

Letter from your Diocesan President

Hello Ladies,

I trust you are all keeping well during these strange times we are living in. We have been unable to meet in our parish halls since the middle of March and lockdown and it seems we will not be resuming our meetings until possibly Christmas or the New Year. Nobody can give accurate dates for anything to happen as our government and the Health agency report each week on the progress of the pandemic and advise us what steps need to be taken. However we were able to have our Prayer Walk and picnic on 9th August at the Palace Demense and were blessed with blue skies and sunshine. I know from those folk who did attend that it was good to have fellowship and enjoy a face to face chat albeit at a social distance.

During Lockdown All Ireland Trustees ran a couple of competitions – the first one was a photographic competition and Armagh Diocese (the only Diocese in the North featured in the prize winners) won two prizes and they both went to Milltown Branch namely Yvonne Woods our Trustee secretary and Janet Smith. Check out the rest of this magazine to see their winning photos and go to the All Ireland website to see all the entries and prize winners. There also was a poetry competition but sadly we did not have any prize winners in it but you can read the two prize winning poems in this magazine and see the others on the website. There will be another competition before Christmas so watch this space.

I hope you were able to see the online service that we recorded as we were unable to have our usual Rural Deanery services. It is available on armagh.anglican.org on the video section date Sunday 13th September. My thanks go to my own rector Canon Shane Forster and Jonathan Hull the communications officer in the Diocese for making this possible – I'm afraid technology and me are not user – friendly. Also I would like to thank Archbishop John for taking time out of his busy schedule to send us his greetings. Also no Rural Deanery services meant we had no collection for Woman's Refuge but we did organise a collection with three of the deaneries and your generosity is overwhelming.

This summer the diocese availed of a grant from Mums In May and we are in the process of planting crocus under the beech tree we planted in May 2017 in the cathedral grounds. These crocus will be a lasting memory to members and friends lost to Covid 19 during the pandemic.

When you receive this magazine Christmas will not be far away and again All Ireland are hosting a competition to design a Christmas card which may be printed for use. So you creative ladies I hope you will have your entry in and let's hope Armagh will feature in the prize winners this time.

Do take care and keep safe and maybe on the night of your meeting you can contact one or two friends in your branch and remind them we "should" be meeting tonight.

Have a peaceful Christmas and remember that this is our Lord's birthday that's what the celebration is about and we can only look forward to a more stable and fruitful New Year in 2021.

God Bless

Sophia

ARMAGH OVERSEAS DONATIONS UPDATE

We are delighted that, to date, we have received a total of £17,320.56 from our MU branches in Armagh Diocese. A huge thank you to all the branch treasurers for sending your Overseas cheques to Yvonne McFarland over the last couple of months. We are very grateful to every single branch member for your continuing generosity, especially at a time when many have been on furlough or are worried about the future of their job. This is a terrific total to date and we do appreciate this impressive collective effort!

There are still about 10 branches who have yet to send their overseas contribution and Yvonne will be happy to receive these as soon as possible.

ARMAGH DIOCESE PRAYER WALK

Sunday afternoon 9th August - Mary Sumner Day, saw a number of Mothers' Union (MU) members from the Diocese arrive at the car park in the Palace Demense in advance of a Prayer Walk

around the Palace grounds. The sun was shining and there was not a cloud in the sky as the first group set off around the palace listening to music and stopping at various points to pray and reflect and give thanks to God for His wonderful creation. Prayers were offered for our founder Mary Sumner, the pandemic we are living in, the hungry, the sick, and the lonely, for the new Archbishop John who had just come to this beautiful Cathedral City, and Leaders and Trustees as they continue the great work of MU around the World in difficult circumstances. The walk concluded outside the private chapel at the Palace with everyone present joining in Mary Sumner Personal Prayer.

Fellowship continued as members had brought along a picnic which was enjoyed on the grass in front of the Palace.

PHOTO COMPETITION

All Ireland Mothers' Union ran a photographic competition the theme was 'What I will remember from isolation in the Spring of 2020'

There were over 40 entries from Northern Ireland, and two ladies from the Armagh Diocese won in their section

1. Going the extra mile was won by Susan Smith.
2. My abiding memory with Caption was won by Yvonne Woods.

Both these ladies are members of Milltown Mothers' Union.

AFIA

Away from it all, is a scheme funded by members of Mothers' Union to help people who would not otherwise be able to have a break.

This year Armagh Diocese helped pay for a family to have a day out.

WOMENS' GETAWAY 6th FEBRUARY 2021

Join us for a Zoom breakfast on Saturday morning 6th February 2021.

We hope to have two speakers -Lydia Monds – the Education advisor with Bishops' Appeal and Karen Gray a Trauma Therapist. We will finish with Midday Prayers.

Check out the Website for more details and there will be a flyer with all the details coming soon.

Supporting families has always been at the heart of our work.

We are running a special scheme to say "thank you" to key workers by gifting activity hampers, experience days or short breaks (to take place in 2021).

To find out more about how you can nominate a key worker or for key workers to apply directly, please go to our website:

www.mothersunion.org



All-Ireland Poetry Competition

Thank you to all who entered the Poetry Competition and congratulations and very well done to all of the prize winners. A special thanks to Jacqui Armstrong, who coordinated the competition, and to the judge, Averil Meehan, who is a published poet. Averil had the following to say about the winning poems:

"Blue Hands is a very moving poem that had me in tears when I read it first, and remained as powerful on each re-read. Dislocation is an excellent poem, does not mention COVID, yet subtly demonstrates it, hinting, with the beautiful language choices, the context of this un-named menace. Both Blue Hands and Dislocation deserve to be winners".

BLUE HANDS

She stood beside the bed – blue from head to toe;
Her wide, brown eyes peeping out from the blue
Swimming in glistening tears that dropped silently on
blue gloved hands, holding feeble hands of love.
She knew it would be the last time her hands were held;
She knew it would be the last time to hold these hands;
Where did all the time go to – why was she always so busy?
Why were we always so busy? always trying to catch up
Catch up on what?
Never did a hand feel so good and never did it feel so bad;
She closed her eyes, a small smile appeared on her
wrinkled face
Brown eyes wept quietly, while the blue hand
gently touched the face of love one last time.

Olive Thorpe, New Ross /Fethard-on-Sea MU
Cashel, Ferns & Ossory

DISLOCATION

I walk unyielding pavements by the roads
past nature clipped, pruned, mown, confined
by hedges, fences, walls and wire
past soaring trees with tarmac round their roots
their seeds adrift on stony ground.

I think about a dark brown path
soft underfoot
that leads me up the hill through lush wild woods
the brackish ponds
the smell of green all round
the sun that spotlights curling ferns
through leafy gaps in beech and thorn
and then legs aching
breathing short
the top is reached,
the fallen tree its roots exposed,
the bench nearby
and there
the open country stretched away
and Strangford gleaming in the mist-filled light.

A car goes roaring past too fast
exhaust fumes linger, air is stale
I turn for home on dusty paths.

Valerie Reilly, Belfast Cathedral MU Connor

USEFUL CONTACTS

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ARE YOU ORGANISING A BRANCH OUTING? Anne Anderson needs to know - Email: mufcs.armagh@gmail.com

NEXT ISSUE

All news items for the next issue of M.U.S.T. to be with Joy Greer by
Monday 26th February 2021 | Email: musteditor.armagh@gmail.com



