



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

Hierarchy General
Purposes Trust

Annual Report 2023

Financial Year Ended
31 Dec 2023



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

The Hierarchy General Purposes Trust is the registered charitable trust through which the work of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference is implemented.

Our Mission

The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (also known as the Irish Episcopal Conference) is the assembly of the Bishops of Ireland exercising together certain pastoral offices for Christ's faithful on the whole island of Ireland.

The Bishops' Conference enables the Bishops to exchange views, and share their wisdom and experience in order to promote the common good of the Church in Ireland. General Meetings of the Bishops' Conference normally take place on a quarterly basis.

The Bishops' Conference seeks to build effective consensus among the Bishops, thereby contributing to the unity of the Church in communion with Pope Francis. Through its links with the Church in neighbouring countries and across the world, it strengthens and enriches efforts to increase faith and proclaim the Gospel message to all nations. At the same time, the Conference fully respects the personal authority, responsibility and ministry of each individual Bishop within his own diocese.



Contents

Trustees and Other Information

Report of the Trustees

Independent Auditors Report

Statement of Financial Activities

Balance Sheet

Cashflow Statement

Notes to the Financial Statements



Trustees and Other Information

TRUSTEES

- + Eamon Martin (President)
- + Dermot Farrell (Vice-President)
- + Francis Duffy (Episcopal Secretary)
- + Kieran O'Reilly SMA
- + Ger Nash (Finance Secretary)
- + Raymond Browne
- + Niall Coll (appointed 22 January 2023)
- + Paul Connell (appointed 18 June 2023)
- + William Creadon
- + Alphonsus Cullinan
- + Thomas Deenihan
- + Paul Dempsey (ceased as trustee 10 April 2024)
- + Kevin Doran
- + Lawrence Duffy
- + Michael Duignan
- + John Fleming (retired 10 April 2024)
- + Fintan Gavin
- + Martin Hayes
- + Brendan Leahy
- + Alan McGuckian SJ
- + Fintan Monahan
- + Denis Nulty
- + Donal McKeown

Monsignor Kevin Gillespie, Diocesan Administrator (appointed 20 March 2024)

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Monsignor Joseph McGuinness

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COUNCIL

- + Ger Nash (Finance Secretary)
- + John Fleming (retired 10 April 2024)
- + Michael Duignan (ceased as a member 2 May 2023)
- + Thomas Deenihan (appointed 2 May 2023)

Stephen Costello
Sean O'Dwyer

Anthony Harbinson
Aideen McGinley
Brian McEnery
Daire Hogan
Teresa Harrington (resigned 9 October 2023)
Geraldine McWeeney (appointed 8 November 2023)

CHARITY NUMBER

CHY5956

CHARITY REGULATOR NUMBER

20009861

PRINCIPAL OFFICE

Columba Centre
Saint Patrick's College
Maynooth
Co. Kildare
W23 P6D3

AUDITORS

Crowe Ireland
Chartered Accountants and Statutory
Audit Firm
40 Mespil Road, Dublin 4

BANKERS

AIB Bank plc

INVESTMENT MANAGERS

Davy Group
49 Dawson Street, Dublin 2

SOLICITORS

Mason Hayes & Curran
South Bank House, Barrow Street, Dublin 4



Trustees Report

The Trustees present their annual report and the financial statements of the Hierarchy General Purposes Trust (HGPT) for the year ended 31 December 2023.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution

The Hierarchy General Purposes Trust was established on 12 December 1975 as a registered charity (20009861). The Trust's governing document is the Trust Deed. In line with the requirements of the Charities Act, and as an aspect of good governance, this Trust Deed was updated and was approved by the Charities Regulator on 28 April 2017. The updated Trust Deed expanded the number of Trustees, to include all Diocesan Bishops (including Apostolic Administrators and Diocesan Administrators) of each Roman Catholic Diocese on the island of Ireland.

Principal aims

The Trust was established to assist the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (also known as the Irish Episcopal Conference) in exercising its collective responsibility for pastoral care, teaching and governance of the Catholic Church.

Trustees

The Trustees are all Diocesan Bishops (including Apostolic Administrators and Diocesan Administrators) of each Roman Catholic Diocese on the island of Ireland.

Governance

The governance of the HGPT is accomplished through the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. This is the assembly of the Bishops of Ireland and the Conference normally meets in plenary session on a quarterly basis. The current membership of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference comprises the bishops (or Diocesan Administrators) of the 26 dioceses of Ireland together with auxiliary bishops. The Trustees are all Diocesan Bishops (including Apostolic Administrators and Diocesan Administrators) of each Roman Catholic Diocese on the island of Ireland.

To help it fulfil its aims more effectively, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has also established five Episcopal Commissions, comprising various Councils together with other agencies and bodies which focus on specific tasks and areas of responsibility to fulfil the mission of the Church. The day-to-day operations of Conference are overseen by a secretariat based in Maynooth, County Kildare.

The financial oversight of the HGPT is supported by the Finance and General Purposes Council (FGPC), comprising the Chairperson (Bishops' Finance Secretary), and two other appointed bishop members and seven appointed voluntary lay members. The FGPC meets on a quarterly basis and all members of this Council (in line with all other Councils) are appointed for a three-year term by the bishops at a general meeting.



Risk assessment

A Risk Management Committee meets quarterly to monitor and review current risks and where necessary to update the risk register.

This committee reports annually to the Trustees, who assess the major risks to which the charity is exposed. In particular, this relates to specific operational risk areas to the charity, by identifying and ranking risks in terms of their potential impact and likelihood.

The Trustees believe that by monitoring and examining the operational risks faced by the charity, that they are developing appropriate management strategies, and are establishing effective systems to mitigate these risks.

Relations with other charitable organisations

As the HGPT is the administrative and legal vehicle for the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, it has close links with the diocesan charities throughout Ireland, through which the annual diocesan contributions towards the funding of the Bishops' Conference are provided. The Trust relates to the charities of religious congregations within the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI), particularly through its provision of the administrative, human resource and financial management for the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Bishops' Conference, through its HGPT, is also a sponsoring body of the charity Towards Healing, the Church's counselling and support service for survivors of abuse and their families. Towards Healing is a company limited by guarantee.

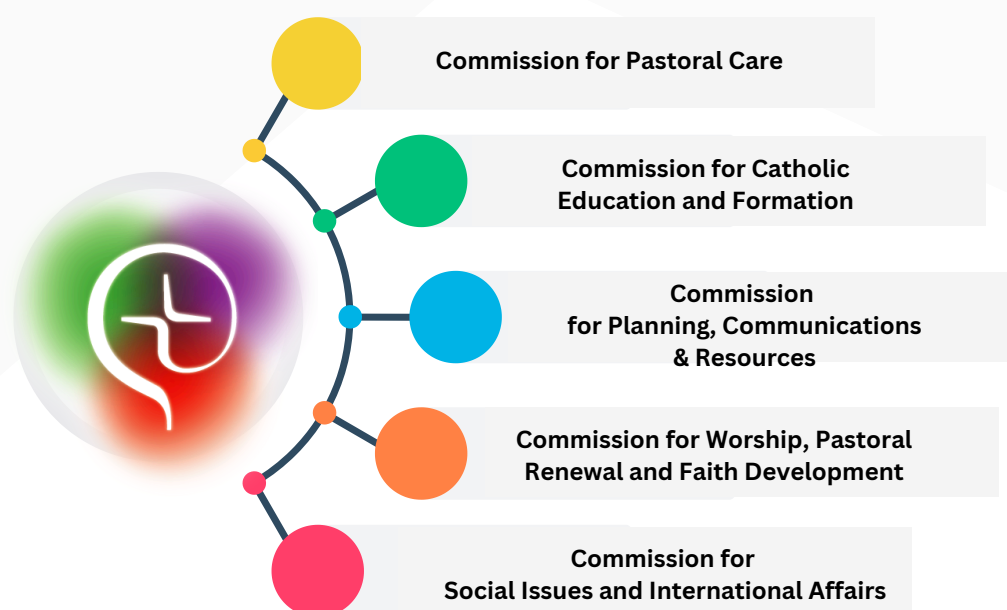
The HGPT also relates closely to those agencies of the Bishops' Conference that exist as independent charities, including Veritas; Trócaire; the Overseas Development Agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland and, the trustee companies on the island comprising Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service.



OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In order to fulfil its charitable aims and objectives, the activities of the Hierarchy General Purposes Trust are determined by the requirements of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The five constituent Commissions of the Bishops' Conference, outlined below, broadly identify for the bishops the current areas of pastoral activity that optimally support the pastoral work of the twenty-six dioceses on the island of Ireland in their witness to the Gospel in the contemporary world.



Public benefit

The details of individual projects that are of public benefit are outlined below. The work of the HGPT, through the pastoral outreach of the Bishops' Conference, contributes to the sum of public knowledge through media engagement and by publishing resources, promoting initiatives, and by raising public awareness in the media, on its website (www.catholicbishops.ie) and via the digital media platforms of the Conference. The objective of all of this work is to support Catholic life in Ireland.

The Trustees have been cognisant of general guidance on public benefit when reviewing their aims and objectives in planning their future activities. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set. Through the work of these five commissions and their councils and

agencies - as detailed below - the Trust, in line with Church teaching, seeks to ensure the moral and spiritual wellbeing of the individual, and to help discern the common good for all of society.



COMMISSION FOR PASTORAL CARE

This Commission is chaired by Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare & Leighlin. The purpose of the Commission for Pastoral Care is to facilitate collaboration in order to serve the strategic objectives of its fourteen constituent parts and to make recommendations to the Bishops' Conference.

Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service

Accord on the island of Ireland comprises three autonomous incorporated companies limited by guarantee: Accord Northern Ireland; Accord Dublin; and Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service CLG. This latter company oversees the work of Accord Central Office in Maynooth and centres in the Republic of Ireland outside of the Archdiocese of Dublin. Each company is a registered charity and publishes its own annual report.

Council for Life

The Council for Life was established by the Conference in March 2019 with Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin as its chair. Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore is also a member. There are nine other members, all but one of whom are members of the lay faithful with a wide variety of expertise. The Council serves as a resource for the bishops in responding to questions relating to respect for human life at all stages from conception to natural death. It serves as a liaison between the Bishops and groups both in Ireland and abroad which support life. The Council facilitates the annual *Day for Life* initiative and the annual Pray for Life Novena. It has made various submissions to Government and to the Oireachtas in relation to End of Life Care, Assisted Suicide and the Review of the Health (Termination of Pregnancy) Act. The Council also promotes its work on Twitter @ChooseLifeIRL and on its website: www.chooselife.ie



Consultative Group on Bioethics

The Consultative Group on Bioethics is chaired by Bishop Kevin Doran and relates closely with the Council for Life and the Council for Healthcare. Building on the work of the previous Bishops' Committee for Bioethics, the Consultative Group briefs the Conference on questions relating to Bioethics and the Ethics of Healthcare. It maintains a close working relationship with the Anscombe Centre for Bioethics. Following the publication of the *Code of Ethical Standards for Healthcare (Veritas, December 2017)*, the Consultative Group has been working to develop an academic module on Christian Bioethics, which would be based on the code of ethical standards and would be of benefit to healthcare professionals and other interested parties. The module is now being offered online by St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Towards Peace

Established in 2014 by the Episcopal Conference and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland, Towards Peace is a response to a request from a number of survivors to provide a spiritual support service for people who have experienced physical, emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse perpetrated by representatives of the Catholic Church in Ireland, either on an individual basis or in institutions. For more information see below under *Initiatives complementing the pastoral work of the Trustees*, subsection 'Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland'.



Council for Healthcare

The Council for Healthcare, chaired by Bishop Michael Router, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Armagh, was established by the Bishops' Conference in 2014. Bishop Ray Browne of Kerry is also a member. The Council keeps abreast of developments in policy and practice within healthcare; the ongoing challenges to Catholic healthcare facilities; and the challenges encountered by Catholic healthcare professionals. It actively promotes the *New Charter for Healthcare Workers (Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Healthcare Workers: 2017)* and the *Code of Ethical Standards for Healthcare (2017)*.

The Council also promotes chaplaincy as an essential ministry for the provision of holistic care within healthcare facilities, it maintains appropriate engagement with statutory agencies and other stakeholders within healthcare in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, and it promotes and supports the annual celebration of World Day of the Sick.

The Council is currently researching the involvement of the Church in healthcare, with a view to formulating a proposed position for the future of the Church in healthcare. The research is being conducted in partnership with The Centre for Mission and Ministry at Saint Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth.

The Healthcare Chaplaincy Board (HCB) is under the auspices of, and accountable to, the Council for Healthcare.

The role of the HCB is to:

- (i) Set standards for certification, to administer the certification process for Catholic healthcare chaplains and to organise a Mass and Presentation of Certificates to newly certified healthcare chaplains in Saint Mary's Oratory and Saint Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth. In 2023, it took place on the 14 June;
- (ii) Negotiate with educational institutions regarding the availability of theological education and pastoral formation that meets the standards for chaplain certification;
- (iii) Set Standards for the Accreditation/Re-Accreditation of Clinical Pastoral Education

(CPE) Programmes at the Mater University Hospital, Dublin, Cork University Hospital and Kerry University Hospital, and facilitate the process of accreditation for CPE programmes at these three hospitals; and,

(iv) to monitor compliance with continuing professional development requirements for chaplains.

The HCB also administers a bursary worth €75,000, which it received from the Bon Secours Healthcare System. The purpose of the grant is to enable the HCB to assist with the theological education and pastoral formation of Catholic healthcare chaplains who will minister within healthcare in Ireland. Having this bursary is a positive development for the HCB and offers the opportunity to bring healthcare chaplaincy to a new level. Currently, there are not enough qualified chaplains available to fill vacant chaplain positions.

The Support Network for Catholic Healthcare Chaplains (SNCHC) is an initiative of the Council for Healthcare. Bishop Ray Browne of Kerry is the liaison bishop for the Network with the Episcopal Conference. National and regional meetings are organised through the Network to provide ongoing theological and pastoral development for chaplains, and to facilitate pastoral reflection and peer support. Some activities were conducted online during the year. The Annual SNCHC conference was an in-person event in Dublin on 19 October.



Council for Marriage and the Family

The Council for Marriage and the Family (CMF) assists the Bishops' Conference in its service to marriage and family life. Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare & Leighlin is chair and Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin is vice-chair of the Council.

During 2023, the Council continued to embed the Universal Synod and the concurrent Irish Synodal Pathway into every aspect of the work of the Council. The Council was updated on the work of the National Steering Committee on the twin themes of 'Synodality as a Process' and 'Synodality as a Style'. The council were encouraged to be a voice for couples and families, to those who are seeking to live the Sacrament of marriage and also to those who are struggling.

The Council is informed on the work of the many ecclesial movements, some of whom are represented on the Council, and others who are invited occasionally to offer presentations. The Council worked throughout 2023 to design a flyer *Marriage Movements Accompanying Couples* which offers a synopsis of all these movements and their charism and contact details, an invaluable resource for couples. The Council took a keen interest in the development of the revised *Marriage Preparation Programme* by Accord, which is being offered across the island to couples preparing for the sacrament.



The fifth anniversary of the IX World Meeting of Families, which took place in Dublin in 2018, and included a visit by the Holy Father Pope Francis, was marked by a number of initiatives encouraged by the Council. The highlight of this anniversary was Mass celebrated by Archbishop Dermot Farrell in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin on 27 August. A number of programmes were uploaded by RTÉ on its Player Platform during the week of the anniversary - some of them included unseen aerial footage.

The Third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was marked on 23 July with celebrations across the country. Bishop Nulty was main celebrant at the Knock ceremony. Dioceses and parishes were resourced by the CMF to mark both the fifth Anniversary of the Dublin WMOF and the third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.



Bishop Denis Nulty at celebration for the Third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

During the year the CMF heard of the excellent outreach by a Polish Chaplain and his team in the area of family evangelisation. This included hearing from a young married father about how he lives his faith in an often hostile or indifferent peer environment. The CMF continued to explore how the council might promote and make better use of *The Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*. The Council was represented at the CCEE Meeting in Bucharest in May on the theme 'Lord, how can we know the way? The Family in Europe today', at a Domestic Abuse Awareness Day in September and at a Synodal Reflection Day on Families in Northern Ireland, also in September.

During 2023, the CMF sadly lost valuable members who passed onto their eternal reward, including former Chair of the Council (2013-2016) Bishop Liam MacDaid and long-time committed member Trish Conway. May they rest in peace.



A number of members who gave great service to the Council took the opportunity to retire during 2023, while we warmly welcomed new members joining. The Council continues to play an important role in advocating on behalf of marriage and the family and supporting the IEC in its work, an example of that, is preparing for the constitutional referendums on family and care, that was scheduled for 8 March 2024.

Council for Emigrants

Bishop Dempsey of Achonry (Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dublin, from 10 April 2024) is chair of the Council for Emigrants. The work of the Council is the pastoral response of the Bishops' Conference to the needs of Irish emigrants prior to and following departure. It is particularly committed to the needs of the most vulnerable emigrant groups. In large part, through the work of the chaplaincies and apostolates in the United States and Britain, and in conjunction with the host Church, it seeks to provide practical and pastoral support to Irish emigrant communities. Parish resources are provided annually as well as grant funding to organisations working with Irish emigrants.



Bishop Paul Dempsey celebrating mass with Irish emigrants on a recent Pastoral visit to the United States

Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) is a sub-committee of the Council for Emigrants. The ICPO provides information, support and advocacy to Irish people in prison overseas and to their families. The ICPO works with approximately 1,100 Irish prisoners in approximately thirty countries around the world. With offices in Maynooth and London, the ICPO seeks to address the needs and concerns of prisoners on a wide variety of matters including, repatriation, deportation, post-release supports, hardship fund support and prison visits. ICPO also engages in advocacy at a national and international level on issues affecting their clients.

Council for Immigrants, Refugees and Migrants

Bishop Michael Duignan of Clonfert is chair of this Council, which develops and fosters initiatives for the pastoral care of immigrants among the dioceses and parishes of Ireland. It identifies immigrant communities within a local setting, recognises their needs and develops pastoral outreach strategies to engage with, support and integrate immigrant communities into dioceses and local parishes throughout Ireland.

Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative (IBDI)

The liaison bishop to the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative is Bishop Michael Router, Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh. The IBDI is the pastoral response of the Bishops' Conference to assist parish communities in raising awareness and developing an informed outreach to help address the issue of drugs and alcohol at a local level. To achieve its objectives, the IBDI provides bespoke information, education and training, as well as offering alternative activities to avoid substance misuse.

In 2023, the podcast series *Leave Your Mark* continued in partnership with schools and agencies.

Chaplaincy to the Defence Forces

On occasion, the Head Chaplain to the Defence Forces in Ireland makes a presentation to the meeting of the Commission for Pastoral Care.

Apostleship of the Sea

Bishop Dempsey is the designated liaison bishop to the Apostleship of the Sea.

Chaplaincy for Deaf People

The Chaplaincy for Deaf people, which is an autonomous and separate charity in its own right has a designated liaison bishop, Bishop Ray Browne of Kerry.

Irish Prisons Chaplains Team (IPCT)

Bishop Martin Hayes is the liaison bishop to the Irish Prisons Chaplains Team. Periodically, a member of the IPCT makes a presentation to the Commission for Pastoral Care.



COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL ISSUES AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

In March 2023, Bishop Alan McGuckian, (now Bishop of Down and Connor, 2 February 2024) and Chair of the Council for Justice & Peace, was elected Chair of this Commission, in succession to Archbishop Noel Treanor, now Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union. The Commission comprises the Council for Justice and Peace, with the Northern Ireland Catholic Council on Social Affairs (NICCOSA); Trócaire, a registered charity in its own right; the Council for Missions; and the Council for Europe. The purpose of the Commission is to facilitate collaboration in order to serve the strategic objectives of its four constituent parts and to make recommendations to the Irish Episcopal Conference. During the year the Commission held three meetings and received a range of presentations on matters relevant to its remit.

Council for Justice & Peace and the Northern Ireland Catholic Council on Social Affairs/NICCOSA)

The Council for Justice & Peace is chaired by Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ and Bishop Kevin Doran and Bishop Martin Hayes are also members. The Council's remit is to promote justice and peace related issues in the public forum. The Council's role is to advise the Bishops' Conference and its commissions, agencies and councils, on justice and peace issues and on the social dimension of the Sacred Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching.

Key activities of the Council during 2023 included engagement on a range of economic and social issues nationally and internationally, representing the Bishops' Conference at COMECE Social Affairs Commission meetings, working with Justice and Peace Europe, and liaising with the Holy See Dicastery for Integral Human Development. The Council also works closely with the *Laudato Si'* Working Group, and Trócaire, regarding the care of creation and climate justice. During 2023, the Council made submissions on housing and homelessness, the cost of living crisis, migrants rights, human trafficking and slavery, as well as the effects of gambling.

The Council works closely with the Council for Immigrants and others in advocating for the rights and dignity of refugees and people seeking asylum in Ireland due to war and oppression.

NICCOSA, which is also chaired by Bishop McGuckian, worked on a number of priority areas, including Brexit, Legacy and matters relating to the

ongoing work for peace and reconciliation, as well as extensive participation in Inter-Church networks and initiatives.

Trócaire

Bishop William Crean of Cloyne is chair of Trócaire, and Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe is also a director. Trócaire was established by the Bishops' Conference as an independent Trust in 1973, to overcome the challenges of poverty and injustice in the developing world. Trócaire produces its own annual report on its long-term development and emergency humanitarian relief programmes in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East to tackle the injustice of global poverty. In Ireland, through its education programmes and campaigning, Trócaire works to raise awareness about development issues and the principles of social justice involved. For more information see www.trocaire.org



Trócaire's 2023 Lenten Campaign: Hold Fast to Love and Justice



Council for European Affairs

Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA is the Chair of this Council. In 2023 the Bishops' Conference was represented by Archbishop O'Reilly on the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE). There are also representatives of the Conference on the various Commissions of COMECE.

In addition, the Bishops' Conference is a member of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE). The Conference sends delegates to its various meetings and conferences.

The Council for Justice and Peace is a member of Justice and Peace Europe where it is represented by Dr Gary Carville. The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions is a network of 32 national Justice and Peace bodies, mandated by their respective Bishops' Conference, to speak out against poverty, and advocate for human rights, peace, reconciliation, development and the care of creation. The Annual Assembly of Justice & Peace Europe for 2023 was held in Malta and those present received a presentation on the work of the various Councils and Agencies of the Irish Bishops' Conference in furtherance of Catholic Social Teaching.

National Mission Council

Archbishop O'Reilly is the chairperson of the National Mission Council. The Council met three times during 2023 (with a combination of video conferencing and in-person meetings) to ensure it continued to work collaboratively and in support of the activities of missionary bodies in Ireland and overseas.

The role of the National Mission Council is:

- to advise the Episcopal Conference and its Commissions, Agencies and Councils on matters relating to the planning, directing and reviewing the main activities of missionary cooperation at national level;
- to coordinate the activities of existing national missionary bodies in Ireland;
- to act as a forum for discussion of matters related to mission;
- to assist the Bishops in their mission, specifically in relation to the support of initiatives which focus on the Church's world mission by promoting mission education and

working collaboratively with the Pontifical Mission Societies (Missio Ireland) and other mission organisations.

The work of the Council in 2023 included:

- the promotion of the mission month of October and World Mission Sunday, which is the penultimate Sunday each October.
- the Council's continued contribution to the Universal Synod on the theme of synodality and the Irish Synodal Pathway.
- the promotion of the Year of Vocations (both to diocesan priesthood and religious life).
- the promotion of missionary work and activity in dioceses and religious congregations.



COMMISSION FOR WORSHIP, PASTORAL RENEWAL AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT

The Commission is chaired by Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross. It comprises the Council for Clergy, the Council for Liturgy, Council for Vocations, and the Council for Pastoral Renewal & Adult Faith Development (including youth ministry). The purpose of the Commission is to facilitate collaboration in order to serve the strategic objectives of its four councils and to make recommendations to the Episcopal Conference:

Council for Vocations

The Council for Vocations is chaired by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore and Bishop Laurence Duffy of Clogher is also a member. Along with the National Office for Diocesan Vocations, the Council seeks to promote diocesan vocations to priesthood and the permanent diaconate in Ireland. It arranges in-service for Vocations Directors and information seminars for prospective candidates for priesthood in dioceses.



Bishop Cullinan speaking to seminarians in Maynooth at the launch of the Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood

Council for Clergy

The Council for Clergy is chaired by Bishop Ray Browne of Kerry and deals with matters relating to the life and ministry of priests and permanent deacons. The other Episcopal members are Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe and Bishop Nulty. Twice annually, representatives meet with the chairpersons of the council of priests of each of the dioceses on the island of Ireland.

Council for Pastoral Renewal & Adult Faith Development (including youth ministry)

The Council for Pastoral Renewal & Adult Faith Development is chaired by Bishop Fintan Gavin. The other Episcopal members are Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry, Bishop McGuckian and Bishop Duignan. The Council concerns itself with the baptismal responsibilities of all adult Christians in Ireland, and with empowering their leadership for Gospel and ecclesial witness. The Council collaborates with Catholic Youth Ministry in Ireland, a forum for practitioners of youth ministry.

Council for Liturgy

The Council for Liturgy is chaired by Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam. The other Episcopal member is Bishop McGuckian. The Council advises the Episcopal Conference on matters liturgical, for example, on the provision of the Church's ritual texts in the English language so that they are of a quality suitable to the culture and idiom of English used in Ireland. The Advisory Committee on Church Music, the Advisory Committee on Sacred Art and Architecture, An Coiste Comhairleach um an Liotúirge i nGaeilge and the Advisory Committee on Liturgical Prayers in English also play important roles in advising the Council for Liturgy. The Council is supported in its work by the Secretariat for Liturgy.



COMMISSION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND FORMATION

The Commission is chaired by Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick and comprises the Council for Education, the Council for Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue, the Council for Catechetics, and the Council for Doctrine. The purpose of the Commission is to facilitate collaboration and thereby support the operation of its four constituent parts, and to make recommendations to the Bishops' Conference to further the mission of the Church:

Council for Education

The Council for Education is chaired by Bishop Tom Deenihan. The other Episcopal members are Archbishop Francis Duffy, Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop Niall Coll, and Bishop Paul Connell. The Council articulates policy and vision for Catholic education in Ireland, North and South, on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. It has responsibility for the forward planning necessary to ensure the best provision for Catholic education in the country. It liaises with other Catholic education offices, the Department of Education in the Republic, and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. The Council advises the Bishops' Conference on all Government legislation as it applies to education and responds to and comments on issues related to the work of education. It seeks also to develop long-term strategies in education for the Bishops' Conference.

Major educational initiatives during the year involving the council included:

- Catholic Schools Week 2023 on the theme 'Catholic Schools – Walking Together in Faith and Love';
- Liaising with the Education Offices of the Episcopal Conferences for Ireland, England & Wales, and Scotland;
- Hosting the annual meetings with the educational trusts which are Public Juridic Persons;
- Working closely with the Catholic Education Partnership in co-ordinating Catholic education at post primary level;
- Collaborating with the Council for Catechetics in providing submissions to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on Religious Education, on Relationships & Sexuality Education and on the draft new primary curriculum;
- Issuing 'Living Love' the Relationship and Sexuality Education resource for Junior Cycle at post-primary;

- Working with ETBI on a statement of effective practice in regard to Catholic ethos for Designated Community Colleges;
- Working with the Association of Joint Patrons on a range of issues concerning Catholic patronage; and,
- Attending meetings of the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education.

Council for Catechetics

The Council for Catechetics is chaired by Bishop Brendan Leahy. The other Episcopal members are Bishop Michael Duignan and Bishop Niall Coll who joined the Council in 2023. Bishop William Crean retired from the Council in 2023. The Council articulates policy and vision for the catechetical needs of Ireland, North and South, on behalf of the Episcopal Conference. It liaises with the Episcopal Commission for Education, other Commissions of the Bishops' Conference and with other bodies and individuals in the area of catechesis and Religious Education. The Council for Catechetics supports the work of catechesis particularly and faith formation in general in the home, in schools and in parish as set out in *Share the Good News, the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*.

Initiatives during the year included:

- Developing national promo video for lay ministry of Catechist and developing Fan into a Flame national policy and guidelines document on the Ministry of Catechist;
- Established Working Groups for RCIA and Sacramental Preparation in Parishes and drafted national policies on RCIA and Sacramental Preparation in Parishes;



- Liaising with Council for Education and NCCA on Senior Cycle SPHE and initiating work on new Senior Cycle SPHE resource;
- The National Director for Catechetics, Dr Alexander O'Hara, presented the work of the Council at a number of conferences nationally and published two articles in *The Furrow* (July 2023) on the ministry of Catechist and Doctrine & Life (October 2023) on Synodality and the Early Irish Church; and at the Sean Freyne Memorial Lecture on Synodality and the Early Irish Church (July 2023);
- Launched *Living Love* the SPHE resource for Junior Cycle in collaboration with the Council for Education;
- Initiated meetings with CPSMA, APTCS, and School Trusts on developing national framework for CPD for teachers in Catholic Schools;
- Participated in 'Shared Island Initiative' dialogues on Education and Accommodating National Identities organised by the Department of the Taoiseach;
- Conducted in-person review meetings in relation to the Certificate in Religious Studies at DCU, St Patrick's College, Maynooth and Marino College with Bishop Leahy;
- Project managed Working Group in developing a specification framework for Senior Cycle Non-Exam Religious Education in Catholic Post-Primary Schools;
- Set up and grew monthly newsletter to 104 subscribers and continue to actively manage social media accounts (FB, Twitter) for Council.

Council for Ecumenism and Inter- Religious Dialogue

Bishop Larry Duffy is chair of this Council and Bishop Brendan Leahy is a member of the Council. Its primary purpose is to contribute to the service of the various ecumenical bodies that it interacts with by supporting the Catholic membership of Irish Inter-Church Meeting, the Irish Inter-Church Committee, the Standing Committee on Mixed Marriages and the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

The Advisory Committee on Ecumenism was established after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Its primary concern is the restoration of unity among Christians. The committee is made up of

representatives of the Bishops' Conference and a representative from each diocese in Ireland. It maintains contact with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). The Advisory Committee met in September 2023 where the Guest Speaker was Bishop Andrew Forster, President of the Irish Council of Churches. The Committee also discussed the importance of synodality in the life of the Church and how it can contribute positively to the work of ecumenism and dialogue in Ireland.

2023 was a significant year for ecumenism in Ireland, it being the centenary of the establishment of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC) and the 50th anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Talks which led to the formation of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. On 22nd January, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity a joint service of worship was held in Saint Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

The service, with the theme 'Celebrating our Reconciling Vision of Hope' was attended by representatives from the Catholic Church, as well as the 15 member denominations of ICC. Archbishop Eamon Martin and the Reverend Dr Harold Good, former president of the Methodist Church, both delivered addresses. On 19-20 October, the 33rd Irish Inter-Church was held at Dromantine Retreat & Conference Centre, Co Down, on the theme of 'Our Reconciling Vision of Hope: Fifty years after the Ballymascanlon Talks'. There was a display of memorabilia, including video, of the early meetings at Ballymascanlon.

The Advisory Committee on Inter-Religious Dialogue advises the Bishops' Conference on issues relating to dialogue with members of non-Christian religious traditions in Ireland and on how best to promote mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Catholics and the followers of other traditions. It liaises with other bodies and agencies of the Conference and with the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue in Rome. The Advisory Committee has representatives from dioceses across the island of Ireland.



Council for Doctrine

The Council for Doctrine of the Irish Bishops' Conference is at the service of the Bishops' Conference which assists Bishops in their duty to safeguard the integrity of Christian faith and morals. It fulfills this mandate by studying all issues relating to faith or morals proposed to it by the Bishops' Conference, so that the Conference's deliberations can be informed fully on matters pertaining to the integrity of the faith. Bishop Leahy is the Chair of the Council for Doctrine. Other Bishop members are: Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop Fintan Gavin and Bishop Niall Coll.

The Theology Committee

The Theology Committee is chaired by Bishop Doran and the second episcopal member is Bishop McGuckian. The membership of the Committee is comprised of both theologians and experts in other related disciplines. The purpose of the Committee is twofold. It advises the Bishops' Conference on theological questions referred to it by the Conference itself. It also identifies and explores theological questions, which may have particular significance for the mission of the Church in Ireland.



Commission for Planning, Communications and Resources

The Commission is chaired by Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin and comprises the Council for Communications; Veritas; the Finance and General Purposes Council and the Council for Research & Development. The purpose of the Commission is to facilitate collaboration and thereby support the operation of its four constituent parts, and to make recommendations to the Bishops' Conference to further the mission of the Church:

Council for Communications

Archbishop Eamon Martin is chair of the Council, which includes Episcopal members Archbishop O'Reilly, Bishop Cullinan and Bishop Dempsey. The Council comprises the Catholic Communications Office (CCO) and the publishing company for the Bishops' Conference, Veritas Communications CLG.

On behalf of the Conference, its agencies and commissions, the CCO provides information to the faithful, and engages with the mass media and on digital media to promote the work of the bishops at a local, national and international level. This includes facilitating media training, related communications support and collaborating with communications officers of the twenty-six dioceses on the island of Ireland, the Holy See Press Office, personnel from Bishops' Conferences abroad, and with media officers of other Christian denominations and faiths in Ireland.

During 2023, Father Paul Clayton-Lea continued in his role as editor of Intercom, the pastoral and liturgical magazine and online resource for people in ministry. The Intercom Editorial Advisory Board, chaired by Ms Finola Bruton, met four times to provide support to the editor and his team. From an operational perspective, Intercom is produced and edited in partnership by the CCO and Veritas, and is published ten times per year by Veritas.

In terms of raising awareness of the pastoral work of the Bishops' Conference, its agencies and commissions, during 2023 the CCO published and posted 198 publicity statements to its 1,630 email recipients. This audience represents clergy; religious; laity; media at local, national and international level; faith and civic interest groups. In addition, CCO responded to thousands of media inquiries, and individual faith-based queries, as well as arranging briefings with journalists on Church-related topics. CCO also managed the digital communication platforms on behalf of the Bishops' Conference

reflecting that multiplicity of pastoral areas that it serves. By year-end, in terms of key metrics, the Bishops' Conference Facebook reach (messages connecting with Facebook users) was 89,700; on X/Twitter there were 16,700 followers, and on Instagram there were 1,990 followers

An overall analysis of Bishops' Conference social media analytics indicate activity spikes arising from:

- On 31 December 2022 following the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and subsequent burial in the Vatican which was attended by Archbishops Eamon Martin, Dermot Farrell and Diarmuid Martin. CCO promoted Books of Condolence on each social platform and on catholicbishops.ie. The social media metrics recorded on:
 - Instagram: 59 likes, 10 comments.
 - Twitter: 16.1k views, 41 retweets, 124 likes, 35 comments.
 - Facebook: 269 reactions, 121 comments, 47 shares.
- 13 February due to Bishop Denis Nulty blessing engaged couples ahead of Saint Valentine's Day.
- Archbishops of Armagh joint statement on the attempted murder of PSNI Officer (8 February).
- Pope Francis' appointment of Father Paul Connell as Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois (5 April)
- Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood Conference (25 April)
- Publication of Abortion – Changing the Narrative, Bishop Doran's video had 11k views on Twitter (14 May)
- Bishops arrive at Saint Mel's Cathedral for the opening procession of the Episcopal Ordination of Paul Connell as the new Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois (18 June)



- Over a million pilgrims attend the opening Mass of WYD2023 in Lisbon (1 August)
- Statement of Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan following road tragedy in Clonmel (26 August)
- Relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis to visit Derry, Knock, Sligo and Newry (12 September)
- Knock Shrine adult faith formation course part of new online/in-person event programme (28 September)
- Bishops ask for prayers ahead of attending the Synod on Synodality in Rome (27 September)
- Church Leaders meet with Northern Ireland political parties: “focus on the restoration of good governance” (9 November)
- Catholic Trustees in the North express concern that new law brought forward by Secretary of State imposes abortion ideology on schools (10 November).

The main communication themes of 2023 included: offering spiritual and pastoral support to families who suffered bereavement due to Covid, and providing liturgies for the deceased; safeguarding children; supporting survivors of abuse; promoting the Synodal Pathway for the Church in Ireland, and universally; Catholic Schools Week; Lent; Holy Week and Easter; Advent and Christmas; support for human life from conception to natural death; Accord’s role in providing marriage counselling and supporting marriage and family; ordinations and vocations; care for creation; Irish missionaries abroad; overseas development; religious intolerance and persecution of Christians; pastoral support for migrants and refugees; support for Irish prisoners overseas; ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue; drug abuse and violence in society; the human and social consequences of Brexit to Ireland and Northern Ireland; justice and peace issues; appointment of bishops by Pope Francis; and, the diminishing numerical level of public worship since the pandemic.

The CCO continued to assist members of the public, in Ireland and from abroad, with queries on Church teaching and also regarding information requests on tracing family-faith history.

Veritas Communications CLG

As the official publisher of the Bishops’ Conference, Veritas publishes general religious books, liturgical texts in Irish and English, and catechetical texts, see www.veritas.ie

The Finance and General Purposes Council

Bishop Ger Nash of Ferns is chairman of the Council, which acts in an advisory capacity to the Bishops’ Conference on matters related to finance, administration and governance. The other Episcopal members are Bishop Thomas Deenihan of Meath and Bishop John Fleming of Killala.

The Charitable Foundations Grants Office

The Grants Office is accountable to the Finance and General Purposes Council. The office provides support to dioceses, parishes, diocesan charities and the HGPT by assisting and building capacity of staff and volunteers to identify funding opportunities and secure grants for capital, social and faith development projects.

In 2023, the Grants Office supported parishes to secure over €2.2 million for a variety of projects including church repair, restoration and adaptation projects; parish hall and centre upgrades; lay ministry, faith development and Synodal Pathway initiatives; social justice programmes and energy efficiency and *Laudato Si* related projects of ecological or environmental nature.

The Grants Office works to support parishes and dioceses to collaborate with their communities to identify their needs; in project planning and management; to design strategies in financial development. Furthermore, the office works with donors and funders to build and maintain positive relationships and increase alignment between funder objectives and community needs.



Council for Research & Development

Archbishop O'Reilly is chairman of the Council, which undertakes and commissions research for the Bishops' Conference in its work to fulfill the mission of the Church.

Initiatives complementing the pastoral work of the Trustees

In addition to the foregoing activities of the Commissions and Councils of the Irish Bishops' Conference, the following gives an outline of ongoing and vital work, undertaken in 2023 by the Hierarchy General Purposes Trust, aimed at fulfilling the mission of the Church:

- Synodal Pathway at local, national, continental and universal levels of the Catholic Church
- Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland
- The '*Laudato Si* Working Group'



Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland

Background

The Catholic Church in Ireland has been taking part in two overlapping but interrelated journeys. In March 2021, the Irish Catholic Bishops undertook to prepare for a National Synodal Assembly or series of assemblies within five years. The guiding question for this pathway was “What does God want from the Church in Ireland at this time?” That same month, Pope Francis announced a Universal Synod on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” Between 2021 and 2022, the Steering Committee, Task Group and General Secretary prepared and led a nationwide listening process on the theme of the Universal Synod. Following a pre-synodal assembly in Athlone in June 2022, the National Synthesis document - with the 15 emerging themes from the Catholic Church in Ireland - was prepared and sent to the Synod office in Rome.

In October 2022, a working document, summarising 112 national documents was published. Entitled *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*, the working document was offered back to each diocese for further reflection. By the end of 2022, further consultations were held in dioceses and organisations and the findings were sent to the Irish Synodal Pathway office before Christmas 2022.



The National Synthesis document published in Knock on 16 August, 2022

2023 – The Universal Synod

The reflections from dioceses and groups formed the basis of the Catholic Church in Ireland’s contribution to a new innovative stage of the Universal Synod, a Continental Assembly. This took place in Prague in February 2023.

Ireland’s delegation comprised fourteen members, with four participating in person and ten online. The four in person delegates from Ireland were Archbishop Eamon Martin, Ms Julieann Moran, Dr Nicola Brady and Fr Éamonn Fitzgibbon. Each delegation had an opportunity to make a short presentation on their national synthesis and to participate in roundtable conversation based on the synodal method of ‘Conversations in the Spirit’. The Irish delegation was candid about the need for healing and very mindful of what was shared in the Irish synthesis on the issue of abuse.



Online and in person delegates attending the Continental Assembly in Prague, February 2023

Following the Continental Assemblies, a final working document for the Universal Stage of the Synod was prepared. This working document consisted of 15 worksheets raising more than 100 questions. Delegates attending the synodal assembly were invited to register for working groups based on the themes in the work sheets. Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick and Bishop Alan McGuckian of Raphoe were the two bishop delegates nominated by the Irish Bishops’ Conference to attend the Universal Synodal assembly, which took place from 4 to 29 October 2023. There was a further innovation from Pope Francis for this synodal assembly. 70 non-bishop members, 54 of whom were women, were invited by Pope Francis to the assembly as full voting members. The report from this assembly was published in November 2023, and in the spirit of circularity, each diocese has been invited to read and respond to the 20 themes presented. This reflective exercise is currently underway in each diocese in Ireland and the Church in Ireland will be presenting its response to the synod office in Rome in May 2024. The second part of the Universal Synod will then take place in October 2024.



Bishop Brendan Leahy (second from right) attending the General Assembly of the Synod, Rome, October 2023



Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ sharing his experience in Rome with members of his Diocese in Raphoe.

2023 – The Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland

As the work of the Universal Synod continued throughout 2023, so too did the work of the Irish Synodal Pathway. One of the major pieces of work completed by the National Steering Committee was a research project in March 2023. The Steering Committee engaged a researcher who held focus groups and surveys with the volunteers who held the listening sessions in 2022. An in-depth leadership training and formation programme, based on the needs analysis carried out, was developed in the latter months of 2023 and will begin in 2024. It will provide some of the skills and knowledge that people felt would be necessary as the Church in Ireland continues its synodal journey. These include a deepening of the theology and spirituality of synodality, listening and discernment skills, accompaniment skills, outreach skills, communication skills and facilitation skills. A full research report was published by the Steering Committee in December 2023. The pilot training programme is being supported by funds granted by The Porticus Foundation and the direct beneficiaries will be people who provided leadership during the

diocesan phase of the Universal Synod and other participating groups and organisations.

The National Steering Committee and Task Group finished its term at the end of September 2023. The Committee made several recommendations to the Irish bishops for the content and structure of the remainder of the Irish Synodal Pathway and published these recommendations in a report in December 2023. As part of the ongoing work of promoting synodality and the Irish Synodal Pathway, the General Secretary, along with members of the Steering Committee and Task Group, engaged with dioceses, groups, and other interested parties throughout the year. This included articles in Catholic publications and magazines, public addresses – in person and webinars, workshops, and parish novenas. Working with the Catholic Communications Office of the Bishops' Conference, awareness raising was also undertaken using online and social media, video resources, press releases and media engagements.

Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland

National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (registered as Coimirce) is a company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated in 2008 and its sponsoring bodies are the Bishops' Conference and AMRI. The objective of the company is to provide advice, services and assistance in the furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Church on the island of Ireland, and to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice and to report on these activities annually. For more details see www.safeguarding.ie

Towards Healing

The Towards Healing Counselling and Support Service was established in 2011 and is a free and confidential helpline and counselling service. It is a company limited by guarantee and governed by an independent board of directors. Towards Healing is committed to supporting survivors of Catholic institutional, clerical and religious childhood abuse on the island of Ireland, and their families, by providing counselling and other related



support services. For more details see www.towardshealing.ie

Towards Peace

Towards Peace is a spiritual support service for people who have experienced physical, emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse perpetrated by representatives of the Catholic Church in Ireland, either on an individual basis or in institutions. Through conversations with a spiritual director/companion, an 'anam cara' or 'soul friend', Towards Peace provides a safe space where people who have been hurt can connect with their spirituality, their sense of God and the sacred, in their personal journey towards peace. The service is free and is available to individuals and family members of those who have been affected.

All Towards Peace spiritual companions are professionally trained, qualified and experienced lay people, religious and clergy, based throughout the country, committed to ongoing specialised training and regular professional supervision. They are members of the All Ireland Spiritual Guide Association, and abide by its code of ethics. The service is managed by an Oversight Committee Chaired by Mr Andrew Fagan, Director of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service of the Archdiocese of Dublin, and it comprises members of the Bishops' Conference and of AMRI, as well as a survivor and a spiritual companion. Bishop Ger Nash of Ferns serves as an Oversight Committee member. Towards Peace works collaboratively with both the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church and with Towards Healing.

Towards Peace reports to the Commission for Pastoral Care and its website is www.towardspeace.ie

The *Laudato Si'* Working Group (LSWG)

The *Laudato Si'* Working Group (LSWG)

Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* – on Care for our Common Home, inspired the establishment the *Laudato Si'* Working Group (LSWG) in 2016. In 2023, the group were involved in the following initiatives:

Care for Our Common Home Resources and webpage:

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/>

In 2023, the LSWG resourced a dedicated space on the Irish Bishop's Conference website for Care for Creation resources. As in previous years, Season of Creation resources were prepared and included Sunday liturgy notes, a weekday prayer service for Creation, a Season of Creation brochure, a Tree

Planting resource, Creation Walk stations, practical actions, Season of Creation video reflection and meditations. The LSWG also provided resources for key dates in the ecological calendar such as an Earth Day Prayer Service, Advent brochure Cultivating Hope, as well as information for key moments of the year such as *Laudato Si'* Week in May.

Return to Nature Project

In March 2023, following a proposal from the *Laudato Si'* Working Group, the Irish Bishops' Conference agreed that they would invite parishes to return 30% of church grounds to nature by 2030. This is a response to the biodiversity crisis our world is facing, the call of *Laudato Si'* and the agreements made at the recent UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15). All are called to arrest the decline of biodiversity for the sake of the next generation:

Parishes are asked to expand their circles of solidarity, to protect and care for biodiversity and creation on 30% of their grounds, and to care for this as a haven for pollinators and biodiversity, that can be enjoyed by the whole community." – Irish Bishops' Conference Spring Statement 2023. In *Laudato Si'* we read that this diversity of species has an "intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself" (LS 140). We are called to care for the earth and its creatures, "to till and to keep the garden of the Lord" (Genesis 2:15).

The *Laudato Si'* Working Group have prepared an extensive set of resources for parishes for this initiative in conjunction with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and these resources are available here:

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/>

In October 2023, the working group also hosted an online webinar to help parishes begin, with expertise from Kate Chandler of the National Biodiversity Data Centre and Barry O'Loughlin, Clare County Council Biodiversity Officer. This webinar can be viewed at this link: <https://vimeo.com/905125930?share=copy>, with the password: biodiversity:

Collaboration with the Heritage Council and National Biodiversity Data Centre Return to Nature has expanded thanks to the involvement of the County Council Biodiversity



Officers. Barry O'Loughlin in County Clare is piloting ten parishes for "Return to Nature" and a recent development means that we are about to expand this project into five other dioceses in Ireland in conjunction with the National Heritage Council.

***Laudato Si'* Conference for the Archdiocese of Dublin November 2023 – 'Parishes Caring for Creation'**

The LSWG hosted the third Diocesan *Laudato Si'* Conference, this time in Dublin on 24 November 2023. Around 220 people gathered in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Blanchardstown, representing the parishes of Dublin Diocese. This conference was a collaboration between LSWG, Trócaire, the Archdiocese of Dublin and the *Laudato Si'* Movement and aimed to help parish communities respond to the ecological crises. How can faith communities respond to the challenges our world faces at this moment? The conference included inspiring inputs from Archbishop Dermot Farrell; Sr. Nellie McLoughlin; Prof. John Sweeney and Dr. Lorna Gold as well as practical workshops to help participants put *Laudato Si'* into action locally. We had a 'marketplace' of organisations present to advise participants and offer support for their activities. This conference was part of the Archdiocese's Pastoral Plan Building Hope. You can read more about this conference here: <https://www.trocaire.org/news/parishes-caring-for-creation/> Future conferences are planned for 2024 in the Munster region.

UN Climate Change Conference COP28

In preparation for the 28th United Nations Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP28) which took place in Dubai in November 2023, Bishop Martin Hayes sent a letter to Minister for the Environment, Eamonn Ryan, asking for urgent action on the climate crisis. In particular we asked that:

- in justice, we must compensate those who have suffered Loss and Damage due to climate change. In this regard, Pope Francis calls attention to Africa, "home to more than half of the world's poorest people" (LD, 9) who are least responsible for global emissions. He calls for compensation to be paid to these countries who are suffering most (LD, 46).
- Following the historic decision at COP27 to establish new funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage, we strongly encourage: COP28 parties to agree on the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage fund, reflecting the highest level of accountability and compliance with core principles of equity and historic responsibility;

- Ireland to demonstrate leadership on loss and damage by announcing a significant funding pledge in support of the new Loss and Damage fund;
- In 2018, our Bishops' Conference began the divesting of their assets from the fossil fuel industry. In the spirit of caring for our Common Home, we ask that the Government of Ireland move towards ending all fossil fuel subsidies so as to make a fair transition to renewable energy. We urge that Ireland pledge support for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In the light of this letter, contact was made with Bishop Martin Hayes which led to a meeting of LSWG with the Minister in Spring 2024.

Divestment

In April 2023, the LSWG hosted a day conference for the finance officers of the dioceses in relation to the divestment of funds from the fossil fuel industry. To date, ten dioceses have announced their divestment from fossil fuels investments. There have been two further commitments since the April 2023 day and we await their announcements. A further four dioceses have listed their intention to announce divestment and this work will continue with other dioceses and in conjunction with the global *Laudato Si'* Movement. The Irish Bishop's Conference divested their shared assets in 2018.

***Laudato Si'* Action Platform**

The LSWG continues to promote the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, which is an initiative of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. It consists of the seven goals of the Cry of Earth, the Cry of the Poor, Ecological Economics, Adopting Sustainable Lifestyles, Ecological Education, Ecological Spirituality and Community Involvement and Participation to involve families, dioceses, parishes, hospitals, schools and universities, Catholic organizations and religious orders in the spirit of integral ecology of *Laudato Si'*.

Research

During 2023, the LSWG continued to engage with the requested submissions for the Synodality Process, press releases at key points of the year, particularly in relation to the UN Conference of Parties (COP) events, as well as content for media queries.



Supporting the *Laudato Si'* Network in Ireland:

During 2023 many trained *Laudato Si'* Animators (LSAs) in Ireland completed courses with Trócaire and/or through the *Laudato Si'* Movement (<https://laudatosimovement.org/>). These LSAs are key to the promotion and roll out of *Laudato Si'* activities locally, particularly during the Season of Creation. The network is resourced through Trócaire but in collaboration with the LSWG and LSM. This support includes:

- monthly *Laudato Si'* animator meetings (online)
- publishing a monthly newsletter through Trócaire (to 400 people)
- supporting care for creation groups, for example in hosting a screening of The Letter film or local workshops on *Laudato Si'*
- linking with Eco-Congregation and the *Laudato Si'* Movement to support parishes who wish to explore the Eco-Parish award or engage with the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform
- hosting retreats on cultivating an ecological spirituality
- responding to speaking requests at events around the country

Laudato Si' book clubs and courses have reached 800 people across Ireland since March 2020.

The Letter – A Message for our Earth

On 4 October 2022, YouTube Originals released the grand documentary The Letter, telling the story of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical letter and how the climate crisis is strongly affecting the Earth and all those who inhabit it. Following its launch, LSWG members, in association with the *Laudato Si'* Movement and Trócaire, organised screenings around the country in parishes, universities and schools. This included a high-level screening with Minister Eamon Ryan in Belvedere College attended by 150 people. To date, we have been involved in 66 screenings across Ireland, 50 of which took place in 2023. Each screening was followed by a question and answers session which encouraged people to get involved locally in order to further promote *Laudato Si'* and the care for creation. Overall, the response to the movie has been enormous, with 8.5 million views on YouTube Originals. Our *Laudato Si'* Officer worked with Veritas to produce a six-session resource which accompanies The Letter for school groups or parish groups. The leaders guide can be accessed here: <https://www.trocaire.org/documents/the-letter-catechesis-resource-leaders-guide/> and the participants guide here: <https://www.trocaire.org/documents/the-letter-participants-resource/>



Overview of the pastoral work of the Irish Episcopal Conference during 2023

January

In his New Year's Message for 2023, Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh said that he prays that people across Ireland will be open to making a special personal effort in the name of peace; to go beyond our selfish interests or desires in the name of something greater and more worthwhile.

In his World Day of Peace homily, Primate of Ireland Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin said that Pope Francis puts before us that there is light in the darkest hour.

Bishop William Crean of Cloyne, and Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore, participated in an international pastoral visit of bishops to the Christian community of Jordan. The Holy Land Coordination group's annual pastoral pilgrimage to the Holy Land took place from 14 January to 19 January. This year's meeting focused on the Christian community in Jordan and the important role that they play in Jordanian society.

Pope Francis appointed Bishop Donal McKeown as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down and Connor on 21 January. The announcement of Bishop McKeown's appointment, was welcomed by Archbishop Noel Treanor, Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union.



At Saint Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, Primate Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh congratulates Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry, following Bishop McKeown's additional appointment as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down and Connor.

On 23 January, the Episcopal Ordination took place of the new Bishop of Ossory, Bishop Niall Coll in the Cathedral of Saint Mary, Kilkenny. The Chief Ordaining Prelate was Archbishop Dermot Farrell, who was assisted by co-consecrators Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare & Leighlin and outgoing Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Ossory; and Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, Bishop of Raphoe. Monsignor Julien Kaboré, Chargé d'Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ireland, also concelebrated this Mass. Father Kieran O'Shea of Ossory preached the homily. The Cathedral Choir provided music for the Mass and Master of Ceremonies was Father Roderick Whearty of Ossory.

Archbishop Martin welcomed Pope Francis' communications message *Speaking with the heart* on 25 January. Archbishop Martin said, "Yesterday, on the feast day of Saint Francis de Sales, the patron of journalists, editors and writers, Pope Francis published the 57th World Communications Day message, on the theme *Speaking with the heart: Veritatem facientes in caritate* (Doing the truth in charity), I encourage all with the responsibility for communicating news to read this insightful message."

February

Archbishop Martin, along with 13 other delegates from Ireland, attended the first ever European Assembly of a Synod within the Catholic Church. There were seven continental assemblies taking place across five continents in a new stage of the Synodal Process, and the European Assembly took place in Prague in the Czech Republic from 5 to 12 February.

This parish of Faughart in Co Louth is the birthplace of Saint Brigid, which is situated in the Archdiocese of Armagh. On the first weekend of February Ireland celebrated for the first time a national holiday in Saint Brigid's honour, who is now officially co-patron saint of Ireland.



In his homily on 5 February, as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the establishment of Trócaire by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, its chairman Bishop William Crea of Cloyne said that a guiding principle for Trócaire is that its duty toward people in need is no longer a matter of charity, rather one of simple justice.



Trócaire mark its 50th anniversary with the launch of its annual Lenten Appeal, Royal College of Physicians, Dublin, 5 February, 2023

Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Armagh, Bishop Michael Router, and chairman of the Council for Healthcare of the Bishops' Conference, welcomed Pope Francis' message for the 2023 World Day of the Sick on 11 February, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on the theme *Take care of him: compassion is a synodal exercise of healing*. The theme had been inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke.

On 13 February, Bishop Nulty, as chairman of Accord, the Catholic Marriage Care Service, celebrated Mass at the Shrine of Saint Valentine in the Carmelite Church on Whitefriar Street, Archdiocese of Dublin, and thereafter led the annual 'Blessing of the Rings' ceremony for a number of soon-to-be-married engaged couples. Accord data found strong demand amongst couples for the Sacrament of Marriage. Speaking at Saint Valentine's shrine, Mr Tony Shanahan, director of Accord CLG, said, "it is reassuring to see that attendance figures for Accord marriage preparation courses are back up to their pre-Covid levels. In 2019 - the most recent full year available for comparison - we provided 285 marriage preparation programmes to 4,610 couples. This figure equals our service in 2022 when we hosted 4,610 couples on 297 programmes.



Bishop Denis Nulty blessing soon to be married couples at the 'Blessing of the Rings' ceremony, at the holy relics of Saint Valentine in the Carmelite Church, Dublin.

On 18 February Bishop Router welcomed the Government's announcement of a Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use. As the beginning of Lent approached, Bishop Router said, "In my roles as liaison bishop to the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative, and as patron to the Family Addiction Support Network in the North East, I invite everyone to avail of Temperance Sunday to reflect on the harm caused by the abuse of drugs and alcohol throughout every parish in our country."

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross expressed prayerful sympathy on the death of Bishop David O'Connell RIP, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles. Bishop Gavin said, "On behalf of the people, priests and religious of the Diocese of Cork and Ross, and on my own behalf, I wish to express my sympathies and prayerful support to the O'Connell family in Cork, to Archbishop José H Gomes and to the people, priests and religious of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles."

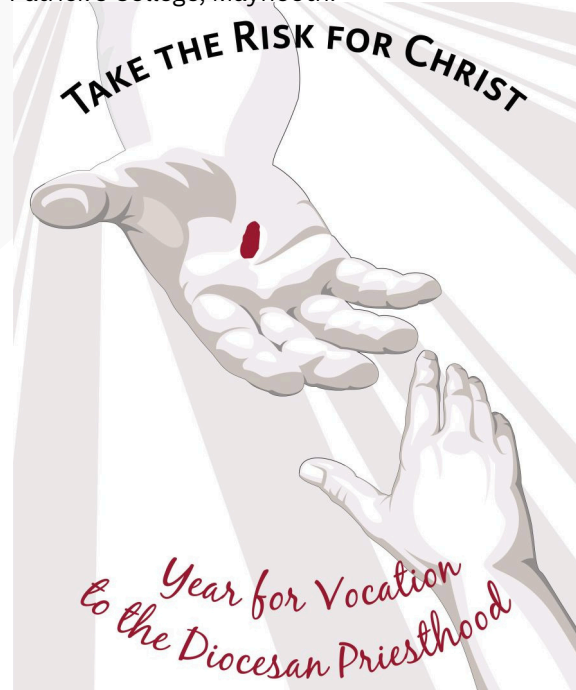
As Lent 2023 began Archbishop Martin said, "Refugees and peace need our prayers, charity and sacrifice this Lent. Over the last year people around the world have experienced death and suffering on a large scale caused by wars and natural disasters. The effects of climate change continue to impact our most vulnerable sisters and brothers. Now, more than ever, the three pillars of Lent – prayer, charity and sacrifice – are needed for our own spiritual conversion and to support those in need."



On 25 February, Archbishop Martin welcomed Pope Francis' appointment of a new Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland. The Holy Father appointed His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Titular Archbishop of Illici, who had been ministering as the Apostolic Nuncio to Colombia.

March

During the Spring General Meeting of the Bishops' Conference, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore, and chair of the Bishops' Council for Vocations - along with seminarians, priests and bishops - announced a dedicated twelve-month long 'Year of Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood', which started in April on the theme: 'Take the Risk for Christ'. To help promote this initiative a media launch included a photocall which took place in the College Chapel of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth.



'Take the Risk for Christ' vocations campaign logo for the 2023-2024 Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood

At their General Meeting bishops prayed together for peace for the people in Ukraine, the victims of the Turkey/Syria earthquake, the Calabria shipwreck, and those injured and killed in the recent Greek train accident. Bishops also offered prayerful congratulations to Pope Francis on the tenth anniversary of his pontificate, and remembered in a special way the inspiring pilgrimage of Pope Francis to the 9th World Meeting of Families in Ireland in August 2018.

On 17 March, Archbishop Martin shared a message with the people of Ireland at home and abroad for Saint Patrick's Day. The Primate said, "when people from every continent like to trace even their slightest connections with Ireland and the Irish, Saint Patrick can truly be hailed as 'a saint for the entire world.'"

In his Saint Patrick's Day homily, Archbishop Farrell said, "Our land - and indeed our faith - have never been some idealised monocultural fortress ... lies that seek to stoke division by exploiting grievances are a denial of the generosity of Christ."

Church leaders united in prayer around the anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Mindful that people from different parts of the community have different views and emotions about the anniversary of the signing of the Agreement, the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) prepared resources for use in times of private prayer and public forms of worship marking the anniversary, recalling the events of the past and looking to the future.

April

On 1 April, Archbishop Martin gave an address at the 'Living the Agreement – Legacy Matters' conference at Queen's University Belfast. He said, "Our failure to recover the truth will only continue to undermine the foundations on which our peace is built and stifle the opportunity for ongoing peace-making and reconciliation".

For Holy Week and Easter 2023, Archbishop Martin published a joint message along with Church of Ireland Primate Archbishop John McDowell.

On 5 April, Pope Francis appointed Father Paul Connell, a priest of the Diocese of Meath, as the new Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. Monsignor Julien Kaboré, Chargé d'Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ireland, was in attendance at Saint Mel's Cathedral, Longford, Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, to announce the good news on behalf of the Holy Father.



Bishop Paul Connell with friends following his episcopal ordination, Saint Mel's Cathedral, Longford, on 18 June, 2023.

Bishops around Ireland celebrated the Mass of Chrism with their priests and people.

On 10 April, Archbishop Martin welcomed Pope Francis' 25th anniversary prayers to mark the Good Friday Agreement. Archbishop Martin said, "The Holy Father has shown great interest in our peace process and is always anxious to be kept up-to-date with developments here. I am confident that his prayerful thoughts today will be welcomed by all people of goodwill."

On 14 April, Bishop John Fleming of Killala received the President of the United States of America, Mr Joe Biden, into Saint Muredach's Cathedral in Ballina, Co Mayo. Afterwards, directly in front of the Cathedral, Mr Biden addressed an estimated 30,000 well-wishers and a global media audience as part of his final engagement of his visit to Ireland, North and South.

The keynote speaker at a conference on 25 April, in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, to launch Ireland's 'Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood' was Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Evangelisation. Archbishop Fisichella spoke about priesthood in a Synodal Church. Archbishop Fisichella said, "One of the distinctive features of Christianity is the notion of being embedded in history. The Church cannot be effective in her work of evangelization if she forgets two defining aspects: how to enter into the culture, and how to create history."

Welcoming Pope Francis' 2023 annual message for vocations, on the theme *Vocation: Grace and Mission*, Bishop Cullinan, as chair of the Bishops' Council for Vocations, said, "On Sunday, as we begin our 'Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood' across Ireland, I am delighted to welcome the letter

by Pope Francis specially for our Year for Vocation."

May

In his role as the Irish Bishops' liaison to chaplains, Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore visited Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. After his visit, Bishop Hayes said, "During my visit I gained an appreciation of the work of the chaplains and their rapport with prisoners. It is readily apparent that the chaplains' role is valued by both management and staff."

In his homily for the Annual State Commemorative Ceremonies for the 1916 Easter Rising, at Arbour Hill in Dublin, Bishop Niall Coll of Ossory said, "The manner in which this commemoration is being traditionally observed just now invites those of us who can - Christians and people here present of other traditions and faiths - to express our hope as we recommend to God's love and mercy those who fell in 1916."

As part of the Church's mission to promote a culture of life at all times, bishops encouraged parishioners to change the public narrative around abortion. Bishops said, "we remain convinced that the relevant law, the *Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018* will, in due course, be repealed."

In his message for the 57th World Communications Day, Pope Francis said, "one of the most luminous and still fascinating examples of 'speaking from the heart' is represented by Saint Francis de Sales, Doctor of the Church, to whom I recently dedicated the Apostolic Letter *Totum Amoris Est*, 400 years after his death."

On 16 May, Catholic Education Partnership welcomed the publication of new Junior Cycle curriculum for Social Personal and Health Education. CEP's chief executive, Alan Hynes, said, "Catholic schools will engage positively with the SPHE curriculum, recognising that SPHE is an important part of a holistic education, contributing to the wellbeing of our young people. The curriculum addresses understanding the self and others, emotional wellbeing, relationship and sexuality education, and on making informed and healthy choices. Catholic schools will seek to propose the Catholic perspective on the full range of the curriculum, in dialogue and encounter with other points of view."



On 19 May the Bishops' Council for Life launched a week long 'Pray For Life Novena' from 23 May until 31 May (Feast of the Visitation). At the launch Bishop Doran, chair of the Bishops' Council for Life, said, "This year, the period of the Novena includes the great Feast of Pentecost when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the 'Lord and Giver of Life'.

June

On 4 June Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killala led a Blessing of the Roads ceremony at the Cathedral in Ennis. During the blessing, Bishop Monahan asked of all road users – and especially young people – to take extra care over public holiday weekends.



Bishop Monahan leading the Blessing of the Roads ceremony, outside of the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, Ennis

On 11 June, the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), Archbishop Farrell welcomed Ireland's new Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, who concelebrated Mass at Saint Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin.

Members of the Bishops' Conference gathered for their Summer 2023 General Meeting at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, on the week of 14 June. At the meeting, the Northern Bishops voiced their grave concern at the decision of the Secretary of State, Mr Chris Heaton Harris MP, to lay regulations in the Westminster Parliament making it compulsory for all second level schools in the region to teach children about access to abortion and prevention of early pregnancy.

The Mass for the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop-elect Paul Connell as Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois took place on 18 June, at Saint Mel's Cathedral, Longford, in the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois.

On World Refugee Day, 19 June, bishops drew attention to the plight of people forced to flee their home due to conflict. Bishops paid tribute to many initiatives that have been undertaken in Ireland, and called for more to be done at government and local level.

Members of the Bishops' Conference met with the National Steering Committee and Task Group of the Irish Synodal Pathway on 28 June, in a day of dialogue and reflection. The Steering Committee proposed recommendations regarding the structure and content of the Synodal Pathway for the coming years in Ireland.



Bishops meet members of the Irish Synodal Pathway steering committee in Maynooth for a Day of Reflection.

On Reek Sunday, 30 June, Archbishop Martin joined thousands of pilgrims of all ages in the annual pilgrimage to the summit of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain. This year's pilgrimage was dedicated to praying for and promoting diocesan priesthood.

July

Bishop Paul Dempsey of Achonry led a special 18 kilometre walk along Co Mayo's scenic greenway on 8 July. This fundraising walk also sought to raise awareness of the plight of Irish emigrants in London. All funds went to support the Seniors Project of the Irish Chaplaincy in London, a pastoral outreach established by the Bishops' Conference in 1957.

Bishops welcomed the publication of the Holy See bulletin of 7 July, which detailed the full list of participants attending the first session of the Universal Synod in Rome to take place in October. The list included Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick and Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ of Raphoe, who were tasked to represent the Irish Bishops' Conference at the Universal Synodal gathering.



Bishop Martin Hayes, as Episcopal Coordinator for *Laudato Si'*, issued a statement on 14 July ahead of the Season of Creation 2023, wherein he called on parish communities to take action to address the impact of the current climate crisis.

On 14 July, the Catholic Education Partnership welcomed the opening of the consultation process of the *Social Personal Health Education Senior-Cycle Curriculum Specification* by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Bishop Nulty celebrated Mass for World Day for Grandparents & the Elderly during the National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine on 23 July. The 2023 theme was: 'His Mercy is From Age to Age'.

On 30 July, Archbishop Martin celebrated Mass at the summit of Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo. This year's Reek Sunday pilgrimage was dedicated to the Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood. In his homily on the summit Archbishop Martin called on our patron saint to intercede for Ireland, "to come and walk once more among us, to rekindle in us the memory of the rock from which we were hewn, and to help us rediscover that wisdom for which he himself prayed."



Archbishop Eamon Martin celebrating Mass at the summit of Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo for the Reek Sunday pilgrimage.

August

The 37th World Youth Day took place in Lisbon, Portugal, on 1 August to 6 August, with the theme chosen by Pope Francis 'Mary arose and went with haste' (Luke 1.39). This global celebration of faith by young people usually takes place every three years. Pope Francis attended WYD during which he visited and prayed at the Marian Shrine in Fatima and celebrated the closing Mass on 6 August for an estimated two million pilgrims.

Irish participation at World Youth Day in Lisbon included 1,500 pilgrims, involving at least twelve different nationalities from Ireland. These pilgrims included sixteen diocesan groups, with twelve bishops, some of whom gave catechesis. Over 200 pilgrims who also attended were members of the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI). In addition, various religious movements participated with groups of young people including Jesus Youth, the Neo-Catechumenal Way and Communion and Liberation. Fifteen Irish groups attended pre-WYD events in Portugal.



Bishop Michael Router and Irish pilgrims attending the 37th World Youth Day, Lisbon, Portugal.

On the major Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, on 6 August, Archbishop Martin marked World Youth Day at Slane, Co Meath. 3,000 people attended the outdoor celebration on the Hill of Slane, where the primate celebrated Mass as part of the 'Light the Fire' festival of faith.

As an initiative of the Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood, the Bishops' National Vocations Office participated at the 'Youth 2000 Summer Festival' over four days in mid-August at Clongowes Wood College SJ, Clane, in the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin. Many of the 630 participants had just returned from attending World Youth Day in Lisbon.

As part of the Year for Vocation the dioceses of Ireland united in Knock during the annual novena to pray for vocations to the priesthood on 17 August. Mass, which was celebrated by Bishop Cullinan, included a ceremony involving representatives of each of the twenty-six dioceses coming together with pieces of a cross, each with a separate diocesan name, to build a dedicated Cross for Vocations.



In conversation with the Police Service of Northern Ireland Chief Constable, Simon Byrne, on 16 August, Archbishop Martin expressed his concern for staff at the circumstances surrounding, and implications of, the recent release of sensitive data, in error, by the PSNI.

On 17 August, the Diocese of Clogher announced the death of Bishop Liam MacDaid RIP, Bishop-Emeritus of Clogher. Archbishop Martin led episcopal tributes to the late bishop.

On 25 August, Archbishop Martin celebrated Mass on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the dedication of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. This included a special visit by the Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, and the unveiling of a new icon that was written by Sister Angela of the Redemptoristine Community in Drumcondra, Dublin.

On 26 August, an initiative of the Year for Vocation, Bishop Cullinan led a pilgrimage to the penitential island of Lough Derg, in the Diocese of Clogher, to pray for vocations.

On 27 August, Archbishop Martin held a Mass to mark the fifth anniversary of the 9th World Meeting of Families which took place in Ireland in 2018. In his homily, Archbishop Martin reflected on the Holy Father's visit, his celebration of Mass in Phoenix Park, Dublin, and his meeting at Saint Mary's Pro Cathedral, Dublin, with couples who were beginning their marriage and family journey.

September

The relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis travelled from the Sanctuary of the Renunciation, Assisi, and visited the Archdiocese of Armagh, and the Diocese of Down and Connor, in June. The pilgrimage of the holy relic to Ireland will continue every three months, until faithful in all of the twenty-six dioceses on the island have had an opportunity to venerate the relic.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, and Church of Ireland Primate Archbishop John McDowell issued a joint appeal for focused action to protect the environment of Lough Neagh and the well-being of all who depend on it on 19 September.

Saint Patrick's College Maynooth, announced the death of Monsignor Brendan Devlin, on 20 September. In a joint statement from the President and Rector of the college, they extended their

condolences to Monsignor Devlin's family, to Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry and to the priests of his native diocese of Derry, and to his wide circle of devoted and close friends.

At the Catholic Historical Society of Ireland's Annual Conference, which took place on 23 September in Dublin City University, Archbishop Martin offered a reflection on the interaction between Catholic Church leadership and Ireland's civil war.

On 25 September, the Diocese of Killaloe, announced a year-long initiative to encourage men to consider joining the priesthood.

A new series of faith renewal events were announced by Knock Shrine, on 28 September. The series will give participants the opportunity to reflect and engage in a range of faith-based workshops, discussions, and events.

The Church Leaders Group (Ireland) travelled to Rome on 28 September to take part in a special seminar to mark the Good Friday Agreement's 25th anniversary. At the two-day visit they shared their personal reflections on this milestone anniversary.

On 30 September, Pope Francis presided over an ecumenical vigil of prayer in Saint Peter's Square to welcome the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I; the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, other Church leaders as well as thousands of young Christians from different denominations, ahead of the opening of the Universal Synod on Synodality in Rome, in October.

October

On 4 October, on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron of the environment, bishops issued a statement welcoming the publication by Pope Francis of his new Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum (Praise God)*.

In a statement following the Autumn General Meeting of the Bishops' Conference on 5 October, bishops appealed to legislators to respect the integrity of healthcare as a service to life from conception until natural death.



As an initiative of the Year for Vocation, and to celebrate the feast day of Saint Luke, Patron of Artists, an exhibition entitled 'Art for Vocations' was held in Portlaoise Parish Centre, on 18 October. Its purpose was to bring to life the beauty of a vocational calling, and artists were asked to submit work through paint, sculpture, print, poetry and/or photography.

On 11 October, the four Archbishops of Ireland issued a joint statement on the conflict in the Holy Land, which had drastically escalated on 7 October following the killing of over 1,100 Israelis, and the taking of an estimated 250 hostages by the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas. The Archbishops joined with Pope Francis in calling for prayers of peace, and prayers for families and individuals who are suffering in the region.

On 27 October, Catholics all over the world followed Pope Francis' invitation to participate in a day of prayer, fasting and penance for peace in the world. Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Martin said, "For several weeks now, the news has been dominated by the horror of war, terror, death and destruction in Israel and Palestine. Our minds are troubled and our hearts are saddened. We look on, feeling powerless to do anything except pray and hope."

November

In tribute to the late Cardinal Ó Fiaich, the former Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland who died 8 May 1990, a blue circle plaque was unveiled at a ceremony in Armagh on 3 November. Speaking at the event, his successor Archbishop Eamon Martin said, "Cardinal Ó Fiaich is remembered with affection, and with admiration for his scholarship, his remarkable leadership and pastoral care during very troubled times, but above all, for his humanity and kindness."

The Church Leaders Group invited the leaders of Northern Ireland's five main political parties to a series of separate individual meetings on 3 November. The meetings, which took place in Assembly Buildings in Belfast, focussed on the restoration of good governance.

On 10 November, the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service in Northern Ireland published its submission to the Department of Education's Relationships and Sexuality Education Consultation regarding new legislation that, according to the CSTC, will impose on schools a particular ideological view of abortion and the prevention of early pregnancy.

In a letter circulated on 13 November to parishioners attending Mass across the Diocese of Raphoe, Bishop McGuckian asked for continued prayers for peace in the Holy Land. In solidarity with those living and working in the region, the chairperson of the Bishops' Council for Justice & Peace, also asked members of the congregations to support the outstanding work of Trócaire.

36 men from dioceses across Ireland enrolled in the annual weekend gathering, on 18 and 19 November, in the national seminary of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, to help discern if God is calling them to the priesthood.

On 21 November, Bishop Cullinan addressed members and guests of the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University, Belfast, on the theme, 'Take the risk for Christ – Holy hour and Panel discussion'. In his address, the chairman of the Bishops' Council for Vocations stated, "God is still calling and men are responding. We need priests and always will...we trust in God."

Following the death of Bishop Tony Farquhar RIP on 17 November, the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down & Connor, and chief celebrant for the Mass, Bishop Donal McKeown, gave thanks during the Funeral Mass to "Christ who called a young man in the 1950s and graced him to be a blessing on so many over 58 years of ministry." On behalf of Pope Francis, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, issued a message of sympathy to clergy, religious and lay faithful of the diocese thanking Almighty God for the late bishop's many years of priestly and episcopal ministry to the Church in Down and Connor.

On 25 November, members of the Church Leaders' Group warmly welcomed the cessation of armed conflict in Gaza and Israel, notwithstanding its temporary nature. The leaders called on everyone who has influence to work earnestly for a lasting peace, for the release of all hostages, and to enable essential humanitarian aid to reach all those who are in such desperate need of help.

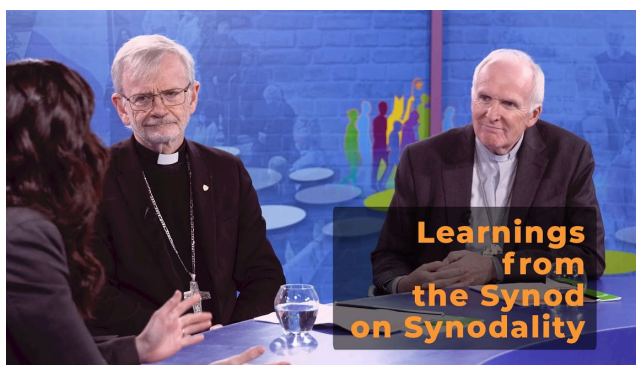


Following riots in Dublin city centre on 23 November, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell issued a public statement; “We have seen with our own eyes, how violence puts everyone – especially the vulnerable and the innocent – in mortal danger. In places we know first-hand, we have seen its power to draw people in and consume them in a spiral of hatred and wanton destruction.”

On 26 November, in Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Archbishop Farrell celebrated the 800th anniversary of the approval of the Franciscan Rule by Pope Honorius III in late November 1223. The ceremony was attended by Franciscans from all the foundations: Capuchins, OFM and female branches.

On 27 November, in the context of the upcoming global gathering for COP 28 in Dubai, Bishop Hayes, on behalf of the Bishops’ Conference *Laudato Si’* Working Group, wrote to Minister Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, as well as to all frontbench environmental spokespersons of political parties North and South, seeking an urgent meeting about Ireland’s commitments for COP28.

On 28 November, Bishop Leahy and Bishop McGuckian submitted their report to the winter 2023 Standing Committee of the Bishops’ Conference on their experience at the XVI Synodal Assembly. The bishops commented that the Synodal Assembly was a deeply intense experience, spiritually, culturally and theologically.



Bishop Leahy and Bishop McGuckian interviewed on iCatholic on their learnings from their recent visit to the General Assembly of the Synod in Rome.

December

To coincide with the first Sunday of Advent, 3 December, Archbishop Martin launched the annual online Advent Calendar on catholicbishops.ie.

Welcoming this year’s Advent Calendar Archbishop Martin said, “The calendar guides us along an Advent journey, pausing each day for a few moments to pray, reflect, and take some practical steps to enrich our experience of Christmas.”

During the 2023 autumn term, fifteen new seminarians began their 2023-2024 academic programme and priestly formation for Irish dioceses. Commenting on this year’s intake of seminarians, Bishop Cullinan, as chair of the Bishops’ Council for Vocations, said, “The figure of fifteen new seminarians represents the reality, and is a clear indication, that God is still calling, and that men are responding with generosity.”

On a visit to Malta, on 3 December, Archbishop Martin celebrated Mass in the parish Church of Saint Publius at Floriana. During his homily, the Primate of All Ireland said, “the Church in Europe faces challenges of war, defence of life, migration, and persecution of Christians and AI.”

During their Winter General Meeting on 4 December, bishops marked the 60th anniversary of the publication of the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. It was the first publication during the Second Vatican Council that began on 11 October 1962 and, over four sessions, concluded on 8 December 1965. During the celebration of Mass in the College Chapel, bishops offered prayers for peace, respect for the dignity of human life, and for climate justice throughout the world.

On 5 December, bishops responded to an invitation from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying to speak on, “The perspective of religious, faith-based and other philosophical groups regarding assisted dying.” Bishops called for a national investment in palliative care and strongly rejected assisted suicide law.

Archbishop Martin commented on the Safe Zone Access Bill on 13 December, ahead of its second stage debate in the Seanad. In a statement he said, “Given that the law already prevents harassment and intimidation, I believe the new legislation represents a disproportionate response with potentially wide implications for freedom of religion and speech.”

On behalf of both of their respective national congregations, a joint Christmas message was issued by the Catholic and Church of Ireland



Archbishops of Armagh. The Primate stated, “People of faith are not just called to be peacekeepers, but to be peacemakers – to be instruments of Christ’s peace; to pray and to work constantly for peace, healing and reconciliation between nations, communities, families, and individuals.”

As the Hamas/Israel war continued, Bishop Cullinan issued a statement in which he expressed his deep concern, and solidarity with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, following the rocket attack by Israeli Defence Forces on a convent of nuns and disabled residents in Gaza on 16 December.

In their cathedrals and for the faithful, bishops celebrated Mass for the Feast of the Nativity and the coming of the Prince of Peace amongst us.



Archbishop Eamon Martin delivering his Christmas Day homily, Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, Armagh.

Bishop Patrick Walsh, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Down and Connor, died on 28 December 2023. During the Funeral Mass on 2 January 2024, which was celebrated in Saint Peter’s Cathedral, Belfast, chief celebrant Bishop Donal McKeown, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down and Connor, preached, “In Saint Luke’s Gospel, Jesus says that when we have done all that we are told to do, we say ‘we have done no more than our duty’ (Luke 17:10).

For further detail on the foregoing, see www.catholicbishops.ie, ‘Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference’ on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and follow on Twitter @CatholicBishops.



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Income and expenditure

In 2023 the income of the Trust from all sources was €3,637,599 (2022: €7,098,663). The main sources are diocesan contributions provided by the bishops for the purposes of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, its councils, agencies and associated initiatives. Diocesan contributions in 2022 included an exceptional collection in support of Ukraine. This special appeal resulted in donations of €3.67 million received and subsequently remitted to Trocaire, to help the provision of assistance for the humanitarian response to the situation in Ukraine. This income did not have a material impact on the operational outcome of the organisation's day to day activities.

Additional contributions were received from dioceses in support of the Church's contributions to the Counselling support service Towards Healing, Anscombe Bioethics Centre, support of the Holy See (Universal Church) and the care of retired bishops. Other income is derived from royalties, investments and external grants.

Total expenditure for the year was €4,646,718 (2022: €7,261,025). The expenditure of the Trust is analysed in detail in the accounts attached to this report. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference employs staff to carry out the work of the Councils, agencies and associated initiatives, which also rely on the participation of volunteers who serve as council members and advisors.

The results for the year are shown in the Statement of Financial Activities. The net movement in funds for the year was a deficit of €1,009,119 (2022: deficit €162,362).

The Balance Sheet shows total reserves of €4,235,676 (2022: €5,244,795). Of this, €1,299,819 (2022: €1,742,329) is restricted to be applied for specific purposes. The remaining funds are unrestricted.

Reserves Policy

The operational policy of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference is to try to ensure that it has adequate "free" reserves to meet its continuing charitable obligations and day-to-day working capital requirements. It is reliant upon diocesan contributions for the majority of its income, and this is agreed annually by the Bishops' Conference.

Investment Policy

The objective of the Investment Policy is to maintain high liquidity while ensuring maximum security, meeting ethical standards and achieving the highest possible return within these limiting factors. Investments are undertaken in a manner that seeks to ensure the preservation of capital in the overall portfolio, mitigating against credit risk, currency risk and country risk.

In the management of investments both Charity Law and Church teaching applies. Under Charity Law, the Trustees must seek to obtain the best financial return possible consistent with commercial prudence. Following the Church's teaching, the Trustees also seek to maintain an ethical investment policy through a process of making judgments about the

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

products, services and corporate practices as well as their financial efficacy. The judgement of the Trustees and their decisions to invest or disinvest, and of seeking to change through shareholder action, reflect particularly that teaching which promotes the dignity and sanctity of human life and the importance of society in general.

TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of the Trust's affairs and of its income and expenditure for the year. The Trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with Irish Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, including Financial Reporting Standard 102, "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Trust will continue in operation.

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Trust keeps or causes to be kept adequate accounting records which correctly explain and record the transactions of the Trust, enable at any time the assets, liabilities, financial position and surplus or deficit of the Trust to be determined with reasonable accuracy and enable the financial statements to be readily and properly audited. The Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Trust and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. They are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the financial information included on the website.

POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

Hierarchy General Purposes Trust has provided additional loan facilities to Veritas of €1.6m. The new loans, commencing December 2023, are being provided subject to a second fixed charge over property held by Veritas at 7/8 Lower Abbey Street. The total loan plus interest is to be repaid in full no later than 31 December 2024.

There were no other significant subsequent events that require disclosure or adjustment to the financial statements.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The Trust is continuing with its programme of works to meet its objectives and to ensure that it conforms to all best practice guidelines for a not for profit entity.

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

TAXATION

The Trust has been granted charitable status under sections 207 and 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

AUDITORS

Crowe Ireland are eligible and have expressed their willingness to continue in office.

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND SIGNED ON ITS BEHALF BY:

+ Kieran O'Reilly
Trustee

+ Francis Duffy
Trustee

Date: 1 October 2024

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Hierarchy General Purposes Trust for the year ended 31 December 2023, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Cashflow Statement and the notes to the financial statements including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish Law and FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and in accordance with 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the Republic of Ireland (FRS102)' ('Charities SORP').

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Trust's affairs as at 31 December 2023 and of its net movement in funds for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102, The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described below in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Trust in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard for Auditors (Ireland) issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST (CONTINUED)

Other information

The Trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the Trust and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the Trustees' report.

Respective responsibilities

Responsibilities of Trustees for the financial statements

The Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to dissolve the Trust or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the IAASA's website at: [http://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/ISA-700-\(Ireland\)](http://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/ISA-700-(Ireland)). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

HIERARCH GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST (CONTINUED)

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the Trustees, as a body. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Trust and the Trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Signed by:

Roseanna O'Hanlon

For and on behalf of:

Crowe Ireland

Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm

40 Mespil Road
Dublin 4

Date: 9 October 2024

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)

	Note	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:					
Donations	4a	1,509,696	1,945,826	3,455,522	7,214,510
Income from charitable activities	4c	8,113	-	8,113	104,165
Investments	4d	173,964	-	173,964	(308,395)
Other	4e	-	-	-	88,383
TOTAL INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS		1,691,773	1,945,826	3,637,599	7,098,663
EXPENDITURE ON:					
Raising funds	5	(16,383)	-	(16,383)	(16,383)
Charitable activities	6	(2,389,820)	(2,240,515)	(4,630,335)	(7,244,642)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		(2,406,203)	(2,240,515)	(4,646,718)	(7,261,025)
NET MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS		(714,430)	(294,689)	(1,009,119)	(162,362)
Total funds brought forward		3,502,466	1,742,329	5,244,795	5,407,157
Transfer from Restricted to Unrestricted reserves		147,821	(147,821)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	15-16	2,935,857	1,299,819	4,235,676	5,244,795

All income and expenditure arises from continuing operations.

There are no recognised gains or losses other than the result for the year.

The notes on pages 44 to 53 form part of the financial statements.

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 €	2023 €	2022 €	2022 €
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	10		10,450		17,277
Financial Assets	11		<u>2,561,782</u>		<u>2,301,488</u>
			2,572,232		2,318,765
NON-CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors (amounts due after one year)	13		196,138		290,307
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors (amounts due within one year)	12	390,023		904,551	
Cash at bank and in hand	18	<u>1,326,614</u>		<u>2,099,261</u>	
		1,716,637		3,003,812	
Creditors (amounts falling due within one year)	14	<u>(249,331)</u>		<u>(368,089)</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			<u>1,467,306</u>		<u>2,635,723</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			4,235,676		5,244,795
TOTAL NET ASSETS			<u><u>4,235,676</u></u>		<u><u>5,244,795</u></u>
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY					
Unrestricted funds	15		2,935,857		3,502,466
Restricted income funds	16		1,299,819		1,742,329
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS			<u><u>4,235,676</u></u>		<u><u>5,244,795</u></u>

Approved by the Board of Trustees and signed on its behalf by:

+ Kieran O'Reilly

Date: 1 October 2024

+ Francis Duffy

Date: 1 October 2024

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

CASHFLOW STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

CASH FLOWS FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Net Cash generated from Operating Activities	17.1	(675,696)	181,668
Net Cash generated from Financing Activities	17.2	642	0
Net Cash generated from/(used in) Investing Activities	17.3	(97,593)	33,651
CHANGE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS IN THE REPORTING PERIOD		<u>(772,647)</u>	<u>215,319</u>
RECONCILIATION OF NET CASH OUTFLOW TO MOVEMENT IN NET FUNDS			
Change in Cash and Cash Equivalents in the Reporting Period		(772,647)	215,319
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Reporting Period		2,099,261	1,883,942
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD	18	<u>1,326,614</u>	<u>2,099,261</u>

The notes on pages 44 to 53 form part of the financial statements.

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The following accounting policies are applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the Trust's financial statements:

1.1 BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland and with reference to "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102)" ("Charities SORP").

The preparation of financial statements in compliance with FRS 102 requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise judgement in applying the Trust's accounting policies.

1.2 INCOMING RESOURCES

Income is treated as being general and unrestricted unless a donor has specified the manner in which the income is to be spent, in which case it is treated as restricted income. Income earned on funds held on deposit is treated as unrestricted income, unless specified by the donor. Restricted income is allocated to the fund as specified by the donor.

Diocesan contributions

Diocesan contributions are credited to the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which they are receivable.

Royalties

Royalties arising from the sale of religious publications are credited to the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which they are receivable.

Grants

Grants are recorded when receivable, and if relevant when any performance conditions are satisfied.

During the prior year, the Trust availed of government wage supports related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Where government supports are treated as a grant in accordance with Section 24 of FRS 102, the supports are recognised at the fair value of the asset receivable using the accruals model where there is reasonable assurance that the grant will be received and all attaching conditions will be complied with.

Other Income

Other income is accounted for when received.

1.3 RESOURCES EXPENDED

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred and is recorded as part of the expenditure to which it relates. Cost of raising funds comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income. Expenditure on charitable activities are those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its stated objectives. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them. Where costs cannot be directly attributed, they have been allocated in proportion to estimated benefits received.

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity.

All expenditure is authorised by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

1.4 PENSIONS

The Irish Episcopal Conference operates a defined contribution scheme and pension benefits are funded over the employees' period of service by way of contributions from the Trust and the employees. Contributions are charged to the relevant Councils in the year in which they become payable.

1.5 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS POLICY

A liability is recognised to the extent of any unused holiday pay entitlement which is accrued at the Balance Sheet date and carried forward to future periods. This is measured at the undiscounted salary cost of the future holiday entitlement so accrued at the Balance Sheet date.

1.6 FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The financial statements are presented in Euro, which is the Trust's functional and presentational currency and is denoted by the symbol '€'. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are translated into euro at the rates of exchange prevailing at the accounting date. Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the date of the transactions. All differences are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

1.7 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS AND DEPRECIATION

Tangible fixed assets are stated in the Balance Sheet at cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses. Cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible assets, so as to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its' expected useful economic life on a straight line basis at the following annual rates:

IT and Office Equipment	25%
Furniture and fittings	25%

1.8 INVESTMENT POLICY

Investments are stated at market value.

1.9 DEBTORS

Debtors are recognised initially at transaction price. Subsequently, these are measured at amortised cost less any provision for impairment. A provision for impairment is established when there is objective evidence that the Trust will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the original terms of receivables. All movements in provisions are recognised in the statement of financial activity.

1.10 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

Cash and cash equivalents are represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature in no more than three months from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

1.11 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The Trust only enters into basic financial instrument transactions that result in the recognition of financial assets and liabilities like trade and other accounts receivable and payable. Basic financial instruments are recorded at transaction price.

1.12 CREDITORS

Creditors are measured at the transaction price.

1.13 TAXATION

No charge to taxation arises as the Trust is exempt under Section 207 and 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

1.14 RESTRICTED FUNDS

Restricted funds consist of amounts received which can only be used for the purpose for which they are specified by the Donors.

1.15 UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Unrestricted funds consist of grants and subscriptions which the charity can spend based on its own discretion to enable it to achieve its overall aim and objectives.

2. JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND KEY SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The preparation of these financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of policies and reported amounts of assets and liabilities, income and expenses.

Judgements and estimates are continually evaluated and are based on historical experiences and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

The Trust makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The Trust will periodically assess the recoverability of debtors and make provisions for potential doubtful debts where there is uncertainty the debt will be settled. There were no other estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

3. GOING CONCERN

Like many charitable entities, Hierarchy General Purposes Trust continues to be exposed to the legacy effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Trustees have prepared budgets and cashflows for a period of at least twelve months from the date of approval of the financial statements which demonstrate that there is no material uncertainty regarding the organisation's ability to meet its liabilities as they fall due, and to continue as a going concern.

On this basis, the Trustees consider it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis. Accordingly, these financial statements do not include any adjustments to the carrying amounts and classification of assets and liabilities that may arise if the organisation was unable to continue as a going concern. The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
4. INCOMING RESOURCES				
4 (a) DONATIONS				
Diocesan Contributions	1,509,696	-	1,509,696	1,443,463
Ukrainian Appeal	-	18,166	18,166	3,678,300
Ukrainian-Afgan Project-Restricted Income(Benefact Trust)	-	185,775	185,775	46,965
Safeguarding In Irish Catholic Church- Grant for Project	-	-	-	185,950
Care of retired Bishops	-	600,000	600,000	600,000
CCSS T/A "Towards Healing"	-	252,000	252,000	260,253
Episcopal Council Drugs Initiative (IBDI)	-	73,366	73,366	69,850
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO)	-	275,861	275,861	248,653
Council for Emigrants	-	184,060	184,060	167,320
Council for Immigrants	-	10,000	10,000	10,000
Council for Justice & Peace	-	30,000	30,000	30,000
Anscombe	-	32,400	32,400	49,248
Holy See (Universal Church)	-	45,502	45,502	48,319
Council for Communications	-	-	-	22,399
Finance and General Purposes Council	-	17,500	17,500	22,500
Council for Catechetic	-	40,350	40,350	40,000
Council for Healthcare	-	15,370	15,370	3,738
Synodal Pathway - Porticus Grant	-	144,000	144,000	-
The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation Office Contribution	-	5,041	5,041	3,057
Synodal Pathways	-	1,550	1,550	260,000
Council for Vocations	-	-	-	8,182
Towards Peace	-	14,885	14,885	16,312
	1,509,696	1,945,826	3,455,522	7,214,510

4 (b) GRANT INCOME

Included within donations are the following grants received during the year:

	2023 €	2022 €
Health Service Executive (HSE) - Included within (IBDI)		
IBDI Programme (1 January 2023 - 31 December 2023)	72,191	69,750

Government of Ireland: Emigrant Support Programme - Included within (ICPO)

1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024

ICPO Caseworker 1 Grant	73,424	64,049
ICPO Caseworker 2 Grant	36,396	34,228
ICPO Caseworker England Grant	38,670	37,798
ICPO Hardship Fund	45,000	45,000
Family Information Days	19,000	-
Prison Visits	-	16,500
Other	15,000	8,000

Total Emigrant Support Programme

	227,490	205,575
Prior Year Underspend:	(8,418)	(14,651)
Carryover to future year		
ICPO staff training	1,082	5,830
Contribution to the design and print costs of the family resource booklet	-	1,500
Contribution to overheads, printing, stationery and newsletter	5,052	-
	(2,284)	(7,321)
	225,206	198,254

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
4 (c) INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES				
Royalty Income	8,113	-	8,113	104,165
	8,113	-	8,113	104,165

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
4 (d) INCOME FROM INVESTMENTS				
Interest earned on deposits	642	-	642	-
Loan Interest Receivable	197	-	197	13,049
Sundry Income	-	-	-	508
Gain/(Loss) + interest/dividends on Investments	173,125	-	173,125	(321,952)
	173,964	-	173,964	(308,395)

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
4 (e) OTHER INCOME				
Government Covid-19 Wage Supports	-	-	-	88,383
	-	-	-	88,383

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
5. RAISING FUNDS				
Staff costs	16,383	-	16,383	16,383
	16,383	-	16,383	16,383

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
6. DIRECT CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE				
Commission for Planning, Communications and Resources	861,661	200,009	1,061,670	1,048,590
Commission for Pastoral Care	48,326	738,996	787,322	689,450
Commission for Social Issues and International Affairs	126,013	244,756	370,769	3,843,068
Commission for Worship, Renewal and Faith Development	23,825	43,459	67,284	56,141
Commission for Catholic Education and Formation	142,619	40,350	182,969	207,753
CCSS T/A Towards Healing	-	252,000	252,000	243,000
Care of retired Bishops	-	599,615	599,615	657,865
Holy See (Universal Church)	-	45,500	45,500	45,500
National Board for Safeguarding Children	250,539	75,830	326,369	369,329
Loan Balance recovered - Irish College Rome	(50,000)	-	(50,000)	(60,000)
Provision against loan balance reduced - Irish College Rome	(185,010)	-	(185,010)	-
Provision against loan balance - Veritas	924,052	-	924,052	-
Provision against Royalties receivable - Veritas	101,532	-	101,532	-
Support Costs (note 7)	3,555	-	3,555	40,492
Governance Costs (note 8)	142,708	-	142,708	93,454
	2,389,820	2,240,515	4,630,335	7,234,642

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

6.1 GRANT FUNDING ACTIVITIES

Included within direct charitable expenditure are the following grants by activity:

	Grants to Institutions	2023	2022
	€	€	€
Commission for Pastoral Care	13,091	13,091	14,084
Commission for Social Issues and International Affairs	36,223	36,223	38,089
Commission for Catholic Education and Formation	46,889	46,889	49,938
National Board for Safeguarding Children	250,539	250,539	276,649
	346,742	346,742	378,760

The only material grants made during the year relate to an amount paid to Coimirce amounting to €250,539 (2022: €276,649).

7. SUPPORT COSTS

Support costs included within the Hierarchy General Purposes Trust include Staff costs, Office costs, Administration, and Training. Costs are charged to each activity on the basis listed below:

	Basis of apportionment	Governance	Charitable activities	2023	2022
		€	€	€	€
Staff Costs	Staff Time	-	-	-	9,658
Office Costs	Staff Time	187	3,555	3,742	32,965
		187	3,555	3,742	42,623

8. OTHER EXPENDITURE

	Note	Charitable activities	2023	2022
		€	€	€
Governance Costs	8.1	142,521	142,521	91,323
Support Costs	7	187	187	2,131
		142,708	142,708	93,454

8.1 Governance costs

	2023	2022
	€	€
Episcopal Conference Bishops Expenses	23,241	36,989
Legal and Professional fees	98,616	36,191
Audit	20,664	18,143
	142,521	91,323

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

9. STAFF COSTS AND DISCLOSURES

The average number of employees during the year was 29 (2022 - 30). The aggregate amounts paid to or on behalf of the staff are as follows:

	2023	2022
	€	€
Wages and salaries	1,260,871	1,317,217
Social welfare costs	128,714	134,575
Pension costs	98,401	88,012
	1,487,986	1,539,804

The number of employees whose remuneration was greater than €70,000 is as follows:

	2023	2022
Salary Range		
€70,000 - €80,000	1	1
€80,001 - €90,000	-	-
€90,001 - €100,000	-	1
€100,001 - €110,000	-	-
€110,001 - €120,000	1	-
€120,001 - €130,000	1	1

Employer contributions of up to 12% are paid to a defined contribution pension plan on behalf of certain employees of the organisation.

None of the Trustees received any remuneration for their services during the year. There were no gratuities or other payments made to any of the Trustees during the year; (2022: €Nil).

Key Management Remuneration

Key management personnel include the Chief Operating Officer, Executive Secretary, Director of Communications and Finance Manager for whom the total remuneration costs was €339,357 (2022: €328,778) in the year.

10. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT & Office Equipment €	Furniture & Fittings €	Total €
COST			
At 1 January 2023	187,820	104,393	292,213
Additions	2,980	1,471	4,451
At 31 December 2023	190,800	105,864	296,664
DEPRECIATION			
At 1 January 2023	171,385	103,551	274,936
Charge for the year	9,234	2,044	11,278
At 31 December 2023	180,619	105,595	286,214
NET BOOK VALUE			
At 31 December 2023	10,181	269	10,450
At 31 December 2022	16,435	842	17,277

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

11. FINANCIAL ASSETS

	2023	2022
	€	€
Valuation at start of year	2,301,488	2,668,258
Additions	541,876	871,669
Disposal proceeds	(448,734)	(912,815)
Realised Gain	17,507	58,386
Unrealised Gain/(Loss)	149,645	(384,010)
Valuation at end of year	2,561,782	2,301,488

Investments are stated at market value and are invested in a combination of bonds, equity, commodities, alternatives and property.

12. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023	2022
	€	€
Prepaid expenses and other debtors	155,906	513,191
World Meeting of Families 2018 Solidarity Funds	34,117	135,360
Term Loan - Veritas	200,000	256,000
	390,023	904,551

13. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR

	2023	2022
	€	€
Loan to Irish College Rome	370,020	420,020
Provision against Loan - Irish College Rome	(185,010)	(420,020)
Term Loan - Veritas	924,052	268,052
Provision against Loan - Veritas	(924,052)	-
World Meeting of Families 2018 Solidarity Funds	11,128	22,255
	196,138	290,307

Included within debtors is a provision against the recoverability of Loans made to Irish College Rome, previously carried at 100% of the outstanding loan balance at 31/12/2022, now reduced to 50% of the outstanding loan balance at 31/12/2023. . A sum of €50,000 has been received in the year as part payment of the outstanding loan. In the event that Irish College Rome returns to a position of solvency in the future, the recoverability of these loans will be reviewed with consideration made to further reducing this provision.

Included within debtors (amounts falling due after more than one year) is a provision against the recoverability of Loans made to Veritas standing at 100% of the outstanding long-term loan balance at 31/12/2023.

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

14. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023	2022
	€	€
Approved commission allocations and accrued expenses	206,215	212,753
World Meeting of Families 2018 Solidarity Funds	-	113,206
Payroll taxes	43,116	42,130
	249,331	368,089

15. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

	Prior year Closing Balance €	Transfer from restricted reserves €	Opening Balance €	Income €	Expenditure €	Closing Balance €
General Unrestricted funds	3,502,466	147,821	3,650,287	1,691,773	(2,406,203)	2,935,857

Unrestricted funds are funds that have been raised by the Trust and which may be used at the discretion of the Trust in furtherance of the objects of the charity.

16. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Prior year Closing Balance €	Transfer to unrestricted reserves €	Opening Balance €	Income €	Expenditure €	Closing Balance €
Episcopal Council for Emigrants	303,704	6,320	310,024	184,060	(131,973)	362,111
Pilgrimage Fund	299,289	-	299,289	-	-	299,289
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas	255,922	39,187	295,109	275,861	(413,429)	157,541
Synodal Pathways	260,000	(112,710)	147,290	1,550	(148,715)	125
Synodal Pathway - Porticus Grant	-	-	-	144,000	(10,962)	133,038
Eucharistic Congress	107,651	-	107,651	-	-	107,651
Safeguarding in Irish Catholic Churches	93,270	-	93,270	-	(75,830)	17,440
Council for Life	81,100	(1,100)	80,000	-	-	80,000
Care of Retired Bishops	79,829	(57,864)	21,965	600,000	(599,615)	22,350
Council for Healthcare	75,000	-	75,000	15,370	(56,090)	34,280
National Vocations Office	54,867	2,619	57,486	-	(43,459)	14,027
Episcopal Conference Drugs Initiative	42,652	(5,643)	37,009	73,371	(88,343)	22,037
Youth Ministry	32,318	-	32,318	-	-	32,318
CCSS "Towards Healing"	17,253	(17,253)	-	252,000	(252,000)	-
Year of Vocation	15,456	2,107	17,563	-	(17,563)	-
Episcopal Council for Immigrants	9,488	-	9,488	10,000	(1,876)	17,612
Ukrainian-Afgan Project (Benefact Trust)	6,315	-	6,315	185,775	(192,090)	-
Ukrainian Appeal	4,500	-	4,500	18,166	(22,666)	-
Holy See	2,839	(2,837)	2	45,498	(45,500)	-
Anscombe	648	(647)	1	32,399	(32,400)	-
The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation	228	-	228	5,041	(5,269)	-
Irish Council for Justice & Peace	-	-	-	30,000	(30,000)	-
Finance & General Purpose Council	-	-	-	17,500	(17,500)	-
Council for Catechetical	-	-	-	40,350	(40,350)	-
Towards Peace	-	-	-	14,885	(14,885)	-
	1,742,329	(147,821)	1,594,508	1,945,826	(2,240,515)	1,299,819

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

17. RECONCILIATION OF CASH FLOWS

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
17.1 OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Net movement in funds		(1,009,119)	(162,362)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation charges	10	11,278	10,058
Deposit Interest	4(d)	(642)	-
Realised gain on investments	11	(17,507)	(58,386)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on Investments	11	(149,645)	384,010
Decrease in debtors	12-13	608,697	33,176
(Decrease) in creditors	14	(118,758)	(24,828)
Net cash (used in)/generated from operating activities		(675,696)	181,668
17.2 FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES			
		2023 €	2022 €
Deposit Interest	4(d)	642	-
Net cash generated from financing activities		642	-
17.3 INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES			
		2023 €	2022 €
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	10	(4,451)	(7,810)
Receipts from sale of tangible fixed assets	10	-	315
Payments to acquire Investments	11	(541,876)	(871,669)
Receipts from sale of Investments	11	448,734	912,815
Net cash (used in)/generated from Investing activities		(97,593)	33,651

18. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	31-Dec 2022 €	Cash Flows €	31-Dec 2023 €
CASH AT BANK			
Operating bank accounts	1,939,447	(662,259)	1,277,188
Cash held in investment portfolio	159,814	(110,388)	49,426
	2,099,261	(772,647)	1,326,614

19. SUPPORTS TREATED AS OTHER INCOME

	2023 €	2022 €
Government Covid-19 Wage Supports	-	88,383
	-	88,383

The Government Wage Subsidy Schemes are treated in line with Section 24 of FRS 102 and in accordance with the Trust's accounting policies and is recognised in Other Income. In accordance with the accounting policy, these government supports are recognised based on the accrual model.

20. PENSIONS

The Irish Episcopal Conference operates a defined contribution scheme for employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the Irish Episcopal Conference in independently administered funds. The pension costs charged in respect of the scheme for the year was €98,401(2022 - €88,012).

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

21. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Trustees of the Hierarchy General Purposes Trust are members of the Irish Episcopal Conference ("IEC"). During the year, the Trust had transactions with its related entities, Coimirce and Veritas Communications. Both entities are also members of the IEC.

Coimirce is incorporated in the Republic of Ireland and is owned by its members which are appointed by IEC and The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland ("AMRI"). During the year ended 31st December 2023, IEC through HGPT provided funding of €250,539 (2022: €276,649) to Coimirce. The balance due to Coimirce at 31st December 2022 was €2,422 (2022: €143,664 due from Coimirce).

During the year ended 31st December 2023, IEC through HGPT provided funding of €600,000 (2022: €Nil) to Catechetical programmes in Veritas. During the year ended 31st December 2023 loans of €924,052 due from Veritas Communications have been provided against due to uncertainty as to its recoverability. At 31 December 2023 Veritas Communications has a repayable secured loan owing to HGPT of €200,000 (2022: €524,052). Interest of €197 (2022: €13,049) accrued on this loan by the end of the year.

HGPT has recognised royalty income of €Nil (2022: €101,532) from Veritas during the year. During the year ended 31 December 2023 royalties of €101,532 have been written off as irrecoverable. The balance due at 31st December 2023 in relation to royalties is €Nil.

22. POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

Hierarchy General Purposes Trust has provided additional loan facilities to Veritas of €1.6m. The new loans, commencing December 2023, are being provided subject to a second fixed charge over property held by Veritas at 7/8 Lower Abbey Street. The total loan plus interest is to be repaid in full no later than 31 December 2024.

There were no other significant subsequent events that require disclosure or adjustment to the financial statements.

23. APPROVAL OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 1 October 2024.