

Miscarriage Association of Ireland



*Welcome to the Miscarriage Association of Ireland
Autumn Newsletter 2015*

The newsletter is a space where we can share our stories of loss and find comfort in the knowledge that we are not alone in our grief.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue, it is really great that you want to share your stories.

*Deirdre Pierce-McDonnell
Chairperson – The Miscarriage Association of Ireland*



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Welcome

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland, has had a busy year in terms of providing support to women and their families who have been through the trauma of losing a baby through miscarriage. We have also been writing articles for various publications on the subject of miscarriage and taken part in radio interviews. We believe it is important that the subject of miscarriage and all baby loss is talked about in society and that sometimes "hidden grief" has a forum to be recognised.

Members of the committee have also been working with the HSE on the Standards for Bereavement Care following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death which should be published later this year. There will be a public consultation before the standards are published, so keep an eye out for the link to this on our website and facebook page and do give your opinion on the standards so that your voice is heard. This along with the National Maternity Strategy that is currently being developed is the start of a new era of maternity care in Ireland. Even though the current system works thanks to the dedication of the midwives and doctors, it is a system that is creaking from lack of resources and the cracks have already been shown from recent reports such as Portlaoise. It is time to stand up for above minimum standards of care.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in the mini marathon on our behalf this year. Even though the weather was miserable and more like November than June, all participants battled on through the wind and rain – mostly with smiles on their faces that we had all achieved something on the day. All your hard work both taking part and raising funds is so appreciated by The Miscarriage Association of Ireland. We could not continue to provide the much required support without your help. Thank you also to Tusla – the family and child support agency for their continued support.

Since I last wrote a welcome for the newsletter, a year has gone by in the blink of an eye in some respects, but sometimes it seems that time has also slowed down. Grief does that. Slows your mind and body down, making you feel emotions of sadness, anger, frustration. Last July I suffered a second miscarriage at 12 weeks. My first miscarriage was in 2009 and we have been blessed with two more beautiful children since then. This time around it wasn't a shock as such as once you have one miscarriage you are nearly bracing yourself for bad news. This time it was the physicality of the miscarriage that hit me hard. The emotions came much later. Not long after my miscarriage a friend lost a baby at 41 weeks. The shock and grief that comes with that news was nearly too much to take on board. Silently screaming would be a good description of how the news made me react. Reading a blog that my friend has starting writing to help her with her grief – a line that she wrote really stuck with me – "not only was I working my way through grief – but grief was working its way through me". ([Http://cakesforconor.wordpress.com](http://cakesforconor.wordpress.com)). I am not sure that I have ever read truer words. There is no time limit on grief, it keeps coming around, even when you have had good days. But I do know that after the grief does come hope and you will feel lighter in heart as recently while I was stuck in traffic the following thought came randomly into my head "To-day I feel happy". It wasn't a conscious thought, but a feeling that the world will be ok again someday.

"Remember that you are not alone" – The Miscarriage Association of Ireland is there to help and support.

*Deirdre Pierce-McDonnell
Chairperson – The Miscarriage Association of Ireland*

YOUR STORIES

My experience of miscarriage in early pregnancy

My first pregnancy was a difficult one. I had dreadful morning sickness right the way through and at 36 weeks I started feeling really unwell and was diagnosed with HELLP syndrome, a severe form of pre-eclampsia. After a failed induction I had an emergency c-section and gave birth to a small but perfectly healthy little girl in March 2008. I was a little traumatised but was so glad we were both ok and I knew this experience would never stop me wanting more children, it was all worth it!

I found out I was pregnant again in January 2010. We were delighted and even though it happened sooner than expected, we were really excited and mentally I already started making plans. To be honest, I never thought about miscarriage because I was so caught up in anticipating the morning sickness and worrying if the HELLP syndrome would come back and how I was going to cope with that and look after a little one too.

I was expecting the morning sickness to start around 5 weeks and when it didn't come, perhaps naively, I didn't worry too much, I just thought 'every pregnancy is different, I might be lucky this time'. At about 6 weeks I had some pain and bleeding. We rang the hospital who told us not to panic too much, that sometimes this can happen and everything is fine, but to come in the next morning if it continued, which it did.

When we got to the hospital we had to wait in the public appointments clinic for over 2 hours to be seen because it was so busy. It was only afterwards I wondered why we weren't sent to the Early Pregnancy Unit. But I suppose you just go along with things thinking; this must be the way it works. The doctor we saw was lovely and asked us all of the necessary questions. After doing the necessary checks she told us that she couldn't see a lot in my womb but that could be because my dates were out and that it didn't necessarily mean I was miscarrying. I was upset and she did what she could to reassure me.

She organised for me to have a blood test to check the pregnancy hormones levels and advised that we go home but to come back in if the symptoms got worse, and organised for us to have a follow up scan a week or so later. I was so upset and I just remember saying to my husband 'I know I'm going to come out of this hospital with nothing'. I just knew we weren't going to have a happy ending. But still I was in shock, for whatever reason miscarriage was never on my radar.

I wasn't long home when the hospital rang to say that my hormone levels were abnormal for gestation and given the doctor couldn't see much on the scan, they were a bit concerned that it might be an ectopic pregnancy! They wanted me to go back in a couple of days to have my bloods done again to check the progression of the hormone levels (as they should double every 48 hours or so) but if the pains got any worse I was to go straight in. By later that evening the pains were very bad.

When we went to the hospital I had to sit in the out of hour's waiting room with heavily pregnant women, some in early labour. You are so vulnerable at the time you just don't question this, it's only in hindsight you think surely it's not too much to let you wait in a 'side room'. Once I was seen by the doctor I was admitted straight away and was put on the gynaecology ward, which was a relief!

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The pain continued all of the next day & night but they looked after me really well and made sure I was comfortable. All of the nurses were lovely to me. The doctor had told me that they wanted to check my hormone levels again before doing anything else. When they did this the levels had risen but not doubled as they should have and following another scan they decided they were treating me as having an ectopic pregnancy. They would perform a laparoscopy the next day and if the pregnancy was developing in one of my tubes then there was a high possibility I may lose the tube in the process. I was gutted, I thought, not only will I not have a baby this time, I'm going to be left with problems conceiving again!

Thankfully it wasn't an ectopic pregnancy which was a big relief, but kind of short-lived! I would have to wait ten days for a repeat scan to see if the pregnancy was viable. In fairness to the hospital they were so nice to me and were being very cautious with their prognosis. I knew in my heart of hearts that it was going to be bad news but there was a tiny part of me that was hopeful! Those 10 days were like slow torture but thankfully the symptoms stayed on a level.

The repeat scan (at almost 9 weeks) now showed a pregnancy sac in the womb but no sign of life. It confirmed what I already knew, our baby hadn't made it. It was confirmed as a 'missed miscarriage'. I cried but not as much as I expected myself to, I suppose I was all cried out by that stage to some extent. The doctor discussed my options with me, either wait for your body to realise what has happened and let things happen naturally or have a D&C. I opted for the D&C, just wanting it to be over with, physically at least. I was booked in for the next morning and would have to take a couple of tablets beforehand.

I was admitted on to the gynaecology ward the next morning and the doctor on duty explained the procedure to me and told me that if they removed anything resembling the remains of the tiny life they would bury it in their communal grave in the Holy Angel's in Glasnevin. That was very comforting. I woke up back on the ward to be told by the nurse that I was being kept in that night and the doctor would be around soon. I thought it was because I was so groggy! It was actually because there had been a complication during the procedure and therefore they couldn't complete the D&C. I would have to stay in for another 48 hours so they could administer IV anti-biotics as a precaution to avoid possible infection. I was so gutted; I just thought 'how unlucky am I'?

I left the hospital 2 days later feeling absolutely battered and so fragile. As my miscarriage was now classified as 'incomplete' I was given more tablets to help my body pass everything with follow-up scans and blood tests to be done until 'everything' was gone. I can't remember anyone saying to me that they were sorry for my loss. I was told to take at least another week off work and given a booklet called 'Dealing with miscarriage'.

It took 4 more weeks for my hormone levels to drop to '0' and for the symptoms to stop completely. I had been 'through the wars' and for that reason the emotional side of things took a bit of a back seat. I was really sad that our much wanted baby hadn't made it but somehow I didn't feel I had the right to grieve for a baby that never really developed! Instead I tried to focus on building myself up physically so we could 'try again'. In my mind if I could be pregnant again then I would feel better.

In ways, it was like I was trying to replace that baby with another one. I learned the hard way that life doesn't work that way. I didn't really give that baby the emotional time he/she deserved.

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In ways I treated the loss like the hospital had, a physical thing, my very complicated miscarriage. It was my way of coping I suppose. My husband and family took my lead. As long as I was ok, then they were too.

Two months later I had a follow up scan at the hospital and a meeting with my consultant and we were given the go ahead to try again. In September 2010 I found out I was pregnant. We were happy but obviously cautious. Once the sickness kicked in the following week I thought 'this is a great sign'. I booked in with the hospital for an early scan; the earliest they could give me was for 10 weeks gestation. I was so sick I could barely function and I got past 7, 8, 9 weeks with no symptoms of miscarriage. I thought I was home and dry! We went to the hospital for the scan. The midwife took my notes and then she began the scan. She seemed to take ages to speak and when she did she just said she wasn't happy with something and needed to get someone else. We knew something was wrong. She came back with another midwife and after moving the scanner around again she said 'I'm very sorry, your baby is only measuring 8 weeks and there is no heartbeat'. I looked at my husband; he had his head in his hands. I looked at the screen and there was this tiny little life as still and quiet as anything, that stillness & silence is still as fresh in my mind now as it was then. I could hear the heartbeat of another baby in the next room, I was inconsolable. The midwife brought us to a side room to wait for the doctor. She was really nice to us and said once again that she was 'sorry'. It meant so much at the time. My mind was racing, I just couldn't think straight! My poor husband didn't know what to say, he just sat there and held my hand. I didn't want him to say anything, because to be honest, I just wanted to run away.

A junior doctor came to see us. She told us she was very sorry, that I'd had another 'missed miscarriage' and we would need to decide what to do next. Another D&C wasn't an option so I opted to take medication to bring on the miscarriage, I couldn't face weeks of waiting for things to happen naturally. When you are told that your baby is no longer alive, one half of you wants the baby out of you and the other doesn't ever want to let go. I was only really told to expect cramping & bleeding within hours of taking the medication and I was booked in for a follow up scan in 4 days time to make sure everything was gone. I wasn't given any booklets or information. I'm sure I asked some questions but to be honest you are so all over the place, things just wash over you. How I wish now that I'd be given something to read when I got home. I don't remember being told to call or come in if things got very bad. You put your trust in the medical people to guide you when you are vulnerable and fragile so we went home and followed the advice. I felt desolate, I couldn't stop crying, didn't want to eat or talk to anyone. My husband kept busy looking after our little girl. He was so gutted but put a brave face on and focused on looking after me and our little one. My parents came over 2 days later and took our little girl home with them so I could rest and do what I needed to. I took the tablets as instructed. What followed over the next few hours was so awful, I was in absolute agony, I was really frightened by what was happening and felt so vulnerable and alone.

My husband had gone to collect our little girl but I had to ring him in a complete state to tell him not to bring her home. He would never have left me if we'd have known things were going to be this bad. I really felt like I shouldn't have been at home going through what I was; I should have been in hospital being looked after by someone properly.

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The next morning I had a scan at the hospital, and again I had to sit in a waiting room with heavily pregnant women going through what I was. It was like the ultimate psychological test! This really upset me and made me feel even more like a failure, so I walked out and waited in the hall. When I was called for my scan I expressed my upset at being left in the waiting room and told the midwife about what had happened the night before. She wondered why I hadn't come in to the hospital or called. I just told her that nobody really told me what to expect or to come in if it got that bad! Even after all I had been through, the scan confirmed that the miscarriage was incomplete and in the midwife's words 'there were still products of conception remaining'. I left the hospital not really knowing what to expect next other than more of the same. In reality what actually happened next was far more graphic and terrifying. The experience was so undignified; for me, for my husband and our tiny little baby. I was traumatised and felt sad and angry that I had been sent home for this to happen. I really feel like the decisions we made that night would have been different if we had have been told what to expect. But then again every miscarriage and everyone's experience is different, so I'm sure it's difficult for the hospital to know in advance. Really I should have been given a contact number to call if and when certain things happened or if I felt like things were getting out of my control, even if it was just for reassurance.

The next morning I rang the Miscarriage Association helpline and spoke to a lovely lady who reassured me that what I had experienced was something that many other women had and that I managed the situation as best I could given the circumstances. It was reassuring to hear those words. It took another month for the symptoms to stop completely. I had a couple of follow up appointments and each time I was directed to that same waiting room but I just politely said that I would wait in the hall. You know you are not a 'priority' anymore, which is hard. I was so rung out but after a few more weeks I felt physically much stronger.

Emotionally, it was a totally different story. I was completely devastated. I felt like my body had failed me, that it was my fault that we had lost our babies and that I was never going to carry a baby to term again. With little aftercare or support from the hospital you feel somewhat abandoned and find yourself looking for answers where there are none. For me this was the hardest part and as a result I tortured myself. I blamed all of the stress of my job, wished I had have looked after myself better and rested more. No matter what my husband said it was the wrong thing and yet he stood there right by my side all of the way. I cried (in secret) when I found out that friends of mine were pregnant or had new babies. Our families and close friends were really good to us and did everything they could to help us through it. Our little girl kept us going, so I got through the days as best I could but inside I was screaming. Some people felt it best to stay away or avoid the subject altogether but that just upset me more. And then the comments like 'be thankful you have a child already, some people don't have any' or 'maybe it was for the best, the baby might have had all sorts of problems' are all said with the best of intentions but don't really help and most of the time make you feel bad for feeling like you do.

All I wanted was for people to acknowledge our loss, just to say 'I am sorry' and 'how are you'. Losing a baby through miscarriage, especially in your first trimester, is a very peculiar and isolated kind of grief. Sometimes I felt like a 'fraud' because I was so sad. After all I was only 9 weeks or 10 weeks along when we lost our babies! I was devastated and I really wanted to talk about what had happened to me but just didn't feel I could do that openly with a lot of people.

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I found that there was still a lot of taboo around the subject of miscarriage and to a large degree it remains unspoken about and becomes something that you just have 'to get on with'. Only people who have experienced the loss of a baby through miscarriage truly understand what you are feeling.

In the months that followed I went to a few of the Miscarriage Association's support meetings. These meetings were my 'saving grace' and the only place I felt I could be truly honest about how I was feeling without being judged. I realised that I was grieving the loss of two babies and all of the hopes and dreams that we had made for them. Even though they were both lost in early pregnancy it was still ok to grieve for them because after all nobody can be 'a little bit pregnant'. I realised that we needed to give our babies the emotional time they deserved so just took some 'time out'. We had a beautiful daughter and I knew now more than ever how lucky we were to have her, so tried to enjoy her all the more. Slowly I started to feel stronger emotionally and started to feel a little more like myself again, not the same as before but then again losing a baby through miscarriage changes you forever and life takes on a whole new meaning from thereon.

A year to the day we had lost our second baby I found out I was pregnant again. We felt a mixture of excitement and fear. What if it happened again, how would we cope? At 6 weeks I had a threatened miscarriage, which was really frightening and I thought 'here we go again', but thankfully our little baby held on and thrived. It was a very tough pregnancy in so many ways. Once you have been through miscarriage, you can never truly relax and constantly think that something will go wrong. Miscarriage steals a lot of the joy and excitement of pregnancy from you. I got through it though and we now have a healthy and crazy 3 year old son and we are so thankful for him and his big sister.

In time I have come to realise that even though we lost both of our babies in early pregnancy, it doesn't mean that our loss isn't significant. It's ok to talk about them and acknowledge their existence. I'm so glad I got to be their mammy. They are as much a part of our life story as our 2 other children are, just in a different way!

Lynn Cassidy



Courteney's Story

I'm Courteney and today I am telling my story. In August 2013 I decided I was ready for a baby. In October I found out I was pregnant. I was overjoyed, excited and happy. I started to think about names and looking at what I could buy my baby. It didn't even cross my mind what was to happen next.

It was the following month and it was time for my first scan. I went into the room and got ready. It took about five minutes and then I was sent into another room to speak to another midwife, she told me maybe I got the dates slightly wrong, she said that happens all the time. I remember her telling me to hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

She booked me in for a week later for another scan. The next week came and I went for my second scan... my baby wasn't growing, there was no change from last week. I was sent into a waiting room and I was left there for what felt like forever.

Finally a nurse came and I followed into her room, she explained everything to me and told me what would happen, she told me there was several things I could do. I was blank. I was then simply sent home, I was going to have my baby naturally as the other two options just weren't right for me. It was now December, Christmas was going to be here soon...

One night this excruciating pain just came over me and I couldn't move. I was rushed to hospital. I had no idea what was going on, the nurse I seen at the end told me there wouldn't be much pain so I was terrified. I was having my baby.

The rest was such a blur as I was given morphine for the pain. I was in the hospital for about 7 hours. Before I left the hospital a nurse came to talk to me and all she had to say to me was that I could now get on with my life and I was still young. I was shocked and heartbroken. I was in a small room by myself and I came across these two very small baby hats in a cupboard next to me and I kept one and took it home with me, I don't know why but I did and it kind of helped looking at it and holding it because I didn't have my baby to hold.

I am so happy to have shared my story, I hope many other women can do the same. I want to break the silence on this taboo there is with pregnancy loss. I want to change this and I hope in the future no one will have to feel ashamed, guilty or anything like that, it is something we should be able to talk about. Thank you for letting me share my story.

Courteney



OUR ANNUAL SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Sunday 9 November 2014 at 3pm

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland's Annual Service of Remembrance took place on Sunday 9th November 2014 in St Theresa's Church, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8. Our service is an opportunity for all those who have lost babies to acknowledge and remember their babies in a very special way. It also gives extended families the opportunity to support their loved ones by attending as a family. Each year we see a broad spectrum of people attending from very young children to older people. We also see many attending who have lost babies a long time ago but did not get to grieve for their loss at the time.

The theme this year was star, gift and angel. We were honoured to have Barbara Galvin Sheridan and Dave O'Connor providing us with beautiful music during the service. Music enhances the service in a very special way as it touches everyone who attends. Dr Pat Tunney, Ann Bergin from the HSE and Renee from the Coombe Women's Hospital made time in their busy schedules to read the reflections which reminds us all of their support and commitment to those who have lost babies. The staff of our maternity hospitals always participate in our service as well as organising their own services at other times in the year.

The parish of St. Theresa's has been a welcome home for our service for many years. Their new parish Father Cormac McNamara was one of our celebrants and provided the same warm welcome we have received for many years. Rev Lorriane Kennedy-Rithchie was also a celebrant and provided a wonderful sermon which touched us all.

In time honoured tradition, we had our candle ceremony near the end of the service where people got to light candles for their lost babies and place them on the steps of the altar. When the lights were turned down, it was very moving to see so many tiny lights on the altar. It reminded us that there are so many babies lost through miscarriage every year and so many people affected by the loss of these tiny babies.

After the service we provided refreshments and had the opportunity to meet and talk to many of those who attended the service. It is good to see people staying around after the service and getting the chance to talk to the committee and to meet with other parents who have a shared experience of miscarriage.

We hold our Service of Remembrance on the second Sunday of November every year so if you didn't get to attend last year, maybe we will see you in November.

Angela Grace

REGIONAL SUPPORT MEETING - SLIGO, 15th October 2014

In 2013 the Miscarriage Association of Ireland celebrated 25 years of supporting women and their families through the grief and pain of a miscarriage. To help us mark this anniversary the Association held support group meetings in various locations around the country, starting with Kilkenny in October 2013, Cork and Kerry in April 2014 and we finished with our support meeting in Sligo in October 2014.

Our meeting took place in St Michael's life Centre Church Hill Sligo at 8 pm. In attendance were members of the committee from The Miscarriage Association of Ireland, Mary, Joan and Patricia from Sligo who provide on-going in Sligo and those who came to share their stories and listen to others who have similar experiences.

A representative from Sligo General Hospital also attended to see what support and information was available to help those who go through the hospital while experiencing a miscarriage. It was a beautiful evening of sharing and healing. Candles were also lit in memory of our babies while a short mediation was read.

To talk or meet with Mary, Joan, or Patricia if you require support in Sligo and surrounding areas, please contact St Michaels life Centre on 071 9170329 and leave your name and number and ask for a message to be passed on to the Mary, Joan, Patricia from The Miscarriage Association of Ireland and they will be in touch. "To know that someone cares"

Deirdre Pierce-McDonnell

THE ROTUNDA REMEMBRANCE SERVICE, ST. MARY'S PRO-CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN 1. Sunday 23rd November 2014.

"The value of life is not measured by the span of its years." (Wisdom 4:8).

Deirdre Pierce-McDonnell and I attended this very beautiful and inspiring Service of Remembrance which is held annually in November for parents of babies who sadly died during the previous year. November is traditionally a month for remembrance.

What was obvious to Deirdre and me, is that the Rotunda is a hospital, staffed by people who care deeply - from the Master, Dr. Sam Coulter Smith who delivered a very moving Welcoming Address, the Chaplain, Ann Charlton whose dedication seems to know no bounds, to the dedicated bereavement team, nursing, administration and household staff - all were present to offer their love and support. On that Sunday afternoon in November, the sadness of loss was met by unconditional love and a serene presence, which seemed to say "we care, you are not alone!"

The Service proclaimed a message of light, healing and hope. All those precious babies who were no longer with us physically were represented by lighted tea-lights on the altar. The words from the beautiful reflection "We Remember Them" came across loud and clear and promised that those children will never be forgotten.

After the Service, everybody was invited to the Gresham Hotel for tea, coffee and refreshments. This provided an opportunity for people to share their stories, support one another and ultimately feel less alone.

A big thank you must go to all who organised this very fitting and dignified Service of Remembrance.

June O'Toole

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE, OUR LADY & ST JOSEPH CHURCH, CARAGH, NAAS, COUNTY KILDARE

Friday 15th November 2014

The Caragh Pastoral Council held their annual memorial service for babies who passed away before, during and after birth. All parents, siblings, grandparents and anyone wishing to remember these little babies were all welcome.

Deirdre and I were delighted to attend this service on behalf of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. Deirdre spoke beautifully and honestly about her story and the sense of grief and loss experienced by parents and families after the loss of a baby or babies through miscarriage. Her words were both encouraging and hopeful to the people there, reminding us that although our babies are not with us, they live in our hearts forever and will never be forgotten.

The parish choir sang beautifully and perhaps the most poignant part of the service was the candle ceremony where people were invited to light a candle in memory of their babies. It was lovely to be able to take the candle home afterwards to light in our homes. We were delighted to speak to a number of people after the ceremony to let them know about the support we offer and the ways in which they can remember their babies. Refreshments were provided afterwards to give people the opportunity to stay a while and share their stories.

The Caragh service was a very emotional, yet beautiful service, organised so well by Carol O'Callaghan and the pastoral council. It was lovely to see a community come together to offer love and support to each other.

Lynn Cassidy

UCD, GRADUATE CERTIFICATE OBSTETRIC ULTRASOUND, EARLY PREGNANCY ULTRASOUND

Friday 23rd January 2015

This year the Miscarriage Association of Ireland teamed up with Ectopic Pregnancy Ireland to speak to the doctors, midwives and nurses attending this course about the loss of a baby in early pregnancy through miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy. Deirdre and I attended on behalf of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland and Francesca Paradisi was there on behalf of Ectopic Pregnancy Ireland.

Deirdre spoke about the importance of the medical profession having clear communication, compassion and kind words when delivering bad news to a woman and her partner during an ultrasound examination. And how small gestures can make all of the difference!

Francesca and I shared our personal stories. This was a great opportunity to speak directly to some of the medical profession and share our personal experiences and bring home the emotional impact of baby loss.

Lynn Cassidy

THE IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION

Public Bereavement Information Evening - Living with Loss November 6th Alexander Hotel, Dublin 2.

Living with Loss was an information evening run by The Irish Hospice Foundation, the purpose being to advise the public and those living with loss of support services available.

Kate Nolan and I attended on behalf of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. Once we had set up our stands and displayed our information, we took the opportunity to circulate and chat with other volunteer groups. Everybody was very supportive and helpful. The Information Stands were well placed and each displayed a clear message so even if people did not feel like asking, they could find out helpful information.

The tea, coffee and refreshments helped create a relaxed and informal atmosphere. The Irish Hospice Foundation, in my opinion, succeeded in putting people at ease.

The speakers were well chosen and spoke with compassion, clarity, wisdom and from experience. Author, Michael Harding, spoke on the theme "Living with Loss." He spoke lovingly about his 96 year old mother, Ellen, who had died two years previous. He spoke about ageing and about the loneliness that comes with old age.

The questions and answers session was skilfully conducted and everybody was treated with dignity and respect. Before leaving, everybody was handed a beautiful candle with the inscription "Those we love, live forever in our hearts."

In my opinion, the evening was very informative and helped those who had experienced loss in their lives realise that people do care and they are not alone.

I would recommend that if you get the opportunity, you should consider attending the next event.

June O'Toole



NATIONAL MATERNITY HOSPITAL SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE Sunday 5th October 2014

Last year I attended the annual National Maternity Hospital (Holles Street) Service of Remembrance, which took place in St Andrew's Church in, Westland Row on Sunday 5th October. It was my first time to attend and I wasn't sure what to expect. I thought it would be a long the lines of a Sunday mass or service, with specific prayers included for babies lost through miscarriage. My baby had died at 15 weeks gestation 29 years previous. It was a much wanted baby and his/her loss then was a traumatic and heart-breaking experience for my husband and myself. We left the hospital with nothing which we could remember our baby. However, I was lucky. I was pregnant within a few months and this time everything went according to plan and we were over the moon when our beautiful baby boy arrived, and two years later we welcomed our beautiful daughter. Life was good, we were blessed and we moved on, but we never forgot.

That Sunday at the Holles Street service I was reminded of the loss we had felt at that time. I shed tears for our baby, the child and the adult we never got to know and with that came sense of release and healing.

The church was full to capacity and on entering everyone was given a candle. The beautiful readings, poetry and music helped to create a very special atmosphere. During the service a line of brightly burning candles made its way up the aisle and onto the altar where each one was placed. They not only lit up the altar and the church, but the faces and the hearts of everyone present. When I looked around I could see others experiencing similar emotions. I felt connected to everyone there who had gone through the same loss, and some, many times over.

Dr.Rhona Mahony in her beautiful and moving address mentioned by name one mother, now in her late eighties, who had lost her baby through miscarriage many years before and was attending the service for the first time.

Making the decision to enrol our baby in The book of remembrance allowed us the opportunity to acknowledge and remember our baby in a very special way and the certificate provided a tangible record of our baby's short life. When it was over we were invited into a side room where refreshments were served and where we could meet and chat with old friends and make new ones.

A huge thanks to the Chaplain, the hospital staff and everyone involved in organizing Such a beautiful and dignified service.

Kate Nolan

REGISTRATION OF CHARITIES UNDER THE CHARITIES ACT OF 2009

Due to the high level of public disquiet regarding the use of donations to charities in recent years and a lack of trust among the public, the Charities Regulatory Authority was established on 16th October 2014 under the terms of the Charities Act 2009.

Minister for Justice and Equality, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, T.D., welcomed the first meeting of the Charities Regulatory Authority in 2014 and said that the new Authority will play an important role in renewing public confidence in charities.

"The work of the Authority in the coming months and years will support the rebuilding of trust in our charities. Through their work, charities in Ireland play a vital role in our communities. With the establishment of a dedicated regulatory framework under the Charities Act, they will be supported in this role."

Minister Fitzgerald continued:

"The Authority also has an important responsibility to increase transparency across the charity sector. This is critical to the rebuilding of public confidence in our charities."

In this regard, the Miscarriage Association of Ireland has registered our charity with the Authority and will continue to update information on a regular basis. We have a new Registered Charity Number: 20024420 as well as our original Charity No. CHY9738. All who donate to our Association whether it be through sponsorship, membership renewal, purchasing of Christmas Cards and decorations, or direct donations can rest assured that all monies are used for the support of those who suffered miscarriage and all services associated with that aim. The Association welcomes the establishment of the Authority.

Marie Mc Manus, Treasurer



SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE, LUSK, 14 June 2015

Sunday, June 14th was a beautiful sunny day. This was no surprise, as the annual Service of Remembrance in Lusk has always been blessed by lovely weather since it started in 2012. This year about 100 people were in the church to participate.

The service began with a procession of symbols carried to the altar. The first symbol was the Candle of Remembrance, specially created for Lusk (and now proudly standing near the altar, next to the permanent display stand holding the Book of Remembrance). This was followed by the parish's Book of Remembrance, the Babe in Arms sculpture and a framed copy of the sheet music "Lament for our Lost Children" specially composed by local musician Liam Clare. Next was a live tree, representing the family tree. Finally, a posy of beautiful flowers was carried up, representing beauty and new life.

Parish priest, Fr. Paul Hampson led the congregation through a simple, elegant and moving service, accompanied by the church choir and local musicians. Following the opening prayers and readings, the Three Candles Ceremony was a beautiful and poignant event. As with the annual service hosted by the Miscarriage Association of Ireland in November, the highlight of the Lusk service was the lighting of candles by the congregation. Even on that bright, sunny day, the light from the myriad of lit candles placed on a large wooden cross, built for the purpose, was spectacular.

To conclude the service, Fr. Paul and piper Liam Clare led the congregation out of the church, around the grounds and back to the entrance, where the Memorial Stone is located. After blessing the Stone, Fr. Paul led the crowd in the reflection "We Remember Them". Everyone then adjourned to the adjacent parish hall for refreshments.

Lynn Cassidy and I attended this fourth Service of Remembrance for the Parish of Lusk. We found it to be a very moving experience and a fitting tribute to all our children who are sadly no longer with us.

June O'Toole



COOMBE WOMEN & INFANTS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Annual Service of Remembrance, Sunday 12th April 2015 in Our Lady of Dolours Church, Dolphin's Barn Dublin 8.

As always, many thanks must be extended to the Chaplains and all the staff of the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital for organizing such a beautiful service this year. The theme and tone of the service was hope through the tears and grief and that it is ok to live life while remembering our precious babies. The prayers, songs and reflections chosen reflected this throughout.

The first reading really struck a chord with me, illustrating that every life matters regardless of length. The reading was Psalm: 139:13-18. "Lord, you created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb. For so many marvels I thank you; a wonder am I and all your works are wonderful. You knew me through and through, my being held no secrets from you, when I was being formed in secret, textured in the depths of the womb. Yours eyes could see my embryo, in your book all my days were inscribed, every one that is fixed there. How hard for me to grasp your thoughts, how many God there are. If I could count them, they are more than the grains of sand; if I come to an end, I am still with you."

After the gospel, there was the procession of Light, which is always poignant. The Pascal candle was carried from the sanctuary down the centre aisle of the church and every persons candle was lit from this flame in memory of their baby. Light radiated throughout the church when all the candles were lit and then carried to the altar. To see all the flickering lights representing all the little souls was very uplifting. Everyone was given beautiful mini daffodil plants to take home – another sign of hope and renewal.

The prayers of intercession followed along with some reflections and a personal story of how one man and his family are learning to live each day, day by day with the loss of their baby. As always throughout the music and songs were glorious and sung by The Coombe Workplace Choir conducted by Lynsey Hannah Callaghan and accompanied by David Callaghan. The repertoire of music included Be Still in the presence of the Lord, Be with me Lord, Nella Fantasia, Smile and Heal the world. One of the last poems read was "To Bless the Space Between US" by John O Donohue. The last verse stuck in my mind:

*"And when the work of grief is done,
The wound of loss will heal
And you will have learned
To wean your eyes
From that gap in the air
And be able to enter your hearth
In your soul where your loved one
Has awaited your return all the time"*

After the service refreshments were served at the back of the church and people stayed and mingled and were able to share their thoughts and feelings with the chaplains, bereavement midwives, medical social workers and many other staff who helped them in their darkest hours. Even though the afternoon was tinged with deep sadness there was also hope and happiness in the air. It was a privilege for me and my colleague June O'Toole to be present and represent The Miscarriage Association of Ireland at such a beautiful Service of Remembrance.

Deirdre Pierce-McDonnell

FUNDRAISING

We would like to express our gratitude to all of you who took part in the Ladies' Mini Marathon, whether you ran, jogged or walked on our behalf of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. This event has been an important event in terms of fundraising again this year. We would also like to thank all those who took part in other marathons, fun runs and other fundraising events on our behalf. As we are a totally voluntary association, all monies raised go directly to those affected by miscarriage.

STANDARDS OF BEREAVEMENT CARE

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland contributed to the Standards of Bereavement Care following pregnancy loss and perinatal death by liaising with the HSE sub committee for these standards. The standards are due to be published in May 2015 and it is hoped that by following these guidelines the medical profession will with more understanding and compassion continue to provide the necessary care and support to those who have experienced baby loss.

POETRY CORNER

"Your loss left a longing that time cannot heal,
Yet love is a treasure that time cannot steal.
In darkness it seemed that my world fell apart
But love's light eternal remains in my heart".

John

They dont rem your dates, dont know why im sad
Dont understand your mammy is silently thinking of those moments we should have had
No memories to hold onto, no place to go
only evidence of angel babies is the love that would of grown
A little picture i have of you as u grew inside your home
when ur heart was beating, how could we have known
But i keep u in my thoughts & heart with our other angel babies
& know u will be minded by ur granndad an angel of your own
He will mind you like his own in ur forever home

Poem by Louise Pimblett



YOU

*You were someone, once.
 Inside me...burgeoning.
 I knew you and perhaps you knew me too.
 I was sick as a dog and so full of hope –
 Because of you.*

*You grew from miniscule,
 To a blueberry, raspberry and –
 Maybe a grape too.
 I actually took pictures of myself
 Holding the different fruits to my belly
 To chart your progress,
 Mark your existence in the planet and –
 To someday show you.*

*You would need space, so –
 I made space for you.
 Cleared out the spare wardrobe
 In the little green room
 That holds so much sunlight, it's unreal!
 You were real for a while,
 Real in every sense, then.
 Our beautiful little secret
 Our little ray.*

*You were supposed to have hands
 When we went for your first scan.
 8 weeks is the size you should have been
 I kept thinking what significance those hands held
 For you and for me.
 For maybe one day,
 You'd make things –
 Play the piano like me –
 Hold my hand.*

*You didn't make it to the hands part, after all.
 You too slowly grew,
 Seemed to stop and begin
 The slow, agonising process of fading out.
 Supposed to be 'further on',
 You became...gone.*

*You were supposed to become real
 To the outside world –
 Just 1 week after I lost you.
 You are now a gem on my wrist.
 I chose a blue one because –
 It reminded me of a blueberry.
 It later turned out
 You'd been a boy.
 With a condition that didn't allow you
 Your health.*

*You were my boy.
 For a short, short time.
 My wonderful little secret
 In my own belly.
 Now....maybe you're floating about,
 In a healthier space –
 I hope you are.
 You were a you – to me,
 You – always will be.*

Claire Conway



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Baby Loss Awareness And Remembrance Evening

This event which is being hosted by The Miscarriage Association of Ireland , Ectopic Pregnancy Ireland and Feileacain, will take place on **Thursday October 15th** 6.30pm to 9.30 pm in the Davenport Hotel, 8/10 Merrion Street Lower Dublin 2. Admission is free. The event is to mark October 15th which is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day. There will be guest speakers, a wave of light at 7 pm, personal stories, remembrance wall and information stands hosted by volunteer support services. This is a "drop in" evening, but if you could please register your attendance at www.eventbrite.ie it would be appreciated. See www.miscarriage.ie or our facebook page for more details.

The National Maternity Hospital hold their Annual Service of Remembrance in October each year. We will post more details to our facebook page when we have full details.

The Rotunda Hospital hold their Annual Service of Remembrance in October each year. We will post more details to our facebook page when we have full details.

IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION

Bereavement Information Evening - Thursday 5th November 2015

Dear all, this is to give you advance notice of the date for the information evening for the public about bereavement which will be **Thursday, 5th November 2015**, a similar event to that of last year which you had a stand at. The venue will be the same as last year the Alexander Hotel in the Aston Suite. The event will run from 5.30pm – 8.00pm. The keynote speaker as yet to be confirmed.

Fanagans Funeral Directors will once again be sponsoring this event.

Further details will follow in due course but in the meantime I would be grateful if you would please let me know by email at iris.murray@hospicefoundation.ie by Monday, 29th June whether or not you would like to take a stand at the event.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Regards.

Iris Murray
Administrator
Bereavement Education & Resource Centre

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS ATTENDED

Deirdre gave an interview with Margaret Hawkins from The Farmers Journal for an article on miscarriage which appeared in the Health Section of same at the end of March 2015.

Lynn has given her story and Deirdre wrote a piece on coping with miscarriage to journalist Caroline Allen who is writing a piece for the **Ultimate Maternity Guide** which is a magazine distributed to Holles street and the Coombe.

Lynn gave an excellent radio interview on LMFM on May 12th.

Lynn and Niamh R are contacting a counsellor from Blanchardstown re completing surveys for her research (Dina).

Deirdre spoke on the **Sean O' Rourke show** with Sheila Power in September - comments received into the show were very positive in that people were happy that the subject of miscarriage was being discussed

Iga, Kate and Deirdre represented the **Forum on Early Pregnancy Loss** which was held in the Royal College of Physicians. It was very informative to hear how the medical profession view and manage miscarriage.

WELCOME BABIES

To Aibhlinn Ruby McKeown, our longed for child who was born on the 19th October 2014, weighing 7 lbs 4 ounces to her very proud parents, Robbie and Mairead and doting big brother Eamon.

ANNIVERSARIES

In memory of our first angel who went to Heaven on 29 May 2004 and our second angel who went to Heaven on 15 May 2011.

Remembered always Mammy and Daddy (Margaret and Damian Dunlea)



TELEPHONE SUPPORT, EMAIL SUPPORT, SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Please remember we offer support to those who have experienced miscarriage and their families. You are welcome to contact us by EMAIL, info@miscarriage.ie where your email will be read and replied to with sympathy and understanding. **TELEPHONE SUPPORT** is also available, for those who would like to chat to someone who has had the experience of miscarriage. Please check our website www.miscarriage.ie/telephonesupport.html to obtain the number of the person on call. If we are not able to take your call, please leave a message and we will contact you as soon as possible.

We also hold **SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS** in Buswell's Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin, 2 at 8.00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month. Both women and their partners who have experienced miscarriage are very welcome to attend. You will be in a safe place to talk about the loss of your baby in the company of others who have had a similar experience.

Regional support group meetings may take place in various centres around the country during the year. Please check the website and facebook page to see the date, time and venue of future meetings.

We have our Book of Remembrance at the meetings in September, December, March and June for those who might like to make an entry in the Book.

OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER / YOUR IDEAS

Please let us have your stories, poetry, articles, coming events, sad farewells, welcome babies, anniversaries and anything you feel will help those who read our newsletter. Please forward them to us at newsletter@miscarriage.ie or by post to Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin, 2 and marked "Newsletter" and include name and contact details. Your name does not have to be included in the article if you wish to remain anonymous. *Closing date for entries for next newsletter is 30 January 2016.*

JUST A NOTE: Sometimes, for whatever reason it is not always possible to publish or acknowledge everybody's correspondence. This does not mean it is not important so please keep forwarding your items of news for sharing.

Our Newsletter

Our newsletter is circulated to members, hospitals and other interested parties and is available on the internet. The opinions in this newsletter are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland.

Membership Renewal

Just a reminder – your membership may be due for renewal. Our annual membership is €15. We ask members not to send cash in the post – cheques or postal orders please.

Angela Grace

The Miscarriage Association
of Ireland



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