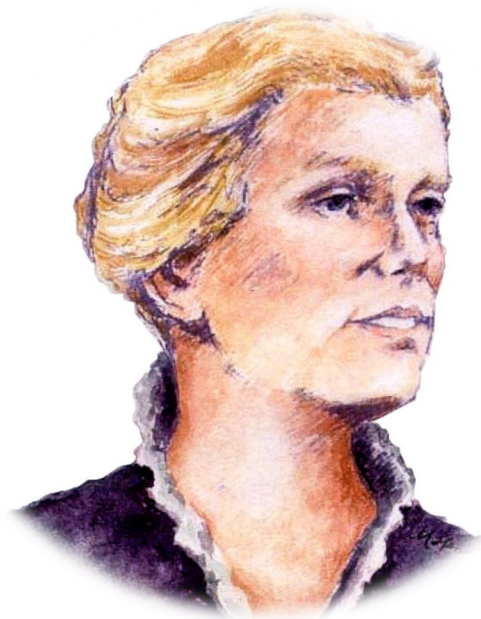


*Congregation of the  
Sisters of Mercy  
Southern Province*



*Annual Trustee Report  
2023*

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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<b>Trustees</b>	Sr. Eileen O'Flynn, Provincial Leader Sr. Nora Anne Lombard Sr. Anna Mai Middleton Sr. Bríd Biggane Sr. Julianne Sullivan
<b>Provincial Bursar</b>	Sr. Ann Lenihan
<b>CHY (Revenue) Number</b>	1690
<b>Registered Charity Number (RCN)</b>	20002459
<b>Principal address</b>	Mercy Stewardship Offices Bishop Street Cork City Cork
<b>Auditors</b>	Walsh O'Brien Harnett Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm 104 Lower Baggot Street Dublin 2 Ireland D02Y940
<b>Bankers</b>	Bank of Ireland 32 South Mall Cork
<b>Solicitors</b>	Barry C. Galvin & Son 91 South Mall Cork City Co. Cork
<b>Investment managers</b>	L&P Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland 23 St. Stephen's Green Dublin 2 D02 AR55
<b>Financial advisors</b>	L&P Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland 23 St. Stephen's Green Dublin 2 D02 AR55

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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### Where Our Mission Began

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is an international Roman Catholic Religious Congregation founded in Dublin in 1831 by Catherine McAuley. Influenced by her Christian faith, she used her inheritance to set up a centre in Baggot Street, Dublin, from where she and her early companions responded to the needs of people who were disadvantaged.

The founding sisters established schools and hospitals and cared in whatever way possible for the needs of the people who were poorest in society. In the years that followed the Sisters of Mercy established communities in Ireland and overseas, setting up schools that still exist in the Southern Province as well as establishing healthcare institutions and working in state-run ones.



### Our Mission Today

In recent decades, and as the State provision in the areas of education and healthcare continue to improve, the work of sisters became more varied.

Motivated by the Christian vision of a world of equality, justice, peace and care of the earth, the Charity has consistently worked for justice and responded to unmet needs, to work for justice and to advocate for the voiceless. Sisters are committed to prayer while also being involved in pastoral care, eco-justice, addressing addiction, the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, spirituality and various facets of the healing and education ministry. However, as the age profile of the sisters has increased, the need to care for older sisters has become a necessity for the Charity while also resourcing others in keeping with the charism of Mercy.

*“The mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is to bear witness to the compassionate and merciful love of God. Our administration of temporal goods must express the Gospel call to justice, charity and almsgiving... We use these goods for our common life, for the various apostolates of mercy and for the needs of the Church, especially the poor and deprived.” Constitutions 104 (1985)*



### How We Organise Ourselves Today

In 1994, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (Ireland) was formed by the union of twenty-seven autonomous Mercy Congregations, formerly of Ireland and South Africa. The purpose of this union was to ensure greater effectiveness in the mission of Mercy.

For administrative purposes the Congregation structurally comprises six Provinces (canonical and civil entities) – four in Ireland (Northern, Southern, Western and South Central) one in Kenya and one in South Africa. There is a smaller group (a Region) of the Congregation in the United States. These structures are currently under review following the 2018 Congregational Chapter.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

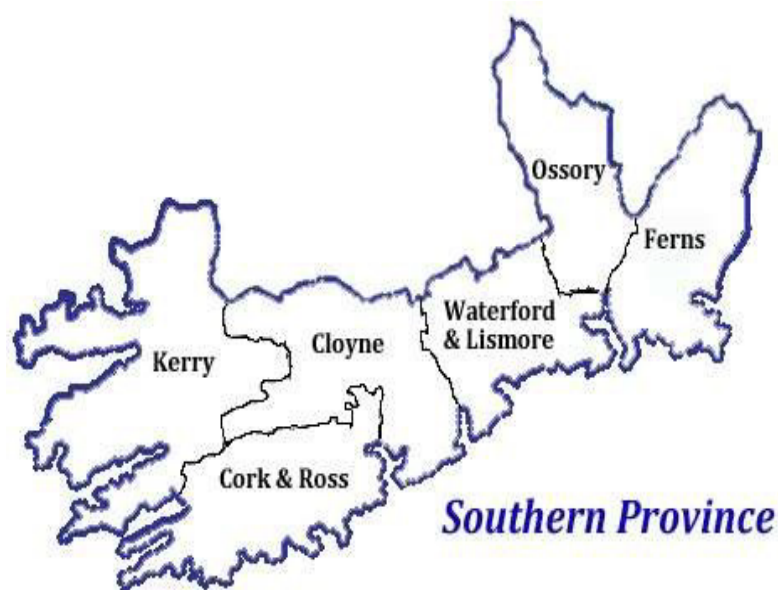
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### Southern Province



The Southern Province comprises six former independent congregations located in the Catholic Dioceses of Cloyne, Cork & Ross, Ferns, Kerry, Ossory and Waterford & Lismore. The geographical area comprises counties Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford. In addition, the province has a mission area in Peru.

### Geographical Location



### Restructuring

This Charity is one of five 'Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy' civil charities in the Republic of Ireland and the Trustees have been working with the wider Congregation on a restructuring process. This is with a view to managing the Congregations resources more effectively for the purposes of their life and mission today. A decision has been taken to restructure the five civil charities in the Republic of Ireland into one legal entity. This will facilitate more streamlined administration and continued good practice in the future, and this restructuring is expected to take place in 2025.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

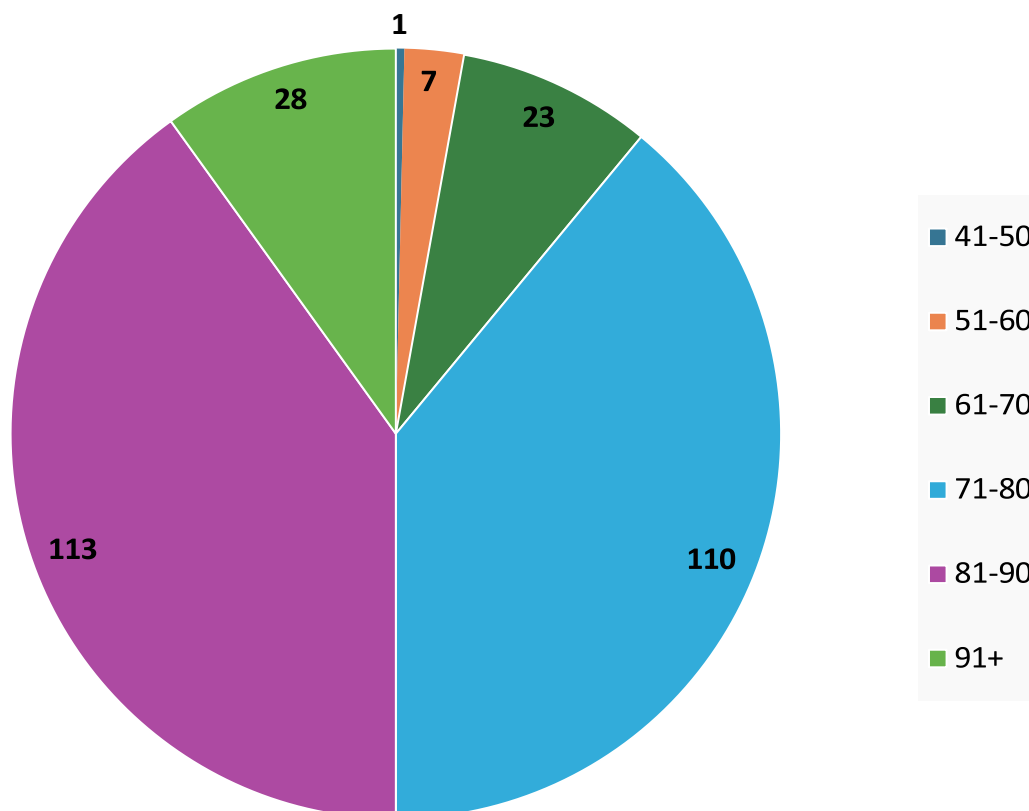
## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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Membership on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 = 282

### Age Profile



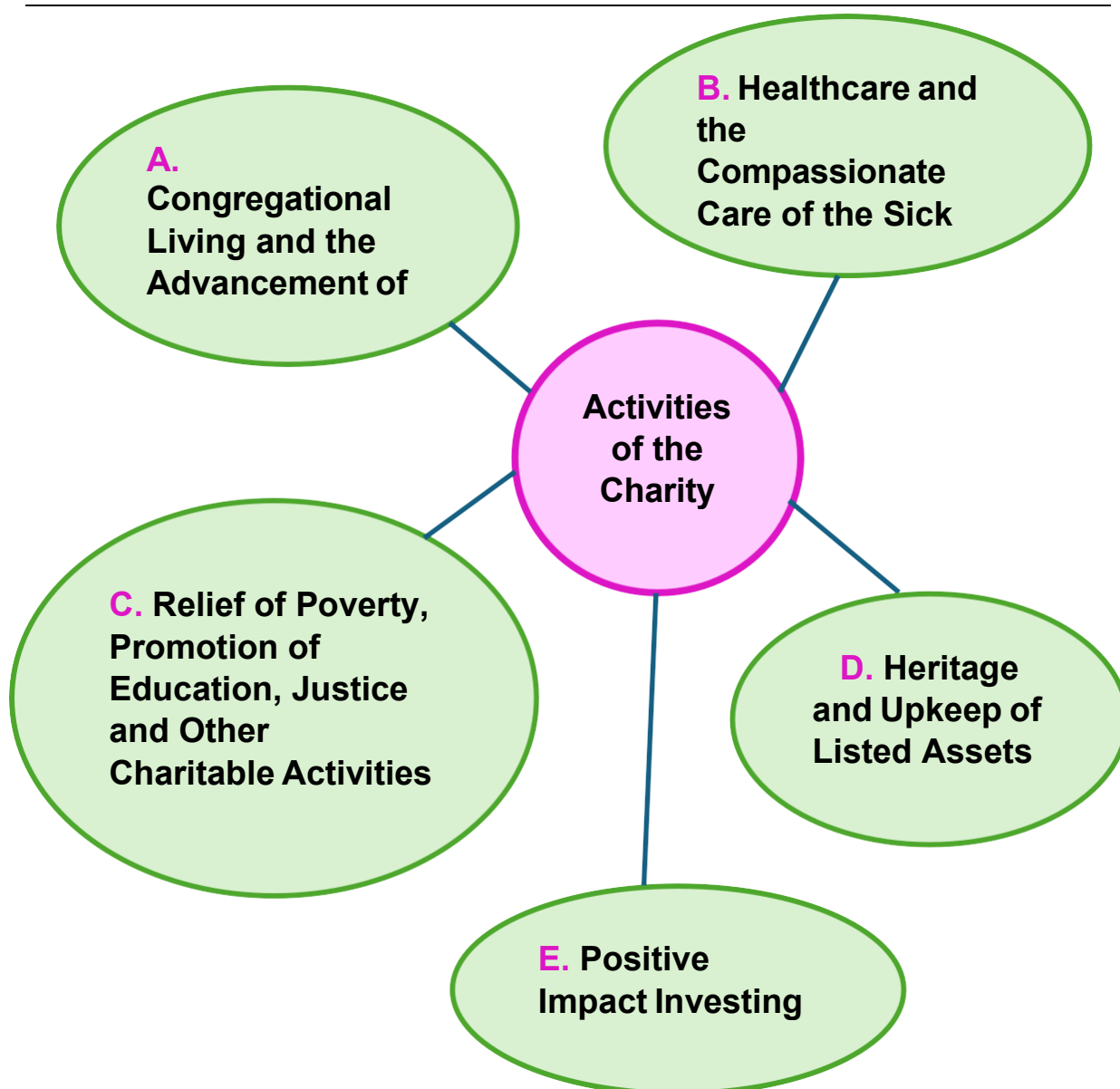
### Objects of the Charity

The main objects of the Charity are:

- ✚ the advancement of religion
- ✚ the alleviation of poverty
- ✚ the support of those in need spiritually as well as materially

The charity aims to support the religious and other charitable works carried out in the name of the province and to care for the members of the province throughout their lives.

We do this through the activities and ministries of the Charity in the following areas:



### Public Benefit

Public Benefit is achieved in a variety of ways, as described throughout this report, and is delivered through religious activities, impact investments, overseas aid, ecological awareness and a variety of services provided to families, refugees, older people, children, and to people experiencing hunger and poverty.

Through grant aids/donations the charity supports other charities to alleviate poverty and improve social conditions.

The beneficiaries are people of the Republic of Ireland and of other parts of the world through our response to needs in developing countries.

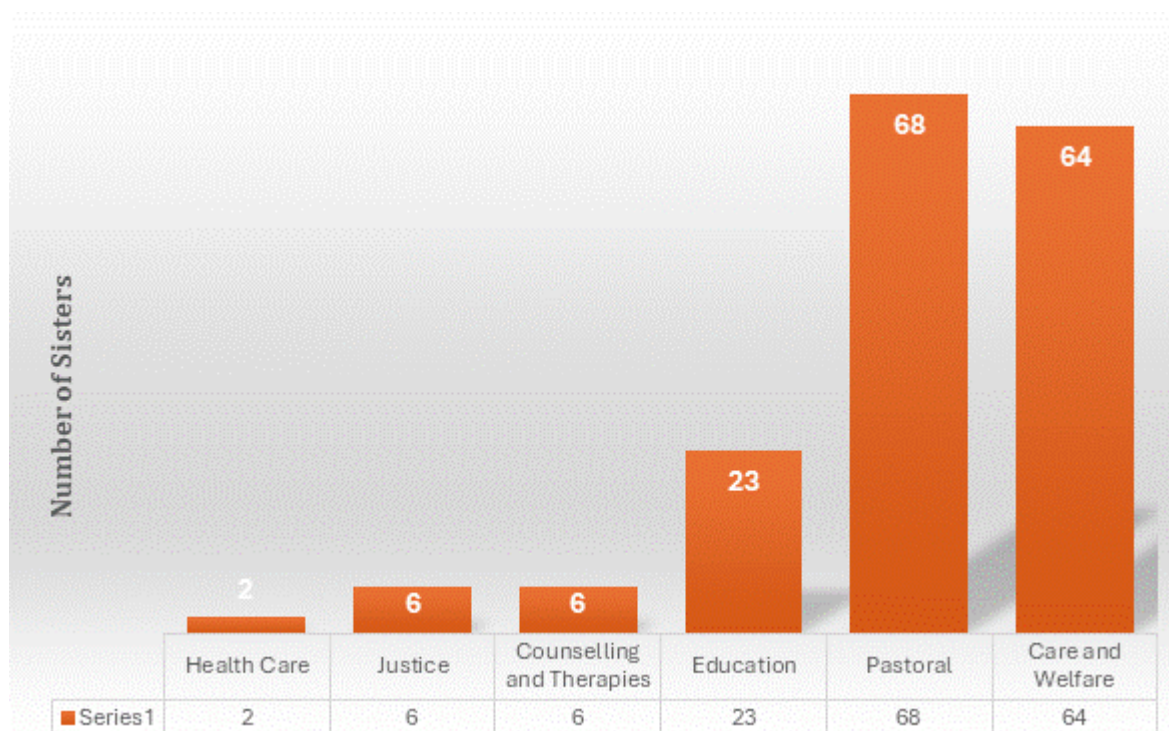
# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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### Number of Sisters in Ministry 2023



The chart shows the areas in which active members are involved, some of them in more than one area. Most of these are part time roles. There are six sisters involved in internal administration: one is treasurer and five (trustees) exercise leadership responsibility within the province. Two sisters are members of the Congregational Leadership Team.

All members of the Charity are committed to the ministry of prayer, both personal and communal.

Seven sisters work in Peru, six Peruvian and one Irish. One member lives and ministers in Lima and six members live and minister in Trujillo.

### *Activities of the Charity*

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#### ***A. Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion***

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The advancement of religion, the nurturing of faith and the spiritual dimension of life are of prime importance to the sisters in the province and underpin all aspects of the life and work of the Charity.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

***FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023***

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The sisters are committed to personal prayer and to the form of communal prayer suited to their local circumstances.

Some groups are closely linked to their local parishes and all, who are able, participate in reflective processes provided by the Congregation and other faith-based communities.

Sisters in receipt of salaries, stipends or pensions donate them to the Charity and therefore have no independent means of support. They have devoted all their lives and their earnings to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives. Many also give their services free in their various ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age.

The Trustees are mindful of the age profile of the members of the province and the impact of this on the work of the Charity, property requirements and financial implications. Accommodation is kept under review to ensure a continuum of care as appropriate to each sister's needs.

The following are a few examples of ministries undertaken by the Charity in 2023:

### **Faith Development/Parish and Prayer Ministry**

Apart from their own prayer life, many sisters, even in retirement, actively contribute to the promotion of spirituality in various ways. A sample of their work is:

- ✚ Adult Faith Development
- ✚ Sacramental Preparation
- ✚ Funeral Ministry
- ✚ Spiritual Accompaniment
- ✚ Parish Liturgy
- ✚ Parish Pastoral Council Member
- ✚ Prison Ministry
- ✚ Music Ministry
- ✚ Prayer Groups

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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### Circles of Mercy and Encountering Mercy – Reflections of Group Members



*“On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2023 members of the Circles of Mercy and the Encountering Mercy group travelled to Baggot Street to recall the life and vision of Catherine McAuley. All received a warm welcome from Sr Patricia (CEO) and Susan Cahill (Programme Coordinator). On our arrival a cup of tea from Avril and her staff set us up for our day’s pilgrimage. Everyone found a palpable depth of the presence of Catherine in the house as Patricia grounded us into a spirit-led day of Mercy and an expanding of our knowledge of Catherine took place as the tour ensued with Susan. It was evident in Susan’s presentation of the Mercy story in Baggot street that the essence of Mercy doesn’t change but maybe just expresses itself in new ways going*

*forward in relation to our own situations in society today. The link she created to the historical figure of Catherine in her times wove a tapestry into the real fabric of what Mercy is, her love for all.*



*Every thread of Mercy was unravelled in a beautiful and meaningful way as we paused in reflection at Catherine’s final resting place.*

*We later spent time journaling and closed the day with a beautiful ritual in the chapel celebrating the life and works of Catherine where prayer, reflection, and thanksgiving around the symbols of Catherine’s cross / prayer book / ring and keys held everyone gathered in a safe and grateful space”.*

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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*"Today I have gained a greater insight into her commitment, her focus and her energy, whilst also coming to know the person of Catherine more clearly and appreciate her work more dearly".*

*"History matters in the story of Catherine, and the mercy links formed by her courage and bravery give us an example in the way we are asked to live out our commitments*

*"As I sit here, I feel the connection of the bond of Mercy across time".*



### **Camilla Lauricella:**

Camilla Lauricella is a leading Mercy Associate with the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and chair of the newly formed Advisory Council (the Office of the Association). We were very privileged to meet with Camilla on the 6th of November in person in the Provincial Offices and via Zoom on the evening of the 7th. During her short stay she also got to visit the Heritage Centre in Charleville.

Present at the in-person meeting were members of the Encountering Mercy Group and the Circles of Mercy. Camilla's strong commitment to the charism of Mercy was palpable and her enthusiasm infectious. It was lovely to hear her quote from

Catherine about the needs of the poor and the response which is ever needed. The zoom call was attended by Sisters, Circle Members and Encountering Mercy Members and there was representation of sisters and associates from Ireland, Kenya, and South Africa. The sense of Global Mercy Presence was evident. Camilla will stay in touch with her new Mercy family, and we will continue to enrich each other on the journey ahead.

*"Mercy is a verb. It's not about what we do but why we do it.  
Mercy is the lens we choose to see through" Camill*

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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### The John Birmingham Centre

*"In early 2023 a request came from the centre through a friend asking if I would be interested in doing a meditation/prayer session with the residents of Glasheen Residential community home. It is home to 20 adults with severe and profound disabilities. They use a person-centred approach to provide unique and holistic care of every person's needs.*

*I visited the centre, met the activities coordinator and gathered information. I pondered for a day or two and then said "yes", "I would give it a try".*

*Garda vetting was put in place and an interview with the coordinator of volunteers followed by induction courses. On Tuesday September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, I began in "Teach Mór". On arrival each week I am warmly welcomed by one or both coordinators. I greet 6-7 residents who are all ready for the session in a bright appealing nicely lit room. Quiet reflective music is played while*



*a centre piece is being prepared usually seasonal, e.g. autumn leaves and fruits, spring flowers or a special centre piece for St. Brigid's Day.*



*Reflection time follows then a song or hymns played on the CD player. Following prayers of intercession songs / hymns are sung. Finally, some closing prayers are said. My visits to the centre are positive and uplifting experiences for me, and the coordinators tell me it is likewise for the residents. They appear to find the sessions relaxing and engaging and as we get more familiar with each other I can see these positive responses myself".*

*Sheila Minehane RSM*

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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### Parish Ministry

Sr De Lourdes Fleming worked in Parish ministry with the Parish Pastoral team in St Brendan's Parish, Tralee from 1999 until her retirement in 2023.



As parish sister she encouraged the parishioners to use their talents in various groups, e.g. Baptismal Group Liturgy, Ministers of the Word and Eucharist, Children's Liturgy, St Joseph's Young Priests' Society, Altar Society etc. Training was provided for these groups, and they were met by Sr de Lourdes on an ongoing basis.

Bereavement Counselling for adults and children was arranged and Sr de Lourdes carried out hospital visitation and home visitation with St Vincent de Paul. The Mothers' Prayer Group afforded her many an opportunity to pray with individuals who called to share their problems.

In **Peru** the sisters are involved in various types of parish ministry. These include preparation for the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation, Bible study, preparation of liturgies, work with young people on the process of synodality, visits to the prison, visitation of the sick in their homes and hospitals and retreat giving.

### A Diocesan Advisor

*"In September 2013, with a number of other retired teachers, I was invited by the late Bishop Seamus Freeman to get involved in Primary School Religious Education in the role of Diocesan Advisor.*

*In 2010 the Irish Episcopal Conference had published Share the Good News, the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland. This led to the publication in 2015 of a new Curriculum for Religious Education in Catholic Preschool and Primary Schools in Ireland and this in turn led to the necessity for a new series of textbooks to replace the 'Alive-O' series. The name of the new programme was 'Grow in Love' and we have all been growing into it over the past almost ten years.*

*Between 2015 and 2018 new textbooks, teachers - manuals and online resources were prepared by Veritas for all classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. This involved the coordination of many hours of piloting and in-service which were taken - on enthusiastically by the teachers.*

*There are 83 primary schools under the patronage of the bishop in the Diocese of Ossory, including one Gael Scoil and three schools for children with special needs. A number of schools was allocated to each of us, Diocesan Advisors. Each school is visited annually, and we also endeavour to provide any assistance the school might request in the area of Religious Education.*



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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*All was going well until Covid arrived and we could no longer visit the schools or hold meetings of our group. Like the rest of the world, we resorted to electronic media and quickly became experts on Zoom and emails. (On one occasion I put on my good shoes prior to zooming in to a meeting!) I had one lovely experience of being part of a zoomed Advent Prayer Service in one of my schools. Post Covid we are all back visiting our schools again and the latest project is the piloting of material from the programme for pupils with special needs.*

*The last ten years have been a learning experience for me in the area of Religious Education in primary schools and a journey that I have thoroughly enjoyed”.*

*Maria Goretti Comerford RSM*



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### **B. Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and Those in Need**

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Catherine McAuley generated in her sisters a deep concern and compassionate care for the sick and dying. Today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of the members of the Charity. They are involved in this work in community care and within the community houses.

In 2023 the Charity made donations to Breakthrough Cancer Research and to The Irish Hospice Foundation – for Night Care Nurses.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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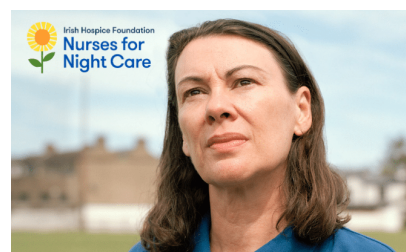
### Breakthrough Cancer Research

Breakthrough Cancer Research is an Irish medical research charity focused on cancer. It works to significantly impact the number of children and adults who can survive this disease. It invests in world-class research in Ireland to impact the quality of life for people with cancer and save lives. It is particularly focused on improving outcomes for those cancers, which are poorly served by current treatment options.



### Irish Hospice Foundation - Nurses for Night Care

The Irish Hospice Foundation funds **Nurses for Night Care** service for people dying with illnesses other than cancer. Nurses for Night Care enable people with diseases like dementia, motor neurone disease, advanced respiratory disease, heart failure and end stage kidney disease to receive expert nursing care and support at night in their own homes in their final days. It



also provides reassurance and respite for families and loved ones caring for someone at home.



### Care of Older Members

The Charity also has a duty to care for its older and frail members who are now themselves in need of care. The Trustees continue to ensure that these sisters, who have selflessly dedicated their lives to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives without any personal remuneration, are cared for in their old age.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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The Trustees are committed to :

- Ensuring sisters receive the appropriate level of care they require.
- Maintaining and reviewing the suitability of community houses for sisters.
- Prudent management of the finances of the Charity in this area.

With the increasing age profile - 90% of our members were over 70 at the end of 2023 - needs have become more acute. It has meant adapting existing houses to become assisted living houses and, in some cases, new buildings have been required. Assisted living is offered in: Killarney, Callan, Clonakilty, Charleville, Kinsale, Mallow, Cork City, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-Suir, Waterford and Wexford. It has also meant frequently securing residential care in nursing homes for members.

Facilities Management Companies are employed in our assisted living houses to oversee care, catering, cleaning and maintenance. Cluster leaders meet weekly with the managers. Individual members of the Trustees attend when feasible and the Trustees meet the company management a couple of times a year for general oversight of the services.



Sisters, who are able, help in supportive and pastoral roles in these communities. This supplements on a spiritual and pastoral level the care provided by the management companies and third party contractors.

In 2023 the Charity engaged the services of Springfort Consultancy to evaluate the standard of services, value for money, staffing levels and to help the Trustees in future planning.

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### ***C. Alleviation of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities in Collaboration with and Support of other Groups***

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“Our foundress, Catherine McAuley, generated in her sisters a deep concern for those at risk in society – this concern engages us in Christian Education. It urges us to be with, and for, the poor and distressed, working for social justice and well-being, seeking to bring rich and poor together in mutual love and service” *Mercy Constitutions 43 (1985)*

The Sisters of Mercy aim to honour that commitment to the best of their ability. In 2023 members of the Charity engaged in the Charity's commitment to the relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities through ministries related to the following:



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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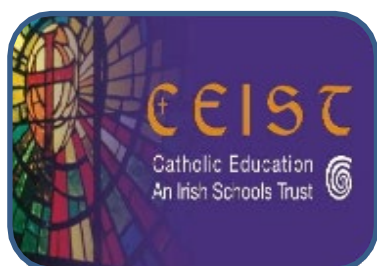
1. Promotion of education
2. Justice, peace and reconciliation
3. Overseas development and support
4. Pastoral and social care and development

### 1. Promotion of Education

Provision of education and access to education has always been central to the work of the Charity. From the late 19th century onwards the Mercy Sisters established second-level schools, including boarding schools, in most provincial towns thereby enabling children from rural Ireland to receive an education.

Discernment regarding the rationalisation of religious run schools began in the 1970's and gained momentum in the 1980's and 1990's. In recent years there have been major developments in the landscape of the Charity's involvement in schools, and this is reflected in the gradual transfer of responsibility for the future of Catholic education in Mercy Schools to other trusteeships.

#### (i) Voluntary and Secondary School Trusteeship:



Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST)

In 2007 CEIST, which is now an independent entity, was set up to act as Trustees for Secondary Schools for the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland and for four other Religious Congregations. CEIST schools have two pillars which support and guide the way they work. The first is that schools are exemplary places of learning where every student experiences excellence in teaching and learning. The second is that schools are nurturing places of spiritual life and Catholic faith. During 2023 eighty teachers completed the *Leadership in CEIST Schools* programme which offers practical strategies for forming leaders who can sustain and develop this inspiring vision.

The EDUCENA foundation works with the CEIST Trust to enable the resourcing of the trusteeship of



their schools and managing and optimizing the financial resources that will be needed in the future. The task of transferring the schools from the Sisters of Mercy to EDUCENA continues to involve considerable work and expertise on the part of the trustees and

their legal and property representatives. Two schools remain to be transferred.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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### (ii) Community Schools

In 2018 the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and The Presentation Sisters engaged CEIST to carry out the Trustee function in Community Schools and Designated Community Colleges under an Agency Agreement. This legal Agency Agreement commits CEIST to carrying out the 'Active Trusteeship' of the Mercy and Presentation Sisters in schools where they are co-Trustees. The agency agreement was signed and extended for a further three years in October 2021.

The Charity is Joint Trustee of five Community Schools and one Community College - Kinsale, Béara, Blackwater, Skibbereen, Passage West Community Schools and Coláiste Dún Iascaigh Community College, Cahir. In 2023 the Charity contributed €10,270 towards the salary of the person appointed by CEIST as the Community Schools and Colleges Co-ordinator.



Coláiste Dún Iascaigh, Cahir, Co. Tipperary

### (iii) Eliza Dennehy Fund

The fund was set up in 1963 when the Sisters of Mercy, Macroom were left \$125,000 by Mary Cronin for, as the will quotes, "the establishment of a fund to be known as the Mary Eliza Dennehy Memorial Fund. Mary Eliza Dennehy was the grandmother of the donor. This Memorial Fund is used for charitable and educational purposes.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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Over the years the money was invested by the sisters. Since the Convent of Mercy, Macroom closed this fund is administered by the Charity. In 2023 €89,500 was disbursed from the fund.

"I wish to thank you most sincerely for the funding which is very much appreciated. It enabled me to continue in education". *A Student*

### (iv) Primary Schools

The trusteeship of the enterprise of education has been transferred to the relevant Dioceses and the process of transferring the properties continues.

### (v) Welcome Immigrant Centre Ltd T/A Welcome English

*"Welcome English is committed to meeting the English Language needs of refugees, those seeking asylum and unemployed immigrants in Cork and its surrounds".*

*(Mission Statement)*



**Welcome English  
Language Centre**

*Welcome English Centre* in Cork City was set up by the province in the year 2000 to respond to the growing numbers of asylum seekers and those with refugee status and their need to learn English. It was set up and coordinated by one of the sisters when she retired from teaching at post primary level. Priority on the courses is given to asylum seekers. Welcome Immigrant Centre CLG is a charity and is largely reliant on donations for funding the operating costs and is principally staffed by a team of volunteers.

The principal donors are the Sisters of Mercy who contributed €50,000 in 2023. In addition to this funding, the congregation also provides the premises where the services operate, together with the services of other support staff.

Students come from many countries (see table below).

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

### Number of Students and Countries of Origin 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

Country	No. of Students	Country	No. of Students
Afghanistan	10	Moldova	3
Albania	1	Nepal	4
Algeria	2	Nigeria	1
Argentina	2	Palestine	3
Brazil	4	Peru	2
China	4	Romania	1
Columbia	1	Russia	2
DRC Congo	5	Senegal	1
Egypt	5	Somalia	2
El Salvador	1	Sudan	2
Eritrea	1	Syria	9
Georgia	3	Tunisia	1
Guatemala	2	Turkey	6
Iran	1	Ukraine	53
Kurdistan (Iraq)	1	Venezuela	3
Lithuania	1	Vietnam	2
Malaysia	1		
<b>Total No. of Students: 141</b>			

In **Peru** three sisters are involved in the ministry of formal education. Another sister oversees the running of 25 Care Centres in which 230 children are provided with food and help with homework while their parents are at work. This help is given by care mothers in their own homes and the sister organises training for them each year. Without this support the children would have no education as their parents would be unable to go out to work.

## 2. Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

The Charity Governing Document urges sisters *“to be with and for the poor and distressed, working for social justice and wellbeing, seeking to bring rich and poor together in mutual love and service”* Constitutions 43 (1985).

The Charity is committed to raising awareness of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all of life. It aims to promote right relationships with all people and with all of life. Over the years, members of the province have endeavoured to alleviate suffering in all its forms. These

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

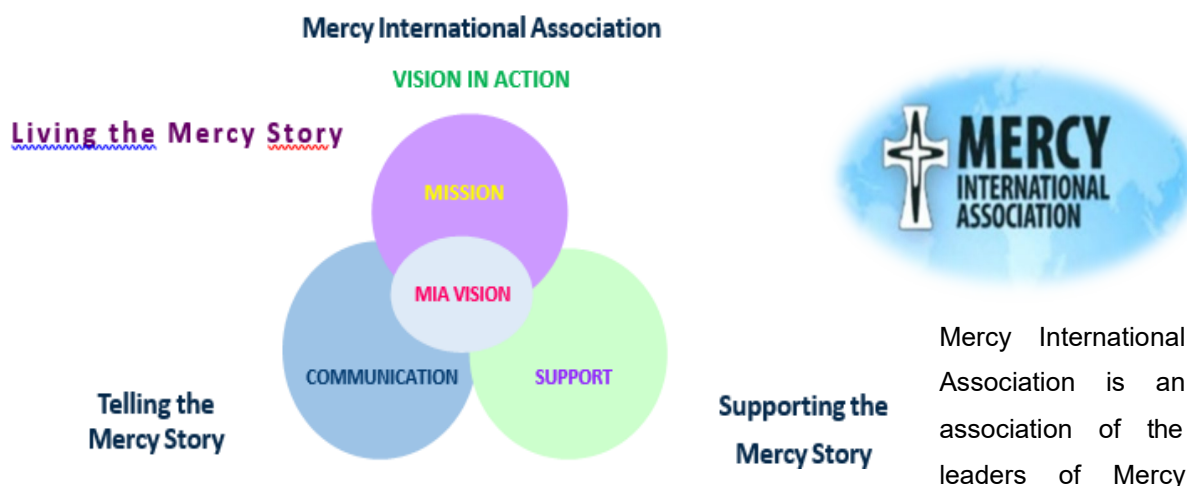
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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members worked in schools, workhouses, orphanages and hospitals in co-operation with the Church and State. The works of the sisters today for justice, peace and reconciliation include:

- Mercy International Association
- Care of Creation/Ecology
- MECPATHS (Mercy Efforts for Child Protection against Trafficking within the Hospitality and Services Sector)
- Solidarity with and Support for Former Residents of Mercy Managed Institutions

### (i) **Mercy International Association**



Mercy International Association is an association of the leaders of Mercy

Congregations, Institutes and Unions throughout the world. The Congregations are in Ireland, England, America, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland and the Philippines.

The leaders work together to share some aspects of the common work of the Congregation. Each Mercy group contributes financially.

One member of the Charity is CEO of Mercy International Centre, Baggot St., Dublin and another is the Director of Heritage and Spirituality.

### (ii) **Care of Creation/Ecology**

Sisters also work in a variety of ways in caring for the earth. These include:

- awareness raising on issues such as climate change and its effects.
- justice issues particularly in relation to the poorest peoples of the globe.
- engaging in advocacy work through signing petitions to curb climate change and other issues that adversely affect the health of the planet and its various life-forms.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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In keeping with the core aim of the Charity - the Advancement of Religion - there is a strong emphasis on facilitating province members and others in recognising the moral and spiritual dimensions of the work of caring for creation and being conscious of the need for climate justice. Pope Francis invites us to find the spark of divinity within all creation to fully realize our relationship with our earthly home. He describes this relationship as an “interdependent shared community”.



There is a substantial commitment to ecology by our sisters in **Peru**. One sister has a team who voluntarily set plants in their local areas. She also provides training on the care of the earth and the use of its resources and organises different scientific projects on ecology. She uses a method of growing plants that saves water and maintains humidity and nitrogen for the care of Our Common Home.

Other sisters are also involved in the ongoing promotion and awareness raising on climate change and environmental care especially in the schools.



At the beginning of 2023 there was grave concern that plants & trees planted and watered by the students and teachers wouldn't survive following Cyclone Yaku but neighbours stepped-in and drew water to keep them alive.

The residents in Sal y Luz addiction treatment centre are very involved in learning about the care of creation work in their garden – planting and caring for the various plants.

**(iii) MECPATHS** is dedicated to countering Child Trafficking and is the only such project in Ireland.

It was officially recognised by the Department of Justice in 2020 when MECPATHS was accepted as an official education partner of the department in countering human trafficking.

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MECPATHS also collaborates with many organisations working to counter other forms of trafficking in Ireland.

The issue of child trafficking without doubt is one of the most horrendous crimes in our world today.

In 2023 MECPATHS celebrated the tenth anniversary of the MECPATHS ministry. During this time the MECPATHS team has opened doors of hope with education, advocacy and outreach. It has connected with the political, social and cultural worlds which has had a very significant impact in the field of hospitality.



**MECPATHS**  
MERCY EFFORTS FOR  
CHILD PROTECTION  
AGAINST TRAFFICKING  
WITH THE HOSPITALITY  
AND SERVICES SECTORS

### **(iv) AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland)**



The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) represents and promotes active collaboration between Religious Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life and Lay Missionary Groups. It promotes the common interests of member organisations and supports their leaders in responding to the challenges of the time. It raises awareness and facilitates responses to current and emerging social justice issues.

It is funded by the contributions of the member organisations and overall responsibility rests with an executive council which is elected by the members. As a member organisation the Charity contributed a subscription of €21,000 to AMRI in 2023 and also gave a contribution of €20,000 to *Towards Healing*.

### **(v) Prison Ministry**

From the earliest days of the Congregation, sisters have been involved in prison work.

St Nicholas Trust (SNT) was set up in Cork in 2008 in response to the needs of relatives of people sentenced to prison in the form of a support group where people can come to talk in a *safe, confidential, non-judgmental environment* to others who have been through the same experience.

Since 2010 it has successfully run a Hospitality Service in Cork Prison Waiting Area on a voluntary basis. Two members of the Charity volunteer. The service provides refreshments for families who are visiting the prison, colouring materials for children and limited advice and support where appropriate.



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A sister in **Peru** co-ordinates the provision of a free legal aid and psychological services in a Womens' Prison, through the services of volunteer solicitors and psychologists.

### 3. Overseas Development and Support

*"Belonging to the universal church, missionary in her very nature, we seek to incarnate the mercy of God, according to the limits of our resources, in missionary countries."*

*(Mercy Constitutions, Par 45)*



**Peru:** Seven sisters work in Peru, six Peruvian and one Irish. One member lives and ministers in Lima and six members live and minister in Trujillo.

As already outlined in the report sisters minister in schools, care centres, the womens' prison, parishes and in an addiction centre.

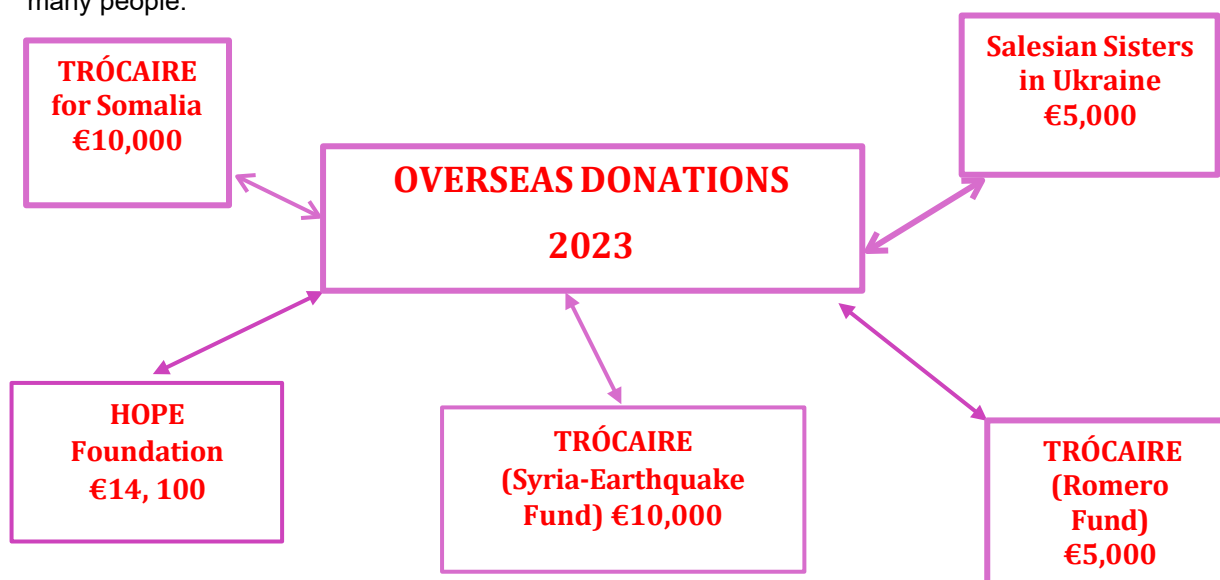
Resources for a number of their projects come from the Congregational Solidarity Fund, Southern Province and from The Ministry of the Good Shepherds, Boca Raton Florida, as well as donations from individual sisters and their families.

**India:** In 2023 €14,100 was donated to the Hope Foundation.

In addition to the help and support provided by the Trustees communities in the province continue to support this and other missions.

**Chile:** One sister works as a member of a parish team in Chile.

**Other Mission Areas** – The province provides ongoing human and financial support in the cause of justice, for the development and enrichment of people's lives in other regions of the world also. This support is usually given through donations for works/projects which have given life and hope to many people.





# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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“Thank you for your generous donation which will support the education and infrastructure needs of children in Gedo”. *CEO Trócaire*

In 2023 Sr. Margaret Kiely held an exhibition of attractive artwork and proceeds from the sale of her work went to Ukrainian refugees in Poland through the SMA (Society of African Missions.)



### HOPE Hospital

HOPE Hospital was established in 2008 to provide healthcare services for people living on the streets and in the slums of Kolkata and other districts of West Bengal. It endeavours to ensure proper medical treatment for underprivileged people living below the poverty line, who would otherwise be deprived of necessary hospital-based care.

“Approximately 1,400 patients (children and adults) are treated at the inpatient department of HOPE Hospital every year. Your donation will provide nutritious meals to the patients 4 times a day for 5 months”.

*M. Forrest, Founding President*

*“Dear Sisters,*

*I send warm greetings from Lviv (Ukraine). Half a year ago, we received financial resources from you to help people in need in Ukraine. In this letter I would like to inform you what this money was spent on.*

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*We have helped numerous large families (from 3 to 9 children), sick people: children, adults and the elderly and other people in need - those displaced by war and the local population*

*It purchased:*

- ❖ *Food, clothes and shoes.*
- ❖ *Cosmetics, washing powders and liquids for cleaning and disinfection.*
- ❖ *Books, notebooks and other school supplies.*
- ❖ *Medical tests and medicines were paid for.*



*Everyone is very grateful to you for your help and kindness of heart. Adults and children pray for all benefactors and ask God to bless them.*

*This Christmas tree was painted by a 9-year-old girl as an expression of gratitude and with wishes for a joyful and peaceful Christmas.*

*All the recipients and we, the Salesian Sisters, join our wishes.*

*We thank you with all our hearts and remember you in our prayers”.*

*Sr. Irena Koch*

### Cecilia's Craftwork 2023

*“I’ve always been involved in Craftwork and in finding creative ways of expressing ideas and forms. In 2023, I crocheted chickens for Easter; a friend joined in with me as there was a big demand. All the proceeds from this project went to Concern. Much of the remainder of the year was spent preparing for a Christmas Craft Fair to begin in November. The Fair was held in our large parlour in Military Road. No doubt the theme was ‘Christmas’ and the items included baubles, Christmas Stockings, Christmas Trees, Santas, bookmarks, cards and Crosstitch Cribs. The house - staff, sisters, friends, visitors, and the Mercy School teaching staff all came and supported the Fair. The proceeds of €400 went to Helping Hands, a local Charity here in Waterford, that provides hot meals to the homeless daily.*

*Apart from my craftwork I also crochet blankets for the Missions; these are sent to countries in need: Malawi, Somalia, Kenya and others. This project is done in conjunction with other knitters and craft workers”.*

*Cecilia McGinn RSM*



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### Property:



In response to the appeals for accommodation for Ukrainians fleeing the war in their homeland the Charity donated a 6 bedroomed house in Clogheen, Co. Tipperary which is currently occupied by a Ukrainian family.

## 4. Pastoral and Social Care and Development

### (i) Charleville Sheltered Housing Services:

A sister acts as co-ordinator of Charleville Sheltered Housing Services which comprises approximately 30 single occupancy bungalows with a large Central Care Unit. The project was set up on land formally owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The goal of the service is to permit ageing, vulnerable and homeless persons to remain independent rather than premature entry into long stay care.



Two sisters are Directors on the Board of The Child and Family Company CLG which employs 25 people. They run a creche, preschool and after school services.



The Community Care and Garden Services was also set up on former convent ground. This is a CLG and one sister is a director on the Board.

### (ii) Kanturk Mercy House:

A sister administers Kanturk Mercy House. The premises are owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The centre provides daily meals, social activities, outings and advice. It seeks to alleviate rural isolation and is a venue for delivery of health care and social activities. In 2023 an average of 50 dinners per day were cooked at the centre and delivered to those in need in the surrounding areas.



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### **(iii) Buttevant Mercy Centre:**

In the 1980's the sisters in Buttevant purchased two houses for ministry. Presently the centre is rented to the HSE by the Sisters of Mercy. It is managed by a sister and is open five days a week. Meals continue to be delivered and social activities take place, particularly for the elderly. The centre also provides facilities for a Parent/Toddler Group. The Community Nurse also avails of the facilities to meet with clients on a regular basis.



### **(iv) Peru:**

The sisters in Peru are very involved in social action both in the parishes and in the schools. They work tirelessly to respond to the needs of those most in need. This includes – organising school supplies for students, distributing food parcels and in 2023 a huge challenge was responding to the needs of those who suffered the loss of their homes and belongings due to the devastation caused by Cyclone Yaku.



### **(v) Volunteering:**

Throughout my career I received Government salaries for teaching post-primary students in Enniscorthy and third level graduates at Mount Oliver Institute and NUI Maynooth; was funded for offering retreats to students and Adult Ed participants in Dioceses throughout Ireland; got my first 'stipend' as Director of the Ferns Diocesan Youth Service (FDYS) from the late Bishop Herlihy (FDYS) based in Wexford; received welcome cheques for facilitation and leadership training of religious congregations and NGOs worldwide, and, more recently, as Secretary General of AMRI. I was even handsomely paid for working with some very memorable political prisoners in Portlaoise over a few years.

However, as the years are passing and with just a little spare time available, I explored the whole area of Volunteering. Volunteer Ireland's website poses the question: **What is Volunteering?** The answer is there too. Volunteering *"to put it simply is doing more than you have to, because you want to, because you care."* Its National Volunteering Strategy expands saying *"Volunteering is any time willingly given, either formally or informally, for the common good and without financial gain."*

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While these definitions ring true and as my years mount up I prefer to base my volunteering on the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25 and its challenges. The final life examination to enter the kingdom of heaven is based on challenges that are clear but how will I be judged on them?

*I was hungry and you fed me OR I was hungry, and you gave me no meal,*

*I was thirsty and you gave me to drink OR I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink,*

*I was homeless and you gave me a room OR I was homeless, and you gave me no bed,*

*I was shivering and you gave me clothes OR I was shivering and you gave me no clothes,*

*I was sick and you stopped to visit,*

*I was in prison and you came to me. } OR I was sick and in prison, and you never visited.*

(The Message Translation)

Having had many opportunities over the years to be well informed, trained in multiple disciplines, having experience of formal leadership and qualified in areas like Company regulations, Governance, Charity legislation, Strategic Planning, Trustee responsibilities, etc. I have been invited to sit on several Boards and train volunteers in the intricacies of what is known as Best Practice. All without 'financial gain' but utterly enjoyed, deeply valued, and offering multiple opportunities for teamwork and collaboration.

A few years ago, when the numbers dying by suicide increased more and more, I volunteered to help establish the **Darkness into Light Walk** at UCC to raise funds for Pieta House. This led to an invitation to join the Board of **Pieta** and offer advice on its forward direction. I continue to admire the many people of all ages who continue to walk through the night raising funds and remembering loved ones.

To their great credit Sisters of Mercy established centres for people suffering from various forms of addiction. Buildings were donated and services were provided without salaries over many years. When a vacancy arose on the Board of **Aiseiri** I was delighted to serve on that Board for three years, serving as Secretary of the Company and creating a new Strategic Plan.

I moved from Cork to Dublin at the end of 2016 and responded to the request to serve on the Board of **Sophia Housing**, again for a period of three years 2018-2021. This social housing company provides homes for people on low income and on the housing list. In 2001, when I had more time to spare, I responded to an advertisement in the Sunday Independent and was interviewed to take up the role of **Trustee** with **Saint John of God Housing Association** for people with disabilities. I have recently renewed a further three-year contract 2023-2026. There I serve not only as a Board member but also as Chair of the Governance Committee and currently as Chair of the Strategic Planning Co-ordinating Committee. Taking responsibility for over 400 units in Counties Louth, Meath, Dublin, Kildare and Kerry requires dedicated commitment from a wonderful team of companions but the work is most rewarding while very time consuming.

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For many years I wished to be able to attend the meetings of **Act to Prevent Trafficking**, known as **APT**. Now that I am living in Dublin, I am a very active member of APT and was instrumental in designing and creating the **cAPTives** programme for post primary schools. This is a series of interviews with significant experts in the field and filmed by iCatholic. Work continues on this programme at present as we strive to spread the programme nationally. I am also APT's representative on the Pope's **Santa Marta Group** working on trafficking in conjunction with the police internationally.

While serving as Secretary General of **AMRI** (Association of Leaders of Missionaries & Religious of Ireland) 2017-2021 I was AMRI's representative on the **Bishops Council for Emigrants and for Irish Prisoners Overseas** (ICPO). I was then requested to continue serving on both Councils and am a very active member now and am continuing for another term from 2023. While there are regular meetings throughout the year our recent work has included devising new Terms of Reference and outlining a new Strategic Plan. Our work ensures that prisoners and their families are not neglected and that the ageing emigrants outside of Ireland have support and connections.

A group of post graduate African men and women scholars established **IIASI** – the **International Institute of African Studies in Ireland** in 2019. A returned missionary approached me in 2021 to meet with this newly formed Company to advise them on all aspects of Company requirements, Charity legislation, Government regulations etc. I willingly work as a Consultant to this group, attending all their meetings, facilitated their recent public launch, October 2023, at Technological University Dublin and am supporting them in becoming a registered Charity.

**Missio Ireland CLG** is the Pope's official charity for supporting overseas mission, part of a global network serving the church in over 120 countries. The objects of this charity is to raise awareness of missionary activity in dioceses and parishes and to raise funds for distribution worldwide where need is greatest. I have served as Trustee on this Board since 2019 and am currently very involved with all aspects of Governance, Finance and Property matters. It is a joy to be a 'missionary with a difference' ensuring that the office in Dublin is a valued hub for all such activity.

All of these plus lots of voluntary work with many smaller religious congregations fill my days.



To conclude I am reminded of Luke's Gospel Chapter 6: 37-38: "Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back – given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity." (The Message translation).

**Sr**

**Liz Murphy**

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### **(vi) Droichead Family Resource Centre**

*Droichead is a charity located in the town of Callan for the benefit of the people of the town and the surrounding area. It provides a wide range of activities for the wellbeing of children, youth and senior citizens with a view to promoting their physical, mental, emotional, economic, recreational, educational and cultural welfare. Droichead's main objectives are to:*

- *advance education*
- *relieve poverty and deprivation*
- *promote community development and support*

*Having been a Primary teacher for more than 20 years it worked really well for me to become involved in the Homework Club for Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class. This involves a weekly three-hour commitment with the main focus on a one-to-one tutoring session with students who are struggling with reading in school. It is my responsibility to ensure students complete their assigned homework, learn the basics of reading and through plenty of positive feedback gain confidence in their ability to be successful in school.*

*I enjoy this time with the younger students, and it is a joy for me to see them advance in confidence and skills. The one-to-one sessions allow me to spend individual time with each student where I can get to know them, listen to their concerns and help them find ways to cope with the challenges they are faced with in school on a daily basis.*

*I also serve as a member of Droichead's Board of Directors which involves one meeting per month. These meetings review our current services, initiate new and innovative programmes as the needs and circumstances of those we serve change, and we also draw up plans for the future development of Droichead Family Resource Centre.*



*Kate Morris RSM*

### **(vii) Treatment Centres Established and Supported by the Province:**



Over the years, the Southern Province established Addiction Treatment Centres, including one for adolescents. They are Tabor Group (Tabor Lodge and Tabor Fellowship House), Aiséirí Cahir, Aislínn (Kilkenny).

**TABOR GROUP** While the Charity has established separate legal entities for these centres, it continues to provide the buildings at a nominal rent.

**Tabor Group 2023 in a Snapshot**

- 898 phone calls made to Tabor Group in 2022
- Assessments:
  - 406 Offered
  - 363 Completed
- 271 Admissions (75% of Completed Assessments)
- 172 (63%) Clients admitted to Tabor Group's Primary Residential Programme
- 79 (35%) Clients admitted to Tabor Group's Integrated Recovery Programme

"I would not be alive today if it were not for Tabor Group".  
*A former client*



**Sal y Luz del Mundo, Peru**

The Sal y Luz del Mundo Therapeutic Community began in 1992 as a result of contact by the sisters with a group of young people who were trying, on their own initiative, to give up drug use. A house was set up and therapists began to work there with the financial help of the province. The province currently contributes €33,000 a year towards salary costs.



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The work begins on the streets where addicts live/gather in places called 'huecos' (holes). There they are befriended by workers from Sal y Luz, given breakfast and invited into the programme. There are three phases in the programme: Welcome, Community and Social Reintegration.



### **(viii) Mercy Ministry Fund**

The Mercy Ministry Fund was set up by the Sisters of Mercy in response to need in the Southern Province. It supports groups which are of benefit to, and improve the lives of, the most vulnerable. It does this by focussing on specific areas of need:

- Educational Disadvantage
- Addiction
- Domestic Violence
- Homelessness
- Social and/or ecological injustice

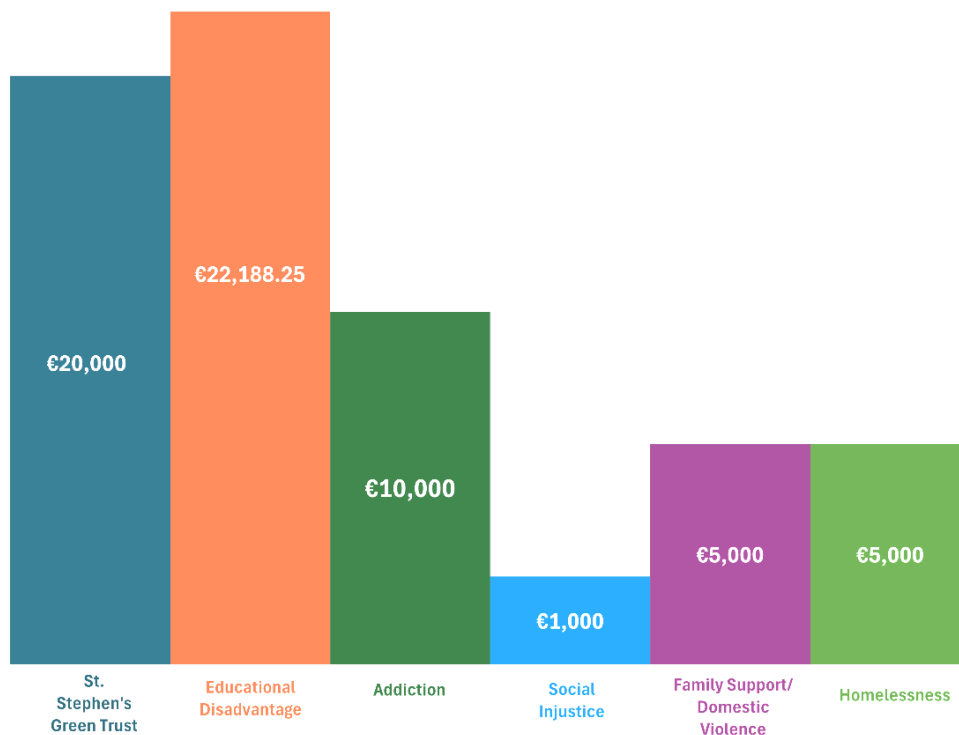


Stewardship personnel review the applications and make recommendations to the Trustees. The applications are assessed according to criteria set by the Trustees. The following is the breakdown of the contribution given and ratified by the Provincial Leadership Team/Trustees in 2023 according to categories:

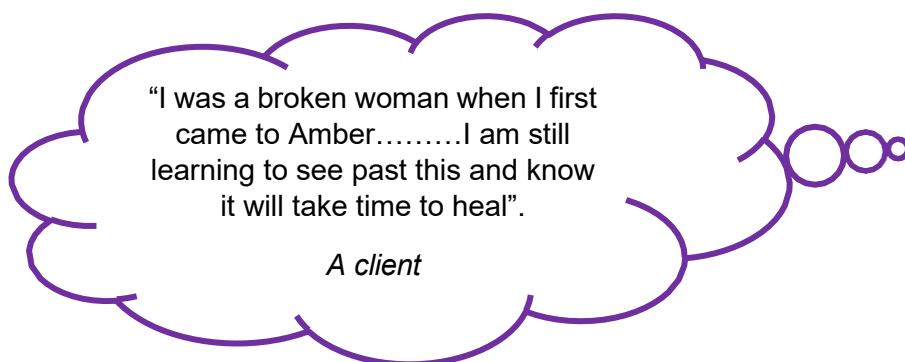
### **Funding 2023 – Categories**

Educational Disadvantage	€22,188
Domestic Violence	€16,000
Homelessness	€5,000
Social&/or Ecological Injustice	€1,000
Stephen's Green Trust	€20,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>€64,188</b>

## MERCY MINISTRY FUND 2023



### Some Beneficiaries in 2023



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*"The Future Leader Induction Programme has helped me with my confidence".*

*"Ukrainian Vyshyvanka Celebration Day was like finding a piece of home in a new place".*

*"The youth project has been my safe haven".*



*"Learning to budget has given me the confidence to go to the shops and make smart choices".  
A Service User*

*"Coming to the healthy life skills group and learning to eat on a budget has helped me to see I don't need to spend a fortune to eat healthily". A Service User*

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"All the volunteers in Blood Bike South are extremely grateful for your generous donation."

*Fundraising Manager*

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### **(ix) Wellsprings**

Wellsprings/Huruma Ltd is both a residential and outreach centre in Cork City. Opened in 1995, it began by providing accommodation and counselling support for homeless young women who usually present with multiple and complex needs. In 2006 an outreach service was established offering lifelong support to women who engage with Wellsprings. Both buildings are provided by the Charity rent-free. Sisters also serve on the Board of Management.



**Bethany Outreach Service**

### **(x) Solidarity with and Support for Former Residents of Mercy Managed Institutions**

The Sisters of Mercy have been engaged in the care of vulnerable young people since the beginning of the Congregation in 1827. This involvement continued through the years in more formal settings such as in orphanages, industrial schools, group homes. Many young people maintained contact and friendship with Sisters who had been their carers in childhood and members in turn provided informal after care services and supports.



In light of revelations of the harshness of regimes in industrial schools in the past the Congregation established a Helpline and Counselling Service in 1996. This was taken over and expanded by CORI the following year and operated as “Faoiseamh” until 2011. Then it was replaced by *Towards Healing* a One Church service financed jointly by AMRI and the Irish Bishops Conference for former residents and their families.

In 2023 the Charity contributed €20,000 to enable a healing response through *Towards Healing*.

The services of the congregational and provincial archivists and their staff as well as the services of provincial administration staff are constantly available to past residents of our institutions who seek their records.

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The Congregation contributed a total of €33,091,114 in property and finance to the 2002 Redress Scheme. It has taken a long time to complete the legal work of transferring some properties and one property still remains.

Following the issue of the Report by the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (The Ryan Report) in 2009 the Congregation pledged a voluntary contribution of €20m in cash as well as property then valued at €11.5m to the Statutory Fund set up to help those who had complained of abuse in industrial schools. In addition, they offered to the State properties which were valued at €80,856,800 and to the voluntary sector properties valued at €15,060,000.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province made an offer to the Government of €27,050,000 in 2009. The offer comprised of a payment of €4,000,000 and a transfer of 16 properties professionally valued at €23,050,000 at the time of the offer. At the balance sheet date, €4,000,000 plus accrued interest had been paid. Seven properties had been transferred, and a further eight sold and the proceeds transferred, and one property sold with the proceeds remaining to be transferred.

Towards Peace provides spiritual support in a safe supportive space, where people who have been affected by abuse in a Church context can be accompanied as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time.

### **Scoping Inquiry into historical sexual abuse in schools run by Religious Orders**

The Trustees worked with the Congregation Leadership Team and other relevant bodies to provide the information requested by the Scoping Inquiry. The Scoping Inquiry subsequently published its report in late 2024.

### **(xi) Safeguarding Policies and Procedures**

#### **Safeguarding Children**

The Trustees have adopted the Policy and Guidance of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). The Charity has a robust safeguarding structure in place.



#### **Safeguarding Office**

The safeguarding office is overseen by the safeguarding manager who is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and administrative support is available. The role of the safeguarding manager is to

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develop and oversee the implementation of safeguarding practices for the Southern Province and liaise with statutory authorities.

### **Safeguarding Committee**

The safeguarding committee met four times in 2023. The purpose of their meetings is to review and support the work of the safeguarding office and to monitor the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2023-25. The committee is accountable to the Provincial Leader through their Annual Report.

### **Safeguarding Audits**

The completion of the Annual Safeguarding Audit assists with the evaluation of Safeguarding practices within the Charity. The 2023 Audit was completed in November 2023 showing 100% return from the province.

It confirmed that there are now no members involved in ministry with children. Sisters are now more and more involved in the care of other aging members who themselves are deemed vulnerable adults requiring support and assistance.

### **Safeguarding Training**

Safeguarding Personnel attended the following training sessions in 2023:

24th May - Risk Assessment and Local Audits.

28th June - Case Management and Supporting Complainants and Respondents.

25th July - Information on draft Child Safeguarding Policy.

6<sup>th</sup> September – Clara Learning – what constitutes a safeguarding concern?

6<sup>th</sup> September – Committee Training by Niall Moore NBSCII

14th November - Ecclesiastical Area meeting.

29th November - International Safeguarding Ministry

### **Safeguarding Adults**

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has revised the Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy. The policy applies to all sisters in the four Irish provinces of the Congregation, resident in the republic and to employees and volunteers in our places of residence and ministry. However, it remains in draft form while we await the completion of our governance restructuring.

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The Charity has contracted management companies for the large residences across the province. Staff are employed by each company to look after the catering, care and accommodation needs of the

sisters. All staff are vetted and comply with the safeguarding policy of the relevant company which is in line with that of the Sisters of Mercy.

In 2023 ministry with adults was included in the Audit. 14 sisters undertake direct Mercy ministry with adults. Most of the ministry relates to care of our own members. 42 sisters are involved in external ministry with adults.

In **Peru**, three sisters form the safeguarding committee. They ensure that all sisters are aware of procedures and protocols. Dr Dayana Pino has overall responsibility for safeguarding training. In 2023 training workshops were held for Care Mothers in the care centres.

#### **Safeguarding Communication**

The Trustees recognise the importance of ensuring that sisters and staff are kept informed of best practice and developments in relation to safeguarding. Safeguarding information and updates were provided through our Province Newsletter - "Province Life", through a dedicated Safeguarding Newsletter and at meetings with cluster leaders during 2023.

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### ***D. Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Buildings***

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#### **Mercy Archives**

The purpose of the archives service in the province is to ensure that a record of the life of the sisters in the province, their mission and ministries is preserved. The Mercy Story links into the Irish social history of the last 200 years particularly in the areas of education, nursing, religious education, prison chaplaincy and social work with a particular focus on the disadvantaged in society. One member of the Charity works in the provincial archives office. Throughout the province several members help through the writing of annals, personal memoirs, oral recordings and the collection of archival material. Other members work on specific projects for example researching and writing up the history of particular foundations, events or ministries.



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### Provincial Heritage Centre, Charleville, Co. Cork



### Provincial Heritage Centre

The Mercy Heritage Centre in Charleville is housed in the former choir and public chapel of the Convent of Mercy, which were transformed into the Provincial Heritage Centre in 2005. The location was chosen because it is the oldest convent in the province having been founded by Catherine McAuley herself in 1836. One sister currently works in the centre.

2023 was the busiest year ever in the Heritage Centre. The guest book recorded 1,680 visitors.

*Who were these visitors?* They ranged in age from children as young as 7 to “golden oldies” in their 90s. Among them were researchers, lace makers, active retired, members of groups e.g. Conradh na Gaeilge, Exodus 90, Circles of Mercy, Home for the Harvest, sheltered housing, day care centres, nursing homes, women’s groups, members of historical and heritage societies, librarians, poets, past pupils, relations and friends of our deceased sisters, pupils from the infant school, primary schools, secondary schools, college students, local people and their visitors.

*Where did they come from?* America, South Africa, Oman, New Zealand, Paris, Paraguay, Peru, England, Scotland, Fiji, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Japan and Ireland.

A great attraction in the Heritage Centre is the variety of exhibitions set up throughout the year by the curator Bernadette Maria Knopek RSM.

These exhibitions usually mark liturgical seasons e.g. Christmas, Feasts of St Brigid, St Patrick, Halloween and Mission Sunday. The tours and talks she gives are adapted to the needs and interests of the many and varied visitors. In 2023 the Fabric and Lace Display was the focus for a group of visitors from Paris. Another group of lace makers spent a day in the centre, and they described the experience as “inspirational, wonderful and absolutely gorgeous.” Over 30 lacemakers, from all over Ireland, came for a two-day workshop in September. Those who hadn’t been there before were amazed at the wealth of patterns and samples of lace, tatting and crochet on display and in storage.

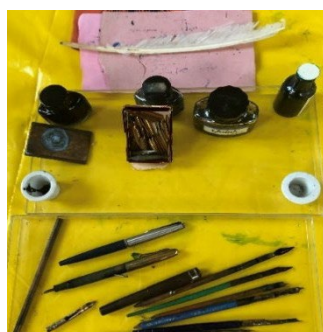
# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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**We the Traditional lacemakers of Ireland had a great day in Charleville Heritage centre with Bernadette. Many more days like this planned. Research, repair and remake days ahead.**



First Holy Communion and Confirmation classes came for sacramental preparation as they do each year in May.

School books and teaching aids of bygone days proved very interesting. Wide eyed with wonder many pupils and young teachers were amazed at how school has changed over the decades. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to those gone before us who didn't discard the outdated resources which we now enjoy.

Groups from outside of Ireland who came to trace their mercy roots in Charleville in 2023:

Members of the McAuley School of Nursing in Detroit came to hear the story of our foundation and ministries. One lady wrote it was "an awesome experience"



A group of Young Mercy Leaders and their teacher came from South Africa and spent a day, all were very enthusiastic about Mercy.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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### Listed Buildings:

The province owns six buildings listed on the planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Protected structures are considered to be of specific interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical importance to society. Three convents located in Co Cork, and one in each of counties Kerry, Kilkenny and Waterford are listed buildings which the charity is obliged to maintain. The Charity is legally required to ensure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm. Certain repair works that are normally routine on a building, may require planning permission on a protected structure. Additional expenditure is incurred in sourcing expertise and materials for the renovation of listed buildings. During 2023 the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province incurred a cost of €464,070 in respect of these protected structures and heritage assets. This cost included areas such as insurance, maintenance, professional fees, general upkeep and depreciation.

Cemeteries are also a focus of care. The Charity aims to keep all cemeteries under its jurisdiction in good condition.



**Convent of Mercy, Charleville**

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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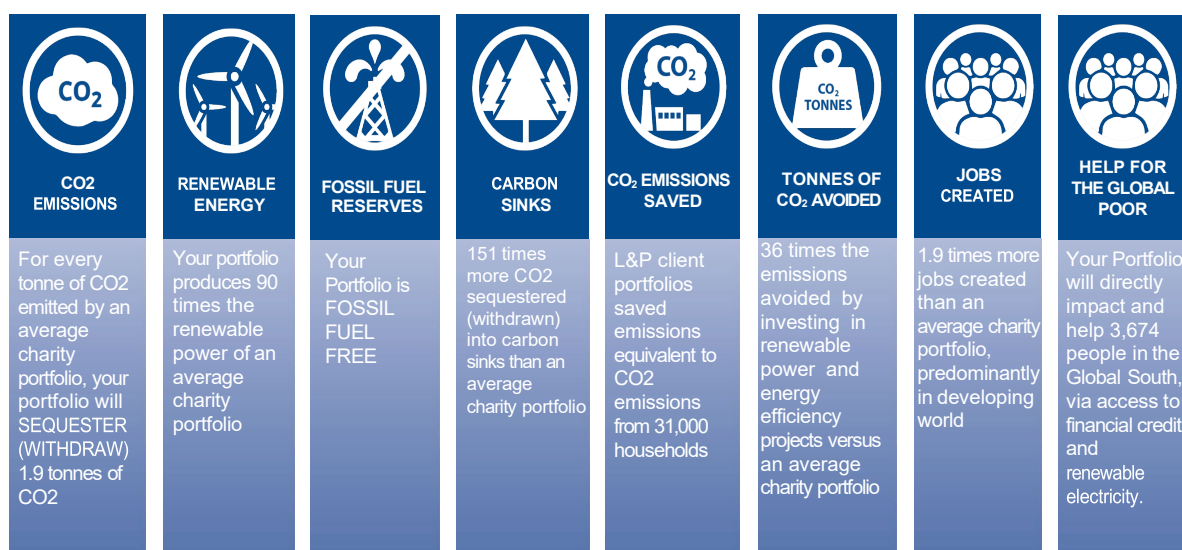
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

### **E. Positive Impact Investing**

We view our investment portfolio as part of our Mission. Alongside our active Ministries, we seek to bring about change through positive impact investing in our investment portfolios. Additionally, our investment portfolio avoids investments deemed to be harmful, such as investments in fossil fuel companies or armaments companies. Avoiding these types of investments is an important step in ensuring that our investment portfolio is not involved in harmful activities.

While avoiding harmful activities is important, we believe that it is even more important to use our investments to bring about positive change in the world. We therefore seek to investment in activities that have beneficial impacts, for both individual wellbeing and for the environment.

We assess these positive impacts under a number of headings that we believe are important measures of how our investments are positively affecting the world around us. Below are some of the positive impacts achieved by the investment portfolio:



### **The Portfolio and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

All of the investments within the Portfolio contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are goals developed and adopted by all member states of the United Nations to achieve “a more sustainable future for all”. They represent a call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and promote prosperity and people’s wellbeing by 2030. The SDGs are as follow:

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Source: UN (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)

Additionally, the SDGs are closely aligned with the charitable objectives of religious organisations. Since the publication of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis has made a strong commitment to sustainable development. His appeal to “...every person living on this planet for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet”, provides a firm ethical foundation for actions that need to be taken urgently at all levels. Pope Francis’ speech ahead of the United Nations General Assembly’s formal adoption of the 17 SDGs gave further support to the ambitious and transformational vision of the goals.

To ensure alignment of the SDGs we use a comprehensive Ethical and Positive Impact screen which guarantees the Portfolio remains consistent with the ethos of the charity. The Portfolio currently excludes companies involved in the production of weapons, tobacco, alcohol, pornography, and activities such as gambling and embryonic stem cell research. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria complements the screening as it improves the overall ESG risk exposure of the Portfolio.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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### Environmental Impact

#### Overall Carbon Footprint



Measurement of carbon emissions is crucial to help us understand the role our investment portfolio plays in the climate crisis, while taking measures to address it. Limiting carbon emissions interacts with several SDGs, helping address Climate Action in particular. Climate justice is another aspect addressed in our portfolio, as climate change predominantly impacts those who've done the least to contribute to pollution and have less resources to deal with it. Therefore, control of carbon emissions in our portfolio also contributes to reducing poverty (SDG1), reducing inequality (SDG10) and preserving life on land (SDG15) and in the ocean (SDG14)

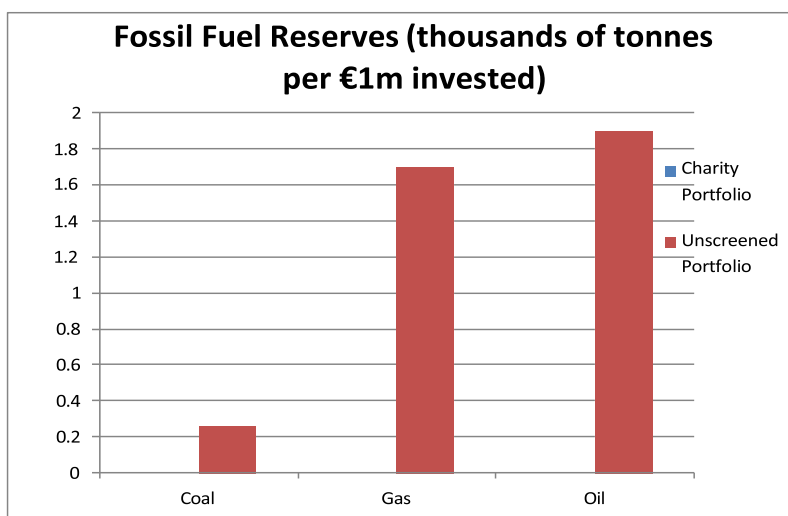
The Portfolio includes a number of carbon sink-type investments, which sequester or draw carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere. Forestry in particular is a very effective carbon sink, as trees absorb carbon dioxide as part of their growing process. Therefore, the presence of forestry funds means that any carbon emissions from the majority of the portfolio are effectively offset entirely by the forestry investments.

Put another way, this means that the Portfolio in aggregate will sequester (withdraw) -2,451 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e from the atmosphere per annum while an unscreened portfolio of the same size would produce c. 1,553 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. We believe that these extremely strong carbon emission statistics makes the Portfolio very much part of the solution to climate change, rather than part of the problem.

#### Fossil Fuel Reserves

Following the Trustees decision to entirely divest from fossil fuels in early 2017, the Portfolio now holds no fossil fuel reserves. The Portfolio ensures no exposure to companies that own thermal coal, oil gas reserves and other unconventional sources of reserves such as oil sands, shale oil, and shale gas. Many of these reserves will become "stranded" and may not be useable if we are to keep the targeted temperature rise (as a result of global warming) below 2 degrees Celsius. Hence, in addition to the impact, not holding these assets reduces the financial risk within the portfolio.

The chart below shows the fossil fuel reserves held by investments within the Portfolio across the major fossil fuels in comparison to an unscreened portfolio. As the chart shows, the Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves at all. This is a key metric to ensure that the Portfolio is not supporting fossil fuel activities that are diametrically opposed to the impact the Portfolio is trying to achieve elsewhere in the investments, namely promoting transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy.



**Chart showing the Charity's Investment Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves (no blue bar)**

### Renewable Energy

Given the importance of promoting renewable energy sources to address climate change, any investor interested in impact investing generally seeks a high level of renewable power output from their investment portfolio.

Within the Portfolio, renewable power is produced by a number of investments based in Ireland, Europe, the US and the developing world. We note some of the key impact metrics of these funds below:

#### Renewable Energy Fund

Renewable energy fund holding both onshore and offshore projects

- Energy for 300,000 houses per annum
- Avoids emissions of 400,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum
- 1,000,000 MWh of renewable power per annum



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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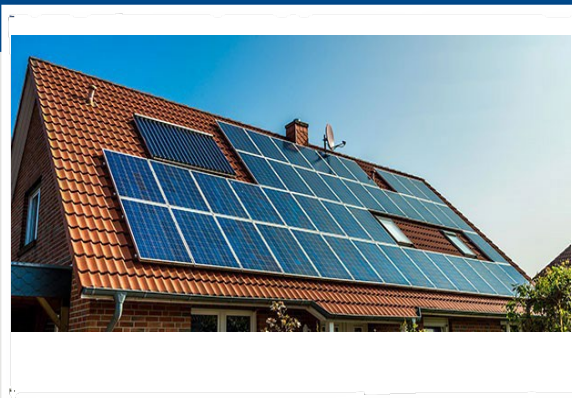
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### Solar Income Fund

Fund holding approx. 40 solar plants in Europe

- Energy for 150,000 houses per annum
- Avoids emissions of 162,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum
- 480,000 MWh of renewable power per annum



The benefit of generating renewable power can be measured by how much fossil fuel power (and resulting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) it replaces. In 2023, the Portfolio avoided the release of almost 1,932 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. This is equivalent to:

- Removing 417 cars from the roads every year
- 4,444 barrels of oil saved
- 1,609 acres of pine forest absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> for one year
- 213 round trips around the world by one typical passenger car (travelling at the equator).

In terms of renewable energy produced, the Portfolio produced 4,776 MWh in 2023, enough energy to power approx. 263 homes.

### ***Environmental Protection and Carbon Sequestration***

Environmental protection is a critical aspect of sustainability addressed by the Portfolio. The forestry investments within the Portfolio have a mandate to:

- Produce sustainable timber;
- Sequester carbon from the atmosphere;
- Protect natural resources and biodiversity of the area, in order to minimise the effect on the biodiversity and general environmental welfare.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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*The managers of the forestry investments in the portfolio review any new forest properties at the outset to record and maintain Biodiversity already present. They have also adopted an approach in their management to enhance biodiversity by planning linkage between features using corridors so that the biodiversity features on site are conserved and new features being created are all joined and form part of a biodiversity unit within each property. These features are measured and captured on the managers' geographic information system (GIS). A detailed biodiversity classification and ranking system is in place and enhancement targets are being set to enrich diversification in fauna and flora throughout the portfolio.*

### Social Impact

#### Job Creation



Providing employment is one of the best methods of reducing poverty, and therefore it has a number of positive beneficial effects across the SDGs, from poverty reduction (SDG1) to providing Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8). As the majority of the jobs created by the impact investments are in the developing world and tend to favour women as much (if not more) than men, then job creation in these areas improves Gender Equality (SDG5) and Reduces Inequalities (SDG10), both between sexes and between the developed and developing regions of the world.

The Portfolio has a number of funds which provide job creation through their economic activity. The equity funds provide capital to companies that employ anywhere between hundreds to hundreds of thousands, and therefore additional capital from investors should enable these companies to create jobs, albeit that the job creation impact from additional investment in these typically large, established businesses is low. However, other funds that operate in the developing world tend to produce far higher job creation and comprise the majority of the additional jobs produced for the portfolio as a whole.

The new jobs created by an unscreened portfolio of the same size as the Portfolio would only create 17 new jobs, while the Portfolio helped create circa 31 direct jobs in 2023.

#### Homelessness Crisis

In Ireland, there were 13,000 homeless people in 2023, and an increase of over 250% of homeless families since 2015. Social housing in Ireland is therefore at crisis levels mainly due to limited supply of

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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residential property and a booming population (at the time of the report writing, the population in Ireland had reached 5 million, the highest level since 1851).

The portfolio now includes the New Haven Social Housing Fund which addresses this chronic shortage of housing for vulnerable groups in Ireland. The goals of the fund are shown below:

### Social Housing Fund

Innovative fund acquires properties for social housing purposes

- Provide €100m+ in long term capital to housing sector
- Target high ESG and sustainability standards
- 500+ new homes to be provided for social housing needs



## Financial Review

### Results for the year

A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 63 of this report.

### Income - where our income came from

Income for the year totalled €10,219,364:

- Donations & Legacies income of €8,012,670: the vast majority of this, €7,071,215 was the pension, salary and stipend income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province and donated to the Charity. The balance, €941,455 was a mixture of income received under the Charitable Donations Scheme, third party legacies, bequests, gifts, and insurance refunds and claims received.
- Investment Income of €164,817: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio and bank interest.
- Charitable activities of €113,911: was the refund received under the Charity Vat Compensation Scheme, rental income and grant income received.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

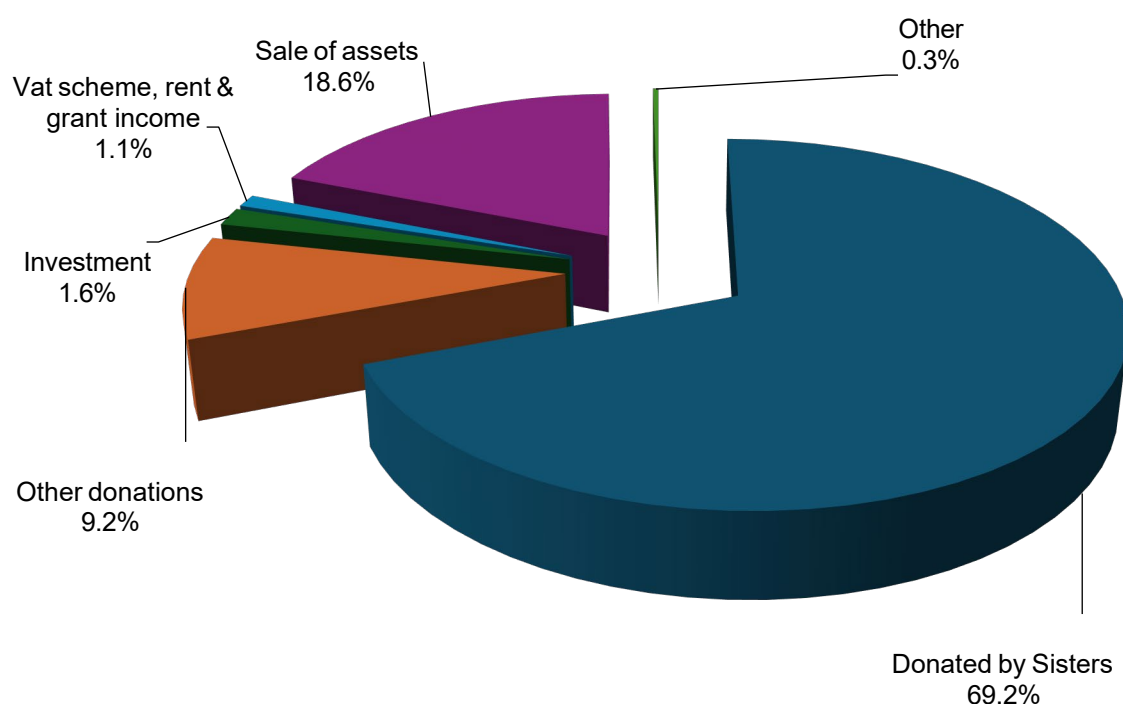
## TRUSTEES' REPORT

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- Surplus on sale of assets of €1,899,446: was the surplus received on the sale of property
- Other of €28,520: was other miscellaneous income received.

**Breakdown of Income**



#### **Expenditure - where the money is spent**

Total expenditure for the year was €12,079,305.

Charitable Activities - of the total, €11,972,087 or 99%, was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregational Living, the Advancement of Religion, €3,782,386: this includes the upkeep and up-skilling and retraining of the members of the Province. The members who receive salary, pension, stipend and retirement lump sum income donate them to the Charity and therefore have no independent means of support. They have devoted all of their adult years and their earnings to realize the objectives of the Charity. Many also give their services free in their various ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age. Hence the work of the Charity includes the provision of living accommodation, the upkeep, up-skilling and retraining of the members of the province so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public.

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- Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and Those in Need, €6,030,539: Catherine McAuley generated in her Sisters a deep concern and compassion for the sick and dying and today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of the members in the Province. The members of the Province are involved in this work in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, community care and within the Community houses. In addition, the Charity must care for the elderly members of the Province who are now themselves in need of care.
- Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and Other Charitable Activities, €1,651,589: this includes expenditure on a number of headings, including Promotion of all Aspects of Education, Justice, Peace & Reconciliation, Overseas Development and Support, Pastoral and Social Care and Development.
- Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Assets, €507,573: the Charity owns a number of protected structures. The structures are typically buildings that are listed on planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). By including them in the RPS, the importance of these structures is recognised; they are legally protected from harm and all future changes to the structure are controlled and managed through the development control process. The Charity is legally required to make sure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.

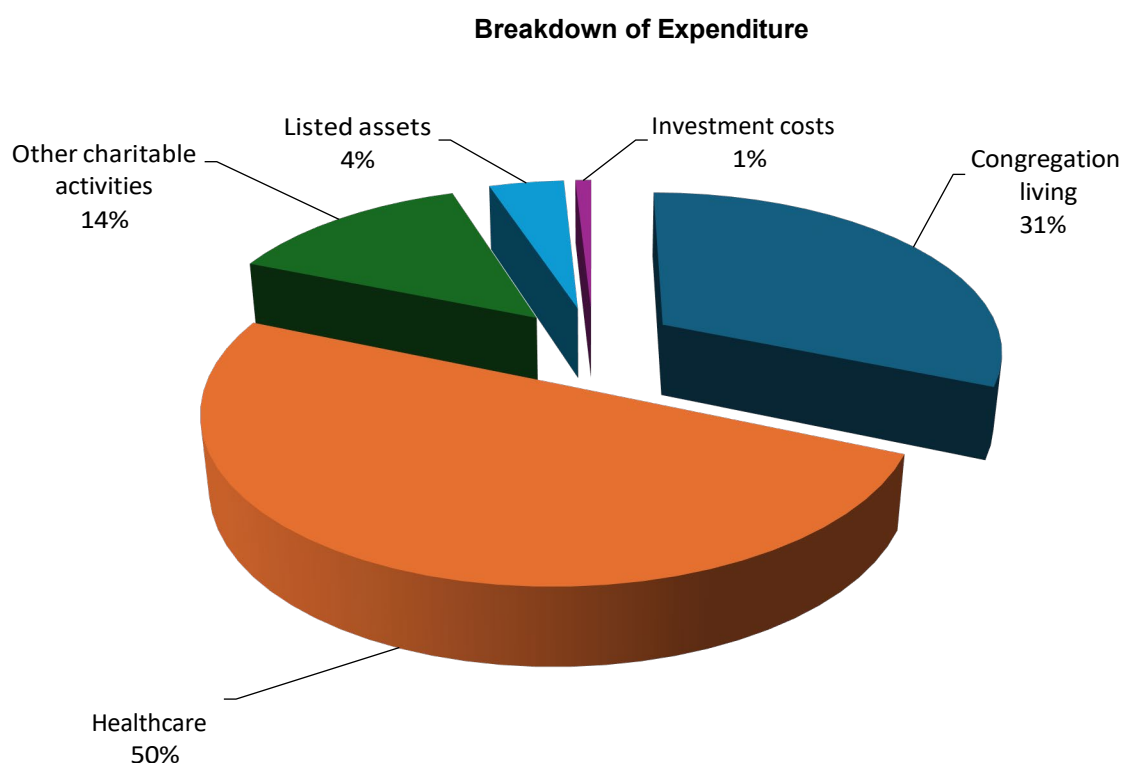
Investment costs – in the year, investment costs totalled €107,218.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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### Net Movement in Funds

Net expenditure for the year, therefore, was €1,859,941. This was before the gain on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net decrease in funds in the year of €1,403,143.

### Investments

At 31 December 2023, the Charity had investments of €18.2m. The purpose of these funds is to provide investment income to promote the charitable objectives of the Charity and to provide capital growth in the reserves over the medium term. The objective for the investments is to generate a return of 4% per annum while utilising the charity's stated ethical investment policy. L&P (Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland) act as a Discretionary Investment Manager.

The investment funds have an ethical investment screen; they exclude companies that fall foul of certain ethical criteria, and where possible, favour stocks that provide positive benefits to society. As noted earlier, the Charity also holds a number of Positive Impact Investments that direct money towards fulfilling certain positive ethical criteria.

The Trustees, with their investment advisors, review the investments on a regular basis.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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### Policy on Reserves

At the end of the financial year, the total funds of the charity amounted to €32.4m. Of this, €0.5m is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 20. Of the balance, €13.5m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another €18.0m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregational Living needs. Details are given in note 21 of these Financial Statements. The Trustees will continue to review and reassess these designations on an on-going basis.

Un-designated or general funds amount to €0.8m. This equates to less than 1 month of unrestricted charitable expenditure. The Trustees would like this to be higher as, given the nature of the Charity's work and its commitments, they consider the level of free reserves should be equal to approximately 6 to 12 months' expenditure.

### Review of the Charity's Objectives for 2023

Objectives Set	Progress Review
Continue its commitment to the ongoing care of all the sisters in the province whether they live independently, in communities or require full time care	Ongoing in consultation with cluster leaders, membership and management companies.
Modify the configuration of clusters and the model of cluster leadership in line with demographic changes in the Charity	The number of clusters was reduced from 11 to 7
Continue the implementation of strategic direction set in 2019 Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province	Ongoing
Facilitate and support the sisters in undertaking the activities of the Charity	Ongoing – See section on Activities of the Charity in this Report

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<p>Collaborate with the other provinces and region of the Congregation to implement the Holy See's response to the proposed changes to our structure and Constitutions</p>	<p>The revised Constitutions were approved by the Dicastery for Institute of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023</p>
<p>Work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs</p>	<p>Ongoing – See Section C of this Report: Alleviation of Poverty etc in Collaboration with and Support of Other Groups</p>
<p>Collaborate with Mercy Global Action and other Congregations in raising awareness in the areas of eco-justice, social justice and climate change</p>	<p>Ongoing – See this Report: Section on Activities</p>
<p>Work with and promote processes emanating from MIA, CLT, Pathways Group in the furtherance of the Mercy Mission</p>	<p>Throughout 2023 members were actively involved in various processes initiated by the Pathways Group in preparation for the Congregational Chapter.</p>
<p>Maintain the safeguarding structures at national and provincial level</p>	<p>Ongoing – Both the Safeguarding Committee and the Inhouse Team met regularly during 2023. See this Report</p>
<p>Continue to update the content and layout of the website</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Progress the transfer of trusteeship of the primary schools to the Diocese of Cork &amp; Ross, Cloyne, Waterford &amp; Lismore, Ferns and Ossory</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>Progress the transfer of the secondary schools to EDUCENA – Dungarvan and Waterford</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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### Charity Objectives for 2024

The Trustees of the Charity will actively engage in their roles and responsibilities (availing of training when necessary) in undertaking the administration of the Charity

<b>The Trustees Will:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Will continue to carry out all their obligations as Trustees of the Charity with the call of Chapter 24 forming the context for all plans and decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engage in the process of identifying and managing the legal aspects of the transaction which will see all of the assets, liabilities and activities of the Province transfer to one single, central congregational entity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work with and promote processes emanating from MIA, CLT, and any group yet to be formed for the furtherance of the Mercy Mission.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue their commitment to the ongoing care of all sisters in the province whether they live independently, in communities or require full time care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Collaborate with Mercy Global Action and other Congregations in raising awareness on areas of eco-justice, social justice and climate change.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Devise a process to consult membership prior to the appointment of Cluster leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain the safeguarding structures at national and provincial level.</li> </ul>



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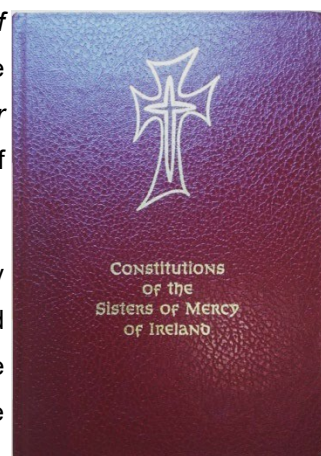
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Facilitate and support the sisters in undertaking the activities of the charity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Continue to update the content and layout of the website</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Engage with members about the Advanced Healthcare Directive.</li><li>➤ Present information and offer ongoing clarification to ensure members understand it is voluntary.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Progress the transfer of trusteeship of the primary schools to the dioceses of Cork and Ross, Cloyne, Waterford and Lismore, Ferns and Ossory.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Support Circles of Mercy and Encountering Mercy members and all who share with us in living the charism of mercy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Progress the transfer of the secondary schools in Dungarvan and Waterford to Educena.</li></ul>

### Structure, Governance and Management

#### Nature of Governing Document

The governing instrument of the Southern Province is the *Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy* which was adopted by the General Chapter of the Congregation in August 1994 and approved by the *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life* (Rome) in April 1995. The province is one of four provinces in Ireland and is an unincorporated association.

The governmental structure of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy involves a number of inter-connected units: local, provincial and congregational. The nature of the authority in each unit is described in the Constitutions. The province is a unit of the Congregation having the personnel and other resources to support its life, mission and membership.



#### Method Adopted for Appointing Trustees (Provincial Leadership Team)

The Charity is governed by the Provincial Leader and the Provincial Leadership Team who are elected every six years by members of the province. The Provincial Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity. Members of the Provincial Leadership Team are chosen for their expertise and skills as well as their experience and knowledge of the Congregation, its nature and mission.

The trustees are members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and as such their living and personal costs are borne by the charity. They receive no remuneration for their services as trustees.

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### **Organisational Structure & Decision Making**

The Provincial Leader and members of the Provincial Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity. With regard to decision-making, the Trustees take responsibility for the overall running of the Charity. The Trustees meet on a regular basis to review developments regarding the Charity and its activities. Every six years members are involved in a prolonged meeting – called a Chapter - a period of reflection/prayer, evaluation and planning with a focus on the development of policies and effective use of resources in an assessment of current and future needs.

Trustees attend formal training courses on the duties of Trustees and seek guidance and advice as necessary from their legal, investment and property advisors on the issues which arise in carrying out their duties. In addition, the Trustees have established a number of advisory groups. The function of these groups, whose membership includes various professional advisors, is to advise the Trustees on different aspects of stewardship and the general management of the assets of the Charity.

There are systems of accountability operational throughout the province. At the six yearly Chapter meeting General and Financial Reports are given to the members. The Provincial Treasurer is appointed by the Provincial Leader with the consent of her team. The Provincial Treasurer administers the affairs of the province under the direction of the Provincial Leader and her Team. The majority of the income of the Charity comes from sisters' salaries, stipends and pensions, sale of property and income from investments. The salary, stipend and pension income is voluntarily donated to a common fund, administered through the Provincial Stewardship Office. Sale of properties and income from investment provide additional income.

### **Risk Management**

The Trustees undertake a full risk assessment exercise on an annual basis and monitor progress on a half-yearly basis. This process is supported by our financial advisors, who work closely with the Trustees in these areas. The Trustees identified the following as being the principal risks to which the Charity is exposed:

- Governance and Management.
- Operational.
- Financial.
- Laws, regulation, external and environment.

**Governance & Management** risks are named as possibility of lack of decisive direction, at whether the skills and training of the members and staff are adequate, and whether the good use of its resources is optimum.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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**Operational** risk looks at the risks inherent in the charity's activities including the operation of its Assisted Living Houses – and the risk of any members being engaged in inappropriate activities, possible unsuitability of buildings, poor maintenance, shortcomings in the services provided, difficulties with staff and poor health and safety guidelines.

**Financial** risk includes those arising as a result of poor budgetary control, inappropriate spending, poor accounting and inappropriate investment policies.

**Laws, regulations, external & environment** look at the effects of government policies, the consequences of non-compliance with the laws and regulations, and poor risk assessment.

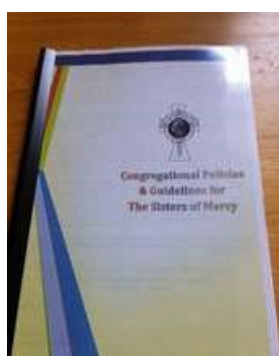
Having assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed the Trustees believe that they have established effective systems to mitigate the risks:

- obtaining appropriate professional advice,
- monitoring, and where appropriate insuring the operational and business risks faced by the charity, and
- developing policies, procedures, systems and controls.

The Trustees are assisted in the above by financial advisors, various committees which consider the management of appropriate risks, including the Property Advisory and Financial Advisory Groups.

There have been no other significant events affecting the charity since the financial year end.

### Policies



The Trustees, in collaboration with Congregational Leadership Team ensure that policies and good practice guidelines are developed, circulated and implemented and that these are regularly evaluated and updated. The Trustees have taken steps to ensure that the Charity is fully compliant with all legislative requirements.

Since the mid 1990's the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has had a safeguarding policy which has been revised regularly. The policy aims to encourage adequate awareness and best practice among all members of the Congregation, and those working for them, to ensure that all children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from abuse of any kind. The Charity is committed to a culture of safeguarding and to ensuring compliance with best practice in this area. The Trustees are proactive in complying with civil and ecclesiastical requirements for safeguarding in the Republic of Ireland. The Trustees review annually the implementation of its Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

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The Charity has further policies and guidelines on Stewardship, Health and Safety, Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons (still in draft form), Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption.

### Property

*“For the sake of our mercy mission, the congregation and each province has the right to acquire and possess, to administer and alienate property temporal goods and revenues according to the norms of universal law and these constitutions, with due respect for civil law”*

(Cons. 119, 1995)

*“We value the resources of the earth as gifts of God and use them in a spirit of stewardship ... In the spirit of religious poverty we seek to have a simple life-style and to balance concern for our future with support and compassion for poor and needy people.”*

(Cons. 118 1995)

We are committed to a lifestyle reflecting the fact that all our possessions are held in trust for the mission of the Congregation. As property trustees we aim to promote the mission, addressing our own needs and those of the wider community.

The relevant professional advice is taken into account in the areas of leases and agreements, protected structures, planning, health and safety legislation, acquisition, refurbishment and disposal of property and all legally binding issues and transactions.

The province has a Property Advisory Group to give advice and make recommendations on issues relating to property when requested by the Provincial Leadership Team. It also ensures that the Property Register is kept up to date.

Membership of the committee includes:

- Members of the Provincial Leadership Team
- Property Coordinator
- Provincial Treasurer
- Provincial Financial Controller
- Property, legal, financial and technical advisors.

They advise and make recommendations to the Provincial Leader and Team, who decide on the course of action to be taken.

Properties are currently held in the Sisters of Mercy (Southern Province) Property Holding CLG.

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### Companies

The following charitable companies were established and founded by the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province:

Mercy Care South

Huruma CLG T/A Wellsprings

Tabor Lodge Addiction and Housing Services CLG Welcome Immigrant Centre

CLG T/A Welcome English.

The Trustees support the work of the respective Boards and engage and meet with them on a regular basis through their Trustee representative and at the annual general meetings of the respective companies. The importance of good corporate governance has been to the forefront in the companies since they were established which is fully supported by the Trustees.

The Trustees also support the charitable companies through the provision of outsourced company secretarial services, which provides additional support to the respective Chairperson and the Boards and ensures that each company fulfils its statutory duty and fully complies with the law. In line with best practise, each Board and the Company Secretary work together to ensure that the Board conducts its duties with the highest standards of governance.

The Sisters of Mercy Southern Province own the properties from which the majority of these companies operate. In many cases, these properties are leased to the companies rent free which allows the companies to channel their resources into the provision of the services in line with their charitable activities and initiate new projects, which ultimately benefits the patients, clients and service users.

### Appreciation

The Trustees wish to record their recognition of the professionalism and commitment of all their staff, volunteers and the individual members of the province and Congregation. Their dedication and positive approach are very much appreciated.

**The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.**

**Sr. Brid Biggane**  
Trustee

**Sr. Eileen O'Flynn, Provincial Leader**  
Trustee

**Dated: 11 September 2024**

**Dated: 11 September 2024**