

FOCUS Online

An All-Ireland Mothers' Union Publication

Spring 2015

Are You Ready To Pour?

It's hard to believe that three years have passed since we all boiled the kettle for Mothers' Union during 'Mums in May 2012'. The great All-Ireland fundraiser was an outstanding success with over £85,000 raised. That money has been used to develop the life-changing work of MU overseas, to support our clergy in training and to establish an All-Ireland Mums in May Fund to support dioceses in their outreach work and projects. So much was achieved from that month of tea-parties, coffee mornings and other events and now we are ready to do it all again in 2015!

Branches will receive packs to help them hold an event for Mums in May 2015 and remember, whether big or small, every event adds up. It is also a great opportunity to invite friends and past members to hear about the work of Mothers' Union both at home and overseas. We really do make a difference and should be proud of our work! Alongside the cups of tea a brand new book has been published – 'Grace & Flavours'. Co-authored by Moira Thom, All-Ireland Fundraising & Communications Coordinator and Freda Marsburg, Focus Editor, it is a book to take us through the seasons of the year and the church with thoughts, prayers and graces accompanied by 50 delicious but simple seasonal recipes which reflect the time of year. Make sure you get your copy from your Branch Leader – and at only £3/€4, why not get copies for your friends and relatives?



The money raised this year will be used in three ways – to finance a project to develop the Mothers' Union Literacy & Financial Education programme into Ethiopia. The programme has been massively successful in Burundi, Malawi and Sudan with over 100,000 adults becoming literate and numerate – now *we in Ireland* will be helping it to develop into Ethiopia making a real difference to those adults who just never got the chance to go to school. A proportion will also be set aside for the All-Ireland Mums in May Fund so that dioceses can continue to apply for funding for projects such as AFIA (Away From It All holidays). Finally, dioceses will receive a proportion directly back to use for their own particular needs – for example, to purchase equipment.

So, if we all do a little bit and get those kettles boiling, Mums in May 2015 will be a wonderful success. Join in this great triennial fundraiser and help Mothers' Union to help those in need....wherever they might be.

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Focus goes Digital

Mothers' Union All-Ireland is always looking for ways to move forward and in keeping with many other organizations we are now piloting this exciting new venture with this Spring Edition. We would love your feedback, ideas and comments on how we can further progress this.

The Autumn Edition will be a paper copy distributed in the normal way.

We hope you enjoy this venture and please remember, your feedback is important and can be sent to: office@mothersunion.ie

Magazine Contents

Just a thought from our All-Ireland President	Page 3
Tributes to Susan Cathcart	Page 4
Mothers' Union Relief Fund	Page 5
"Cooking Connections"	Page 6
A Digital Dash around the Dioceses	Page 7
Bite Size	Page 12

Mums in May 2015

Grace & Flavours

*Food for Body & Soul
through the seasons of the year
Cost: £3.00/€4*

Copies of Grace & Flavours are available from:

- Your local Branch Leader
- Diocesan president
- Or contact: office@mothersunion.ie

The Mothers' Union Prayer

*Loving Lord,
we thank you for your love
so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union
as we seek to share your love
through the encouragement,
strengthening and support
of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your spirit,
may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service reach out
as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.*

The Autumn Deadline

Items for inclusion in the Autumn 2015 issue of Focus should be sent to: editor@mothersunion.ie by 7th September 2015

Please note the earlier deadline and feel free to submit any material throughout the summer.

Focus is a publication of The Mothers' Union in Ireland and can be contacted at the following address:

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The Mothers' Union Office
St. Michan's Church
Church Street
Dublin 7

Tel: +353 1 873 5075
Email: office@mothersunion.ie

Just a thought from our All-Ireland President

I am writing this sitting at my kitchen table, Stumpy is snoozing peacefully on the chair and outside my window the garden is white with snowdrops, some in large clumps and some dotted about in much smaller groups. They came into blossom just at Christmas time and despite snow showers, frost, lashing rain and winter gales they are still there; bright and brave, their fragile but flexible stems blowing in the wind while their roots are firmly embedded in the ground. As the year moves on they will disappear back into the ground only to return again next year refreshed and stronger than ever. Is there a lesson there? I think so indeed! Flexibility, endurance, perseverance and being firmly rooted in faith must surely be an aspiration for each of us in Mothers' Union; with everyone contributing to the wonderful landscape; whether you are a member of a large Branch or small, a Diocesan member, individual or group; everyone is a vital part of our organisation.



It was a wonderful privilege to attend the Provincial Presidents' Conference last October and meet and share with Mothers' Union leaders from around the world. It was so empowering to hear of the difference that Mothers' Union has made, and continues to make to the lives of so many families right around the world. We were each assigned to a family group, mine was Brigid of Kildare and my companions included Erani, Sri Lanka; Margaret, Canada; Mugisa, Congo; Ida, Papua New Guinea. Erani and Margaret have each contributed a grace to ***Grace and Flavours***, our exciting new publication of reflections, prayers and graces to accompany a selection of recipes for each season of the year. ***Grace and Flavours*** is the result of suggestions made at a workshop at the Triennial Conference last year – isn't it wonderful what happens when minds and vision combine?

The updated Wave of Prayer is now well established and I hope you find it exciting and interesting as we share with new companions in prayer. I find the information in Families Worldwide is so helpful in drawing each of us closer together.

2015 is an Election year for Mothers' Union at Diocesan, All-Ireland and Worldwide level. Please consider the positions prayerfully and I would ask for your support for those who are called to serve Mothers' Union – perhaps it may be you!!! I would also like to pay tribute to all who serve Mothers' Union in leadership roles and I speak here especially of Diocesan Presidents. It is through their enthusiasm, encouragement and leadership that Mothers' Union is a living, dynamic organisation. May God bless and keep them and you,

Phyllis

Saying Farewell....Mrs Patricia Mayes

Mrs Patricia Mayes died on 23rd December in her 93rd year. She served as General President of Mothers' Union from 1977-1983, having previously served as Diocesan President of Cashel, Emly, Waterford and Lismore where her husband, Gilbert, was Dean of Lismore for many years. Mrs Mayes will be remembered for her faithful service to Mothers' Union and particularly for her contribution to the celebration of the Centenary of Mothers' Union in Ireland in 1987. A short history of Mothers' Union entitled "Specially Concerned" was jointly produced by Mrs Mayes and Mrs Edna Burrows while examples of the candle holder, bell, plate with the distinctive shamrock and harebell design painted by Mrs Mayes are to be found in many homes around the country. Mothers' Union members extend sympathy to her daughters, Brigid, Clare and Eleanor.

Tributes to Susan Cathcart

From All-Ireland President, Phyllis Grothier....

Mothers' Union members around the country were greatly saddened to learn of Susan's death in December. Susan's final illness and death came as a tremendous shock to all of us. It was obvious last Autumn that she was unwell, but her dedication to Mothers' Union and her determination to continue as All-Ireland Treasurer, a role which she had just taken over in January, was so overwhelming that she persevered almost to the end, attending the Finance and Central Services Unit Conference in Swanick in September and All Ireland Council in November. She will be greatly missed and our thoughts and prayers are with Alan, Lisa and Emma, Susan's parents, her brother and many friends.



From Former All-Ireland President, Margaret Crawford....

We were all so sorry to hear of the untimely death of Susan Cathcart on 11th December. Susan had so much to offer, at home, in the family business, in her Church and in Mothers' Union.

Susan served as Diocesan Secretary for 7 years during which time many interesting and exciting events took place in the Diocese. With her meticulous planning and attention to detail, Diocesan Family Fun Days were organized at Castle Coole, The Bawnacre and the Airport; she assisted with training courses for Diocesan Officers and helped run Treasure Hunts and Easter Egg Hunts for Young families. There was even an 'Action Man' evening for the menfolk! During this time she was instrumental in launching the Clogher MU Diocesan Website. She also arranged Diocesan Trips for many years to the MU Annual Meetings in Wales, Scotland and England.

Susan then served as All-Ireland Marketing Co-ordinator for 6 years and also was a member of the Marketing Committee at Mary Sumner House. Her flair for marketing led to the revamp of the All-Ireland Focus magazine, updating of the All-Ireland website, the launch of the 'Bye Buy Childhood' postcard campaign and many other fund raising initiatives. She was part of the committee that ran the 'Mums in May 2012' event when almost €100,000 was raised for MU initiatives at home and Overseas.

In 2013 Susan was appointed as All-Ireland Treasurer for Mothers' Union. She had many skills to offer and because of her love of working with figures, was looking forward to settling in to this role - sadly, her health deteriorated, but she was resilient to the end. Mothers' Union in Ireland has lost a trustworthy, dedicated and loyal member and friend.

We offer our deepest sympathy to Alan, Lisa and Emma

From Freda Marsburg, Editor of Focus....

I first met Susan along with Margaret Crawford when I thought I might be interested in coming on-board with Focus. At that time I had no idea who Susan Cathcart was..... Over the next four years Susan and I built a friendship through working together on Focus and I will be forever thankful for her immense vision for Focus.

I loved working with her because I loved her attention to detail.....even a comma in the wrong place was picked up by Susan. She was meticulous in her work with me on Focus and together we pushed forward and in the first year of working together Focus won the award for the best "Other" Church publication.

Susan and I not only developed a close working relationship but we became friends. Often I would say to my husband, "if we had met in our younger days we would have been life-long friends". I feel it was a real privilege to have Susan as a friend and over the last four years she has been a very faithful friend. I loved being in her company and our occasional lunches together were full of laughter, encouragement and enjoyment.

I miss Susan, especially her long and encouraging phone-calls, our sharing of "doggy" stories and her prayers that resulted in very practical and real care and concern for those around her.

Mothers' Union Relief Fund

Mothers' Union is working with the Diocese of Cyprus & The Gulf to provide for 15,000 displaced people in Iraq



In November 2014 the Mothers' Union's Relief Fund was able to contribute to the coordinated efforts of the network of Kurdish churches in Iraq to bring refuge and safety to displaced families and refugees from towns that have become war-zones due to IS aggression – Mosul, Qaraqash, and more.

The money and resources we have given through The Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf have helped the local church make a huge difference to these families, restoring some sense of stability and community. Without the presence of international relief agencies in the most desperate of areas, the Church network has enabled families to have shelter, fresh water, food, clothing and medicine.



Bishop Michael, and Father Faiz, from Mothers' Union's home in Iraq, St George's Baghdad, have written to thank all who contributed, the support shown by our members around the world has made life on the ground more bearable for these struggling communities.

Support for these refugees has enabled the church network to establish complexes across the city of Erbil, each of which house 650 refugees. In total nearly 15,000 have to date been sheltered.. Thirty enormous water tanks provide the fresh water and over 1,000 blankets have also been distributed.

The pictures shared with us demonstrate that, whilst not ideal, families are today being cared for. However the situation is still critical – keeping the water clean is a major problem, and the electricity supply is often interrupted as the price of fuel soars out of reach.

The need to help these displaced communities rebuild their lives remains – the need for housing, schooling and of course employment. Rather than simply continue to provide relief, therefore, Mothers' Union will continue to build a close relationship with Iraq through the Diocese in order to do all we can to contribute to the rebuilding of safe communities in Iraq.



So Mums in May is on the way again……

Cooking Connections!

So Mums in May is on the way again. It's not all about tea parties this year but it did get me thinking about cooking and baking. I've never been an expert cook. Sometimes it's a chore, an obligation, and on other occasions it's been an opportunity to learn, an enjoyable pastime, and even, an uplifting, creative experience! Secretly though, truth to tell, I much prefer my meal handed to me.

Cooking allows us to use the best of nutritious ingredients. Let's look at the nutrients available to us in each daily meal – vitamins, minerals, trace elements, fibre, protein, carbohydrates and fat – in perfect balance they create and sustain our lives. What an amazing provision God has provided for our daily sustenance. But what about the spiritual ingredients available to us? You may enjoy sustenance found in an inspirational book, or feel privileged to be part of your Mothers' Union Diocesan Prayer Circle or perhaps you prefer listening to CDs and *Songs of Praise*. Whatever switches you on we hope you will find inspiration within this year's theme *United in Prayer*. This theme provides us with excellent opportunities to nourish our spiritual lives so let's put aside time for prayer, as we daily seek to relax in His presence with His Word.



Sometimes we share our cooking with others, and so too it can be refreshing to meet others to share our spiritual nourishment with each other whilst enjoying fellowship together. Many dioceses have *Quiet Days*, Prayer Walks, conferences etc. and of course this year there will be a *Mums In May* event happening near you! *To be whole is to be spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy. Jesus lived in perfect wholeness.* (Colin Urquart). No matter how busy you are take care of yourself so that you can do your best to serve yourself and serve God.

Cooking is creative. We don't have to stick to the recipe. Depending on our mood and the kitchen larder we can improvise, add something new and take pot luck. I am always astounded at the number of times I read a familiar passage in the bible and am struck by a new angle or a new dimension that has previously alluded me. I ought not to be as surprised as the psalmist in Psalm 119:18 assures us that when we open our eyes that will see wonderful things in God's law.

Cooking consists of change – there can be lots of mess - organising the ingredients, mixing well, placing in the oven, savouring the sensual aroma that permeates the kitchen and last, but not least, the final product – if we're lucky it's delicious, if we're unfortunate, it may be overcooked or burnt to a cinder. Our lives can go through periods of change. These can be positive or negative and let's face it, even positive change can bring levels of stress. We are constantly faced with challenges, some we accept, some we pass over, but there's no doubting that God uses challenges to develop us in new ways. It can sometimes be hard to acknowledge that by accepting a change God may have something better in store for us. Change is a challenge and an opportunity and as the old adage goes "there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so." In Ephesians 4:23 Paul tells us we can "be made new in the attitude of our minds." The disciples embraced great change in their lives in order to follow Jesus, early Christians too made drastic changes in their lives – all sharing the vision of a chosen life of faith.



What change can we make in our lives that will allow us to spend more time with God? Dr J. Packer has this advice for us. "How can we turn our knowledge about God into knowledge of God? The rule for doing so is demanding, but simple. It is that we turn each truth that we learn about God into a matter for meditation before God, leading to prayer and praise of God."

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Jacqui Armstrong
All-Ireland Faith and Policy Coordinator

A Digital Dash around the Dioceses

Derry & Raphoe Trustee Body Retreat

The Immanuel Retreat Centre, Ramelton, was the venue for the Derry & Raphoe Trustee Body Meeting and Retreat on the Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd of November 2014. The residential weekend in this beautiful part of Donegal was facilitated and meticulously organised by Jacqui Armstrong (Faith & Policy Co-ordinator)

On arrival we were warmly welcomed by the proprietors, Sue and Harry Greer. Prior to our delicious meal the Rev'd Carmen gave thanks for the food and this special time together in fellowship. Very soon the dining room was filled with conversations and lots of laughter.



At 8pm our President Kay Clarke called us 'to order' and invited Mrs Mary Good to open our Trustee Body meeting with prayer. Following the business of the meeting in a period of atmospheric meditation led by Mary, we were encouraged to shine a light in the dark corners of our lives.

On Saturday morning after a hearty breakfast and lots of 'chit chat' our day of retreat began. Jacqui led us in worship taking as her theme, "*We are the salt of the earth and we are the light of the world*". She encouraged and inspired us to think of ways in which we can enhance and develop both our spiritual wellbeing and our general wellbeing. A period

of quietness and reflection followed Jacqui's presentation. The beautifully crafted greeting cards by the artist Hannah Dunnett, were used to create an atmosphere and setting conducive to reflection.

Having enjoyed further culinary delights, we were joined by Esther Russell. Using Chapters 1 and 2 of Jonah, Esther introduced us to the Inductive method of studying the Bible. Through simply acquired skills, Inductive Bible Study assists individuals of all ages in understanding and increasing their knowledge and specific engagement with God's word.

Our time of fellowship concluded with Jacqui and Kay encouraging us to explore prayer. We reflected upon the old saying, "*Pray as you can - not as you can't*". We were reminded that prayers can be at any time and wherever we might find ourselves - walking, sitting, or even driving. We have to realise the fact that we all live very busy lives with many distractions, thus rendering it often almost impossible to set aside a quiet time for prayer.



We left the Immanuel Centre feeling refreshed, enthused, encouraged and inspired and very appreciative of Jacqui's leadership skills and hard work in preparing for and facilitating our time together.

Congratulations to members of Drumholm



Mrs Ruby Stinson with her 65 year certificate, Mrs Marion Mc Crea with her 25 year certificate, Mrs Margaret Morrow with her 30 year certificate and Judith Hinchcliff with her 25 year certificate.



Mrs Mary Barnett an Indoor Member of Drumholm was presented with her 65 year certificate in her home.

Tuam, Killala & Achonry

Diocesan President's Garden Party

Many members from the scattered branches were delighted to attend the Garden Party held in Bishop's House, Castlebar by kind invitation of Bishop and Mrs. Rooke. It was a great pleasure that some of the Indoor Members with their families also attended. There was also a "Bring and Buy" stall, the proceeds of which were divided between the Overseas and AFIA funds. After a lovely tea provided by the members the afternoon ended with some hymn singing and prayers led by the Bishop.



Diocesan Project

The diocese has been granted money from the Mums in May Fund and it was decided at Council to help and support some vulnerable women who are moving back to live independently from one of the refuges which are run by Cope in Galway city. This will be administered by Galway MU who will help to equip the accommodation with bedding, kitchen equipment, etc.

Individual branches are busy with their projects supporting people in hospital with toiletries, socks and underwear and also helping with the shoebox appeal. Some members of Galway branch knitted shawls and attached a card with prayers which have been given to the Indoor Members who reside in Nursing Homes.

Some members intend to travel to Dublin to attend the All-Ireland Holy Communion Service in Christ Church Cathedral on Thursday, 5th March and hope to meet with fellow members from Clogher diocese.

The Mums in May Service will be held on Sunday 17th May at 3.30pm in Christ Church, Castlebar. Members look forward to welcoming the All-Ireland President, Mrs Phyllis Grothier who will give the address.

Connor

'Perfect Evening'

"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.



Lee Montgomery and Anne McFarlane



Christmas Tree Festival

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'.

Clogher

Tempo & Clabby Celebrate 60th Anniversary



Anne Armstrong with Dr Margaret Knox



Cutting the cake are Mrs Patricia Foy and Mrs Nancy Allen, and Dr Margaret Knox President along with Branch Leader Lavina Allen

Cork, Cloyne & Ross

Quiet Days

Rev. Geraldine Gracie led us on a 'Journey into the unknown' at our Diocesan Quiet day in St Sennan's, Inniscarra in October 2014. We looked at Joshua 3, the story of the Israelites being led across the Jordan River. It was such an uplifting and soul nourishing time together of reflection and worship so carefully led by Rev Geraldine.

Early in January, Ballydehob Union branch was joined by members from neighbouring branches and from Cork for their annual Quiet Day. Rev. Steve McCann, Ballydehob rector explored the incidences of healing in St Mark's Gospel. As always, a great way to start the year.

United in Prayer

The Women's Conference November Conference held once again in the Garryvoe Hotel in East Cork was a resounding success, with lots of positive feedback. Glynis spoke about being peacemakers (not peace-fakers or peace-breakers!) in our families and our communities and helped us to think about conflict and how to handle it properly and positively. She was practical, humorous and real! The workshops (gentle exercise, thinking about different ways we worship, creative writing and making cards) were all very much enjoyed and it helped a few of us find some hidden talents! The weekend had everything from lovely food and time to chat, special worship and music, moments of pure daftness with the 'Cinderella' sketch and a mad game of 'beetle'! This year's Conference will be in the same venue from November 13-15. Booking forms and programmes will be available later in the year. If you are interested please contact our Diocesan Secretary Oriel Lester (musecccr@gmail.com) for provisional bookings – members from neighbouring dioceses (or further afield!) are very welcome to join us.

Diocesan Council

At the Diocesan Council meeting in December we had a special focus on the 16 days of Activism against gender based violence – pausing 5 times during the meeting to hear facts about people's real situations and praying about them. It was great to hear about so much positive work going on in the diocese and further afield – and to hear of letters from families who have enjoyed AFIA holidays this year and from the Prison Visitors Centre.

We anticipate having great fun "doing our bit" for Mums in May. All members took on the challenge in 2012 with many inventive fundraising schemes. As a diocese we are so grateful to have been awarded a grant recently to help defray the Conference expenses.

In June we will once again be providing baby-changing and feeding facilities at Cork Show, along with entertainment and story-telling for children. If you're in Cork for the Show do drop by and visit us.

Armagh

Busy Bees

A very successful morning of inspiration and reflection for members was held at the beginning of Advent in Tamlaght Parish Hall at their Busy Bee event.

After opening prayer and welcome from our Chaplain Revd. Barry Paine, Iris our Diocesan President introduced the speakers for the morning. Ruth Cooke from International Justice Mission told us of their work with vulnerable people, who because of debt find themselves in slavery while their employers get richer. Also she spoke about their work with children who are sexually exploited. As this event was in the middle of the Mothers' Union campaign Against Gender Violence it was a very appropriate talk and many questions were asked regarding this work. Beth Wortley and Myrtle Stevenson lead a time of prayer with an emphasis on the Mothers' Union work at home and worldwide. Myrtle reminded members of Armagh's new link Diocese. This was followed by a time of fellowship and coffee served by the members from Ballinderry, Tamlaght and Ardboe. Iris then introduced our All-Ireland President, Phyllis Grothier. Phyllis used the theme Busy Bees and explained how it is a miracle that a bee ever gets off the ground with their flimsy wings and robust body. She compared it to the work of Mothers' Union which without prayer would not be able to get all the projects and work they do in their local churches and community off the ground. Revd. Barry Paine, the Diocesan Chaplain closed the meeting with a reflection on Praying reflectively and effectively. Thanks was expressed by Iris to the speakers and to all the Mothers' Union members who had taken the time out to come along. Each member was given a little gift to take home.

St Columba's, Portadown



Mothers' Union tree at St Columba's, Portadown pictured with Myrtle Stevenson Wave of Prayer Links Rep. Phyllis Grothier and Iris Suitor DP

Wrapped in Love
Prayer Shawl Ministry

Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh

Many branches in our diocese have been busy knitting prayer shawls. Members have enjoyed knitting these shawls, and have combined prayers with reaching out to those in need of comfort. Many of our indoor members have received a prayer shawl. They have been thrilled to think they have been remembered and even more special to be prayed for. A lot of these ladies have been knitters and really appreciate the shawl and the work involved in knitting them. The gift of the shawl will be treasured. The shawls are also very practical and cosy in this chilly winter weather.



Prayer shawls knitted by MU members.

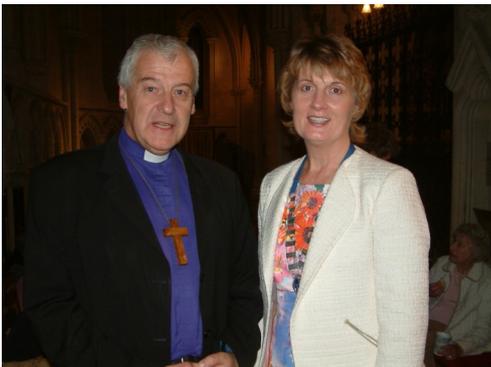


*"Mothers' Union Family"
knitted by a branch member in Greystones.*

Dublin & Glendalough



These are our fiddle muffs which were launched at our Winter council. They are similar to the fiddle blankets and are for use by people with dementia. The pattern can be found on the Dublin and Glendalough web site.



*Archbishop Michael Jackson and D.P. Joy Gordon
at the Festival Service*

Bite Size.....

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, Co Down
175th Anniversary of the Nave

Flower Festival 2015

22nd – 25th May 2015



“ Our Mission ”

Artistic Director : Barbara Megarry

Friday 22nd May 2015	2.00pm – 8.00pm : Opening Ceremony at 2.00pm
Saturday 23rd May 2015	10.00am – 8.00pm
Sunday 24th May 2015	2.00pm – 5.00pm : Thanksgiving Service 6.30pm
Monday 25th May 2015	10.00am – 8.00pm

Morning Coffee/Lunches/Afternoon Tea and High Tea
Booking is essential for coach parties and groups

For further information, booking forms etc : please contact St Mary's Parish Office
Tel: 028 9187 3963 or e-mail: comber.parity@btinternet.com

Comber is a small town in County Down. It lies five miles south of Newtownards, at the northern end of Strangford Lough. It is also known as the home of the Northern Irish Potato. A notable native was Thomas Andrews, the designer of the RMS Titanic. Comber has good road links from the greater Belfast area and onwards towards the Ards Peninsula for those groups planning a day trip and who would wish to include the flower festival as part of their itinerary.

Local Attractions:

The Titanic Trail
Castle Espie Wetland Centre
Scrabo Tower and Country Park
Strangford Lough
The Somme Centre
Mount Stewart
Rowallane Gardens

Accommodation Nearby:

4* La Mon Hotel and Country Club
Anna's House (Luxury Organic B&B)
Old Schoolhouse Inn –
Restaurant (Luxury Accommodation)
3* Strangford Arms Hotel, Newtownards

From the Editor

**"The people of Israel mingle with godless foreigners,
making themselves as worthless
as a half-baked cake!"**

Hosea 7: 8, NLT

As I read Hosea the words in the verse above jumped out of the page! What an interesting turn of phrase. Other versions refer to 'a cake not turned'. It's certainly intended as a scathing assessment of Israel by God Himself. It caused me to mull this phrase over and to ask myself if I'm like this.

In the natural realm, a half-baked cake is good for nothing. It's neither cooked nor uncooked. It would taste awful, and hint at what might have been if the process had been allowed to continue. For some reason the cooking process was terminated too early, and it's now worthless and fit only for the dustbin.

What about in the spiritual realm? - Because that's clearly why Holy Spirit led Hosea to write this. A beautiful cake's a credit to the baker and a blessing to all who partake of it. God, the Master Baker, has provided all the ingredients for us to be a blessing to others and a reflection of His glory. Those ingredients will vary from person to person (each cake can be different in some way). I see them as the fruits of the Spirit, blended in with our own personality and character. Into the mixing God ensures Holy Spirit will provide all that's necessary for us to rise, expand and develop.

The final stage is the baking. We're no microwave cakes! Each of us takes a time that only the Master Baker knows. The oven of testing, trial and temptation provides the heat that causes us to develop. But we can stop that process. We can pull away from God. We can mix with the world and become lukewarm. In the process we fail to develop and become good for nothing.

The question for each of us is, "Have I mingled with the world?" Am I a follower of Christ on Sundays, but live the rest of the week as I please? - Indistinguishable from the world? If so, then I might think I'm OK, and even look alright, but in reality I'm good for nothing; neither one thing nor the other. The good news is that we can change! Unlike a half-baked cake we can repent, draw near to God and allow Him to continue and complete His work in us. We can allow our lives to give glory to the Master Baker and be a blessing to all who partake of us.

Once again it has been a pleasure and an honour to be involved in putting this edition of Focus together and I hope it will be a blessing to all who read it.

Blessings and Shalom,
Freda



Bovevagh Parish Church Presents A

Festival of Flowers

Themed On

The Circle Of Life

29TH – 31ST MAY 2015

Weekend Schedule

Friday, 29th May: 4pm – 8pm : Festival Open
Official Opening & Dedication of Festival at 4pm

Saturday, 30th May: 10am – 8pm : Festival Open
11am – 4pm : Entertainment
Provided by local bands and choirs
(in the Music Marquee)

Sunday, 31st May: 2pm – 5pm : Festival Open
7pm : Special Praise Service
In the Church with guest speaker



Coach Parties & Groups are very welcome

A Flower Festival catering programme is available offering
Morning Coffee, Lunches,
Afternoon Tea and High Tea.

Booking is essential
for coach parties and groups.

To book your catering needs,
email: beverly.steele@hotmail.co.uk
or Tel: 028777 64863
Mobile: 07704 004522

Light refreshments will be available to all
visitors throughout the weekend
in the Parish Centre

Bovevagh Parish Church is Located in the village
of **Burnfoot**
(Between Dungiven and Limavady)

Why not also visit:-

- The Walled City of Derry/Londonderry to shop or walk The Peace Bridge
- Causeway Coast, Giants Causeway, Coleraine, Downhill Demesne & Gardens, Mussenden Temple, Hezlett House Castlerock
- Causeway Coast Route to Limavady, Magilligan Ferry crossing to Greencastle, Donegal
- Magherafelt, Maghera Garden Centre
- Limavady, Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre, walk our beautiful Roe Valley Country Park & visit the Museum or walk the new Riverside Walk along the River Roe in Burnfoot