



“A CELEBRATION OF FAITH” - MOTHERS’ UNION 1876-2016

“A Holy Phenomenon” is how the General Secretary of the Anglican Communion, the Most Rev Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon, referred to Mothers’ Union in his written greetings to us celebrating the 140th Anniversary of the foundation of our wonderful organisation. Indeed, everyone who attended the anniversary service in Winchester Cathedral on Thursday 22 September and the General Meeting at Basingstoke on Friday 23 September with the theme “A Celebration of Faith”, felt we were part of something very special! Archbishop Idowu-Fearon went on to refer to how “the faith, prayer, activities and resilience” of our members had made a difference to millions of families and communities and how our “life-bringing mode of Christian faith in action” sets an example to all. Doesn’t that make you so proud to be a member of Mothers’ Union!!! I felt it was a very special, perhaps even phenomenal, weekend. Five of us were there from Down and Dromore - Joy, Marion, Margaret, Hilda and myself - and we were joined at times travelling, eating, socialising and at the Service and General Meeting by about 20 others from the other Dioceses in Ireland; these included Phyllis our All-Ireland President and former Presidents, Paddy Wallace and Margaret Crawford.

MOTHERS’ UNION

Christian care for families

Diocese of Down & Dromore

Even the meeting and greeting before the service in Winchester Cathedral was special. Some 1500 Mothers Union members chatting in the afternoon sun was a sight (and noise) to behold! We had been fortunate to get tickets for the afternoon Holy Communion service led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, and his address encouraged us to move forward as well as celebrating our heritage. Also very special were the praise and prayers - the hymns included, “O Praise thee The Lord”, “Be thou My vision” (my favourite!) and “I the Lord of Sea and Sky”. The praise was led by a fabulous ladies choir from Zambia - the quality of their voices and their exuberance while singing was a joy to behold.

Behind the Cathedral lies the grave of Mary Sumner. Lynne Tenby (the Worldwide President) and Bev Julien (the new Chief Executive) laid flowers there before the service in the Cathedral. It was wonderful to worship in the Cathedral which meant so much to Mary Sumner - her husband ended his clerical career as the Bishop of Gilford but, when he served as Archdeacon of Winchester in the 1890s, they lived beside the Cathedral. Winchester is an enchanting city and, as we discovered, very easy to reach from Southampton airport.

On Friday morning we made our way to Basingstoke, about ten miles inland. The General Meeting was held in a huge annex to the Hampshire Court Hotel



Down & Dromore with 140th anniversary cake

- I understand over 1600 members attended. We had worship led by the Mothers’ Union chaplain, the Right Rev Andrew Proud, Bishop of Reading;

again the colourful Zambian choir led the praise and performed several songs - some of the ladies in the choir had amazing “bass” voices! The delegates were addressed by Lynne and Bev, as well as Daniel McAlister, Head of the Fundraising and Communications Unit. They all spoke about the work of Mothers’ Union today, at home and abroad, but two things in particular which Bev said have remained with me since - she spoke about taking a leap of faith to do new things in the name of Mothers’ Union and, in the context of membership, she said we should all “speak up, speak out and engage” - become outwardly focused. Perhaps we should adopt that as our “motto” for Down and Dromore after all in Mark’s Gospel, Chapter 16, Jesus said “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone” and Paul in a letter to Timothy said “Instruct those who are rich in this present world..... to do good, be rich in good works, be generous and ready to share.....”

The highlight of the General Meeting for me personally was at the beginning of the day - a play which lasted nearly an hour performed by Saltmine Theatre Company. Four very talented young actors told the “Mothers’ Union Story” from the spark of the idea by Mary Sumner in 1876 through until her death in 1921. Through that play we all learned so much about Mary, her family, how Mothers’ Union began, how Mary took fright at the very first meeting in her rectory and could not speak, how she promoted it and women’s issues in Hampshire and then wider afield, and how Mothers’ Union expanded under her guidance until she resigned as Central President in 1909.



Continued on next page

Annual Meeting 2016



The play was so successful there is a suggestion that it may now be filmed and released as a DVD. Also the Company will tour with it across Dioceses and it would be splendid if we could afford to bring them to Ireland.

After the General Meeting concluded, we were uplifted and greatly enthused about Mothers' Union. I would encourage anyone who can to try to attend a General Meeting – it puts all our local work in context and gives us encouragement as well as more information about UK and worldwide projects. Also, of course, there is the opportunity to meet and chat with our colleagues from other Dioceses. The next General Meeting will be in Edinburgh at the end of September 2017 – that is a relatively easy venue for our members who live in Northern Ireland!

Our Hampshire experience ended on a high on the morning of Saturday 24 September when a few of us drove to Old Alresford. It was wonderful to visit the rectory which was home to the Sumner family for many years from 1851; where the seed of an idea to provide help for young mothers and to promote the spiritual and physical well-being of children flourished into a full-blown organisation; to sit in the drawing room in the rectory where Mary held the first meetings; to walk in the beautiful gardens which she tended and, above all, to spend some time in the Parish Church of St Mary, the Virgin, where she worshipped until the family left in 1885.



The church is largely the same as it was then and is cared for lovingly by the parishioners. Rev George and Mary Sumner obviously have a special place in their hearts and there are several memorials to them.

Arriving at the door of (right)

St Mary's

Old Alresford

& below the beautiful Altar frontal depicting a very rural scene (which was very appropriate given the location)



It was indeed a great privilege to spend some time in the "home" of Mothers' Union. I hope by what I have written, and through the photographs taken by Marion, that you have gleaned something of our visit in September to Hampshire. It was just so heartening, uplifting and (yes!) special to visit and appreciate where Mothers' Union had its roots— both in Old Alresford and Winchester - and to learn the full story through the excellent production by the Saltmine Theatre Company.

As part of the commemorative service, the Archbishop of Canterbury has written a special prayer to help our members look to Christ and His Vision for the future of Mothers' Union. I would ask you please to use it in your branches now and to adapt it next year as we move forward to celebrate our 130th anniversary of Mothers' Union in Ireland.

*Life-giving God, on its 140th anniversary,
We give you thanks for the Mothers' Union,
For its dedication and faithful witness to Jesus Christ across the world.
We praise you for its compassion, care and acts of justice for families and communities.
Bless all its members in your mission to the world,
Strengthen hearts, hands and voices in the years to come,
As they continue to nurture, defend and deliver your children.
Through their service bring great glory to Jesus and make known your kingdom.
We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen*

June

MUMS IN MAY AWARDS

We are delighted to announce that we have just received funding for AFIA £1000 and Hydebank £500



Mothers' Union choir who performed in Winchester Cathedral and at The General meeting in Basingstoke

Around The Diocese



Ballywalter MU celebrated 75 years on 16 May 2016

Following a meaningful service where the special speaker was Lady Eames a very special supper and anniversary cake was cut.



Right: June Butler, Canon Robert Howard, Lady Eames and Phyllis Ashe pictured following the service. It was a lovely summer's evening for a drive to and to see Ballywalter in the sunshine.



31 May 2016 Trustees Meeting in Saintfield where Doris McDowell was presented with flowers as a small token of gratitude for all she has done & indeed continues to do for MU in Down & Dromore



19 May St John's Lurgan (left & right)

was the venue for our annual afternoon tea party where members were entertained by the Dickson primary school choir.



Seagoe Parish Mothers' Union Sunday 5th June Enrolment Service (below) & right 50 years certificates



4 members were presented with 50 years membership certificates L-R Eleanor Roney, Ina Best, Doreen Hughes & Bessie Vennard

Above left : Brenda Robinson, Edna Littlejohn, Miriam Lavery, Deborah Prentice & Adeline Watson, Jean Kerr , Ann Mitchell & Deborah Cornett the 8 newly enrolled MU Members with Mrs Winnie McLaughlin with Rev Canon Terence Cadden



St Jude's Quiet Day in October
4 new members were enrolled back row L-R with existing members



FAITH & POLICY PRAYER BREAKFAST

on **22 Oct 2016**

at Rockmount Golf Club was a great success with well over 100 members attending. Organised by Barbara Small and the guest speaker was Jacqui Armstrong (All Ireland Faith & Policy). Mrs Phyllis Grothier (All Ireland MU President) travelled from Co Carlow to be with us.

Well done Barbara.



MU GETAWAY 2016

On a beautiful Friday in October, 6 of us (youngish) ladies set out from Saintfield Parish to the MU Getaway. This year it was held in Radisson Blu Hotel, Rosses Point,

Sligo. We had great food, fantastic speakers, namely Bishop Richard Henderson, Joanie Reilly and a prayer walk. Although its only 1 night away, there is so much packed in that it feels like you've been away for the weekend.

This is an annual pilgrimage for most of us and it didn't disappoint this year, but we would love other ladies in the diocese to join us next year, so if when you see or hear it mentioned and you think you might like to go contact either myself or Lesley Harvey and we can all travel together. It's 24 hrs to recharge the batteries and we all deserve that from time to time. Wenda Pollock (Saintfield)

Nov

- 25-27 Christmas Tree Festival St Columba's Knock
- 26 Faith & Policy Prayer Vigil Holywood 10-12noon

Dec

- 5 Advent Carol Service St Finian's 8pm

Mar

- 2 Holy Communion Christ Church Dublin
- 7 Trustee Meeting Knocknagoney
- 10-12 All Irl Training Conference An Grianan
- 20 Bangor Area Meeting Groomsport 8pm
- 25 All Irl Trustees
- 26 Mothering Sunday
- 27 D & D Festival Service Dromore Cathedral

Apr

- 8 All Irl Council
- 16 Easter Sunday
- 23 St John's Dromara 60th anniversary
- 24 Down & Dromore Council St Ignatius, Carryduff

May

- 4-6 General Synod Limerick
- 12-21 Pilgrims Way celebrating 130 MU in Irl
- 14 Holy Trinity Seapatrack 100th anniversary
- 18 Afternoon Tea party St Donards

June

- 11 St Elizabeth's Dundonald 100th anniversary
- 15-18 St Mark's Newtownards 200th anniversary with Marriage memories & Wedding Dress Festival

PLEASE CONFIRM BOOKINGS FOR DIOCESAN PRESIDENT WITH DIOCESAN SECRETARY

Down & Dromore

www.downanddromore.org/action/mothers-union

Mothers' Union Ireland

www.mothersunion.ie

The Mothers' Union (Mary Sumner House, London)

www.mothersunion.org

Diocesan Press Officer—Marion Edwards

All items for website or magazine please send by email and mark Mothers' Union or MU .

For next edition send at your convenience

Marion Edwards

028 97 510806

61 Ballynahinch Road

Saintfield

BT24 7LZ

Marion.edwards2@btopenworld.com

