

IN TOUCH.....

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

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The Diocesan President writes.....

Dear Fellow Members,

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed. Hallelujah! How wonderful it is to say those words on Easter Sunday. I do hope you had a happy and blessed Easter. We look forward to better weather and the new life spring brings. The heat from the sun encourages the flowers to bloom and makes us appreciate the world of nature all around us.

By the time you receive this we will have had our Festival Service in St Anne’s Cathedral. I am really looking forward to it as I’m sure you are. Then in May we have our Diocesan Songs of Praise in Antrim, and what a wonderful afternoon that will be, as we join in singing hymns, both old and new. Later in the year our Young Members have planned an exciting evening of fun and fellowship for all. In October we have the Women’s Getaway in Armagh and in November we have the BIG SING in Ballymena for the Northern Dioceses. Also in November we have the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. Last November we launched the Rise Up Campaign and I’m very pleased to tell you that St Patrick’s Broughshane was the first branch in Ireland to receive the Bronze Award.

This year is election year, and we are now preparing for ‘new’ people to take on different roles and responsibilities at diocesan, provincial and worldwide levels. Do reflect prayerfully as to whether you feel called to rise to the challenge, or if you can encourage a friend to come forward. This year Sheran steps down as Worldwide President, Iris completes her term as Zonal Trustee, and June steps down as All Ireland President. Closer to home, I will complete my term of office as your Diocesan President at the end of the year, as will many members of our Trustee Board. Do pray that the right people will be elected.

Looking a little further ahead – 2026 marks 150 years of our wonderful organisation. We will be thinking of ways to celebrate this, so please put your thinking caps on and let us know of any ideas you might have.

I’m sure you will enjoy reading this issue of In Touch. What a lot of things have been happening in our diocese! It is great to be reminded of all the events that have taken place and the great fellowship we have had together.

I leave you with the words of this Gaelic Blessing:

**Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the gentle night to you,
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you,
Deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you,
Deep peace of Christ to you.**

With my love

Sally x

REACHING OUT WITH SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S AID – new projects for Connor Diocese

by Wendy Halligan, Diocesan Action & Outreach Coordinator

Connor Diocese received a £1000 grant from the Mums in May Fund as seed money for a diocesan project. The Trustees decided on two projects supporting the work of Women's Aid within our Diocesan boundaries. One project is to provide women who are trafficked to Northern Ireland with a Chrome Book to support them with applying for and attending university or further education courses. The second project is to put together a starter pack for women moving from a Women's Aid Refuge to their own new home. Each pack would contain an Air Fryer and a washing-up bowl filled with cleaning materials. The Action & Outreach team approached Curry's Corporate Department who proved to be very generous regarding discounts and delivery for the electrical items.

The seed grant, combined with funds raised at the Mid Connor 16 Days Prayer Breakfast, allowed the purchase of 2 Chrome Books and twenty one starter kits. The twenty one starter kits have been split evenly between three Women's Aid centres in Connor diocese: Belfast & Lisburn, Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne & Newtownabbey and Causeway & Mid Ulster. The 2 Chrome Books will be given to Women's Aid Belfast & Lisburn.

On Monday 29th February, Connor Diocesan President Sally, VP F&A Unit Alberta, Social Policy Contact Jacqui and A&O Unit Co-ordinator Wendy had the privilege of visiting Virginia House refuge which is operated by Women's Aid (Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne & Newtownabbey). The ladies (*pictured right*) were given a tour of the refuge and took time to discuss with Communication and Engagement Manager, Arlene, and Sarah the manager of Virginia House, how Mothers' Union in Connor could assist with supporting them in the future. After the tour and discussion, the representatives from Connor Diocese were delighted to hand over seven of the starter kits which in turn will be given to women who are preparing to move into their own homes.



At the time of writing, two further dates are to be arranged for visits to Women's Aid Belfast & Lisburn and Causeway & Mid Ulster to enable us to present the other fourteen starter kits and the two Chrome Books.

It is hoped that these two projects will be adopted by the Areas and/or Branches within Connor Diocese over the coming months. Further details about both projects will be available at Spring Council on 25th April.

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Mid Connor Prayer Breakfast to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

(St Patrick's Parish Hall, Ballymena, 25th November)

A delicious breakfast was served to members from the Mid Connor Area who were also joined by members from other areas. All of the breakfast ingredients were donated by local supermarkets who had been very generous in their support. Following breakfast, Arlene Creighton from Women's Aid spoke about the challenges the organisation faces as they offer sanctuary for women and children fleeing abusive homes. She expressed her sincere gratitude for the support given to Women's Aid by Mothers' Union branches.



(photo l-r: **Joyce Bond** Diocesan Faith & Policy Coordinator and Area Chair for Mid Connor, **Jacqui McLaughlin**, Diocesan Social Policy Contact, **Sally Cotter**, Diocesan President and **Arlene Creighton**, Women's Aid - Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey)

North Connor Area Prayer Breakfast



Members in North Connor Area held a Prayer Breakfast on Saturday 4th November in the Old Schoolhouse in Ballymoney. Rev'd Andrew Sweeney opened with prayer after which the ladies were treated to a delicious continental breakfast. The speaker was Sharon Burnett from Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid.

Mrs Caroline Glover of Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin branch led prayers based on the upcoming 16 Days of Activism Campaign.

Bible verses were shared at each table and candles lit in reflection of those suffering domestic abuse.

The event was well supported and feedback was very positive, with many expressing a wish that this should become an annual event.

North Connor Area Service

On St Luke's Day, Wednesday 18th October 2023, Ballintoy Parish Church hosted the Mothers' Union North Connor Autumn Area Service. The Branch was delighted to dedicate their new Ballintoy & Dunseverick Mothers' Union banner.

North Connor Area Chairperson Roslyn Graham read the Epistle while All Ireland President June Butler read the Gospel. Archdeacon Stephen McBride, the Diocesan and All Ireland Chaplain, encouraged members with his address about St Luke.

The new banner features the cross and MU logo on one side with salmon and a barley sheaf on the other reflecting their farming and fishing communities, the harvests of the land and sea, and God's providence.



(l) Patricia Elliott is pictured with the beautiful new Ballintoy & Dunseverick banner. Patricia is the daughter of the late Joyce Kane who had stitched much of the front of the banner before her death in 2019.

(r) Rev'd Louise Stewart is pictured with some of the North Connor banners which she has designed and created over the years.

MUMS IN MAY 2024

Our All Ireland Triennial Fundraiser takes place this year, so how can you and your branch get involved?

Here are three easy ways:

1. Could your branch hold a **tea party** or special supper in your programme...with a basket for donations towards Mums in May? You can hold your event anytime up to the end of 2024!
2. Each branch will receive a bundle of a brand new '**Puzzle Book**' packed full of fun puzzles. It will sell for just **£3** – a great little purchase for members, families and friends.
3. A special '**Songs of Praise**' service will be held on **Sunday 19th May at 3pm in All Saints' Parish, Antrim**
(Collection will be for Mums in May)

The service will feature favourite hymns as voted for by Connor members.

So, let's all have fun, fellowship and do our bit for Mums in May 2024 – remember...every little helps!

REMEMBER TO SEND ON PHOTOS OF YOUR MUMS IN MAY EVENTS FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF 'IN TOUCH' TO THE EDITOR moirathom@hotmail.com. (PLEASE ENSURE PERMISSION FORMS ARE SIGNED BY PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR ANY PHOTOS FEATURING CHILDREN)

SAVE THE DATE!

Finally, 'Mums in May 2024' will be rounded off with a special All Ireland 'Big Hymn Sing' in St Patrick's Parish Church, Ballymena. Members from all of the Northern Dioceses are especially invited to come together on Saturday 16th November at 2pm in St Patrick's for a great celebration of our favourite hymns, led by The Clare Chorale. The collection will be for the Mums in May Fund.

(The Mums in May Fund supports diocesan projects across MU in Ireland)

Many Happy Returns, Ladies!

Happy Birthday, Sylvia!



Sylvia Creighton, a faithful member of Christ Church Lisburn Branch, celebrated her 90th birthday. She is pictured (centre) with Valerie Christy, Branch Leader and Ann Elliot, Branch Secretary.

Happy Birthday, Olive!



Mrs Olive Archibald celebrated her 95th birthday with members from Ballymoney, Finvoy & Rasharkin Mothers' Union.

They all agree that Olive is a remarkable lady!

ARMOY & DRUMTULLAGH BRANCH

At their recent Project Night, the branch members gathered together 91 emergency wash bags and over 100 knitted items – 65 baby hats, 7 cardigans and 30 blankets.



Heather McKay received a gift from Gillian Easton to mark her 15 years of service as Branch Secretary



'BLACK SANTA' GRANT TO CONNOR MU



Connor Diocese MU was once again included in the dispersion of money collected by the Black Santa Christmas appeal by Dean Forde. A cheque for £1000 was presented for the Diocesan 'Away From It All' (AFIA) fund. Pictured at the presentation are Alberta Miskimmin, Sally Cotter and Joyce Bond.

Reaching out as God's hands to our communities.....

BUSY MEMBERS IN CARNMONEY BRANCH!

Members in Carnmoney Branch had another busy year in 2023 with projects. They made up 180 emergency toilet bags which were gratefully received by A&E staff at Antrim Area Hospital. Staff there said some patients had no family or support and so the packs are needed and very much appreciated during their stay in hospital. A total of 150 baby hats, cardigans and incubator blankets were delivered to the Neo Natal Unit in Antrim and again were gratefully received. Finally, a delivery of women's and children's clothes, toys, games and toiletry packs was made to Women's Aid in Ballymena.

Well done ladies and many thanks!



Busy hands in Cloughfern Branch.....



A table packed with wash bags and 'snuggly' incubator mattresses made by the members in Cloughfern Branch. Great work ladies!

BALLYCLARE & BALLYNURE BRANCH

The Branch hosted a Festive Afternoon Tea for the Parish Fellowship before Christmas. 40 attended and had a delicious tea of sandwiches, scones, mince pies and traybakes. A Christmas quiz and singalong was enjoyed by all with a surprise visit by Santa with a little gift for everyone rounded off a most enjoyable afternoon.



At their annual Holy Communion service, branch leader Vera Jones was commissioned and three new members enrolled.

St Patrick's, Jordanstown Branch



The branch recently presented essential baby items to Baby Basics in Ballynure. Well done ladies!

DID YOU KNOW?

If your members are keen to make snuggly mattresses or knit Trauma Teddies, MU in Connor can supply cotton materials and appropriate wool for the teddies. Branch Leaders should contact Project Rep, Rae Scott, for details: raescott4650@hotmail.co.uk

Enjoying fellowship while making a difference.....

CHRIST CHURCH LISBURN BRANCH

The Branch enjoyed an evening of festive fun as everyone took part in the task of creating Christmas table centres. Much chat and fellowship was enjoyed and the end results were pronounced beautiful!



The Branch also put together a large selection of baby clothes and essentials for Baby Basics.



KILLEAD & GARTREE BRANCH

The busy Pins and Needles group presented a lovely selection of knitted hats to the Neo Natal Unit at Antrim Area Hospital. Staff there were delighted to receive them! The group also presented bunk blankets to the Mission to Seafarers..



LISBURN & DERRIAGHY AREA SERVICE



On a windy night in October, as storm Babet was forecast, branches from the Lisburn & Derriaghly Area gathered in Christ Church Derriaghly for their annual Area service. It was a wonderful service planned and led by Rev'd Aaron McAlister and his wife Melanie, the Branch Leader. A delicious supper was served in the parish hall afterwards and a time of fellowship was enjoyed by all as branches enjoyed time together.

BALLYRASHANE & KILDOLLAGH BRANCH

Freda Hunter of Ballyrashane & Kildollagh MU has been busy over the past year and has produced a remarkable array of knitted items including 23 baby jackets with hats, 11 matinee coats, 4 teddies, 8 hats, 4 adult hats and a blanket.

Well done Freda on a wonderful achievement!



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY!

SUNDAY 19TH MAY: DIOCESAN 'SONGS OF PRAISE' in ALL SAINTS' PARISH CHURCH, ANTRIM 3pm

THURSDAY 6TH JUNE: DIOCESAN HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE in ALL SAINTS' PARISH CHURCH, ANTRIM 7.30pm

SATURDAY 16TH NOVEMBER: ALL IRELAND 'BIG HYMN SING' in ST PATRICK'S BALLYMENA 2pm

(Singing led by The Clare Choral)

Connor MU needs a Diocesan Honorary Treasurer!

Due to the retirement of our Diocesan Honorary Treasurer, the Trustee Board of Connor Diocese Mothers' Union is seeking to fill this important role in the Diocese.

The ideal candidate will:

- Look after the regular monies, receipts and payments
- Prepare annual accounts for auditing and circulation to members
- Prepare and send annual diocesan contributions to the All Ireland Treasurer

A working knowledge of Excel would be beneficial.

In order to share the work involved, the Trustee Board would also like to appoint an Assistant Honorary Treasurer. Although these are voluntary positions, appropriate expenses would be reimbursed.

The Honorary Treasurer and Assistant Honorary Treasurer will be supported by the Finance & Administration Coordinator who will continue to look after Gift Aid administration and also submit the annual report required by the Charity Commission.

Can you help, or do you know someone from within Mothers' Union or even a non MU member who could fulfil either of these roles?

We are very much a team in Connor Diocese and the Diocesan Treasurer will be fully supported by the Trustee Board.

Please contact the Finance & Administration Coordinator for further information or to discuss any aspects of these roles:

mufinance.connor@gmail.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 Autumn 2024 edition. Please send me any news and photos by **1st October 2024**, or as early as possible. Thank you to all who contribute items to In Touch – it is very much appreciated! *Moira*

Photos/news to: moirathom@hotmail.com

An Idea for an Outing!



ST. CATHERINE'S PARISH CHURCH,
KILLEAD, ALDERGROVE, CRUMLIN,
COUNTY ANTRIM BT29 4EL



YARNS FROM THE BIBLE

Friday 3rd May - Sunday 12th May 2024

An exhibition of hand-crafted knitted tableaux and patchworks depicting familiar scenes from the Bible. The work of sisters Doris Killow and Ethel Parks, this exhibition was first displayed in September 2022 in Tartaraghan Parish Church, Portadown.

OPENING HOURS: MONDAY – FRIDAY: 10.30 AM – 4.00 PM and 7.00 PM – 9.00 PM
SATURDAYS: 10.30 AM – 7.00 PM SUNDAYS: 2.30 PM – 5 PM
CLOSING SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING: SUNDAY 12TH MAY 7.00 PM

CATERING: Walk-in light refreshments available throughout exhibition hours.

Two course meal (salad or soup, dessert & tea/coffee) £12.50 p.p. N.B. Available only for pre-booked groups - please email: killeadparishevents@gmail.com not later than 24th April 2024.

For further information either email as above or telephone 07762458282

Proceeds to St Catherine's Church Funds

BALLYCLARE & BALLYNURE BRANCH AT WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The branch was asked to provide refreshments for their local World Day of Prayer Service. The Café Church style event featured Jason Brodie from Frontiers Ireland who has visited Pakistan several times and his wife Erica who is Palestinian.



Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Connor

CONNOR DIOCESE MU NIC NUMBER 101658