



STRATEGY DOCUMENT

2024 to 2027

Irish Church Music Association

Strategy 2024-2027

Irish Church Music Association

The Irish Church Music Association (ICMA) supports the musicians working in the field of liturgical music in Ireland. Through training, publication and dissemination of information, the ICMA strives to improve standards and encourage musicians in their service of God and the community. The ICMA is supported by the Irish Bishops' Conference and is based in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

Each July the ICMA organises the Church Music Summer School in Maynooth, where musicians from around the country and beyond get the opportunity to sing and pray together, learning the best music of past and present.

The ICMA is a company limited by guarantee whose object is to promote, encourage and support the understanding of music in the Church. The directors of the company are elected by the members of the association at the AGM. The activities of the association are funded by subscriptions from its membership.

Context for Strategy

The ICMA was founded in November 1969. Following the enactment of the Charities Act 2009 and the Companies Act 2014 the constitution was revised and in 2016 the association was registered as a company, the council becoming the board of directors. The association has not yet registered as a charity.

In 2019 the ICMA celebrated its 50th anniversary with some special events, including a well-attended summer school, which was very favourably received and sparked a renewed interest in the work of the association. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was not possible to hold a summer school in 2020. Following an online summer school in 2021, in-person summer schools resumed in 2022.

The board is now looking to future of the ICMA and planning for how it can best serve its members. Among the current needs of members in the context of liturgical music in the Irish Church the board has identified:

- Support and encouragement of musician's
- Education and formation, especially for newer members
- Providing exposure to new music
- Giving a voice and platform to Irish composers

The board is also conscious of the need to realign its constitution with the legal obligations of the Charities Act 2009 and the Companies Act 2014, and with the needs and direction of the association for the future.

Strategy Review

In order to review and update its strategic direction the board first considered the opportunities and threats (external) facing the ICMA and the current strengths and weaknesses (internal) of the association.

This analysis concluded that the association has a proud history of serving the needs of church music and musicians in Ireland over the last 55 years. Despite the changes in the Church in Ireland and among church musicians there is still a need for the association, for its work and for the support it offers to members. The board has also identified some additional opportunities for fulfilling the objectives of the association. Consequently, there is no immediate threat to the ICMA.

The ICMA has a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge among its members and a very committed board of directors that has ensured the continuity of the association during some challenging years. However, there are questions about how well the association communicates with its members and promotes its activities. There are also some governance and administrative issues that need to be addressed.

Strategy 2024-2027

2024-2027 will be a period of consolidation, building on the strengths of the Irish Church Music Association (ICMA) and focusing on the core activities of the association with an emphasis on communication and good governance.

The ICMA has re-defined its Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Objectives as follows:

Vision

The board's vision is to sustain an association that promotes and fosters the art of good liturgical music practice in Ireland, in an inclusive, all-island approach.

Mission

Our mission is to enable, encourage and empower music ministers and others involved in liturgical music in Ireland to enhance the quality of liturgical celebrations through formation, promotion of the activities of the ICMA and communication among its members.

Values

While the strategic themes and objectives that follow describe what the ICMA proposes to do in the next four years, the board wishes to affirm the values that will inform and influence how we will operate.

Empowerment

Supporting members in their respective roles, empowering and encouraging them to improve and develop their knowledge, skills and talents.

Faith-filled

Being conscious of Christian values and rooted in prayer and liturgy.

Promotion of Best Practice

Striving for excellence and promoting good standards and best practice in the work of the association and the functioning of the board.

Inclusivity

Making sure that the association is inclusive in its membership, work and activities, including a diversity of musical genres and respect for all levels of competence.

Strategic Themes and Objectives

The following three strategic themes have been agreed for 2024-2027:

Strategic Theme 1 – Consolidating the Activities of the ICMA

Objective 1

To organise an annual summer school that offers formation, support and encouragement to church musicians in Ireland.

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Plan a summer school that responds to the current needs of the members.
- ii. Offer workshops that focus on the musical, liturgical and pastoral aspects of our ministry.
- iii. Explore the possibilities of facilitating attendance of 13-18 year olds

Objective 2

To offer regional/online workshops on relevant topics

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Plan at least two workshops per year
- ii. Collaborate with other organisations (Dioceses, ACCM etc)
- iii. Target and reach out to focussed groups

Strategic Theme 2 – Communication

Objective 1

To maintain contact with and between members

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Maintain an up-to-date and secure membership database
- ii. Produce a newsletter every quarter

Objective 2

To promote the activities of the ICMA

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Make contact with dioceses, parish choir directors and other relevant groups
- ii. Aim to recruit new members by promoting the benefits of membership
- iii. Make better use of social media

Objective 3

To forge and/or strengthen links with other similar groups

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Approach the Advisory Commission for Church Music, the Council for Liturgy and the Liturgy Association of Ireland for meetings regarding potential collaboration

Strategic Theme 3 – Governance

Objective 1

To comply with existing legislation

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Review our constitution and where necessary update it
- ii. Register the ICMA as a Charity
- iii. Review Safeguarding policies and procedures
- iv. Ensure that we comply with GDPR
- v. Have appropriate insurances in place
- vi. Complete an Audit of Compliance

Objective 2

To have a board that functions efficiently and effectively

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Ensure minutes of meetings are taken, approved and signed
- ii. Put appropriate financial procedures in place
- iii. Facilitate training for directors
- iv. Collate all records of the association and store them securely

Objective 3

To act with transparency

To achieve this, we will:

- i. Hold an Annual General Meeting, usually during the summer school
- ii. Produce an Annual Report and publish it online
- iii. Ensure our website contains a list of current directors

Enablers of Success

In order to re-focus the association and achieve the strategic objectives the following enablers of success have been identified:

Overcoming the financial obstacle to attending the Summer School

- Approaching parishes to explain the benefits for music ministers of attendance at the summer school and suggesting subsidies
- Explore the creation of a bursary fund to facilitate attendance at the summer school

Receiving relevant content for the Newsletter to ensure it is produced with sustained regularity

- Requesting articles and news items from members
- Including some regular features
- Compile and share music and liturgical resources

Approval of Strategy

This strategy was approved by the board on 24th May 2024.

(The Board would like to acknowledge the help of Fr. Richard Purcell ocsa to formulate this Strategy Document).