



IRISH CATHOLIC  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

Hierarchy General  
Purposes Trust

# Annual Report

2024

Financial Year Ended  
31 Dec 2024



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.**



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# 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
  - + Paul Connell
  - + William Crean
  - + Alphonsus Cullinan
  - + Thomas Deenihan
  - + Paul Dempsey (ceased to be an appointee, April 2024)
  - + Kevin Doran
  - + Lawrence Duffy
  - + Michael Duignan
  - + 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)
- + Thomas Deenihan
- Stephen Costello
- Sean O'Dwyer
- Hugh O'Connor (appointed 3 September, 2024)

Anthony Harbinson  
Aideen McGinley  
Brian McEnery  
Daire Hogan  
Geraldine McWeeney

## 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 2024

## 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 one other appointed bishop member and eight 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 periodically 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.**

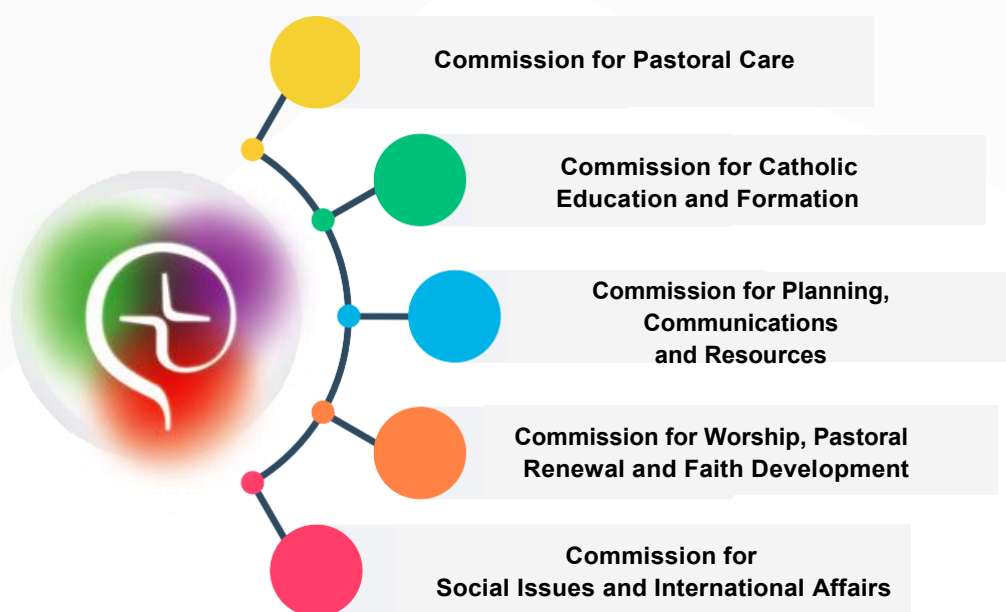
**The HGPT also relates closely to those agencies of the Bishops' Conference that exist as independent charities, including Veritas; Trócaire; the Overseas Development Agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland and, the three trustee companies on the island comprising the Accord Catholic marriage care 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, illustrated 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](http://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 that 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 Catholic Marriage Care Service on the island of Ireland comprises three autonomous incorporated companies limited by guarantee: Accord Northern Ireland CLG; Accord Dublin CLG; 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. The primary work this past year has been the roll out of the new Marriage Preparation Programme and the return to in-person courses, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, as distinct from online programmes. A number of courses have been offered on-line for those unable to attend an in-person programme.**

## 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 five 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 2018*. In the past year, the Council completed a thirty minute documentary on Care at the End of Life, which has been widely viewed on social media and screened on four international Networks. The Council promotes its work on X (formally Twitter) social media platform, @ChooseLifeIRL, on Facebook, Council for Life, and on its website: [www.chooselife.ie](http://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 involved in developing an academic module on Christian Bioethics, which is based on the Code of Ethical Standards and is of particular interest to healthcare professionals and hospital administrators. The module is now being offered online by Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth.**

## Towards Peace

**Established in 2014 by the Bishops' 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 Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh, Michael Router, was established by the Bishops' Conference in 2014. Bishop Ray Browne 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 Church celebration of the World Day of the Sick.**

**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 of Saint Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth. In 2024, it took place on the 7 December;**

**(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) Monitor compliance with continuing professional development requirements for chaplains. The HCB also administers a bursary that 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 Browne is the liaison bishop for the Network with the Bishops' 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.**



## 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 is its chair and Archbishop Dermot Farrell is vice-chair of the Council.**

**The Council was delighted to welcome new members during the year including Father Iomar Daniels, Stefano & Francesca Gargantini and Deirdre O'Rawe. A number of guest presentations were facilitated during the year, one of which included former member Brenda Drumm.**

**Another key moment in the life of the Council is the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, which fell on 28 July.**

**In response to the CSO statistics, the Council was delighted to welcome two guest speakers who analysed these statistics.**

**Continuing the conversation as to how the Council might embed the Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life into the Irish context, two very helpful webinars were offered by the Council during the year. There was a great response to these webinars by ecclesial movements and dioceses. It is the Council's intention, in the spring of 2025, to follow up the online webinars with an in-person gathering.**

**Work continued through the year on developing resources to support the work of the Council through developing a state of the art web presence and the printing of a CMF flyer telling the stories of several marriage and ecclesial movements that support marriage and the family, titled *Marriage Movements Accompanying Couples*. Such was the success of the latter, as the year turned, the Council initiated a reprint, and in doing so, added two more ecclesial groups to the fold over resource.**



## Council for Emigrants

**Bishop Paul Dempsey 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. Updated parish resources are provided annually as well as grant funding to organisations working with Irish emigrants.**

## Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

**The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) is a sub-committee of the Bishops' 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, Co Kildare, and in 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 its clients.**



Bishop Paul Dempsey recognising twenty years of dedicated service to ICPO by three exceptional volunteers – Eileen Boyle, Joan O'Cleirigh, and Sister Anne Sheehy, 26 November, 2024

## Council for Immigrants, Refugees and Migrants

**Bishop Donal Roche took over as interim Chair of this Council in October 2024. The Council 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.**

**During 2024, the Council coordinated much of the work in preparing a Pastoral Letter from the Bishops' Conference on matters concerning the welcoming of immigrants to Ireland. Entitled *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes?* this provided a reflection on the current immigration levels in Ireland in the light of Catholic Social Teaching. It provided an overview of the changed situation that Ireland now faces, including input from immigrants who have been welcomed in parishes around the country.**

**The Council has also established a network of diocesan liaison persons for immigrants and this group met in March 2024. Further meetings at regional level are being planned.**

## Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative (IBDI)

**The liaison bishop to the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative is Auxiliary Bishop Michael Router. 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 2024, the podcast series 'Leave Your Mark' continued in partnership with schools and agencies.**

## Chaplaincy to the Defence Forces

**The Head Chaplain to the Defence Forces in Ireland is a full member of the Commission for Pastoral Care and makes a valuable contribution to each meeting, often highlighting the deployment of peacekeepers in a troubled area, accompanied by a chaplain. It is important and encouraging to hear at first hand the invaluable contribution chaplains make to such assignments.**

## Apostleship of the Sea

**Bishop Denis Brennan (retired Bishop of Ferns) 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.**

## 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. The Liaison Bishop had the annual meeting with the Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Ms Caron McCaffrey, on 29 November 2024.**

**The Review of Prison Chaplaincy within the IPS is due for publication in Q1 of 2025.**

**The publication of the *Review of Prison Chaplaincy* within the IPS, will hopefully lend impetus to the finalisation of the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Bishops' Conference and the IPS.**

**The position of Head Chaplain which was advertised during 2024 and will be readvertised in 2025 upon consideration of the Review of Prison Chaplaincy within the IPS.**

**The Liaison Bishop has been invited to be part of a working group to consider the recommendations of the Research Report from Maynooth University on Foreign Prisoners in the care of the IPS.**

**The Liaison Bishop visited Limerick, Loughlin House, Mountjoy and Cork Prisons during 2024.**

**Outstanding items awaiting further progress:**

- ♦ a locum chaplain for Cork Prison in accord with MoU between Bishops' Conference and IPS;
- ♦ publication of Prison Chaplains' Report in accordance with GDPR requirements; and,
- ♦ the ongoing work of a Mental Health Task Force in response to the Inspector of Prisons Report of March 2024.

**Finally, the Liaison Bishop continues to address issues arising from the repurposing of the Chapel at Mountjoy Prison and has been invited to its reopening on 16 March 2025.**



## COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL ISSUES AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, is the Chair of the Commission for Social Issues and International Affairs. He is also the Chair of the Council for Justice & Peace. 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 Bishops' 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. 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.**

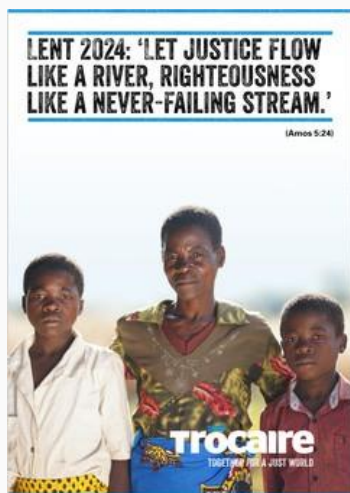
**Key activities of the Council during 2024 included:**

- continued 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 2024, the Council made submissions on the wars in the Holy Land and in Ukraine, housing and homelessness, the cost of living crisis, migrants rights, human trafficking and slavery, as well as facilitating messages from the Bishops on the occasion of General Elections in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

**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. Working with partners, it has been active in bringing relief to people affected by the plight of wars in the Holy land and Ukraine, as well as in other troubled regions of the world. 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](http://www.trocaire.org)**



Trócaire's 2024 Lenten Campaign: 'Let Justice Flow Like a River, Righteousness Like a Never-Failing Stream.' (Amos 5:24)

### Council for European Affairs

Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA is the Chair of this Council. In 2024, 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, Executive Secretary for Social issues & International Affairs & Coordinator of Council for Justice & Peace. 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.

### National Mission Council

The National Mission Council (NMC) convened three times during 2024 under the leadership of Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly. The Council welcomed new members, addressed critical mission and pastoral initiatives, and advanced discussions on synodality and international partnerships.

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; and,
- 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.

This report summarises the key activities, decisions, and developments throughout the year.

#### Membership and Governance

Three new members joined the Council in 2024:

- Mr Gerard Gallagher, Acting Secretary General at AMRI
- Mr Robert Duggan, Diocesan Director for Missions in Waterford and Lismore
- Monsignor Colum Curry, Diocesan Director for Missions in Down and Connor

The Council expressed gratitude to outgoing members and recognised the contributions of all involved in advancing the mission.



## Mission and Outreach Activities:

- **The theme for World Mission Sunday 2024 was "Go and invite everyone to the banquet" (Mt 22:9). The RTÉ televised Mass for World Mission Sunday was prepared and celebrated co-operatively between Missio Ireland, AMRI and Mísean Cara. The chief celebrant of the Mass was Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore Diocese.**
- **Global Engagement: Throughout the year, Missio Ireland shared its mission-related projects with the National Mission Council. Both Viatores Christi and the Legion of Mary also shared the work and projects of their missionaries and members overseas.**

**Youth and Community Involvement: The Presentation Brothers LEAF initiative in Cork, Missio Ireland's promotional activity at the Youth 2000 conference, and AMRI's young men and women religious at the National Ploughing Championships, are some of the main highlights throughout 2024.**

## Synodal Pathway and Church Renewal

**The NMC engaged actively with the Irish Synodal Pathway and the broader universal synodal process including:**

- **Facilitative Leadership Training Programme: A new initiative trained nearly 200 participants across six venues in Christian leadership and discernment.**
- **National Synodal Team: Formed in April 2024 to oversee assemblies and working groups, ensuring diverse representation.**
- **Towards October 2024: Contributions from Irish dioceses were synthesised and submitted to Rome, reflecting on themes such as baptism, women's roles, and co-responsibility.**

## Reports from Representative Groups

- **AMRI: focused on:**
  1. **its submission for the Universal Synod,**
  2. **fostering young religious through events, and**
  3. **supporting returned missionaries.**
- **Viatores Christi: Emphasised strategic planning for overseas missions, acknowledging funding challenges, and supporting their lay missionaries already overseas.**
- **Legion of Mary: Continued its street apostolate efforts and welcomed new members, including asylum seekers undertaking faith instruction.**
- **Spiritans Fathers: Implemented the "Circles of Healing" online programme for survivors of abuse and prepared for their provincial chapter.**
- **LEAF Project: Appointed a new Director and continued to support young adult leadership formation.**

## Challenges and Future Directions

**Key challenges identified include:**

- **Addressing the diminishing number of clergy and fostering lay leadership.**
- **Responding to the ongoing scoping inquiry affecting congregations.**
- **Securing sustainable funding for mission and pastoral projects.**
- **Deepening synodal engagement with other networks.**

## Conclusion

**The National Mission Council remains committed to fostering mission awareness, supporting vulnerable communities, and embracing the call to synodality. The Council extends gratitude to all its members and partners for their dedication and looks forward to continued collaboration in 2025.**



Members of Council Social Issues & International Affairs and the Council for Justice & Peace meeting with Cardinal Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to hear at first hand of the suffering being experienced in the Holy Land, 19 July, 2024.



# COMMISSION FOR WORSHIP, PASTORAL RENEWAL AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT

The Commission is chaired by Bishop Fintan Gavin. 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 Bishops' Conference.

## Council for Vocations

**The Council for Vocations is chaired by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan and Bishop Laurence Duffy is also a member. Along with the National Vocations Office, the Council seeks to promote vocations to diocesan priesthood in Ireland. It arranges in-service training for Vocations Directors and information seminars for prospective candidates for priesthood in dioceses as well as many other events aimed at the promotion, support and encouragement of priestly vocations.**



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 and deals with matters relating to the life and ministry of priests and permanent deacons. The other Episcopal members are Bishop Fintan Monahan and Bishop Denis 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, Bishop McGuckian, Bishop Duignan and Bishop Donal Roche. 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. The other Episcopal member is Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ. The Council advises the Episcopal Conference on matters liturgical. The Advisory Committee on Church Music, the Advisory Committee on Sacred Art and Architecture, *An Coiste Comhairleach um an Liotúirge in Gaeilge* 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, 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, in both civil jurisdictions, 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 Catholic education bodies, the Department of Education and Youth 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 2024 on the theme 'Catholic Schools – Alive in Christ';**
- **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, and in the negotiations of the entry of CPSMA into the CEP structures;**
- **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;**

- **Finalising negotiations 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.**

Priorities for 2025 include:

- **The introduction of the Senior-Cycle RSE resource;**
- **Final agreement with ETBI on a statement of effective practice in regard to Catholic ethos for Designated Community Colleges and the introduction of same to those colleges; and,**
- **The entry of CPSMA into the structures of CEP.**

### 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. The Council articulates policy and vision for the catechetical needs of Ireland on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. It liaises with the Episcopal Commission for Education and Formation, 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:

- **The Ministry of Catechist: The National Guidelines for the Ministry of Catechist, *Fan into a Flame* was published and distributed to dioceses, with the document and the video accompanying the document hosted on the website of the Council for Catechetics. Work was completed regarding next steps in terms of diocesan formation, pastoral placements, and the role of a National Training;**
- **Synodal Pathway: Members of the Council had contributed to the listening phases of the Synodal pathway during 2021-2023 and received an update on the final session of the Synod on Synodality which was held in Rome in October;**
- **Certificate in Religious Studies: Following an approach by Bishop Markus Stock of the Catholic Education Service of England and Wales regarding the development of a common Certificate in Religious Studies that would be common to Ireland, Scotland, and England, a number of online meetings have been held, led on behalf of Ireland by the National Director for Catechetics;**
- **Recognition of Qualifications to teach Religious Education: A revised Recognition document was drafted during 2024. The revised document takes into account the situation in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. The situation of anomalies of those teachers qualified before 2011 and/or qualified outside Ireland who have been teaching RE for a significant period of time but who do not have the CCRS was addressed and a document issued;**
- **Wellbeing and Catholic Schools. The guidance document on Wellbeing and Catholic Schools is produced by the Council for Catechetics;**
- **Credible Catholic, the online resource for Senior Cycle RE: The National Director for Catechetics was involved in updating the content of Credible Catholic and in providing training for teachers using Credible Catholic;**
- **Sacramental Preparation in Parishes: A Working Group of the Council for Catechetics drafted a document in relation to sacramental preparation in parishes for children preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and circulated it for feedback;**

- **RCIA. The Council has drafted a RCIA National Policy and Guidelines for the island of Ireland. Feedback has been received from the Council for Liturgy. Work is continuing in developing the text;**
- **Publications. Work continues in relation to catechetical publications such as *New Horizons* online resource for Senior Cycle Non-Exam RE prepared by Veritas. Four online modules were submitted for approval by the Council for Catechetics by the end of 2024; and,**
- **GRACE Interim Report on Catholic Schools. A summary of the GRACE Interim Report was communicated to the Council for Education for their attention and a sub-group meeting between the two Councils was organized online.**

Priorities for 2025 include:

In 2025, the Council for Catechetics will be merged with the Council for Pastoral Renewal to form a new Council for Evangelisation, Catechetics, and Pastoral Renewal.

Some of the continuing work of the Council will include:

- **Considerations of the *Final Document of the October 2024 XVI Synodal Assembly of Bishops*;**
- **Promotion and roll out of Ministry of Catechist nationally;**
- **Development of RSE resource for Senior Cycle;**
- **CPD provision for teachers in Catholic schools;**
- **Develop framework specification document on Senior Cycle Non-Exam RE and provide online training for Credible Catholic resource that will be delivered by teachers for teachers; and,**
- **Develop a national policy document on Sacramental Preparation in Parishes and RCIA.**



## 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 the 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 July 2024 where the guest speaker was Dr Nicola Brady, General Secretary of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. The meeting considered the value of east-west dialogue among Churches and faith communities, mirroring the potential of the Good Friday Agreement in the political and constitutional area.**

**During the year, Dr Gary Carville, secretary of the Council for Ecumenism, engaged with the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland at a number of levels, including participation in quarterly meetings with Ecumenism Officers of other Churches across the two islands. He also presented to the Churches Refugee Network, the Pastoral Letter of the Irish Catholic Bishops on Immigration and Hospitality, which was published in October 2024, *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes? Exploring what hospitality for migrant people means in contemporary Ireland.***

**On 12-13 November, the 34th Irish Inter-Church meeting was held at Dromantine Retreat & Conference Centre, Co Down, on the theme of 'Finding the Face of God in One Another'. The range of speakers from across Ireland and Europe explored the dynamics of fracturing and healing in Ireland today and how listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us and the wisdom from the next generation can help us on that journey.**

**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.**

**Looking ahead to 2025, the Council is conscious that it is a Jubilee Year based on hope. It is also the 1,700th anniversary of the first ecumenical council of the Church – the Council of Nicaea. This council gave us what became the Nicene Creed. 2025 also marks the 60th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. The will be above will be reflected in the activities of the Council of Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue and in the work of local inter-Church partnerships and groups across the country.**

## Council for Doctrine

**The Council for Doctrine is chaired by Bishop Brendan Leahy and is at the service of the Bishops' Conference which assists bishops in their duty to safeguard the integrity of Christian faith and morals. It fulfils 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. Other Episcopal members are: Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop Fintan Gavin, and Bishop Niall Coll.**

## The Theology Committee

**The Theology Committee is chaired by Bishop Kevin Doran and the second episcopal member is Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ. 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; and, it 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; 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 three 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 Kieran O'Reilly SMA, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan and Bishop Paul Dempsey. The Council comprises the Catholic Communications Office (CCO), Father Bill Kemmy (iCatholic), Petra Conroy and Father Paul Clayton Lee, Editor of *Intercom*.**

**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 2024, 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.**

**In terms of raising awareness of the pastoral work of the Bishops' Conference, its agencies and commissions, during 2024 the CCO published and promoted the 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 376,400 (89,700 in 2023); on X/Twitter there were 17,400 followers (16,700 followers in 2023), and on Instagram there were 2,517 followers (1,990 followers in 2023) posted 221 publicity statements to its 1,509 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 one to two thousand 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, and joined the new application Bluesky.**

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

- **On 23 January Bishop Kevin Doran issued a statement on the new ethics guide of the Medical Council**
- **On 11 February, World Day of the Sick, Bishop Michael Router published a short video that reflected on Pope Francis' message for the day and the human need for communion and relationships**
- **On 9 July the Bishops' Conference launched a video drawing on the experience of family members and healthcare professionals, exploring how we can accompany people in the final stages of life, called *Through the Valley*.**
- **On 25 November the Bishops' Conference issued a statement for General Election 2024**
- **On 27 November Bishop Martin Hayes issued a statement on prisoner's rights in support of freedom of religious expression**
- **On 2 December the Archdiocese of Armagh issued a response to the disruption of Mass in Saint Patrick's Cathedral**
- **On 3 December the Bishops' Conference launched the online countdown to Jubilee Year of Hope in Ireland**
- **On 5 December the Bishops' Conference launched their 2024 digital Advent Calendar**



- On 7 December Archbishop Eamon Martin attended the reopening ceremony of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris
- On 13 December the Bishops' Conference issued a statement asking people of Ireland to sign an international letter calling for peace in the Holy Land
- On 16 December Archbishops of Armagh Eamon Martin and John McDowell issued their 2024 Christmas message
- On 27 December Bishop Fintan Monahan launched Ireland's Jubilee 2025 webpage
- On 31 December Archbishop Eamon Martin issued his 2025 New year's message
- On 31 December the Church issued their 2025 New Year's message

The main communication themes of 2024 included; 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; overseas development; religious intolerance and persecution of Christians; pastoral support for migrants and refugees; support for Irish prisoners overseas; ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue; justice and peace issues; and, appointment of bishops by Pope Francis.

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.

#### Planning ahead

In 2025, the Council for Communications plans to launch a new digital platform to enhance how the Irish Episcopal Conference shares the Good News and the impactful work of the Irish Church, inviting all to engage with and benefit from this mission. This initiative, rooted in evangelisation, faith formation, and Catholic education, will establish a trusted national platform and in-house production agency for consistent delivery of programming and resources across the Church.

Also during 2025 the Catholic Communications Office will host a seminar on the theme of 'Christian

Hope' as a contribution to the Universal Church's Jubilee Year of Hope. The CCO will mark its fiftieth year of operation in 2025.

#### 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 member is Bishop Tom Deenihan.

#### 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.

Every year more parishes and Dioceses engage with the Grants Office to access philanthropic, corporate and statutory funding for a wide variety of projects, reducing local fundraising challenges. In 2024, the Grants Office partnered with parishes and dioceses to secure over €2.4 million in grants for vital community projects. Through information, support and guidance provided by the Grants Officer, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference is working to enhance places of worship, modernise gathering spaces, foster faith-based programs, drive positive social change across the island of Ireland, and build a more sustainable future.

#### Council for Research & Development

Archbishop O'Reilly is chairman of the Council which 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 2024 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;** and,
- **The ‘Laudato Si Working Group’.**

## Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland

### Background

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 has been “What does God want from the Church in Ireland at this time?” In that same month, Pope Francis announced a Universal Synod on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.”

Between October 2021 and October 2024, the Steering Committee, Task Group (and later, the National Synodal Team), and General Secretary prepared and led nationwide listening and consultation processes on the theme of the Universal Synod and its subsequent requests. 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 Secretariat of the Synod in Rome.

Following the first Assembly of the Universal Synod in October 2023, further outreach took place in Ireland to prepare a response called *Towards October 2024 - Summary of Contributions from Dioceses and Groups of the Catholic Church in Ireland*. The Universal Synod concluded at the closing ceremony of the second assembly on 27 October 2024 and an implementation phase has begun with the *Final Document of the Universal Synod* as guidance.

The Irish Synodal Pathway has made significant strides in its mission to enhance synodality within the Catholic Church in Ireland. Throughout 2024, key initiatives were undertaken to strengthen leadership, promote participation, and foster a co-responsible Church. The following highlights our achievements, challenges, and the roadmap ahead:

#### 1. Universal Synod

The Bishops’ Conference actively engaged with the Universal Synod’s process, responding to the Secretariat’s call for deeper reflection on the theme: “How can we be a synodal Church in mission?” In January 2024, regional

meetings were held to facilitate discussions among dioceses and representatives from the ecclesial movements and groups. A national document (called *Towards October 2024 - Summary of Contributions from Dioceses and Groups of the Catholic Church in Ireland*) was prepared, incorporating feedback from these discussions, along with best synodal practices taking place in Ireland. This document was sent to the Secretariat of the Universal Synod in May 2024.



Father Declan Hurley, Chairperson of the National Synodal Team, and Julieann Moran, General Secretary for the Irish Synodal Pathway

Key milestones in this process included:

- **January 2024: Regional meetings to next steps in Universal Synod.**
- **25 March 2024: Final submission of diocesan contributions received.**
- **11-12 April 2024: Discernment and Writing Group prepared draft synthesis.**
- **22 April 2024: Presentation of the draft submission at regional meetings.**
- **15 May 2024: Submission of the final document to the Secretariat of the Synod.**

Bishops Brendan Leahy of Limerick and Alan McGuckian of Down and Connor were the two bishop representatives from the Irish Episcopal Conference attending the Universal Synod in Rome during October 2024, as voting members. The General Secretary for the Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Ms Julieann Moran, attended some of the significant events during the final week of the Synod including the closing moments of the Synod in the Synod Hall when the Holy Father announced that the Final Document of the Synod would be its teaching document rather than a post-synodal exhortation. With the assistance of Father Bill Kemmy from iCatholic, a suite of video resources (including interviews from Synod participants) were recorded and published by the Irish Synodal Pathway on [www.synod.ie](http://www.synod.ie).



A collage of video resources, recorded in Rome by iCatholic after the Assembly on Synod on Synodality closed

## 2. World Meeting of Parish Priests for the Universal Synod

**Five Irish priests participated in the World Meeting of Parish Priests for the Universal Synod (28 April to 2 May 2024) in Sacrofano, Italy, joining over 200 priests from 99 countries in prayerful discussions on synodality. The gathering emphasised the importance of listening, sharing experiences, and fostering a Church that is both welcoming and mission-oriented, culminating in a personal meeting with Pope Francis. The Irish delegation expressed a desire for similar opportunities for their fellow priests in Ireland and the National Synodal Team has engaged with the Bishops' Conference's Council for Clergy to further this request.**

### 3. Regional Meetings with Diocesan Synodal Teams

**The regional meetings held in January and April 2024 served as forums for discussion, training, and preparation for the next stages of the Universal Synod and the Irish Synodal Pathway. Materials provided included:**

- **PowerPoint presentations;**
- **Video updates on synodal progress;**
- **Resource booklets for local consultations;**
- **Updates on international synodal resources;**
- **Prayer resources based on the Jubilee Year theme of hope; and,**
- **Video resources reviewing the 17 themes from the Catholic Church in Ireland.**

## 4. Formation of the National Synodal Team

**A major milestone in 2024 was the establishment of a new National Synodal Team to oversee the next phase of the Irish Synodal Pathway. The team, chaired by Father Declan Hurley, met for the first time on 29 April 2024 with monthly meetings in place on an ongoing basis. Its primary responsibilities include:**

- **Coordinating diocesan synodal teams and regional meetings (online and in-person);**
- **Overseeing the Facilitative Leadership Training Programme;**
- **Preparing for the Pre-synodal Assembly on 18 October 2025; and,**
- **Preparing for the first National Synodal Assembly on 17 October 2026.**

Membership of the team includes:

- **Irish Episcopal Conference Representatives**
- **Diocesan Representatives**
- **Lay Women and Lay Men**
- **Priests and Deacons**
- **Religious men and women (AMRI)**
- **Some staff from the Councils, Commissions and Agencies of the IEC**

### 5. Facilitative Leadership Training Programme

**The National Synodal Team, in collaboration with grant sponsors, Porticus, successfully launched a Facilitative Leadership Training Programme for a synodal Church in Ireland. The programme was developed based on a needs analysis conducted by an independent researcher in March 2023, which identified key skills and competencies that are desirable for leadership in a synodal Church. The training, designed to address these needs, was rolled out in eight locations:**

- **Mallow, Co. Cork (23-24 February)**
- **Knock, Co. Mayo (8-9 March)**
- **Drumalis, Co. Antrim (14-15 March)**
- **Knock, Co. Mayo (12-13 April)**
- **Carlow, Co. Carlow (25-26 April)**
- **Lough Derg, Co. Donegal (9-10 May)**
- **Knock, Co. Mayo (4-5 October)**
- **Knock, Co. Mayo (18-19 October)**

The training consisted of:

- **One online preparatory session**
- **Eight in-person residential sessions (over two days) across various locations**
- **Two follow-up online sessions**
- **A final in-person gathering (21 September 2024) to consolidate learning and to present a module on accompaniment and outreach**

**A total of 250 participants completed the training, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participants reported a renewed sense of mission and confidence to become a co-responsible leader in their parish / diocesan / group setting.**



**The key skills where participants indicated most growth was in the areas of discernment, *Conversations in the Spirit*, and practical leadership skills for facilitating gatherings.**

**The facilitators of the in-person and online sessions of the training programme were:**

- Ms Julieann Moran
- Mr Jim Deeds
- Mrs Paula McKeown
- Rev Prof Michael A. Conway
- Mr Danny Curtin (for the one-day gathering in Maynooth)

**The training was well-received, equipping participants with the necessary skills to lead and support synodal initiatives in their respective areas. The programme's funding, provided by Porticus, ensured accessibility for all participants and ensured that participants represented the following groups:**

- Lay Women
- Lay Men
- Young Adults
- Priests
- Deacons
- Bishops
- Women Religious
- Men Religious
- Youth Ministers
- Diocesan Employees
- Diocesan and Parish Volunteers
- Members of Parish Pastoral Councils and Diocesan Pastoral Councils
- Members of Ecclesial Movements
- Members of Marriage Movements
- Members of Lay Associations
- Irish
- Northern Irish
- British
- Other international / ethnic groups (including African, South American, American, Asian)

#### 6. Communications and Engagements

**As part of the ongoing work of promoting synodality and the Irish Synodal Pathway, the General Secretary, along with members of the National Synodal Team, 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 Episcopal Conference, awareness raising was also undertaken using online and social media, video resources, press releases and media engagements.**



Members of parishes, dioceses, Church movements and associations participating in facilitative leadership training sessions for the Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024.

**Activities in 2024 in preparation for the pre-synodal assembly included:**

- Establishing and supporting diocesan synodal teams; and,
- Hosting regional gatherings in Advent 2024 to prepare for local consultations.

**Future activities include:**

- Conducting nationwide consultations in Spring 2025; and,
- Collating responses for presentation at a Pre-Synodal Assembly in October 2025.

**8. Evaluation and Reporting to Stakeholders**  
**As part of our commitment to transparency, evaluations were conducted throughout the year.**

**Key reports included:**

- Interim report from the training programme submitted to the Bishops' Conference and Porticus (The General Secretary and Grants Application Officer met with Porticus representatives in July 2024 to provide a mid-year progress update. A full evaluation report will be submitted in 2025);
- Pre and post-training assessments for the Facilitative Leadership Training Programme (shared with participants on the training programme);
- Minutes from all meetings of the National Synodal Team;
- Memos and reports from the General Secretary of the Synodal Pathway to the Bishops' Conference; and,
- Financial audits.



## Conclusion

**2024 was a year of growth, collaboration, and preparation for the future of the Irish Synodal Pathway. With a fully established National Synodal Team, the successful completion of the Facilitative Leadership Training Programme, and the ongoing engagement with the Universal Synod, the Catholic Church in Ireland is well-positioned to continue its synodal journey.**

## Planning Ahead

**Looking ahead to 2025 and 2026, the focus of the Synodal Pathway in Ireland, will be on deepening participation at the local level, and ensuring that all voices are heard in the lead-up to Ireland's first National Synodal Assembly in 2026.**

**During the spring of 2025, diocesan and parish gatherings will bring people together to review the themes that emerged from listening in Ireland and, in the spirit of hope, identify priorities for action to be considered at future synodal assemblies here in Ireland.**

**In the autumn, the Church will host its Pre-Synodal Assembly in October. Throughout 2025 the journey of the Irish Synodal Pathway will be informed by the theme of "Hope," thus reflecting the spirit of next year's Jubilee Year of Hope for the Universal Church.**

## 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 Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries & Religious of Ireland (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.**

**In 2024 the NBSCCCI published the revised *Child Safeguarding Policy, A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024*, together with associated guidance. The revised policy came into effect on 11 June, and was promoted through various induction events.**

**The Annual Report of the National Board, which covers the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, recorded that in 2023/24 the NBSCCCI received notification of 252 allegations against Church personnel, which is an increase of one from the previous year. Whilst the majority of allegations relate to 1960s, 70s and 80s, we note four allegations related to the year 2000 or later.**

**In the same reporting period 5,093 people were trained in Child Safeguarding by National Board registered trainers.**

**The National Board said farewell to Chairperson Garret Sheehan, CEO Teresa Devlin, Director of Safeguarding Peter Kieran and Sister Colette Stevenson during the year. The Board are grateful for their sterling dedication to ensuring children continue to be safe in the Catholic Church in Ireland and we wish them a long and healthy retirement.**

## Planning ahead

**In 2025 the National Board will host a Conference on 3-5 September in Athlone, with the theme of 'Towards Promoting a Restorative and Transitional Justice approach to engaging with victims and survivors of abuse'.**



The recruitment of a new Director of Safeguarding will also facilitate the development of a revised methodology for conducting reviews of safeguarding practice in Dioceses and Congregations and those reviews will commence in late 2025. For more details see [www.safeguarding.ie](http://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](http://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.

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. A group of eight, comprises members of the Bishops' Conference, AMRI, the National Board for Safeguarding, as well as two survivors, a psychologist and a member of Aid to the Church in Need.

Towards Peace works collaboratively with both the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church and with Towards Healing.

In the light of the involvement of Towards Peace with the synodal process the Oversight Committee came together with an independent facilitator to discern its purpose and plan a way forward.

Ultimately the discernment process revealed: "The purpose of the Oversight Committee of Towards Peace is to reach out, connect and listen to survivors of abuse and their families in order to open pathways to healing, empowerment and peace in keeping with the vision of Towards Peace."

The following objectives were proposed and agreed:

- To enable safe spaces for difficult conversations on abuse in the Church;
- To provide guidance and support for the Coordinator and Spiritual Companions; and,
- To create sub-committees as appropriate to achieve tasks in a timely manner.

This work has been ongoing throughout 2024 specifically in relation to ongoing training about the impact of spiritual abuse, with Towards Healing therapists and the Maynooth Seminarians, as well as working on the issue of restorative justice with Dr Marie Keenan of UCD, and Joseph John's Saint Peter's Project Mintaro Adelaide South Australia, in relation to:

- The collapse of trust in the Church;
  - Need to sensitise Church Leadership and Church Membership;
  - The sense of an internal resistance to the external tensions and trauma of abuse; and,
  - People's ongoing search for meaning.
- The work is ongoing and will continue into 2025.
- Towards Peace reports to the Bishops' Commission for Pastoral Care and its website is [www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie)



## The *Laudato Si'* Working Group (LSWG)

The *Laudato Si'* Working Group (LSWG) originated as a subcommittee of the Council for Catechetics and was formed in late 2015 in response to the educational implications of *Laudato Si'*. The LSWG, aware of the Spirit working in all of creation, promotes care for our common home within the Catholic Church in Ireland and wider society.

The role of the LSWG is as follows:

- To promote the message of *Laudato Si'* through formal and informal educational settings leading to ecological education and conversion; and
- To continue to encourage a spirituality of active hope within the Irish Church so that an integral ecology can be developed across all disciplines and ecclesial bodies.

2024 Activities: Care for Our Common Home Resources and webpage: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/>

In 2024, the LSWG continued to resource 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 on the theme of: "To Hope and Act for Creation". These included Sunday liturgy notes, a leaflet on biodiversity, Tree Planting resource, Creation Walk Moments, prayerful video reflections, Blessings for Pets for Saint Francis' feast day and meditations which encourage the development of an ecological spirituality. A new addition to the resources this year were six PowerPoint presentations created for Second-Level school assemblies for use during the Season of Creation.

### Return to Nature Project

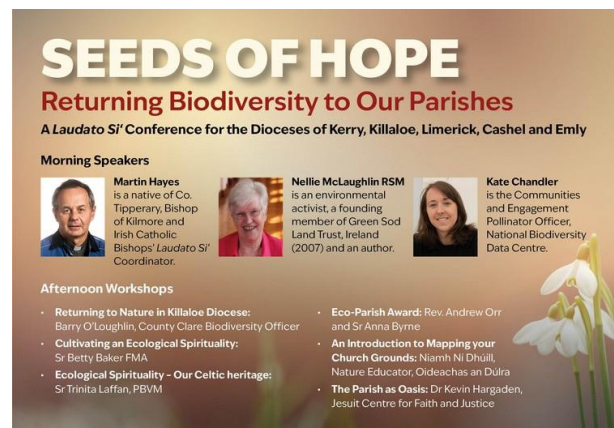
In March 2023, following a proposal from the LSWG, the Bishops' Conference agreed that they would invite parishes to return 30% of church grounds to nature by 2030. The LSWG has prepared an extensive set of resources for parishes for this initiative, in conjunction with the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The resources are available at: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/>

In 2023-4, a pilot project ran in the Diocese of Killaloe, thanks to the involvement of the Clare County Council Biodiversity Officer, Barry O'Loughlin, who piloted 12 parishes for "Return to

Nature". Growing on this, the LSWG in collaboration with the Heritage Council, are in the process of teaming up County Council biodiversity officers around the country with their respective dioceses.

Bishop Martin Hayes addressed the AGM of Biodiversity Officers in September 2024, which took place in Galway. There has been huge interest in this project with biodiversity officers in Galway and Cork linking up with parishes in their locality. Mr O'Loughlin's project in County Clare has been nominated for a national award and he is preparing to engage with a further four parishes in the area on *Return to Nature*, bringing his total to 16. The project has now taken on an ecumenical perspective with the inclusion of some Church of Ireland parishes in County Clare. Bishop Hayes and Jane Mellett of Trócaire continue to liaise with the Heritage Council on this initiative nationally.

'Seeds of Hope' - a *Laudato Si'* Conference for the Dioceses of Limerick, Killaloe, Kerry and Cashel & Emlly



Poster used to promote the Seeds of Hope event

The LSWG will host the fourth Diocesan *Laudato Si'* Conference in Mallow on 25 January 2025. This event was six months in planning in 2024, in conjunction with a local inter-diocesan *Laudato Si'* Group from the four dioceses in Munster. Over 140 people gathered in the Springfort Hotel, Mallow, for this event, which was a collaboration from these Munster Dioceses, LSWG, Trócaire and the *Laudato Si'* Movement.



The theme, “Seeds of Hope-Returning Biodiversity to our Parishes” aimed to help parish communities respond to the biodiversity crisis and the *Return to Nature* initiative noted above. Keynote speakers included Barry O’Loughlin, Bishop Hayes, and Kate Chandler from National Biodiversity Data Centre. There were practical workshops to help participants put *Laudato Si’* into action locally which included; workshops on eco-spirituality; Celtic spirituality; mapping your church grounds; the Eco-Parish Award; and, the Parish as Oasis. The LSWG also had a ‘marketplace’ of organisations present to advise participants and offer support for their activities. Future conferences are planned for 2025 in the Munster region.

**UN Climate Change Conference COP29**  
The LSWG helped to draft statements at key moments of the year such as the Season of Creation and COP29. To read the statement by Bishop Hayes for COP29, please visit: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2024/11/10/bishop-hayes-i-ask-political-leaders-at-cop29-to-ensure-climate-targets-are-implemented-and-for-a-just-transition/>

**Divestment**  
The LSWG continues to liaise with dioceses on fossil fuel divestment. To date, 12 Irish dioceses have announced their divestment. In November 2024, two Irish institutional divestments were announced: the Diocese of Down and Connor and the Catholic Education Service Trust: <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/a-moral-imperative-global-faith-institutions-say-investing-in-fossil-fuels-no-longer-ethical-amid-extreme-climate-biodiversity-and-humanitarian-impacts/>. These announcements are coordinated in collaboration with Trócaire, the *Laudato Si’* Movement and other faith-based organisations. A full list of divested institutions, including religious orders, is also available here: [www.divestmentdatabase.org](http://www.divestmentdatabase.org)

A further four dioceses have listed their intention to announce divestment. This work will continue in conjunction with the global *Laudato Si’* Movement.

Supporting the *Laudato Si’* Network in Ireland During 2024 many trained *Laudato Si’* Animators (LSAs) in Ireland completed courses with Trócaire and/or through the **Laudato Si’ Movement**. 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’s *Laudato Si’* Officer and wider Church Team in collaboration with the LSWG and LSM. This support includes:

- monthly *Laudato Si’* animator meetings (online);
- publishing a monthly newsletter through Trócaire (to 500 people);
- supporting care for creation groups, for example in hosting a screening of *The Letter* film or local workshops on *Laudato Si’* or *Return to Nature*;
- linking with Eco-Congregation and the *Laudato Si’* Movement to support parishes who wish to explore becoming an Eco-Parish or engage with the **Laudato Si’ Action Platform**;
- hosting retreats on cultivating an ecological spirituality;
- responding to speaking requests at events around the country;
- hosting regional encounters of *Laudato Si’* animators in 2024; and,
- *Laudato Si’* book clubs and courses have reached 900 people across Ireland since March 2020.

Feast of Creation Conference in Assisi – December 2024

Reports on the conference held in Assisi in December 2024 to consider a proposal for the Solemnity of Creation are awaited, for consideration by the Council for Liturgy, the LSWG and the Bishops’ Conference. A copy of the Assisi Conference report is available here: [www.bit.ly/assisi-2024-report](http://www.bit.ly/assisi-2024-report)



### ***The Letter – A Message for our Earth***

**On 4 October 2022, YouTube Originals released the film-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 in Rome and also in Áras an Uachtaráin in 2022, LSWG members, in association with the *Laudato Si'* Movement and Trócaire, organised 70 screenings around the country in parishes, universities and schools. Each screening was followed by a question and answers session that encourage people to get involved locally in order to further promote *Laudato Si'* and care for creation. Overall, the response to the movie has been enormous, with 8.5 million views on YouTube Originals. The *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/>**

### **Planning ahead**

Top line overview of plans for 2025 include:

- **Celebration of the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* in May/June 2025;**
- **A fifth inter-diocesan *Laudato Si'* Conference;**
- ***Return to Nature* project to expand into five dioceses with the link up of biodiversity officers and their respective dioceses;**
- **Ongoing resources for key moments of the year such as *Laudato Si'* Week (May) and the Season of Creation (September);**
- **Ongoing support for the divestment of dioceses from the fossil fuel industry;**
- **Ongoing support for the *Laudato Si'* Network in Ireland and for the growth of this movement at parish level;**
- **Responding to requests for workshops, events, courses in relation to *Laudato Si'*; and,**

**A review is underway in Trocaire exploring the impact of the *Laudato Si'* project to date. This report will also include stories of hope which will be shared over the course of 2025 to mark both the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* and the Universal Jubilee Year of Hope.**



## Overview of the pastoral work of the Irish Episcopal Conference during 2024

### January

**On 5 January, the Catholic bishops of Ireland expressed deep sorrow over the death of Bishop William Lee, who served as Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. Recognising Bishop Lee's lifelong dedication to the Church, the bishops praised his significant contributions to the Bishops' Conference and his commitment to priestly formation and marriage care.**

**On 12 January, the Catholic and Church of Ireland Archbishops of Armagh, Eamon Martin and John McDowell, issued a joint video message for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, entitled *Go and do likewise*, based on the Good Samaritan parable, encouraging reflection on loving our neighbour.**

**Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe, and the Church of Ireland Bishop Michael Burrows, issued a joint statement on 17 January, about protests against the arrival of people seeking emergency accommodation in Roscrea. The protests coincided with the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* which highlighted compassion to our neighbour. The bishops appealed for calm, urging support for refugees.**

**From 21-27 January, *Catholic Schools Week* was celebrated across Ireland, focusing on the theme 'Communities of Service'. As Chair of the Council for Education, Bishop Tom Deenihan of Meath highlighted Catholic schools' role in fostering service to others, with daily reflections on service within various communities.**

**In his homily on 22 January, Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin highlighted the Church's celebration of the 'Sunday of the Word of God,' focusing on the message from the *Book of Jonah*. He called on Christians to reflect on God's mercy and to embrace the challenge of welcoming refugees and migrants with compassion, solidarity, and truth.**

**On 23 January, Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin highlighted defects in the Irish Medical Council's new edition of the *Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics*. It is against this Code that the professional code and conduct of doctors is measured. In particular the statement, 'You must not take part in the deliberate killing of a patient' has been dropped from the 9th edition. Also the sections on 'Assisted Human Reproduction'**

**(47), and 'Abortion' (48), do not appear in the latest edition.**

**On 24 January, Archbishop Martin welcomed Pope Francis' World Communications Day message on Artificial intelligence. In his message, Pope Francis urged a human-centered approach to artificial intelligence, emphasising the importance of 'the wisdom of the heart.' Reflecting on AI's ethical use, he highlighted its potential to foster human fraternity and warned against the risks of dehumanisation.**

**At Saint Brigid's Church, Kildare, Mass was celebrated by Bishop Denis Nulty on 28 January for the installation of the holy Relic of Saint Brigid. In his homily, Bishop Nulty spoke about the return of Saint Brigid, being brought from Lisbon to Kildare, where Brigid established a powerful legacy of hospitality, faith, and peacemaking. Bishop Nulty said the homecoming reminds all of her values, calling for compassion and a spiritual approach to modern challenges.**

**On 28 January, Archbishop Dermot Farrell ordained Brother Antony Kurian to the Diaconate. In his homily, Archbishop Farrell highlighted hope as the foundation of faith. Emphasising prophetic service, he called on Antony to embody Christ's humility and selfless service, following Saint Francis' example as a deacon. Archbishop Farrell urged a life dedicated to service, prayer, and listening to God's call.**

Sunday, 21 January–Saturday, 27 January



Catholic Schools Week 2024

Catholic Schools: Serving Our Communities



Poster for Catholic Schools Week 2024, that was celebrated across Ireland, focusing on the theme 'Communities of Service'.



## February

**In his homily for the Feast of Saint Brigid on 1 February, Bishop Michael Ruter, Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh, highlighted Pope Francis' appointment of women to key roles in the Vatican, recognising their vital contributions. Reflecting on Saint Brigid's legacy, he emphasised her compassion, leadership, and the importance of women in the Church. He also highlighted the ongoing synodal process which aims to establish a more equitable and realistic role for women in shaping the Church's future.**

**On 2 February, the Church Leaders' Group welcomed political progress in the North. In a joint statement, the leaders of the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, the Methodist Church, and the Irish Council of Churches, said, "As Church leaders we have consistently called for the UK Government to take all necessary steps to facilitate the restoration of good governance in Northern Ireland and the return of fully functioning and resourced devolved institutions, north-south and east-west bodies."**

**On 2 February, bishops warmly welcomed Pope Francis' appointment of Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ as Bishop of Down and Connor - Ireland's second-largest diocese. In various statements, bishops praised Bishop McGuckian's pastoral care and leadership, as well as his involvement in various Church and civic initiatives, including the Synod on Synodality.**

**On 7 February, Bishop Tom Deenihan paid tribute to former Taoiseach and European Ambassador to the United States, the late John Bruton, RIP, of Dunboyne, Co Meath. Bishop Deenihan said Mr Bruton would be remembered for his integrity, leadership, and commitment to the common good.**

**Bishops responded to the announcement of the forthcoming closure of Veritas Communications CLG on 9 February. In a statement the bishops said, "Veritas Communications CLG has served the publishing and catechetical needs of the Irish Episcopal Conference very well for many years and the decision to begin the wind down and closure of its business operations, including its remaining retail stores, represents a great loss to the Church in Ireland."**

**On 10 February, Bishop Michael Ruter welcomed Pope Francis' World Day of the Sick message, *It is not good that man should be alone* – Healing the Sick by Healing Relationships. In his statement, Bishop Ruter highlighted the Pope's recognition of isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, war, and poverty. He emphasised the importance of human connection and**

**compassion in healthcare, urging a shift towards a culture of tenderness and calling for respect for the dignity of the sick, elderly, and vulnerable.**

**On 12 February, Bishop Nulty blessed engaged couples Sinéad O'Connor and Darren Larkin from Newbridge, and Siobhan O'Shaughnessy and Kieran Davey from Cork, in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, at the shrine of the Holy relics of Saint Valentine in Whitefriar Street in Dublin. The couples shared their positive experience with Accord's new marriage preparation course. In 2023, Accord prepared 7,262 couples for marriage, with 7,470 in 2022, reflecting strong interest in the programme.**



At the shrine of Saint Valentine in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church Whitefriar St Dublin Bishop Denis Nulty blessed engaged couples Sinead O'Connor & Darren Larkin, along with Siobhan O'Shaughnessy & Kieran Davey.

**On 14 February, Bishop Ruter celebrated a Saint Valentine's Mass at Saint Mary's Church, Belfast, blessing engagement rings for three couples preparing for marriage. He also launched the updated Accord Marriage Preparation Course, emphasising faith, communication, and the importance of sacramental marriage in a changing society.**

**The Church's Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse took place on 16 February, marking the first Friday of Lent. Initiated by Pope Francis, this significant day has been marked by Irish dioceses since 2017. Parishes across the country lit Candles of Atonement as symbols of repentance, hope, and healing.**

**On 25 February, the Bishops' Conference issued a statement in the context of the Family and Care referendums to change the Constitution of Ireland. The bishops expressed concern about the vote, arguing that the *Family Amendment* would weaken the importance of marriage in society and could**



discourage young people from marrying. The Care Amendment, bishops say, also risked erasing the role of mothers in the Constitution. On 8 March, both referendums were roundly rejected by the electorate.

#### March

On 5 March, on the second day of the Spring General Meeting in Maynooth, the bishops called for an urgent and complete ceasefire in Gaza, and an immediate end to the daily horror of killing, wounding and destruction of property in the Holy Land. During their meeting, other issues addressed by the bishops included the return of the Northern Ireland Executive; immigration; homelessness; the Irish Synodal Pathway, and Trócaire's climate justice campaign.

Also on 5 March, Pope Francis appointed Father Donal Roche as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dublin. Archbishop Farrell welcomed the appointment, highlighting Father Roche's extensive pastoral experience. Father Roche expressed gratitude for the appointment and pledged to serve the priests and people of the Archdiocese, relying on God's strength and wisdom.

In Archbishop Martin's Saint Patrick's Day message, he focused on Irish emigrants worldwide, wishing them happiness and safety. Reflecting on migration, the Primate highlighted the importance of welcoming and integrating newcomers to Ireland, emphasising Pope Francis' call to protect, promote, and include. He also called for open conversations about migration and the need for affordable housing and services.

On 15 March, Bishop Monahan urged road users to exercise caution over Saint Patrick's weekend, emphasising the preventability of road deaths through care and vigilance. With 52 fatalities recorded in Ireland so far in 2024, he led a 'Blessing of the Roads' ceremony outside the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Ennis, praying for safety for all road users.

In his Holy Week message issued on 23 March, Archbishop Martin called for prayers for peace, justice, and dignity during Holy Week and Easter, urging people of all faiths to unite in prayer for an end to violence, particularly in Gaza, Israel, and Ukraine. He emphasised hope, compassion, and the Easter message of victory over hatred and division.

At the annual Mass for the Families of the Disappeared in Armagh on 24 March, Archbishop Martin commended the Interim Kenova Report for highlighting the unresolved pain of families affected by the Troubles. He emphasised the need for truth,



Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe blessing the roads following the celebration Mass in the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, Ennis, 15 March, 2024.

accountability, and reconciliation, acknowledging the ongoing suffering of families seeking closure and justice.



Archbishop Eamon Martin after the celebration of Mass for the Families of the Disappeared in Armagh, 24 March, 2024.

On 25 March, Archbishops of Armagh issued a joint message for Easter 2024. The Archbishops emphasised the importance of both the message and ministry of reconciliation, urging Christians and all people of goodwill to actively engage in healing broken relationships. Reflecting on the anniversary of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, they highlighted reconciliation as an ongoing, essential duty for building a peaceful society.

Following the translation of Bishop McGuckian to the Diocese of Down and Connor, which took effect on 19 March 2024, the College of Consultors of the Diocese of Raphoe elected the Monsignor Kevin Gillespie as Diocesan Administrator on 25 March.



**In a special video for Holy Week, on 25 March, Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick encouraged reflection on the true meaning of Easter, highlighting the journey from Christ's sacrifice to His resurrection. Bishop Leahy emphasised that despite life's challenges, there is always hope, with God's presence offering support and new beginnings through the Risen Lord.**

**In his Chrism Mass homily, on 27 March, Bishop Monahan focused on the blessing of sacred oils and the renewal of pastoral commitments. He highlighted the healing power of both oil and prayer, urging ministers to embrace a life of dedication, rooted in prayer and service, to bring Christ's healing presence to others.**

**On March 28, Bishop Kevin Doran's homily for the Mass of Chrism, in the Diocese of Elphin, emphasised the significance of anointing in Christian life. Reflecting on biblical traditions, he highlighted how the same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus empowers all baptised individuals. Bishop Doran called for shared responsibility in faith, healing, and mission within the Church.**

**In his Easter message on 30 March, Archbishop Martin reflected on the world's struggles, from global conflicts to local challenges. The Primate highlighted the Tree of Life crucifix in Saint Patrick's Cathedral as a symbol of hope, reminding people that Christ's suffering and resurrection offer inspiration to heal and spread joy in a troubled world.**

**On 30 March, Bishop Niall Coll of Ossory published his Easter Vigil homily highlighting Easter's dual significance in Ireland, blending religious and political history. He emphasised the hope and new beginnings symbolised by Christ's resurrection, urging Christians to embrace the Risen Lord's promise, especially amid global conflict and personal struggles, resonating with Pope John Paul II's call: 'We are the Easter people.'**

#### April

**On 8 April, Bishop Doran welcomed the Vatican's new document *Dignitas Infinita*, affirming the inherent dignity of all humans. He emphasised its rejection of euthanasia and assisted suicide, highlighting the need for palliative care. Bishop Doran also condemned actions like sexual abuse, trafficking, and discrimination, stressing respect for every life, especially the vulnerable.**

**On 10 April, Pope Francis appointed Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam as the Apostolic Administrator of Killala. At the same time, the Holy Father appointed Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin as Apostolic Administrator of Achonry, while translating Bishop Paul Dempsey from Achonry to the Archdiocese of Dublin as its new Auxiliary Bishop. These episcopal changes coincided with the resignation, on the grounds of age, of Bishop John Flemming as Bishop of Killala. The bishops of Ireland offered their prayerful good wishes to Bishop Fleming on his retirement, and to their episcopal colleagues on their new responsibilities.**

**On 22 April, Archbishop Farrell's homily for the victims of the 1981 Stardust fire recognised the families' suffering and their relentless pursuit of justice. He commended their courage and perseverance, highlighting that truth brings healing and freedom.**

**In his homily for Vocations Sunday on 22 April, Archbishop Farrell celebrated the graduation of 45 catechists, praising their dedication to faith despite a demanding culture. Reflecting on the Good Shepherd's call, Archbishop Farrell urged a deeper commitment to listening to Jesus' voice, while highlighting the Church's evolving role and the need for new leaders to guide future generations.**



Pilgrims of the Archdiocese of Dublin at Knock Basilica during the Dublin Diocese Pilgrimage, 29 April, 2024.



**During the Dublin diocesan pilgrimage to Knock on 29 April, Archbishop Farrell emphasised the importance of pilgrimage, silence, and unity, urging all to bring back faith-filled reminders of their spiritual journey with God.**

**Also on 29 April, the newly appointed National Synodal Team for Ireland's Synodal Pathway met in Columba Centre, Maynooth, for the first time. Chaired by Father Declan Hurley of Meath, the team, including lay people, clergy, and religious, will focus on collaborative work across the Church, supporting initiatives and national-level planning in the coming two years.**

**On 25 April, the Archdiocese of Armagh and the Diocese of Dromore hosted an inter-church dialogue on 'Journeying together as Christians in Ireland'. The event explored how the Catholic Synodal process can inspire and strengthen inter-church relations, fostering unity, healing, and collaboration across denominations in Ireland.**

**May**

**In his homily at Newman University Church, Dublin, on 6 May, before the annual 'March for Life', Bishop Doran emphasised the scientific and spiritual continuity of life from conception. He called for a renewed respect for the dignity of every human life, stressing the importance of witnessing to God's love and advocating for the vulnerable.**



**Pray for Life Novena poster, May 2024.**

**At the State Commemoration in Arbour Hill, Dublin on 8 May, Bishop Monahan reflected on the sacrifices of 1916 leaders, linking their courage to the resurrection. He emphasised their faith and**

**dedication to Ireland's freedom, praying for their souls and for continued hope and justice for future generations.**

**On 12 May, Archbishop Martin highlighted Pope Francis' message for World Communications Day, urging reflection on artificial intelligence's impact on human communication. Pope Francis cautioned about the risks of AI, advocating for ethical regulation and stressing the need for "wisdom of the heart" to ensure technology serves humanity and upholds individual dignity.**

**On 14 May, Pope Francis appointed Monsignor Séamus Horgan of Killaloe as Apostolic Nuncio to South Sudan. In a statement, Bishop Monahan congratulated Monsignor Horgan and offered the prayers and support of the diocese while referencing his "extensive pastoral leadership experience".**

**On 17 May, Archbishop Farrell celebrated Mass for the families of the victims of the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings, in Saint Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, marking the 50th anniversary of this atrocity which killed 34 people, included a full term unborn child. In terms of loss of human life, it was the deadliest attack of the Troubles. Archbishop Farrell's homily emphasised the importance of memory and reconciliation, drawing on Christian faith and Pope Francis' call for peace.**

**On 23 May, Bishop Doran launched the Pray for Life Novena, which ran from 23 to 31 of May, urging people to pray for the protection of human life. The initiative encourages participants to support expectant mothers, the unborn, and advocates for life, while fostering courage and confidence in promoting a culture of life.**

**On 26 May in Saint Andrew's Church on Westland Row, Dublin, Bishops Paul Dempsey and Donal Roche were ordained as new Auxiliary Bishops of the Archdiocese of Dublin. In his homily, Archbishop Farrell emphasised the Church's evolving role in society, stressing leadership, pastoral care, and solidarity with vulnerable groups. He said that the bishops were also called to serve in spreading Christ's message of hope and compassion. At this Ordination Mass, Bishop Dempsey expressed gratitude for the warm welcome that he had received since coming to Dublin, emphasising**



the Church's mission of hope amidst societal change. Bishop Roche also thanked the Dublin faithful for their prayerful support, and shared his wish for a future of hope and faith.



Bishop Donal Roche with his family at his ordination as new Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dublin, Saint Andrew's Church, on Westland Row, Dublin, 26 May 2024.

## June

In a homily for the Feast of Saint Kevin on 4 June, Archbishop Farrell announced his request to Pope Francis for Saint Mary's Pro-Cathedral to be designated as Dublin's official cathedral. The Archbishop said that this would complement Saint Andrew's on Westland Row, forming a twin-pillar strategy to renew the city's pastoral and missionary efforts.



Archbishops Martin and McDowell honoring the chaplains who served during the 1944 invasion, Normandy, France, 7 June 2024.

Bishop Doran, in this year's Day for Life message published on 11 June, emphasised the need to surround terminally ill individuals with love and

support. He urged society to support them to live life fully, stressing that such times can foster growth and integration for those who are ill and for their loved ones. To promote this important dignity of life message, Bishop Doran launched a dedicated video *Through the Valley* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NCsCkM\\_23c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NCsCkM_23c))



*Through the Valley* A short movie launched in June 2024, that draws on the experience of family members and healthcare professionals and explores how the faithful can accompany people in the final stages of life.

On 20 June, bishops called for courageous world leadership to end the Israel/Hamas war, emphasising the need for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian aid access. They urged for prayers for victims, including over 37,000 dead, and stressed the importance of prioritising human dignity in peace efforts, echoing Pope Francis' plea for courage.

On 22 June, Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross, and Chair of the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development, hosted over 160 young adults gathered at Clongowes Wood College SJ, in Clane, Co Kildare, for the inaugural 'Intentional Young Adult Ministry' event, with guest speaker Father Stephen Wang. Speaking at the event, Bishop Gavin emphasised the need for intentional outreach in young adult ministry, urging leaders to befriend and build trust with young people, inviting them into encounters with Christ.

On 24 June, the Bishops' Conference issued a pastoral letter *Freedom to Live Fully, Until Death Comes*, which promotes Church teaching on protecting human life while rejecting proposed assisted suicide legislation. They emphasised the dignity of every person, advocating for palliative and pastoral care that supports the whole person, while expressing concern about the potential vulnerability of people with intellectual disabilities.



**Ahead of the 4 July Westminster elections, Northern Bishops urged voters to engage in the democratic process. Highlighting key issues such as social cohesion, the dignity of life, and drug addiction, they called for candidates to offer hope, restore public trust, and prioritise the well-being of all citizens, especially the vulnerable.**

**On 26 June, the Bishops' Conference issued a statement that condemned human trafficking as a grave assault on human dignity. Acknowledging Ireland's ongoing efforts, they urged greater cooperation between governments, resources for prevention, and stronger victim protection. The bishops called on society to raise awareness, support anti-trafficking initiatives, and prioritise human dignity over profit.**

#### July

**On 1 July, Bishop Deenihan congratulated Monsignor Julien Kaboré on his appointment as Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana and Titular Archbishop of Milevum. A long-time associate of Mullingar parish, Archbishop Kaboré has served in various countries and is praised for his dedication. Bishop Deenihan offered prayers and best wishes for his new role.**

**During the celebration of Mass to open the 54th Irish Church Music Association's Summer School in Maynooth on 3 July, Monsignor Joseph McGuinness highlighted in his homily the connection between science and Scripture. The Executive Secretary of the Irish Episcopal Conference reflected on Stanley Miller's 1952 experiment, drawing parallels to the Biblical creation story, emphasising water's significance in both life's origin and spiritual symbolism throughout Scripture.**



Members of the choir at the 54th Irish Church Music Association's Summer School in Maynooth on 3 July, 2024.

**On 4 July, the Parish Priest of Westport, Co Mayo, Father John Kenny, invited priests to minister during Reek Sunday on 28 July at Croagh Patrick, Ireland's Holy Mountain. This year's annual pilgrimage, themed 'To pray for and honour grandparents and the elderly', marked the 2024 Year of Prayer.**

**During his homily at Mass in Dublin on 6 July, ahead of the annual 'Rally for Life', Bishop Doran condemned abortion as an act of violence against women and babies, urging society to defend life and support women. The Chair of the Bishops' Council for Life emphasised the need for personal and societal transformation, promoting a welcoming attitude toward pregnancy and motherhood.**

**During the ordination of Father Mark Quinn in Tuam on 10 July, Archbishop Duffy urged Catholics to embrace priesthood with hope and confidence. He emphasised that answering God's call, despite challenges, is a rewarding path. The Archbishop of Tuam encouraged others to consider the priestly vocation, assuring that God will provide guidance and support.**

**On 18 July, Bishop William Crean of Cloyne welcomed Pope Francis' appointment of Archbishop Michael Crotty, a former priest of Cloyne, as the new Papal Nuncio to Nigeria. Bishop Crean praised Archbishop Crotty's recent pastoral work in Burkina Faso and Niger, offering prayers for strength and blessings in his new role.**

**On 23 July, Bishop Michael Duignan of Galway expressed deep empathy for those distressed by recent media coverage of Bishop Eamonn Casey's legacy. He reaffirmed the diocese's commitment to safeguarding, offering support to victims through counselling and pastoral care, and emphasised a continued effort for truth and healing.**

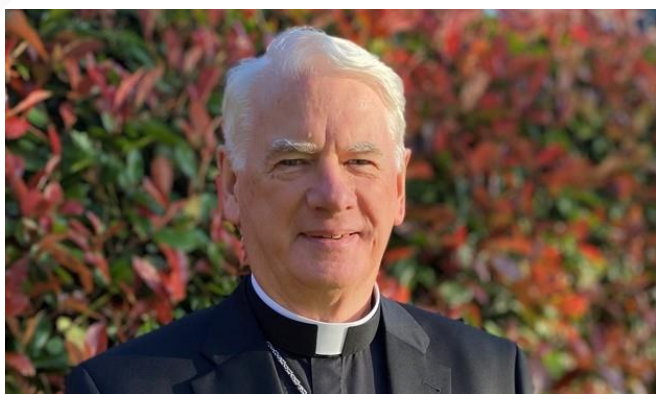
**On 29 July, Archbishop Farrell welcomed Pope Francis' appointment of Monsignor John Kennedy as Archbishop-elect of Ossero. Archbishop Farrell offered prayers for Monsignor Kennedy, who is a Dublin diocesan priest and Secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.**



On 31 July, on the Feast of Saint Ignatius of Loyola who was cofounder of the Society of Jesus, Archbishop Farrell celebrated Mass, reflecting on the transformative journey of Ignatius from soldier to servant of God. He acknowledged the changes in the Jesuit parish in Gardiner Street, Dublin, and emphasised the need for the Church to adapt to new realities, urging unity and faith in the Eucharist.

On 6 August, Bishop McGuckian called for calm and community harmony in response to recent acts of racial violence and discrimination, including Islamophobia and xenophobia. He condemned the spreading of fear and misinformation, urging solidarity and honest dialogue across cultures and religions, emphasising the Christian path of peace and mutual respect.

On 12 August, bishops and civic leaders across Ireland and Europe expressed their deep sadness on hearing news of the death of the much loved and respected Archbishop Noël Treanor, who was serving as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union, having formally led the Diocese of Down and Connor. In a statement, bishops praised Archbishop Treanor's lifelong dedication to the Gospel, social justice and peace, while extending their condolences to his family and to all who knew him.



Archbishop Noël Treanor RIP, who passed away in August, 2024

On 16 August, Bishop Duignan and Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan expressed shock and sadness over the assault on a Catholic priest serving as an army chaplain in Renmore, Co Galway. They offered prayers for the priest's recovery, his family, army colleagues, and medical staff caring for him.

In his homily at the annual Knock Novena on 19 August, Bishop Doran emphasised God's invitation to a relationship through Creation. Reflecting on Genesis and modern science, he highlighted how both faith and science reveal the wonder of God's universe, urging a deeper understanding of our place and mission within it.

Archbishop Farrell published a pastoral letter on 27 August that urged renewal across the archdiocese on the theme of *Building Hope with Open Hearts*. Emphasising Jesus' call for intimate relationship and mission, he invited parishes to embrace change with the Holy Spirit's guidance. Archbishop Farrell encouraged openness to God's vision, viewing smallness not as an end, but as a new beginning.

In a statement issued ahead of the start of the Season of Creation on 30 August, Bishop Hayes who serves as the Bishop's Coordinator for *Laudato Si'*, urged active stewardship of the environment. With the theme 'To hope and act with creation', Bishop Hayes emphasises the need for conversion and commitment to protect the planet for future generations, supported by diocesan resources.

#### September

On 1 September, Archbishop Martin welcomed the first visit of the relics of Saint Bernadette of Lourdes to Ireland, calling it "a source of hope and inspiration". The pilgrimage, from Lourdes to churches across Ireland, precedes the launch of the 2025 Jubilee Year. Archbishop Martin encouraged the faithful to pray and reflect on Saint Bernadette's message. Speaking about the visit on 2 September, Bishop Doran said he hoped the pilgrimage would bring blessings, allowing people to venerate the relics and experience the grace of Lourdes, especially those unable to travel there.



Poster used to promote the visit of Saint Bernadette's relics to Ireland in 2024.



**Bishops expressed their deep sorrow to survivors of abuse following the release of the *Scoping Inquiry into Historical Sexual Abuse in Religious Schools* on 5 September. Acknowledging the pain of survivors, bishops pledged their continued commitment to safeguarding and urged vigilance in protecting children, emphasising the importance of reporting any concerns to authorities and safeguarding teams. In a statement in response to the report on the *Scoping Inquiry*, the Catholic Education Partnership acknowledged the harm caused by abuse in Religious Order schools, pledging full cooperation with future inquiries. The partnership emphasised that Catholic schools today have robust child safeguarding procedures that are supported by the Department of Education. It committed to continued efforts to uphold safeguarding standards and responsibilities.**

**In his homily at Mass at the Lourdes Grotto on 6 September, Archbishop Farrell reminded the large number of pilgrims who had travelled to France from the Archdiocese of Dublin that kindness can heal, while violence destroys. Reflecting on the transformative power of pilgrimage, he emphasised that Lourdes offers a chance for inner change, mirroring the strength and purity of Saint Bernadette's faith and obedience to God.**



**Pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Dublin on 6 September in Lourdes, France.**

**On 8 September, during the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, Co Laois, which is located in the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin, Bishop Nulty invited visitors to the 'Pledge your Pin for Peace' stand. The initiative, which proved to be very popular among attendees sought to support victims of war and promote peace.**

**On 19 September, it was announced that twenty-one new seminarians had begun their studies for the priesthood in Irish dioceses, bringing the total number to 74. Bishop Cullinan, as Chair of the Council for**



**Bishop Denis Nulty at the National Ploughing Championships with members of Aid the Church in Need**

**Vocations, expressed his gratitude for their response to God's call and highlighted the importance of continued vocations.**

**In his homily for Mass on Safeguarding Sunday on 22 September, Archbishop Farrell emphasised that the abuse crisis must be fully addressed before true reform can occur in the Church. He described the abuse as an "open wound" and called for genuine accountability, urging society and the Church to confront this dark legacy for lasting healing and renewal.**

**On 24 September, in Our Lady of the Angels Church on Church Street, Dublin, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop Emeritus of Dublin, celebrated Mass on the Feast of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio), and reflected on the saint's life of prayer, suffering, and mercy. He highlighted Padre Pio's dedication to sharing in Christ's passion, encouraging the faithful to live humbly, embrace God's mercy, and follow Jesus' path of selfless love and sacrifice. Ireland's National Shrine of Padre Pio is located at the church, and both church and shrine fall under the pastoral responsibility of the Capuchin Friars.**

**Speaking on the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees on 28 September, Bishop Duignan emphasised that "an encounter with migrants is an encounter with Christ". Reflecting on Pope Francis' message, he called for the Church to embrace and accompany migrants, stressing the importance of welcoming the stranger and fostering integration in Irish society.**



**On 29 September, ahead of the Synod on Synodality in Rome, Irish Bishops' Conference delegates Bishops Leahy and McGuckian urged prayers for guidance. The Synod, which began on 2 October, focused on 'Communion, Participation, and Mission'. It aimed to deepen the Church's understanding of synodality and offer discernment to Pope Francis.**



Bishop Brendan Leahy bringing iCatholic behind the scenes of the Synod on Synodality, Rome, Italy.

**On 30 September, Church leaders from Ireland commented on a recent visit to Brussels to meet key EU figures, including EU Parliament Vice-President Antonella Sberna, and Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič. During the two-day visit, the bishops discussed post-Brexit progress, ongoing concerns in Northern Ireland, and the importance of fostering positive relationships between the UK, Ireland, and the EU.**



Church Leaders meeting Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič (third from left) were, from left, the Rt Revd Dr Richard Murray, Presbyterian Moderator; the Revd Dr John Alderdice, Methodist President; Archbishops John McDowell and Eamon Martin, Church of Ireland and Catholic Primates; and Bishop Sarah Groves, Irish Council of Churches President (with the Revd Trevor Gribben and the Revd Dr Heather Morris, Joint Secretaries)

## October

**On 1 October, during Mass celebrated by members of the Bishops' Conference for the staff, families and friends of the Bishops' Secretariat, agencies and commissions, Father Declan Hurley, Chair of the National Synodal Team, highlighted the importance of synodality and the**

**upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope. He urged all to embrace the journey of renewal with trust, love, and confidence, focusing on the transformative power of Christ's love. He called for collective discernment and action.**

**During the conferral ceremony on 6 October, at the historic College Chapel in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, Bishop Nulty encouraged 22 new graduates to place Christ at the heart of their work and to accompany couples with mercy and love, offering support through relationship challenges while embodying Accord's mission in marriage preparation.**

**On 6 October, Bishop McGuckian welcomed the launch of daily Mass readings in the Irish language, and that is now available online to over half a million speakers worldwide. The initiative, led by Ciarán MacGuill and *Evangelizo*, made the readings accessible in Irish, enhancing faith and Scripture study. Bishop McGuckian also praised the project's evangelisation efforts.**

**On 7 October, Bishop Fintan Gavin invited parishioners across the Diocese of Cork and Ross to a year of prayer, listening, and discernment regarding the future of the Church. In his pastoral letter, he highlighted the importance of Baptism, Eucharist, and lay leadership, urging communities to engage in springtime gatherings to address these challenges together.**

**On 8 October, Bishop Monahan launched a countdown timer for the Jubilee Year 2025 on CatholicBishops.ie. The Holy Year, themed 'Pilgrims of Hope,' will begin on Christmas Eve with the opening of the Holy Door in Rome.**

**On 10 October, Bishop Nulty announced a new Lay Pastoral Minister Training Programme in the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. Developed with Saint Patrick's Pontifical University, the programme aims to empower lay leaders to serve in parishes. Information sessions were also announced and will be held across the diocese to encourage participation.**

**On 12 October, the Bishops' Conference issued a pastoral letter, *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes?*, calling for greater hospitality toward immigrants. The letter, reflecting on the Good Samaritan parable, urges communities to foster inclusion and support for newcomers, and calls on the government to address local social and economic challenges.**



**On his reflection for Prisoners' Sunday, on 13 October, Bishop Hayes highlighted the work of Father Greg Boyle and urged Irish gang members to participate in a local version of 'Homeboy Industries', a rehabilitation programme that was successfully pioneered in Los Angeles. He emphasised removing prejudices to see the inherent goodness in others, calling for more inclusive, compassionate approaches to prisoner rehabilitation.**

**On 13 October, Bishop Donal Murray, Bishop Emeritus of Limerick, passed away. Known for his spiritual depth and vision, tributes remembered him as a pastor who energetically led the Church in Limerick, promoted youth ministry, lay involvement, and implemented safeguarding reforms.**



**Bishop Donal Murray RIP who passed away on 13 October, 2024.**

**On 15 October, Archbishop Farrell welcomed the launch of the Mercy Law Centre's Annual Report, praising its advocacy for the homeless. He highlighted the complex nature of poverty and homelessness, stressing the Centre's vital work in protecting rights and critiquing policy.**

**On 15 October, Archbishop Martin urged voters to contact their MPs and TDs to reject proposed assisted suicide laws, calling them an affront to a protective society. He emphasised the importance of caring for vulnerable individuals and advocating for enhanced palliative care, urging political commitment to life-affirming end-of-life care policies.**

**In an article published by The Irish Times on 20 October, Dr Gary Carville, Research Coordinator with the Council for Justice and Peace, emphasised that welcoming migrants is both a societal duty and a sacred Christian obligation. Reflecting on Ireland's history as a migrant nation, he urged Catholics to embrace diversity, foster**

**integration, and ensure a culture of encounter, rooted in empathy and hospitality.**

**On 23 October, bishops urged TDs to reject the final report on assisted dying that had been published by an Oireachtas committee. Bishops called it a threat to the sanctity of life and emphasised the need for increased investment in palliative care, citing risks to vulnerable groups and healthcare ethics.**

**On 27 October, Bishops Leahy and McGuckian welcomed the release of the Synod on Synodality's *Final Document*, praising its emphasis on collaboration and baptismal ministry. The bishops noted its potential to inspire Ireland's Synodal Pathway, encouraging greater participation and discernment within the Church as it seeks renewal and unity.**

**On 27 October, Archbishop Martin reflected on Pope Francis' new encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*, which invites a profound meditation on Christ's divine and human love. Archbishop Martin encouraged believers to live out this love, fostering compassion, unity, and reconciliation in a world marked by division and individualism.**

**November**

**On 1 November, Archbishops Martin and McDowell published an autumn reflection, *Daring to Dream*, focusing on the "coming good" of creation and society. The reflection celebrated nature's abundance and global political shifts, stressing the importance of compassion, safety, and civic engagement while calling for support for vulnerable groups and a united, hopeful future.**

**On 5 November, in the Risen Christ Church in Kiltoom, Co Roscommon, Bishop Doran expressed gratitude to volunteers across dioceses for their efforts in ensuring the success of the visit of Saint Bernadette's relics. In his homily, Bishop Doran highlighted the spiritual lessons from Bernadette's life, urging all to follow her example of humility, dedication to God's love, and service to others.**

**In Belfast on 6 November, Church leaders met with the recently appointed Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Hilary Benn. The leaders discussed Brexit's impact, legacy issues, and financial stability for Northern Ireland's devolved government. The leaders also emphasised the need for clarity on legacy policies and financial support for public services.**



Church Leaders Group (Ireland) meet with Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP at the Assembly Buildings in Belfast on 6 November, 2024.

**On 8 November, Bishop Doran shared a pastoral message to the faithful of the dioceses of Achonry and Elphin, outlining the process of merging the two dioceses. The move, aimed at strengthening pastoral care and governance, follows consultations and offers collaboration in areas like pilgrimage, lay ministry, and youth programmes.**

**On 10 November, Archbishops Martin and McDowell shared reflections on the lives and service of two wartime military chaplains on BBC Radio 4's *Sunday Worship* programme for Remembrance Sunday.**

**Ahead of COP29 in Baku, Bishop Hayes urged political leaders to ensure climate targets are implemented, emphasising a just transition for vulnerable communities. On 10 November, he called for increased financial and technological support for developing countries, citing Pope Francis' advocacy for binding, effective energy transitions and global cooperation on climate action.**

**On 13 November, Bishop McGuckian published a pastoral letter urging Christian communities to reflect on end-of-life care ahead of the vote on assisted suicide in Westminster. He emphasised the dignity of life, rejecting assisted suicide, and calling for greater palliative care.**

**In his homily on 17 November in Saint Patrick's Church, Dundalk, Bishop Router expressed support for the Universal Synod report, highlighting its calls for greater accountability, inclusivity of women, youth, and marginalised groups, and transparency in addressing abuse. He also emphasised the importance of pastoral councils and ongoing faith formation to renew the Church's mission in the world.**

**Ahead of 'Red Wednesday' on 20 November, Archbishop Martin urged parishioners to show solidarity with persecuted Christians. Cathedrals and churches across Ireland were illuminated in red, symbolising martyrdom. The initiative, part of Aid to the Church in Need's 'Week of Witness', highlights global Christian persecution.**

**In the general election statement of the Bishops' Conference, published on 20 November, voters were urged to prioritise the common good. Key issues include tackling homelessness, welcoming immigrants, valuing life, addressing climate change, ending war, and restoring Church-State dialogue. They also encouraged voters to question candidates on these pressing concerns, with a focus on human dignity, hope and respect for all.**

**In a statement published on 27 November, Bishop Hayes criticised Mountjoy Prison's decision to repurpose its chapel without consulting prison chaplains or prisoners. He expressed concern that this undermines prisoners' religious rights, especially during Advent. Bishop Hayes called for the immediate halt of the chapel's closure, emphasising its importance for spiritual support and healing.**

**In a statement published on 28 November, Archbishop Martin urged Northern Ireland MPs to reject the *Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill*, which sought to legalise assisted suicide. The Primate stressed that such legislation undermines the care of vulnerable individuals and the sanctity of life, calling for better palliative care instead.**

December

**On 1 December, Bishop Monahan launched the annual digital Advent calendar, hosted on CatholicBishops.ie with the theme of 'Hope.' The calendar offered prayers, reflections, and resources to guide individuals and families through Advent, emphasising Christian hope, peace, and solidarity amid global conflict, in preparation for the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025.**

**Also on 2 December, the Archdiocese of Armagh expressed disappointment over protesters disrupting Mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Archbishop Martin, alongside other bishops, had spoken out numerous times against violence in Gaza, urging humanitarian aid.**



**On 3 December, the bishops of Ireland met for their Winter General meeting in Maynooth, where they planned the faith-filled and social programme for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. Each diocese in Ireland will select a local pilgrimage site, while the bishops designated Our Lady's Shrine in Knock, Croagh Patrick, and Saint Patrick's Purgatory as national pilgrimage sites. At their meeting bishops also discussed the new *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* lectionary, supporting refugees through the Irish Red Cross, end-of-life care, and child safeguarding in the Church. They also addressed Pope Francis' encyclical, and peace in the Holy Land.**

**On 7 December, Archbishop Martin attended the reopening Mass of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, following the 2019 devastating fire. Representing Ireland's bishops, he praised those who restored the 850-year-old landmark and prayed for stronger faith in Ireland, France, and worldwide. The Primate was joined by bishops and global civic leaders.**



Archbishop Martin attended the reopening Mass of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, December, 2024.

**On 12 December, the Bishops' Conferences of Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand announced that they are to collaborate on the 'Joint Lectionary Project' to update the *Lectionary for Mass*. Using the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* and *Abbey Psalms*, they aim to create an accessible, faithful translation for liturgical use, with editorial leadership by Martin Foster.**

**In a joint Christmas message by the Catholic Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy and his Church of Ireland counterpart, Bishop Ian Ellis, they emphasised the Christian message of hope, rooted in faith in Jesus. The bishops said, "Unlike worldly hope, it is a trust in God's love and power. Jesus, the source of hope, brings joy, healing, and peace".**

**Bishop Paul Connell of Ardagh & Clonmacnois, during a celebration of Mass for the staff of the Bishops' Conference at Columba Centre on 20 December, spoke of Christian hope amidst global struggles, especially in the Holy Land. He emphasised his episcopal *motto Deus Spes Mea* (God is my hope), urging all to carry the light of hope through difficulties. He also wished a blessed Christmas to all, one that would be filled with Christ's peace.**

**On 29 December, Bishop Monahan launched Ireland's Jubilee 2025 webpage on [CatholicBishops.ie](https://CatholicBishops.ie). Its purpose is to provide a central information hub for events and resources related to the Jubilee Year of Hope. The page includes a calendar, downloadable materials, and inspiring videos, encouraging participation in celebrations both locally and in Rome, focusing on reconciliation and renewal.**

**On 29 December, bishops in Ireland, and around the World, celebrated Mass to mark the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year of Hope. In Armagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin emphasised hope and the Jubilee's call for mercy, forgiveness, and spiritual renewal. The Primate said, "the year will feature pilgrimages, parish initiatives, and celebrations, alongside preparations for a Diocesan Congress on Youth and Family Ministry". In Dublin, Archbishop Dermot Farrell invited the faithful to journey through 'Pockets of Hope' in churches during Jubilee Year 2025, reflecting on hope as both a relationship and a pilgrimage. He encouraged living hope through shared journeys, highlighting trust in God, bearing present pain, and sowing hope for a transformed future. In Kilkenny, Bishop Niall Coll of Ossory, highlighted a crisis of hope, marked by anxiety and isolation in modern life. He urged Catholics to embrace hope through faith in Christ, translating it into acts of mercy, justice, and kindness, thus becoming 'Pilgrims of Hope' in the world.**



Logo for Jubilee Year of Hope

**In Pope Francis' 2025 World Day of Peace message called for forgiveness, justice, and peace. The Holy Father urged the cancellation of foreign and ecological debts, respect for human life, and advocated for redirecting military spending to combat hunger and promote education. His message also emphasised cultural and structural change for global solidarity and peace.**

**In their New Year message, Church leaders urged a shift from division and hurt to love, peace, and hope. They highlighted responsibility for future generations, healing, and unity, encouraging action grounded in faith and the teachings of Christ to create a world filled with peace, kindness, and justice.**

*For further detail on the foregoing, see [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie), 'Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference' on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and follow on Twitter @CatholicBishops.*

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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#### FINANCIAL REVIEW

##### Income and expenditure

In 2024 the income of the Trust from all sources was €4,060,871 (2023: €3,637,599). 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. 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 €3,368,585 (2023: €4,646,718). 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 surplus of €692,286 (2023: deficit €1,009,119).

The Balance Sheet shows total reserves of €4,927,962 (2023: €4,235,676). Of this, €1,273,524 (2023: €1,299,819) 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 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 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 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" and promulgated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 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.

**HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST**

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

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**POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS**

The Trustees do not note any significant events post the balance sheet date.

**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

**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

Date: 21 October 2025

+ Francis Duffy

Date: 21 October 2025

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

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

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#### 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 2024, 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'.

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 2024 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)

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#### *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.

#### **Opinion on other matters**

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- in our opinion, the information given in the Trustees' Report is consistent with the financial statements; and
- in our opinion, the Trustees' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the Trust were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, and financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

#### *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.

## HIERARCH GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

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

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#### *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.

#### *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 : Roseanna O'Hanlon**

For and on behalf of:

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

Date: 21 October 2025

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024  
(incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)

	Note	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2024 €	Total 2023 €
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:</b>					
Donations	4a	1,743,567	2,068,459	3,812,026	3,455,522
Income from charitable activities	4c	43,551	-	43,551	8,113
Investments	4d	205,294	-	205,294	173,964
<b>TOTAL INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS</b>		<b>1,992,412</b>	<b>2,068,459</b>	<b>4,060,871</b>	<b>3,637,599</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>					
Raising funds	5	(14,766)	-	(14,766)	(16,383)
Charitable activities	6	(1,259,066)	(2,094,754)	(3,353,820)	(4,630,335)
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>(1,273,832)</b>	<b>(2,094,754)</b>	<b>(3,368,586)</b>	<b>(4,646,718)</b>
<b>NET MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS</b>		<b>718,580</b>	<b>(26,295)</b>	<b>692,286</b>	<b>(1,009,119)</b>
Total funds brought forward		2,935,857	1,299,819	4,235,676	5,244,795
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>3,654,437</b>	<b>1,273,524</b>	<b>4,927,962</b>	<b>4,235,676</b>

All income and expenditure arises from continuing operations.

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

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Note	2024 €	2024 €	2023 €	2023 €
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Intangible assets	10		2,000,000		-
Tangible assets	11		4,155		10,450
Financial Assets	12		<u>2,678,857</u>		<u>2,561,782</u>
			4,683,012		2,572,232
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors (amounts due after one year)	13		146,138		196,138
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors (amounts due within one year)	14	3,326,207		390,023	
Cash at bank and in hand	19	<u>680,298</u>		<u>1,326,614</u>	
		4,006,505		1,716,637	
Creditors (amounts falling due within one year)	15	<u>(3,907,693)</u>		<u>(249,331)</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<u>98,812</u>		<u>1,467,306</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			4,927,962		4,235,676
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>			<u><b>4,927,962</b></u>		<u><b>4,235,676</b></u>
<b>THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY</b>					
Unrestricted funds	17		3,654,438		2,935,857
Restricted income funds	16		1,273,524		1,299,819
<b>TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS</b>			<u><b>4,927,962</b></u>		<u><b>4,235,676</b></u>

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

+ Kieran O'Reilly

Date: 21 October 2025

+ Francis Duffy

Date: 21 October 2025

**HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST****CASHFLOW STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024**

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<b>CASH FLOWS FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
		<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
Net Cash generated from/(used in) Operating Activities	18.1	(719,597)	(675,893)
Net Cash generated from Financing Activities	18.2	23,724	839
Net Cash generated from/(used in) Investing Activities	18.3	49,556	(97,593)
<b>CHANGE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS IN THE REPORTING PERIOD</b>		<b><u>(646,317)</u></b>	<b><u>(772,647)</u></b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF NET CASH OUTFLOW TO MOVEMENT IN NET FUNDS</b>			
Change in Cash and Cash Equivalents in the Reporting Period		(646,316)	(772,647)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Reporting Period		1,326,614	2,099,261
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD</b>	19	<b><u>680,298</u></b>	<b><u>1,326,614</u></b>

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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#### 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.

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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#### 1.7 INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS AND DEPRECIATION

Intangible assets are initially recognised at cost. After recognition, under the cost model, intangible assets are measured at cost less any accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

At each reporting date, an impairment review is carried out to determine whether there is any indication of impairment. If such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is determined, which is the higher of its fair value less costs to sell and its value in use. An impairment loss is recognised where the carrying amount exceeds the recoverable amount.

#### 1.8 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 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

IT and Office Equipment	25%
Furniture and fittings	25%

#### 1.9 INVESTMENT POLICY

Investments are stated at market value.

#### 1.10 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.

#### 1.11 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.

#### 1.12 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.

#### 1.13 CREDITORS

Creditors are measured at the transaction price.

#### 1.14 TAXATION

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

#### 1.15 RESTRICTED FUNDS

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

#### 1.16 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.

### 3. GOING CONCERN

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.

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2024 €	Total 2023 €
<b>4. INCOMING RESOURCES</b>				
<b>4 (a) DONATIONS</b>				
Diocesan Contributions	1,738,434	-	1,738,434	1,509,696
Ukrainian Appeal	-	556	556	18,166
Ukrainian-Afghan Project-Restricted Income (Benefact Trust)	-	-	-	185,775
Gubay Foundation Grant	-	250,000	250,000	-
Care of retired Bishops	-	512,500	512,500	600,000
CCSS T/A "Towards Healing"	-	256,652	256,652	252,000
Episcopal Council Drugs Initiative (IBDI)	-	85,650	85,650	73,366
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO)	-	323,888	323,888	275,861
Council for Emigrants	-	249,687	249,687	184,060
Council for Immigrants	-	10,000	10,000	10,000
Council for Justice & Peace	-	30,000	30,000	30,000
Anscombe	-	16,201	16,201	32,400
Holy See (Universal Church)	-	45,502	45,502	45,502
Finance and General Purposes Council	-	17,500	17,500	17,500
Council for Catechetics	-	40,000	40,000	40,350
Council for Healthcare	-	15,862	15,862	15,370
Synodal Pathway - Porticus Grant	5,133	-	5,133	144,000
The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation Office Contribution	-	-	-	5,041
Synodal Pathways	-	197,084	197,084	1,550
Towards Peace	-	17,377	17,377	14,885
	<b>1,743,567</b>	<b>2,068,459</b>	<b>3,812,026</b>	<b>3,455,522</b>

**4 (b) GRANT INCOME**

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

	2024 €	2023 €
<b>Health Service Executive (HSE) - Included within (IBDI)</b>		
IBDI Programme (1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024)	<b>84,750</b>	<b>72,191</b>
<b>Government of Ireland: Emigrant Support Programme - Included within (ICPO)</b>		
ICPO Caseworker Remuneration & costs	208,988	148,490
ICPO Hardship Fund	45,000	45,000
Prison Visits	19,000	19,000
Other	-	15,000
<b>Total Emigrant Support Programme</b>	<b>272,988</b>	<b>227,490</b>

HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2024 €	Total 2023 €
<b>4 (c) INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES</b>				
Royalty Income	9,728	-	9,728	8,113
Sundry Income	9,194	-	9,194	-
ICEL Members Distribution	9,918	-	9,918	-
Joint Lectionary Project	14,711	-	14,711	-
	<b>43,551</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>43,551</b>	<b>8,113</b>

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2024 €	Total 2023 €
<b>4 (d) INCOME FROM INVESTMENTS</b>				
Interest earned on deposits	1,980	-	1,980	642
Loan Interest Receivable	21,744	-	21,744	197
Gain/(Loss) + interest/dividends on Investments	181,570	-	181,570	173,125
	<b>205,294</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>205,294</b>	<b>173,964</b>

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2024 €	Total 2023 €
<b>5. RAISING FUNDS</b>				
Staff costs	14,766	-	14,766	16,383
	<b>14,766</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>14,766</b>	<b>16,383</b>

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2024 €	Total 2023 €
<b>6. DIRECT CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE</b>				
Commission for Planning & Communication & Resources	996,979	1,149,810	2,146,789	1,061,670
Commission for Pastoral Care	33,292	54,557	87,849	787,322
Commission for Social Issues and International Affairs	226,281	30,000	256,281	370,769
Commission for Worship, Renewal and Faith Development	-	-	-	67,284
Commission for Catholic Education & Formation	167,395	40,000	207,395	182,969
CCSS T/A Towards Healing	-	256,652	256,652	252,000
Care of Retired Bishops	-	518,233	518,233	599,615
Holy See (Universal Church)	-	45,502	45,502	45,500
National Board for Safeguarding Children	227,545	-	227,545	326,369
Loan Balance recovered - Irish College Rome	-	-	-	(50,000)
Provision against loan balance reduced - Irish College Rome	-	-	-	(185,010)
Provision against loan balance - Veritas	(703,110)	-	(703,110)	924,052
Provision against Royalties receivable - Veritas	-	-	-	101,532
Support Costs (note 7)	37,649	-	37,649	3,555
Governance Costs (note 8)	273,035	-	273,035	142,708
	<b>1,259,066</b>	<b>2,094,754</b>	<b>3,353,820</b>	<b>4,630,335</b>

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

#### 6.1 GRANT FUNDING ACTIVITIES

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

	<b>Grants to Institutions</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	€	€	€
Commission for Pastoral Care	7,859	7,859	13,091
Commission for Social and International Issues	36,135	36,135	36,223
Commission for Catholic Education and Formation	38,983	38,983	46,889
National Board for Safeguarding Children	-	-	250,539
	<b>82,977</b>	<b>82,977</b>	<b>346,742</b>

No material grants were made during the year. In the prior year the only material grant made relates to an amount paid to Coimirce amounting to €250,539.

#### 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:

	<b>Basis of apportionment</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Charitable activities</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
		€	€	€	€
Office Costs	Staff Time	1,982	37,649	39,631	3,742
		<b>1,982</b>	<b>37,649</b>	<b>39,631</b>	<b>3,742</b>

#### 8. OTHER EXPENDITURE

	<b>Note</b>	<b>Charitable activities</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
		€	€	€
Governance Costs	8.1	271,053	271,053	91,323
Support Costs	7	1,982	1,982	2,131
		<b>273,035</b>	<b>273,035</b>	<b>93,454</b>

#### 8.1 Governance costs

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	€	€
Episcopal Conference Bishops Expenses	18,012	23,241
Legal and Professional fees	215,481	98,616
Northern Ireland Bishops support	3,126	-
Meetings Abroad	6,021	-
Trusteeship Services (IEC Pension Scheme)	923	-
Audit	27,490	20,664
	<b>271,053</b>	<b>142,521</b>

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

#### 9. STAFF COSTS AND DISCLOSURES

The average number of employees during the year was 29 (2023 - 29). The aggregate amounts paid to or on behalf of the staff are as follows:

	2024	2023
	€	€
Wages and salaries	1,362,912	1,260,871
Social welfare costs	138,794	128,714
Pension costs	104,849	98,401
	<b>1,606,555</b>	<b>1,487,986</b>

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

	2024	2023
<b>Salary Range</b>		
€70,000 - €80,000	2	1
€80,001 - €90,000	-	-
€90,001 - €100,000	-	-
€100,001 - €110,000	-	-
€110,001 - €120,000	-	1
€120,001 - €130,000	2	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; (2023: €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 €357,146 (2023: €328,778) in the year.

#### 10. INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Intellectual property Rights €	Total €
<b>Cost</b>		
At 1 January 2024	-	-
Additions	2,000,000	2,000,000
At 31 December 2024	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>		
At 1 January 2024	-	-
Charge for the year	-	-
At 31 December 2024	-	-
<b>NET BOOK VALUE</b>		
At 31 December 2024	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>
At 31 December 2023	-	-

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

#### 11. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT & Office Equipment	Furniture & Fittings	Total
	€	€	€
<b>COST</b>			
At 1 January 2024	190,800	105,864	296,664
Additions	4,499	175	4,674
At 31 December 2024	<b>195,299</b>	<b>106,039</b>	<b>301,338</b>
<b>DEPRECIATION</b>			
At 1 January 2024	180,619	105,595	286,214
Charge for the year	10,525	444	10,969
At 31 December 2024	<b>191,144</b>	<b>106,039</b>	<b>297,183</b>
<b>NET BOOK VALUE</b>			
At 31 December 2024	<b>4,155</b>	-	<b>4,155</b>
At 31 December 2023	10,181	269	10,450

#### 12. FINANCIAL ASSETS

	2024	2023
	€	€
Valuation at start of year	2,561,782	2,301,488
Additions	543,992	541,876
Disposal proceeds	(598,222)	(448,734)
Realised Gain	45,041	17,507
Unrealised Gain	126,264	149,645
Valuation at end of year	<b>2,678,857</b>	<b>2,561,782</b>

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

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

	2024	2023
	€	€
Loan to Irish College Rome	320,020	370,020
Provision against Loan - Irish College Rome	(185,010)	(185,010)
Term Loan - Veritas	-	924,052
Provision against Loan - Veritas	-	(924,052)
World Meeting of Families 2018 Solidarity Funds	11,128	11,128
	<b>146,138</b>	<b>196,138</b>

Included within debtors is a provision against the recoverability of Loans made to Irish College Rome, previously carried at 50% of the outstanding loan balance at 31/12/2023, the provision has remained unchanged at 31/12/24. 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 2024

#### 14. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024	2023
	€	€
Prepaid expenses and other debtors	815,780	155,906
World Meeting of Families 2018 Solidarity Funds	7,317	34,117
Veritas loans	2,724,052	200,000
Provision against Loan - Veritas	(220,942)	-
	<b>3,326,207</b>	<b>390,023</b>

Included within debtors (amounts falling due within one year), is a provision against the recoverability of Loans made to Veritas. This provision has been reduced in 2024 by €703,110 as this amount has been received from Veritas post year end. The Trustees have not provided for the amounts loaned to Veritas in 2024 as this loan is secured against the property of Veritas.

#### 15. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024	2023
	€	€
Approved commission allocations and accrued expenses	407,647	206,215
Deferred income	2,002,123	-
Veritas - Solidarity Funds	1,009,621	-
Value added tax liability	442,628	-
Payroll taxes	45,674	43,116
	<b>3,907,693</b>	<b>249,331</b>

#### 16. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Opening Balance	Income	Expenditure	Closing Balance
	€	€	€	€
Episcopal Council for Emigrants	362,111	249,687	(221,855)	389,943
Pilgrimage Fund	299,289	-	-	299,289
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas	157,541	323,888	(394,305)	87,124
Synodal Pathway	133,163	197,084	(215,953)	114,294
Eucharistic Congress	107,651	-	-	107,651
Safeguarding in Irish Catholic Churches	17,440	-	-	17,440
Council for Life	80,000	-	(6,726)	73,274
Care of Retired Bishops	22,350	512,500	(518,233)	16,617
Council for Healthcare	34,280	15,862	(33,712)	16,430
National Vocations Office	14,027	-	(4,630)	9,397
Episcopal Conference Drugs Initiative	22,037	85,650	(86,868)	20,819
Youth Ministry	32,318	-	-	32,318
CCSS "Towards Healing"	-	256,652	(256,652)	-
Episcopal Council for Immigrants	17,612	10,000	(90)	27,522
Ukrainian Appeal	-	556	-	556
Holy See	-	45,502	(45,502)	-
Anscombe	-	16,201	(16,201)	-
Gubay Foundation Grant	-	250,000	(189,150)	60,850
Irish Council for Justice & Peace	-	30,000	(30,000)	-
Finance & General Purpose Council	-	17,500	(17,500)	-
Council for Catechetics	-	40,000	(40,000)	-
Towards Peace	-	17,377	(17,377)	-
	<b>1,299,819</b>	<b>2,068,459</b>	<b>(2,094,754)</b>	<b>1,273,524</b>

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

#### 17. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

	Opening Balance €	Income €	Expenditure €	Closing Balance €
<b>General Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>2,935,857</b>	<b>1,992,412</b>	<b>(1,273,832)</b>	<b>3,654,438</b>

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.

#### 18. RECONCILIATION OF CASH FLOWS

	Note	2024 €	2023 €
<b>18.1 OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Net movement in funds		692,286	(1,009,119)
<b>Adjustments for:</b>			
Depreciation charges	11	10,969	11,278
Interest receivable	4(d)	(23,724)	(839)
Realised gain	12	(45,041)	(17,507)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on Investments	12	(126,264)	(149,645)
(Increase)/Decrease in debtors	13-14	(2,886,184)	608,697
Increase/(Decrease) in creditors	15	1,658,362	(118,758)
<b>Net cash used in operating activities</b>		<b>(719,597)</b>	<b>(675,893)</b>

#### 18.2 FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

		2024 €	2023 €
Interest receivable	4(d)	23,724	839
<b>Net cash generated from financing activities</b>		<b>23,724</b>	<b>839</b>

#### 18.3 INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

		2024 €	2023 €
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	11	(4,674)	(4,451)
Payments to acquire Investments	12	(543,992)	(541,876)
Receipts from sale of Investments	12	598,222	448,734
<b>Net cash generated/(used in) Investing activities</b>		<b>49,556</b>	<b>(97,593)</b>

#### 19. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	31-Dec 2023 €	Cash Flows €	31-Dec 2024 €
<b>CASH AT BANK</b>			
Operating bank accounts	1,277,188	(613,989)	663,199
Cash held in investment portfolio	49,426	(32,327)	17,099
	<b>1,326,614</b>	<b>(646,316)</b>	<b>680,298</b>

#### 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 €104,849 (2023 - €98,401).

## HIERARCHY GENERAL PURPOSES TRUST

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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#### 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 2024, IEC through HGPT provided funding of €244,984 (2023: €250,539) to Coimirce. The balance due to Coimirce at 31st December 2024 was €NIL (2023: €2,422).

During the year ended 31st December 2024, IEC through HGPT provided funding of €1,600,000 (2023: €600,000) to Catechetical programmes in Veritas. During the year ended 31st December 2023 €924,052 due from Veritas Communications had been provided against due to uncertainty as to its recoverability. During the year ended 31st December 2024, this provision has been reduced by €703,110. At 31 December 2024 Veritas Communications has a repayable secured loan owing to HGPT of €1,800,000 (2023: €200,000). Interest of €21,941 (2023: €197) accrued on this loan by the end of the year and is included prepaid expenses and other debtors.

HGPT has recognised royalty income of €Nil (2023: €NIL) 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 2024 in relation to royalties is €Nil.

#### 22. POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

There were no 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 21 October 2025.