

**THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH  
(REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1050485)**

**TRUSTEES' REPORT AND UNAUDITED ACCOUNTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**



# Dominican Sisters of St Joseph

## Trustees report – January to December 2024

### About the Charity

The Dominican Sisters of St Joseph is a Roman Catholic congregation of religious sisters, registered as a UK Charity, number: 1050485.

11 sisters form the religious congregation. They live together in St Dominic's Priory, Shirley Holms Road, Lymington, SO41 8NH, which is the charity's address.

The current trustees of the charity are:

Sr Hyacinthe Defos du Rau, OP

Sr Mary Benedicta Obiora, OP

Sr Carino Hodder, OP (appointed 4 January 2025)

Sr Lucy Cahill, OP (appointed 4 January 2025)

At the head of the charity is the prioress (superior) of the congregation, Sr Hyacinthe Defos du Rau, OP. elected in January 2025. She is advised by her council consisting of the sub-prioress and 2 elected members. The prioress is elected for a 3-year term. The charity's trustees are the members of the council of the congregation. Three members, including the prioress, are elected by the life-long members of the community, and one, the sub-prioress, is nominated by the prioress.

The charity is regulated by the Constitutions of the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph, established and approved as a religious congregation on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1994.

All 11 sisters are listed as volunteers in the charity. In addition, 21 lay persons are listed as volunteers due to their occasional participation in the charity's activities. These include the community's chaplain and volunteers at the community's youth camp. The charity has no employees.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2024, the trustees of the charity were:

Sr Julie Marsh-Collis, OP (Prioress)

Sr Hyacinthe Defos du Rau, OP

Sr Mary Benedicta Obiora, OP

Sr Michelle Hawkes, OP

## Aims and Purpose

The community of the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph aims to provide a welcoming place of daily worship of God, where all can share in the prayer of the sisters, in-person and online.

The sisters work in pastoral outreach to adults, young people, and children, to further the mission of the Catholic Church at the service of all people through the proclamation of the Gospel, online and in-person.

The work of the community is particularly focused on training parish catechists, who will be able to serve the needs of their own parishes more efficiently thanks to the formation received from the sisters, thus impacting the wider community of the Church and its influence on society.

To achieve the aims listed above, the charity provides for the needs of the sisters, who live together under one roof, and for the needs of their chaplain.

## Objectives and Activities

The Dominican Sisters of St Joseph are responsible for the maintenance of the priory which is their home, open to all for prayer and day retreats for groups and individuals. The priory is situated in the New Forest, in a remote area of natural beauty which is ideal for prayer, recollection, and contemplation.

Making the priory a safe place to come is a priority of the community, which ensures that health and safety regulations are followed, and that safeguarding measures are implemented under the overseeing authority of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and with the help of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS). The safeguarding imperative extends to all areas of the sisters' life and work, within and beyond the boundaries of the priory.

The worship of the sisters, open to all and shared by many, in-person and online, consists in the daily celebration of Mass, of the Divine Office and other prayers. For this purpose, the upkeep of a dedicated chaplain at the priory is essential.

The apostolic outreach of the sisters, called *Light of Truth*, is carried out both online and in-person, at the priory or in the various places where they are invited to teach and form others. The outreach of the sisters aims at helping people grow in faith, in confidence, and in virtue, developing their knowledge of the faith, their relationship with God, and their ability to help others to grow in faith and love of God and neighbour. The sisters' work is focused on forming formators.

Through their public worship and their pastoral outreach, the sisters are working practically and explicitly for the advancement of religion, in keeping with their charitable purposes, as stated in their governing document.

# Achievements and Performance in 2024

## *Community, worship, and prayer*

The Dominican Sisters of St Joseph dedicate at least 4 hours a day to public worship which all can join in-person or online. On average, 30 persons join the sisters weekly for their worship in the chapel. The total number of online participations to the sisters' worship in 2024 was 259,704, of which 146,039 were unique viewers from 124 countries for a total of 269,607 hours of viewing time.

The most important part of the sisters' prayer is the celebration of Mass. In 2024, they made provisions for a resident chaplain, Fr Michael Shakeel Gill, OP, to come over from Pakistan, from February to the end of April. He was replaced in May by Fr Thomas Skeats, OP, who has become their permanent chaplain. As it is necessary for the chaplain to live on-site, the sisters equipped a bungalow on the grounds of their property for that purpose.

## *Pastoral work at the priory*

Below is a summary list of the work carried on in 2024 by the Dominican sisters of St Joseph for groups or individuals who came to the priory:

- 4 Retreat days for primary school, with an intake of 30 children each.
- A day Retreat for a confirmation group.
- A residential weekend retreat for young people, led with other volunteers.
- A few day retreats for groups, averaging 15 people per day.
- 2 weekend retreats for 10 young women.
- 2 retreat days for about 15 families with their children.
- A monthly meeting for a group of 6 Lay Dominicans.
- A Carol Service for more than 50 people.
- Regular retreats (days or residential) for single retreatants of different Christian denominations
- Spiritual direction for individuals

## *In-person pastoral outreach beyond the priory*

Below is a summary of the pastoral work carried out by the sisters, in person, in various locations in the UK and Ireland:

- A summer camp for about 65 young people, with the help of 15 volunteers.
- A monthly youth group in Holy Family Parish, Southampton.
- A weekly children's faith club in St Patrick's School, Southampton.
- A monthly support for parish catechesis in Winchester.
- In a context of growing partnership with various dioceses, the sisters led or participated in 28 faith formation days in 2024, in:

- Cardiff Diocese (x 2)
- Westminster Archdiocese (x 3)
- Portsmouth Diocese (x 10)
- Plymouth Diocese (x 3)
- Clifton Diocese (x 4)
- Arundel and Brighton Diocese
- Nottingham Diocese
- Southwark Diocese (x 4)
- The sisters led or participated in outreach to the pupils of Catholic schools in Aldershot, Warwick, Bournemouth, Winchester, and Birmingham.
- 2 sisters offered pastoral support and faith formation to different groups and in different venues in Liverpool Archdiocese, for a week of mission.
- 2 sisters offered a weekend of catechists' formation in Galway, Ireland
- 2 sisters led 3 days of retreat for Southwark Archdiocese Life and Family Team.
- The sisters are also involved in pastoral outreach within the local community, visiting the sick and housebound, at their request, within and beyond the Catholic community.
- 1 sister provides a pastoral presence and support in the local parish.

#### *Online pastoral outreach and formation*

- The sisters have developed sections on Children's Liturgy and to help parents and catechists of children with additional needs on their Light of Truth website ([www.lightoftruth.uk](http://www.lightoftruth.uk)), which is the main platform for their online apostolate.
- The traffic on the Light of Truth website for 2024 amounted to 2,347 unique visitors for a total of 5,034 sessions. This was an improvement from 2023, which numbered 1,908 unique visitors for a total of 4,121 sessions. The website was launched in August 2022.
- The sisters keep up their social media presence up to date with a community account on Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube.
- The sisters offer a weekly Gospel podcast, with an explanation of the Sunday Gospel, which was downloaded 7,231 times in 2024.
- The sisters were invited to co-host a bi-monthly show on questions of faith, for Radio Maria England.
- The sisters presented 12 stand-alone online sessions on diverse topics related to the faith throughout the year, either at their initiative or by invitation.
- They offered a monthly formation session, online, for the Catholic Women's Association, open to all, with an average participation of 30.

- They offered 6 short online courses of faith formation for adults, open to all, asking for a voluntary donation, for an average of 45 participants per session:
  - Lenten retreat (6 sessions)
  - Essential training for catechists (6 sessions)
  - Words of Faith (6 sessions)
  - Origins of the Bible (4 sessions)
  - Four Last Things (4 sessions)
  - Advent retreat (3 sessions)

#### *Development and launch of a 2-year Certificate in Catechesis*

- The project of offering a 2-year online certificate course for catechists was developed and launched in September 2024. The certificate course consists of 4 modules a year (September to July) with two electives, amounting to 10 modules of 9 sessions each over 2 years. Having never undertaken a project of this scale before, it required research, external consultation, and a decision process involving the entire community of the Dominican sisters.
- A new area, relevant to the Certificate was set up on the Light of Truth website. The safeguarding and data protection policies were updated to match the development.
- A subscription for an online Learning Management System (LMS) was purchased to serve as the platform for the Certificate, offering access to the entirety of the course material to the students. This was the most significant investment.
- Registration for the Course were opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2024.
- The Induction evening took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, for a first intake of 89 students from 23 dioceses in England, Wales, Ireland, France, and Australia.
- Students attend a weekly 2-hour live session and 2 in-person formation days a year, presented by the Dominican sisters and occasional guest speaker with relevant area of expertise. Students are assessed orally after each module.
- The certificate received the approval of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for the formation process of those who will be instituted as catechists under the authority of their diocesan Bishop.
- With the launch of the Certificate, the community made the decision to restrict or terminate other areas of pastoral work (i.e. outreach to schools, confirmation retreats, residential retreats), so as to focus on work required for the Certificate, with a high standard of student support and care.

### *Community membership and formation*

The entirety of the sisters' work as a charity is dependent on their own membership, individual well-being, community development and formation. In 2024, the following achievements took place:

In terms of membership, Sr Amata was clothed as a novice, having lived in the community for one year as a postulant, and Sr Lucy made perpetual vows as life-long member of the community after 6 years of formation.

In terms of intellectual formation, the sisters provide weekly 4 hours of in-house formation for new members, as well as online formation sourced from different providers. Formation sessions and conferences have been organised as part of the on-going formation of all the sisters. All the sisters are given the opportunity to study every weekday for two hours. Sr Carino completed her Bachelor in Divinity after 5 years of study, and Sr Hyacinthe completed her PhD after 4 years of study, both part-time.

Since singing is at the heart of the sisters' worship, the community invited a professional music teacher to give the sisters communal and individual singing lessons every week. This has made a tremendous impact on the sisters' worship.

In November 2024, a canonical visitation of the community took place, led by Abbot Xavier Perrin, from Quarr Abbey, to assess the human and spiritual health of the community as a whole, its fidelity to its vocation and goals, and identify areas of weakness and growth. Abbot Perrin's report was positive, with a special commendation given to Sr Julie, the prioress at the time, for her leadership. The visitation was an opportunity for all the sisters to review their life and to renew their commitment for the future development of the community and its work at the service of the people they can reach through their worship and ministry.

## Financial Review

2024 saw an increase of £34,518 in income from the previous year. The greater part of £203,085 was earned by the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph or donated to them in 2024. This figure includes also gift aid, investments, pensions, and care allowances, as well as rent income.

This increase in income is mainly accounted for by the launch of the 2-year Certificate in Catechesis with its fees set at £495 a year per student. This is a new and stable source of income for the Dominican sisters. The significance of the certificate fees in the breakdown is visible under 'standard earned income' which shows a variance of £39,304 from the previous year, for a total of £86,936 in earned income.

Total expenditure has decreased from £206,067 to £179,979. However 2024 includes significant spend on capital items – if this is excluded other expenditure has increased by £21,752 from the previous year, with a total figure of £175,593. The increase in expenditure was due to the higher cost of living, especially regarding heat, light, and power (£7,634 increase from 2023 for a total of £21,617), but also to necessary maintenance work on the priory, carrying out essential repairs and alterations. For instance, an entire block of derelict wooden stables was destroyed on the grounds, and essential plumbing work was undertaken in the house. The priory is an Edwardian house with extensions which needs constant care, maintenance, and repair. This maintenance extends to the grounds of 2.5 acres.

The 2024 expenditure also included the travelling and visa expenses of the Pakistani priest who served as chaplain for a couple of months, as well as the equipment of his bungalow. Another new area of expenditure was the investment in the software equipment necessary to run the new Certificate course.

The 11 sisters who form the community endeavour to live frugally, and this is reflected in the household costs and stipends figure, which, notwithstanding higher costs of living, remained at a similar level at £33,468 compared to £33,635 in the previous year.


In view of a slightly higher income in 2024 but also of the lower expenditure, the charity made a surplus to £23,106, which is kept as an emergency fund, especially for unexpected breakdowns of equipment or unplanned and urgent repairs to the house.

### **Reserves policy**

The reserves policy of the charity is to keep cash reserves to cover 3-6 months operational expenditure, whilst also being mindful of the significant property maintenance costs that arise. Total cash funds at 31 December 2024 were £176,070.

Approved by the Trustees on 20 October 2025

Signed on their behalf by



Sr Hyacinthe Defos du Rau, OP

Trustee



# **INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Dominican Sisters of St Joseph for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 9 to 10.

## **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trustee's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

## **Independent Examiners Statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- (2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



**J E Harris FCCA**

**20 October 2025**

Knight Goodhead Limited  
Chartered Accountants  
7 Bournemouth Road  
Chandler's Ford  
Eastleigh  
Hampshire  
SO53 3DA

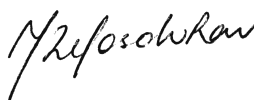
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>				
Donations and legacies	55,325	-	55,325	52,433
Repository sales	9,581	-	9,581	9,469
FLC sales	6,562	-	6,562	1,683
Fundraising	60	-	60	203
Investment income	2,194	-	2,194	1,380
Other income	42	-	42	3,814
Pensions and care allowance	41,149	-	41,149	50,687
Solar panel income	1,236	-	1,236	1,266
<b>Standard earned income</b>				
Rental income	1,800	-	1,800	1,800
Fees earned	8,282	-	8,282	7,092
Priory visitors	12,197	-	12,197	9,339
Fanning the flame	15,311	-	15,311	13,059
Light of Truth	49,346	-	49,346	16,342
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>203,085</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>203,085</b>	<b>168,567</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>				
Grants and donations paid	4,675	-	4,675	3,038
Fanning the flame	17,726	-	17,726	14,286
Good for resale - repository	1,864	-	1,864	1,743
FLC materials	6,100	-	6,100	3,752
Rates	2,569	-	2,569	2,511
Light and heat	21,617	-	21,617	13,983
Travel and subsistence	10,334	-	10,334	5,075
Motor costs	10,377	-	10,377	9,509
Telephone, internet and office costs	6,138	-	6,138	11,640
Repairs, maintenance and other premises costs	37,139	-	37,139	26,100
Purchase of capital items	4,386	-	4,386	52,226
Course expenses	3,343	-	3,343	11,119
Insurance	11,052	-	11,052	10,395
Chapel expenses	4,637	-	4,637	3,518
Household costs	29,292	-	29,292	27,538
Bank charges and transaction fees	576	-	576	96
Stipends	4,176	-	4,176	6,097
Legal and professional fees	-	-	-	1,072
Subscriptions	3,394	-	3,394	2,369
Funerals and burials	584	-	584	-
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>179,979</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>179,979</b>	<b>206,067</b>
<b>NET INCOME/(PAYMENTS)</b>	<b>23,106</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>23,106</b>	<b>(37,500)</b>
<b>CASH FUNDS AT 1 JANUARY</b>	<b>152,964</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>152,964</b>	<b>190,464</b>
<b>CASH FUNDS AT 31 DECEMBER</b>	<b>176,070</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>176,070</b>	<b>152,964</b>

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AT 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	2024 £	2023 £
<b>CASH FUNDS</b>		
Current account	24,677	21,941
Deposit accounts	150,343	130,742
PayPal	942	-
Cash in hand	108	281
	<u>176,070</u>	<u>152,964</u>
 <b>OTHER ASSETS</b>		
Stock held for resale	<u>700</u>	<u>700</u>
 <b>ASSETS RETAINED FOR CHARITY'S OWN USE</b>		
Property	1,221,397	1,221,397
Chaplain's Bungalow	328,294	328,294
Motor vehicles	13,359	18,629
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	31,061	32,637
	<u>1,594,111</u>	<u>1,600,957</u>

Approved by the committee on 20 October 2025  
and signed on its behalf by



Sr Hyacinthe Defos du Rau, OP  
Trustee

**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

**1 PREPARATION OF ACCOUNTS**

The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with the Charities Act 2011.