



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Diocese of Down & Dromore

THE 2017 GENERAL MEETING

Seven of the Trustees from Down and Dromore Mothers' Union - Margaret, Pat, Hilda, Sally, Joy, Marion and myself, with our former colleague and friend Doris McDowell (now a Diocesan member living outside Glasgow) - attended the General Meeting at the



Edinburgh International Conference Centre on Saturday 30 September. We were joined by two friends Jacqui Armstrong from Derry and Raphoe and Irene Gates from Connor Dioceses.

We travelled over by plane on Friday morning and after depositing cases at our various overnight locations and gathering ourselves (including a little retail therapy in some instances!) we met at St Mary's Cathedral for the Festal Evensong service to celebrate the feast day of St Michael and All Angels. The cathedral was filled to overflowing (in fact there

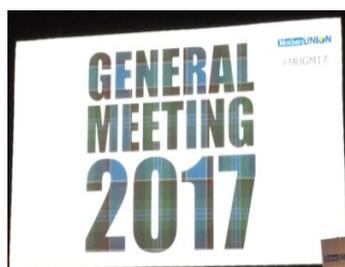
was another service at St John's Episcopal Church nearby for those who had not been able to get tickets).



Everyone was welcomed by the Bishop of Edinburgh and the new Primus of Scotland, The Most Revd Mark Strange, gave an inspiring address focusing on the core objects of MU.

The standard of music and the singing by the St Mary's Cathedral Choir were of the highest standard - most of the sung responses were unfamiliar.

Afterwards, five of the more energetic of our group attended a ceilidh and dinner organised by the central MU staff and reported that it was a super event. However, while there is no photographic evidence that they participated in the dancing their reports of some of the antics of others were amusing. That evening, the others and I headed off to find alternative food in a more sedate setting and had an early night - how boring were we?



- the EICC was an excellent venue and the only criticisms I have related to queues.

The entrance could have been more effectively managed as there was little definition between those who already obtained and those who had yet to collect their tickets!

The other queues were at lunchtime when it took quite a while to be served. The staff of EICC were delightful but obviously had not been briefed that 900 MU members would expect to be served simultaneously! They lost significant custom as many left to seek refreshments outside the venue.

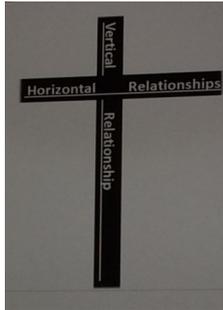
Certainly, having waited inside, we did not have adequate time to look around all the stalls or to investigate the information provided in the Community Hub by MSH staff and the Scottish Dioceses.

The meeting took the usual format with the Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey, and Chief Executive, Bev Julien, reporting separately about the successes of Mothers' Union over the previous year - exceeding the challenge to raise over £1.4M in the 140th anniversary year, the worthwhile overseas projects, the process to revise the MU Constitution, the new project to explore what is unique about MU and what it does (MULOA - MU Listening, Observing and Acting), the ongoing work to embrace difference and the external focussed projects, often responding to crisis such as AFIA holidays for the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire and assistance for victims of domestic violence.

In relation to Ireland, Lynne made specific reference to our knitted teddies travelling by ship to the Mediterranean to be given to refugee children and about the success of our "Big Sing" a few weeks previously.

Annual Meeting Report continued

The keynote speaker, with two sessions both before and after the lunch break, was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Advisor on Reconciliation, Canon Sarah Synder - a member of Mothers' Union. She spoke passionately about her work in the field of peace and reconciliation and asked that we should move outside our personal comfort zones and build on our strengths to reach out to all communities with our MU work. In short, we should become ambassadors for reconciliation.



There was also a moving short act of worship close to midday, led by the central Chaplain, Bishop Andrew Proud.

There was a great deal positive about the 2017 General Meeting and I also enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with old friends from other dioceses and with MSH staff.

Canon Synder was an inspiring speaker but perhaps she could have covered her topic in a single session. I would have liked to hear much more about MU work at home and abroad - some of the displays focussing on initiatives in Scotland were superb and there were MU members there from Uganda, The Solomon Islands, Trinidad and Tobago who could have told us from the stage about their on-going projects.

Afterwards some members I spoke to felt that there had been too much theory and too great a focus on peace and reconciliation (perhaps we in NI feel overloaded with that concept?) with not enough about our "Faith in Action". After the wonderful 140th celebratory General Meeting in Basingstoke last year, the 2017 meeting was possibly going to be an anti-climax but, hopefully, the feedback will encourage the General Trustees to be more innovative for next year's gathering in Swansea - Mary Sumner's footsteps should provide ample scope!



That night our own footsteps took us to a great restaurant where the D and D "gang"

celebrated Joy's birthday in style, enjoying fellowship and friendship, something in which we excel in Down and Dromore.



Hilda, Pat & Doris in Edinburgh

To quote one of the hymns from Friday's Festal Evensong service,

"God who made us, sought us, found us, called and chose us from above, cast a Father's arm around us, here unites us in His love."

With Love
June

Save the Date

General Meeting 2018

Swansea 18 September



TOYS FOR SCHOOLS

were presented to mark MU 130 years in Ireland.

1. Donard School, Banbridge
2. Tor Bank School, Dundonald
3. Knockevin School, Downpatrick

Photograph below shows June Butler and Pat Mills presenting Tor Bank School with new ICT equipment. Also in the picture are pupils Luke Dobson and Daniel Magill along with Acting Vice Principal Julie Jordan.



ST MARK'S NEWTOWNARDS WEDDING DRESS FESTIVAL



Hillsborough MU members visiting and enjoying the Festival in June in Newtownards

Around The Diocese



Above: Pictured following the **Dromore Area Service** held in Rathfriland on 17th September 2017 are Winnie McLaughlin, Diocesan VP, Rev Gerald McCartney, Diocesan Chaplain, Phyllis Burrell Secretary and June Butler Diocesan President.



Ballywalter MU celebrated their 75th anniversary In May 2016



St Elizabeth's Dundonald 100 years

In June 2017 a special service took place in Dundonald where guests included Bishop Ken Clarke (speaker) Mayor & Mayoress of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council , All Ireland President Phyllis Grothier, former branch leaders and Diocesan President June Butler



Peggy Capper received her 50 years Certificate from President June Butler. This took place as the **St Brendan's** Mu joined **St Dorothea's** for the opening service and Communion on 13th September.

Peggy was also joined by her daughter and granddaughter



A large cake and balloon helped to mark this centenary celebration at St Elizabeth's in Dundonald



Around The Diocese

THE BIG SING took place in **National Concert Hall in Dublin** on 9 September and Down & Dromore were well represented. Also 5 of the hymns sung were chosen by our diocese.



Waiting in Saintfield for the Dublin bus

Members from Seapattrick and Rathfriland branches on the steps of The National Concert Hall



Part of 1,200 audience in Dublin



Left: Lynne Tembey (Worldwide President of Mothers' Union) addressing the audience of 1,200 with choir members (from branches from all over Ireland) behind her



Members of Bangor Area enjoying a very special meal at An Grianan on the way back from The Big Sing in Dublin



Diary Dates

PLEASE CONFIRM

ALL BOOKINGS FOR DIOCESAN PRESIDENT WITH DIOCESAN SECRETARY PHYLLIS WHITESIDE

- Nov 27 Bangor Area Service
- Dec 1 Fundraising concert
St Elizabeth's Dundonald
- 4 Advent Carol Service 8pm
Magheradroll B.hinch
- 7 130th anniversary Tree Planting
Down Cathedral

THEME FOR 2018

"IN MARY SUMNER'S FOOTSTEPS"

- Feb 5-9 Worldwide Council Swanwick
- Mar 2 Women's World Day of Prayer
- 14 Diocesan Trustees St Finian's
- Apr 9 Diocesan Festival Service 8pm
St Mark's Dundela
- 14 All Ireland Council Christ Church
Dublin 10.30am
- 23 Diocesan Council Meeting
- May 10-12 General Synod
- 17 Senior Members Holy Communion
Seapattrick, Banbridge
- Aug 9 Mary Sumner Day
- Sep 17
- 18 Annual Meeting Swansea

WOMEN'S AID & TOILETRIES FOR A & E UNITS AT HOSPITALS

Please continue to support our work with Women's Aid in Newry and Bangor.

Christmas is fast approaching and as well as usual items they have asked if we could supply pyjamas and slippers for mums and children. Alternatively, a cash donation to buy items. Some of us love new sleepwear at Christmas. The majority of these families have had to flee their home very urgently with little or nothing.

Also remember our toilet bags for the Ulster Hospital, Craigavon & Daisy Hill. Apparently the biggest need is for men's bags according to the hospitals. Plus keep knitting. All items are very gratefully received.

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