



Diocese of Down and Dromore

Annual Report

For the year ended 31st December 2022

Charity Number NIC 105094

Legal and Administrative Information, with addresses for correspondence

Charity Name: Mothers' Union Diocese of Down and Dromore

Charity Number: NIC 105094

Principal Office Bearers

Diocesan President – Mrs Mavis Thompson, 203 Ballynahinch Road, Dromore BT25 1EU

Diocesan Secretary – Mrs Phyllis Whiteside, 5 Moyra Park, Saintfield BT24 7BG

Honorary Diocesan Treasurer – Mrs Lynda Bremner, 40 Garnerville Park, Belfast BT4 2NY

Trustees:

Mrs H Arnold, Mrs E Briggs, Mrs P Burrell, Mrs R Clarke, Mrs M Edwards, Mrs H Leckey, Mrs E Lester, Mrs R Macartney, Mrs S McCurry, Mrs J Reain, Mrs C Stewart, Mrs R Teggarty, Mrs L Thompson, Mrs M Thompson, Mrs P Whiteside

Bankers:

Ulster Bank Ltd, Connswater Branch, Arches Retail Park, Belfast BT5 4AF

Independent Examiner for Accounts: Mrs Wilma Cathcart, 7 Grange Crescent, Saintfield, Co Down, BT24 7NE

Purpose, Aims and Objects of Mothers' Union

The Purpose of Mothers' Union is to be 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 the Aim, its Objectives 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

The Mothers' Union is a Christian organisation which promotes the well-being of families worldwide. We achieve this by:

- Developing prayer and spiritual growth in families
- Studying and reflection on family life and marriage and their place in society
- Resourcing our members to take practical action to improve conditions for families, both nationally and in the communities in which they live.

The Trustee Board

The Bye-laws for MU in the Diocese of Down and Dromore require that the Trustee Board shall be elected triennially by Diocesan Council and that nominees for membership of the Trustee Board must be or have been members of Down and Dromore Council.

The Trustee Board is comprised of the Diocesan President, four elected Vice-Presidents, Diocesan Secretary, Honorary Diocesan Treasurer, four Unit Coordinators, Hospital Visitor, Indoor Member Contact, Links Correspondent, Media and Public Relations Representative, Worldwide Representative, Prayer Representative and Young Members Representative. There are also ex officio (non-voting) Members including the Diocesan Chaplain, the Bishop's spouse, Area Representatives and the immediate past Diocesan President.

The Trustee Board meets at least twice a year and at such other times as the Diocesan President may deem necessary; half the membership constitutes a quorum. It has the power to form sub-committees and may co-opt a number of persons who might not be members of Mothers' Union to act in an advisory capacity.

Accounts are passed annually by the Trustee Board and an Honorary Auditor/Independent Examiner is appointed by the Trustee Board.

Unit Committees

There are four Unit Committees, each concerned with an area of activity or interest on behalf of the Trustee Board.

- Finance and Central Services – deals with finance and matters related to administration and governance
- Action and Outreach – primarily manages projects and campaigns, and provides links with members and projects worldwide and locally
- Faith and Policy – focuses on underpinning all our activities with prayer and Bible study and provides prayer resources for services and meetings
- Fundraising and Communications – prepares publications and leaflets on relevant matters, coordinates media activity and publicity, and leads on fundraising activities.

Diocesan Council

The Council comprises: Members of the Trustee Board, all Branch leaders and Secretaries, Diocesan Members, All Ireland Office Bearers resident in this Diocese (ex officio), all Past Diocesan Presidents (ex officio). Diocesan officials are elected to serve for a three-year period and shall be eligible to serve for one further three-year term whether consecutively or at intervals. Retirement for any reason during a three-year period of service shall be considered as completion of such a three-year period.

The Council meets at least twice each year and thirty-six members constitutes a quorum.

In cases of unavoidable absence of Branch Representatives, substitutes are eligible to attend. All Diocesan Council meetings include a time of worship, the Mothers' Union Prayer and Wave of Prayer.

Method of Election

Office bearers (the Trustees) of Down and Dromore MU are elected triennially, in accordance with the Constitution of Mothers' Union in Ireland and the Diocesan Bye Laws. They must stand down from office after three years but may be re-elected to that role for a further consecutive triennial, after which they are no longer eligible to be re-elected to that position. All roles commence at the beginning of January, with the Diocesan President being elected the previous year to take up that role i.e. in 2022, 2025, 2028, with the other office bearers a year later 2023, 2026, 2029 etc.

Administration

As required by law, the annual report from the Trustees for Mothers' Union in the Diocese was submitted to the Charity Commission (NI) in September 2022 in respect of 2021. The Trustees have continued to improve the governance of MU in the Diocese and in Branches in various

ways during 2022. Ongoing support has been given to Branch Leaders, Secretaries and Treasurers to help with any difficulties due to the continuing pandemic.

Finance

Our finances are managed with the Finance and Central Services Unit, primarily by the Treasurer who liaises closely with the bankers and prepares and presents reports and interim statements to each meeting of the Trustees and Diocesan Council. The Treasurer also reports to meetings of the Finance and Central Services Unit as required. Any cash received within branches or centrally is counted under dual control.

Achievements, Performance and Public Benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duties in line with the Charity Commission Public Benefit statutory guidance. However due to Government restrictions at the beginning of the year, we followed the guidelines in force at the time. Mothers' Union continued on and members kept in touch with each other by phone, text or Zoom when unable to meet. A lot of members worked on projects at home for hospitals and care homes as well as contributing to Women's Aid Refuges, or a need in their community.

Formal Meetings in 2022

Diocesan Trustees met on 24 March, 26 May and 11 October with other meetings with DP, VPs and Unit Coordinators held as necessary.

Diocesan Council met on 6 April and 30 November.

The **Unit Committees** met as necessary throughout the year.

All Ireland meetings were attended by Diocesan President Mavis Thompson by Zoom and in person.

All Ireland Unit meetings took place by Zoom and were attended by the Unit Coordinator or representative.

Services and Special Events

Commissioning Service – 2 February of the Diocesan President Mavis Thompson and Diocesan Chaplain Rev Duncan Pollock held in Dromore Cathedral.

Commissioning Service – 27 February All Ireland President June Butler and All Ireland Trustees held in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

Pilot course "Equipping the Church to take action and end Domestic Abuse" – five Zoom meetings in January.

Annual Gathering planning and preparation – thirteen Zoom meetings and two in person meetings between 16 February and 1 October.

Annual Gathering Services in St Anne's Cathedral – 4.30pm and 7pm 23 September.

Annual Gathering in ICC Belfast – all day 24 September.

Mothers' Union Branches – Killinchy, Knockbreda, St Brendan's, St Elizabeth's, St Dorothea's and Willowfield Area Service.

Dinner to celebrate Carryduff MU 60 years.

Service to celebrate Shankill MU, Lurgan 80 years.

Service to celebrate Annahilt MU 70 years.

Service to celebrate Magherahamlet MU 60 years.

Zoom meetings with Mary Sumner House 23 March and 22 November.

Three Zoom meetings and two in person meetings from 13 May to 9 August with Kingdom Voices to plan and prepare for the visit of Bishops' wives from Burundi, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Chile and USA for a Prayer Walk at Tobar Mhuire, Crossgar after a session discussing Gender Based Violence and Domestic Abuse.

Worldwide service in Carryduff Parish – 7 November – speaker – Sheran Harper Worldwide President.

16 Days of Activism event – coffee morning in St Finnian's Church Hall 26 November.

Advent Carol Service – 7 December in Newcastle Parish Church.

Throughout the year at Church services and other events, members were supported by the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev Duncan Pollock.

Trustees and members attended the two Commissioning Services in Dromore and Armagh, which were special and meaningful in the life of our Diocese.

Members attendance at External Events

Commissioning service of Diocesan President Sally Cotter for Connor Diocese attended by Diocesan President Mavis Thompson and June Butler.

First part of Safeguarding training 30 May by Zoom attended by Mavis Thompson.

MU Service of Holy Communion in Christ Church Dublin 6 October. Five members attended from Down and Dromore and were joined by members from Dublin and Glendalough.

Women's Getaway Weekend 4 November at Springfield Hotel, Leixlip. The speaker was MU Worldwide President Sheran Harper. Several members attended and found it very encouraging and uplifting.

All Ireland Council meetings were attended by Diocesan President and Trustees on 7 May by Zoom and 19 November in person at Springfield Hotel, Leixlip.

The Women's Refuge in Newry was visited by Diocesan President Mavis Thompson and a few Trustees in December.

Elections in 2022

Mavis Thompson Worldwide Representative was appointed Diocesan President from 1 January.

A number of Trustees have completed their term in office at the end of this year. Elections have been conducted and the results are as follows:

Diocesan Secretary - Mrs Heather Leckey

Faith and Policy Unit Coordinator - Mrs Roberta Macartney

Fundraising and Communications Unit Coordinator - Mrs Rosie Teggarty

Indoor Members Representative - Mrs Sally McCurry

Links Correspondent - Mrs Elaine Lester

Project work in support of our Aims and Objects

Action and Outreach

Support for Women's Aid Newry and Bangor - donations of groceries, clothing, toiletries, toys and other basic necessities are made by members and branches and are distributed to the two Women's Aid refuges in Newry and Bangor. This year we were once again able to host an afternoon tea party with the ladies and children.

Emergency wash bags – filled emergency wash bags were distributed to all three hospitals in our Diocese and were, as always, gratefully received.

Knitted baby clothes/blankets – knitted items were donated by members and distributed to hospitals and hospices and were gratefully received.

Twiddle muffs and knee blankets – the Ulster Hospital is particularly grateful to receive these items for the many elderly patients, including those with dementia, who have to wait in the Emergency Department for treatment or admission.

Refugee support – a new project this year, funded by the Diocese and also a grant from Mums in May, was to provide stock pots for those who have arrived in Northern Ireland as refugees. They cook their meals in one pot and having arrived in the country with very little, appreciated the donation of stock pots.

Prisons Outreach – as Covid restrictions were not completely lifted we have been unable to hold our normal craft classes for the women in Hydebank, however a personal gift and a

signed Christmas card were delivered by a Trustee to Hydebank for all male and female prisoners.

As a Diocese we were able to donate Christmas books for the children of prisoners in Maghaberry Prison.

Outreach to Foodbanks – in October the Trustees agreed to support six foodbanks around the Diocese by donating groceries and other essential items to the value of £100 to each of them. Trustees contacted the foodbanks in Dromore, Kilkeel, Portadown, Banbridge, Bangor and Belfast to confirm their needs and delivered the items to them. Gifts of food and some festive treats were very much appreciated by the foodbank managers.

Away From It All – no applications for Short Breaks were received this year so it was decided to offer food or heating vouchers to families who were struggling during difficult times. A number of Clergy were contacted, and six £100 vouchers were issued before Christmas. This assistance was greatly appreciated by all families.

Worldwide – one of the highlights of the year was the opportunity to host a Worldwide Evening with our Worldwide President, Sheran Harper, as the speaker. It was a very uplifting and challenging evening.

Faith and Policy Unit

Prayer Chain – members of the Diocesan Prayer Chain are united in giving prayerful support when urgently required. Those who are ill, bereaved, in despair, those with depression or anxiety or any other needs feel the support of those who are praying.

Indoor Members – indoor members in the Diocese are not forgotten, receiving birthday cards and reflections sent from Mary Sumner House.

Hospital Visitor – visits to Nursing Homes began again towards the end of the year and a few visits were made. Cards are also sent to members.

Social Policy – Saturday 26 November was when we marked the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. A coffee morning was held in St Finnian's Church Hall when most of the branches in the Diocese were represented. A power point presentation updated everyone about the issues around Gender Based abuse.

A new initiative in Ireland – Equipping the Church – has been running on Zoom all year and was the basis for Down and Dromore's involvement in a workshop with the spouses of around 30 Bishops from various countries in South America and Africa who were staying in Tobar Mhuire Retreat Centre in Crossgar. Discussions, in nation groups, were very open and, at times, difficult to hear, were followed by a Prayer Walk in the Centre's Prayer Garden. This happened on 9 August – Mary Sumner Day.

Fundraising and Communications

Midday prayers are available through Facebook and on Down and Dromore's Facebook page members can follow what is happening in the Diocese and keep up to date with the latest news.

The All Ireland website is regularly updated with news, prayers and upcoming events as well as a monthly letter from the All Ireland President. "Focus" was once again available in print. A Christmas Card with information of different Branch events and a Christmas message from the Diocesan President was given to each member before Christmas.

Many branches, in June, celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of our Patron, Queen Elizabeth II, then in September heard the sad news she had passed away.

Membership

Mothers' Union membership is 852 including 23 Diocesan Members. Sadly we had a few branches close, but some members joined other branches or became Diocesan Members. Some branches welcomed new members.

Planning for the Future

We look forward to 2023 when hopefully all restrictions will be lifted and members will feel more comfortable meeting in person and renewing friendships. We hope to be able to have our senior members together for a Communion Service and afternoon Tea Party and to meet together for our Festival Service.

Signed on behalf of Trustees

Mrs Mavis Thompson – Diocesan President

.....  Date 7 June 2023

Mrs Phyllis Whiteside – Diocesan Secretary

.....  Date 7 June 2023

Mrs Marion Edwards – Finance and Central Services Unit Coordinator

.....  Date 7 June 2023