



Focus ~ Spring 2022

An All-Ireland Mothers' Union Publication
Theme 2022 ~ Transformation – Now!



**Mums
in
May
2021**



JUNE BUTLER WRITES:

What a joy it is to have the return of Focus! The Trustees for All Ireland Mothers' Union reluctantly took the decision in early autumn not to publish an edition then, due to issues with printing and distribution of copies in the face of the ongoing Covid restrictions, but to wait until the spring of 2022 and produce a bumper edition. All our thanks are due to Margaret Jacob, the Editor, who has done a wonderful job of putting together a synopsis of last year's activities by members throughout Ireland, and illuminating some of the highlights such as the recent service in Armagh Cathedral, as well as giving us a flavour of what will come our way this year. I do hope you enjoy reading it and seeing some wonderful photographs to remind us of special times together and the things we were able to achieve.

One section relates to the "21 in 21" walks I undertook as my personal challenge to raise sponsorship for the Ireland "Mums in May" Fund. Other members did 21 of other things - baking, reading, cycling, swimming, other personal challenges for which friends and family sponsored them- but I chose to walk at least 21kms in every diocese in Ireland. In fact the accurate statistics for my walking enterprise are that I drove some 4,000 miles to be able to accomplish my challenge; I covered over 275km (about 172 miles) on foot and astonishingly the walking "app" on my phone told me I had undertaken some 430,000 steps! The details of all the 36 walks are recorded on the MU website www.mothersunion.ie/mums-in-may-2021.

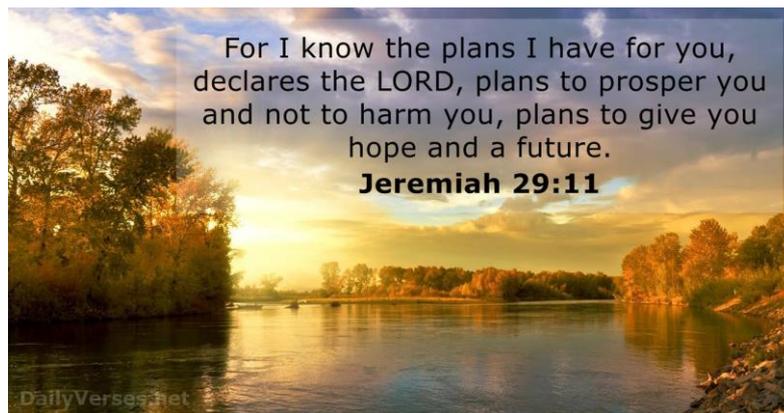


However, while I might be slightly more fit than I was at the beginning of 2021, the most important aspect of the walks for me was the fellowship. After over a year of not seeing anyone other than immediate family, it was really special to be able to meet outdoors with members. I have wonderful memories, not only of the amazing paths we trod but of the brilliant conversations en route and of the meaningful services organised around them. Of course, there were also the beautiful churches in which I was privileged to worship. It was indeed a very special year for me.

I had said when I was first elected as Provincial President that I hoped to visit every diocese in Ireland during my three years in office. During the second year, 2020, that aspiration seemed improbable, but with the lifting of restrictions I was able to meet my goal in 2021. Also my geographical knowledge of this island has improved immensely! At the beginning of this, my second triennium as the All Ireland President, I will again aspire to be in every diocese at some point during these three years, with my focus on meeting as many branch members as possible.

The theme of Mothers' Union worldwide for 2022 is "Transformation: Now!" and, while I believe that we have to transform ourselves and Mothers' Union to meet the demands of our world post-Covid - and now especially in the light of the dreadful situation in Ukraine - that transformation can be slow and gradual. We have to begin the process of transformation now, but it doesn't all have to happen immediately. Like a small child, it is important that we take small steps first to gain confidence in ourselves, and the confidence of others in us, in this different world. Also we must never forget the words written in Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".



About that future.....While the number of members of Mothers' Union in Ireland has reduced slightly over recent years and a few branches have closed or merged with those nearby, the determination of everyone to continue within our beloved organisation and to fulfil our aims and objects - especially to help those in adversity and to promote family life - has strengthened. Sometimes we have just to find different, new and transformational ways to do it.

In this year which is the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, our Patron, I am reminded of the story that it was she who recommended to her Father, King George VI, that he should include in his Christmas broadcast in 1939 the following poem written in 1908 by Minnie Haskins. Remember that this was four months into the Second World War but I feel it stands too for all of us today in this period of uncertainty and transformation:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

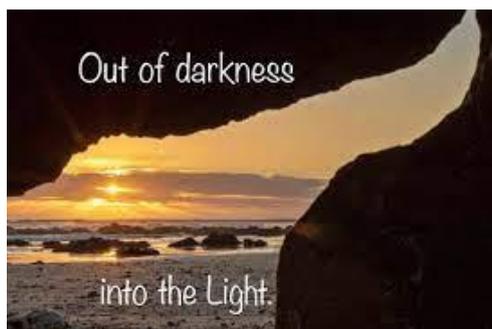


I pray that you will put your hand into the hand of God as you travel the road ahead throughout 2022.

With love and every blessing

June

THE EDITOR WRITES:



***From darkness into glorious light
Whoever follows him,
His life he gave that we might live;
To rescue us from sin***

The words above are taken from the hymn “Come unto me, I am the door” which was written by Yvonne Woods and was the winning hymn in the All-Ireland hymn competition in 2021. See the full version of the hymn on the All-Ireland website: <http://www.mothersunion.ie/competitions.html>

The last two years have been challenging ones for both young and old as we all had to adapt to so many changes in our lives. We are now at a stage where we are looking at how we can rebuild our lives and get back to socialising and meeting up more with family and friends - we are moving from darkness into light. The theme for Mothers’ Union for 2022 is **“TRANSFORMATION – NOW!”** and how apt that is under the circumstances.

Branches are gradually starting to meet up again in person, looking at how they can safely meet up and helping those whose confidence has been shaken as a result of the restrictions of the last few years. We have all become very conscious of the necessity to keep each other safe and have adapted how we conduct our meetings to support all of our members. Technology has proved invaluable in helping us all to keep in touch whether by using ZOOM, WhatsApp Groups, Newsletters or just a simple telephone call. Even though we were restricted in meeting in person Mothers’ Union continued to support worthy causes, not only by adding to our Mums in May Fund but also providing financial aid for Overseas Projects, the Centenary Fund (which grants much needed financial aid to ordinands in the Theological College) to name but a few.



**The Cathedral Church of St. Patrick
Armagh**

This year sees the beginning of a new triennium in Mothers’ Union. Newly elected and appointed Trustees were commissioned at a lovely service in the Cathedral Church of St. Patrick, Armagh on Sunday 27th February. It was a joyous occasion when many members and the families of those being commissioned joined together for a service of Choral Evensong. Our very best wishes to those who were commissioned and our grateful thanks to all outgoing members of the Trustees Board for the time, energy and commitment they have given to All-Ireland Mothers’ Union during their terms of office

As we move forward in 2022 with what we hope and pray will be from “darkness into glorious light”, we look to the future of Mothers’ Union in Ireland as we endeavour to encourage and grow our membership.

Margaret

MUMS IN MAY 2021

This edition of Focus has a special feature on June Butler's walks throughout every Diocese in Ireland to raise much needed funds for "Mums in May". "Mums in May" is an All-Ireland Fund which was established in 2012 in celebration of 125 years of MU in Ireland. The Fund supports new and on-going MU projects throughout Ireland as well as specific important overseas projects. Every third year the MIM Fund is replenished through the efforts of members in Ireland and 2021 was the fourth occasion when MU fundraising focused on this initiative. Several events were organised to raise funds for Mums in May 2021.



- The sale of the Mothers' Union Cookbook ~ **Mums Marvellous Meals** ~ Copies of the cookbook are still available to purchase costing £5 or €5.
- A **"Count your Blessings Calendar"** ~ Members were encouraged throughout the month of May to give thanks for all of the blessings they enjoy and donate to the "Mums in May" Fund.
- **"21 in 21"** ~ Members were asked to receive sponsorship for an initiative around doing/creating 21 things in 2021 ~ knit, sew, bake, read, run, walk etc.
- **June Butler's walks** ~ June undertook to walk 21 kilometres in each of the twelve Diocese over a three-day period and raise funds for Mums in May and she was accompanied on her walks by "Archie", the mascot designed for "Mums in May".

How are the funds Used?

- Every Diocese receives a grant of € 300/ £260 per annum which they can put towards a project of their choice.
- Each spring and autumn Dioceses are invited to apply for a grant towards specific projects and a committee administers these grants.

Many worthy causes have been supported through these grants ~



- Supplies for local women's refuges
- AFIA Breaks
- Mini Bootcamps and Lunch Giveaways
- School Books and Uniform Bursaries etc.



- A grant from "Mums in May" also pays for the printing of Focus.



Many families greatly appreciate the funding and support they receive as a result of the above. The projects supported by grant aid from "Mums in May" is a way in which we can give much needed assistance to those in our own community whether it is giving a bursary to provide school books and uniforms, giving supplies to a local refuge, supporting a grub club or providing a short break for a family or individual.

Our grateful thanks to everyone who has raised money for "Mums in May 2021". A full account of all of June's walks and a slideshow of photographs from each of the thirty-six walks is available on the All-Ireland website: www.mothersunion.ie



16 DAYS 365

Speaking Out Calling Out Rooting Out.....

‘Be courageous, not invisible!’ was the call in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory in 2021, and this was echoed around the dioceses as members shone a light on **#Nomore1in3**, signifying the one in three women worldwide who experience some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime. This is the continuing call of 16 Days 365 Days of Activism.

Why do we take part in the 16 Days 365 conversation?



16 Days 365 is a commitment of 6,000+ organisations in 185 countries worldwide to the process of the elimination of violence against women. Mothers’ Union is part of this dynamic group that uphold the worth and dignity of each person as a human being and wish to act accordingly. Globally we act against all forms of gender-based violence and more locally we support refuges across Ireland, encourage our churches and communities, continuously educating ourselves and yes, indeed – endeavour to speak out about abuse!

Why is ‘speaking out’ important?

Essentially, *‘Speaking out is an important form of honesty. Honesty builds trust, especially when combined with tact and empathy. Demonstrate that you are truthful with people, that you care about them, and that you give good advice, and you will never lack for trusting friends and followers.’*¹ What an encouragement to ‘be courageous, not invisible!’

2021-2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the Global 16 Days Campaign.

To commemorate this anniversary, the 16 Days 365 Campaign will have an additional special theme focusing on **femicide**.² Closer to home, we have been appalled by the premature death of Ashling Murphy, just out for a run, in broad daylight. Regrettably, the stark reality of **femicide** is that 23 women across Ireland have died since covid began.

What is femicide?

‘**Femicide** is universally understood as the killing of women and girls by men. It differs from male homicide in specific ways as most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex partners.

It is a term used to describe killings of women and girls precisely because they are women and girls. Femicide is both a cause and a result of gender inequality and discrimination, both of which are root causes of all violence against women.

Femicide is often linked to ongoing emotional, physical, sexual and economic abuse as well as coercive control perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner against the woman. The understanding of femicide as the murder of a woman because of her gender is important.

Whilst men are much more likely to be victims of homicide in general at the hands of a wide range of perpetrators, *women who are murdered are highly likely to have been murdered by an intimate partner, ex-intimate partner, or family member.*³ In fact, just 13% of women in Ireland are killed by a stranger.



Silence and femicide?

Silence is as active a form of communication as talking. At any given time, people are aware of our input and the lack of it! Silence indicates that we do not really care one way or the other and enables the bad behaviour to continue regardless.

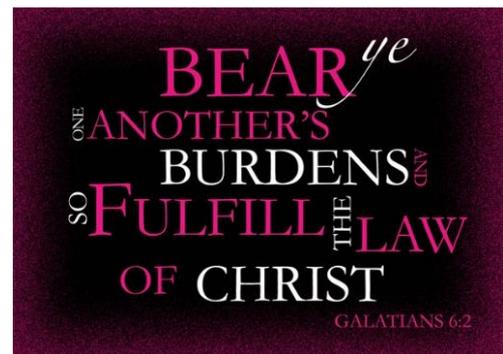
Which serves the greater good? Speaking out or silence?

As a rule, we are good hearted, shining our light where and when we can and striving to love our neighbour. Even so, standing up and speaking out is a challenge, and we do have a choice.

By staying silent we hinder the cause of the very people we wish to help. When in doubt, the greater good must win out – *‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you,’* Luke 6:31 **In this conversation, everyone benefits, and a more considerate, empathetic, respectful and** compassionate society comes to the fore.

God created us in his own image not to be invisible but to be visible as His hands and feet in the community. When we make a difference to others, how often we find that we too are blessed through that difference. Let us forget about being reserved, and continue to speak out, call out and root out the deep-seated causes of gender-based violence and domestic abuse.

A world without violence is possible and this moment demands unparalleled courage and joint action to make this vision a reality. **Let’s ‘be courageous, not invisible!’**



“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”
Catherine of Siena



¹ Kevin Daum

² [From Awareness to Accountability | Global 16 Days Campaign](#)

³ 12 in Northern Ireland, 11 in Republic of Ireland (10/02/2022)

⁴ [womens_aid_femicide_factsheet_2021.pdf \(womensaid.ie\)](#)



I am going to begin with a confession.

Once upon a time I had underestimated Mothers' Union.

I will never make that mistake again.

When our Diocesan President, Jacqui Armstrong, invited me to share in the piloting of a new resource¹ that Mothers' Union is involved in developing, aimed at ending gender-based violence, I quickly realised that the level of research that had been undertaken, the quality of personnel involved and the strength of their vision which propelled them were all exemplary.

As each session unfolded, a range of engaging leaders from across the Anglican Communion taught us and encouraged us to apply the learning in our own context and community. This course however is not only about learning statistics or theory, this course is about equipping church members across the Church of Ireland, to become aware of Gender Based Violence and its impact on our families, neighbours and wider community.

The reality of Gender Based Violence, in all of its abhorrent forms, is all too familiar to many. People that we know well, those we sit beside Sunday by Sunday, colleagues and even family members who are victims of Gender Based Violence, are often so expert at disguising their painful experience, that their story can go unnoticed and their voice unheard.

In recent weeks we have moved rapidly through the alphabet as storm followed storm. Our churches were designed, in part, to be physical sanctuaries, places where the weary could find rest, the broken could find

renewal and the discouraged could find hope. As I journeyed through this course, I tried to imagine how a victim of Gender Based Violence might feel if they were part of our church community. Would they feel safe? Could they be sure that someone would listen to, and importantly, believe their story? Would they find trusted friends who would value and love them? Would the experience love and healing and hope?

As a church leader I am so thankful for the opportunity which Mothers' Union has given me to open my eyes, to hear stories and to develop a practical and pastoral response. This course has ended, but it has begun something in me. A new yearning for a society where my three daughters can feel safe, valued and loved. I long for the day when they and their friends can go for a walk without fear, when their voices will be heard and valued along with others, when girls across the world will no longer live under the threat of forced marriage and FGM.

I also long for a church, grounded in the good news of the Gospel, which is welcoming, listening and caring. Where broken people are made whole through Christ, where the beauty and value of each individual, created by God, is cherished and celebrated.

We are the church of Jesus Christ. We speak value, dignity and inherent worth into and over every person. I want to lead and be part of a church that seeks and reflects the very heart of God for his people. Violence or injustice, of any kind, has no part to play in that church.

If you have the opportunity in the coming months to participate in this course then please do. Let's be informed and equipped to do all that we can, standing together.

I began by telling you that I had underestimated Mothers' Union.

Today, don't underestimate.

Don't underestimate the prevalence and harm of Gender Based Violence in your community.

Don't underestimate the power of your silence on the issue.

Don't underestimate the power of your advocacy.

Don't underestimate what it means for a victim to know that you believe them.

Don't underestimate the power of Jesus Christ to transform broken lives.

¹*'Equipping The Church To Take Action and End Domestic Abuse'* is a joint initiative within the Church of Ireland, created in collaboration with Mothers' Union, Bishop's Appeal and Tearfund Ireland. The course is designed for those who wish to deepen their understanding of the root causes of domestic abuse, the reality and scope of domestic abuse and the actions we can take to ensure our churches are safe spaces.

For further information contact: presidentdrmu@gmail.com

Rev Graham Hare, Drumragh Parish, Derry & Raphoe



INDOOR MEMBERS

Indoor Members have not been forgotten during the recent pandemic. While visits to members in their homes or Care Homes were not possible, they were kept in touch by letter/card, telephone calls, face-time and door-step visits. Some branches and dioceses gave gift bags containing a prayer card, hand cream/sanitizer, a tea bag, a packet of tissues etc. One diocese gave each Indoor Member a knitted shawl and prayer card. These gifts were much appreciated.

An Indoor Member can be any age – young or old. It is interesting to note that at the time of writing we have 12 members who are over 100 years of age – the oldest being in her 105th year.

Indoor Members enjoy receiving birthday cards from their diocese. Cards marking significant birthdays (90, 95, 100, 100+) are sent on behalf of the All-Ireland President

Holy Communion services and enjoyable Tea Parties were not able to take place during the pandemic but we look forward to times when such fellowship resumes.

Norma Bell ~ All Ireland Indoor Member Contact

TELECONFERENCING

ALL IRELAND MOTHERS UNION TELECONFERENCING began in 2009. Teleconferencing is available for members on both sides of the border.

It is a way of keeping in touch with people who no longer get out much. All ages are welcome along with Carers. The calls are on the 2nd Monday of the month and last for about 40 minutes. There is NO cost to the participants. The call centre is based in England.

Anyone interested in joining should contact:

Valerie Stewart ~ Co Ordinator or your Diocesan President for further details.

MARY AGNES (Cis) McCARTHY (1923-2021)

It was with great sadness that the members of the Mothers Union All Ireland Teleconferencing heard of the death of Mrs Mary Agnes (CIS) McCarthy on Sunday 7 November 2021, in her 99th year. The Teleconferencing calls started in January 2009 and Cis was one of the members on the first day and remained so until October 2021. Cis is pictured below with her daughters



ALL-IRELAND FESTIVAL SERVICE 2022



The Mothers' Union All-Ireland Festival Service took place on Sunday 27th February 2022 in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh. The Mothers' Union theme for 2022 of "**Transformation – Now!**" was introduced and a number of people were commissioned to serve in their various roles by Archbishop John McDowell, who was the preacher at what was a very special service of Choral Evensong. The Dean of Armagh – Very Revd Shane Forster, welcomed everyone to the Cathedral, as for the first time since the onset of the pandemic, a gathering of this size was possible.



Those commissioned were:

Mrs June Butler, for a second term as All-Ireland President of the Mothers' Union.

All-Ireland Trustees: **Joy Gordon, Hazel Speares, Margaret Jacob, Clare Stewart, Mavis Thompson, Ada Lawson and Ann Howard.**

Revd Canon Ken Rue was introduced as the Mothers' Union All-Ireland Treasurer and **Mrs Iris Sutor** as the Mothers' Union Zonal Trustee.

It was lovely to be able to join together for this special service. The lessons at the service were read by Sophia Dillon and June Butler and the prayers were led by Revd Canon Robert Deane, Beth Wortley and Patsy Devoy. The congregation enjoyed joining in the singing of the hymns, "Praise, my soul, the King of heaven", "Come unto me, I am the door" (the winning hymn written by Yvonne Woods for a competition organised by Mothers' Union in 2021), "Lord the light of your love is shining" and "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah.

The retiring collection was for the **Mothers' Union Centenary Fund** which awards grants annually to ordinands to provide extra support while they are training at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

Many of the congregation returned to the Armagh City Hotel for refreshments and an opportunity to meet up for a chat. Our thanks to all who put so much time and effort into preparing the service and to those involved in organising the refreshments in the hotel. Our very best wishes too to all of the newly commissioned Trustees.





On Friday 9 April June completed her first walk in the Diocese of Armagh walking twice round the beautiful Clare Glen near Tandragee on a glorious spring morning. Canon Brian Blacoe and his wife Elizabeth (currently the MU branch leader at Ballymore Parish in Tandragee) prayed with the small group of walkers at the church before they drove individually to the Glen. Those walking – socially distanced of course - were June, the Diocesan President, Sophia Dillon, and Armagh Diocesan Trustees, Beth Wortley, Betty Williamson and Debbie Davidson. This was a delightful circular walk around Clare Glen beside River Cusher.



For her second walk in Armagh Diocese a group of ladies gathered with June on a very cold afternoon at St Anne's Parish Church in the centre of Dungannon where they were met by the rector, Rev'd Bryan Martin and the curate, Rev'd Graham Hare. The Armagh MU Chaplain, Rev'd Alan Cross from nearby Lissan Parish, came to see them on their way and prayed with the group outside St Anne's before they set off down the hill towards Dungannon Park. The group of walkers, under the leadership of Linda Stewart, MU Branch Leader at St Anne's Parish, were Sophia Dillon - DP, Iris Suintor – All-Ireland VP and former DP of Armagh, and local MU members Linda, Pauline, Yvonne and Edith. Rev'd Bryan accompanied the group as far as the Park and then returned to parish duties; Rev'd Graham joined the ladies at the Park and accompanied them on that part of the walk.

Armagh



June's final walk in the Diocese of Armagh was in the south of the diocese - Gosford Forest Park. She met with the Diocesan President, Sophia Dillon, in Markethill and drove in the early afternoon to the rectory of the parish of Mullabrack and Kilcluney which lies just outside the town. There the two joined the Rector, Rev'd Dr Peter Munce and the MU Branch leader, Doreen Quinn, and they stood outside in the sunshine, overlooking the Armagh countryside, as Rev'd Peter read from Luke's Gospel about the meeting on the road to Emmaus and offered prayers for the MIM walk that day.



About 25 members and friends gathered at the Deanery Orchard, opposite the gates to St Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny, to welcome June for the first walk she tackled in the Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. There were light refreshments provided by the members of the Cathedral branch of MU before the Bishop, the Rt Rev Michael Burrows, said a few words about pilgrimage to set the walkers on their way. Among those also present were the Dean, the Very Rev'd David McDonnell, the MU Diocesan President, Lesley Bayley, the Cathedral Branch Leader, Florrie Carter, and Denise Hughes, a former Diocesan Secretary and in that a role a former work colleague of June.



June completed her second walk in CFO on 12 July on territory which was familiar to her as she has friends who live in this area of south Wexford and visits there occasionally. Her friend Laurene accompanied the MU ladies on this walk. Tintern Abbey is located on the Hook Peninsula, near Saltmills, and originally was a Cistercian abbey founded by the Earl of Pembroke as the result of a vow he made when he was caught in a storm nearby. After the dissolution of the Abbey in 1562, the lands were granted to the Colclough family who lived there for the next 400 years making many improvements to the estate.



Cashel Ferns Ossory

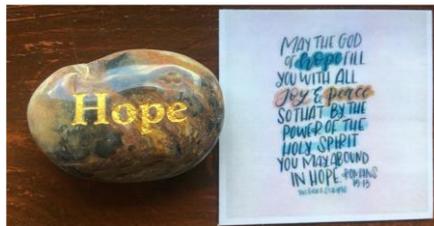


June's final walk, Walk number 36, in her challenge of completing 21kms in every diocese in Ireland during 2021 took place at Tinahely in South Co Wicklow on Tuesday 26 October. It was a pleasantly warm and still autumn morning. In thanking the members from that and neighbouring dioceses who had come to see her off on the walk, June said she had been determined to finish the series of walks before winter set in but had not expected to be able to do so without wearing a coat at the end of October. Ten ladies and two gentlemen tackled some or all of the walk and the scene for the morning was set with prayers by the All-Ireland Treasurer, Rev'd Ken Rue, and a welcome from the CFO Diocesan President Lesley Bayley.





June's first walk in Clogher Diocese commenced at Castle Archdale Parish Church (St Patrick's). Leading the walk was Diocesan Secretary, Liane Armstrong and she and June were accompanied by Rev'd Charles Eames (Diocesan Chaplain) and some members and friends from Derryvullan North & Castle Archdale MU branches. Valerie McMorris, a former Trustee Board member, took the photographs and Diocesan President, Irene Boyd, and Heather Ellis (wife of the Bishop Elect) joined the group for part of the route.



June's tenth walk, her second in Clogher Diocese, took place on a glorious spring afternoon when over 40 ladies from across the diocese of Clogher gathered at Colebrooke Parish church to walk with her through the 1000 acre Colebrooke estate, on the edge of Brookeborough village in Co Fermanagh. They were greeted by the DP Irene Boyd and Lord Brookeborough who had taken time from other duties to welcome all the ladies to the estate and show his support for MU.

The rector, Rev'd John McClenaghan, gave thanks in prayer for the work of MU and for that day's walk. He also gave to each member present a stone on which was painted the word "Hope" with the following verse, laminated on card, from Romans 15:13 ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope"***.

Clogher

About 25 ladies, gentlemen, children and two dogs assembled outside St Patrick's Church in the middle of Monaghan town on a very windy morning to join in a short act of worship led by the rector of Clones, Rev'd Roy Taylor, before the third and final one in the diocese of Clogher. At the beginning of this walk, June was accompanied by 18 others - the Diocesan President, Irene Boyd; the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev'd. Charlie Eames, Barbara Clarke, All Ireland PRO for the northern dioceses - the official photographer for the day; members from several branches and their daughters - as well as the two dogs. The 7.5km walk was led by the Branch Leader from Clones Mothers' Union, Linda Keating.





In lovely sunshine June was blessed on her way by The Rev'd Canon Kevin Graham, Rector of St Bartholomew's Parish, Stranmillis, as she set off to complete the first of her walks in Connor Diocese. June was accompanied along the embankment to Ormeau Bridge by Alberta Miskimmin, Co-ordinator of Finance & Central Services Unit. The Very Rev'd Stephen Ford, Dean of Belfast, joined June at Ormeau Bridge and they continued walking along the River Lagan to Albert Bridge where Alberta met June again and they continued to Belfast Cathedral, walking across several of the iconic bridges and through some of the oldest streets in Belfast, as well as visiting the modern St Anne's Square. At that point June had completed almost 5km of the day's walk.



June's second walk in the Diocese was one of her favourites along the north coast of Northern Ireland – the coastal cliff path from Portrush to Portstewart. It was a pleasant day with the walk beginning in sunshine but the sky gradually clouded over; however there was little wind - unusual for this area but a perfect day for this walk. June was accompanied by Nina McNeary, Church Support Officer with the National Churches Trust. They were also joined on the walk by MU members Kay and Jean from Ballywillan and Kim and Alicean from Agherton. They all gathered at Holy Trinity Church (Ballywillan parish) in the middle of Portrush before beginning the walk. Canon Peter McDowell led the group in prayer.

Connor

Around 25 people gathered outside St Jude's Parish Church at Muckamore, near Antrim, at noon on 13 October to see off the group of walkers who would accompany June on her final one of the three in Connor Diocese. There was a great buzz of conversation as everyone took the opportunity to greet those they had not seen for some time. Special mention must be given to Rev'd John McClure, rector of the parish, who had been ill for quite some time and Mrs Paddy Wallace, former All-Ireland President of Mothers' Union. Irene Gates, the Diocesan Secretary, led this Mid-Connor walk and the other two walk stewards were members from All Saints MU Branch in Antrim - Cynthia Cherry and Sheila Thompson.



Nine MU members from the Youghal area (including Diocesan Trustee, Veronica Deane and her mother, Vera) joined Diocesan President, Hilary Dring, and June for a short period of worship before she began her first walk in CCR. The service was held at the beautiful Collegiate Church of St Mary in Youghal and was led by the rector, Rev'd Canon Andrew Orr. It included readings and lovely prayers and Andrew spoke briefly on relevant extracts from a recent book by Rt Rev'd Graham Usher, Bishop of Norwich, which focussed on walking with God on the journey of life. He also presented June with a memento of the day – a scallop shell which is often considered a symbol of direction along the Camino, pointing pilgrims towards Santiago. Pilgrims also wear this symbol which further enhances the camaraderie along this great walking trail.



June's second in Cork, Cloyne and Ross - began at the Parish Church of St Peter where Rev'd Robert Ferris (the incumbent in charge of three churches in the Carrigrohane Union) led a short period of worship with 12 MU members present. The service was streamed and recorded to be available to members who were unable to attend. At the beginning June spoke briefly about the "21 in 21" walks, the reason she had undertaken this walking challenge and about MU members across Ireland working to raise money to support this MIM Fund from which grants ultimately came back to all the dioceses to support projects enabling members to help those in their communities.



Cork Cloyne & Ross



About 15 folk from MU branches across the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross met at the parish church of St Mary at Doneraile in north Cork to be greeted by the MU branch leader, Ruth Sherlock, and members of the branch for the final walk in CCR. Others present included DP, Hilary Dring, and Trustees Hazel Sherlock and Avril Jennings. Before June's walk, there was a short poignant service led by the new rector of the Mallow Union of parishes, the Rev'd Meurig Williams, who gave a short reflection on Mary when she is first mentioned in St Luke's gospel, and led the worshippers in relevant prayers. The members then broke into two groups – those who undertook a shorter walk in Doneraile Pk and seven ladies - June, Hilary, Avril, Anne, Jean and Linda who under the leadership of Hazel undertook the longer walk.





June began first in Derry and Raphoe, outside the parish hall of St Paul's Parish Church in the centre of Articlave on a beautiful sunny morning. After posing for photographs for the local paper and a short talk about the church by Sandra Simpson, a local historian and MU member, the rector Rev'd Chris MacBruithin, prayed with the walkers before they started the route for the day. The walkers, under the leadership of Marlyn Quigley, Castlerock MU Branch Leader; included the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Rev'd Andrew Forster, Jacqui Armstrong, DP of D and R, Kathleen Finlay, D and R Diocesan Secretary, Avril McNee, former DP of D and R, and representative members from Articlave, Castlerock, Drumachose (Limavady) and Aghadowey branches.



For her second walk in D&R June tackled Derry's walls – and much else besides. The walkers gathered in St Columba's Park off the Limavady Road at 11am. The Park is located on the banks of the River Foyle and comprises 70 acres of parkland in a historic demesne dating back to the 12th century. Contained within the park are the ruins of the medieval St. Breacan's Church, although most of the original church was demolished in the mid-15th century as the Bishop at the time wished to use the stones to build a palace! The walkers gathered first around the statue of St Columba for prayers led by the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev'd Canon Katie McAteer. Her very powerful prayers focussed on peace and building bridges. The group included the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Rev'd Andrew Forster, DP Jacqui Armstrong, and trustees, branch leaders and members from various branches-Irene Hewitt, Pauline Doherty, Doreen Sidebottom, Linda Hughes, Betty McKinley, Kathleen Finlay and Eva Wright - and the occasional husband!



Derry & Raphoe



A team of 15 - 14 ladies and one man - the brave rector of Drumragh parish Omagh, Rev'd Graham Hare - began June's third 7 km Mums in May walk in Derry and Raphoe Diocese in the late afternoon of 29 September from the parish hall in the centre of the town. The reason it was taking place at such an unusual time was that afterwards everyone was going to attend the Derry and Raphoe Festival Service in the lovely old church of the parish, St Columba's; this is located - along with four other old churches of different denominations - in the aptly named Church Street! This town, riverbank and park walk opened the eyes of all who were present to the wonderful environment in and around the Omagh. The walk was planned and led by Kathleen Finlay, the Diocesan Secretary of D and R, and Iris Moffitt-Scott, the Branch leader of the nearby Edenderry Parish Mothers' Union.



June Butler, the All-Ireland President, began her "21 in 21" walks today on her own home turf. In line with government regulations, she was accompanied only by the Branch Leader from Saintfield Parish, Marion Edwards, and they were sent on their way from the grounds of Saintfield Parish Church with prayers and good wishes from the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev'd Gerald Macartney, his wife Roberta, Diocesan President, and the Vicar of Saintfield the Rev'd Chris Pollock - all socially distanced of course. Marion and June walked 7.8 kms around the periphery of the village and through Rowallane Gardens (with a short stop for a picnic lunch), finishing back at the parish church - in pouring rain - with around 15,000 steps on the "clock". June said it was a great way to start her "21 in 21" journey in familiar territory with one of her greatest - and oldest - MU friends!



June followed the towpath of the former Newry Portadown Canal from Scarva to Poyntzpass on a chilly but dry morning for her second walk in the Diocese. Some of the Diocesan Trustees were there to see her off and there were also two clergy, the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev'd Gerald Macartney, and Rev'd Rodney Magennis, Diocesan Curate for the local parishes, who offered very meaningful prayers for the walk and for the success of the MIM appeal. Diocesan President, Roberta, accompanied June on the first leg, with Marion Edwards and Phyllis Burrell walking at an acceptable distance behind. The route was flat and interesting, passing Acton Lake/Lough Shark which is a haven for wildlife. The group saw a bevy of swans descending from a hillside on to the lake - a magnificent sight! There was also a heron intent on its prey.

Down & Dromore



On Saturday 2 October June completed her final walk in Down and Dromore - this time covering almost 9kms! She met with a group of ladies from the Mothers' Union Branch at Christ Church, Kilkeel, at the church on a glorious autumn afternoon. With the Mourne Mountains as a resplendent backdrop, the branch leader, Jean Keown, welcomed everyone and the rector, Rev'd Alison Calvin, led a short time of prayer. The ladies headed off by car to the nearby Silent Valley Reservoir Park where they were joined by the Diocesan President, Roberta Macartney and her husband Rev'd Gerald, the Diocesan Chaplain, and the Rt Rev'd David McClay, Bishop of Down and Dromore. The entire area of 9000 acres at the reservoir complex was acquired at the beginning of the 20th century by Belfast City and District Water Commissioners, with the aim of improving the water supply to the expanding city of Belfast.





June's first walk in Dublin and Glendalough Diocese began from St Brigid's Church in the centre of Castleknock, north-west Dublin. Eleven members and friends joined in prayer in the church - those who were going to walk and some others including Anne Cadoo (Branch Leader) and MU stalwarts Jean Denner and Pat Gray. The lovely prayers were led by the rector of Castleknock – Rev'd Canon Paul Houston. June had time inside to admire the beautiful church, especially the fabulous Harry Clarke window, depicting the saints George, Hubert and Luke. Philip Good took some photographs before the group of six walkers - DP Karen Nelson, Trustee Olive Good, who led the walk, Erin, Anne, Canon Paul and June - donned their wet weather gear, grabbed a few umbrellas and headed out from the church grounds.



June's second walk in Dublin and Glendalough was organised to be in tandem with the celebrations on 21 August to commemorate the founder of Mothers' Union in Ireland, Annabella Hayes. The 7.5 Km walk was from All Saint's Church in Raheny to St Fintan's Cemetery in Sutton North along the seafront at Raheny looking north east towards Howth Head. The walk began with prayers at the parish hall of All Saint's, led by Rev'd Ashling Shine, the NSM attached to the parish; she included in her prayers the hope for a dry walk, even with a blink of sunshine! Fourteen members, several husbands, the Diocesan Chaplain Rev'd Leonard Ruddock and his wife Hazel, had gathered at the hall for this quiet time of prayer. Ashling and Karen Nelson (D and G DP) then led the walk from the church grounds. Besides these two ladies and June, those walking included the DPs of Kildare, Elphin & Ardagh, Tuam, Killala & Achonry, Derry and Raphoe and Clogher - Hazel, Myrtle, Jacqui and Irene - as well as David Nairn - Tuam, Barbara Smyth - KEA, and Mary White - D and G.



Dublin & Glendalough



On a glorious Monday morning – the October public holiday in the Republic of Ireland – twelve MU members and one stalwart husband gathered at the parish church of St Mary in Blessington, Co Wicklow to join in a short period of prayer led by the Dublin and Glendalough MU Diocesan Chaplain, Rev'd Canon Leonard Ruddock. He is also the rector of the three parishes in the Blessington Union. It was June's final walk in this Diocese. Nine walkers began the walk from the church up the main road to join the Blessington Greenway near the Avon Ri activity complex. Accompanying June and Canon Leonard were the D. & G. DP Karen Nelson (and her lovely little dog, Alfie) Trustee Ada Lawson, Meath and Kildare DP Sylvia Wheatley and her husband Tom who live just over the diocesan border, Rev'd Canon John Clarke and his wife Jessica, and local branch member Margaret Stanley.



Forty members from KEA joined with June, Bishop Ferran Glenfield, the Diocesan Chaplin, Rev'd Richard Waller and the local rector, Rev'd Simon Donohoe, for a short time of prayer at Tom Regan Church, Ballyconnell. June also said a few words about her "21 in 21" challenge and about the MIM Fund. A group of 30 set off down the hill from the church into Ballyconnell village and, at the end of the main road through the village, turned right to join the path beside the Woodford Canal, part of the Shannon-Erne Waterway which was re-opened in 1993. The walk was led by Phyllis Cassidy (who is a member of the Swanlinbar/Kilallon MU branch based in the church at Ballyconnell) and she set a brisk pace for the walk.



The second walk in the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh began with a short act of worship for the twenty or so MU members who had gathered at St John's parish in the centre of Longford. This was held in glorious sunshine and was led by Ann Howard, a Diocesan Trustee, and by the branch leader, Diane Stewart. There were prayers, and bible readings and even hymns amplified across the graveyard from Ann's phone. Fittingly one of these was "Walk, walk in the light"!! June was presented with a lovely bag of Longford "goodies" and she spoke for a few minutes about MIM and this year's efforts to rebuild the Fund all focussed around "21 in 21".

Kilmore Elphin & Ardagh



The final walk in KEA at Strandhill, June realised precisely why the town has that name, as she walked on the strand, and under the hill which overlooks the town – and encountered a steep incline back uphill at the end of the walk.

To begin the day there was a lovely service in St Anne's Church on the outskirts of Strandhill - it was led by the Rev'ds Michael and Ann Wooderson and was based on the prayers for Mary Sumner Day which had been the previous day – 9th August. The service had been prepared by the rector of St Anne's, Dean Arfon Williams, who was unable to be present due to another commitment but sent his best wishes for the day. June also gave a short welcome and explained about the purposes of the "21 in 21" walks.





June had her first venture into Limerick and Killaloe Diocese on a lovely late summer morning. D.P. Lucy Kavanagh, Margaret Schutz (Branch leader of Limerick City Branch) and June joined the worshippers for the normal morning prayer service in St Mary's Cathedral, led by the Dean, the Very Rev'd Niall Sloane. During the prayers he referred specifically to Mothers' Union and their work and included the three members present by name and role. They subsequently had a coffee with the Dean at a local restaurant before DP Lucy, MU member Adrienne Baron, also from Limerick City Branch, and June set off on their 7.2km walk. They headed away from the Cathedral and the centre of Limerick city along the pathway beside the Park Canal. This cycle and walkway, now known as the Rhebogoe Neighbourhood Greenway, has been remodelled in recent years.



June's second walk in Limerick and Killaloe began with over 20 members and friends gathering in the beautiful parish church of St Nicholas, formerly known as the "Black Abbey" - an Augustinian Friary founded in 1316 by the Earl of Kildare, on the outskirts of Adare to have a short service of morning prayer. This had been arranged by the Branch Leader, Jessie Griffin, and it was led by a local lay reader, Dorothy Brislane. Not only were MU members present but there were several ladies from Adare Methodist Church and the local "Active Retired" group as well as visitors from the dioceses of Derry and Raphoe and Cork, Cloyne and Ross.



June's final walk in Limerick and Killaloe was organised by the Ballinasloe Branch Leader, Jackie Eastwood and was planned as the "Walk of Seven Churches" as well as a conducted tour of this historic town.

Limerick & Killaloe

After gathering outside the porch of the church in the sunshine for photographs, seven walkers headed off on the 7km walk, under the leadership of Rosemary Shier from Adare MU Branch.



The group of walkers gathered at Ballinasloe Christian Fellowship Church in the centre of the town - this was a converted storehouse which now serves all parts of the community and, in these times, also acts as a food bank. Seven walkers set off - as well as Jackie, June and Diocesan President Lucy Kavanagh, there were the local rector, Rev'd John Godfrey and his dog, and MU members Jill Cooke, Frances Hurley and Kathleen Newtown.





June's first in Meath and Kildare, began with a short formal service in the parish church of St Catherine in Tullamore – a beautiful Gothic style early 19th century church with a three-story tower, sitting in an imposing location on the top of Hop Hill overlooking the Charleville estate on the edge of the town. The short service focussed on the theme of pilgrimage and was led by Rev. Fran Grasham and Rev. Isaac Delamere; June gave a short reflection and the Diocesan President, Sylvia Wheatley, read the lesson. There were very meaningful prayers, including Mary Sumner's prayer, and two beautiful hymns – all to set the scene for a lovely walk. Around 25 people attended the service and afterwards gathered outside for lunch and light refreshments.



Her second walk took place on a dull but dry day in the centre of the Diocese of Meath and Kildare – at the Curragh. The afternoon began at St Patrick's Church in Newbridge where the MU Diocesan Chaplain, Rev'd Ruth O'Kelly, led over 20 members in a short service of thanksgiving. Bishop Pat Storey gave a short, very poignant reflection based on Psalm 46 and, after the service concluded, June spoke for a few moments about Mums in May and the commemoration services for the life and witness of Annabella Hayes which had been held in Dublin a fortnight earlier.

Present also was the rector, the Very Rev'd Tim Wright and his wife, Karen. Everyone who attended the service took time for tea and fellowship on the steps of the church afterwards, before driving the short distance to the Curragh to begin the walk. Twelve members and friends started the 7km walk, which covered the undulating grassland close to the famous racecourse.



Meath & Kildare



On a beautiful autumnal Saturday 17 ladies and gentlemen met at St Mary's Parish Church in the centre of Navan for coffee; here they were welcomed by the Diocesan President, Sylvia Wheatley and the Rector, Rev'd Canon John Clarke. They assembled for photographs on the steps of the church before heading off down the main street towards the entrance to the Boyne Walk. This walk the third and final one in Meath and Kildare – was led by Sandra Clarke, the rector's wife who is also Branch Secretary, and the Navan Branch Leader, Leah Malcolm. Others who were present included several Diocesan Trustees - Olive Potterton F&C, Eileen McKenna Overseas and Ruth Moloney F&P - the Newbridge Branch Leader, the Dean of Trim, the Very Rev'd Paul Bogle, and members from branches within the Diocese, as well as a few husbands and brother.



June's first in Tuam, Killala and Achonry took place in Westport, Co Mayo, the furthest west June had travelled on this journey. Canon Jen McWhirter, who is also the MU Diocesan Chaplain, led the four other walkers in morning prayer at her parish in Holy Trinity Church in Westport before they set off on their morning's walk. June hadn't visited the church before and was amazed at its size and the elaborate Italianate-style marble interior.

The walkers accompanying June were Myrtle Nairn, the Diocesan President and her husband David, and Canon Jen and her daughter. They walked along the road beside Westport College of Further Education, into the grounds of Westport House, passing in front of the Hotel Westport.



Before June's second walk in TKA - 12 members from branches near and far met at St Michael's parish church in Ballina for morning prayer which incorporated MU Midday Prayers and a short devotion on the theme of the fellowship of Mothers' Union. The service was led by the rector, Archdeacon Stephen McWhirter, assisted by Caroline Morrow, the OLM who is attached to the parish. Those who were going to undertake the walk travelled about a mile across the town to Belleek Forest Park, 200 acres of woodland and trees which lie on the outskirts of Ballina. These lie in the grounds of the former home of the aristocratic Knox-Gore family, which was called Belleek Manor and is now the Belleek Castle Hotel. Nine folk began the walk - led by DP Myrtle Nairn and her husband David.



Tuam Killala & Achonry



Fifteen ladies and gentlemen assembled at Skreen Parish Church in Co Sligo for morning prayer, led by the Rev'd Canon Noel Regan. It is a beautiful small church sitting in the countryside and is so much larger than it looks from outside. After assembling for a diocesan photograph on the steps, about ten of those present travelled the short distance by car to Aughris on the coast of Sligo Bay.



Three ladies tackled a shorter walk while seven folk joined June on her final 7km walk in Tuam Diocese. They were the Diocesan President, Myrtle Nairn and her husband David, the Diocesan Chaplain Canon Jen McWhirter, Canon Noel Regan, Diocesan Trustees Audrey Moore and Sheila Bourke and the Churchwarden of Skreen Parish, Alan Greer.



NEWS FROM ARMAGH

Armagh Diocesan Mothers' Union Annual Prayer Breakfast and Vigil:



Armagh Diocesan Mothers' Union held their Annual Prayer Breakfast and Vigil in Armagh City Hotel on Saturday 27th November, 2021.

The theme for the breakfast was the campaign "The United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and Abuse" - a rallying call to members of the Anglican Communion to take action against Gender-Based Violence.

Stated a Mothers' Union spokesperson: "We are meeting today as part of Mothers' Union's response to this call. In venues up and down the country, members are coming together in fellowship to raise awareness of the need to end Gender-Based Violence in all forms and in all societies and we are calling for a stop to this scourge."

It is a shocking statistic that 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime.

Almost 100 members enjoyed breakfast including the Armagh Diocesan President, Sophia Dillon.



Gifts delivered to Ward 4 South in Craigavon Hospital from Armagh Diocesan Mothers' Union just in time for Christmas Day. Staff said how much they appreciate the kindness of Mothers' Union as these patients would see no visitors over the Christmas period.

The Ward Manager in Craigavon Neo Natal Unit was delighted to receive such a number of knitted items for use in the Unit.



NEWS FROM CASHEL, FERNS & OSSORY

Sadly, due to the continued restrictions caused by covid-19 Branches, Trustees and Council meetings continued to be held via zoom. Lesley Bayley, Diocesan President, kept members up to date with all of the news through the production of a monthly newsletter. The Diocese continued to support families in need through the School Book & Uniform Bursary Scheme and AFIA. Families were very grateful to receive this much needed support.



Thankfully we were able to hold our Global Day service in person and this took place in St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny. The service was led by the Diocesan President, Lesley Bayley, assisted by the Bishop's Vicar, The Revd. Dr. Richard Marsh and the preacher was the Diocesan MU Chaplain, Revd. Canon Ian Cruickshank. Music was provided by Naomi Besanson on the piano.

There was a wonderful response to the collection for the local refuge and they were delighted to receive these donations. Branches throughout the Diocese also collected clothes, toiletries and toys for refuges in their area. The refuges greatly appreciate the support they receive from Mothers' Union



We are delighted to have filled two of the vacant positions among Trustees. We welcome William Bayley, who was elected as Overseas Representative, and Valerie Power, who was elected as Unit Coordinator for Action & Outreach. Valerie will bring a great deal of knowledge and expertise to this area from her involvement with Bishop's Appeal.

During Advent Lesley organised a weekly zoom service. Members were delighted to participate in these acts of worship and as a result she decided to continue holding zoom services on special church occasions ~ the Feast of the Epiphany, to mark the week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Ash Wednesday, every Monday in Lent, during Holy Week etc.

The time, thought and preparation Lesley puts into these services is greatly appreciated by all those who log in to join in prayer and fellowship.



NEWS FROM CLOGHER

As part of the Global Day of Action against domestic abuse and sexual violence, a service of worship was held on Saturday 27 November 2021 in **St Patrick's Church, Monaghan**. The opening welcome, "As we raise our voices on behalf of the voiceless, we also raise our voices in worship and intercession to our loving righteous God," began a meaningful and challenging service with Mothers' Union members and friends attending. The service was led by the Rev'd Chancellor Ian Berry.

Mothers' Union Members Linda Keating, Jennifer Leathem, Dorothy Adams, Margaret Howe, Audrey Hill and Barbara Clarke participated through readings and prayers. The reflection by Rev'd. Elaine Dunn spoke on Gathering together to end Gender-Based Violence. Mothers' Union is part of a worldwide campaign in raising awareness of, and call for an end to, gender-based violence.

Siobhan McKenna talked about the role of Tearmann Domestic Abuse Services in Monaghan and described that One in four women in Ireland experience abuse in their relationship. Siobhan thanked the Mothers' Union members for their continued support and generous donations to Tearmann. Members of the MU Trustee Board came forward wearing scarves in a 3 minutes silence from 1.00 to 1.03, in fitting with the theme of #NOMORE1in3.



As part of the Global Day of Action against domestic abuse and sexual violence, a service of worship was held on Saturday 27 November 2021 in **St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen**. The opening welcome, "As we raise our voices on behalf of the voiceless, we also raise our voices in worship and intercession to our loving righteous God," began a meaningful and challenging service with over 60 Mothers' Union members and friends attending. The service was led by the Very Rev'd Canon Kenneth Hall, the organist was Mrs Diane Simpson and a reflection was given by the Right Rev'd Dr Ian Ellis, Bishop of Clogher.

Taking part in readings and prayers were Rev'd Charles Eames, Caroline Watterson, Norma Scott, Harriett Kirkpatrick, Valerie McMorris, and Sally Masterson. Some words from a hymn sung summed up the message conveyed to all who gathered "God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray: melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain; come, change our love from a spark to a flame." Members of the Trustee Board took part in the act of action for 'No more one in 3' where they wore purple scarves and stood in silence for 3 minutes before removing their scarves.

Women's Aid worker Kerrie gave a moving and informative message about the work being done by the charity. She mentioned the thoughts and experiences of women who, as they face leaving their home or attending court appointments, are reminded of the loving acts of those who contributed clothing and toiletries to support the charity. The aroma of bath salts and the warm feel of PJs, scarf and gloves bring so much comfort at a time of trauma. They do not know who contributed these items but these loving gifts have made a difference to them. The charity was overwhelmed by the outstanding generosity of Mothers' Union members who contributed items for emergency packs for women. Local MLA Deborah Erskine attended and visited the Women's Aid Centre afterwards to share her support for this campaign.

NEWS FROM CONNOR DIOCESE

Connor Diocese marked the Global Day of Action, on Saturday November 27th with a short service, led by the Rev Jason Kernohan, in All Saints Parish Church, Eglantine during which 16 candles were lit by Cathy Doig, Connor Social Policy Contact and the 3 minutes of silence was observed.



Prayers were led by Sally Cotter, Diocesan President, and Cathy Doig. We were delighted to be joined by Bishop George and Mrs Davison, along with members from across the Diocese.



Members who were unable to attend were encouraged to join with us in their homes for silence at 1.03, and the order of service was available on the Connor MU website. The service was available to watch on Facebook and the website later on that day.



Many Branches used the material provided at their Branch meetings and prayers were led by MU members at church services throughout the 16 days of the Campaign.

Connor Diocese Supporting Women's Aid ABCLN:

Connor Diocese Autumn Council meeting was held in St. Patrick's Parish Church, Ballymena and representatives from Women's Aid ABCLN had been invited along to talk to those present about their vital work.

Women's Aid ABCLN covers the Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey area. As supporters of the 16 Days of Activism against gender violence campaign, it is vitally important that Connor members hear first-hand about the work of Women's Aid within our communities.



During the Covid-19 pandemic the instances of domestic abuse have risen sharply. Many branches within Connor already help local Women's Aid refuges with donations of toilet bags, bedding and clothing. When it became evident that due to the pandemic the diocese could not operate the AFIA project, the Diocesan Trustee and Executive committee decided to re-imagine AFIA and the outcome was to support Women's Aid ABCLN with fuel vouchers.

The diocese has provided two very generous donations of fuel vouchers for local families and it is hoped that the practical support to Women's Aid ABCLN will help ease the burden of fuel costs at this time.

NEWS FROM CORK, CLOYNE AND ROSS



Hilary Dring Writes: Over the autumn months Mothers' Union members took to the highways and byways of Cork, both city and county, to raise funds for the Mums in May fund – what a great time we had, walking and talking, getting soaked, enjoying the sunshine, drinking tea together, sharing stories and praying together. The views were at times magnificent, at times we were in the fog; it was always enjoyable!

'21 in 21' was the tagline – do 21 of something and raise some money to help fund projects all across Ireland. So I thought what could I do? I could walk 21 x 5km and raise a few bob. Little did I realise how wonderful a plan it would be. For a year and a half we had not been able to have any meetings or services, members had been 'cocooning' and were isolated and often lonely. As I contacted the different branches, and the walks were organised one by one, I experienced the sheer joy of seeing people meet up again after not seeing each other for so long. It was simply amazing to bring people together in different places, to have the support of the clergy, who led us in prayer as we set out and often walked with us. It seemed such a simple thing to do but it turned out to be also a profound thing to do. Members and others were encouraged and strengthened as we gathered. The friendship and fellowship which is such a big part of Mothers' Union was able to take place again in person. Travelling around the county was a wonderful experience and I learned so, so much about the different areas thanks to the local knowledge that 'walked' with me. I visited places I had never been before and learned of the history of Cork in a new light.



Thank you to all who walked with me, to those who organised the walks, the teas, the prayers, the raising of funds. My 21 walks have raised just short of €3,000 and, along with the great efforts of many other members in Cork, we have raised a total of €7878 so far which is incredible. Across Ireland we estimate that the amount will be well above €50,000, which will go towards local projects and towards changing people's lives over the next three years.

Mothers' Union – Reaching Out - Making a Difference!!

NEWS FROM DERRY AND RAPHOE

Trustees, building on their plan for 2020-21 to empower and encourage members through connectivity, rebuild hope and confidence and address loneliness and isolation, applied for funding from NI Awards for All. Under the logo, 'mu.it. mothers' union in touch', they were successful in securing a substantial grant to buy gifts and print Harvest and Christmas newsletters, full of articles and activities relating to each season. A 'goodie bag' was prepared and delivered to each member containing not only the newsletters, but a variety of MU literature and their gift, at Harvest an MU mask, biscuit and tea bag and at Christmas a perfumed candle. Gifts from Ally Foyle, the local network for elderly groups, who offer recreational and social activities, enabled trustees to distribute further gifts to elderly members. The bags were received with grateful surprise and delight and were additional morale boosters to previous support given to members, to remind them they had not been forgotten.

Annual Diocesan Service:



Joyful anticipation was in the air as members gathered in September, socially distanced, in the beautiful St Columba's Church, Omagh, for the Annual Diocesan Service. Going ahead without the usual pageantry of banners, members were delighted former MU Worldwide President Lady Eames was in attendance to lend her support. Seven members were commissioned to their new roles by the Rt. Rev'd Andrew Forster during the service. As it was Prisons Week, the sermon, preached by AI President June, highlighted the 'great plans' the diocese had as part of their outreach to support the family centre at HMP Magilligan.

Prison, she said in her sermon, was often used as a metaphor for human distress, and she related confinement of those imprisoned physically for punishment or political reasons, to those members imprisoned in their own homes due to Covid 19. She assured members that God, guided by the Holy Spirit, is with anyone confined in their own personal prisons and helps them endure being away from family and friends. It was an incredibly special and heart-warming service and members retired for the evening feeling inspired and uplifted to face the future, whatever it may hold.

16 Days Global Day of Activism

There was a poignant demonstration of solidarity with domestic abuse victims at the 16 Days Global Day of Activism in November at St Columba's Cathedral, Londonderry

Signifying their wish for an end to 1 in 3 victims, members, socially distanced in groups of 3, designated one member to cover her head with a purple scarf. During the service members were addressed by 3 local ladies from Domestic Abuse agencies and heard graphic accounts illustrating the extent and impact of domestic abuse in the diocese. Bishop Andrew Forster, who was deeply distressed to see so many, "affected by this terrible evil" said men, as well as women, need to call out, challenge and raise awareness of domestic abuse'



NEWS FROM DOWN & DROMORE

Commissioning of New Down & Dromore Diocesan President

Congratulations to Mrs Mavis Thompson and Revd Duncan Pollock who have been commissioned as MU Diocesan President and Diocesan Chaplain respectively. The MU Trustees for the diocese were also commissioned at the service which took place in Dromore Cathedral on Wednesday 2 February. Bishop David gave the address.



Mavis has been Area Representative of Ballynahinch Area for the past few years and in 2020 became a Trustee as Worldwide Representative. Overseas work has always been part of her life as her late father was secretary of a missionary society and she grew up with missionaries visiting her home. Mavis writes: God has been with me in my decision to accept this position. Two verses have stood out - Philippians 4:6 *"Do not be anxious about anything"* and Deuteronomy 31:8 *"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you"*. It is reassuring to at God will be with me and will guide me as I take up this post.



Mount Merrion Parish, Belfast

Mother's Union once again provided support in the form of lunch bags for children during their Easter school holidays. The **'Grub Club'** is a regular feature now during school holidays at Mount Merrion Church in Belfast and Down and Dromore Mothers' Union assists the local Parish in addressing the need for nutritious meals when school meals are not available, even though the pandemic limits what can safely be provided.



Kilkeel Parish - Support for The Fishermen's Mission.



In Ireland, The Fishermen's Mission has 3 centres - Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie, all in the Diocese of Down and Dromore. The Fishermen's Mission is the only charity that provides emergency support, practical, financial, spiritual and emotional care for fishermen and their families who may suffer financial uncertainty and strain caused by long periods spent away from home. Mothers' Union members at Christ Church Kilkeel have recently been involved in providing over 100 knitted hats, along with toiletries and chocolate, not only for locals but for the many fishermen arriving in Kilkeel as part of this international industry. Whoever thought of making a knitted hat Christmas Tree - BRILLIANT!

Dromore Parish

Lots of fun and fellowship at a recent branch meeting when Kate Maguire demonstrated how to make a Christmas wreath using only natural materials from the garden. Not a piece of plastic in sight and really lovely seasonal decorations produced. While enjoying mince pies and shortbread, the members who were present contributed £345 for the MU coordinator to buy gifts for the children and women who spent Christmas season at the Woman's Refuge in Newry. This money was wisely spent and much appreciated as our coordinator takes the trouble to match the support provided to the needs of the individual women and children living there. In moving towards the conclusion of our second unusual MU year, another lot of knitting - coats, hats, trauma teddies and a twiddle muff will soon be on its way to those in need.



Lord Jesus, give us what we need to follow your calling to be your disciples, so that we may reflect your grace and mercy to all, through the work of Mothers' Union.

NEWS FROM DUBLIN & GLENDALOUGH

New Diocesan President:

The Dublin & Glendalough Trustees & Council welcomes its new President Mrs Ada Lawson who will be commissioned in St Brigid's Church Castleknock on Friday 25th March. Ada is a member since 1990 and is from a presbyterian family. She married Robert Lawson RIP and has two adult sons Theo and Paul. We wish Ada every success in her new role. Her Commissioning Service will take place on 25th March 2022 at 7.30pm. The preacher will be Canon Aisling Shine.



16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence:

The 2021 16 Days of Activism took place from 25th November to 10th December. The basis for this year's event was the Mothers' Union Prayer Diary compiled for the occasion and for use by all Dioceses as they deemed appropriate. For each of the ten days there was a separate Video which consisted of An Introduction, A Reflection, A Bible Reading followed by prayer and finally information relating to all services in the Dioceses that are available to those who are suffering abuse. Each day was led by members of Mothers' Union from around the branches, the President, Trustees and the Chaplain. In addition, there was a presentation via Zoom on Day 4 by Mary Kennedy, a Social Work PhD candidate who spoke about the impact of Domestic Abuse on children. On Day 13, there was a Communion Service in Christchurch Cathedral where the Guest Speaker was Kelly Bermingham from CriTiCall, a service that provides a central Hub for practical aid for the Homeless. All these events were held under Covid-19 restrictions and were a mix of online and in person formats. The President would like to thank all involved for their participation.

Breakfast with the Theme of Transformation Now: Rebuilding Hope & Confidence.



This breakfast was held in the Springfield Hotel, Leixlip on Saturday 26th February 2022. Over 70 people attended and enjoyed the opportunity to hear Mrs. June Butler, All Ireland President speak about reconnecting and seeing how we could do things differently in the future. Hymn 549, Dear Lord and Father of mankind was used to illustrate how we can transform our lives, by keeping in touch with each other, look at what we used to do and use resources available to us now to do things differently such as virtual and outdoor meetings. We can focus on communicating internally in a different way. Let some things go and look at how we can focus on projects and fundraising underpinned by prayer. Look at what we can do differently in small steps in this triennium

National Womens' Council (NWC):

Pension Justice for all so that women are not disadvantaged.

Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and gender-based violence. There are many aspects to this which is complicated by the inequality that exists between genders.

Submission on Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 of particular interest to rural women.

A Care Economy for a Fair Economy – Investing and Delivering for Women in Budget 2022 this is relevant to everybody,

Submission to the NCCA SPHE Curriculum Consultation. Women in Rural Communities Paper For more info:

<https://www.nwc.ie>

Hon Treasurer:



Mrs Jean Denner has retired from her role as Hon Treasurer of Mothers Union which she has held since 2011. Jean says the following: "As I retire from the position of Diocesan Hon Treasurer of Mothers Union which I have held since 2011, I reflect on this experience, I have enjoyed my time, made many friends and enjoyed the many phone calls from branch Hon Treasurers. I would like to thank all Branch Hon Treasurers for their support by getting returns to me on time, I would also like to thank the Hon Accountant for his help in getting the end of year reports completed. It was only with the help of many that the Hon Treasurer can complete her job and I am sure you will all support my successor Hazel Ruddock as she takes up her new role.

Lastly, I would like to thank the two Diocesan Presidents, Joy Gordon and Karen Nelson, that I served under. I am looking forward to spending my free time with my husband Mervyn, who has been a great support, and my family."

Christmas Appeal

Once again the branches were extremely generous with their donations towards the Christmas Appeal. Everything was brought to one house for sorting between Darndale, the Women's Refuges (Aoibhneas, Saoirse and Sonas) and the Home Start project. This is only the second year we have done this to ensure the right goods are going to each project and to isolate them for Covid reasons.



Having sorted all the books, toys, toiletries, clothes, selection boxes and gift bags out. We were able to determine what to spend the money donated on. Many had donated money as they could not or preferred not to go to the shops to get items. The money was used to purchase boxes for Home Start packs, sponges for Home Start packs, extra toys for Darndale, towels for Refuges and vouchers for Refuges to give to clients to help them with budgeting.

All the goods were delivered to Home Start and the three women's refuges, whilst Darndale collected their goods. All donations were very well received.

"The Jigsaw Centre really appreciate the time and generosity of you all in helping to make this a very special Christmas for the children" **Darndale**

"Through your help we were able to provide vouchers, hampers and gifts to 209 women and children engaged in our services who need critical, practical and financial assistance at Christmas." **Aoibhneas Refuge.**

"Once again you have excelled yourselves with your generosity, it was greatly appreciated by the residents." **Sonass Refuge**

"Your donations will further help us in supporting our clients who are having difficult times." **Saoirse Refuge**



"We are overwhelmed once again at how much thought has gone into putting these packages together for some of our most vulnerable mothers. You have excelled yourselves again with the lovely colourful boxes so beautifully presented." Home-Start

NEWS FROM KILMORE ELPHIN AND ARDAGH

The initiative by our Action and Outreach Coordinator, Mrs Leila Beattie to knit, crochet or sew knee rugs, twiddle muffs & fiddle blankets for residents in Nursing Homes is proving to be a resounding success. Knee rugs and twiddle muffs have been delivered to Care Homes across the Diocese

Over 50 baby hats were presented to Cavan General Hospital. Some premature hats and matinee coats went to Temple Street Children's Hospital.

Many trauma teddies were presented to Longford Women's Link and to Sleep Out Cavan.

Leila has received letters of appreciation from many of the nursing homes who were delighted to receive the knee rugs and twiddle muffs.

More recently a need for bags to hold syringe driver bags for use with palliative care patients has been identified. These can be knitted or sewed. There is a scarcity of these due to Covid 19, so palliative care is delighted to receive them. Some have also been presented to Cavan General Hospital.

MU Masks

A big thankyou to Hazel Gumley and Leila Beattie who have made face masks for every member.

These were greatly appreciated by those who have received them.



16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2021:



A prayer vigil was held in St. John's Cathedral Sligo on Saturday 27th November to mark 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. In this Service we united with organisation across the world to champion the cause of justice and to offer up our prayers for all who are affected by abuse and violence. The speaker was Marie Casserly, a councillor from Sligo. The service was well attended by public representatives and church leaders. A big thankyou to Marlet Hunter and Mary Geelan for organising the service and to all who took part.

A service was also held In Virginia Parish Church on Saturday 4th December. The Speaker at this service was Michael Loughman from Sleepout, Cavan. Thanks again to Mary Geelan, Marlet Hunter and Vida McCauley for organising the service. Charlotte Browne presented 25 caps to Michael Loughman which she had knitted.



NEWS FROM LIMERICK & KILLALOE

Adare Branch Outing – June 2021:



A wonderful afternoon of admiring all the beautiful shrubs and flowers in the gardens of Lady Harrington, The Glen, Ballingarry, Co. Limerick was had by the members of Adare Branch when they held their first meeting and outing since the lockdown. All Covid guidelines and rules were followed as the members walked around the beautiful gardens in the June sunshine.



The group then moved on to Glen Brook House, the garden of Diana Williams, a member of Adare Branch, for afternoon tea. The weather was beautiful and it was really lovely to be able to reconnect with friends with plenty of chat, tea and goodies.



VIGIL FOR 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:



On November 27th, on what was the Global Day of Activism, a small group of us gathered in St. Mary's Cathedral for our Diocesan Vigil Against Gender Based Violence. Our vigil was led by Rev'd Canon Jane Galbraith, Diocesan Chaplain, and ably assisted by Rev'd Dr Leonard Madden. Jane took us through a very visual and powerful vigil starting with a reflection and then going on to list the many ways that gender-based violence can be perpetrated. A candle was lit as each form of gender-based violence was read out, 16 in total, but there are many more as we know. Jane preached a sermon that highlighted how difficult and hidden this problem is and that we must all bear responsibility to try to raise the profile of abuse and through our actions, very gradually, make a difference. The vigil was live streamed to the diocese as with Covid restrictions we were prevented from gathering together in a large crowd.

KNITTING: I will shortly be delivering another bag of knits to the neo natal unit in the Mid-West Regional Maternity Hospital. These items were beautifully knitted by several of our members and we urge everyone in our diocese to continue to knit both for our maternity hospitals and our refuges. My huge thanks to Vida Cowpar from Limerick City Branch who has just handed in a huge bag full of little hats for the neo natal unit. All knitted items are so much appreciated by those who need them.

CONNECTING AGAIN PRAYER BRUNCH: We are all looking forward to this diocesan event to be held on 14th May in Cloughjordan, in the middle of our diocese. We will start with tea/coffee and a chat and then we will be joined by Lydia Monds who will speak to us about her work with Bishops' Appeal and some other things that she is involved in. This will be followed by some crafting fun. Rev'd Canon Jane Galbraith, our Diocesan Chaplain will then lead us in prayers and reflections. We will end our get together with a light lunch before heading home. We really hope that by May we will all be feeling a little bit more positive about bringing our members together again to enjoy each other's company and fellowship.

NEWS FROM MEATH & KILDARE

Sylvia Wheatley, Diocesan President, reported that the Diocese had very little going on due to the continuing Covid-19 restrictions. All of their meetings and services were held on Zoom and Sylvia said, "I think we are experts by now!"

Thanks to on-line Meath & Kildare had their Global Day Service on Friday December 10, 2021. Rev'd Ruth O'Kelly, Diocesan Chaplain, conducted and Ruth Moloney, Faith & Policy Co-ordinator, organised the readers etc. The guest speaker was Sandra Beattie who is Violet Beattie's daughter, Mothers' Union Newbridge. Sylvia "interviewed" Sandra about her work in Sudan. It was very interesting to hear what she does there and she brought it home to everyone about what is happening in the world.

The members have been in constant contact with older folk in the Church family and anyone who was isolated or vulnerable. Members have been busily knitting during Covid-19 and knitted items were distributed to various hospitals. Thanks to all who took part in this worthy activity. Keep up the good work.

Sylvia attended the 16 Days Service in St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny. Cashel, Ferns & Ossory Diocese had collected donations for refuges and had surplus donations which they very kindly gave to her. Sylvia added extra items to make up two hampers which were brought to refuges in Kildare Town and Navan. Both were very appreciative.



NEWS FROM TUAM, KILLALA AND ACHONRY



It was quite a pleasure to be able to hold the annual Diocesan Service at Hoy Trinity Church, Westport led by our Diocesan Chaplain Rev'd Canon Jen McWhirter, in May. During the service Ann Nethaway was commissioned as Unit Co-Ordinator for Fundraising and Communications, while two Vice Presidents Audrey Moore and Heather Sherlock as well as the Diocesan Chaplain Rev'd Jennifer were also commissioned.

Every parish was contacted and given Information Posters with regard to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

Global Day was highlighted at St Nicholas Church, Galway



Mothers' UNION

ANNUAL GATHERING

2022

Belfast ~ 23rd & 24th September



Friday 23rd September 2022

Two Services will take place in
St. Anne's Cathedral in Belfast.
4.30p.m. and 7.00p.m.

Saturday 24th September

Mothers' Union Annual Gathering in
The Waterfront Conference Centre
Doors open at 9.30am



A concert will take place in the Waterfront Conference Centre on the Saturday evening. All of the events will be ticketed.

Please keep an eye on the website for further details:

www.mothersunion.ie or www.mothersunion.org