



2024 Derry & Raphoe Mothers' Union Annual Report and Review of Diocesan Activities

Legal and Administrative Information

Diocesan President:	Jacqueline Armstrong
Diocesan Secretary:	Kathleen Finlay
Diocesan Treasurer	Peter Clampett

Trustees

Dioc. President	Jacqueline Armstrong:
Dioc. Secretary	Kathleen Finlay
Vice-President	Kaye Nesbitt
Vice-President	May Boyd
Vice-President	Rita Smyth
Vice-President	Rev Rosie Diffin
Unit Co-ordinator F&CS	Kay Clarke
Unit Co-ordinator F&P	Diane White
Unit Co-ordinator F&C	Jean Thompson
Unit Co-ordinator A&O	Anne Smith:

Method of Election

Office Bearers within the Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe MU are elected for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election for a second term. Not less than fourteen days before the meeting of the Council nomination papers are sent out to each member of the Council who may nominate one member for the post of President or other Diocesan Official. The nomination papers are returned within a period of time agreed by the Trustee Board to the Finance and Central services Unit Co-ordinator. No name which has received less than three nominations is submitted to the vote. Permission must be sought from a nominee before nomination. On the receipt of the nomination papers by the Finance and Central Services Unit Co-ordinator, a voting paper giving the names of the persons nominated is sent to every member of the Council. Each member of the Council has one vote.

The voting papers are handed to the Finance and Central Services Unit Co-ordinator at the Council meeting and are unsigned. A member of the Council unable to attend the meeting may record their vote by sending their completed and signed voting paper to the Finance and Central Services Unit Co-ordinator before the Council meeting.

All Diocesan Officials are elected by the Diocesan Council and must retire triennially. They shall be ineligible for re-election to the same office, if they have already served two consecutive periods. In the year 1994 and triennially thereafter at the second meeting of the Council held in that year the Diocesan President is elected. In the year 1996, and triennially thereafter, at the first meeting of the Diocesan Council held in that year, the election of all Diocesan Officials, including the Diocesan Secretary is announced and they take up office in January of that year.

Regarding the election of Area Secretaries, nomination and voting papers are prepared by the retiring Area Secretary and copies sent to each Branch Leader, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive Member and Clergy wife (if a member of M U) in her area. Once again, no name which receives less than three nominations can be submitted to the vote and the consent of the nominee must be obtained before nomination.

Main Banker

Mr Peter Clampett, Diocesan Treasurer, Address as above.

Banks used for Mothers' Union Diocesan business are the Ulster Bank, Catherine Street, Limavady and the AIB, Main Street, Letterkenny.

Auditor

Mr Gavin Harkin.

Registered with the Charity Commission for NI: NIC100834

UK Inland Revenue No. XR76024

Recognised as a Charity by the Revenue Commissioners: CHY5161

Registered Charity No: 20007331

Aim, Purpose and Objectives of the Mothers' Union

Purpose, Aim and Objects

The Purpose of the Mothers' Union is to be especially concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and Christian family life.

The Aim of the Society is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life. In order to carry out this Aim, its Objects are:

1. To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and promote its wider understanding;
2. To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the Church;
3. To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service;
4. To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children;
5. To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

Mission statement of the Mothers' Union

1. The Mothers' Union is an Anglican organisation which promotes the well-being of families world-wide.
2. We achieve this by:
 - (i) developing prayer and spiritual growth in families;
 - (ii) studying and reflecting on family life and its place in society;
 - (iii) resourcing our members to take practical action to improve conditions for families, both nationally and in the communities in which they live.

Diocesan Structure

In keeping with the All-Ireland structure, Derry and Raphoe MU has a Trustee Board and Diocesan Council.

The Trustee Board

The Trustee Board consist of the Diocesan President, the Diocesan Secretary, the Bishop's spouse (if he or she so desires), the four Vice-Presidents and the four Unit Co-ordinators and also the Diocesan Treasurer (non-voting). The Diocesan Chaplain (ex officio) may attend meetings of the Trustee Board but may not vote. In addition, the Diocesan President has authority to invite an individual to any meeting where expertise is required for a specific task, but they may not vote. The Diocesan President shall have the authority to appoint persons to fill all vacancies created by resignations.

The Trustee Board is the decision-making body in the Diocese. Subject to the approval of the Council, the Trustee Board exercise powers assigned to them by the Diocesan Council. The Trustee Board has the power to form sub-committees. All sub-committees lapse when their function ceases.

The Trustee Board shall meet as may be required but not less than twice annually. The quorum for a meeting of the Trustee Board shall be fifty per cent of the membership plus one.

The Diocesan Council

The Diocesan Council consists of the Diocesan President, the Diocesan Secretary, the Diocesan Treasurer (in attendance but with no voting rights), the Chaplain (ex officio), the four Unit Co-ordinators, the Bishop's Spouse, Unit Representatives, the four Vice-Presidents, Area Secretaries, Branch Leaders, all Past Diocesan Presidents, Branch Secretaries, Branch Treasurers, Representatives on All-Ireland Committees, Representatives on Committees at Mary Sumner House and Any Past All-Ireland President or World Wide President who resides in the Diocese. Clergy spouses who are not office bearers in their Branch may attend Council but may not vote.

The Diocesan Council shall meet at least twice yearly. Forty members constitute a quorum. Not less than fourteen days' written notice of the date of regular meetings is given to members of the Council and copies of the agenda is sent with the notice.

No business is transacted, or motion made at any Council meeting without due notice appearing on the Agenda paper except at the request of the Diocesan President and by consent of two-thirds of the Council present and voting. Every question is settled by a show of hands and every member of Council has one vote. The Chairman has a casting vote in addition to her ordinary vote.

The Diocesan Secretary shall attend all meetings of the Council and keep minutes thereof and generally carry out the business of the Council. The Diocesan Treasurer receives and applies all monies of the Council under such regulations as the Council may make.

The Diocesan President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.

The Derry and Raphoe MU has four Units each with a Unit Co-ordinator. These are:

- (i) Finance and Central Services
- (ii) Action and Outreach
- (iii) Fundraising and Communications
- (iv) Faith and Policy

There are six Area Secretaries, one for each of the geographical locations within the diocese. These are:

- (i) Derry
- (ii) Donegal
- (iii) Omagh
- (iv) North Sperrin
- (v) South Sperrin
- (vi) Strabane.

The Diocesan President has oversight and responsibility for the outworking of Mothers' Union activities in the Diocese. She is encouraged and supported by four Vice-presidents.

2024 Derry & Raphoe Mothers' Union Annual Report

2024 Branch Overview

Clondevaddock MU held their closing branch service in March during Storm Kathleen. It was an afternoon of celebration, gratitude and thankfulness for 22 years of MU. We currently have 30 Mothers' Union branches in Derry & Raphoe with 541 members.

During the year several significant MU anniversaries were celebrated including:

- Drumholm MU - 75 years,
- Derg and Termonamongan MU - 80 years
- Maghera and Upperlands MU – 90 years
- Inver MU – 90 years
- Dungiven and Bovevagh - 90 years
- Macosquin MU – 90 years
- Killowen MU - 120 years

Communications:

- **Facebook** posts continue.
- The **Derry & Raphoe MU website** is still in place, though we have been unable to update any aspect of it since early 2020.
- An MU related article continues to be placed in the Diocesan **nVision** magazine which is published four times a year.
- Each month a **diocesan email** including information together with a short thought and prayer is emailed to every diocesan member and branch.
- In October MU were given an opportunity to speak to our **Diocesan Synod** for 3 minutes. This year we concentrated on promoting the RISE UP project and . MUe had another successful day promoting MU.
- The **Mums In May Puzzle Book** was distributed to each branch and Mums In May updates were shared throughout the year

Diocesan Awards

The Helen Livingston Award for the Branch Programme that best reflects the current theme and the aims and objects of MU was awarded to Edenderry & Clanabogan MU.

Worldwide: *The Eileen Moore Award 2024* was awarded to Clondehorkey MU who raised an average of €121.69 per member for worldwide projects. Clondehorkey MU host an Annual Walk for MU Worldwide. In 2024 Derry diocese contributed £6.165.19 and Raphoe diocese €2,960.41.

Council Meetings: *Spring Diocesan Council* included buzz groups discussing their best ideas for a branch meeting – these were subsequently collated and forwarded to branches.

Due to timings of elections, *Autumn Diocesan Council* was held in December. It was announced that Kaye Nesbitt was nominated unopposed as Diocesan President for the next triennium. Best wishes were also extended to Past Diocesan President, Kay Clarke, as incoming All Ireland President. Jacqui Armstrong was thanked, and she received a Past President's brooch. Bishop Andrew Forster attended the Council meeting.

Diocesan Members:

We had 10 Diocesan Members in 2024. In April it was agreed that Kaye Nesbitt would take charge of the Diocesan Members, as VP of Finance & Central Services Unit.

Golf continues to be a regular feature with a small number of members and friends. Arrangements are shared with Diocesan Secretary, Kathleen Finlay, taking the lead.

MUe - the MU enterprise stall attended numerous events and sales are up on previous years

Young Families - Family Fun Days: As individuals, DRMU volunteers assisted 'SEEDS' ministry, at the Family Fun Day on 27th April in Gortin for families of children with additional needs, and again at the general Family Fun Day on 18th May in Dunlewey Centre, Co Donegal.

AFIA Cost of Living Crisis – Individuals and families continue to avail of the *AFIA Cost of Living Crisis Scheme*. Applicants were in challenging circumstances, yet not eligible for Universal Credit. Local rectors continue to refer families and individuals for assistance.

Safeguarding - the discussion around a suitable Safeguarding Policy continues with Mary Sumner House. The advice for branches and members is that we continue to follow the regulations and procedures of the Church of Ireland Safeguarding policies.

CCNI Compliance: Our obligation to report to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was completed in advance of 31st October deadline.

Donations to All Ireland Funds: £400 was forwarded to the Centenary Fund, £100 to the Mothers' Union Chapel Fund and €100 to the National Ploughing Championships outreach.

Treasurer Appointment: Mr Peter Clampett leaves office on 31 December 2024. Mr Richard Cotter has agreed to take on the role of Diocesan Treasurer.

Subscriptions 2025: The Derry & Raphoe subscription rate was set at £32/€36 for 2025. Branches may add a local branch contribution, following discussion with their members.

MU Live Reports

The remainder of the Derry & Raphoe Annual Report is based on MU Live postings.

Remembering to input into MU Live is a challenge, yet the information it contains at year's end is uplifting and revealing. Anne Smith, Janice Quigley and Diane White undertook training with Janette Lawrence on updating data to MU Live in 2024.

Nurturing Faith

During March and April two **Mums In May Big Hymn Sings** were held covering North and South Sperrin, and the Strabane and Omagh Areas. The services were held in Kilcronaghan Church, Tobermore and in Christ Church, Lislimnaghan. Each service sang hymns chosen by members in their joint areas. One service happily coincided with International Women's Day on the 8th March and featured hymns penned by women. Prayers were based on each of the four units in MU, the services included bible readings and meditations on some of the hymns. Both were well attended, very fulfilling and concluded with a welcome cup of tea and fellowship.

Some members attended the *All Ireland Mums in May Big Hymn Sing* held on Saturday 16 November in St. Patrick's Church, Ballymena.

In May a **Gospel Praise Evening** was held in St. Peter's Church. Rev Canon David McBeth led the evening and organised the Praise Band.

The Summer Gathering took place in Dungiven Parish Hall. It considered the hymn favourites of our Indoor Members. This tea party and singalong was enjoyed by c.30 members. Each person present submitted their favourite hymn. Much chat ensued and members sang with great gusto.

Indoor Members continue to receive birthday, Christmas and Easter communications, together with invitations to attend diocesan and branch events.

International Widows' Day: Branches were encouraged to connect with widows in their parish. A set of prayers was forwarded to all branches for individual, branch or parish use.

On **Mary Sumner Day** members gathered for a Prayer Walk along the *Amazing Grace Trail* at the seashore in Buncrana. The afternoon opened with worship in the parish hall, followed by the Prayer Walk. Those who didn't wish to walk took the opportunity to use a selection of prayer stations in the hall.

The **Diocesan Service** was held in Christ Church, Drumachose in mid September. This was well attended by members and clergy. Our speaker was Iris Suitor, Zonal Trustee gave a stimulating and very informative address.

The **All-Ireland Communion Service** took place in St. Columb's Cathedral in October.

Thy Kingdom Come and Prisons Week:

Resources were widely shared, and participation was encouraged.

The Diocesan Prayer Circle continues to support individuals and families in need of urgent prayer and is a much appreciated ministry in the diocese.

Social Policy: The **SPIN** was shared with branch members. Homelessness, loneliness, affordable childcare, violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and immigration continue to be big issues.

Category Description: Offering Gifts of Love – Emergency Toilet Packs

Number of people impacted: Hospitals: 414

Information about the activity: Altnagelvin Area Hospital and Letterkenny University Hospital are very grateful for the gift of Emergency Toilet Packs.

Category Description: Offering Gifts of Love – Craft Items

Number of people impacted: Hospitals: 1311

Information about the activity: Altnagelvin Area Hospital and Letterkenny Hospital continue to be supported with a wide range of crafted items.

Category Description: Offering Gifts of Love – Mums In May Grant

Number of people impacted: Community: 550 prisoners - 93% of which use Magilligan Prison Library

An MIM Grant of £400 was used to purchase biographies and other nonfiction books as advised by the prison librarian. This phase enhances further development of the current creative writing programme with the Writer in Residence in conjunction with the Prison Arts Foundation¹.

The book handover took place in Magilligan Prison where DP, Jacqui Armstrong, and A&O Coordinator, Anne Smith, received a very warm welcome from the staff. Huge gratitude was expressed by the Governor and staff for this generous MIM donation.

The librarian summarised the importance of the library in the lives of offenders and outlined the extensive award-winning creative writing arts programme Pamela, PAF, has run in recent years. Each year chosen pieces are published in book format and a magazine is compiled by offenders twice a year.

¹Prison Arts Foundation' seeks to provide access to the arts for people who have offended. Their mission is to inspire creativity and encourage personal and social change in offenders within the criminal justice system, through the arts.

Category Description: Offering Gifts of Love

Information about the activity: Domestic Abuse Services

2024 collection for Domestic Abuse Services. An overwhelming number of vouchers and items were received and shared among Foyle, Omagh and Coleraine Women's Aid and Donegal Domestic Violence Services. Each of the four services have written or posted their gratitude on social media.

Category Description: Campaigning

Information about the activity: 16 Days 365 and RISE UP in 2024

The RISE Up Campaign was steadily promoted. Two RISE Up Gold Awards were received - Christ Church, Strabane and St. Columb's Cathedral, Londonderry. Bronze awards were received by Aghanloo, Balteagh Carrick and Tamlaghtard Group of Parishes, Castlerock & Dunboe MU, and St. Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe. Further parishes and branches are considering the RISE UP and intend applying for awards in early 2025. This was the main thrust of our 16 Days Campaign in 2024.

Each branch received the RISE UP prayer and a quiz with 4 questions to assist on engaging members with the issue in a meaningful manner.

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION

Members of Mothers' Union Derry & Raphoe attended a **'16 Days RISE UP' Breakfast** in the Factory Floor Restaurant, located at Aspace2 in Londonderry.

The theme of this year's gathering was **'Every Voice Matters'**. As guests made their way into the restaurant, they passed photographs and names of the 24 women who have lost their lives because of domestic violence in Northern Ireland since 2020.

Special guests who attended this breakfast event, included the Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District, Cllr Lilian Seenoi-Barr, and Lydia Monds of Church's Ministry of Healing: Ireland, both of whom addressed the audience.

The Mayor said the District Council hoped to make the local district a safer place for everyone but that they couldn't do it alone. *"Real change requires a collective effort," she said, "one that involves government, community organisations, faith groups and individuals."*

Ms Monds distributed mustard seeds to the women present and, drawing on one of the great biblical parables, invited the ladies to consider what step, in faith, they were going to take to respond to the needs that God had placed in front of them.

Bishop Andrew Forster thanked both speakers for their presence and their contributions. The Bishop said there were women present from the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in the North West, indicating what he called a *"great coming together on this issue"* [of gender-based violence].

Bishop Andrew congratulated Mothers' Union Derry & Raphoe for its advocacy on behalf of victims of gender-based violence and its campaign work against domestic abuse, *"It fills me with a real sense of thankfulness," Bishop Andrew said, "that in our diocesan Mothers' Union we have taken the lead in making sure that the issue of domestic violence – of gender-based violence – has been at the forefront of the agenda of the Church of Ireland over the last 10 years."*

The Bishop also shared some thoughts on the future challenges facing campaigners, *"I think the next step is how we actually challenge men, how we challenge men to speak out against attitudes and values that they hear."*

DR SCHOOLS

A warm welcome was received at two secondary schools. One had requested a 10 minute assembly with 200 students. The second school had 2 x 40 min presentations which reached 120 students. Both schools received information on Bystander Action.

Changing The story of Domestic Abuse

Thanks to Bishop Andrew, Derry & Raphoe diocese hosted an engaging weekend in September with the Rev. Dr. Helen Paynter, founder of the Centre of Biblical Violence at Bristol Bible Baptist College. The clergy morning was very well attended as was the morning with Parishes on the Saturday. An interfaith evening was held on the Friday. The sessions were uplifting, empowering and enlightening and demonstrated that MU have made an impact and impression within the Church of Ireland over the last ten years, and this expresses the need for MU to keep on keeping on, to share with our local churches and assist in bringing the community together on this issue.

‘Equipping The Church To Take Action and End Domestic Abuse’ - this education programme is available to all parishes.

‘Changing The Story Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Group’: One facilitator and one member attended the first Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Weekend in Spring 2024

Church Informed Trauma Training: Two members from Derry & Raphoe completed this training programme.

General Outreach

An article relating to domestic abuse has been placed in our Diocesan NVision magazine four times this year and 10 short articles organised by the *All Ireland Changing The Story Team* for inclusion in parish newsletters were forwarded to parishes through the Diocesan Communications Officer.

It is impossible to guess how many lives were changed - from items donated to domestic abuse services multiple hundreds would have benefited. 320 students heard a message in school. Hundreds of parishioners have read and/or been informed on issues surrounding domestic abuse.

HOMELESSNESS has been highlighted at each Diocesan Council and a written campaign is to be initiated in the New Year to remind politicians of the great need in communities across Ireland and of their responsibilities.

Curry In a Hurry – this publication has been welcomed by food poverty kitchens and by final year students in two secondary schools.

Visit of Bev Jullien, CEO, MSH

Bev visited Ireland in November and met with Trustees and members from around Ireland.

Ish Lennox, Faith and Church Engagement Manager, MSH visited Ireland in October. Ish socialised and spoke to members in Kildare Cathedral and to All Ireland Council in Christ Church Cathedral.

A memorable Communion Service opened **All Ireland Council in Christ Church Cathedral**, Dublin. Towards the end of the service, members present symbolically walked from the original MU designated Chapel to the Lady Chapel, where The Most Rev Michael Jackson dedicated the Lady Chapel to the use of Mothers’ Union in Ireland.

Five Derry & Raphoe members attended **the MU Annual Women’s Getaway** in Armagh. The theme was ‘Gloriously Ordinary’, with Ruth Garvey Williams, echoing the sentiments of the five Anglican Marks of Mission.

In conclusion

Diocesan President, Jacqui Armstrong, has now concluded two terms of office, and the diocese look forward to welcoming Kaye Nesbitt in 2025. The ministry of Mothers’ Union depends on the prayerful and practical willingness and dedication of members, who work as volunteers on the ground across the diocese. Their dedication is exemplary, and, we are, as always grateful to the encouragement and input of our bishop and clergy, and our partner organisations across the diocese.

The ministry of Mothers’ Union is local, national and global. Members involvement stretches from the simple to the complex, from praying in one’s armchair to contributing at diocesan, national and worldwide level. The thread that runs through all Mothers’ Union undertakes is consistent prayer

and nurturing of faith. This, in turn, continues to inform our actions and exemplifies the words of 1 John 3:18 as found in the Amplified Bible

‘Let us not love [merely in theory] with word or with tongue [giving lip service to compassion], but in action and in truth [in practice and in sincerity, because practical acts of love are more than words.]’

Jacqui Armstrong,
Diocesan President

December 2024