



# Towards Peace

*Spiritual Support  
for Survivors of Abuse  
by Catholic Church Personnel  
in Ireland*



**Service Report**

**January 2016 – June 2017**

# Executive Summary

## January 2016 – June 2017

### Numbers related to work with clients and service providers:

- **Towards Peace supported 39 survivors of abuse and their family members.**  
*Compared to December 2015 - 18*  
*Supported via spiritual direction work - 30*  
*Compared to December 2015 - 15*  
*Supported via phone conversations - 9*  
*Compared to December 2015 - 3*
- **Towards Peace supported\* 34 spiritual companions to work with survivors.**  
*Compared to December 2015 - 22*  
*\*Supported via ongoing specialised training, education & professional development.*

### Key areas of development:

- **Major update of Policies & Procedures**  
*More trauma-informed, client-centered, coherent, easy-to-follow guide to practice, including revision of criteria for spiritual companions and supervisors.*
- **Recruitment of 2 Towards Peace supervisors for spiritual companions**  
*Regular supervision is a criterion for Towards Peace spiritual companions.*
- **Design and delivery of 2 specialised trainings to spiritual companions**  
*Shattered Wholeness: The Spiritual Impact of Trauma, and Spiritual Accompaniment: Charism, Privilege & Responsibility.*
- **Regional promotion in Galway and Cork.**  
*Outreach to diocesan, pastoral and secular support organisations.*

### General information at a glance:

Website: [www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie)

Leaflet: <http://towardspeace.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Towards-Peace-Leaflet-Sept-2015-Update.pdf>

Email: [towardspeace@iecon.ie](mailto:towardspeace@iecon.ie)

Phone: 01 505 3028

Mobile: 086 771 0533

Address: Columba Centre, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

Office hours: Mondays – Wednesdays, 10am-5pm

Staff: Una Allen and Colleen Brown

Designated Liaison Person: Kevin Duffy - 091 575053 / 565066; [duffykf57@gmail.com](mailto:duffykf57@gmail.com)

Board Members: Sr. Marianne O'Connor (Chair), Mr. Andrew Fagan (Vice-Chair), Dr. Ann Caulfield, Fr. Pat Lucey, Ms. Rachel Mooney, Bishop John Buckley, Mrs. Kathleen Duffy, Bishop Denis Brennan, Dr. Bernadette Fahey, Mr. Joseph McDonagh, Fr. Aidan Ryan, Ms. Barbara McDermott, Fr. Myles O'Reilly

# Introduction

*The vision of Towards Peace is to provide a safe supportive space, where people who have been affected by abuse in a Church context can be accompanied as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time.*

*Towards Peace realises that abuse by Church personnel in particular, may have an especially traumatic impact on spirituality; shattering a person’s sense of wholeness, rupturing their inherent trust of their own goodness and sacredness, and fracturing their relationship with the presence of God within themselves and their lives. We are very much aware that this kind of abuse, which harms a person’s core in the name of ‘God’, can create deep lifelong spiritual wounds.*

*In seeking to offer a pathway ‘towards peace’, we respect that the journey of healing from spiritual injuries is a painful, complex and unique journey, for each person. With the difficulty of this work in mind, Towards Peace is committed to the ongoing development of responsible practice, including competency, accountability, transparency and collaboration.*

The request for spiritual support from survivors of clerical and institutional abuse in Ireland was heard by Irish Catholic bishops during meetings with survivors in 2010-2011. The foundations for a spiritual support service were worked on in 2012-2013. The framework for the service, which became known as Towards Peace, including the above *Vision Statement*, was built in 2014-2015.

The full history of Towards Peace can be found at: <http://towardspeace.ie/history>.

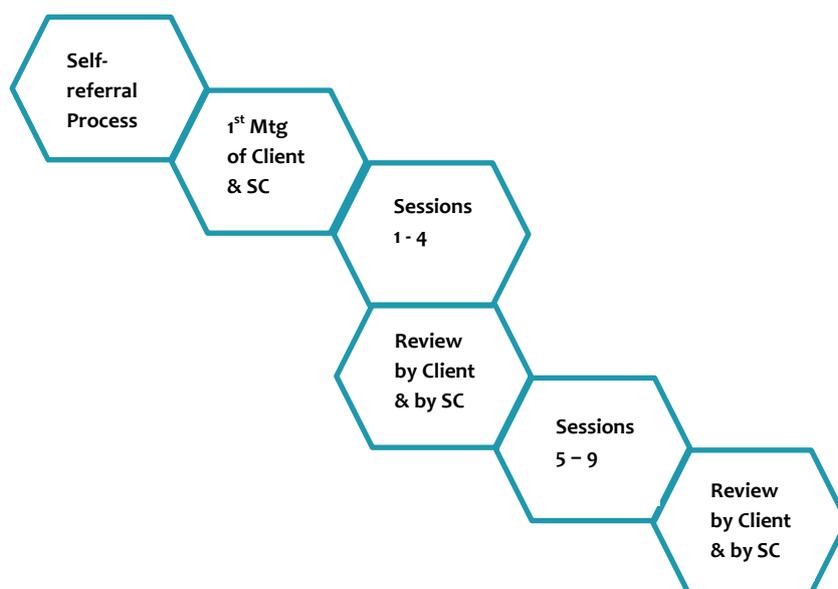
This report covers an 18 month period, from January 2016 – June 2017, during which Towards Peace has sought to honour the original request, realise its vision and bring a safe supportive space - to life.

## Content:

Service Summary.....	4
Reflections from Clients and Spiritual Companions.....	5
Reflection from Chair of the Board.....	6
Reflection from Staff.....	7
Map of Service Delivery.....	8
Data related to work with Survivors.....	9
Data related to work with Spiritual Companions.....	10
Financial Statement.....	11

## Service Summary

The Towards Peace service is primarily for people who have survived abuse by Church personnel in Ireland, clerical and institutional, and family members of survivors, who are interested in spiritual support via one-to-one spiritual direction work. The flowchart below summarises the basic steps of this work between a survivor (Client) and Towards Peace spiritual companion (SC).



### **Additional dimensions of the Towards Peace service have thus far included:**

- *Support over the phone and by email of survivors, their family members, and those who seek to support them;*
- *Consultation with survivors and survivor support organisations toward service development;*
- *Recruitment of spiritual directors who meet the Towards Peace criteria;*
- *Ongoing design and provision of specialised training and education to spiritual directors;*
- *Ongoing development of a resource section of the website as an online support for survivors, their family members, those working with survivors, Church personnel, etc.;*
- *Promotion of the service within the Church, secular support organisations, and wider society;*
- *Collaborative work with the NBSCCCI and Towards Healing towards responsible practice;*
- *When possible, awareness work with Church personnel about the spiritual impact of trauma in general, and more specifically the spiritual and theological impact of primary and secondary trauma due to abuse in a Church context.*

## Reflections from Clients and Spiritual Companions

Towards Peace understands that the relationship between **the person who has survived abuse** by Church personnel, and **the spiritual companion**, is a possibility for the experience of healing rather than harm, in a spiritual context. It is a very difficult possibility to trust and an enormous risk to ask a survivor to take. Towards Peace takes very seriously the feedback from survivors about their experience, as well as from spiritual companions about what they are learning.

The following are quotes from **five survivors of clerical or institutional abuse** who have experienced spiritual direction sessions with a Towards Peace spiritual companion:

*“Towards Peace helped me realise that bad happenings that happened in the past are not the workings of Jesus or God’s will that they happened.”*

*“Glad to understand that my companion knows how to be a good companion because the journey can be a lonely one.”*

*“I have been listened to and held in compassion, respect and reverence in a space that I have not remotely otherwise experienced in the Church within the context of the abuse I suffered.”*

*“I believe Towards Peace has brought total healing to my life and my relationship with God.”*

*“Because of my own personal experiences and indeed other members of my family I felt so betrayed confused, broken and lost. As I am getting older, weaker, fragile and in a lot of emotional pain, I felt a great need for spiritual direction to help me meet my God ... Towards Peace is doing a good job in supporting me to help myself try and make sense of it all.”*

The following are reflections from **two Towards Peace spiritual companions**, about what they have learned in their work. One reflection is by a religious sister, and one is from a lay man:

*“I have accompanied two clients, one woman and one man, as part of the Towards Peace service. Both sought spiritual accompaniment because of issues they had with the Catholic Church - arising from the experience of abuse (each person had experienced a different kind of abuse) by Church personnel. Both regretted (and felt guilty) that they felt alienated from God and from the Church and wanted to be reconciled with God - and to be able to resume the life of prayer that they once had. The abuse had created a block in their hearts, and they wanted to be assured of reconciliation. This was particularly so in the case of one person who felt that death was imminent. Working with these two people was a huge privilege for me.”*

*“I am privileged by the trust placed in me by clients referred from Towards Peace. As a spiritual director who works with many different people, I was thinking about the unique aspects of accompanying a person on their spiritual journey who has experienced the trauma of abuse. I have learned that the relationship with a survivor of trauma by someone who was supposed to represent God, requires more sensitivity on my part. Words or phrases that I use in everyday conversation can become triggers which need to be examined and processed before we are able to focus on the spiritual journey. Survivors struggle with how they view authority, church, and God. The wounds of the past are deep and the search for meaning and for God is lifelong.”*

## Reflection from Chair of the Board

Towards Peace is a young, unique service and has taken some time to find its feet in the midst of what is a highly sensitive and complex area, however, as evident from the significant increase in beneficiaries over the past eighteen months, the service is now up and running.

The voluntary Board of Management has been outstanding in their dedication and commitment. In 2016 we were pleased to welcome a survivor to our Board. The Board had consisted of two lay men, four lay women, one religious sister, two congregational clergy, one diocesan clergy, and two bishops. The Board now totals thirteen people and the experience on the Board includes a mixture of: surviving abuse by Church personnel, supporting survivors of abuse via secular organisations, providing spiritual direction, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and the funding organisations.

The Board of Towards Peace operates with a Chair and a Vice Chair and works between meetings through four Committees: Policies & Procedures, Spiritual Companions, Communications, Finance. The following is a summary of the accomplishments of each committee January 2016 – June 2017:

- **Policies & Procedures Committee (Chair: Andrew Fagan, also Vice Chair)**
  - Thorough review of all 2013 Towards Peace policies and procedures
  - Board agreement (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016) of new document: *Towards Peace: Policies, Procedures and Practice, 2016*
  
- **Spiritual Companions Committee (Chair: Kathleen Duffy)**
  - Revised criteria for spiritual companions, and supervisors for companions
  - Recruitment of 10 new spiritual companions
  - Recruitment of 2 supervisors to work with companions
  - Development of 2 out of 4 specialised training modules
  - Development of Annual Towards Peace Day of Prayer & Reflection (December)
  
- **Communications Committee (Chair: Ann Caulfield)**
  - Annual Towards Peace newsletter (September)
  - Hosting information mornings, speaking at conferences and events
  - Radio interviews and newspaper articles
  - Promotion within the Galway diocese / region (November/December 2016)
  - Promotion within the Cork diocese / region (March 2017)
  
- **Finance Committee (Chair: Marianne O'Connor)**
  - Annual budget preparation in consultation with Staff and Columba Centre
  - Monitoring quarterly expenditure

Una Allen, Director, and Colleen Brown, Administration and Development Coordinator, have been exceptional. Working just two days a week each, they have not only delivered on the objectives but have gone beyond in the extra time they have given as needs have arisen.

Now that Towards Peace is picking up momentum, it requires ongoing attention to maintain and develop and that undoubtedly requires that more time be allocated to roles in the office.

**Sr. Marianne O'Connor OSU**

## Reflection from Staff

In this report we have endeavoured to give a flavour of the complexity of the work involved in setting up and promoting a service to provide spiritual support for people who have been hurt as a result of abuse by Catholic Church personnel in Ireland. In the midst of the inevitable complexity it is wonderful to see the increase in the number of people benefitting from Towards Peace. Our website, too, has seen a significant increase in traffic since it was redeveloped in 2015. The service has come a very long way from when it began as a concept in 2011, and was first launched in 2014.

Many see exploring the spiritual impact of the abuse experience as a 'next step on the journey' after therapeutic work, and indeed the vast majority of Towards Peace clients who engage in spiritual direction work, have already gone through their own therapeutic work, many of whom have done so with our sister service, Towards Healing. It is important to note that an additional difference between Towards Peace and Towards Healing, is that Towards Peace is for both adult survivors of abuse as children (under 18), and of abuse as adults (over 18).

An additional challenge for Towards Peace, as compared to Towards Healing, is that engagement with Towards Peace brings a survivor back into a spiritual context, which is where the original trauma occurred. It is for this reason that Towards Peace has worked very hard to make sure it is a safe, trustworthy service, whose goal is not to bring people back to the Church, rather to genuinely acknowledge the deep spiritual wounds resulting from abuse by representatives of the Church, and God. The nature of the abuse and the fact that it was perpetrated in the main by people purporting to act in the name of Jesus Christ means that in many cases relationship with that same Christ or God has been damaged to the core, if not ruptured entirely. And so we seek to offer a 'safe, supportive space', to explore the spiritual and theological impact of the abuse experience, with people who are especially trained to accompany that hard work.

A key insight over the past few years has been that supporting survivors and service providers, go hand in hand. Unlike Towards Healing, this is especially the case for Towards Peace, whose service providers are spiritual companions who have not received trauma training as part of their spiritual direction training, and who have been trained within a Catholic spiritual direction framework. The former can create a challenge in understanding survivors and the latter can create a challenge in being trusted by survivors. This has led to our focus on building capacity in our spiritual companions to understand the complexity of Church abuse trauma, for everyone.

In 2016 a review of Towards Peace was conducted by the Board which found that the management structure was logical and fit for service, but voiced concern at the slow uptake of the service. As has already been noted we continually seek to promote and publicise the service throughout the island of Ireland. However, whilst the office has distributed leaflets and posters to each diocese, it is unclear as to how many of these have found their way to being available in local parish churches. Service promotion within the context of secular support services is particularly challenging at this point in time, given the feelings of betrayal by and anger towards the Church. Together with the challenge of publicising the availability of Towards Peace, spiritual accompaniment to those unfamiliar with it can be a concept that requires some explanation. Even in the general population many are unsure as to what is entailed and how the process differs from that of counselling. These, in addition to the deep distrust of anything to do with spirituality / religion / Church / God mentioned above, combine, we think to create a very slow uptake of the service in its current form.

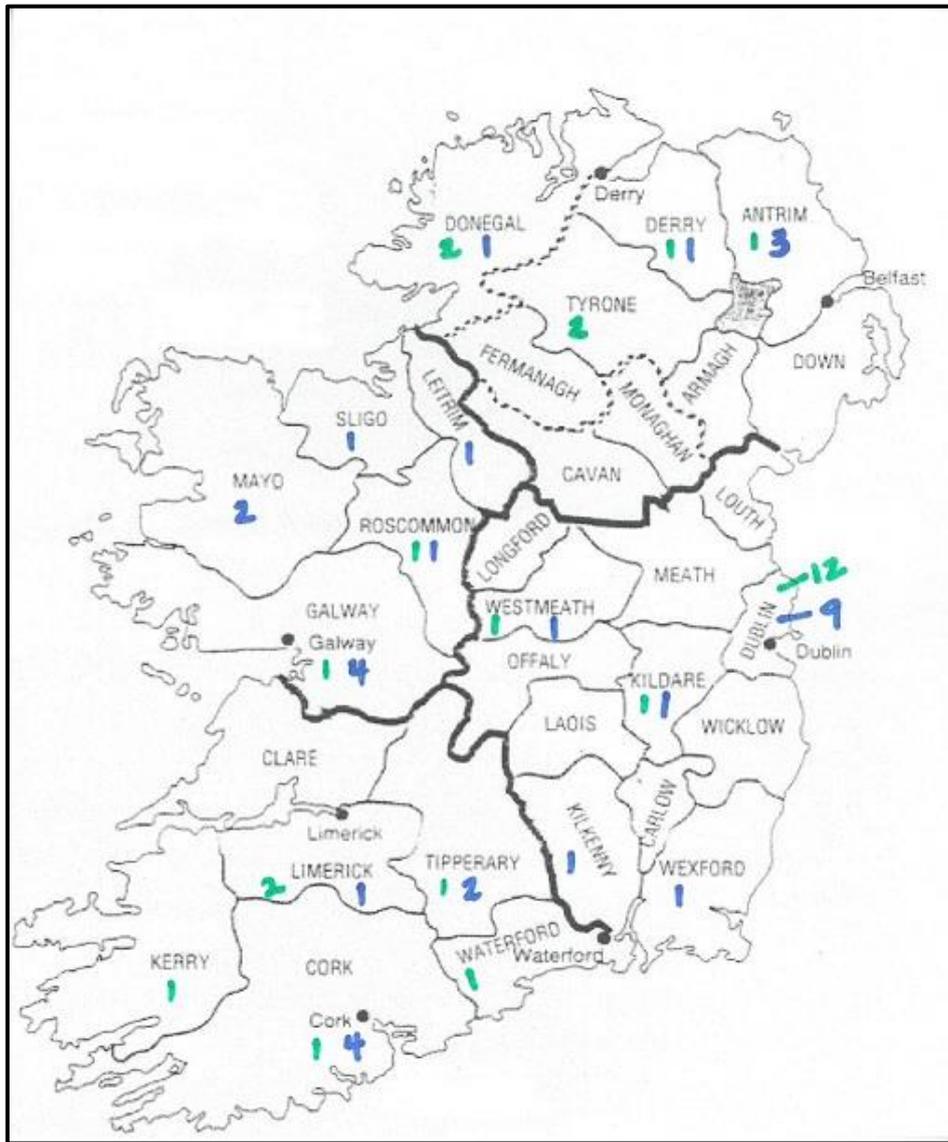
**Una Allen, Director**

**Colleen Brown, Administration & Development Coordinator**

## Map of Service Delivery

Mapping geographic location shows us where we need to focus on service promotion to survivors, and recruitment of spiritual companions, to make sure the service is known, and resourced.

January 2016 – June 2017



### Spiritual Direction Clients: 30

Ireland: 24  
 Northern Ireland: 4  
 Ulster: 6  
 Leinster: 14  
 Munster: 6  
 Connacht: 2  
 UK (Skype): 1  
 USA (Skype): 1

### Spiritual Companions: 34

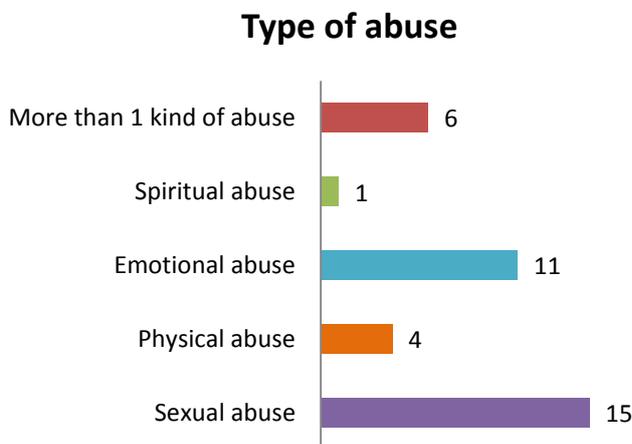
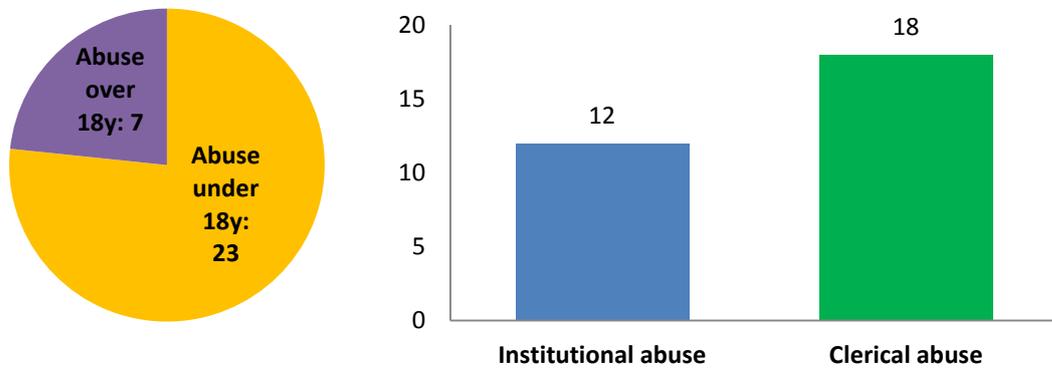
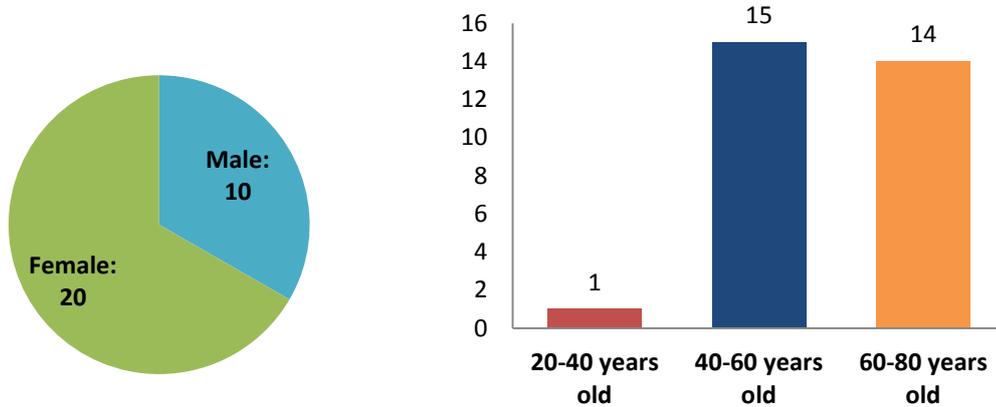
Ireland: 30  
 Northern Ireland: 4  
 Ulster: 5  
 Leinster: 13  
 Munster: 7  
 Connacht: 9

# Data related to work with Survivors

Total number of survivors / family members supported (January 2016 – June 2017):  
39

Total number of survivors / family members who received phone support only:  
9

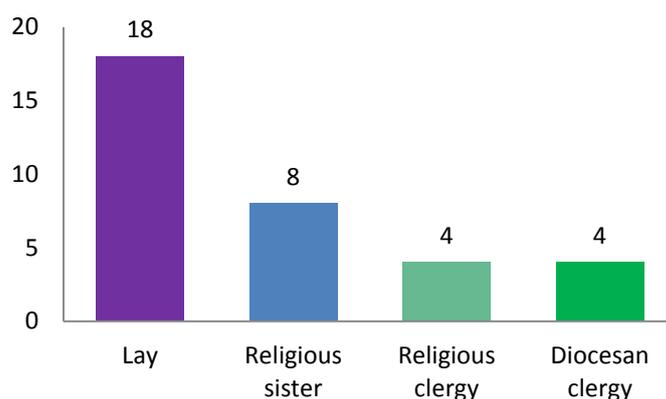
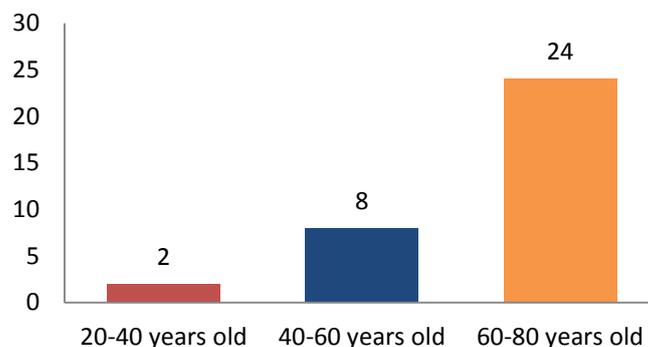
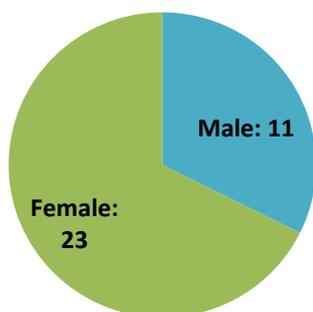
Total number of spiritual direction clients (January 2016 – June 2017):  
30



## Data related to work with Spiritual Companions

Total number of spiritual companions supported\* (January 2016 – June 2017):

34



*\*Towards Peace secondarily works to build capacity within the Church, to more fully understand and compassionately respond to the experience of being abused by Church personnel. To be able to do so, Towards Peace spiritual companions are offered ongoing specialised training, education and professional development; to support them to create a 'safe supportive space' for survivors of abuse.*

## Financial Statement

The Towards Peace budget is managed through the Finance Office of the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC). The IEC runs its operations under The Hierarchy General Purposes Trust (HGPT).

Towards Peace is a joint funding (50/50) initiative of the IEC and Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland (AMRI). Towards Peace operates under the IEC's Commission for Pastoral Care and the Income and Expenditure of the initiative are incorporated within the overall financial reporting mechanism of the IEC's Charitable Trust, HGPT.

The HGPT is audited annually by Crowe Horwath (Marine House, Clanwilliam Court, Dublin 2).

Audited accounts for the Trust are available on the website of the IEC:

[www.catholicbishops.ie/finance](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/finance).

Towards Peace's income/funding has, from the date of commencement to the end of December 2016, been provided by the IEC and CORI/IMU (Conference of Religious in Ireland and Irish Missionary Union).

From 2017, the budget will be funded 50/50 from the IEC and AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland).

### **Expenditure detail for January 2016 – June 2017:**

#### **Total Towards Peace expenditure in 2016:**

€67, 363

#### **Total Towards Peace expenditure in 2017 up to 30 June 2017:**

€30, 726