

IN TOUCH.....

.....with Mothers’ Union in Connor Diocese

.....

From the Diocesan President:

Dear Fellow Members

As I write this letter the weather has turned much colder and feels really autumnal. The beech trees in our lane are shedding their leaves at an enormous rate and will soon be bare. Even when they are bare, they are still majestic, silhouetted against the sky. The pattern of their branches is like that of the airways in our lungs. Trees are truly the lungs of the earth, controlling the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, sustaining life.

We have not always cared for creation in the way that God asked us, and we increasingly feel the consequences of global warming – forest fires, floods, coastlines washed away. We should try to change our lifestyles – how we travel, what we eat, how we use energy.

In Mothers’ Union we are very concerned about another lifestyle – that which condones domestic violence. Our new campaign RISE UP Against Domestic Abuse was launched at the Annual Gathering in September. The letters of RISE UP stand for Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite, Pray. We are working with our members to ensure that as many churches as possible have information about their local domestic abuse helpline. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone from any walk of life. Our aim is to make sure that activism against domestic abuse and gender-based violence happens 365 days per year, not just during the 16 Days of Activism campaign in November and December. You can find out more about this campaign, and how to get involved, on the MU website and also in Connected magazine.

The photograph of Saoirse this time shows her in her Squirrels uniform (Junior Cubs). She is proudly holding the squirrel mascot which she was allowed to bring home because she was the best-behaved child that week. She is really enjoying the activities of the group. It’s hard to believe she is growing up so quickly.

With my love,

Sally x



Maundy honour for Joyce Bond!

Connor Faith & Policy Coordinator and Mid Connor Chair, Joyce Bond, had the great honour of being awarded a Maundy Purse from King Charles at York Minster in April. Joyce has held many roles in Mothers' Union, both at Diocesan and All Ireland level, as well as devoted service to Guiding and many other organisations within the wider church and beyond.



Reflecting on the wonderful experience of being at the service in York Minster, Joyce described the King as having 'warm hands and kind eyes' as he placed the red and white purses of coins into her hands.

Joyce, Connor Mothers' Union is very proud that you were chosen for this very well deserved honour!

(Joyce is pictured with her husband, Dean John Bond)



Joyce Bond's Summer 2023 MU Quiz!

Many of you may have entered Joyce's Fireside Quiz based on Mothers' Union. If you were stuck on some answers here they are, and if you did not see the quiz, read on - you will learn something, no doubt!

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. When do we celebrate our Founder's Day? | 9 AUGUST |
| 2. Mary Sumner died at the age of..... | 92 in 1921 |
| 3. Who did the Rev'd George Sumner marry? | MARY ELIZABETH HEYWOOD |
| 4. Who founded the 'Union of Mothers' in 1876? | MARY SUMNER |
| 5. Mary Sumner's husband became the Suffragan Bishop of? | GUILDFORD |
| 6. Mary Sumner visited Ireland in.....? | 1901 |
| 7. Mary delivered her first speech in..... ? | 1885 |
| 8. Who started the Mothers' Union in Ireland? | ANNA BELLA J HAYES |
| <i>(Helen Williams who wrote a history (The Mothers' Union 1945 -1987 Diocese of Connor) says "St. Luke's, Belfast, can also claim a link with the very first 'branch in Ireland', there, in tablets of stone are the words "In 1887 Anna Bella J Hayes started the Mothers' Union in Ireland. Her son, once Rector, places these stones in hope and thankfulness").</i> | |
| 9. The name of our All Ireland MU President? | JUNE BUTLER |
| 10. An unusual place for a MU Garden Party? | DUBLIN ZOO |
| 11. The first branch in Connor Diocese? | RAMOAN |
| 12. The Connor daffodil was first grown in? | BROUGHSHANE |
| 13. The O'Neill Cup is kept where? | BELFAST CATHEDRAL |
| 14. The first MU President in the Diocese of Connor? | MRS LOUIE KING-IRWIN |
| 15. MU theme for 2023? | TRANSFORMATION - NOW! |
| 16. 2023 General Meeting is being held in? | YORK |
| 17. Can't go to MU branch meetings regularly? Become a.....? | DIOCESAN MEMBER |
| 18. AFIA? | AWAY FROM IT ALL |
| 19. The Worldwide President of Mothers' Union? | SHERAN HARPER |
| 20. Write out the words of Mary Sumner's Prayer: | |

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the words I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen

BRAND NEW LEAFLET FOR CONNOR MEMBERS

A new information leaflet has been produced for members in Connor. A small team (Irene Gates, Wendy Halligan and Moira Thom) designed the leaflet which is full of information on how important membership of Mothers' Union is. Each branch has been given enough leaflets for every member and the team hope it will make every member proud of the difference we can make as members of our great organisation.

(photo – Moira's grandson Harry shows off the new leaflet)

If you would like more leaflets for distribution in your parish, please contact-
mothersunion.connor@gmail.com



The Mothers' Union Annual Gathering 2023 - A reflective report by Cathy Doig

Three members from Connor were part of the All Ireland contingent who made their way to the historic city of York for the 2023 Annual Gathering.

As we met up with friends, old and new, outside the Barbican on a sunny Friday morning, there was a buzz of excitement in the air and we were not disappointed!

After the formal opening, our Worldwide President Sheran Harper spoke for almost an hour. Her inspirational address centred on how we can move from "Transformation Now" to "Transformation in Action" in 2024. She encouraged us to take the message and the work of Mothers' Union out into our communities and meet people where they are, rather than waiting for them to come to us.

Sheran highlighted some of the life-changing projects that Mothers' Union has undertaken and reinforced the message that Mothers' Union stands up against injustice and violence against women and girls throughout the world.

After lunch, members were brought up to date with news from Mary Sumner House.

Following on from the successful Parenting Programme, a new initiative is currently being piloted called "Flourishing Families" whereby children are developing within safe and nourishing environments.

The "Rise Up" campaign was formally launched at the Gathering. This campaign aims to make sure that activism against domestic abuse and gender based violence happens 365 days a year and not just during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in November and December.

After a very thought-provoking day, the Gathering ended with prayers led by the Bishop of Shelby, Dr John Thomson. Then a group of members, including the All Ireland President June Butler, Jacqui Armstrong and myself, marched from the Barbican to York Minster. We carried placards and shouted "RISE UP" to highlight the new campaign.

The perfect end to the day was to join together in Choral Evensong in the wonderful York Minster. The sermon was preached by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

A full report of the Gathering will be available on the Mothers' Union website - www.mothersunion.org

It has been decided that the next Annual Gathering will be in 2026 (*venue to be announced*). I would encourage everyone who can, to think about attending as it is an amazing day which leaves everyone enthused and energised.

New members in Broughshane!

St Patrick's Broughshane recently welcomed three new members into the Branch during their Holy Communion service. (Pictured are Emma, Valerie and Helen with Branch Leader Cathy)

Welcome to Mothers' Union, ladies!

During the Holiday Bible Club, Mothers' Union served juice and biscuits to the children.

The Tots group, which was started by Mothers' Union over 20 years ago, is back after the summer break.



Two wonderful ladies celebrating milestone birthdays in 2023!

Mrs Maureen Smith, a faithful Indoor Member of Christ Church Lisburn branch, celebrated her 90th birthday in July. She was delighted to receive cards and messages from Mothers' Union worldwide – she is pictured with some lovely flowers from the branch. Maureen is a jolly lady who loves visitors and is thankful for her loving and caring family



Mrs Maureen Smith



Mrs Molly Craig,
(pictured with her daughter
Rosalind Bloomfield)

Mrs Molly Craig of Lambeg Branch celebrated her 100th birthday in May. Molly has been a member of the branch for an incredible 64 years during which time she has held many roles, including Branch Leader. Molly encouraged the branch to raise funds, including a daffodil tea and a sponsored walk, to be able to buy a banner for Lambeg Mothers' Union. The design, which she drew, was used to create the banner which was dedicated on 25th March 1990.

A Night at the Movies – MU style!

'Mrs Harris goes to Paris!'



The Younger Members Committee held a Movie Night at All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim on Thursday 25th May. We had around 80 ladies and a few gents from across the diocese attending. The ladies definitely dressed to impress as we watched 'Mrs Harris goes to Paris' which proved to be very entertaining.....and of course movie night wouldn't be movie night without popcorn and ice-cream! All in all, it was a fantastic night of fun and fellowship and we raised £390 which was given to the diocesan AFIA fund.

(by Melanie McAlister, Younger Members Contact)



Diocesan President Sally enjoys her night at the movies!

All Ireland Commissioning Service in Armagh Cathedral

An All Ireland Commissioning Service was held on 11th June in Armagh Cathedral. Several members from Connor Diocese were commissioned by the Archbishop of Armagh into All Ireland roles including Moira Thom as Vice President All Ireland, Cathy Doig as Social Policy Contact for the Northern Dioceses, Wendy Halligan as Northern Younger Members Contact and Archdeacon Stephen McBride as All Ireland Chaplain for Mothers' Union.

(Photo shows all those commissioned to All Ireland roles, including 4 from Connor Diocese)



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY!

**Remember the 16 Days Campaign
against Gender Based Violence:**

25th November – 10th December 2023
(Resources: www.mothersunion.org)

.....

**21st April 2024 – Connor Diocese
Festival Service in St Anne's Cathedral
3.30pm**

**Speaker: June Butler
(All Ireland President of MU)**

.....

**May 2024 – 'Mums in May' events incl.
Sunday 19th May – Connor Diocese
'Big Hymn Sing'
in All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim
3pm**



MUMS IN MAY 2024

'Mums in May' is the All Ireland triennial fundraiser which supports the work of Mothers' Union across the country. Started in 2012, and held every three years, Mums in May activities have resulted in creating a fund to which dioceses may apply for financial support for local projects.

How do we raise money?

Well, the one thing Mothers' Union members are experts at is making a cup of tea! **Why not have a tea party in your branch or Area....**or even with a few friends at home. A basket at the door will gather donations for Mums in May and all those pounds really do add up!

In addition, the All Ireland Fundraising & Communications Unit are planning to produce a **PUZZLE BOOK** which will be packed full of all sorts of puzzles. This exciting little book will sell at just **£3** with all proceeds going to the Mums in May fund. Look out for it coming to your branch next Spring!

Last, but certainly not least, every diocese in Ireland will hold a **'Big Hymn Sing'** service featuring members' favourite hymns. The Connor Big Hymn Sing will be held in **All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim on Sunday 19th May 2024** with the collection going to Mums in May.

So, let's all get involved in next year's Mums in May and help our work to grow and prosper!

'Changing The Story' - All Ireland Mothers' Union Special Conferences

by Cathy Doig, (Social Policy Contact for the Norther Dioceses & member of Connor Diocese MU)

Having developed the programme "Equipping The Church to Take Action and End Domestic Abuse ", it was decided to formally launch this, along with an online Wellbeing Group, at two conferences, one in the North and one in the South. The title "*Changing the Story*" was chosen to demonstrate that we in Mothers' Union can make a difference.

The Northern conference took place in Seagoe Parish Centre on 15th September and was attended by members, parishioners, politicians and clergy from various churches.

The main speakers were Bekah Legg, CEO of Restored, and Rev'd Dr Helen Paynter, Theologian and author, who were also joined by speakers from Kintsugi Hope, PSNI, Onus and Women's Aid.

During the day, those attending heard how domestic abuse affects every aspect of society, leading to increased poverty, homelessness and poor mental health.

To combat the increase in levels of domestic abuse, our churches must be safe places where victims and survivors are met with love and understanding. As Christians, we are bound to follow Christ's example in treating everyone with compassion and kindness.

The course is a 5-part online programme which hopes to equip and encourage parishes to discuss positive steps towards prevention, highlighting and supporting victims/survivors in our communities. The next programme starts in January 2024. Please talk to your Rector about your parish participating in this.

The Wellbeing group, based on the vision of Kintsugi Hope, starts its next session of 12 meetings online in February.

For more information or to register your interest in either the Programme or the Wellbeing group, please contact muchangingthestory@gmail.com

These initiatives, together with the Mothers' Union **RISE UP** campaign, send out a clear message that domestic abuse will not be tolerated in any form in any church, or community in Ireland.

"We must do something, so speak up" Judges 19:30



News from the Branches.....

Ladies from **Ballynure & Ballyeaston (Ballyclare)** enjoyed the Movie Night organised by the Younger Members, with two of the ladies winning prizes for *'dressing to impress'* on their night out!



The branch also enjoyed a night out at a concert by the Clare Chorale.



St Jude's Muckamore

Nicola Newbury from Women's Aid visited the branch and delivered a superb presentation on the work of Women's Aid for women and children. Nicola also spoke about domestic violence and the effect this has on families. At the end of the evening Nicola was presented with essential items donated by the members, and we hope that these will help in this much needed service. The donated items included pyjamas, towels, baby cardigans, face cloths, and toiletries.



God Save the King!

A few days after the coronation, **Christ Church Lisburn** branch celebrated the crowning of King Charles III with invited guests from St Paul's MU. It was a great night of fun and fellowship, greatly enjoyed by all. Entertainment included a Coronation Quiz, a display of Irish Dancing and a rolling power-point depicting the life of the new King from his birth in 1948, through all the significant moments of his life and right up to the Coronation weekend. A delicious 'afternoon tea' supper was served before the evening ended with some musical entertainment led by MU choir members with everyone joining in some favourite songs.

The evening came to a close with everyone standing to sing the National Anthem in honour of the new King!



Busy Knitters in Killead & Gartree Branch!

At their meeting in May, the branch had Mark Reid and Tom Irwin from Mission to Seafarers. The Pins & Needles group of the branch handed over 10 blankets which had been knit by them. These blankets are given to seafarers for warmth and comfort.

As you can see, the group have also been very busy knitting for Baby Basics!



Lisburn & Derriaghy Area branches held their annual Coffee Evening on 20th April. Branches from all over the area gathered in Eglantine Parish Hall in Lisburn for a wonderful evening of fellowship with over 70 ladies attending. Stalls of bric-a-brac and cakes were busy while a delicious supper was served by the members of Eglantine branch, led by their Branch Leader Brenda Orr. The evening raised £338.51 for the Worldwide Fund & Period Poverty.



Holy Trinity & Immanuel Branch in Mid Belfast Area sadly closed in May after more than 60 years. The members marked the closure with a wonderful afternoon tea party to celebrate all that the branch had meant over the years to all who had been involved – the passing of an era.

We thank them for their service and dedication to Mothers' Union over many years.

Belfast Cathedral Branch out for lunch!

Belfast Cathedral branch enjoyed an outing for lunch to Carrick Golf Club. It was their first lunch outing since well before COVID.

Everyone enjoyed a lovely meal and great fellowship together.



Christ Church Derriagh Branch

Three members of the branch received long service certificates at their recent Holy Communion service.



Margaret Hanthorne (45 years), June Belshaw (40 years), June Benson (30 years) are pictured with Branch Leader Melanie McAlister and Rev'd Aaron McAlister

The branch members were also delighted to recently present Hospital Chaplain Sanna Mallon with sponge bags and knitted items.



AN ALTERNATIVE TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP!

If you know someone who does not have a branch of Mothers' Union in their parish, but would like to be a member of our great organisation, why not suggest that they become a **Diocesan Member**?

Diocesan Members pay the same subscription as branch members and will get all their magazines, -those from Mary Sumner House (Connected, Prayer Diary) as well as In Touch and Focus.

Contact Moira for further information.

moirathom@hotmail.com

From the Editor – Moira Thom

I hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of In Touch. This is YOUR magazine so please send me your branch news for the Spring 2024 edition. Please send me any news and photos by 30th March 2024, or as early as possible.

Thank you to all who contribute items to In Touch – it is very much appreciated!

Moira moirathom@hotmail.com

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Connor

NIC Number 101658