

ARE YOU LONELY? DO YOU KNOW



SOMEONE WHO IS LONELY?

Anyone can feel lonely at any time, no matter what their age or gender or whether they live in an urban or rural setting. It is possible to feel lonely in a crowd. It is a feeling that comes and goes through life, but most loneliness is temporary. Being on our own does not always mean being lonely, and indeed, there may be times when we enjoy time alone.

Acknowledging “positive” emotions, such as happiness and joy, is easier than dealing with what we sometimes consider the more “negative” emotions, such as loneliness, anger, or sadness.

Loneliness is a normal human emotion we feel when we want to be more connected to other people and it is perfectly alright to admit this to ourselves and others.

“As All Ireland President, I have become increasingly aware of the many people I know who sometimes feel lonely, and others who, for a variety of reasons, have become isolated from family and friends; I wondered how Mothers’ Union might be able to help.”

June Butler, All Ireland President.

June continues: “In November 2019 All Ireland Council adopted a proposal to consider how Mothers’ Union members might reach out to those who are lonely; Christine Eames, former Worldwide President, offered to lead this project.”

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the plight of those who were lonely, a loneliness which extends far beyond those who live alone. The All-Ireland Trustees agreed that an anonymous donation to our funds should be used to promote this project; this leaflet is the beginning of our outreach. Please read it and pray about how you might best use it.

“Communication and connecting with others are key to tackling loneliness.”

Sometimes the simplest things, e.g., a cup of tea or a phone call, can be the most effective.

Here are some ideas for good practice which can be used within parishes and communities. (Thank you to dioceses who responded to our recent survey).

Communication

- Use a variety of types of communication – phone calls, visits, emails, texts, social media groups such as WhatsApp – so that no-one feels excluded.
- Be especially mindful of those who are not online. Make telephone calls regularly. Post cards or letters to remember birthdays, special occasions, or just “thinking of you.”
- Create and use WhatsApp/regular texts with groups of members updating them on latest information and matters of interest.

- Maintain Facebook updates, where members can see announcements, prayers, and news.
- Provide Indoor Members with prayers, reflections, and information: help them to feel valued by socialising as appropriate.

Friendship/Support

- Support members, facilitate friendship/common interest groups.
- Promote the concept of “buddying” - so that any member who lives alone is connected with a member (preferably with common interests) who commits to regular communication with them.
- Ensure more active members support others by offering to help - if it is wanted - e.g., shopping, collecting prescriptions, taking to appointments, etc.
- Encourage members to think of different ways to meet each other - fellowship does not have to be only at formal MU meetings.



Ideas that might help

- Develop/join a common interest group.
- A bird table can bring great company for those who live alone.
- Encourage Diocesan Membership for members who do not feel comfortable attending meetings or where their branch has closed; look after these members well.
- Include all those who want to be involved in branch prayer chains; use text or WhatsApp to share prayer requests.

You may have someone within your family or parish, in Mothers' Union or amongst your friends with whom you can chat. There are also many well-known charities who offer support to the lonely and to those who wish to volunteer. Below are the contact details for just a few of them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

AGE NI: Provides a listening ear to the lonely

Phone 028-90245729

Website www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland

BELFAST CENTRAL MISSION: Befriending Services

Phone 028-90241917

Website www.belfastcentralmission.org

THE GOOD MORNING SERVICE

provides reassurance and support to people right across Northern Ireland. Search online for Good Morning Services available in your area.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

ALONE: Supporting Older People to Age at Home

Phone 0818 222 024

Website www.alone.ie

A LUST FOR LIFE: Tackling Loneliness

Website www.alustforlife.com

SENIORLINE: A confidential listening service

Freephone 1800 80 45 91 - Every day 10 to 10

Website www.thirdageireland.ie

Loneliness Working Group:

Christine Eames, Clare Stewart, Hilary Dring and June Butler

Nothing makes a person feel more valued than being heard. Truly listening to another person can make all the difference.

- 🌐 Give the person your full attention
- 🌐 Listen without interrupting
- 🌐 Listen without thinking about what you're going to say next or what advice to give
- 🌐 Listen without judging the other person or jumping to conclusions
- 🌐 Allow the other person to express their emotions. Emotions are part of who we are – there are no bad or wrong emotions
- 🌐 Try to be comfortable with silence; it can be an important part of a conversation. Do not jump in too quickly
- 🌐 Ask thoughtful questions only if you need to clarify something - otherwise just listen
- 🌐 Acknowledge what you have heard, being sensitive to the mood of the other person. Do not impose your opinions or solutions unless they are invited
- 🌐 Be kind; listen with heart as well as with mind. Remember that we have been given two ears and one mouth – listen at least twice as much as you speak!!

“You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.”

James 1:19

This leaflet recognises the work done in dioceses and parishes by Mothers' Union members throughout Ireland who continue to reach out in numerous ways as the needs of people become apparent.
Thank you to all our members.

It contains practical information, as well as starting points, for those who feel they would like to be part of addressing this aspect of our lives in a more structured form. It acknowledges the needs of both young and old and the fact that “loneliness”, whether within us or because of physical isolation, has the potential to affect most, if not all of us, at some time in our lives.

Our Christian faith teaches us of the presence of God with us and gives us that comfort and assurance; it also challenges us to love our neighbours and show kindness one to another.

“For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”

Isaiah 41:13

Dear God, thank you for the assurance of your presence with us in all the seasons of our lives. Thank you for the efforts of many to reach out to others in friendship and love. Guide us and direct our efforts in the days ahead, that we may have the grace both to give and to receive, mindful of the needs of others and of ourselves, day by day. Amen