

## Thursdays in Black interview with June Butler, All-Ireland President



### Why and when did you decide to participate in Thursdays in Black?

I first learned about it in the offices of the Anglican Communion in New York when I was attending the **UN Commission on the Status of Women** as a Mothers' Union delegate last March. It was a Thursday afternoon and all the ladies attending our meeting were dressed entirely in black.

I thought they were paying respect to the New Zealand delegate as it was just after the dreadful shootings in Christchurch and apologised for being dressed in colour.

They explained to me about the “*Thursdays in Black*” campaign set up at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the World Council of Churches and relaunched in 2018 with the aim of encouraging people worldwide to wear black clothing on Thursdays as a reminder of the need to act against sexual violence in all its forms.

The ladies gave me a few of the TIB badges and I have been wearing black and a badge on Thursdays since; I've given the others to people whom I know will spread this important message.



### How has Thursdays in Black impacted you personally?

It makes me appreciate how fortunate I am and remember how so many others in this world are subjected regularly to rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment. I know these are evils which have always been and still are present in our society and I want to use *Thursdays In Black* as a vehicle to raise awareness of them and encourage everyone to work towards a world which is free of them.

### When people ask you about your button, what is your message to them?



I was influenced immensely in this campaign by Canon Terrie Robinson, The Anglican Communion's Director for Women in Church and Society. She has been quoted as saying “A commitment to wearing black one day every week means getting into a rhythm of constantly ‘showing up’ as a visual, challenging and urgent reminder that rape happens and must stop.

It's also a commitment to being activist – in prayer and deed – against the abuse of power.” I try to get those messages across when anyone asks me about the *Thursdays In Black* badge.



## How is Mothers' Union addressing gender-based violence?

Mothers' Union highlights gender based violence in all its forms throughout the year. In particular, during the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence Against Women*, (25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December), Mothers' Union highlights the **disproportionate effect** of gender based violence on women.

Figures from the World Health Organisation show that, globally, an estimated 23-37% of women suffer violence from an intimate partner, and that 38% of all women murdered across the world are killed by their partner.

The '16 Days' provides the opportunity to raise awareness prayerfully and practically, to show solidarity with victims, and to put pressure on governments to take action.

It gives hope and creates a better informed understanding among communities and individuals.

## What difference do you think Thursdays in Black can make to your current efforts?

Every new initiative we undertake as Mothers' Union members serves to focus and energise us in our quest to live in a world where gender based violence is eradicated, and we can walk in our communities in safety and without fear.



It encourages us to be active and willing to step outside our comfort zones and tackle the root causes of such violence. It is that weekly reminder to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who suffer gender based violence, and to pray for restoration, healing and wholeness as we reflect the heart of God in our communities.

It may sometimes feel like we are tiptoeing but in five years' time we shall look back and see how long our strides have become!

**Every Thursday, Mothers' Union invites members and friends to call for an end to rape, violence and domestic abuse as they re-energise and commit as Godly people of faith to**

***'Thursdays in Black'***

