

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee

The Trustee presents its Annual Report and the audited financial statements of the Charity, Down and Connor Diocesan Trust, for the year ended 31 December 2022.

#### **Constitution and aims**

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor was formed from the amalgamation of the Diocese of Down and the Diocese of Connor, both of which were established in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. The Diocese of Down and the Diocese of Connor were eventually permanently joined in 1439, and The Roman Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor, ('the Diocese') as it is known today, was established, and has continued in existence for the last 584 years.

The Down and Connor Diocesan Trust, a charitable trust, was established by a Trust Deed dated 29 September 2004. On the 17 December 2015, Down and Connor Diocesan Trust was registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and given the registration number 103983. For tax purposes, Down and Connor Diocesan Trust is also registered with HM Revenue and Customs - Reference number XN46141. The sole Trustee of the Charity is a Corporation, Diocese of Down and Connor Trustee. The Company is limited by guarantee and was registered on 5 April 2006, registration number NI058844. On 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006 the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland authorised Diocese of Down and Connor Trustee to act in any Charitable or Ecclesiastical Trust as a Trust Corporation.

#### **Objectives and activities**

The principal objects of the Charity are:

- the advancement of the Roman Catholic religion in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor subject to any future curtailment or addition of area made in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Roman Catholic Church;
- the advancement of any charitable purpose supported by the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world or in any part of the world.

The Church in Down and Connor, in union with the Catholic Church worldwide, seeks to achieve its objectives through activities including the following:

- Proclamation of the Gospel
- Worship of God
- Provision of Clergy and pastoral personnel
- Formation and development of Parish communities
- Support for families
- Provision of educational, pastoral and youth ministries
- Provision and maintenance of places of worship
- Aid for impoverished and needy communities worldwide

The means used to fulfil the purposes of the Diocesan Trust are constantly monitored and reviewed to ensure that the principal aims, and objectives of the Charity are adhered to.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (*Continued*)

#### **Statement that the Trustee has had regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland public benefit requirement statutory guidance**

The Trustee confirms it has complied with the requirements of Section 4 (6) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in determining the activities undertaken by the Charity. Throughout this Annual Report the Trustee seeks to demonstrate that the Charity's aims and objectives are for the public benefit.

#### **Structure, Governance and Management**

The operation of the Charity is overseen by the Trustee. The Directors of the Trustee are appointed by the Bishop of Down and Connor who is Chair of the Board. Recruitment of Directors is based upon their knowledge of the local Church and their having the professional skills and experiences necessary for overseeing the affairs of the Charity by ensuring it is solvent, well-run, and that it delivers the outcomes for which it was established.

On appointment new Directors of the Trustee Board attend an Induction Day and are introduced to their role and responsibilities by the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Diocesan Secretary and the Diocesan Civil Administrator and they are provided with copies of the Trust Deed and the latest financial information and reports. Directors attend formal and informal training sessions as required.

The Human Resources and Personnel Committee meets at least four times a year and makes all key recommendations to the Trustee Board on the setting of pay and remuneration for key management personnel; the Committee is guided by a term of reference and has a quorum of Trustee representatives. Part of the Charity's longer-term strategy is the development of a succession plan for key staff and this is considered as part of the overall review of strategic and operational risks.

Archbishop Noel Treanor retired as the Bishop of the Diocese of Down and Connor on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and became Bishop Emeritus of Down and Connor and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down and Connor on that date.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2023 Archbishop Noel Treanor left the Diocese to take up the position of Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union. The Holy Father Pope Francis appointed Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of the Diocese of Derry, as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down and Connor on that date.

In the day-to-day management of the Charity, the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator refers ecclesiastical related matters to the Vicars General, the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Judicial Vicar, the Diocesan Secretary, Episcopal Vicars, and other appropriate officials. Civil administrative matters are referred to the Diocesan Civil Administrator and other officers employed by the Charity. In accordance with the Code of Canon Law a Presbyterial Council, that is a group of priests which represents the Presbyterium (however not in 'sede vacante'), and the College of Consultors assist the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator in the governance of the Diocese according to the norm of law so as to promote, as much as possible, the pastoral good of the people of God entrusted to him.

Reflecting Canon Law, the activities of the Charity are separated in this Report into Parish and Central Services functions.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (*Continued*)

#### **Parishes**

The Diocese is divided into Parish communities. Parish Priests/Administrators and Curates are appointed by the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator to provide pastoral care for Parish communities and to manage Parishes in all juridical affairs thus ensuring Parishes are administered in accordance with the norms of Canon and Civil Law while fulfilling the aims of the Charity.

As encouraged by The Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops (Apostolorum Successores), the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator, in consultation with Priests and the laity, reviews on a regular basis the Parish structure to ensure the long-term pastoral sustainability of the Parishes. Each Parish is required by Canon Law to have a Finance Committee to assist the Parish Priest/Administrator in the administration of the Parish. Parish Finance Committees include Parishioners with knowledge and experience in finance, property and administration.

#### **Central Services**

The Diocesan Central Services consists of those institutions and persons which furnish assistance to the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator in the governance of the entire Diocese, especially, in directing pastoral activity, in providing for the administration of the Diocese and in exercising judicial power. It also includes all who participate in the overall administration of the Diocese, especially those who direct diocesan activities such as pastoral support, youth work, education, family life, liturgy, lay voluntary involvement and other facets of the local Church's life.

The Trustee Board delegates oversight of the Diocese's day-to-day financial, property, investment and administration matters to the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Diocesan Secretary, the Diocesan Civil Administrator and other personnel from within the Central Services. Among the other designated personnel who assist the Board of Directors are the Finance Officer, the Property Liaison Officer, the Human Resources Officer and the Director of Safeguarding. All personnel of the Diocese undergo continuous professional development training.

The remuneration of the key management personnel is disclosed in the Financial Statements (note 12). All employment matters and remuneration issues are overseen by the Trustee Board and reviews are undertaken periodically.

#### **Risk Management**

The Trustee Board actively reviews all major strategic and operational risks to which the Charity is exposed and confirms these have been reviewed and that strategies and systems are established to manage exposure to these risks. Each department is required to monitor changes and to develop systems to manage risk whenever possible. The main areas of risk identified and monitored by the Board, during the year, include:

- Safeguarding
- Compliance with Health & Safety and listed buildings legislation
- Reduction in active clergy numbers
- Reduction in voluntary income including COVID-19 impact
- Increasing costs for the care of sick and retired clergy
- Reduction in central reserves due to capital projects and long-term commitments
- Compliance with data protection regulations

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

Report of the Trustee (*Continued*)

### **Achievements and performance**

The territory covered by the Diocese of Down and Connor has a total population of approximately 1.1 million people of which approximately 350,000 are Catholics. The eighty-six parishes are predominantly in Counties Antrim, Down and parts of County Derry. The Parishes are clustered into thirteen Pastoral Communities. Each Pastoral Community consists of a number of adjoining Parishes united in the interests of promoting and realising the objects and the mission of the Church in Down and Connor within their local communities. There are six Pastoral Communities in Belfast and the Greater Belfast area, three in County Down and four in County Antrim (Connor).

### **Proclamation of the Gospel and Worship of God**

Within the Diocese religion is advanced through the provision of places of worship, the facilitation of religious practice and, particularly, through community celebrations of Mass. Since the easing of COVID-19 restrictions there is a public celebration of Mass most days in the majority of Parishes/neighbouring Parishes and on every weekend several community Masses are celebrated in public in every Parish.

During the prior year, 2021, to adhere to appropriate protocols, including social distancing, our churches opened with reduced capacity. Since 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022 our churches increased capacity in line with government restrictions.

Other activities of the Charity include conducting religious ceremonies (such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals), running programmes pertaining to spiritual formation and development, encouraging and supporting inter-church relationships and maintaining places of worship, many of which are listed and contain religious works of art and other artefacts all of which form part of our national heritage. When government restrictions allowed, these places of worship are open to the general public, people of all faiths or none, they provide a public benefit for the whole community and for many people they are spaces which offer the opportunity for quiet reflection and for spiritual contemplation.

It is within Parishes that people experience what it is to be a member of the Catholic Church and where faith is nurtured and given expression. Parishes, through various means, provide for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of Parishioners young and old. Practical expressions of faith are manifested through the means of Parish organised pastoral, social and educational activities many of which rely on the voluntary involvement of Parishioners. During the current reporting period a total of 3,606 Baptisms took place within the Diocese. In the same period the Sacrament of First Communion was administered to 4,582 young people and the Sacrament of Confirmation was conferred on a total of 4,901 individuals.

As well as pastoral care and the provision of the Sacraments to the members of Parish communities, the Diocese offers chaplaincy services to those who cannot be part of a regular Parish community. Hospital Chaplains and lay pastoral visitors are available at all the major hospitals within the Diocese of Down and Connor including The Mater Hospital, The Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast City Hospital, Musgrave Park Hospital and Ulster Hospital. The Chaplains are regularly available to patients, patients' relatives and staff and are on call to attend in emergencies. The Diocese also provides chaplaincy services to those in Penal Institutions, HM Prison Maghaberry, Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre and Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (*Continued*)

Each year, priests, and people from Down and Connor journey to traditional pilgrimage sites such as Saul, Slemish, Lough Derg and Bangor. The national shrine of Our Lady at Knock continues to be a much-loved place of encounter with Our Lord in the Eucharist and of devotion to Our Lady of Knock. Pilgrimage is part of the rich tradition of faith expression in the Diocese and a visible manifestation of the Church community in action. As well as local sites such as Saul, Slemish and Downpatrick, people from Down and Connor make pilgrim visits to Knock, Lourdes, Fatima and follow the Pilgrim way to Santiago de Compostela. Travelling together as a pilgrimage group is an uplifting experience for all involved. The annual Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes successfully returned, on a smaller scale as the first year back post Covid, in July 2022. It is planned that the sick and their families will return for a larger pilgrimage in July 2023. On pilgrimage the Church community is seen in action as both young and old gather together for inspirational liturgies and prayerful reflection. The sick and their families, when they return to Lourdes in 2023, receive excellent care and attention from volunteers who freely and generously give of their time and skills thus enabling their brothers and sisters in Christ to benefit fully from their pilgrimage experience.

The important role played by volunteers who participate in the various activities of their Parish cannot be overstated and their contribution is vital in enabling the Diocese to continue to fulfil and develop its stated objectives. Volunteers generously give of their time serving in various ministries, caring for and visiting the sick, the housebound and those on the margins of society. They play a significant role in helping to maintain Parish property and assisting in financial and other administrative duties such as through membership of Parish Pastoral, Finance and Safeguarding Committees. Such Parishioners are the lifeblood of their communities and their contribution is significant. During the COVID-19 pandemic the response of volunteers generously giving time so that risk assessments and cleaning routines could be implemented to enable our churches to open has been overwhelming. It has not been possible to quantify the number of volunteers active throughout the Diocese nor is it possible to estimate the financial value of their involvement.

Although the Charity relies principally on donations from Parishioners for its funding, access to religious services is never restricted on the grounds of ability to pay. In addition, members of the Catholic community are encouraged, as a consequence of their faith commitment, to contribute towards creating a better society by becoming active volunteers for the Common Good within their local area through membership of charities, local societies, community groups and, also, by volunteering in all sorts of other ways so as to benefit society in general.

Besides the work accomplished in the Parishes, the Central Services, the central administrative offices of the Diocese, coordinates and carries out a number of essential functions necessary for the advancement of the Catholic Religion at local, national and international level. In order to do this the Central Services operates through Diocesan Commissions, Committees and through various personnel charged with specific responsibilities.

The Diocesan Commissions include the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission, the Commission on Family Ministry, the Liturgy Commission, the Commission for Religious, the Social Affairs Commission and the Vocations Commission.

The Diocesan Committees include the Diocesan Education Committee, the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, and the Diocesan Living Church Committee.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust Report of the Trustee (Continued)

Personnel with specific responsibilities include the Diocesan Archivist, the Diocesan Coordinator of Adult Faith Development, the Diocesan Historian, the Diocesan Knock Pilgrimage Director, the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Director, the Diocesan Media Liaison Officer, the pastoral care of Migrants Coordinator, Diocesan Director of Public and Social Affairs, the Diocesan Propagation of the Faith Director and the Diocesan Vocations Director.

### **Provision of Clergy and pastoral personnel**

Central to Parish life is the relationship between the Parish Priest, Curates, Deacons and Parishioners. Clergy are not employees of the Diocese, however, in Canon Law the care and welfare of incardinated Priests of the Diocese is mandatory and is, therefore, part of the Charity's ongoing commitments.

On the whole, it is the clergy ministering in Parishes who organise, animate and motivate the local faith communities. They constantly strive to be witnesses of hope and authentic shepherds for their people. The provision of dedicated, well qualified and competent clergy to serve in Parishes and other ministries remains a priority for the Diocese. Through the means of regular conferences, retreats, courses, workshops and sabbaticals the clergy of the Diocese are kept informed and provided with guidance in regard to current issues and developments in respect of all aspects of ministry and mission. Currently, the Diocese has seven candidates in formation leading to ordination to the Priesthood and four candidates preparing for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate. During the year one candidate was ordained to the priesthood for ministry in the Down and Connor Diocese and six candidates were ordained to the Permanent Diaconate. The cost of this formation is borne by the Clerical Students Fund.

The general well-being and care of clergy in active ministry is coordinated by an Episcopal Vicar for Clergy. Priests' stipends and related matters are overseen and regulated through a Priests' Welfare Fund. Equally important is the welfare of priests who are sick or retired. Many of the retired priests have served in Parishes and local communities for over fifty years. Their welfare and accommodation are the responsibility of a committee which administers the Provident Fund of the Secular Priests of the Diocese of Down and Connor. During the year thirty-four priests received assistance from the Fund which necessitated a total spend of approximately £537,835.

The objectives of the Charity are greatly supported, and the life of the Diocese enriched, by the contribution made by one hundred and sixty-four members of Religious Institutions, Secular Institutions and/or Societies of Apostolic Life serving in the Diocese. The Diocese of Down and Connor expresses its sincere gratitude to these men and women of faith for their ministries of generous service and sacrifice.

### **Support for families**

Pope Francis's encyclical *Amoris Laetitia* alongside The World Meeting of Families which took place in Dublin in 2018 raised the profile of the Church's need to minister to families. Families encounter the church at all key moments in their life; the Baptism of a new child, nurturing the faith of a child through the sacraments of reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, Marriage, times of illness and bereavement. 'Family Ministry' within the Diocese is dedicated to strengthening marriage and families by coordinating pastoral programmes and ministries that have faith as their foundation and Christ as their goal.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

In collaboration with other agencies 'Family Ministry' also offers services and practical resources to assist people, at all stages of life, in order to help them experience, more fully, the love and compassion of God in the ordinary events of life. ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Service, Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter provide preparation courses for couples led by lay people and clergy across the Diocese as couples look to prepare not just for a wedding day but also for life together. The preparation courses offer couples a time of reflection, teaching and prayer supporting couples to have a solid foundation on which to build their marriage. ACCORD also provides vital counselling support to couples at times when their relationship needs support and guidance in their centers.

Bethany Bereavement Support Group and Beginning Experiences are both lay led groups supported by the Diocese to ensure that people experience compassion and support at a time of loss. Family life is challenged by the death of a loved one and the Church cannot fail to offer the light of faith as a support to families at a time of such great loss. Bethany volunteers have completed a training programme to support them in developing the necessary skills for this sensitive pastoral ministry. Clergy of the diocese are supported by local Bethany groups who continue visitation of families in their own homes accompanying bereaved families as they grieve.

#### **Provision of educational, youth and pastoral ministries**

##### **Catholic schools and universities within the Diocese**

A key ingredient in our contribution to the local community is through our large network of Catholic Schools. Catholic Schools Week is celebrated throughout Ireland. Through this event, schools focus on the value Catholic Education provides to young people and its contributions to our church, our communities and our country. This annual event calls on Catholic schools to give expression, in a special way, to a particular aspect of Catholic Education. Catholic Schools Week 2022 took place from 23<sup>rd</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> January, focusing on the theme 'Catholic Schools: Living Life to the Full.'

The Church in Down and Connor remains fully committed, through its Catholic Schools, to maintaining, by way of a holistic methodology, the highest standards in learning thus continuing to offer academic excellence and faith-filled education to all young people. Many non-Catholic parents choose to educate their children in Catholic schools, not least, because of the excellent education on offer but also, the identifiable ethos of trust, mutual respect and recognition of responsibility to those in need. Throughout the year the Diocesan Episcopal Vicar for Education exercises responsibility for oversight of the work of Catholic Education within the Diocese.

The Diocese participates in third level education through its involvement in Saint Mary's University College, Belfast. St Mary's is the only Catholic University College in Northern Ireland. Its primary role is to serve the educational needs of the community in general by educating competent and dedicated teachers. The Diocese also provides chaplains at Queen's University, Belfast and at two of Ulster University's campuses, Coleraine and Belfast. The Diocese owns, manages and maintains premises adjacent to Queen's University which is designated specifically for the purpose of providing an outreach for students attending Queen's University. These facilities will undergo a major redevelopment over the next few years.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

#### Living Church

The 'Living Church' office was established in December 2011 by Archbishop Noel Treanor and was tasked with developing a Diocesan Pastoral Plan which was presented at the Diocesan Congress in September 2013. The Living Church office plays an integral role in the pastoral renewal and life of the Diocese. The office has a wide range of remits that fall under the themes of the Pastoral Plan. The remit of the office includes the work of SPRED, a faith development programme for people with learning disabilities.

#### *Faith Development*

Parishes continue to avail of the support of the Living Church Office in identifying appropriate adult Faith Development Programmes, to be facilitated in their local Parish or Pastoral Community. Faith Development Courses seek to provide participants with the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God, to deepen their knowledge of the Church and to create safe spaces where people can support and encourage one another in living out their Christian faith.

In 2022 the course *Unlocking the mystery of the Bible* was delivered to 150 people over 8 weekly sessions helping them to read the Bible by discovering the story of salvation. The programme WISDOM was delivered both online and in person to 100 people helping them understand how to better embrace decision making in our lives using prayer, scripture and teaching of the church.

Pope Francis gave a series of catechesis on the *Spirituality of Aging*; this was taken up and a series of *Beloved Disciples* programmes were delivered in parishes across the Diocese. It provided a valuable space for older parishioners to reflect on their experience of the COVID pandemic, to build community and for many the opportunity to attend their first retreat.

During Lent 255 people participated in *No Greater Love*, this weekly programme provided an opportunity to consider the Scriptures connected to the final moments of the Last Supper.

The Living Church office provides regular social media updates on Feast Days of Saints, key liturgical dates and insights on the Universal Church that are shared by our parishes and have a reach of between 10 – 20,000 people per week. A series of videos featuring clergy and laity from across the Diocese was shared for the 12 days of Christmas alongside other printed resources to support people in personal prayer. The Living Church provides resources to support adults undertaking the RCIA programme in the Diocese as they prepare for their full reception into the Catholic Church.

#### *Lay Participation*

##### *For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*

In October 2021 Archbishop Treanor alongside the Director and Assistant Director of the Living Church office opened the Diocesan Phase of the Universal Synodal Pathway initiated by Pope Francis. A synodal committee was formed which reflected on the Preparatory and Vademecum documents produced by the General Secretariat so that the Diocese would commence its Synodal Listening during Lent 2022.

During Lent the parishes of the Diocese participated in a *Make Your Mark* campaign on the First Week of Lent providing personal responses to the synodal questions. For many they felt that this was the first time that their opinion had been specifically sought out by the Church. Parishes reflected on the submissions that they received and shared that reflection with the Diocese. Encouraged by Pope Francis to listen to the margins specific listening took place with families living in poverty, divorced and re-married, LGBTQ community, people living with disabilities and carers. A large synodal gathering took place with keynote speakers Nicola Brady, *Churches Together in Britain & Ireland* and Caoimhe de Barra, CEO *Trocáire* to reflect on the *Church in the Public Square* and our role in promoting the common good.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

A team of facilitators also conducted 13 synodal listening sessions using the methodology of Spiritual Conversations to encourage engagement with the synod at a local level. These sessions held in various locations across the Diocese were spirit filled gatherings of prayer and dialogue and opportunities for people to meet from across parishes to engage with the Universal Church process.

The Director of the Living Church was appointed to the Steering Committee of the *Irish Synodal Pathway* to provide teaching and guidance tools on Spiritual Conversations to representatives of the Irish Dioceses and was a member of the team who read the Irish Submissions and facilitated a day of reflection in Athlone for the Irish Bishops, and representatives from each of the Irish Diocese, Religious communities and Lay associations and movements.

#### *Pathways to the Future*

The Diocese has begun a new journey of forward planning. This started by identifying lay people with significant experience in the life of the Diocese to support the work of preparing for the future of the Diocese. The work involves three clear strands of work; *Care for Clergy in times of Change, Developing Lay Ministry and Co-responsible Leadership; and Managing Change in the Life and Mission of the Church*. The Steering Committee developed a pre-consultation workbook outlining the emerging trends in the Diocese informed by data on the number of clergy available for ministry and forward projections for the next 20 years. The data also presented the number of Sacraments that took place within each of the parishes in the Diocese and suggestions for grouping of parishes known as *Families of Parishes*. A series of clergy gatherings took place in the June 2022 followed by 6 diocesan gatherings that took place over October and November 2022 attended by clergy and parish representatives. These gatherings, synodal in their nature, provided people with the opportunity to share their insights. These insights would form the basis for further reflection and discernment.

#### *Passing on the Faith*

The remit for children, youth and young adult ministry has been taken up by the Living Church office at the request of Archbishop Noel Treanor. One of the key developments in young adult ministry has been the opening of the Belfast Jesuit Centre for Spirituality in October 2022 following an invitation from Archbishop Treanor. Located beside the new Ulster University Campus the centre will be ecumenical in its outreach and synodal in its way of proceeding. It aims to be a hub of activities such as spiritual companionship, workshops, courses in Ignatian spirituality, faith formation, and creative pathways to encountering God at work in the hearts and minds of those attending and at work in the wider socio-cultural surroundings.

The Pope John Paul II award continued at Parish Level and plans are underway to re-launch this programme with Parish as the focus of gathering the young people and ensuring their participation in the life of the Parish.

#### **Safeguarding**

The Down and Connor Safeguarding Office was established in 2008 to coordinate and develop robust safeguarding practices across the Diocese and in response to effective responses to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations against church personnel, compliant with safeguarding best practice and statutory safeguarding procedures and legislation.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

The Diocesan Safeguarding Office has developed in line with the Catholic Church in Ireland's response to safeguarding, as evidenced by the establishment of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) and the publication in 2016 of 'Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards'. The Diocese of Down and Connor works to this policy and associated standards as well as to statutory and legal imperatives in the field of safeguarding. This also has promoted a "one church" approach across the Catholic Church in Ireland. The work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, answerable to the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator and who meet every two months.

An important development of the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Office has been the implementation of Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. This is in line with best practice with regards to adult safeguarding and the office works to current statutory policies and legislation. This is evidenced by the Designated Liaison Person (Child Safeguarding) also adopting the role of Adult Safeguarding Champion as per statutory guidance.

A core element of the work of the Safeguarding Office is case management. This involves the diocesan response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations relating to child protection/safeguarding and adult safeguarding in compliance with statutory procedures and Church guidance. This work falls exclusively within the role of the Designated Liaison Person/Adult Safeguarding Champion.

During 2022 the office had two professional staff and an administrative support staff. In addition, the Parish Safeguarding Support Officer role was established post year end, during 2023. Case management within the Diocese is supported by the Bishop's Advisory Panel, a group of experts from a number of relevant fields. This group is serviced by the Designated Liaison Person and provide guidance and recommendations to the Bishop/ Apostolic Administrator in relation to case management.

An essential feature of the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Office is to support each Parish in Down and Connor in creating safe environments in Parishes. A core element of this work is that each Parish has in place a Parish Safeguarding Committee. These Parish Safeguarding Committees are supported by staff in the Diocesan Safeguarding Office. It is important to note that the Diocese of Down and Connor safeguarding Parish structures comprise of some 500 volunteers who themselves are vetted and trained. These dedicated volunteers continue to maintain a unique and robust safeguarding structure designed to ensure that best practice is driven and maintained at Parish level where children, young people and vulnerable adults participate in Parish activities.

#### **Provision and maintenance of places of worship**

Churches play a central role in the spiritual life of Parishioners and along with Parochial Houses and other associated Parish buildings they are often significant landmarks within the wider local community. Public benefit is provided through the provision of safe and worthy places of worship and assembly for not only the Catholic community but for those also who wish to make use of them for personal or spiritual contemplation. Many of the Churches and associated buildings are listed as being of special or historical architectural interest. The proper care of these buildings can be onerous, but they are essential for the ongoing realisation of the principal object of the Charity, the advancement of the Catholic religion.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

General maintenance, minor and major schemes of renewal and projects of construction in regard to church buildings and properties often require major outlays which are essential if these important structures, which form part of our national heritage, are to be maintained not just for present use but for future generations. The management of this responsibility is ongoing and is carefully regulated and professionally monitored so that legitimate requests for new works, renovations and adaptations can be readily assessed and progressed.

The Diocese has in place insurance cover in respect of all its buildings so that public access should not be unduly restricted by lack of funds to repair or restore buildings harmed as a result of accidental or other damage.

#### **Aid for impoverished and needy communities worldwide**

Trócaire is the official overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. It was established by the Irish Bishops Conference in 1973 as a means through which people could donate to Trócaire's overseas emergency relief and development aid programmes. Its dual mandate is to support the most vulnerable people in the developing world while, also, raising awareness of injustice and global poverty. The Diocese of Down and Connor, the second largest Diocese in Ireland, is a major contributor to the charitable work of Trócaire and in the year under review contributed over £442,583.

#### **Overview**

This brief overview reflects a consolidation of the work of the Charity in the current year and also indicates its ongoing commitment in regard to fulfilling the principal aims and objectives of the Charitable Trust into the future.

#### **Going concern**

Like many charitable entities, Down and Connor Diocesan Trust is exposed to the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Until 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022, our Churches were opened at reduced capacity due to government restrictions, for the celebration of public worship across our Parishes.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 there has been a reduction in income, however costs have been reduced where possible. Based on the measures taken and given the level of unrestricted reserves as at 31 December 2022, the Trustee believes that the Trust is well positioned to operate through the uncertainty and beyond. The financial statements have therefore been prepared on a going concern basis.

#### **Post year end**

Post year end, in June 2023, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland performed a Review of Child Safeguarding practice and arrangements, in the Diocese of Down and Connor. The National Board acknowledged and commended the commitment and dedication of everyone they met. They concluded that they saw clear evidence of visible and pro-active leaderships with regard to safeguarding and delivering against the National Board Standards at all levels within the Diocese. They were impressed by the trauma-informed approach the Diocese is taking to safeguarding practice. This approach is very relevant to work with complainants, respondents, and their families, as well as to staff and clergy who work regularly with those who have experienced abuse related trauma.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

#### Future Plans

The Church in Down and Connor will continue to build upon and develop the initiatives and activities outlined in the narrative above and so continue to fulfil the principal aims of the Charity. In addition, a primary focus of the Trustee is to secure the longer-term financial stability of the Diocese and a continuation of its existing core activities. Periodically the Trustee undertakes a review exercise in respect of all aspects of the activities of the Charity through reports from Parish Priests, Parish Administrators and the various bodies which are constituent parts of the diocese.

#### Review of Financial Performance

The detailed financial results for the year ended 31 December 2022 are set out in the financial statements that accompany this report.

The table below summarises the financial activities of the Diocese:

	<b>2022</b>	2021
	<b>£'000</b>	£'000
<b>Parishes</b>		
Income	<b>15,309</b>	16,703
Expenditure	<b>(13,039)</b>	(12,324)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net income before assessment and transfers	<b>2,270</b>	4,379
Diocesan Assessment and other transfers	<b>(1,410)</b>	(1,561)
Gain on revaluation of fixed assets	-	814
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Increase in reserves	<b>860</b>	3,632
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Central Services</b>		
Income	<b>3,291</b>	8,211
Expenditure	<b>(5,624)</b>	(4,380)
Diocesan assessment and other transfers	<b>1,410</b>	1,561
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net (expenditure) / income before investment gains and revaluation gains	<b>(923)</b>	5,392
Investment (losses) / gains	<b>(4,111)</b>	4,164
	<hr/>	<hr/>
(Decrease) / increase in reserves	<b>(5,034)</b>	9,556
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total (decrease) / increase in Parish and Central Services reserves</b>	<b>(4,174)</b>	13,188
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Complete details of the income and expenditure are shown in the statement of financial activities on page 23 and in the notes to the accounts.

#### Review of transactions and financial position of the Charity

The reserves of the Charity at 31 December 2022 total £169.5m (2021: £173.7m) and of this total £88.7m (2021: £87.9m) relates solely to the assets and activities of individual Parishes and are not available for the non-parish general purposes of the Charity. Central Services reserves total £80.8m (2021: £85.8m) at the year-end of which £59.5m (2021: £63.7m) are unrestricted with £9.2m (2021: £8.7m) of this relating to fixed assets.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust

### Report of the Trustee (Continued)

Most of the income received by Parishes is through the Sunday offertory and other donations. This source of income is 73% (2021: 64.2%) of the parish total. This increased from £10.7m in 2021 to £11.2m in 2022 (note 2). Total expenditure increased by 5.7% to £13m in 2022 from £12.3m in 2021.

Total Central Services income decreased from £8.2m in 2021 to £3.3m in 2022. Total expenditure increased from £4.4m in 2021 to £5.6m in 2022.

#### **Investment policy**

The Down and Connor Diocesan Trust Deed, dated 29 of September 2004, provides the Diocese of Down and Connor Trustee with the power to invest and vary the investment of the Diocesan Assets '*...in such shares, stocks, funds, securities, land, buildings, chattels or other investments or property of any nature and in any part of the world...*'.

At present the Trustee's Finance and Investment Committee liaises with the current investment managers, monitors their performance and reports to the Trustee Board at each of its meetings.

Under Charity Law the Trustee Board must seek to obtain the best financial return possible consistent with commercial prudence.

#### **Investment Objectives**

The Trustee Board has adopted investment objectives that seek to protect and enhance the real value of the Diocesan Assets over the long term while also achieving agreed rates of income generation.

In fulfilling these objectives, the Trustee Board adheres to an Ethical Policy that restricts investment in asset classes directly or mainly involved in the manufacture and/or supply of goods and services which are not in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel, the promotion of the dignity and sanctity of human life and the social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the year investments have performed as expected given the ongoing pandemic.

#### **Investment Managers**

The principal Diocesan Trust Investment Portfolio (£44m) is presently managed by Cazenove Capital (Schroder & Co Ltd) operating a 'total return' policy over the medium to long-term. Smith & Williamson Investment Management LLP (Cunningham Coates) manage the much smaller Specified Fund Portfolio (£0.50m) with emphasis on current income with a lower risk profile. Both portfolios are managed on a discretionary basis.

## Down and Connor Diocesan Trust Report of the Trustee (Continued)

### **Ethical Investment Policy**

The agreed Trustee Board's Ethical Investment Policy is as follows:

No direct investments in companies, or groups of companies, which generate more than 10% of their turnover from:

- exploitation of those living in conditions of poverty through unfair lending practices including payday lending.
- unjust practices which deny employees fair wages and conditions
- biological and chemical weapons, landmines and general weapons and arms of war and mass destruction
- pornography
- contraceptives and/or birth control devices
- the provision of abortions or euthanasia
- embryonic stem cell research, foetal tissue research or human cloning
- activities that violate currently approved environmental conventions.

It is understood that a complete control over monies, for instance, those held in Funds, is not possible. The Trustee Board may, therefore, have indirect exposure to activities which may give rise to ethical concerns where these are considered minimal in relation to the portfolio's overall composition.

This Ethical Investment Policy is to be reviewed periodically by the Trustee Board's Finance and Investment Committee and ratified, along with any updates, annually by the Trustee Board.

### **Reserves policy**

Unrestricted funds are not all freely available, should the Charity need immediate access to reserves. In order to ensure that the organisation has access to funds it is necessary to adjust unrestricted reserves as recommended by SORP 2019 by excluding Fixed Assets as it would be unlikely that the organisation would be able to liquidate the fixed assets in a timely manner. The Charity's policy is to maintain 12 months unrestricted expenditure as free reserves at 31 December 2022, free reserves are equivalent to 12 months planned unrestricted expenditure of the Charity.

Approved by the Trustee on 27 September 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



Very Reverend Eugene O'Hagan  
Director of Diocese of Down and Connor Trustee