

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited is the Corporate Trustee (the Trustee) for the Parishes, the Curia and other associated charitable bodies which constitute the Archdiocese of Armagh. The Council of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited presents the Strategic Report, the Directors' Report and the audited financial statements of the Charity, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited, for the year ended 31 March 2024. The Council has adopted the provisions of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and 2022, and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities finalising their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charitable company.

HISTORY OF THE DIOCESE

The Church of Armagh was founded by St Patrick in the middle of the fifth century. It soon became a noted ecclesiastical centre with many churches and a monastic school, which attracted students from all over Ireland and abroad.

The Diocese has been blessed with many saints through the centuries, not least the 'Apostle of Ireland', St Patrick, but also St Brigid, St Malachy, St Oliver Plunkett and many more.

It is one of the larger dioceses in Ireland covering almost all of Counties Armagh and Louth, approximately half of County Tyrone and a part of County Derry, as well as some townlands in County Meath. The Diocese is made up of sixty-one parishes of which thirty-seven are in Northern Ireland and twenty-four in the Republic of Ireland. The seat of administration is located in the city of Armagh.

CONSTITUTION AND AIMS

In Northern Ireland, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited (the Trust), a charitable trust, is a company limited by guarantee and was registered on 14 December 1981, registration number NI015284. On 20 June 2018, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited was registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and given the registration number 106767. For tax purposes, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited is also registered with HM Revenue and Customs – Reference XN76368. On 26 January 2015 the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland authorised St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited to act in any Charitable or Ecclesiastical Trust as a Trust Corporation. St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited became active on 1 April 2018 when the charitable activities of the Archdiocese of Armagh became subject to the oversight of the Council of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited.

In the Republic of Ireland, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Company Limited by Guarantee, a bare trust, is a company limited by guarantee and was registered on 29 November 1993, with registration company number 210040. On 4 December 2020, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited was registered as a Charity with the Charity Regulator in Ireland and given the registered charity number 20029104. For tax purposes, St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Company Limited by Guarantee is also registered with the Irish Revenue Commissioner – CHY (Revenue) Number 10987.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The principal objectives of the Charity are:

- the advancement of the Roman Catholic religion in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Armagh subject to any future curtailment or addition 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 Ireland or in any part of the world.

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The Church in the Archdiocese of Armagh, 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
- Support for families
- Formation and development of parish communities
- 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 Trust are constantly monitored and reviewed to ensure that the principal aims and objectives of the Charity are adhered to.

STATEMENT THAT THE TRUST HAS HAD REGARD TO THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC BENEFIT REQUIREMENT STATUTORY GUIDANCE

The Trust confirms that 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 Trust seeks to demonstrate that the Charity's aims and objectives are for the public benefit.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Diocese consists of sixty-one parishes predominantly in Counties Armagh and Louth and in parts of Counties Tyrone, Derry and Meath. The parishes are clustered into seventeen Pastoral Areas. Each Pastoral Area consists of a number of adjoining parishes united in promoting and realising the objects and the mission of the Church in the Archdiocese of Armagh within their local communities.

Reflecting Canon Law (the Universal Law of the Catholic Church), the activities of the Charity are separated in this report into Parish and Curia functions.

Parishes

The Diocese is divided into parish communities. Parish Priests/ Administrators and Curates are appointed by the Archbishop 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 also fulfilling the aims of the Charity. A major function of parishes is the celebration of the liturgy and the provision of spiritual and pastoral care. However, much other unseen and unheralded charitable work also occurs, greatly enriching the local communities which they serve.

Each parish is required by Canon Law to have a Parish Finance Committee to assist the Parish Priest/ Administrator in the governance of the parish. Parish Finance Committees include parishioners with knowledge and experience in finance, property management, personnel and administration. Additionally, each Parish Priest/ Administrator in his own parish, with his Parish Finance Committee, and in accordance with the norms and guidelines of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited, is entrusted with the responsibility of conserving and maintaining items and articles of artistic and historical value, as well as keeping an inventory of such objects. Priests have been diligent in this task, often employing the services of experts to assist them. Parish employees include secretaries, newsletter writers, choir directors, organists, bookkeepers, financial administrators, cleaners, grounds staff, and parish centre managers. In some instances, people offer their services on an entirely voluntary basis.

Parishes are central to fulfilling the Charity's mission. They are communities whose daily activities contribute, both directly and indirectly, to the spiritual and moral well-being of everyone living and working within them. They are the places where local communities come together to worship, where sacraments are administered, where children are educated in the faith, and where social outreach programmes are developed which allow communities to care for those in need and work for the common good of society.

Curia

The Diocesan Curia consists of those institutions and persons which furnish assistance to the Archbishop in the governance of the entire Diocese, especially in directing pastoral activity, in providing for the administration of the Diocese, and in exercising juridical governance. It also includes all who participate in the overall administration of the Diocese, particularly those who direct diocesan activities such as pastoral support, safeguarding, youth work, education, family life, liturgy, lay voluntary involvement and other facets of the local Church's life. Its central base is Armagh City.

The Council of the Trust delegates oversight of the Diocese's day-to-day finances, property, investments and administration to the Diocesan Financial Administrator, the Diocesan Secretary and other staff within the Curia. All personnel in the service of the Diocese undergo continuous professional development training.

As a registered charity, it is imperative that the Diocese continues to ensure good practice legally and financially in all areas, including health and safety, data protection, insurance, and the maintenance of property, while also conforming to the prescripts of Canon Law and best ecclesiastical practice.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Proclamation of the Gospel, Worship of God and other Ministries

Within the Diocese religion is advanced through the provision of places of worship, the facilitation of religious practice and, particularly, through community celebration of Mass. Normally there is a public celebration of Mass or other liturgy every day in the majority of parishes, and on every weekend several public Masses are offered in each parish. All such liturgies are open to the public without any restrictions.

Other activities of the Charity include conducting religious ceremonies (such as baptisms, weddings and funerals); presenting programmes pertaining to spiritual formation and development; encouraging and supporting ecumenical 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. All these places of worship are open to the general public including people of all faiths and 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 primarily within parishes that people experience what it is to be a member of the Catholic Church. They are the settings where faith is nurtured and given expression. Parishes, through various means, provide for the spiritual and moral well-being of parishioners, young and old. Practical expressions of faith are manifested by means of parish-organised pastoral, social and educational activities many of which rely on the voluntary involvement of parishioners. During the reporting period a total of 3,178 baptisms took place within the Diocese. First Holy Communion was administered to 3,777 young people and the Sacrament of Confirmation was conferred on 4,030 individuals. In the same period 670 marriages were celebrated and some 2,054 funerals conducted.

The Diocese has engaged with social and digital media platforms for some time through its website, Facebook and Twitter sites. The www.armaghprays.com website, dedicated to disseminating diocesan pastoral resources, continued to be widely used. Webcams for the live streaming of Mass and other liturgies have become an invaluable element in the pastoral outreach of parishes. Parishes in the Archdiocese also contributed to the celebration of liturgies on the network channel RTÉ News and on local radio.

In August 2023, the Archdiocese of Armagh celebrated the 150th anniversary of the dedication of St. Patrick's Cathedral on 24 August 1873. The weekend of events was led by Archbishop Martin, beginning with a gathering for families followed by Evening Prayer during which a new commemorative icon was unveiled. The celebrations concluded with a Solemn Mass at which His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, was the principal celebrant. The events honoured the Cathedral's rich history and attracted parishioners from across the Archdiocese as well as members of other Christian communities.

In addition to pastoral care and the provision of the sacraments to the faithful, 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 major hospitals within the Archdiocese of Armagh. The Chaplains are regularly at the disposal of patients, their relatives and staff, as well as being on call to attend in emergencies. Other clergy and lay pastoral visitors regularly attend hospitals and nursing homes in the area frequented by members of the Diocese. Moreover, the Diocese assists with the provision of chaplaincy services to those in penal institutions located outside its territory.

Each year the clergy and people of the Archdiocese of Armagh journey to ancient pilgrimage sites within the Diocese and beyond. The yearly diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, France took place in May 2023 and the annual day pilgrimage to Knock, Co. Mayo occurred on Sunday 28 May 2023. Other pilgrimages, for example to Fatima, Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick, took place during the year. Organised pilgrimages provide much valued support for the sick who participate as well as for all the volunteers who give so much of their time and energy. They become model experiences of the Church as the pilgrim People of God.

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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. Many people play a key role in our parishes, offering their services as volunteers. They include those involved in various aspects of parish life: those who help with the sacred liturgy – Ministers of the Word and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, members of altar societies, altar serving coordinators, choirs and music groups, organists, instrumentalists, and stewards; people who assist with finance, church collectors, counters, envelope distributors and dues collectors; and other assorted roles including cemetery upkeep, various apostolic and charitable groups too numerous to mention as well as prayer and perpetual adoration groups. 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, including membership of Parish Pastoral, Finance and Safeguarding Committees. Such parishioners are the lifeblood of their communities, and their contributions are significant. 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 contribute financially. In addition, members of the Catholic community are encouraged to contribute towards creating a more just society by becoming active volunteers for the Common Good within their local area through membership of charities, local societies, community groups, and by volunteering in all sorts of other ways to the benefit of society in general.

Besides the work accomplished at parish level, the Curia coordinates and carries out a number of functions necessary to the advancement of the Catholic religion at local, national and international level. To this end, the Curia operates by way of diocesan commissions, committees and through various personnel charged with specific responsibilities.

The Diocesan commissions include a Vocations Commission, a Liturgical and Sacred Music Commission, the Diocesan Clerical Benefit Society, the Diocesan Education Committee, Armagh Diocesan Youth Commission, a Diocesan Pastoral Plan, a Justice, Peace and Development Commission, the Prayer and Spirituality Commission, Adult Faith Formation and a Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. Personnel with specific responsibilities include Diocesan Pastoral Workers, Diocesan Youth Coordinators, the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Director, the Diocesan Knock Pilgrimage Director, the Diocesan Pontifical Mission Societies Director, the Diocesan Safeguarding Director, the Diocesan Advisory Team on Religious Education, and the Diocesan Vocations Director. Mention also needs to be made of those who work in the administration of Catholic education.

Provision of Clergy and Pastoral Personnel

Central to Parish life is the relationship between the clergy 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 therefore forms part of the Charity's ongoing commitments.

It is the priests ministering in parishes who, working in collaboration with their parishioners, are charged in a special way with organising, animating and motivating 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 is a priority for the Diocese. Through the means of regular conferences, gatherings, retreats, courses, workshops and sabbaticals, the priests of the Diocese are updated on current issues, developments and best practice in respect of all aspects of ministry and mission.

In the reporting period the Diocese had twenty students for the priesthood, either in full-time study or on

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pastoral placement. They attended respectively St Patrick's College, Maynooth, the Pontifical Bede College, Rome, and the Redemptoris Mater Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary, based in Dundalk, Co. Louth. During the year, the Diocese had one candidate ordained for the priesthood and three candidates ordained as transitional deacons. The costs of this seminary formation are supported by the Diocesan Education Fund. As part of its missionary outreach, the Diocese also part sponsored the theology programme for a seminarian attached to the seminary of the Missionaries of St Paul in Abuja, Nigeria. The Diocese also had one man in his final year of formation for the ministry of Permanent Diaconate. His training and formation has been financed from the Diocesan Education Fund.

A key to sustaining the advancement of Catholicism is the promotion and support of vocations to the Priesthood, Consecrated Life, Diaconate and of the wider apostolate of the lay faithful. The Diocese continues to engage with those people who wish to undertake discernment in connection with vocations to the Priesthood, the Permanent Diaconate or the Religious and Consecrated Life. The Diocesan Vocations Director, along with the Diocesan Vocations Commission, coordinates this essential mission mostly through the means of discernment groups, prayer vigils, retreats and chaplaincy work in post-primary schools and colleges throughout the Diocese.

The general well-being and care of clergy in active ministry is coordinated by the Diocesan Curia, Vicars General, Episcopal Vicars and Vicars Forane. Priests' stipends and related matters are overseen and regulated by the Archbishop with the Council of Priests and the Council of the Trust. Equally important is the welfare of priests who are sick or retired from active ministry. Many of the priests no longer in active ministry have served in parishes and local communities for over sixty years. Their welfare is the responsibility of a committee which administers the Armagh Diocesan Clerical Benefit Society Fund. During the reporting year, twenty-six priests received assistance from the fund which necessitated a total spend of approximately £408,183.

The objectives of the Charity are greatly supported, and the life of the Diocese enriched, by the contribution made by the many members of Religious Institutions, Secular Institutions and/ or Societies of Apostolic Life serving in the Diocese. The Archdiocese of Armagh expresses its sincere gratitude to these men and women of faith for their ministries of generosity and sacrifice.

Support for Families

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. By responding to the needs of families, as they strive to live in a very challenging culture and a rapidly changing world, Family Ministry serves as a resource for families, clergy and parish communities.

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.

There are three Accord Marriage Preparation and Counselling centres in the Diocese - Drogheda, Dundalk and Portadown. These centres provide regular courses throughout the year for those preparing for marriage. Couples are encouraged to attend an accredited pre-marriage course as soon as they contact the parish to make arrangements for their marriage. Accord continues to provide face-to-face and online counselling for couples.

The Rainbows programme enables children and young people, who have experienced a significant loss in their lives, to access peer support and counselling. This service is offered through St Patrick's Parish, Dundalk and is available to all who seek it regardless of faith or church affiliation.

The Diocese also promotes the work of the Family Addiction Support Network (F.A.S.N.) based in Dundalk. The Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese is the Patron and a board member of the organisation

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which supports families who are dealing with the drug addiction of a loved one. Often these families are desperate for help but have no one to turn to because of stigma and intimidation. F.A.S.N provides a safe place for families to find support and guidance to overcome their difficulties.

Provision of Educational, Pastoral and Youth Ministries

Armagh Diocesan Youth Commission (ADYC)

Established in 2000 by the Archdiocese of Armagh, the Armagh Diocesan Youth Commission (ADYC) has remained steadfast in its mission to provide meaningful activities, events, and programmes for young people within the Archdiocese. With a primary focus on fostering faith, confidence, and self-esteem among youth, the Commission - comprising laity, professionals, clergy, and religious - plays a vital role in shaping and advancing youth ministry. The term ending on March 31, 2024, has been defined by resilience and adaptability, as the Commission continues to navigate the challenges of post-pandemic recovery and the complexities of the contemporary world while staying committed to its mission.

ADYC provides faith encounters for young people, ranging from post-Confirmation age to young adulthood. The Pope John Paul II and Muiredach Cross Awards are key components of youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Armagh, and in the past year, both awards have experienced a resurgence in participation following the pandemic. In response to the challenges posed by Covid-19, ADYC has strengthened its accompaniment of young participants in these awards, offering continued support and guidance to participants, leaders and parishes alike.

The ongoing efforts to enhance the awards by incorporating catechetical elements have proven successful and work is ongoing. In September 2023, a celebratory gathering honoured the achievements of 170 young participants in the Pope John Paul II and Muiredach Cross Awards—an increase from the previous year. Registrations for the awards in September 2023 also saw growth, with 332 applications received from young people across the Archdiocese of Armagh.

ADYC's partnership with St. Patrick's Pontifical College, Maynooth has continued in respect of youth ministry and one of the diocesan youth co-ordinators continues to offer input and lecturing support to St. Patrick's Pontifical College on its Diploma in Youth Ministry Programme. This reciprocal arrangement ensures that the Archdiocese of Armagh continues to shape the continued development of youth ministry across the Church in Ireland.

During 2023 the Archdiocese of Armagh partnered with the Diocese of Dromore to facilitate the participation of young parishioners at World Youth Day held in Lisbon during August 2023. Young people from across both dioceses travelled to the event and had the opportunity for enrichment through catechesis and engagement with other young Catholics from Ireland and across the world. Preparations for World Youth Day 2023 formed a large part of the work of ADYC during the early part of the reporting year along with pastoral visits to schools and liaison with parishes across the Archdiocese.

The ADYC continued its work in parishes and schools of the Archdiocese, providing retreats, opportunities for prayer and liturgy, and fostering the personal development of young people. A key outcome of the Archdiocese's synodal listening process is the prioritisation of youth, with a preferential option for engaging young people in the Church's life. During Easter 2023, this commitment was reflected in the significant involvement of young people in Holy Week and Easter liturgies across the Archdiocese.

Throughout the year, young people were offered numerous opportunities to deepen their faith. Two notable events were the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral of St. Patrick in August 2023 and the launch of a year on February 1, 2024, to mark the 1500th anniversary of the death of St. Brigid which included a Mass with strong participation of young people from the Dundalk area. This work was followed up later in the year with a synodal listening session dedicated to young

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people in Dundalk. As part of this year dedicated to St. Brigid, the Archdiocese has focused on developing resources to support young parents, encouraging them to pass on the faith and promote spiritual renewal. This has been warmly received.

The stated mission of ADYC is to work in partnership with young people, the Church and interested agencies to ensure that young people are encouraged and affirmed on their journey of faith. The vision is for young people to experience the love of God and to inspire them to engage in the life and mission of the Catholic Church, in social outreach, and in initiatives for the benefit of the wider community.

Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese

A key aspect of the contribution of the Diocese to the local community is the large network of Catholic schools. There are 150 primary schools and 27 post primary in the Diocese with a total enrolment of approximately 50,900 pupils. The Diocese celebrates this contribution by taking part in Catholic Schools Week, an event held throughout Ireland in January for the last ten years. This annual celebration calls on Catholic schools to give expression, in a special way, to a particular aspect of Catholic Education. Catholic Schools Week took place in this reporting year on 21– 27 January, 2024 on the theme of Catholic Schools as ‘Communities of Service’.

In Catholic schools we look to Jesus as our role model and teacher as we come to a greater understanding of the depth of Christian service. For Catholic Schools Week we contemplated our schools as ‘Communities of Service’ by helping the children focus on their own community of friends both within and outside school, their families, the wider local and faith communities and how they can serve others. Services were held in the Church of the Holy Family, Coalisland (16 January) and in the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Dundalk (25 January). These were very well received by schools and the wider parish communities.

In our schools we are called to support each other and to have faith in the promise of the Good News. Catholic schools are inspired by the belief that God has created each one of us with a capacity to give and receive love. While each Catholic school is such a community, it also fosters the integral development of its students, promotes their spiritual and moral well-being and helps them to cultivate a deeper, loving relationship with God. Jesus teaches us to love one another as He has loved us. During Catholic Schools Week we celebrated the gifts and talents which enable us to follow Christ’s teachings.

The Archdiocese of Armagh remains fully committed through its Catholic schools to maintaining, by way of a holistic methodology, the highest standards in learning, and 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 high-quality education on offer, but also due to the identifiable ethos of trust, mutual respect and recognition of responsibility to those in need. The Diocese appoints personnel to act as the Diocesan Advisory Team for Religious Education in both the primary and post-primary sectors. These teams visit the Catholic schools and offer help and guidance to the teachers.

Each school receives an annual visit from its appointed Diocesan adviser. The adviser is an established link between schools and the Church and visits of a pastoral nature help to strengthen this connection. All Advisers report on a very positive engagement with principals and school staff and how heartening it is to witness the hunger, thirst and awe that children have for God. The advisers visit classrooms and offer practical help too by providing a range of online resources for use alongside the “Children of God” series as an aid to preparing children for the Sacraments.

Going forward many schools have concerns about the ever changing and diverse world children live in. Principals recognise the complementary, connected, but different roles of the home, school and parish in the faith education of their children. Parents are the first and the primary teachers of their children in

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faith. The parish is where children learn about and worship God while Religious Education in Catholic schools concentrates on the formal curriculum and faith formation. Often elements of this partnership are missing and the path is not straightforward. The Diocesan Advisory team will continue to work alongside schools to help meet these challenges.

Formation and Development of Parish Communities

Diocesan Pastoral Plan

The Diocesan Pastoral Plan provides guidance and direction for priests, deacons and pastoral councils to enable them to further the mission of Christ in the Archdiocese of Armagh. The present plan was published in 2015 after an eighteen-month period of consultation and refinement. As the Diocesan Plan approached the end of 2020 it was decided to engage in a Year of Reflection and Prayer before beginning the process of working towards a Diocesan Assembly and formulating a new Pastoral Plan.

The launch of a National Synodal process in early 2021 and a Universal Synodal process entitled *Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Mission and Participation* changed the priorities, and it was decided to fit the process of formulating an updated Diocesan Pastoral Plan into the new timeframe for the National and Universal Synods.

With these processes ongoing, the Archdiocese has continued to follow the current plan, which will remain in operation until a new one is formulated. The Diocesan Pastoral Plan covers three main areas of pastoral life in the Diocese – ‘Mission and Outreach’, ‘Spirit Filled Worship’ and ‘Understanding Our Faith’. The Diocesan Pastoral Team use the plan as the basis for their work as they reach out to parishes and groups across the Diocese. They facilitate and provide training for the lay faithful to become more actively involved in the ongoing life of the Church in their local area.

During the reporting period, the Pastoral Team moved their base from the Parochial House in Holy Family Parish, Dundalk to Grange, County Louth. The house provides office space for the Pastoral Team and the Auxiliary Bishop. The Pastoral Team directs the implementation of the Pastoral Plan from this office. The impact of Covid-19, though diminishing, has continued to affect projects and initiatives aligned with the Diocesan Pastoral Plan during 2023/2024. While the Archdiocese of Armagh has made significant progress in its recovery efforts, some significant challenges from this period are still being felt.

The section of the Pastoral Plan relating to ‘Understanding Our Faith’ encompasses a number of Adult Faith Formation courses. The Diocesan Theology Programme, which is accredited and supervised by the Pontifical University in Maynooth, Co. Kildare, had 8 students enrolled in 2023.

The promotion of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) which prepares adults for baptism and reception into the Church, along with the training of teams to facilitate the programme, is also an important component in the work of evangelisation. April 2023 was a time of gratitude to the outgoing OCIA team in Dundalk, who served the Pastoral Area for six dedicated years walking with those who were searching for God in their lives. The areas of Dungannon, Dundalk and Armagh continue to provide this growing ministry.

In September 2023, four adults and two children embarked on their spiritual journey towards full reception into the Catholic Church. The OCIA programme ran for 31 weeks from September 2023 to the Easter Vigil. At the Vigil in St. Patrick's, Dundalk, there was a wonderful celebration of the sacraments of initiation. The programme concluded in May 2024 after the period of Mystagogy.

‘Spirit-filled Worship’ is a key element of the Pastoral Plan, as Sunday Mass remains the primary connection most people have with the Church. To enhance the liturgical experience - and especially during liturgical seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter - parishes were supported with tailored resources and guidance.

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'Mission and Outreach' lies at the heart of the Church's mission and is also a central focus of the Pastoral Plan. The Diocesan Pastoral Team promotes the formation of parish visitation teams, assistance for the disadvantaged, support for those struggling with addiction, and the encouragement of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

The Diocesan Pastoral Team continued to provide a multitude of online resources to support religious education and prayer in family homes, schools, hospitals, nursing homes and other settings. These resources are accessed through the www.armaghprays.com website which they maintain. The Diocesan Pastoral Team also collaborates closely with other colleagues across dioceses in the Northern Pastoral Network to share resources and strategies in the areas of adult faith formation, pastoral development and youth ministry.

Care for the environment is central to the pastoral work of the Diocese in this present age. *Laudato Si*, subtitled 'On Care for Our Common Home', the second encyclical of Pope Francis provides the basis for the Season of Creation which is celebrated by the Church throughout the month of September. The theme for the 2023 season was 'Let Justice and Peace Flow'. Resources provided by the Holy See were disseminated throughout the Diocese and many parishes discussed them with their Pastoral Councils and used them during their Sunday liturgies so that parishioners could focus on their Christian duty to protect God's Creation. During October 2023 Pope Francis published a separate Apostolic Exhortation on the environment entitled *Laudate Deum*.

The Diocese encourages each parish to actively reach out to the marginalized and disadvantaged, emphasising pastoral care for immigrants and asylum seekers while fostering a culture of welcome, unity, and collaboration. Regular Masses are celebrated in the native languages of immigrant communities from East Timor, Poland, and India (Malayalam-speaking), with pastoral care provided to these and other nationalities by priest chaplains from their respective countries. These arrangements are made in collaboration with their episcopal conferences and relevant diocesan and religious authorities. The Diocese is also seeing a growing number of international liturgies and celebrations, reflecting its increasingly diverse community.

Special attention is given to baptisms, marriages and deaths of migrants, and their language and cultural traditions are catered for as much as possible. They also receive a welcome and assurances of support through pastoral visitation by the clergy or members of the parish community.

The 109th World Day of Migrants and Refugees was held on Sunday, September 24, 2023. The theme for 2023 was 'Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay'. The topic was intended to promote reflection on the right to remain in one's own country, which is not yet codified at the international level. The World Day of Migrants and Refugees is celebrated with enthusiasm in the Diocese, and the Holy Father's Message for this Day is noted with care each year and circulated among the clergy and laity.

Two notable events that the Pastoral Team were involved in during the reporting year included: the 150th anniversary of the dedication of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh with associated festivities; and the launch of a year dedicated to the life and legacy of St. Brigid that coincided with the 1500th year anniversary of her death. On the 1st February 2024 a morning Mass was celebrated at the Shrine of St. Brigid, Faughart, and in the evening there was a candlelight procession from the Faughart graveyard to the Shrine. The Pastoral Team began organising a Festival of Families in honour of St. Brigid which was planned for June in Dundalk.

An essential element in pastoral planning for the future is the Diocesan Pastoral Council and Parish Pastoral Councils. The Archbishop strives to govern the Diocese in consultation with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and other bodies. In so doing, the Archdiocese operates a form of governance that emphasises the participation and shared responsibility of all Christian people for the life of the local

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Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Church. The Diocesan Pastoral Council seeks to discern the pastoral needs of the people of the Diocese and propose adequate responses. The Diocesan Pastoral Council helps to establish priorities, plan pastoral initiatives, and devise appropriate strategies for the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. The members are representative of the Diocese at large and not of any specific group.

At all times the function of the Diocesan Pastoral Council is exercised in accordance with the teachings of Sacred Scripture, Canon Law, and the norms of the Irish Episcopal Conference. The role of the Diocesan Pastoral Council is constantly reviewed in the context of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and is updated according to emerging needs and priorities.

At parish level, Pastoral Councils respond to the need for co-responsible leadership of clergy and people in fulfilling the mission of the Church. They are structures of participation that can provide new impetus to the life of a parish. Clergy and lay faithful work together in the power of the Holy Spirit to reinvigorate the Church by co-ordinating and harnessing the efforts of parishioners who live and share the Good News of Christ in the local community. As part of the ongoing planning and development process in the Diocese, parishes are encouraged to refresh their Pastoral Council every 4-5 years. Training for these new councils is provided in regional areas by the Diocesan Pastoral Team. In the reporting year the team delivered ongoing training with Parish Pastoral Councils in the parishes of Dromintee and Termonmaguirc as well as in Our Lady Queen of Peace Pastoral Area. They also commenced preparation for reforming the Parish Pastoral Council in the Parish of Loughgilly. Each of these councils engaged in a process of renewing its membership leaving more room for a broader engagement with the parish community.

The Diocesan Pastoral Workers delivered talks to parents of children receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in Haggardstown and Blackrock. The Pastoral Workers attended conferences on forming Catechists at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny in November 2023 and in April 2024 on the Catechism of the Catholic Church at Knock, Co. Mayo.

Oasis of Peace

The Diocese also supported the work of the 'The Oasis of Peace' in Collon, Co. Louth, which is a focus for evangelisation and outreach. The Centre provides opportunities for visitors to encounter the love of God. It is a place of prayer, teaching and healing as well as providing pastoral care and support to those in need.

Synodality

The Synodal Journey, initiated by Pope Francis in October 2021, is an ongoing process of engagement with the People of God, centred on listening and dialogue to advance the mission of the Church. During the reporting year, the Archdiocese of Armagh completed its participation in the diocesan phase of the consultation, culminating in a national gathering in Athlone. Further consultations contributed to the continental phase of the Synod, leading up to the XVI Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023. This consultation took the form of a large Diocesan Meeting in the Carrickdale Hotel with representatives from almost every parish in the Diocese.

Significant progress has been made through the work of the Diocesan Synodal Core Group, with successful emphasis on the 'Conversations in the Spirit' methodology, which fostered reflection and dialogue among participants. The Archdiocese's synodal journey during this period has drawn on the rich experience and wisdom within its parish communities, demonstrating a deep commitment to creating the conditions in which the Church's mission can be most effectively realised.

Online Resources

In the ecclesial landscape of social and digital media, the Archdiocese of Armagh's Pastoral Team has played an important role in fostering evangelisation and community engagement. The team oversaw the creation of the Armagh Prays Website, a vital platform utilised for resource distribution throughout the

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Archdiocese. The Archdiocesan YouTube Channel, which now boasts an impressive repository of 380 videos, has garnered 155,344 views and interactions to date. The Pastoral Team's multifaceted approach encompasses educational initiatives and collaborative projects thereby reinforcing the Church's relevance in the digital age and demonstrating its commitment to reach diverse and dynamic audiences as follows: provision of visitation teams in parishes; assistance to the disadvantaged; support for those suffering from addiction; and the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Ecumenism

The heads of the four main Churches and ecclesial communities in Ireland: the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Church of Ireland (Anglican) Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, together with the President of the Irish Council of Churches, meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of religious, social, community and political importance. At a diocesan level work is promoted to foster spiritual ecumenism according to the principles laid down in the Decree on Ecumenism about public and private prayer for the unity of Christians. Parishes and clergy are encouraged to promote friendship, cooperation and charity between Catholics and their brothers and sisters from other Christian communities. Ecumenical prayer services, coffee mornings and pilgrimage walks took place in various parts of the Archdiocese on significant moments throughout the year, including ecumenical Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. Noteworthy is the work of the Armagh Cathedrals' Partnership which helped to promote joint events during St Patrick's Festival and the Season of Advent.

On 1 April 2023 Archbishop Eamon Martin delivered an address to a Legacy Matters Conference at Queen's University, Belfast on the issue of truth recovery and reconciliation in Northern Ireland from a faith perspective. The Church Leaders Group acknowledged the anniversary of the Good Friday/ Belfast Agreement with a joint message on reconciliation for Holy Week in 2023. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the historic accord was also marked by the main Christian leaders participating in a seminar held in Rome in September 2023. The conference was hosted by the Pontifical Irish College and included reflections by Church figures, including Archbishop Martin, on the legacy of the agreement. Members of the Church Leaders Group held meetings with local political parties in early November 2023 and jointly welcomed the restoration of the devolved institutions in February 2024.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was observed in the Archdiocese from 18 – 25 January 2024 using resources produced by Christian communities in Burkina Faso on the theme 'You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself (Lk 10:27). In that connection, Archbishop Martin and his Church of Ireland counterpart, Archbishop John McDowell, produced a joint video reflection based on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Five decades of ecumenical co-operation was celebrated with a two-day conference in October 2023 as Christian leaders gathered in Dromantine to reflect on the theme *Our Reconciling Vision of Hope: Fifty Years since the Ballymascanlon Talks*. In that same month, St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh hosted an ecumenical prayer service for people affected by cancer. The event was led by Bishop Michael Router and featured Archbishop John McDowell, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, as guest preacher.

On 2 May 2023 Archbishop Martin attended a Service of Thanksgiving in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh in advance of the Coronation. Four days later, His Grace was present at Westminster Abbey as Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla were crowned. The Catholic and Church of Ireland Archbishops issued a number of joint statements during the reporting year, including: a call for action to protect the environment of Lough Neagh; Christmas greetings focused on the need for Christians to be peacemakers; a New Year message for 2024; and Easter blessings in 2024 with an emphasis on the requirement for a true ministry of reconciliation in our society.

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults continues to be a priority for the Archdiocese of Armagh. The Safeguarding agenda is driven by legislation, policy and procedures which are updated and fully complied with.

The Safeguarding Office ensures the Archdiocese of Armagh adheres to the requirements of the new Policy & Guidance "*A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024*" (National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland) (NBSCCCI), and the Diocesan Policy on Adult Safeguarding 2017.

The Safeguarding Office of the Archdiocese consists of one part-time equivalent Director of Safeguarding, one part-time Safeguarding Trainer and one part-time Administrative Officer. Both the Director and the Diocesan Trainer are Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) and available to receive any complaints in respect of the safeguarding of either children or vulnerable adults. The contact details for the DLPs are publicised through the Safeguarding page of the Diocesan Website (www.armagharchdiocese.org/safeguarding), and also on posters which are displayed in every church and church building throughout the Archdiocese.

The Director and the Diocesan Trainer attend the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee meetings at which they provide updates on work carried out and progress on the delivery of the objectives of the Diocesan Three-Year Strategic Safeguarding Plan. Four meetings were held during the reporting period on Thursday, 6th July 2023, Thursday, 21st September 2023, Tuesday, 28th November 2023 and Thursday, 7th March 2024.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is responsible for overseeing the work of the Safeguarding Office in the Archdiocese of Armagh. Membership is for a three-year period with the option to renew for one further period of three years. This membership is made up of lay members and clergy reflecting experiences in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Archdiocese undertook a parish self-audit during the reporting period in line with guidance received from the NBSCCCI. A report of the Audit feedback was compiled and shared with the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee alongside an associated action plan.

The Diocesan Advisory Panel continued to meet during the reporting period.

In total 288 participants completed the Safeguarding Children training and 123 completed their Adult Safeguarding training (including Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Volunteers) over the course of the reporting period.

In total 234 people were vetted through Access NI during the reporting period and 936 were vetted through the Garda Vetting Office during the same period.

The Director of Safeguarding continues to participate in the Southern Trust Local Adult Safeguarding Partnership (LASP) where the Director is also a member of the Prevention Workstream.

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, not only for the Catholic community, but also for those also who wish to make use of them for personal or spiritual

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Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

contemplation. Many of the churches and associated buildings are listed / protected as being of special or historic architectural interest. The proper care of these buildings can be onerous and costly, but they are essential for the ongoing realisation of the principal object of the Charity, the advancement of the Catholic religion.

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 by the Diocesan Building and Development Committee.

During this year there were a number of building projects undertaken throughout the Archdiocese, including: ongoing construction works at the Redemptoris Mater Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary, Dundalk; mechanical and electrical upgrades at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Drogheda; car park resurfacing works at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Termonfechin; and repair works to the Church of St Patrick, Stonebridge. Various maintenance works continue across the Diocese to help protect and preserve the beauty and integrity of many of our old buildings. 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.

Fundraising

The Trust receives a large proportion of its income from donations, bequests and legacies from its supporters who are generally parishioners or those who have close connections to the Church. The Trust also receives support from other various groups such as the Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation, National Churches Trust, All Churches Trust and other funders. Without this valuable support the Trust would not be able to carry out most of its mission. The Council members of the Trust are mindful of their duty of care to those who may support the Trust, including vulnerable people, and therefore ensure that fundraising is carried out in a responsible and caring manner. The Trust does not use external professional fundraisers or require its parishioners to donate in order to share in the generous resources that God has provided for their use. It rather encourages a culture of giving where this is possible and therefore places no pressure on its donors to contribute. The Trust encourages the use of tax relief (Gift Aid and CHY) to maximise giving where this is possible and ensures that donors are fully informed of the scope of tax relief in relation to their tax status so that they can make an informed choice.

Donations

The charity made charitable donations amounting to £80,403 (2023: £70,427) during the financial year. No donations for political purposes were made during this period.

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 contribute to 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 is a significant contributor to the charitable work of Trócaire and in the year under review contributed over £270,000 (2023: £347,000). Along with the Lenten Collection, the Diocese also supported special collections in April 2023 and March 2024 in response to the humanitarian crises in Ukraine, Turkey and Syria. The Archdiocese of Armagh also financially assists, facilitates and works in collaboration with the St Vincent de Paul Society and other charitable groups that look after the poor, the homeless and migrants.

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Management of Resources

Council of the Trust

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited (the Trust) is governed by the Council of the Trust (the Directors) who meet regularly throughout the year to attend to the financial, property, building, personnel, legal and administrative affairs of the Diocese. All Parish Priests and Administrators of the parishes of the Archdiocese of Armagh are members of the Trust and are entitled to attend General Meetings of the Trust, including the Annual General Meeting. Parish Finance Committee members are also invited to these meetings.

There are eleven members of the Council. The Archbishop of Armagh is the Chairperson of the Council. The Vicars General are *ex officio* members of the Council. There are three lay and three other priest members of the Council chosen by the Archbishop for their integrity, experience and expertise.

The Secretary for the Trust is appointed by the Archbishop. The Council of the Trust has adopted a three-year development plan with appropriate objectives and targets. During the year, the Council met six times mainly to ensure the plan is continuously monitored, evaluated and reviewed, while also assessing the impact of the pandemic.

The Council has instituted a number of committees to assist and advise in the proper performance of its duties, including the Diocesan Building and Development Committee, the Diocesan Advisory Finance Committee, the Diocesan Personnel Committee, and the Diocesan Property Committee. Each member of the Council is a member of at least one of the Committees.

The Diocesan Building and Development Committee provides oversight and makes recommendations in relation to the area of Building and Building Development as set out in the Diocesan Buildings & Development Manual (October 2017). The membership of the Committee comprises three Directors of the Council of the Trust (one of who is Chair) and such other persons appointed by the Council with integrity and expertise in this field. The Chairperson of this Committee reports directly to the Council of the Trust. The Committee met seven times during the year.

The Diocesan Advisory Finance Committee provides oversight and makes recommendations in relation to the area of Finance within the Diocese and parishes as set out in the Finance Manual (October 2017). This includes strategic planning, fundraising, audit and reporting requirements, controls, investments, budgets and the review of financial resources. The membership of the Committee comprises three Directors of the Council of the Trust (one of who is Chair) and such other persons with integrity and relevant financial expertise appointed by the Council. The Chairperson of this Committee reports directly to the Council of the Trust. The Committee met four times during the year.

The Diocesan Personnel Committee makes strategic recommendations on behalf of and to the Council in relation to the area of Parish and Diocesan Personnel and Human Resource management. It monitors the implementation and effectiveness of all personnel-related policies and ensures that resources are in place for implementation of policies. To this end the Committee has devised a Parish Recruitment and Selection manual, and Staff Handbooks. The membership of the Committee comprises three Directors of the Council of the Trust (one of who is Chair) and such other persons appointed by the Council with integrity and relevant human resources expertise. The Chairperson of this Committee reports directly to the Council of the Trust. The Committee met five times during the year.

The Diocesan Property Committee provides oversight and makes recommendations in relation to the area of Property as set out in the Property Manual (October 2017). This includes ownership, acquisitions, disposals, letting, leasing, licensing and any other form of alienation which alters the value of a property. The membership of the Committee comprises five Directors of the Council of the Trust (one of whom is Chair) and such other persons with integrity and relevant expertise appointed by the Council. The Chairperson of this Committee reports directly to the Council of the Trust. The Committee met six times

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Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

during the year.

Risk Management

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

- Compliance with Health & Safety and listed buildings legislation
- Reduction in active clergy numbers
- Reduction in voluntary income
- Increasing costs for the care of sick and retired clergy
- Operational risks in the areas of finance, personnel and property
- Board failing in its responsibilities
- Funding volatility
- Reduction in central reserves due to capital projects and long-term commitments
- Compliance with data protection regulations
- Compliance with good governance procedures
- Safeguarding

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The detailed financial results for the year ended 31 March 2024 are set out in the financial statements that accompany this report.

The table below summarises the financial activities of the Diocese:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Parishes		
Income	12,413	11,739
Expenditure	(11,712)	(11,134)
Net surplus before transfers	701	605
Transfer between funds	177	369
Net gains on disposal of assets	369	303
Net (losses) on investments	(2)	(29)
Increase in reserves	1,245	1,248
Curia		
Income	2,815	2,948
Expenditure	(1,413)	(1,648)
Surplus before transfers and investment gains	1,402	1,300
Transfer between funds	(177)	(369)
Net gains on disposal of assets	-	101
Net gains/(losses) on investment	628	(549)
Increase in reserves	1,853	483
Total increase in Parish and Curia reserves	3,098	1,731

Complete details of the income and expenditure are shown in the statement of financial activities on page 30 and in the notes to the accounts.

Review of transactions and financial position of the Charity

The reserves of the Charity at 31 March 2024 total £111m (2023 - £109m) and of this total £92.3m (2023-£91.9m) relate solely to the assets and activities of individual Parishes and are not available for the non-parish general purposes of the Charity. Curia reserves total £19m at the year-end (2023 £17.2m) of which £0.2m (2023 - £0.3m) is unrestricted with £4.1m (2023 - £2.4m) of this relating to fixed assets.

Most of the income received by Parishes is through the Sunday offertory and other donations. This source of income is 66% of the parish total. Total income was £12.4m (2023 - £11.7m) and total expenditure was £11.7m in 2024 (2023 - £11.1m).

Total Curia income was £2.8m in 2024 (2023 - £2.9m). Total expenditure was £1.4m in 2024 (2023 - £1.6m).

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Investment policy

The Memorandum of Association of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited provides the Trust with the powers to deposit or invest funds in any manner and to delegate the management of investments to a financial expert.

Investment Managers

The Trust has appointed IQ-EQ Fund Management (Ireland) Limited as investment managers who operate a 'total return' policy over the medium to long-term with emphasis on current income with a low-medium risk profile. The managers have full discretion to invest, subject to the parameters laid down by the Trust. There is a review of information from the Investment Managers on a regular basis.

At present the Diocesan Finance Committee liaises with the investment managers, monitors their performance, and reports to the Council of the Trust at each of its meetings. In 2021/2022, the Diocesan Finance Committee, supported by an independent advisor, undertook a project to review the Diocesan Investment Portfolio and the performance of the Investment Managers. A similar review is planned for 2025 in pursuance of a policy of continuously monitoring performance.

Under Charity Law the Council of the Trust must seek to obtain the best financial return possible consistent with commercial prudence.

The Diocesan Trust Investment Portfolio value is £15,554,699 (2023 - £14,819,421).

Investment Objectives

The overall objectives of the Trust are to meet the diverse needs of the Portfolio's Beneficiaries by pursuing a reasonable level of capital growth in a risk- controlled manner to meet benefit payments that will be largely Sterling denominated.

In fulfilling these objectives, the Council of the Trust adheres to an Ethical Policy that precludes 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 Catholic Church. Environmental issues are also a significant factor.

Ethical Investment Policy

The agreed Trust's Ethical Investment Policy is as follows:

- Preclusion of investment in companies known to be racist or otherwise exploitative of human rights
- Preclusion of investment in companies which either produce or promote:
 - armaments including biological and chemical weapons, landmines and general weapons and arms of war and mass destruction
 - contraceptives and/or birth control devices
 - offensive written material
 - gambling, tobacco or alcohol

Preclusion of investment in companies involved:

- in the provision of abortion or euthanasia
- in the violation of currently approved environmental conventions.
- directly in fossil fuels

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REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

It is understood that a complete control over monies, for instance, those held in Funds, is not possible. The Council of the Trust 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.

Reserves policy

The Trust recognises that its income arises primarily from voluntary donations and that accordingly it is important to seek to carry adequate levels of reserves to ensure its ability to meet future expenditure commitments as they arise. Parishes are encouraged to maintain adequate short-term reserves to ensure that they can meet operating costs in the short-term and to build longer-term reserves that will be available if substantial commitments, such as building refurbishment projects, arise. The Diocese centrally aims to maintain adequate levels of reserves to meet Diocesan operating costs in the short to medium term and to provide for any significant expenditures and contingencies that may arise at future dates. The policy of maintaining significant long-term reserves is considered consistent with the expectation that the Archdiocese of Armagh will continue to exist in perpetuity.

Financial Management and Key Performance Indicators

With the pro-active involvement of the Council Committees, diocesan resources are managed to tightly control all costs, in particular property and human resources/employment costs. The Council Committees pursue a policy of obtaining value for money and protection of diocesan assets. The management of the diocesan property holdings, with input from the Property and Building and Development Committees, is costly (costs amounted to £5.1m in the last financial year - see Pages 42 and 43 of this report under the headings Premises Costs, Repairs and Maintenance, and Rates and Insurance expenditure). Yet, the resource of property is key to engaging with the Charity's stakeholders and essential for the public benefit it provides.

The Personnel Committee focuses on the costs of employment and compensating employees fairly. The Finance Committee monitors general overheads, one-off expenditures and the financial implications of Property and Building and Development decisions, as well as acting in an advisory capacity for all the Council's Committees.

To respond to unexpected calls for financial support whilst funding predictable recurring expenditure, the Charity has a policy of keeping liquid reserves (cash and cash equivalents) at least equal to annual running costs currently estimated at £19.6m.

Targeted fundraising is employed when major expenditure projects are being planned which would otherwise put too much of a strain on existing resources.

Plans for the Future

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

The Archdiocese of Armagh will continue to build upon and develop the initiatives and activities outlined in the narrative above and so continue to advance the primary goals of the Charity. In addition, a particular focus of the Trust is to secure the long-term financial stability of the Archdiocese.

Periodically, the Trust undertakes a review exercise in respect of all aspects of the activities of the Charity through reports from parishes and the various bodies which are constituent parts of the Diocese. Work is

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Strategic Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

continuing towards the organisation of a Diocesan Assembly to reflect on and produce a comprehensive medium- to long-term Diocesan Pastoral Plan and to ensure that resources are focussed on the key themes which have been identified as central to the work of the Archdiocese.

The Strategic Report has been approved by the Trustees on 11 December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Most Reverend Eamon Martin
Director of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited



Reverend Colm Hagan
Secretary of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Report of the Directors for the year ended 31 March 2024

Structure, Governance and Management

The operation of the Charity is overseen by the Corporate Trustee. The Directors of the Corporate Trustee (Council of the Trust) are appointed by the Archbishop of Armagh who is the Chair. Recruitment of Directors is based upon their knowledge of the local Church and professional skills and expertise 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 Council of the Trust are introduced to their role by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Diocesan Secretary and the Diocesan Financial Administrator, and are provided with copies of documentation relating to the Trust and the latest financial information and reports. Directors attend formal and informal training sessions as required (see page 3 for legal and administrative details).

In accordance with the Code of Canon Law a Council of Priests, that is a group of priests which represents the Presbyterium, advises the Archbishop 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. The Archbishop also relies upon the advice and guidance of the Cathedral Chapter, the College of Consultors, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Episcopal Vicars, all of whom meet regularly to discuss matters of pastoral concern within the Diocese.

At parish level, the Parish Priest is responsible for all aspects of governing the parish. Parish Priests are not employees but act as agents for the Trust. Each parish is required to have a Finance Committee which meets at least four times per year to support and advise the priest, particularly in the areas of finance, property, buildings and personnel. A comprehensive manual, "Finance Manual – financial controls and related processes within Parishes" is issued by the Diocese to parishes. Letters and updates are issued by the Archbishop regularly through which policies are communicated to parishes covering liturgical, pastoral, financial and administrative matters. Further support is also available from the Curia office.

The Council has instituted a number of committees to assist and advise it in the proper performance of its duties, including the Diocesan Building and Development Committee, the Diocesan Finance Committee, the Diocesan Personnel Committee, and the Diocesan Property Committee (see pages 18 and 19).

Statement of Trustee's responsibilities

The Trustee is responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulation.

Company law requires the Trustee to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the Trustee has prepared the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Accounting Standards, comprising FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", and applicable law (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). Under company law the Trustee must not approve the financial statements unless it is satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustee is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (2015);
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards, comprising FRS 102, have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustee is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain

St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited

Report of the Directors for the year ended 31 March 2024

the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Trustee is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustee is responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Future developments

Future developments are set out in the Strategic report and included in this report by cross reference. The plan for future periods is detailed on pages 22-23.

Reference and administrative details

Administrative details are included on page 3.

Funds held as a custodian trustee on behalf of others

There are no funds held as custodian trustee on behalf of others.

Independent auditor

The auditors, CavanaghKelly, have indicated their willingness to continue in office, and a resolution concerning their reappointment will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

The Report of the Directors was approved and authorised for issue by the Directors of the Corporate Trustee on 11 December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Most Reverend Eamon Martin
Director of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited



Reverend Colm Hagan
Secretary of St Patrick's Archdiocesan Trust Limited