



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary



Dear Friend of MMM,

I hope that you and your family had a lovely Christmas and are celebrating a Happy New Year. We had a very busy year in the MMM Communications Department so the joy and rest of the end of December was certainly welcomed. The start of a new year is always filled with promise and hope for something better for us all.



We were glad so many of you participated in our Advent Reflection. Thank you for your kind feedback. If you enjoyed it or if you missed it, we plan to do one for Easter and hope you will join us then.

Our Advent appeal was well supported by many of you and we are deeply grateful for what this allows us to do in 2025. Sadly, we enter this year knowing that the demands and needs of the poorest in our world are great. We are facing severe famine, war and violence in many areas of the world that often do not make the evening news or newspapers. We are seeing so much destruction in our world that it can be daunting.

It's long been proved that resolutions don't last. But, for the year ahead we can all commit to just do our very best to ease a little suffering in the world. If we all join hands and hearts and promise this simple thing, then 2025 will be one of a much brighter reality.

One little change you can expect in 2025, is that our newsletter will move to a quarterly format so you will hear from us again in the Spring. We wish you and your family every joy and health in the year ahead.

With kind regards,
Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM

MMM News

News from MMM

Ireland: The Annual Christmas Craft Fair was held in Drogheda on November 23rd and, as usual, it was a most enjoyable day. See the photos and join in the joy!

2025 is a big year for MMM. As well as being a Jubilee Year in the Church, it is also a Jubilee year for MMM as we celebrate the 50 years since Mother Mary Martin, our Foundress, died in 1975. We will be celebrating in some way in all our MMM communities worldwide and in Drogheda with a special ceremony on January 25th.

We still have special 50 Year celebration MMM 2025 Calendars available.

Please email us if you want any at: commoffice@mmmworldwide.org

MMM Christmas Craft Fair 2024



Srs. Anastasia Essien, Christine Lawler & Cecilia Kanulor, MMM



Srs. Mary McNamara & Rita Higgins, MMM



Srs. Jacinta Okechukwu, Agatha Bakahirwa & Catherine Fallon, MMM



Nadia Ramoutar, Communications Co-Ordinator at MMM



A visit with Santa!



Srs. Dervilla O'Donnell & Rita Kelly, MMM, looking at the new Mother Mary book



Lyn Regan, Sr. Rita Kelly, MMM & Dr. Breige Rafferty with the new Mother Mary book



The Loving Life choir on stage at the Christmas Fair

A Welcome in Tanzania



Recently we received this letter of gratitude from a young student nurse. We are grateful that MMM hospitality is still alive and active!

“Hello, my name is Claire Whyte from Lawrencetown, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, grandniece of Sr. Edel Tanner (Strokestown, Co. Roscommon). I am a third-year general nursing student in the University of Galway. As part of my studies, I volunteered with three other students in my course at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, Arusha, and Simanjiro Health Centre, Tanzania for the month of June 2024. The girls who also volunteered were: Grace Haugh from Clarinbridge, Co. Galway, Caoimhe Kenny from Craughwell, Co. Galway, and Ruth Kelly from Castlebar, Co. Mayo. It was an incredible, once in a lifetime experience that allowed us to witness both the challenges and the inspiring strength of the people in Tanzania. Tanzania is a country rich in culture and beauty and upon our arrival, we were immediately struck by the warmth of the people and the community.

As we were finding our feet, we visited the Medical Missionaries of Mary’s Convent where we were greeted with open arms. As we were all missing home, the nuns had prepared homemade scones, raspberry jam, and a hot cup of tea reminding us of home. They shared their stories of when they visited Ireland putting a massive smile on our faces. Sr. Protagia lived with my great aunt, Sr. Edel, for 15 years in São Paulo, Brazil. They showed us their gardens and the fantastic facilities they provide for the students in the school of Pharmacy.

We will be forever grateful for the kindness they showed us that afternoon.

With that in mind, I choose to donate the remaining money from my fundraiser to the Medical Missionaries of Mary, specifically for educational purposes in Tanzania.

The Harsh Reality of Urban Slums

By Sr. Mary O'Malley, MMM



Editor's Note: This short piece is taken from a longer article on Counter Human Trafficking which has been Sr. Mary's ministry since 2006.

Since previous work in the Family Life Program (FLP 1987 - 1992) in the Kenya Catholic Conference of Bishops (KCCB), I had ample scope to get to know the more than 250 slums of Nairobi. It was referred to as the 'green city in the sun' but I doubt that anyone who thought s/he lived in the green city had ever put a foot inside its slums. My first trip into slums was during the Eucharistic Congress,

September 1985. I joined a group going to do the Way of the Cross in 'Mathare Valley' slum. Prior to that I had worked in the vast hinterland of Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu - large farming areas. I only got stuck in extremely heavy rain and my front wheel drive always performed well!

Here in these miles of slums, I was both appalled and intrigued by how residents got rid of human waste. It was made with an empty tin with top and bottom cut out and inserted into the lower part of the huts (clay and wattle made) and that became

the outlet for sewage. I had gone there in open sandals and once I saw the tins then I knew what gave them the odor of sewage I experienced afterwards. I finally had to discard the sandals. But I was very sobered to learn that half a million people lived there.

My next big trek there was during the World Social Forum, 2007. During that hectic time, we learned that 5% of the city territory was occupied by 95% of the people (those in extreme poverty), while 95% of the city territory was occupied by 5% of the residents. Fast forward ten years later and I found myself drawn to these same slums - they had just grown exponentially. Overcrowding and poverty had increased. Currently there are approximately 2.5 million slum dwellers in about 200 settlements in Nairobi representing 60% of the Nairobi population and occupying just 6% of the land.

This is a very harsh reality that the poor have to cope with every day.



UNANIMA International September 2024 Board Meeting

By Sr Carol Breslin, MMM

In September 2024, I once again represented MMM at the UNANIMA International (UI) board meeting in New York. UI now represents 25 congregations of women religious with ministries in 100 countries. It advocates at the United Nations on behalf of women, children, girls and other marginalised groups: the homeless, victims of human trafficking, immigrants, refugees, and the environment.

We aim to educate and influence policymakers at the global level. Through UNANIMA, MMM participates in Religious at the UN (RUN), a support group for religious organisations who advocate at the UN. UI is also a member of the Justice Coalition of Religious, which represents over 200 congregations.

The latest UNANIMA International update, available online (www.unanima-international.org)

“ *MMM has had a special role in developing services for girls and women affected by obstetric fistula in East and West Africa.* ”



Sr Carol Breslin, MMM, giving her presentation at the UI board meeting in New York

includes a story about MMM's involvement with displaced people in northern Nigeria. The Executive Director's Report shows a wide range of involvement in advocacy activities.

A Grassroots Story:

UI meetings include sharing stories on our ministries. I spoke about obstetric fistula, an issue of special concern for MMM. I described the causes of obstetric fistula and gynaecological fistula. The latter has become increasingly common in conflict zones, where rape is used as a weapon against female civilians and their communities

Prevention of obstetric fistula is critical, and includes access to education and basic health care and nutrition for girls, delaying the age of marriage and first pregnancy, basic obstetric care, and supervision and training of midwives and young doctors. The basic rights of women and girls in society must be promoted and men and boys need to be involved. In addition, surveys are needed to have accurate figures about the condition's incidence and prevalence.

MMM has had a special role in developing services for girls and women affected by obstetric fistula in East and West Africa. Currently, at the Family Life Centre/VVF Hospital in



The UNANIMA group at the board meeting in September

Itam, Nigeria, there are regular surgical repair camps and more energy is being put into awareness-raising activities - at local gatherings and in remote areas. Staff provide maternal and child health clinics and Caesarean sections when needed.

Despite these efforts, obstetric fistula remains a public health concern, with a growing incidence in the Itam area. The SafeBirth4All Campaign was launched in Ireland in May 2024, a part of MMM's involvement in obstetric fistula prevention and advocacy. Other issues

At this meeting, we decided to present the 2025 UI Woman of Courage Award to Juana García Valverde, a Spanish laywoman

who has advocated for the most disadvantaged in Ancash, Peru, a Quechua-speaking area, for 41 years. She started a medical center and a homeless shelter, supporting the elderly and the hungry, often facing opposition from Peruvian state institutions.

The award honours women who have exhibited exceptional courage and leadership, especially to better the lives of women and children in their communities.

Sister Patricia Murray, IBVM, of the International Union of Superiors General, led a reflection on synodality and the future direction of UI.

Sister Maria Gonzaga Namuyomba, of our MMM Congregational Leadership Team, and MMM

CPO Jacqueline McAuley, participated via Zoom. I was confirmed as a member of the By-laws and Policies Committee and am a member of a new Expanded Executive Committee. It is great to be part of MMM's advocacy work in promoting the advancement of women and children.

Meet the Sisters - Sr. Juliet Ezekwere, MMM



Sr. Juliet Ezekwere, MMM

Sr. Juliet Njideka Ezekwere comes from Akatta, Our, Imo State Nigeria. She is one of eight surviving children, five boys and 3 girls after her parents lost their first girl child. She is the eldest daughter and the first child among the other seven children and her parents are still alive.

Growing up, she had a happy childhood, enjoying the love and care of her parents and relatives as well as the company of childhood friends at home, school and Church. As a child, she loved whatsoever had to do with prayer and Church activities. She belonged to many church groups like Altar girls and Charismatic Renewal, Young Catholic Students (YCS)

and the Legion of Mary. As she went through secondary school, she became passionate about caring for the sick, the less privileged and the destitute.

She chose science subjects in her senior year to assist her in my choice of future career to become either a pharmacist or a nurse. But she also felt the inner desire to serve God and to experience His presence by ministering to others. When she finished her senior secondary certificate examination, she finally decided to become a nurse and a religious.

Her journey to MMM was almost accidental – the MMM advertisement was in a small corner of the last page of the religious magazine she was reading! But she found it! But wisely she decided to do her nurse training first and finally joined MMM in 2008.

After her initial religious formation, she went to East Africa and Makondo, Uganda. There she worked as a coordinator of the HIV and

AIDS programme and later was in charge of the Health Centre before it was handed over to the diocese of Masaka in 2018. Then she pioneered a new mission in Uganda in Kansiira.

Sr. Juliet is an out-going, friendly person. Her hobbies include singing, cooking and watching football. (Reluctantly she admits she just watches, doesn't play herself!) She enjoys learning new things from colleagues, asking questions and applying them.

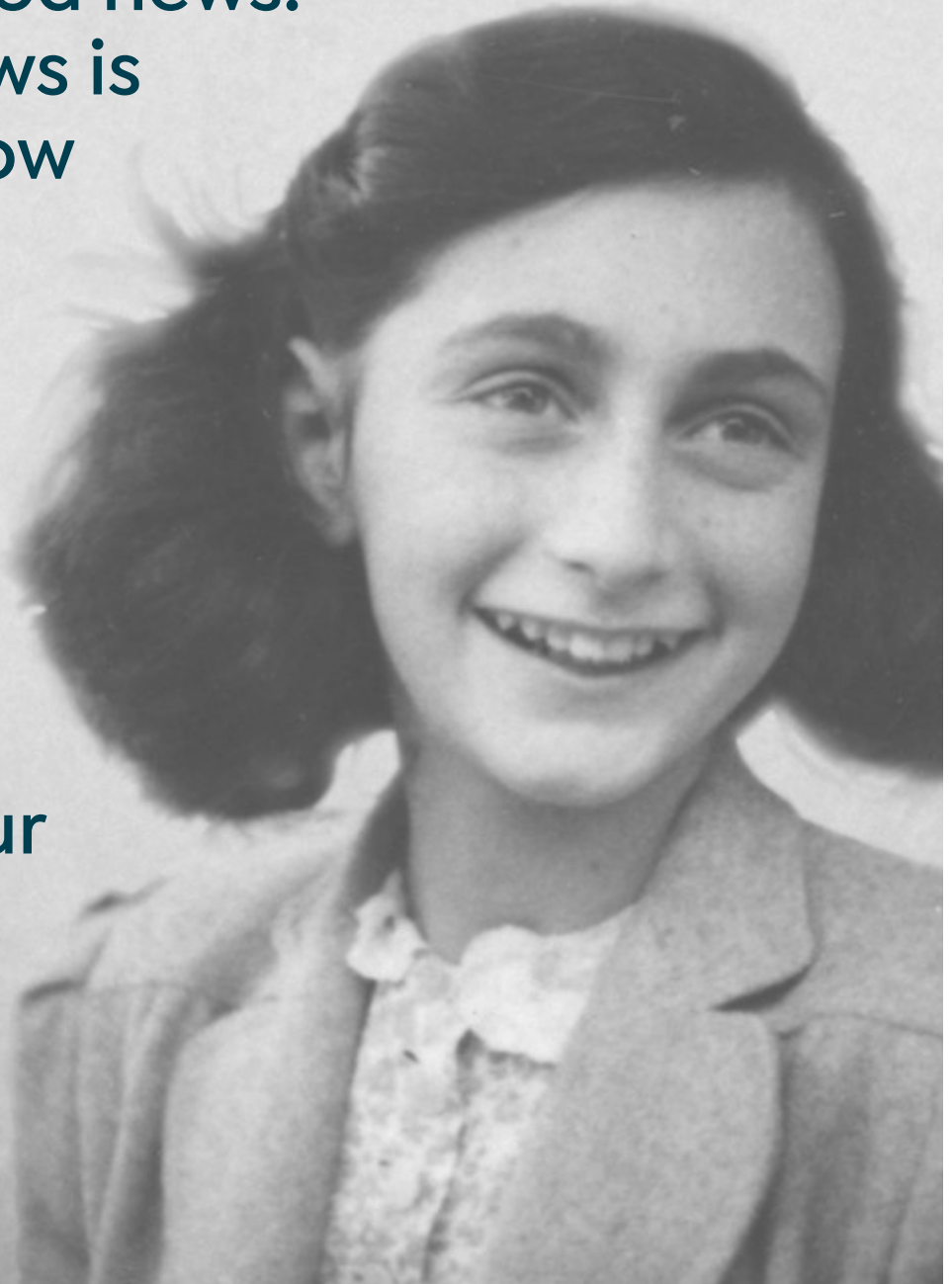
One thing life has taught her is that as individuals, we are all special gifts to one another, created to complement each other and be unique in the eyes of God. It has also taught her to be optimistic even in challenging moments as it unlocks happiness, increases resilience and equally adds more variety to life.

Currently, Sr. Juliet is in Ireland, upgrading her nursing studies in University College, Cork.

Inspiration

“Everyone has inside them
a piece of good news.
The good news is
you don’t know
how great
you can be!
How much
you can
love! What
you can
accomplish!
And what your
potential is.”

– *Anne Frank*



Thank you for your continued support.
We hold you in our prayers.

www.mmmworldwide.org