

# AMRI: Supporting Religious Life in Ireland

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I am often asked ‘What is AMRI?’ The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) was established in 2016 through the merging of the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) and the Irish Missionary Union (IMU). Both organisations were motivated to create something new, not least because several members were involved in both CORI and IMU.

Religious Life in Ireland created a space for some of the most talented, educated and innovative people to live out their vocation, making provision for education, health and social care for people otherwise deprived of these vital services.

Our ‘missionaries’ travelled to the ‘ends of the earth’, bringing the message of the Gospel to some of the poorest places to live. From Africa to Asia, from the Amazon to Australia, Irish religious globally impacted the world and helped to shape the contemporary Church. In our outreach to returned missionaries, we have heard stories that demonstrate how impactful Irish missionaries have been globally.

As secretary general of AMRI, I find it amazing to converse with some incredible people in religious life,

as we listen and support those in leadership who continue to face huge challenges: ageing congregations, properties no longer suitable for older people, issues of governance and compliance. AMRI facilitates access to shared wisdom for those taking on such onerous areas of responsibility.

The ‘Daring to Hope’ exhibition, supported by AMRI, illustrates the pioneering work of female religious filled with passion for making a difference across the globe over the past century. This has led to AMRI’s collaboration with others in a ‘Safe Birth for All Campaign’ aimed at ending obstetric fistula globally.

AMRI seeks to take its place in the public square. Our strategic plan asks us to take the lead on ensuring the voice of religious is heard in the meetings on the synod.

Many religious congregations continue to deal with the impact of abuse and collaborate with various state and church inquiries in this regard, supporting the services ‘Towards Healing’ and ‘Towards Peace’.

It is true that some congregations are engaged in the challenging tasks of completion. It is, however, liberating to hear people reflect that the mission for which they were estab-



From 'Daring to Hope' an Irish religious sisters' photographic exhibition

lished is complete.

At the other end of the spectrum, AMRI supports congregations that have an openness to new vocations. Vocations Ireland, which is part of AMRI, provides a space for vocational discernment to religious life. Some religious communities have vibrant youth ministry initiatives.

Jesus said, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Mt 25:35). I am in awe of those religious who protest and advocate on diverse topics from equality to Gaza, from climate change to just investments. In the early days of the Ukraine war, it was the members of AMRI who responded, opened doors, buildings and homes to those fleeing. I have witnessed the dedication of religious sisters to people living in Direct Provision and to APT (Act to Prevent Trafficking),

creating networks to help those trafficked to Ireland.

It is noticeable that some congregations are now welcoming members from young Churches to Ireland. AMRI supports them in getting visas for the religious formation of their members and to live and minister here.

Both Pope Francis and Pope Leo have referred to religious being 'prophetic'. It is important that they continue to challenge injustice by their truth and commitment. It is more important than ever that our younger religious take up the baton in a changing church environment to build on the work of the religious who have gone before them.

To find out more about AMRI ([www.amri.ie](http://www.amri.ie)), you can follow AMRI on various social media platforms.