



THE MOTHERS' UNION



DIOCESE OF CONNOR

1945 — 1987



UNITED IN LOVE AND SERVICE

The Mothers' Union in Connor Diocese

**Compiled and Written by
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Foreword by The Bishop of Connor, The Rt. Rev. Samuel G. Poyntz

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FOREWORD

We need stories. We need to narrate as well as to listen. Our stories help to define our identity, who we are and to whom we belong. The Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Connor has its own story. It is part of a wider story - the Mothers' Union in Ireland and the Mothers' Union Worldwide with its Christian concern for families.

This great Society with over a century of 'know-how' is not a pious little clique in the Parish but a handmaid of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. It exists in dioceses in Europe and America, in Australia and New Zealand. Increasingly, it is mushrooming in the great continent of Africa. It witnesses in areas where the Church is rich and powerful and in areas where it is poor and weak; in Antrim and in Antigua, in Belfast and Bloemfontein, in Coleraine and Capetown Countless numbers of women have been members of this organisation during the past century. The most recent statistics show that there are 183,500 members in the British Isles and 286,000 overseas members - an increase in membership of 9,000. We recall the parable of the Mustard Seed and we know that a little leaven can do much.

Mrs. Helen Williams tells the story of the growth of the Mothers' Union in our Diocese with a readable and succinct account and we are much indebted to her for this important piece of work. I hope that this publication will be widely read so that members and friends may be aware of our goodly heritage. The list of officers appended is a reminder of the debt owed to generations of women who have helped forward the Mothers' Union in this Diocese. The story which unfolds should inspire us for the next stretch of road.

+ SAMUEL CONNOR

St. Luke's Day 1988

The Mothers' Union 1945-1987 Diocese of Connor

"Did you know", said the Mothers' Union husband rather teasingly - "that Bishop McNeice's History of the Church of Ireland in Belfast, published in 1931, never even mentions the Mothers' Union?" True or false? A quick check-up revealed that this was, in fact, true - but also that the Bishop (then Archdeacon of Connor) had much else on his mind, such as the need for new churches and "institutes". If he did not mention particular church organisations, they benefited indirectly by his pressing for dignified places of worship to replace existing temporary structures; and those "institutes" became the church halls where many a Mothers' Union branch has since met.

FIRST CONNOR BRANCH

The first Mothers' Union branch in Connor Diocese was formed in Ramoan Parish, Ballycastle, in 1892, by Mary Emma McNeile followed in 1894 by that of St. Luke's, Belfast. St. Luke's 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". By 1931 there were upwards of 40 branches in the Diocese; in 1960 the number was 62 and in 1987 there were 70.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

Following its separation from the diocese of Down and Dromore in 1945, Connor Diocese remained roughly definable as the County of Antrim and included the larger part of Belfast. The City had its own problems in 1945, in the immediate post-war period. "A number of parishes in the North and West of Belfast had suffered severely in the German air raids of 1941, some losing both church and hall" (writes Betty Smart of once demolished St. Barnabas). "Their difficulties in carrying on Mothers' Union work were made worse by the movement of families from the danger areas. Gradually, however, families returned and buildings were repaired, so that by 1945, Mothers' Union branches were quite active again - a very real tribute to the innate vitality of the organisation". The re-opening in 1954 of St. James, Belfast, which had been left only with its spire among the ruins, was celebrated among other events with a Mothers' Union Festival Service attended by 700 members.

DIFFICULT YEARS

Echoes of the sadness of war continued in the Council minutes. The President voiced her thankfulness that peace had come at last. It was no longer necessary to keep a Roll of Honour in the Journal of sons and husbands lost in the war. Randalstown (under Mrs. Webb) announced that they had "adopted" a Latvian family from a German concentration camp. Petty restrictions did not make life any easier. In 1946 it was recorded that the Board of Trade had earlier disallowed the publishing of the Wave of Prayer in the Mothers' Union Journal - presumably in case it contained a coded message. A Customs permit was needed before the Diocesan banner could be taken to Dublin and Erskine Mayne's needed a permit to bring the Journal up from Dublin.

FIRST LEADERS

The first President of the Connor-only Mothers' Union was the Bishop's wife, Louie King-Irwin, followed after eight years in 1953 by Louise Breene, rector's wife in St. Peter's, Belfast. Both are commemorated in Belfast Cathedral - the former by carved sanctuary chairs and prayer-desks, and the latter by the new Diocesan Banner. In addition a chair in memory of each was donated to the Mothers' Union Chapel in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The next Diocesan President was Elizabeth Noble OBE, who from 1956 to 1960 was to lead the growing membership through five important years, with Eleanor Holding as Honorary Secretary, giving stability and wise direction to new departments and new Enrolling Members alike.

MAJOR EVENTS

Sharing as they did the City of Belfast, the now separated dioceses of Down-and-Dromore and Connor continued to co-operate in major events such as festival services in St. Anne's Cathedral and on various public occasions. A joint venture in 1954 was a mammoth "Happy Families Exhibition" in the huge area of the Wellington Hall, Belfast. Colourful displays (all backed in a bargain buy of the appropriate blue cloth) represented a wide range of family interests, from "Marriage" to "The Media" and from "Family Handwork" to "Treasures of the Church". Dorothy Butler remembers "measuring out the floor by inches and then being asked to accommodate larger-than-expected models". The Exhibition ran for two days, opened in turn by Lady Wakehurst and the Viscountess of Masserene and Ferrard. Town branches furnished the stands and country branches provided the food for snack lunches and teas. Widely distributed Souvenir Programmes brought large crowds of members and visitors to what was voted a major educational project.

A second major Exhibition was staged in 1958 by the joint Young Members of the two dioceses in St. George's Hall, Belfast, with the co-operation of the Church of Ireland Education Officer. Activated by the need for Church Teaching and based on "The Church's Year" the Exhibition underlined the relevance to the Christian life of the Church's seasons, from Advent through Easter and Whit to the Sunday next before Advent.

In 1959, to share in the visit of Central Council to Dublin, 946 Northern members travelled by train to attend a Service in St. Patrick's Cathedral after lunch at Clery's. Much merriment was caused by the fact that the following Garden Party was to be held at the Zoo! Some earlier concern over a member who had hurt her foot at the railway station was dispelled when she duly arrived, whole but hungry, at Clery's for her lunch.

CHRISTIAN FAMILY YEAR

Christian Family Year (1962/63) was inspired by the Lambeth Report of 1958, which found that "The Family has never been so exposed to the acids of carelessness and selfishness as now. Nor has the world ever had greater need of the gifts the family can offer." The Year was marked by the visits to Belfast of two outstanding speakers in Miss Violet Welton and Sir John Wolfender; and Services of Re-dedication were held in St. Anne's Cathedral and in St. Patrick's, Ballymena. North Belfast Area held a conference for 300 teenage girls entitled "Calling All Schoolgirls", with warming-up meetings in rectories beforehand; and South Belfast also had a conference for youth - "With it, with the Faith!"

YOUNG FAMILIES' DEPARTMENT

The development of "the vigorous Mothers' Union in action" can be clearly seen in the growth of the Young Families' department. Dorothy Butler, first All-Ireland Chairman of the Young Members' department from the North formed the initial Young Members' Committee in Connor in 1957. In the early 1960s, the diocese was fortunate to have young mothers of the calibre of Sheila Hughes, Audrey Richardson and Betty McConnell; all three continued to serve the Diocese in a variety of capacities, Sheila eventually being a rousing Diocesan President.

The Young Members' first diffident attempts at group organisation were patiently followed through, until they found the kind of committee structure and the niche in the Diocese that suited them best. Soon they were to make a valuable contribution on the Diocesan Council and its sub-committees. By dint of numerous Training Days, Carol Services, family occasions like

barbecues and by undertaking social projects for needy folk like the elderly and the down-and-outs, the Department has grown in strength and confidence over the years. One "Family Day" in 1977 registered 60 parents (including 25 fathers) and 70 children; while at a similar Family Day in 1985, 60 adults heard the Rev. H. McKelvey speak on the Children's Ministry - ("Children are the Church of today, not just tomorrow") - the afternoon session being given over to a panel discussing Marriage. Four young members attended a weekend Young Family Conference in Dublin in April 1986 to consider the topical subject "Stress in the Family Today".

Among other services, the young members provide speakers on their activities, which aim at being of particular interest to the younger mother. One annual and much appreciated demonstration of "the M.U. in action", - begun when Maureen Gordon was Y.F. representative - is the running of a creche since 1976 at the Royal Ulster Agricultural Show at Balmoral. Here members provide staff and toys at a play centre over four consecutive days and have been known to cater at a stretch for some 200 children, including a two month old baby. In 1987 in appreciation of their efforts, two commercial firms at the Show gave a large "Sit and Ride" tractor for the use of the children.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Connor was one of the first Dioceses in Ireland to have a Speakers' Representative (now called the Education Representative). Esta McElhinney was appointed to this post in 1960, having previously attended training conferences at Winchester and Highleigh in England. As well as initiating the first of many training days for speakers, she was to produce with her committee a comprehensive list of some 40 M.U. and clerical speakers on the main devotional topics suggested by London for Christian Family Year in 1962. These included, among others, "Why a Christian Family Year?" and "The Marks of a Christian Family". The list, ahead of its time, was greatly appreciated by the branches and was the forerunner of a growing speakers' service in the Diocese. Individual talents blossomed: Peggy Kerr in Lisburn was a great "encourager" of new speakers; and Sylvia Ellis ran a useful study group in the Derryvolgie area.

In due course, the Speakers' Department (now called the Education Department) was to develop further training days, practice talks, a library and helpful folders for new speakers, as well as a supply of resource kits to encourage participation and discussion in branches without a special speaker. The idea of team speaking, brought back by Betty Smart from a Durham conference in 1967, proved particularly useful for Young Families' speakers,

who appreciated the mutual support of having one or two colleagues when tackling a speaking engagement. Only those who have travelled the long, dark country roads in North Connor (and what would happen if the car broke down?), or risked hijacking or missiles in city backwoods, could fully appreciate what the Diocese owes to its dependable band of speakers. It is a sign of the times and of members' commitment to reconciliation in the community, that the latest Speakers' List contains the names of three guest Roman Catholic speakers.

It is interesting to note that as late as 1957, it was stressed at a Council meeting that no "outside" speakers should be invited to branches without the permission of the Diocesan President. Programmes have moved on since then - though emphasis on their spiritual content is still needed.

As the M.U. renews itself by the advent of fresh young members, the cycle of training and education is repeated in different ways to suit the times. The recommended Irish themes of "Marriage" and "The Family" - both old yet ever new - have led in 1986 and 1987 to the production of helpful booklets to inspire Branch programmes; and numerous training days for Branch officials throughout the Diocese have been well attended and enthusiastically received.

SOCIAL CONCERN

Particularly in the city, social problems loom large and our Social Concern Representatives have constantly brought to our attention abuses and shortcomings that threaten family life in the community. From the one-time more academic exercise of trying to persuade the City Fathers to replace Snow White and friends by more Christian symbols at the City Hall Christmas tree - (a battle still lost?) - to the recent agonising over glue sniffing and unemployment, the subjects brought before us are themselves a reflection of social trends. The Diocese sends delegates and/or financial support to a number of community committees, notably the Women's Forum, which exerts pressure in areas of potential social evils, like the sale of alcohol in leisure centres, video "nasties" and child vandalism; while supporting ameliorative projects such as "bleepers" for the elderly, new homes for battered wives (80 such wives in one month in North Belfast in 1973), the new Belfast Hospice, as well as Dismas House, a rest house for prisoners' relatives near Crumlin Road gaol. Meantime, branch members are widely engaged in their own locality in meals on wheels, mother and toddler groups, community holidays, visiting of hospitals and "shut-ins", snack bars for students (Portrush), "Message Home" and the Samaritans. In 1984 the phenomenal number of 47,500 wrappers from Kit Kat chocolate bars was

collected (with the help of a local shop) for the Kit Kat "Break" appeal, in aid of holidays for families with a handicapped member. The rising divorce rate - from 700 in 1977 in Northern Ireland to 2,000 in 1982 - increases stress among families; and new problems threaten over teenage mothers, child abuse and AIDS.

For a period of years until civil strife made it impossible, volunteers from Connor, Down and Dromore attended the Matrimonial Courts each week and paid home visits to deserted wives and one-parent families, often bringing clothing and other practical help. This work is now carried on by the Social and Family Welfare Association.

PRAYER GROUPS

The spiritual side of Mothers' Union commitment was underlined by the holding of annual diocesan Quiet Days each September until 1961, when they passed to the Areas; and by the appointment of Peggy Kerr as the first Prayer Group Representative in 1967. In due course a quarterly Prayer Leaflet was sent out to every branch. Esta McElhinney comments: "This suggested a Theme for meditation, e.g., 'The Practice of the Presence of God', with appropriate readings for study and various thoughts on the theme, followed by a few prayers to help us live as we pray." Representatives in this department sometimes commented on a lack of 'feed-back', but its workings are by nature muted, and - as Sadie Sproule, the Prayer Representative, reported in 1981 - attendance at the annual Prayer Group Conference in England can be a great encouragement. Connor had a day of Prayer on October 8, 1984, and the Diocese formed part of a team praying for Mary Sumner House and its staff. A residential conference was held in Stricklands, Bangor, in 1986, when the speaker was Miss Joan Nicholson of the Ruanda Mission; and in 1987 a Day of Prayer and Meditation was held in the Chapel of Unity, St. Anne's Cathedral, on the theme "The Power of Prayer". A further Quiet Day for the Irish Centenary was led by the Rev. Sam Jones in St. Andrew's Church, Ballysally, Coleraine, with the title "Personal Encounters with God".

INDOOR MEMBERS

The Indoor Members prayer circle has kept up to 224 housebound members 'in touch' at one time; and for those who are more mobile, special outings and parties have had their own brand of magic. Here Vera Breene and Cecily Stewart-Moore made an outstanding, caring contribution over a period of more than 15 years. Their successors built on this foundation to increase the circle of members fourfold.

WORLD CENTENARY YEAR

World Centenary Year (1975/76) was entered into with enthusiasm and verve. Joint celebrations with the Diocese of Down and Dromore included a Garden Party in the sylvan surroundings of Hillsborough (enjoyed despite heavy rain) and a Thanksgiving Service in St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, combined with a Flower Festival (Connor) and an exhibition of "The M.U. Past and Present" (Down & Dromore). For a week punctuated by bomb scares, the displays were on view to the public. The exhibition occupied the ambulatory and the flower arrangements, entered as a competition for the O'Neill Cup, had a choice of "a pillar, a ledge or the floor"!

St. Bartholomew's Players gave their first night proceeds to the Centenary Fund. Coleraine M.U. ran a Book Fair to the same end. All branches made a contribution. There were Diocesan Centenary posters, Centenary notelets and showings of the Centenary film. Four hundred and seventy-seven Connor members travelled to Dublin for the Centenary Service in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

RADIO AND T.V.

Sheila Hughes and Elizabeth Jones represented Connor Diocese on the twenty minute radio programme "Platform" with a play written by Sheila that contrasted the sometimes blinkered public view of Mothers' Union with the more vibrant reality and earned the respect of the producer for its content and topicality. Similarly, Vivienne McCappin and Sheila Hughes with Jo Mercer of Down Diocese projected the modern M.U. in the Ulster Television programme "What's It All About?", with interviewer Frank Hanna.

LORD MAYOR'S SHOW

A further venture in public relations was the entry of a float displaying "Christian Family Life - Worldwide" in the Lord Mayor's Show in Belfast. Photogenic young members in "Mothers' Union" tee-shirts presented different facets of "Building Christian Homes" here and overseas; and the float came first in its section, winning the Co-operative Cup.

X MAIN CENTENARY PROJECT

Undoubtedly Connor's most important effort for the centenary was the furnishing of two Mother and Child rooms at the leukemia wing of Belfast's Children's Hospital (Malcolm Sargeant House), from an idea suggested and researched by Betty Philpott. The first thought of furnishing one room grew until it involved two rooms, complete with fridge-freezer, washing machine,

tumble drier and general kitchen equipment. A total of £3,535 (including a gift of £1,000 by Liverpool Diocese) was raised for the project. Wise stewardship of the capital - helped by generous discounts and the good offices of the Church of Ireland Trustees - made the money stretch out like the biblical cruse of oil, so that further purchases of bed linen and curtains still left £1,000 for replacements and £2,500 to help furnish a cystic fibrosis unit. The President of Liverpool Diocese M.U. was a welcome guest at the opening on 3 April 1981 of the leukemia unit where a plaque in the hall commemorates the part played by the members of Connor Diocese. Subsequently almost 200 Connor members accepted the invitation to inspect the House. By October of that year, 59 parents of children afflicted with leukemia had spent one to four days and nights there.

O'NEILL CUP COMPETITION

In 1968, the then Diocesan President, Mrs. Terence O'Neill (later Lady O'Neill) offered a silver cup for voluntary competition among branches, with a particular view to involving younger members. The first event in 1969 was won by St. George's Belfast for drama; and in the following years the competition ranged over choral work, craftwork, an overseas exhibition, community services research, a flower festival and compilation of a book of prayers. There was often a second object so that craftwork was sold for the Overseas Fund or used to enhance Parish Churches, toys were given to children's hospitals and bedspreads to the needy. In the course of two drama competitions, expertly organised by Hazel Beacom, many amateur actresses came face-to-face with professional judges for the first time and it was a learning experience. One indignant St. Michael's member was long to recall how she was faulted for wearing her wedding ring in a "maiden's" part! The O'Neill Cup competition has aroused much interest and ingenuity over the years. Contrariwise, it can sometimes prove difficult to engage the major part of a branch in a given project; and fortunate is the leader who, being already very busy, can delegate the organisation of it to some talented member.

OVERSEAS

The Overseas Department in Connor had inspiring beginnings due to the long and enthusiastic work of its first two Representatives - Patricia Warnock and Letty Perrin; and this special interest continued under a variety of keen representatives. Early Diocesan links were forged with Belize, Montreal and Dunedin and special intercessions shared with them at the appropriate juncture in the Wave of Prayer. In 1965 Connor received a generous tribute at General Council for being the first Irish Diocese to pass the £1,000 mark

in overseas contributions; in 1984 the amount was £6,053, plus £340 for special relief funds. In 1987 this rose to £8,291 plus £626 more for the Relief Fund set up in 1985. Members were happy to participate in the "Patricia" Fund for a schoolgirl's support in Nigeria; willing hands knitted and crocheted blankets for cold nights in Kenya and South Africa; collected communion linen and clothes for Belize and textiles, wedding dresses and rings for Uganda; sent Aran jumpers and other handwork to the big overseas sale in London in 1964 and various parcels from Branches to Korea and Zanzibar. Our special relationship with Belize led us to choose and dispatch a pectoral cross for the new Bishop there, a Presidential badge for his Mothers' Union leader and substantial donations following a hurricane disaster. Unexpected needs overseas - like the refurbishing of Bishop Gwynne College in Uganda, devastated by civil war - continue to be met by extra efforts at home. In 1985, a series of disasters in Central Africa led to the formation of a Relief Fund at headquarters. A typical response came from Muckamore Branch, whose Thrift Shop in Antrim over two days produced £200 for this fund.

News and visits from overseas workers are much appreciated and help to explain their special problems like polygamy, growing nationalism and the need to raise the status of women. When, as sometimes happens, they appear as guests on local T.V. programmes, they reflect not only their own land, but the worldwide nature of the Mothers' Union. Our branches currently have 16 links in many countries with whom to share news and support. Nearer home, five branches maintain friendship links with branches in the Republic of Ireland. Some members from Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin braved "the black North" to visit Connor in 1978 and 51 members from Connor enjoyed much kind hospitality on a return visit the following year. Friendships were renewed when 15 members of Connor Executive Committee accepted an invitation to visit Cashel and Ossory in September 1987.

"THE TROUBLES"

While all the Northern Dioceses have suffered in the Troubles, Connor bore the brunt of the greater part of the violence in the 1970s, embracing as it does the centre of Belfast and the Falls and Shankill districts. Diocesan minutes record St. Mary Magdalene's pleasure in 1979 at being able to have an Area Service again after many years, though of course Sunday services there never ceased. A notice of mid-Belfast's Area Service in St. Luke's in 1977 bears the Rector's jotting: "Police and military notified of Service". Throughout the worst of the Troubles, M.U. members continued to meet in defiance of all difficulties, their spirit typified by a mid-Belfast Area Committee who met on

one of the worst occasions of all - the first night of the Ulster Workers' Council strike, which was eventually to bring down the Faulkner Government. Due to the resultant power cut, Freda Baillie, the Area Chairman, negotiated the darkened streets carrying matches and a dozen candles in her briefcase. Stopped on the way by a hooded vigilante and with blast bombs going off at unnerving intervals, she managed with ten others to carry on with the meeting by candlelight. She recalls: "Somebody remarked that we looked like a coven of witches!" Members in Immanuel Parish, Ardoyne, suffered the burning of whole blocks of houses in Farringdon Gardens and Velsheda Park. The Rector (Rev. J.N.B. Wilkinson) got one member out of her house just in time; another had a bullet through her window and wardrobe; several had to move to new homes. St. Mark's (Ballysillan) members recall hearing explosions during their meetings and saying "That was close!" Scores of neighbours lost at least slates and windows and had their living rooms inundated with soot and plaster.

Contrary to popular belief, many cross-community contacts persisted in problem areas, despite extreme provocation by shootings, bombings and general mayhem. Roman Catholics continued to patronise Mothers' Union functions: individual M.U. members joined the famous Peace March up the Shankill Road, where even the customers of the public houses lined up to marvel at the sight of groups of nuns walking happily in such a place.

The prayers and practical help of our friends meant much in our distress. Nine branches in England established prayer links with Connor branches. The General M.U. Council in Dublin sent a total of £550 to the Peace Movement and the Reconciliation Centre at Corrymeela. Glasgow Diocese sent £41, allocated to a Youth Centre; and Penrith, Cumberland, sent £542, allocated to Corrymeela. As evidence that we were not altogether inward looking the Diocesan minutes of February 1981 record that a letter of sympathy was sent to Mr. Charles Haughey over the Stardust Dance Hall disaster in Dublin.

MOTHERS' UNION LITERATURE

Literature has always enjoyed a high priority in our branch life, with the latest publications from London constantly reviewed and readily available. Due to the current cost of production, copies of the "Home & Family" quarterly tend to be shared rather than individually bought but it is read and appreciated. Connor has been well served by a succession of active Literature Representatives, of whom Edna Wright contributed a valuable 8-year stint. From the early days when Nancie Garrett manned a twice-weekly "shop" in Belfast city centre (and the chat was free), hundreds of meetings have been



THE DIOCESAN BANNER



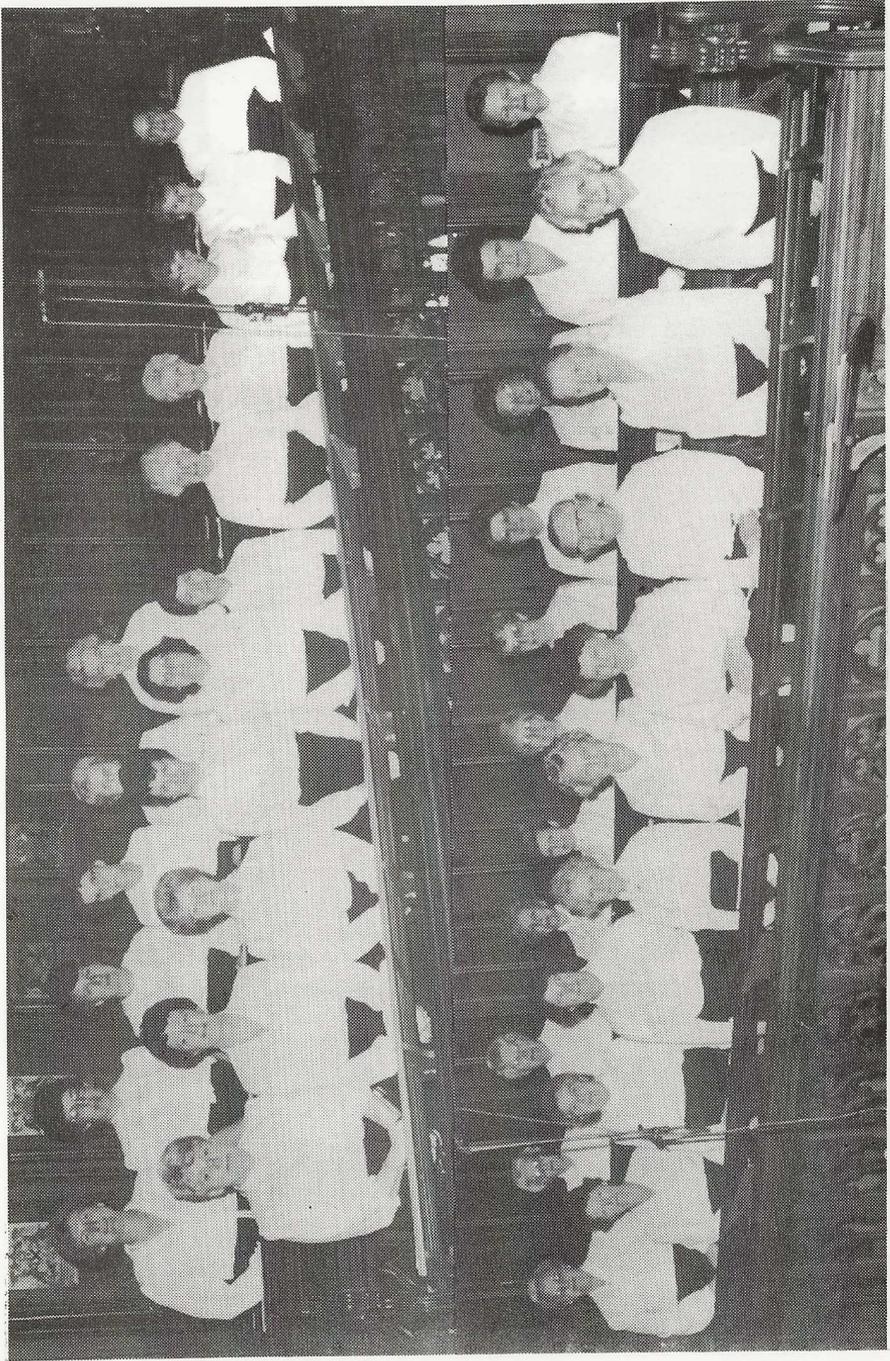
HELEN WILLIAMS
- Author



BETTY PHILPOTT
- President 1986 -



THE EXECUTIVE 1987 -



CONNOR CHOIR

backed by the now familiar literature stall and occasion taken to commend helpful M.U. leaflets and relevant film-strips to clergy and to women of other denominations who lack our facilities. By April 1984 Jean Stewart was reporting that she had sold £5,000 worth of literature in 6 years, and in 1987 Norma Bell reported the sale of £1,500 worth in a single year, as well as £4,500 of Centenary Souvenirs. Recent titles included "Leadership", "Marriage for Life" and "Tears are for Sharing" (on bereavement).

An innovation in communication was pioneered by Roberta McKelvey, who in 1978 promoted a twice-yearly Diocesan news sheet called "In Touch". Brightly written and handsomely printed on good quality paper, with up-to-date logos and photographs of branch events, it goes free to every single member and is a sophisticated reflection of the modern Mothers' Union. The International Year of the Child was signalled by a Christmas Card competition for Sunday School children promoted by Joan Gough and the profits from the printing of 17,500 cards were made up to £500 for the aftermath of a disastrous hurricane in our linked Diocese of Belize.

"NEW DIMENSIONS"

The theme of New Dimensions, when it came in 1972, was treated with the seriousness it deserved and while reservations were expressed about the possible dilution of the rules for membership, some 80% of members were in favour of change. Ten years later, a devoted member who had grave misgivings about the proposed changes - especially since they might add to the difficulties experienced by Overseas workers - was to reflect that some home branches had, indeed, been enhanced by the admission of women formerly barred from membership: "Not many - but interesting". The increased emphasis on outreach led to more "open" meetings. One branch could report the attendance of a number of husbands for a talk on Local History, though the said husbands *did* insist on taking up the back seats!

AUSTRALIA 1979

At the M.U. World Conference in Australia in 1979 one of the three Irish delegates, and one of five main speakers at the Conference, was Vivienne McCappin, former Diocesan President and sometime elected member of the Central Executive in London. Vivienne's allotted subject was "The Family is an intimate attempt at a society of people who believe in one another". Her script, to be submitted three months beforehand spoke of the family, with its multiple variations, as "a unit that must be allowed to break up, in order to stay together ... where its members are bound to each other by love and trust and not by strict rules and regulations". Church life in Australia seemed conservative

by our standards, with nothing as yet to match our drift from the churches. Northern Ireland was seen almost exclusively as "Bomb Alley" and delegates were surprised to hear of ecumenical services and other facts of normal life. Sympathy for our Troubles was not lacking. Young members in Brisbane prayed daily for Ireland when they peeled the potatoes!

MEDIA DEPARTMENT

The youngest department of the Mothers' Union - the Media Department - grew out of the Television Viewing Committees originally under Social Concern. The first Chairman appointed in Connor in 1985 was Kathleen Rodgers, who at once sought Area and Branch representatives to register members' reactions to the influence in their homes of T.V., radio, video and the press, as well as cinema and theatre. Here the emphasis was on awareness of these outside influences, to help members to make positive choices and to stay in control of what they and their families watch and listen to. Questionnaires on advertising and young people's viewing were circulated within the Diocese, and returned to Mary Sumner House as part of a Media Awareness Project funded by the Jerusalem Charitable Trust.

Some interesting statistics were brought back from a Conference held in Dublin in March 1987, where it was stated by Mr. Tony Fleck of the Independent Broadcasting Authority that 98% of homes in Northern Ireland currently received T.V., with children of 4 to 12 years watching 15 to 20 hours per week. While the I.B.A. made every effort to control scenes of violence and to observe the "9 o'clock watershed" for family viewing, parental responsibility was still of first importance, and this would be no less in the 1990s, when we would receive all satellite channels and there would be no such control. A psychiatrist at the same Conference (Dr. Helen Commisky) pointed out that while T.V. could bring families together for viewing and discussion, it could also "lead to passivity and inhibit creativity". On the good side, members found T.V. to be a source of relaxation and cheap entertainment, as well as an excellent educational medium.

The first Diocesan meeting organised by the new department brought together an experienced panel to examine the relevance of the media to Marriage (Mrs. V. McCappin), to the Church (Rev. T. Williams) and to the Family (Mrs. S. Ayling); while Mr. James Hawthorne of the B.B.C. spoke from the media point of view.

IRISH CENTENARY 1987

The once-in-a-lifetime celebrations of the Mothers' Union Centenary in Ireland shed a special aura of joy and gratitude among the 14,000 Irish members, who gave £1 per head to establish a Centenary Fund, the surplus of which after administrative costs was to provide bursaries for needy theological students. Two hundred and eighty-four members from Connor travelled to Dublin for the Festival Service in St. Patrick's Cathedral and 30 Connor members (in neat white blouses and black skirts) had the honour of forming the Choir. A "History of the Mothers' Union in Ireland" was produced, succeeding the "Golden Book" which had chronicled the first 50 years, and Connor was one of the three Dioceses which contributed a full diocesan history for this volume.

A new daffodil was raised by Mrs. Kate Reade of Broughshane, duly registered with the Royal Horticultural Society and graciously named "Connor". St. Anne's Cathedral was the setting for the Diocesan Festival Service on 22 March, where a great congregation of 1,300 members and their families heard Archbishop Eames preach on "The Family", and a colourful exhibition of the different Mothers' Union departments was staged at the West Door.

Other local celebrations included a Day of Prayer, the visit of Mrs. M. Chapman (Central Secretary), four different parties for Indoor Members, a Barbecue and Barn Dance and later a Supper Dance. At this last function, presentations were made to Bishop Wm. McCappin and his wife Vivienne - both long-standing champions of the Mothers' Union - on their retirement.

"JOYFULLY FORWARD"

The Diocese continues in practical ways to meet the challenge of the times. On the serious side, members have shared in submitting evidence to the Warnock Committee's enquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology and to the Law Commission on Guardianship, Divorce and Abortion. On the lighter side, the members of a Shankill Road Branch have confounded their husbands' scepticism by running a sponsored silence for charity. Despite other heavy financial commitments, the Diocese contributed £2,267 to the Mary Sumner House repair fund in 1984/85, and gave grants towards the Church of Ireland Children's Ministry, the Church Resource Centre and the Family Worker's Project (St. Mary's). Connor members shared in the hosting of delegates to the first-ever International Conference of Young Anglicans held in Belfast in 1987; Ardoyne Branch gave a Kenyan delegate 20 Mothers' Union brooches to take home to her local branch.

The movement of population from the inner city areas has reduced the size and youthfulness of branches there but other branches in the catchment areas have gained as a result. Two of the largest branches are as far afield as Lisburn and Coleraine. Today there is a quicker turnover of leaders as new talent is revealed in the branches (with a welcome increase in the number of non-clergy-wives in this capacity). The division of the Diocese into eight semi-autonomous Areas since 1965 has lent strength and identity to even the smallest branch.

Patricia Darling was appointed Diocesan President in 1983, a year before the Triennial Elections and just in time for the first visit of the All-Ireland Council to Belfast since 1946, in May 1985 - a year in which Connor supplied six officers for All-Ireland departments. These were - Sheila Hughes (Vice President); Bea Thorpe (Chairman, Overseas); Joan Gough (Chairman, Education); Anne Moller (Secretary, Education); Kathleen Rodgers (Secretary, Young Families); and Roberta McKelvey (Editor, Irish Inset). As Patricia Darling's husband became Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe in 1985, Pam Traill consented to be Acting Diocesan President until April 1986, when Betty Philpott of St. Michael's was formally elected Diocesan President. A gold M.U. brooch, presented by the diocesan members in 1979 in affectionate memory of Mrs. Betty Butler, fellow-member and wife of Bishop Arthur Butler, has since been worn officially by successive Presidents in the diocese.

Following 1981, five new Branches were formed in the Diocese, and by 1987 despite the migration of many families "across the Lagan" to new estates, there were 2,200 members in Connor out of an All-Ireland total of 13,700. Numerous Branches celebrated anniversaries - notably Ballycastle (95 years old in 1987), Belfast Cathedral (87) and Ballywillan (82). An amusing insight into early Mothers' Union life was dredged up in the attic of Ballywillan Rectory, where the first branch register recorded "total receipts Nov 1905 - April 1906 ... 18/4d", and the annual excursion by "Stewart's Char-a-bancs" or "Kennedy's Covered Motors", with "on one occasion a day in Belfast by train, for which the railway company provided a special tram to take the party straight to Woolworth's" (Frances Bach).

This unpretentious organisation, which began as a step of faith in more peaceful but less affluent times, has withstood the trauma of two World Wars and recurrent Troubles, and still supports and encourages the ideal of motherhood and family life in succeeding generations. Its best work lies in the individual Branches, its best influence in individual homes. Over the years there has been a change of emphasis from members' own concerns to

greater social awareness and involvement. Housewifely skills, so often underrated, are recognised to embrace management skills in planning, choosing priorities and persuading others. The family is "the vital source of support, emotional strength and mental health for children" (Prof. Jennifer Bryce). There is a great need for stable and lasting relationships in marriage. In all these spheres, the Mothers' Union can exert an important influence.

On Easter Day 1985 a Connor member at the morning service in Westminster Abbey noticed that the Mothers' Union banner carried in procession (by a man) with others had a message embroidered on the back. Later, an obliging verger copied out the words for her on a white paper bag: "The Foundations of National Glory are set in the homes of the people. They will only remain unshaken while the Family Life of our Race and Nation is strong, simple and pure - GEORGE R.I." Nowadays we might subject the word "glory" to thoughtful scrutiny: ours tends to be a quieter hope, enshrined perhaps in the picture of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 - "Her children rise up, and call her blessed" - or more mundanely, in the words of a hard working Rector: "The Mothers' Union? - a gift to any parish!"

Mrs. P. Warnock	1988
Mrs. A. Ross	
Mrs. E. Holding	
Mrs. E. Noble OBE	
Mrs. A. Ross	
Mrs. E. Holding	1983
Mrs. E. Noble OBE	
Mrs. A. Ross	
Mrs. E. Holding	
Mrs. E. Noble OBE	
Mrs. A. Ross	
Mrs. L. Breene	1957
Mrs. M. McInnes	
Mrs. E. Noble OBE	1956
Lady Costes	
Mrs. A. Ross	
Mrs. M. McInnes	
Mrs. Hayes	
Mrs. Richardson	1954
Mrs. Richardson (St. John's)	
Lady Costes	
Mrs. M. McInnes	1949

DIOCESAN PRESIDENTS

1945-1953	Mrs. L. King-Irwin
1953-1956	Mrs. L. Breene
1956-1960	Mrs. E. Noble
1960-1969	The Hon. Mrs. T. O'Neill
1969	Mrs. H. Peacocke
1970-1975	Mrs. V. McCappin
1975-1976	Mrs. E. Jones
1976-1977	Mrs. M. Bourne
1978-1983	Mrs. S. Hughes
1983-1985	Mrs. P. Darling
1985-1986	Mrs. P. Traill (Acting D.P.)
1986	Mrs. E. Philpott

DIOCESAN LIFE VICE PRESIDENTS

1949	Mrs. McNeice Lady Coates
1954	Mrs. Richardson (St. John's) Mrs. Richardson Mrs. Hayes Mrs. McNeice Mrs. A. Ross Lady Coates
1956	Mrs. E. Noble OBE Mrs. McNeice Mrs. L. Breene
1957	Mrs. Barton
1960	Mrs. Hayes Mrs. A. Ross Mrs. E. Noble OBE Mrs. E. Holding
1963	Mrs. E. Noble OBE Mrs. E. Holding Mrs. A. Ross
1966	Mrs. E. Noble OBE Mrs. E. Holding Mrs. A. Ross Mrs. P. Warnock

1969 The Hon. Mrs. T. O'Neill
 Mrs. E. Noble OBE
 Mrs. A. Ross
 Mrs. E. Holding
 Mrs. P. Warnock

1972 Lady O'Neill
 Mrs. E. Noble OBE
 Mrs. E. Holding
 Mrs. A. Ross
 Mrs. P. Warnock

1975 Lady O'Neill
 Mrs. E. Noble OBE

DIOCESAN VICE PRESIDENTS

1947 Mrs. Richardson (St. John's)

1954 Mrs. E. Noble OBE
 Mrs. E. Holding
 Mrs. Jackson
 Mrs. Thompson
 Mrs. P. Warnock
 Mrs. McDonald

1957 Mrs. P Warnock
 Mrs. E. Holding
 Mrs. E. McElhinney
 Mrs. McDonald
 Mrs. P. Kerr
 The Hon. Mrs. T. O'Neill

1960 Mrs. E. McElhinney
 Mrs. P. Kerr
 Mrs. P Warnock
 Mrs. E. Macourt
 Mrs. McDonald
 Mrs. B. Smart

1963 Mrs. E. McElhinney
 Mrs. P. Kerr
 Mrs. E. Macourt
 Mrs. H. Peacock

	Mrs. S. Ellis	1965
	Mrs. P. Warnock	
1966	Mrs. D. Butler	
	Mrs. P. Kerr	
	Mrs. H. Peacocke	
	Mrs. S. Ellis	1971
	Mrs. E. McElhinney	
1969	Mrs. L. Perrin	
	Mrs. S. Ellis	
	Mrs. N. Garrett	
	Mrs. P. Kerr	
	Mrs. L. Perrin	1975
	Mrs. N. Taggart	
	Mrs. H. Williams	
1972	Mrs. A.H. Butler	
	Mrs. N. Taggart	
	Mrs. L. Perrin	
	Mrs. E. Campbell	
	Mrs. N. Garrett	1977
	Mrs. H. Williams	1981
1975	Mrs. A.H. Butler	
	Mrs. V. McCappin	
1976	Mrs. S. Ellis	
	Mrs. A.H. Butler	
1978-1981	Mrs. W.C. Bourns	
	Mrs. V. McCappin	
1981-1984	Mrs. I. Crooks	1987
	Mrs. M. Stevenson	
	Mrs. V. McCappin	
1984-1987	Mrs. I. Crooks	
	Mrs. M. Stevenson	
	Mrs. V. McCappin	
	Mrs. P. Traill	1991
1987	Mrs. H. Jones	
	Mrs. M. Smythe	
	Mrs. C. Stoney	
	Mrs. P. Traill	

DIOCESAN SECRETARIES

1945-1951 Mrs. E. Holding

1951-1952	Mrs. M. Lawlor
1952-1960	Mrs. E. Holding
1960-1966	Mrs. D. Butler
1966-1969	Mrs. N. Garrett
1969-1972	Mrs. E. Campbell
1972-1975	Mrs. M. Smythe
1975-1978	Mrs. M. Parker
1978-1979	Mrs. A. Livingstone
1979-1984	Mrs. C. Stoney
1984-	Mrs. G. Walker

DIOCESAN TREASURERS

1945-1953	Mrs. L. Breene
1953-1963	Mrs. E. Macourt
1964-1972	Mrs. N. Taggart
1972-1975	Mrs. L. Perrin
1975-1981	Mrs. M. Teer
1981-1986	Mrs. E. Philpott
1986-1987	Mrs. M. Teer
1987-	Mrs. M. Ferguson

OVERSEAS CHAIRMEN

1945-1951	Miss McClelland
1951-1961	Mrs. P. Warnock
1961-1972	Mrs. L. Perrin
1972-1975	Mrs. E. Jones
1975-1978	Mrs. J. Clyde
1978-1983	Mrs. B. Thorpe
1983-	Mrs. B. McConnell

LINKS REPRESENTATIVES

1945-1951	Miss McClelland
1972-1978	Mrs. A. Richardson
1978-1983	Mrs. L. Perrin
1983-	Mrs. J. Bond

YOUNG FAMILIES' REPRESENTATIVES

1949-1952	Mrs. A. Buchanan
1952-1957	Mrs. A. Buchanan & Mrs. M. Lawlor
1957-1961	Mrs. D. Butler
1961-1963	Mrs. N. Taggart
1963	Mrs. Ferry
1963-1964	Mrs. N. Taggart
1964-1967	Mrs. A. Richardson
1967-1972	Mrs. B. McConnell
1972-1975	Mrs. P. Wallace
1975-1978	Mrs. M. Gordon
1978-1979	Mrs. J. Wilson & Mrs. M. Richmond
1979-1983	Mrs. K. Rodgers & Mrs. B. Moore
1983-1984	Mrs. B. Moore & Mrs. R. Macartney
1984-1987	Mrs. R. Macartney & Mrs. J. Davidson
1987-	Mrs. J. Davidson & Mrs. M. Pryce

EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVES

1960-1963	Mrs. E. McElhinney
1963-1968	Mrs. H. Williams
1968-1972	Mrs. H. Jones
1972-1978	Mrs. S. Hughes
1978-1981	Mrs. A. Moller
1981-1985	Mrs. R. McKelvey
1985-1987	Mrs. J. Fox
1987-	Mrs. D. Cromey

LITERATURE REPRESENTATIVES

1945-1951	Mrs. Baldwin
1951-1954	Mrs. E. Holding
1954-1960	Mrs. Wilson
1960-1962	Mrs. N. Garrett
1963-1964	Miss Usher
1964	Mrs. Casement
1964-1972	Mrs. E. Wright
1972-1978	Mrs. B. McConnell
1978-1984	Mrs. J. Stewart
1984-	Mrs. N. Bell

SOCIAL CONCERN REPRESENTATIVES

1956-1962	Mrs. E. McElhinney
1962-1970	Mrs. M. Mitchell
1970-1972	Mrs. E. Jones
1972-1978	Mrs. E. Philpott
1978-1981	Mrs. P. Traill
1981-1985	Mrs. N. Dodds
1985-	Mrs. M. Gordon

PRAYER REPRESENTATIVES

1967-1969	Mrs. P. Kerr
1969-1972	Mrs. F. Baillie
1972-1978	Mrs. E. McElhinney
1978-1981	Mrs. E. Philpott
1981-1986	Mrs. S. Sproule
1986	Mrs. A. Crawford
1987-	Mrs. M. McCammon

INDOOR MEMBERS' PRAYER CIRCLE CORRESPONDENTS

1949-1963	Mrs. Dundas
	Mrs. Grove-Annesley
	Mrs. B. Smart
1963-1977	Mrs. C. Stewart-Moore
	Mrs. V. Breene
1977-1983	Mrs. C. Stewart-Moore
	Mrs. B. Smart
1983-1987	Mrs. A. Richardson
1987-	Mrs. L. Lendrum

DIOCESAN CORRESPONDENTS

1952-1955	Mrs. Jackson
1955-1961	Mrs. V. McCappin
1961-1972	Mrs. B. Smart
1972-1974	Mrs. E. Campbell
1974-1981	Mrs. R. McKelvey
1981-	Mrs. E. Wright

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

1985-	Mrs. K. Rodgers
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ALL IRELAND OFFICIALS FROM CONNOR DIOCESE

1950	Mrs. V. McCappin (Editor{!} MU Journal)
1954	Mrs. Breene (Life Vice President)
	Mrs. Grove Annesley (Life Vice President)
1955	Mrs. A. Buchanan (Chairman YM Department)
1957	Mrs. Warnock (Overseas Treasurer)
	Mrs. D. Butler (Chairman YM Department)
1961	Mrs. E. Noble (Life Vice President)
1966	The Hon. Mrs. T. O'Neill (Vice President)
	Mrs. Warnock (Vice President)
1966	Mrs. M. Mitchell (Chairman YM Department)
1978	Mrs. M. Gordon (Hon. Secretary, YM Department)
1984-1987	Mrs. S. Hughes (Vice President)
1982-1985	Mrs. J. Gough (Chairman Education Department)
1982-1985	Mrs. K. Rodgers (Hon. Secretary YF Department)
1983-1986	Mrs. A. Moller (Hon. Secretary Education Department)
1983-	Mrs. B. Thorpe (Chairman Overseas Department)
1984-	Mrs. R. McKelvey (Editor Irish Inset)
1986-	Mrs. J. Fox (Hon. Secretary Education Department)

MEMBER OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE

1971-1974	Mrs. V. McCappin
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Mothers' Union Branches in Connor Diocese

NORTH BELFAST

- St. Barnabas
- Holy Evangelists, Carnmoney
- The Church of the Ascension, Cloughfern
- The Church of the Good Shepherd, Monkstown
- St. Patrick, Jordanstown
- Holy Trinity
- St. James
- St. Silas
- St. Katharine
- St. Ninian
- St. Paul
- St. Peter
- St. John, Whitehouse

MID BELFAST

- Belfast Cathedral
- St. George
- Immanuel, Ardoyne
- St. Mark, Ballysillan
- St. Mary
- St. Matthew, Shankill
- St. Michael
- St. Columba, Whiterock
- Holy Redeemer

SOUTH BELFAST

- St. Aidan
- All Saints
- St. Bartholomew
- Epiphany, Upper Malone
- St. John, Malone
- St. Nicholas
- St. Polycarp
- St. Simon

CARRICKFERGUS

- St. John, Glynn
- St. John, Ballycarry

St. John the Evangelist, Ballyclare
 St. Cedma, Larne
 St. Nicholas, Carrickfergus
 St. Patrick, Whitehead
 St. Colman, Kilroot

NORTH CONNOR

Ballintoy and Dunseverick
 Holy Trinity, Ballywillan
 Billy and Derrykeighan
 St. Patrick, Coleraine
 All Saints', Drumtullagh
 St. John the Baptist, Dunluce
 Finvoy and Rasharkin
 Ramoan and Culfeightrin

MID CONNOR

St. Colmanell, Ahoghill
 All Saints', Antrim
 St. Patrick, Antrim
 St. Saviour, Connor
 St. Patrick, Ballymena
 St. Patrick, Broughshane
 Craigs
 Duneane and Ballyscullion
 St. Catherine, Killead and Gartree
 St. Jude, Muckamore
 Portglenone

LISBURN

St. Mark, Ballymacash
 St. Matthew, Broomhedge
 Christ Church
 All Saints', Eglantine
 Lisburn Cathedral
 Magheragall
 St. Paul

DERRIAGHY

St. Columba, Derryvolgie
 Christ Church, Derrriaghy
 St. Colman, Dunmurry

St. John, Crumlin
 St. Hilda, Kilmakee
 Lambeg
 St. John the Baptist, Upper Falls

WINNERS OF THE O'NEILL CUP

- | | | |
|------|--|-------------------------|
| 1969 | - St. George | - DRAMA |
| 1970 | - Lambeg | - NEEDLEWORK |
| 1971 | - Christ Church, Lisburn
and St. Patrick, Coleraine | - MUSIC |
| 1972 | - St. George | - DRAMA |
| 1973 | - St. Columba, Whiterock | - COMMUNITY
OUTREACH |
| 1974 | - Mid Belfast Area | - GLOBE PROBE |
| 1976 | - Centenary Year
Holy Trinity, North Belfast | - FLOWER FESTIVAL |
| 1978 | - St. Patrick, Broughshane | - TOYS |
| 1979 | - St. Jude, Muckamore | - 15 MINUTE CONCERT |
| 1980 | - Ballynure & Ballyeaston (Ballyclare) | - BED COVER |
| 1982 | - Belfast Cathedral | - BOOK OF PRAYERS |
| 1984 | - Belfast Cathedral | - TAPESTRY KNEELERS |
| 1986 | - St. Patrick, Jordanstown and
Cloughfern | - CHOIRS |

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WINNERS OF THE O'NEILL CUP

1989	- St. George	- DRAMA
1970	- Landed	- NEEDLEWORK
1971	- Christ Church, Lisburn and St. Patrick, Coleraine	- MUSIC
1972	- St. George	- DRAMA
1973	- St. Colinda, Wintrock	- COMMUNITY OUTREACH
1974	- Mid Belfast Area	- GLOBE PROBE
1976	- Century Year Holy Trinity, North Belfast	- FLOWER FESTIVAL
1978	- St. Patrick, Brughisbane	- TOYS
1979	- St. Jude, Muckanore	- 15 MINUTE CONCERT
1980	- Ballynure & Ballyeston (Ballyclare)	- BED COVER
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