

ST PATRICK'S, BROUGHSHANE, CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



By Joyce Bond
Broughshane MU branch

MU members of St Patrick's, Broughshane, made the decorations for their tree (pictured) at the parish's Christmas Tree Festival. The theme of the tree was 'The Great Commission' and many aspects of MU's work and projects were displayed on it. The Christingle service at the end of the Festival was an act

of worship packed with young families. One little person was seen toasting her marshmallow over a candle (under supervision, of course!). The occasion provided a donation towards MU's Sudan Appeal. In addition, a short presentation on '16 days of Activism' at the MU Ladies' Fellowship Breakfast gave everyone 'food for thought'.

MU membership

We are all members of MU. What type of member are you? Are you a branch member who attends branch meetings? Are you an indoor member who is unable to attend branch meetings? Are you a senior member who has been a branch member for many years? Are you a diocesan member - someone who is unable to be part of a branch but still wishes to

support and be part of the work of MU? All members are very valuable to MU and should receive information about our charity, magazines, access to websites and all are able to accept posts within the Diocese, All-Ireland, etc. If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a diocesan member, please contact Lynne Colman for more information (tel. 9058 7398; email: lynne21@virginmedia.com).

Connor Young Members
invite you to
The Great Connor Bake-Off!
Bishop Alan Abernethy and Archdeacon Stephen McBride will go head-to-head in St Patrick's Parish Hall, Ballymena, on Tuesday 26th May, at 7.30pm
£5 (including supper)

Indoor members - 'very special ladies'

By Evelyn Lewis
Connor Indoor Members'
Representative

I have just completed my first year as Connor Indoor Members' Representative. It has been a pleasure sending out cards to those members who have reached and celebrated 90th birthdays and over. We have four ladies at the moment who have celebrated birthdays of between 100 and 104, which is absolutely amazing.

It is vitally important that I am kept up to date with details of 90th plus birthdays and also 50th and 60th plus wedding anniversaries. This is the responsibility of each branch and I would encourage and remind members to provide all details to their Area Indoor Members' Representative in the first instance and she, in turn, will pass them on to me. It would be such a pity if a member missed out on receiving her card.

It goes without saying that, sadly, it is also very important that I am kept up to date with any deaths which occur in

this age group. I also arrange for cards to be sent from both All-Ireland and Mary Sumner House on all of these special occasions.

Valerie and I have thoroughly enjoyed being at the areas' indoor members' tea parties, as this is a lovely opportunity for us to meet these very special ladies and enjoy some time and fellowship with them. Please contact both of us with possible dates when you are arranging these events so that we can plan to be there.

Finally, I quote from a letter which I have received from Margaret Crawford, All-Ireland Indoor Members' Representative: "If an indoor member should move, say, to be with her family or to a nursing home, she is still the responsibility of the branch where was an enrolled member. That branch is responsible for her subscription, however it is paid."

If you need to contact me directly, please email me at: evelyn.lewis1@btinternet.com. Thank you, Evelyn

'Perfect evening'



Lee Montgomery (left) and Anne McFarlane are pictured at the beauty and craft evening organised by St Mark's, Ballysillan, MU branch.

By Geraldine Montgomery
Vice-President, Finance and
Administration

"A truly fantastic evening with lots of great tips, great atmosphere and great food."

That was one of the comments made after a beauty and craft evening organised before Christmas by St Mark's, Ballysillan, MU for younger women in the parish. Anne McFarlane, a St Mark's

MU member, showed everyone how to make a felt Christmas tree decoration and there was a choice of a tree, star or stocking to decorate and sew.

Lee Montgomery, a beauty therapist from the Merchant Hotel, Belfast, demonstrated make-up techniques.

On leaving, the happy young women who attended were given a selection of MU publications to round off a perfect evening.

Cloughfern branch dinner



Some MU members of Cloughfern enjoy 'The Slush' following dinner in the Clarion Hotel.

By Barbara Turkington
Cloughfern MU branch

Earlier this year, members of Cloughfern MU branch, Newtownabbey, accompanied by a number of friends, went for dinner to the Clarion Hotel, Carrickfergus. They all enjoyed their meal

and catching up with some members who had been unable to join them for a while.

After dinner, they were treated to great singing from Eric Moore and some ladies were even persuaded to dance. It was a lovely occasion which, hopefully, will be repeated.

Thank you, Black Santa!



Connor MU Diocesan President, Valerie Ash, receives a cheque for £800 for MU from Claire McCollum, presenter of BBC TV's *Songs of Praise*, at the Good Samaritans' service in St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday 1st February. Some 32 people will benefit from the cheque which will be used for MU's Literacy and Financial Development programme. At the service, representatives of almost 200 charities received donations from the £186,000 collected during the Black Santa Sitout outside St Anne's Cathedral in the week before Christmas. (Photo: Karen Bushby)

**Closing date for material for next issue:
14th August 2015**

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In Touch with Connor Diocese MU
Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Spring 2015
MU website: www.mothersunion.ie



The Diocesan President writes ... Congratulations and celebrations!

Hello everyone,

This year, MU in Connor Diocese will celebrate its 70th anniversary in its own right, as Connor and Down and Dromore Dioceses separated in 1945 and MU followed suit.

Several branches, including St Polycarp's (Finaghy), Eglantine (Lisburn) and All Saints' (Antrim), have recently celebrated their 70th anniversaries and I was delighted to attend their services.

It was a great honour for me to attend Eglantine's anniversary service in January, especially as I was able to present some long-service certificates, one in particular to a founder-member of the branch, Margaret Adams,

for 70 years' membership of MU (see photograph below).

Margaret is a marvellous lady and I know that there are many more like her in the Diocese.

Also in January, I brought congratulations from members in Connor to Zoë Holman who was celebrating her 100th birthday (see photograph below). Zoë has been a member of Christ Church, Lisburn, MU branch for 26 years and is now one of our indoor members.

It was a pleasure to talk to her, reminiscing about her days as a Chief Petty Officer in the WRNS in Londonderry during the Second World War. She may well have met my mother who was also a Chief Petty Officer in the WRNS in Londonderry.

CHANGES IN SOCIETY AND MU

What changes in society and MU these two ladies, and many others, have lived through in their lifetime!

During the last 70 years, they would have seen MU evolve from branch meetings in 1945 - when a branch meeting may well have been the only social outing women experienced and most members joined a branch after they were married - to what it is today.

In 2015, MU is a worldwide Christian charity, with 4.1 million members in branches in 83 countries, and is as much a charity as are, for example, Oxfam and the Chest, Heart and

Stroke Association.

Members will recall all the projects with which Connor has been involved during the last 70 years and who can forget the fun - not to mention the anxiety! - that the projects for the O'Neill Cup have stirred up. Yes, we have had a lot of fun in Connor Diocese over the years.

MU MEMBERSHIP

The branch is still very important and contains our grassroots members, although now many young married women are working and often lack the time to be members of a branch.

Did you know that MU offers

Continued on page 2



Valerie presents Margaret Adams with her certificate to mark her 70 years of MU membership during Eglantine MU's 70th anniversary service. Branch members, Elizabeth McIlroy, Loretta Fleming and Margaret Ashbridge (back row, 1st, 2nd and 3rd right respectively), also received long-service certificates, as did Norma Bell (2nd left), a former Branch Chair and Connor MU Diocesan President, who gave the address at the service. Also joining in the celebrations are Branch Chair, Brenda Orr, and Lisburn Area Chair, Alison Leckey (left and 3rd left respectively).



Valerie wishes Zoë Holman a happy 100th birthday on behalf of Connor MU members, accompanied by (standing, from left) Barbara Watson, Nola Dundas and Marie Anderson.

Congratulations and celebrations! - from page 1

different types of membership: branch, indoor members and diocesan membership? (see page 5)

Diocesan membership enables those who wish to support MU but have difficulty attending branch meetings to be full MU members.

Over the past 70 years, our aims and objectives have remained the same, although methods of delivery have changed.

ALWAYS GETTING SUPPORT THROUGH

In Whitehead, where I live, there is a stream which flows over a wall on to the beach.

The water from the stream always reaches the sea, but - depending on the amount of water, the state of the tide, etc. - the path it takes changes daily.

Sometimes, it will flow in a single, deep channel; at other times, it will meander gently, with many small tributaries.

No matter what path the water takes, it reaches the sea and the fresh water has some effect on the sea water.

MU reminds me of that stream: no matter what the changes - membership, finances, etc. - MU always gets support through to where it is needed.

As an organisation in which prayer plays a very important role, let us pray that each one of us will be willing and able to play the part in MU that God has planned for us.

I hope that, in another 70 years, the Diocesan President will be able to look back on a Diocese which has grown from strength to strength.

May you all know God's richest blessings this year.

With all my love,

Valerie xx

Eglantine MU celebrates 70th anniversary

By Brenda Orr
Eglantine, Lisburn,
MU Branch Chair

Eglantine, Lisburn, MU celebrated its 70th anniversary with a special service of thanksgiving in All Saints', Eglantine, on Sunday 25th January.

Canon William Bell, a former rector of the parish, officiated at the service and his wife, Norma, a former Branch Chair and Connor MU Diocesan President, was our guest speaker.

Guests from MU branches within the Lisburn Area joined us for the celebrations.

We were also delighted to welcome Connor MU Diocesan President, Valerie Ash, who presented Margaret Adams, a founder-member of the branch, with her 70 years' long-service certificate.

Valerie also presented branch members, Margaret Ashbridge, Loretta Fleming and Elizabeth McIlroy, with long-service certificates, marking between 31 and 39 years' membership, and Norma with a certificate marking her 44 years' membership.

The branch donated to the church a number of large-print hymnbooks as a thankoffering to mark the anniversary.

Following the service, all present enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea in the Parish Hall.

Diocesan Festival Service hears that 'prayer is at centre of all that we do'

The Connor MU Diocesan Festival Service in St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday 22nd March had a special significance this year, in that it marked the 70th anniversary of MU in the diocese.

In 1945, the Dioceses of Connor and of Down and Dromore separated, with Connor MU then becoming a separate organisation in its own right.

Louie King-Irwin, wife of the first Bishop of Connor, the Rt Revd Charles King-Irwin, became the first Diocesan President of Connor.

Maintaining the link between past and present, the current Diocesan President, Valerie Ash, read the Old Testament lesson and Sheila Hughes, who was President from 1978-1983, read the New Testament lesson.

The intercessions were led by Rae Scott, North Connor Area Chair, and Roslyn Graham, Connor Young Members' Representative.

The preacher at the Festival Service was the Very Revd Raymond Ferguson, MU All-Ireland Chaplain, who emphasised the importance of such a service in any diocese, describing it as "an important rallying occasion ... important for diocesan structures and also for the branches which undergird those structures ... important for MU members who can be relied upon to rally to the banner and answer the call".

Referring to the 70th anniversary, Dean Ferguson gave thanks for "those who guided



Pictured at the MU Diocesan Festival Service in St Anne's Cathedral are (left to right) the Dean of Belfast, the Very Revd John Mann; Valerie Ash; the Very Revd Raymond Ferguson; and the Ven. Stephen McBride, Connor MU Diocesan Chaplain.

and shaped the changes 70 years ago ... the faithful, unsung members who have carried on the work in parishes right down to the present day [and] all who have handed the baton on to us".

May we, he said, "be found faithful as we hand on to others".

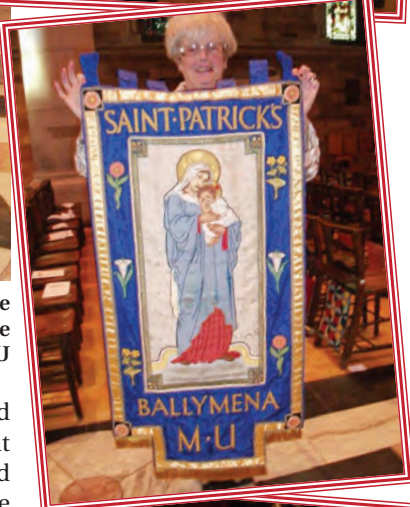
Focusing on the MU theme for 2015, 'United in Prayer', Dean Ferguson asserted that MU was "a great fellowship of prayer and worship, with prayer at the centre of all that we do, marking us out as a Christian and Church-based organisation and making us different to other more secular groups".

He went on to illustrate this with references to both a number

of Scripture passages and occasions which taught about the importance of being united in prayer and individuals whose lives were rooted in disciplined prayer.

Dean Ferguson commended the MU Wave of Prayer as being "such a powerful instrument in our own spiritual growth and in the fulfilling of God's plans" and felt that "we don't practice or stress it half enough".

He concluded by challenging members - "In Connor Diocese, are we a weak or a strong link in that vital chain of prayer?" - and reminded them that "when a believing person prays, great things happen".



MU Chief Executive to retire in July



Reg Bailey CBE

Reg Bailey, who joined MU as its Chief Executive in 1999, following a successful business career in the private sector, is to retire from the post in July.

Mr Bailey was one of the organisers of last year's MU General Meeting in Belfast's Waterfront Hall, an occasion he described as "delightful and memorable", emphasising in particular the "warmth of welcome and affection" evident throughout the two days.

In 2011, he was asked to chair an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and

Sexualisation of Childhood, *Letting Children be Children*, as part of a commitment made by both David Cameron and Nick Clegg before the 2010 General Election to give support to family life.

The so-called 'Bailey review' assessed how children were being pressurised into growing up too quickly, especially in respect of the sexuality and consumerism which surrounded them.

His 14 recommendations were largely implemented, leading to the introduction of codes of conduct to

minimise the sexualisation and commercialisation of children by media, businesses, manufacturing and retail companies in the UK, Ireland and many other countries.

Mr Bailey was awarded a CBE in the 2013 New Year's Honours List for services to children and families.

MU Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey, said that "during his sixteen years of working for Mothers' Union, Reg has been a great asset" and she wished him and his wife, Alison, well in retirement.

100 not out

By Valerie Christy
Christ Church, Lisburn,
MU Branch Secretary

Zoë Holman, a member of Christ Church, Lisburn, MU since 1986, celebrated her 100th birthday on 26th January.

Among the guests who called at Zoë's home in Lisburn to wish her many happy returns were the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Revd Alan Abernethy; the rector of Christ Church, the Revd Paul Dundas; members of Christ Church MU; and Valerie Ash, Connor MU Diocesan President.

I have known Zoë since she joined our branch. She is a very loyal member and always attended meetings and took part in everything that was happening. She has been an indoor member for a number of years.

For 100 years of age, Zoë is amazing. She speaks her mind, is very lively and brilliant

to talk to because she is so interesting and full of lots of stories. She is a delightful lady, with a very positive outlook on life, a twinkle in her eye and a great sense of fun.

Valerie Ash said that Zoë was among the oldest MU members in the Diocese, adding: "It is great to have people who are this age and still interested in and supporting MU."

Bishop Abernethy recalled that he had first met Zoë when he conducted Holy Week in Christ Church last year and was staggered to realise that she was 99.

He said: "I promised to return to see her on her 100th birthday and she remembered that promise."

"It is a joy to meet people like Zoë who have lived full lives and remain so faithful and gracious."

Carrmoney MU Prayer Breakfast



Pictured at Carrmoney MU's Prayer Breakfast held at the end of February are (left to right) Joan Killen, Carrmoney Branch Chair; Kathleen Lunn, North Belfast Area Chair; the Revd Arlene Moore (guest speaker); and Valerie Ash, Connor MU Diocesan President. (Photo: Noel Jenkins)

Thank You

By Barbara Turkington
Connor MU Projects
Representative

I would like to share with members the following 'thank you' note which I received from the Neonatal Unit at Antrim Hospital:

"Dear Mrs Turkington, Thank you for the blankets, sheets and hats your members made for us. We really appreciate them.

Love from the staff and babies of Antrim Neonatal Unit."

It is good to know that the dedicated work of members throughout Connor in providing contributions for the hospitals' projects is of enormous help and value and also greatly appreciated.

The Unit also sent me the following 'thank you' poem composed by a parent at Antrim Hospital:

You took the time
To lift your needles and thread,
Thinking of a tiny life
Lying in their hospital bed.

You knitted something special
With your own fair hands,
Not expecting anything in return,
Just kindness in your plans.

You created yellows and greens,
You created whites and creams,
You created cardigans and hats,
A new mother's dream.

New parents, neonatal staff
And our little ones in bed
Would like to thank you for lifting
Your needles and thread.



The shelves and baskets in Antrim Hospital which contain the baby clothes, etc. - stacked according to size - made and donated by Connor MU members as part of the various ongoing hospitals-related projects