

The recently launched campaign 'Empower Her – Illiteracy Doesn't Make Sense' aims to put women's education on the global agenda. 480 million women around the world cannot read or write, resulting in disadvantage, exclusion and poverty.

Millions of adults cannot register the birth of their child, read a medicine packet, or apply for a job. They are excluded from so much.

Illiteracy does not make sense! We all agree that access to education for children is a fundamental human right. Yet millions of women continue to miss out on education. You can add your voice to the campaign and find stories and resources at: www.mothersunion.org/empowerher



You might think that **slavery** is a thing of the past. But right now, almost 50 million people are trapped in slavery worldwide. It is a problem that affects every country on earth – including ours.

Anti-Slavery International define modern slavery as when an individual is exploited by others, for personal or commercial gain, whether tricked, coerced, or forced, they lose their freedom. This includes, but is not limited to, human trafficking, forced labour, and debt bondage.

Modern slavery is all around us, often hidden in plain sight. People can become enslaved making our clothes, serving our food, picking our crops, working in factories, or working in houses as cooks, cleaners or nannies.

Many people have fallen into the trap of slavery because they were trying to escape poverty or insecurity, improve their lives and support their families. Now, they can't leave! **Anti-slavery Day** takes place annually on October 18th and International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is held on December 2nd. Free downloadable resources are available on www.slavefreealliance.org/anti-slavery-day/



As the cost of living increases, more and more people are finding it hard to manage on a limited budget. It is important to encourage everyone to claim any help that may be available.

For advice on a wide range of issues, including cost of living help, elder abuse, legal matters and financial advice in the Republic of Ireland contact Citizens Advice on **0818 07 4000** and in Northern Ireland contact Advice NI on **0800 915 4604**. Please make sure that this information is widely available in your MU branches and churches!



Homelessness continues to be at record levels and the on- going housing crisis is of major concern to many throughout the island of Ireland. The most recent figures published show that in the Republic of Ireland there were just over **14,000** people living in emergency accommodation, with **4,147** of those being **children** (August), while in Northern Ireland **30,000** households have homeless status (June).

Earlier in the year a template letter was issued to all Diocesan Presidents and we would ask that members update the information and continue to send the letter to their local and national politicians. While we appreciate that postage costs may deter people from getting involved in this campaign, email addresses can be easily obtained either through Google or the relevant county council/government websites.



The Draft Programme for Government was recently published by the NI Executive which includes a commitment to deliver more affordable childcare, provide more housing and to develop a Strategic Framework to end violence against women and

girls. An eight week public consultation period on the draft programme is currently underway and will end on November 4th. We would encourage members to respond to this on an individual basis. To get involved visit <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/PfG-Consultation> with further information available at www.northernireland.gov.uk



The MU 'Changing The Story' **Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Group** is an online programme run over 12 sessions based on the vision of Kintsugi Hope – '**to discover treasures in life's scars**'.

Starting Date: Monday 10th February 2025, the programme includes an in-person weekend in Newcastle, Co. Down (4th-6th April 2025).



Following the recent consultation it has been decided to retain the **Translink SmartPass** and **Senior SmartPass** scheme. The scheme will see the introduction of an initial fee for first time applicants only. SmartPass will cost £20 and Senior SmartPass £12. Thank you to everyone who responded, we believe this scheme is essential to keep older people active, engaged and healthy.



Eco-Congregation Ireland encourages Christians to adopt an eco approach to worship, lifestyle, property and finance management, community outreach and contact with the

developing world. **Why not get involved?** One way to get involved is to **STOP** using **floral foam** (oasis) in church flower arrangements. Floral foam, which is often green and crumbly, is a synthetic material made from plastics such as polyurethane and phenol-formaldehyde. The manufacturing process, which involves the use of several harmful chemicals, is in itself a source of pollution.

The most serious problem with floral foam is that it is not biodegradable. Once it has been used, it ends up in the bin, and the waste remains in the environment for centuries. Unlike other materials used in floriculture, such as paper or cardboard, floral foam does not disintegrate naturally. It crumbles into microplastics, which contaminate soil and waterways, contributing to global plastic pollution. There are more plastic particles in one piece of floral foam than in ten plastic carrier bags.

Here are a few eco-friendly suggestions for your flower arrangements:

- Use pebbles, sand, gravel, clay, marbles, wood aspen, compact moss or even fruit to support floral arrangements.
- Re-trim floral bouquets and change the water regularly to prolong flowers life.
- Pliable twigs also make a good supportive lattice for flowers to be propped against.
- Chicken wire or metal pins are fantastic for securing stems and act as a supportive grate when arranging straight into vases or planters.



The Bronze Award can be easily achieved by your branch/church. There are a few simple steps to take:

1. Put up a RISE UP poster raising awareness about domestic abuse in appropriate public places such as in churches, toilets, community centres, parish halls etc.
2. Commit to pray for those affected by domestic abuse, including the victims, survivors, perpetrators, and those who work in the field of domestic abuse.

3. Make a connection with your local domestic abuse service to see how you can support them.

A range of RISE UP Resources are available for viewing and download at www.mothersunion.org/RISEUP
Register your interest, complete your actions and apply for your award at <https://tinyurl.com/Riseupassess>



What is consent?

When you think about consent think **OMFG**.

O - ONGOING M - MUTUAL FG - FREELY GIVEN

CUAN is the new governmental Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency in Ireland. The agency is currently promoting 'The Consent Conversation' and 'The Always Here' campaigns through ongoing media advertising and further details can be found at www.gov.ie/consent and www.alwayshere.ie which also lists all domestic service providers and help line numbers.



Since 2014 our advocacy and campaigning in the area of gender-based violence has been funded through generous grants and voluntary contributions. If you would like to contribute to the continuing work and outreach of the Mothers' Union 'Changing The Story' Project, it would be much appreciated.



www.gofundme/mothersunionchangingthestory or muchangingthestory@gmail.com



What are the **16 Days of Activism** and why should we care?

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign calls for action against one of the world's most persistent violations of human rights – violence against

women. This year the 16 Days starts on Monday 25th of November, **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women** and ends on Tuesday 10th of December, **World Human Rights Day**. The Mothers' Union Global Day of Action takes place on Saturday 30th of November. During the 16 Days of Activism people around the world unite to raise awareness about gender-based violence, challenge discriminatory attitudes and call for improved laws and services to end violence against women for good.

