



Greetings from Mothers' Union! These are very strange times and this is just a short update on all that has been going on in Mothers' Union at home here in Ireland and worldwide.

First of all we would like to thank you, our Clergy, for all your inspirational messages - if not as usual delivered in the conventional manner from our churches but also from gardens, studies and living rooms using all types of technology. Nonetheless, the messages of God's Word and your prayers are very much needed, and greatly appreciated, at this time. We would also thank you for the care and attention you have taken towards our members during the Covid-19 pandemic. Locally we know that you have kept in touch and ensured that they had any needs met - especially those who live alone.

Like you, the Mothers' Union in Ireland has joined the new world of Zoom! Branches are working with their Diocesan Trustees through Zoom, some branches are even meeting that way and recently All Ireland Trustees held several meetings using Zoom so that our work and governance can be properly managed. Also the Worldwide Trustees 'met' in this way in mid-May, as international travel has been suspended by the central charity, and it was so successful they plan to meet now every month!

Mothers' Union members have not been idle despite lockdown and have kept in touch with the members of their branches, mostly by telephone, but many WhatsApp groups have also been formed to facilitate the distribution of bible readings, prayers, reflections and music. Across Ireland we have also been providing extra prayer and other worship resources to members, locally and nationally. Each week there is a different Reflection on the MU Ireland website, prepared by one of the All Ireland Trustees, and the Faith and Policy Unit regularly circulates new, meaningful prayers to members through the Diocesan Presidents and Indoor Member Contacts. After all, we are now all 'Indoor Members'!

Our members have been making thousands of new essential items to support health and care workers, including handmade scrubs, ear protectors, scrub bags, masks and mask straps. We have been knitting furiously - tiny baby clothes and blankets for Premature Baby Units, soft toys, 'baby cots' for miscarried babies, lap blankets and prayers shawls for the elderly, twiddle muffs for those with dementia and knitted hearts for the families of those who are in hospitals or nursing homes, where a duplicate heart has been given to their loved ones who cannot visit them at the present time.

Knitting

Some members are volunteering at food banks and others are collecting the basics required by women's refuges so that the women and children who escape from abusive households can be adequately fed and clothed. Someone said on the radio recently that domestic violence is currently as bad a pandemic as Covid-19....that is indeed a sobering thought. Internationally Mothers' Union has decided to give this area of work priority in the months ahead and we in Ireland have already acknowledged this acute need by responding to appeals by local refuges for urgent supplies.



Food For Children

The mental health and loneliness of members - and others in our communities - have been major concerns. Besides practical help at a local level where those who are able have been shopping and collecting medicines for parish colleagues, friends and older members of our communities, many MU members are regularly phoning those they know who live alone to encourage and support them during the lockdown. Some branches have been providing small 'treat' parcels to parishioners and also tray bakes for local health care workers and to residential homes.

Parcel Bags

Every day the staff of Mothers' Union, many of whom are currently furloughed, lead our midday prayers on Facebook and this has proved a wonderful way of connecting our members worldwide. We in Ireland have asked for that to continue when 'normal' life resumes.

The All Ireland Mothers' Union website has recently been updated and relaunched - www.mothersunion.ie. It can now be accessed on tablet or phone and, besides news, there are links to relevant important resources, such as 'Looking after your Mental Health' and guidance on dealing with bereavement



Some of the Worldwide Projects have been put on hold due to the pandemic. However, we hope and pray that our many important projects will be able to recommence in the coming months. Some of these - Parenting Programmes, Savings and Credit Group training, Church and Community Mobilisation, and Literacy and Financial Education - are vital to the empowerment of our members in developing countries.

AFIA: Away From It All Holidays



AFIA this year will have to be different but MU will use the scheme in 2020 to help families and carers who need a break or a different experience at this time. In some small way we can try to heal and rebuild family relationships which may have struggled over the pandemic and we will need to focus on the immediate needs of families and individuals facing hardship in these uncertain times.



Referrals should come, as before, from you -the Clergy - to your Diocesan President; please consider and avail of this service, and do this as soon as possible.

Thy Kingdom Come

Following the success of 'Thy Kingdom Come' events worldwide in previous years, Mothers' Union was invited by Lambeth Palace to host another Global Moment in 2020 and encourage members around the world to participate. The live service obviously had to be cancelled but a very good substitute service was pre - recorded and made available on the website from Friday 22 May. Our MU All Ireland Chaplain, Canon Robert Deane, led the service with great dignity and found himself on the same 'platform' as the Archbishop of Canterbury! You can still view it at <http://www.mothersunion.org/ThyKingdomcome>.

The All-Ireland Trustees are ready for busy times ahead and have already started planning for services, training, fundraising and other activities in 2021. This includes our advocacy around the 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence which will happen again this year at the end of November. You will hear the details of that in due course.



When things ease, please do use your branch to support and help you and the parish family as, with God's help, we all move forward. Mothers' Union will have to be different but we will still aim to maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service as we reach out as God's hands around the world.

Beth Wortley (All Ireland Faith and Policy Coordinator)

Thank you for your continued support for Mothers Union. Further details of Mothers Union activities can be found at www.mothersunion.ie or at www.mothersunion.org