

Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane with Diocese of Brechin

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Dear Friends

Well May has been fairly jam-packed so far. A Coronation, hosting the Eurovision Song Contest, three bank Holidays and following Ascension Day the 11 days of prayer for Thy Kingdom Come.

Have you taken part or watched any of these events? I was certainly glued to the Coronation service – I don't remember the last one and I probably won't witness another one. Did you have parties or other events taking place in your church, villages or streets? I know Dunblane did and thank you to all those who raised money for MU.

I did not watch the Eurovision – not my thing at all but it obviously was for many and a chance to show our support for Ukraine still enduring the terrible onslaught from Russia.

The time of Prayer for Thy Kingdom Come will also be something I expect many of us will choose to be part of. I think all clergy have been



sent helpful information to help us pray and I hope this has been passed on to you. By the time you receive this the 11 days may well be over, but that should not stop us from praying for God's Kingdom to be more widely known every day.

It almost feels and looks as if summer is almost here. Bluebells abound, the pollen count is up and the grass is growing at the rate of knots. The trees are clothed in their wonderful new spring greenness and our summer plants are coming back to life – new growth everywhere.

My new to us, now 2yr old springer spaniel has turned into Houdini, seemingly able to open most of our doors by bouncing on the handles

and eats grass as if she is a cow. She is quite intrigued by the red squirrel that comes up to the window and I'm not sure who outstares who. So never a dull moment here.

As you know the provincial MU holds much of our money now but at our last meeting the Trustees decided we would like to give £500 of it towards the editing and printing of a Scottish edition of the book Restored which we heard about from Isabelle Pottinger at her presentation on Lady Day.

We have also been asked to give an AFIA holiday to a family of mother and 6 children which we are arranging at the moment with some of our money held by the province too. We are hoping to send them to Arbroath for a few days. Jackie Thomson has agreed to become a Trustee and was co-opted at our last meeting. Thank you, Jackie. Anyone else willing to join our small band?

The beginning of July sees our Wave of Prayer few days and I am hoping there will be something sent to you all to help focus on the areas we are linked with. I expect you heard or saw on the news that Sittwe in Myanmar, one of our links, was hit badly by the recent Cyclone to add to their hardships. Please remember to pray for all our links, not just over those two or three days but regularly. We may not hear from them, but we should not be discouraged by that.

We have 5 members taking part in Kilt Walks to help raise funds for MU. Four in Dundee on 20th August and one in Edinburgh. If you are able to sponsor any of them that would be wonderful. The Dundee walk is just over 4 miles and eth Edinburgh one on 17th September 5 miles. You can sponsor our walkers by looking for the Kiltwalk page on the Just Giving website where the charities are listed.

We may no longer be able to physically do as much as we used to do but prayer is one thing we can continue even lying in our beds or sitting in a chair and a big part of our being MU members. It is what sets us apart from other women's groups and age is no barrier. So Keep On Praying The need never diminishes.

With my love and prayers

Sarah

MEMORIES OF WORKING AT OLD ALRESFORD PLACE



Having been in Parish ministry in the diocese of Winchester I found myself appointed to a new training roll within the Ministry Department of

the diocese. The diocesan office was located in the former rectory of the parish of Old Alresford, now known as Old Alresford Place (OAP). As well as accommodating the offices, the building was so well proportioned, that it also contained residential rooms and training facilities. The main training room was the lounge of the former rectory, the room in which Mary Sumner, as wife of the Rector, founded the Mothers' Union

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I was involved in the delivery of training and formation for clergy and lay ministers and always took the opportunity to highlight what had happened in that room and the tremendous global missionary organisation that had grown from such a simple idea. I always encouraged them, that as part of their ministry, they should in turn be encouraging and supporting the work of the Mothers' Union in their parish.

In another of the rooms, which served as an ante room to the chapel, there was a display cabinet containing Mary Sumner's Bible, other artefacts and some letters that she had written. As you can imagine these were important not only to the diocese of Winchester but more widely to those interested in the history and development of the MU. Occasionally, groups would arrive for a tour of the building and to look at the artefacts on display.

These were arranged by appointment, but occasionally, out of the blue, a coach full of ladies, most often from some part of Africa, would arrive unannounced and expect a full tour and refreshments! Resplendent in their technicolour dresses and hats, they would look with incredulity at the hearth around which those first MU ladies sat before bustling into the chapel ante room. All of this irrespective of whether a training session was under way or a service was being conducted in the chapel!

For many of the visiting ladies, visiting OAP was the highlight of their trip to England. For those of us who worked there, these visits were interesting interventions!

Rev'd Duncan Strathie, Rector of St Kessog's Aughterarder

MARY SUMNER DAY

This year for Mary Sumner Day, Kim our MU chaplain has extended a warm invitation to any who would like to, or who are able, to join her and members of St Catharine's Blairgowrie at our mid-week communion service on 9th August at 10.30am. There will be coffee available after and time to chat and those who wish to stay on could go out to a nearby café for lunch. I apologise now that I shall be away on Mull enjoying a very belated Golden Wedding celebration with all our family then.

Sarah

A BOOK THAT WE SHOULD BE READING

'Restored' Editor Esther Sweetman

This Christian perspective handbook is for female survivors of domestic abuse to let them know they are not alone. It is free to any domestic abuse survivor as a supportive resource in their recovery journey, covering laws in England and Wales. There are plans afoot to reproduce this book in a Scottish law friendly way but in the

meantime this appears to be the only one with a Christian angle.

The book's overwhelming message is of hope and encouragement as its 14 authors, experts in their field, give constructive assistance to making the recovery journey easier whilst acknowledging and addressing the numerous obstacles and barriers that can impede moving forward. These include but are not restricted to impediments by the individual's church leaders and its members, family, friends as well as the perpetrator of the abuse.

It is difficult enough for the individual to open up about the power and control of the abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, financial or spiritual. It is harder still, if not insurmountable, if they do not receive the validation and more practically the support and necessary resources to leave the abusive environment from those they believed would help in their church family.

Restored as a charity was started in 2010 to 'raise awareness that domestic abuse happens in churches too and to resource and equip the church to respond appropriately and effectively to domestic abuse'. Through working with survivors and listening to their stories, the book came about in 2019. As a tool, it is also effective for 'church leaders, friends and family, as it gives an insight into the realities of domestic abuse'.

One of the themes that recurs throughout the book is complicity and for evil to prosper good men do nothing. Often survivors hit brick walls from their church who did not want to acknowledge the abuse or felt it was the survivor's problem to solve or indeed they colluded and 'sought inappropriate mercy from the survivor for the perpetrator, especially if the perpetrator is involved in the church, over justice for the survivor. This unknowingly is stamping on the survivor's soul again and minimising the abusive behaviour'. Where's the compassion in complicity? Where's the safety, dignity and sanity of the victim in all this and who's challenging the perpetrator and contesting their dismissive attitude? If the perpetrator is involved with the church, their role in the church can remain unchanged, which in effect validates their behaviour as if the survivor was the one who had the problem.

Survivors often felt they had to leave their church not because of the abuse but 'because of the indifference and weakness of church leaders and community to do what is right'. The right

decision is not always the easy decision but it is **always** the right decision.

For healing, restoration and justice for those suffering to take place, church leaders and members have a role to play. God has shown through his scripture what is right in the face of oppression, especially, in this case domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is not a pleasant subject to talk about but it is even more unpleasant and can be deadly to be caught up in. Unfortunately with Covid, being confined to home increased the occurrences and it is not something that is going to magically go away. Until it happens to someone close to you, you don't really think about it other than it happens to other people but 'not us'. However it happens to all people in all walks of life, no one is exempt, not even the church.

Jackie Thomson



Towards the end of April, Mary Sumner House presided over and organised a meeting on zoom of AFIA representatives from England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland - around 25 people in all. This was the second such meeting that I have attended.

These meetings provide an opportunity for officials at Mary Sumner House to tell us what they are up to and for MU members to inform them of what, as it were, is happening on the front line, to enable members to exchange views and share problems.

It seems that the major work being undertaken just now at Mary Sumner House is to update our policy on safeguarding - not perhaps a very exciting topic - but very necessary. In the troubled world that we now inhabit. As a charity there is a need for Mothers' Union to comply with the Charity Commission regulations and requirements which include the area of safeguarding. Mary Sumner House will shortly be providing safeguarding training,

The wonderful thing about AFIA is that its various programmes. They encompass a wide range of diverse activities large and small throughout our four nations and they play an important role in our efforts to help the victims of domestic violence both adults and children. A vital weapon in our armoury.

Some dioceses own their own caravans, some use caravan or holiday parks and others provide short holidays or days out or activities.

Members were able to share views as to what works and what doesn't work, and they were able to identify and discuss the problems that can arise.

How to identify those we can help? I'm afraid that the clergy in some regions were criticised for some lack of support, and it seems that perhaps the solution may be to establish a good working relationship with Women's Aid Groups. Our branch is currently working with Stirling Women's Aid.

We are presently trying to provide a break for a family of seven - a single mother with children ranging in age from 17 to 16 months. Not, as you may appreciate, an easy task but we are making progress. Will it work? Let's see. I shall be letting you know. More later.

David Morgan

GREETINGS FROM THE SITTWEE DIOCESE

On May 14, 2023 from the afternoon 12:30 pm to 3:30pm for about three hours, the MOCHA cyclone was bitterly felt on location in Sittwe, Rakhine state in Myanmar. It was a very strong cyclone with force-power of 120 miles in an hour. Because of it, the houses of church members, water tanks and wells were being destroyed among Sittwee dioceses.

According to this, we are now suffering from these catastrophes. Now we are not able to consider and solve how to do it on the spot.



However, we and our church members are stronger in faith than before within this situation. Although this event has caused us to be upset, How much trouble we face, we cannot escape

from it whether we would like it or not. And we learned that it is our task and duty which the Lord has given us to do better for his ministry. Now our church members are doing more prayers than previous days. Among the churches in cyclone-stormy areas, we are also able to refuge the Lord faithfully

May I request all brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, remember us in your prayers more for it. Cooperate to serve together with us. As we believe that you have never forsaken us whenever we faced trouble two or three years ago of catastrophes in Myanmar, such as the trouble and difficult times of pandemic, conflict, insecure situations in us. We cannot forget your concerns to show us as a family member in Christ and the past what you have generously done together to us until now The destruction of buildings and others by cyclone storms is as follows:



- 1.5 Church buildings
2. 4 Vicarages (Priest house)
3. 70 church members' houses,
4. 3. Students boarding houses for students
5. Water tanks and well
6. Church's fence and walls

Indeed, all these are urgently needed to help us as we honestly request you to serve together the glory of God in Sittwee Diocese, Myanmar. (urgent need; 500 Zinc for roof because the rain is coming) Looking forward to what the Lord will show to us.

May the Lord bless you.

+James Min Dein

Bishop of Sittwe Diocese

Please can you also remember in your prayers our Wave of Prayer link of Renk in South Sudan, a country that has been much affected by the recent desperate troubles in Khartoum that has touched so many lives causing great numbers of people to flee for their lives and become refugees.

RIGHT ROYAL TEA PARTY

On Monday 8th May, the Dunblane members of the Forth Valley MU held a tea party, all were made very welcome ... whether Royalists or Republicans, the extended weekend was just an excuse for a 'get together'. The event was supported by a lovely mix of people from both St Mary's and other Dunblane churches, and the selection of sandwiches and cakes passed all expectations. There was also an amazing choice of items donated for sale, the stall manned so well by both Sheila and Gudrun, huge thanks go to all the members who helped in any way to make the afternoon such a wonderfully successful afternoon, the grand total raised was a truly amazing £619. The money will stay in Scotland, and in this diocese, being used for the Mothers' Union AFIA (Away From It All) appeal this gives nominated needy families a break from their everyday trials and tribulations.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Cathedral Prayers happens on the second Tuesday of each month unless notified to the contrary. It is a quiet half hour of prayers, readings and intercessions led by various members, and even though we can no longer gather in St Ninian's, the service is sent out on line, so we can still gather together and pray and reflect as a corporate body. Join us and see!

CHAPLAIN'S VIEWPOINT

One of the delights I have as the Rector at ABC Saints is conducting baptisms! Although people can be baptised at any age, it's usually babies and toddlers. Coming with their family,

Godparents, and friends it's a joy to formally welcome them into the family of God.

As part of the service, Chrism Oil is used to anoint the candidate, making the sign of the cross on their forehead. It's a sign that the child (or adult) is set aside to serve God as part of their Christian journey following Jesus our King.

When King Charles was crowned on May 6th, the most sacred part of the ceremony was the anointing. The Archbishop of Canterbury used holy oil to anoint the King's head, hands and breast (heart) – a sign that the King is set aside to serve God throughout his reign. It was such a poignant moment, watching King Charles kneeling at the altar in his untucked shirt. It was only after the anointing that the investiture and crowning took place (outward signs of his holy calling to serve God and God's people).

What joyous celebrations followed! Not only the ceremonial ones (carriage procession, fly past, concert at



Windsor) but the informal ones where friends and neighbours gathered for parties in the streets and at home, welcoming a new era for our country. Now the celebrations have ended, the fancy robes and crowns are back in storage and our new King and Queen will get on with their busy schedules, serving our country, they have made the journey from celebration to serving.

Here in the Episcopal Church, we have just reached the end of the celebrations of the Easter season and we now enter that time in our church year known as Ordinary Time. All the celebrations are finished now for quite some time. Often folk think this is a boring time in church with nothing to lift our spirits but there is really so little ordinary about it. The reality is that following Jesus is always a cause for celebrating. His wonderful resurrection gives us such hope for today and for the future. His ascension shows us the way and the coming of the Holy Spirit fills us with all we need for living. We serve the King of Kings and so our Christian journey is a life-long journey of both service and celebration.

The Rev'd Kim

CHRISTIAN CONCERN FOR FAMILIES

WORLDWIDE

PRAYING - ENABLELING - CAMPAGNING

That's what we do best!