

## President Grace's message

**Our planet, our future – let's get cracking!**



AT THIS BUSY time for clubs, with AGMs and changing roles, I would like to welcome our new (or returning) Presidents and committees.

Yours will be a transition year as we move back to some of the ways we knew before the turmoil of 2020, although some of the innovations will undoubtedly remain.

My thanks to all clubs that returned feedback on the Soroptimist News, the SIGBI Briefings and this Region Newsletter. Your honest responses are invaluable, helping those who work hard to keep members up to date with essential information and informed of so many activities at all levels of Soroptimism.

It was especially pleasing to see that this newsletter is the most popular, receiving many positive comments. The contributions of all clubs and variety of articles make it a very useful tool to give to potential members so please use it wherever and whenever you can. Many thanks to Patricia Painting for this – please keep supplying her with content (some of which can double up to populate fields on your programme focus forms).

The Membership Month of May is just around the corner so I hope that clubs will find time to celebrate with new and potential members. Coffee and cake or wine and nibbles may not be the same on Zoom but at least can still happen.

I look forward to seeing your cheery photos here and on social media, and perhaps a comment or two from your new members.

Finally, the Soroptimist tulips are blooming all over Southern England. See the pictures on page 04.

## A memory of Prince Philip



AS CHAIR OF the support group, Friends of the Elderly, SI Croydon member Jean Turner was invited to St James's Palace to meet Her Royal Highness the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Unfortunately, on the day the above photograph was taken, the Queen was unwell. The following year, Jean was again invited and this time met them both.

On another occasion Jean took me for a debate in London on climate change, chaired by Prince Philip. It was a challenging event as many members were so cross on certain issues and resigned. He just was not going to have any nonsense!

Later on, we assembled for wine etc. Everyone was mingling but there were no seats. A waiter got me a stool. Prince Philip walked over and laughed on my inability to stand as a youngster. We had such a laugh because I told him I was special. He told Jean to bring me back.

My former husband Roger and I met Prince Philip when our daughter Sabina collected her Duke of Edinburgh Award at the Palace. It was pouring with rain.

I feel so sad for the queen. A clever man and such a loss.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON AND DISTRICT



**UK NGO CSW ALLIANCE**

Full report on page 05

**UK Civil Society Women's Alliance**

**Public Statement on the withdrawal of the Republic of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention**



*Jean Turner, following her stroke last year, now resides in Orford House, one of the homes she supported through her work with Friends of the Elderly.*

**Region Meetings in 2021 are scheduled to take place on: June 26 and September 25**

## Canterbury Club



prepare for their  
Diamond Jubilee

AT CANTERBY CLUB'S recent AGM, outgoing President Dawn Lilford was congratulated for a tremendous year.



Dawn's highlights included laying the wreath on Remembrance Day, welcoming two new members and connecting through Programme Action and friendship amongst members.

Members welcomed incoming President Carol Reed. Carol was previously president in 2004 and only one member, Nancy Burroughs, continues from then.

During 2021-22 Carol hopes to lead a joint project with our Friendship Link clubs and focus on the climate emergency.

Most importantly, President Carol will lead our club's 60th Anniversary celebrations.

On Saturday June 19, 2021, Canterbury Club will hold a virtual celebration, to which all members of SISEE Region are invited.

On that day, the Club will be joined by SIGBI President Johanna Raffan, Canterbury Sheriff Anne Dekker, and Regional President Grace Onions. The Canterbury's Inspirational Woman of the Year Award will be presented at the meeting.

So, do put this date in your diary: Saturday June 19, 2021.

JANE WEBB, SI CANTERBURY

## Eastbourne Club member finds her 'green fingers'



TO CELEBRATE SI'S Centenary, Denise Staplehurst decided to try to grow some trees. "I planted some acorns and hazel nuts, and this is the result. I didn't realise I had green fingers!!"

These trees will be planted at her father's farm. In the meantime, Denise has already planted 24 hawthorn trees to create a hedge.



I RECENTLY ATTENDED a meeting hosted by the Kent arm of Bond.org.uk, an "International Development Network which aims to connect, strengthen and champion a dynamic network of civil society organisations to eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice". They claim to influence governments and policy makers at national and international levels. In order to build a just and sustainable world they link with small and large organisations to share expertise, insights and learning.

This Kent Watch Party Event started with an excellent video created by the UN on its 75th Anniversary to mark five years since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. The video covered climate and the planet, poverty and inequality, justice and human rights, and finally, gender equality. The 35 minute video [Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times](#) | Presented by Thandie Newton is well worth watching, particularly the final chapter which includes some interesting information. At this particular event they wanted representatives from Amnesty International and Soroptimist International to talk about our work so it was a good advertising platform and networking opportunity. I have discovered two local groups who have similar aims and objectives as Soroptimists and I have been able to follow up with them and potentially create an informal partnership. There will be other future Watch Party Events hosted by Bond and, when my contact returns from leave, I will get and pass on details of events relating to other counties in the south east of England in case they are of interest.

WANDA WRIGHT, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE.



## East Grinstead support Dementia Action Week



OVER THE PAST weeks and months, members of SI East Grinstead have been busy knitting and crocheting Forget-Me-Not flowers for Dementia Action Week in May 2021.

They have been gathering these 'flowers' in preparation for a High Street display to be mounted by the Town Council.

## More news from East Grinstead

EAST GRINSTEAD MEMBERS welcomed Sue Edgar, their 2021-2022 President. The Club has extended her Presidency for a further year!

The club's Community Flower Planter, part of the Windmill Lane garden project on the fringes of the town, has seen spring flowers flourish and after a tidy up of the box even more colour could be enjoyed.

# Sevenoaks Club's Z to A guide to a year of Zoom

THIS HAS BEEN the year of Zoom... which has enabled the Club to function thanks to Penny Robins and Jenny Webb... kept us in touch with Region... and which made me think of a Z to A guide for the Club year. **Z** = Zoom and **Y**= Year

**X** for the crosses put on the ballot papers received from SIGBI.

**W** for supporting International women's day by participating in the Close the Gender Gap movement; President Penny laying a wreath of poppies on Remembrance Sunday, albeit without the usual ceremony on the Vine; a talk on witchcraft and lobbying letters to our MP on better legislation to help women victims of abuse.

**V** would be all the voluntary work and a social lunch at the Mount Vineyard café in the short window of time in the Summer when it was possible to meet each other.

**U** for support of UN days as in November "Orange the world" elimination of gender based violence. And always bearing in mind the UN sustainable development goals when we plan our projects.

**T** must be tree planting near the Vine café – Pat Downing's suggestion followed up by the purchase of an *amelanchier canadensis* in liaison with the Town Council, which has also purchased Soroptimist tulips.

**S & R** brings us to shawls which have been donated to Syrian Refugee families in Sevenoaks as the pandemic has temporarily closed the route to the Hamlin Fistula hospital in Addis Ababa.

**S** also for our friendship link St Helens with whom Shirley Brigham keeps in touch and the Shares we bought to support the SI Residential Club in Bayswater Road.

**R** for Christmas treats on a plate for Rockdale residents.

**Q** for the Christmas quiz at our virtual Christmas party.

And probably the most important letter is...

**P** for PAFFS (Programme Action Focus Forms) sent to the Federation conscientiously and regularly by Isobel Groves and reaching the grand record total for our Club of 30, indicating all the continuing work even during lockdown. And of course the 5 x Ps which are the areas of our action Peace, People, Planet, Partnerships and Prosperity

**O** is for our overseas links – we sent Christmas news sheets to SI Fribourg, Switzerland and SI Cobran Barooga inc. in Australia. And of course we have our Regional President Grace Onions!

**N** brings us to the monthly Regional newsletters which have been very full and colourful.

**M** is very important, standing for membership. We finished the Club year with 22 members which included Beverley who joined during lockdown, and our student member Rachel. Macmillan Coffee mornings were also held with reduced numbers or virtually, but equally lucrative.

**L** is covered by a talk on the Sackville leopards at Knole on the lighter side; but also for lobbying – on domestic abuse, provision of a vaccination centre in Edenbridge and Fairtrade

**K**, knitting of sensory twiddle muffs for the Hospice.



**J** a regional meeting talk by the first female jet pilot.

**I** equals Instagram – worked on for hours by Penny and Rachel and whose pages generate interest about SI Sevenoaks at home and abroad.

**H** we had a talk on the Hospice by their creative musician.

**G** for Gardening – an outdoor activity which could continue. The gardeners have worked so hard to keep the Vine garden looking good and they felt justifiably proud when Sevenoaks was awarded a gold medal for South and South East England in Bloom. Another **G** is Gatwick detainees with clothes collections for male detainees being made.

**F** most recently the support for female fire-fighters in Poland; gifts to the local Foodbank and funding for food parcels in Zimbabwe. Friendship has been particularly important during lockdown.

**E** Environment – a member carried out litter picking at a local beauty spot.

**D** for the doves of peace members made for displaying on the Vine for VE and VJ days and the collage created by Penny.

**C** Camfed – campaign for female education in sub-Saharan Africa has continued to have our support.

**B** for batch baking for NHS staff at Maidstone Hospital who had no access to canteen facilities, and for residents in sheltered accommodation. And last October the virtual SIGBI Conference in Belfast.

And so we reach...

**A** and our continued support for the charity Arts Without Boundaries.

No doubt you can think of other points which characterised this strangest of years of not being able to meet, but perhaps there is enough content to show that SI Sevenoaks has been far from inactive under the leadership of President Penny Robins.

ISOBEL WHITE, SECRETARY, SI SEVENOAKS

# Learning how to be a racial equality ally

Another in the occasional series of articles by Tessa Woodward, SI Canterbury

## A new definition of racism

IN THE FIRST of this series of articles, I explained what triggered my decision to join the Women's Equality Party Racial Equality Caucus Ally group.

I also reflected on the fact that, given the country I was born in, my family, home, school, and social experiences, it's small wonder that I tend to be, consciously or unconsciously, biased towards those of my own skin colour and hair texture, seeing them/us as somehow normal and right.

In the next in this series, I discovered ways to move out of the 'white = normal' mode that I had been in for a long time. In this issue, I'll start unpicking my understanding of some of the new definitions and concepts I have come across in this work. I'll start with the word 'racism'.

I used to think that white racism happened when appalling people enslaved black people or lynched them or set dogs on them or turned fire hoses onto peaceful demonstrators. I thought it was when black people were turned away from restaurants, refused accommodation and jobs by nasty white people. I thought it was when a country had laws that prevented people of colour from being in certain places, from owning property or from dating or marrying white people.

And since I do not regard myself as an appalling or nasty person or one who would intentionally hurt others and since, with some exceptions, I do not live in such a country, I thought I was not racist. I thought, rather, that I was racially progressive. In fact, if somebody had ever called me a racist, then I would have responded with outrage at the suggestion. I would have felt falsely accused of something terrible and would have wanted to defend my character from unwelcome insult.

But what if I understand racism as a system into which I have been socialized? What if I learn to see, as I have learned to see in gender politics, the lack of diversity in government, in boardrooms, in mass media, in 'good' housing districts, in 'good' schools? What if I learn to see the advantages I have had by virtue of my skin colour and hair texture, advantages that I have taken utterly for granted, since it has been my privilege never to have had to consider them? What if I learned to see that racism is not just about discrete acts committed by individual people but is, rather, a complex interconnected system in which I am located, and in which, if I do nothing and say nothing, I am complicit? Just as the policemen in the USA last summer, watching George Floyd lying on the floor struggling for breath, were complicit in his murder and maintained the racial status quo.

If I understand racism this way, as a system in which I am located, then when somebody lets me know that something I have said or done is racially problematic, I can respond with gratitude and relief rather than anger and denial. If I accept that it will be impossible for me to completely escape my socialization, then these painful moments, when I am given information about my racially problematic words or actions, can be my chance to learn something valuable and then change my behaviour.

A big stepping-stone to this part of my understanding came when I read the book 'White Fragility: why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism' by Robin DiAngelo. If you are intrigued but have no time to read the book, there is a video of an excellent lecture given by DiAngelo on June 28, 2018 at Seattle Central Library on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45ey4jgoxeU>



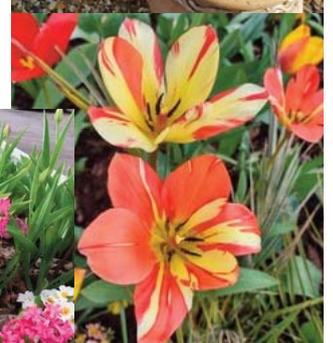
## Soroptimist tulips are blooming all over the Southern Region

Bulbs arrived last winter from a Dutch supplier working with the Lisse-Bollenstreek Club.

The club raises funds through these purchases for their "School for Justice", a project of the Free a Girl campaign.

Comments from Christina, Audrey, Rozanne, Norma and Jan (SI Woking) and Alexis (SI Weybridge) include "glorious", "have brought joy", and "3 Soroptimist tulips to welcome our 3 new members".

May they continue to bring joy every year!





## Have your club history included on the SIGBI Centenary website

SUE CHALLONER HAS recently posted a request on Facebook as she is trying to link club website history pages to the SIGBI centenary history website. She thinks this should make a great history resource for our Federation.

Currently, the SISEE Region only has four clubs linked in and they are: Canterbury, East Grinstead, Medway and Maidstone, and Tunbridge Wells. It would be good to have all 11 clubs from our Region included on the SIGBI centenary history website.

If you have a club history page, then let Sue Challoner know your club history webpage address and she will link it in.

Otherwise, it is not too late to draft details of your club history and include them on your club website and then tell Sue Challoner when it is complete via the 'Contact us' link on the SIGBI centenary website.



A CONTINUING THEME across our Region and the UK is the issue of Trafficking. Several regional members, including those from SI East Grinstead, joined a session hosted by SIGBI at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, CSW65.

You may recognise some of the faces above.

Many Regional Zoom meetings have covered this subject and our continued support for women's safe houses and monitoring of local businesses (where we think human trafficking is taking place) is essential.

## STOP PRESS

THE OXFORD JENNER Institute have developed a malaria vaccine, which, following trials in Africa, is proving to be 77% effective. It holds out real hope of cutting the death toll of this disease, which annually kills around 400,000 people, mostly children.

### Closing Date for the May issue of SEE News is Monday May 24, 2021

Email your text and photographs to Patricia at [pat.painting@btinternet.com](mailto:pat.painting@btinternet.com) 020 8668 2681

## UK Civil Society Women's Alliance

### Public Statement on the withdrawal of the Republic of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention

THE UK CIVIL Society Women's Alliance expresses its deep concern regarding the announcement that the Republic of Turkey intends to withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence; known after its initial signing in Turkey's largest city as the Istanbul Convention.

Turkey was not only the host nation for the signing of the Convention, but the first nation to ratify it in March 2012. Turning away from this critical commitment to the rights of women and girls is in stark contrast with the spirit of the current negotiations underway as part of the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and coincides with global recognition of increased violence against women and girls in the year since Covid-19 necessitated lockdowns around the world.

In 2011, Turkey stood in defence of these rights, and we call for a return to this position – for the full and proper recognition of women's rights as human rights, and for the separation of populist narratives and misinformation from the genuine need to ensure that violence against women and girls is ended globally.

The UK Civil Society Women's Alliance supports the Commission on the Status of Women's regular reaffirmation of the Istanbul Convention, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women upon which it is built. These key documents have provided the framework for international law and best practice, and inspired action all over the world to better protect and empower women.

Progressive action to secure, strengthen, and safeguard the rights of women and girls all over the world is critically necessary and we urge the Republic of Turkey to reconsider its withdrawal from the Convention.

In 2021, there is the opportunity to make a genuine commitment to Building Back Better, and ensuring that women and girls are not Left Behind. The UK Civil Society Women's Alliance calls upon Turkey to make this commitment, and to return to full ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

## Women in the news

**Shriti Vadera** has been named as chair of the Royal Shakespeare Company. She is the first woman and person of colour to be appointed to this role.

**Baroness Benjamin of Beckenham.** Former TV presenter Floella Benjamin's childhood memoir 'Coming to England' is to be adapted for the stage by the Birmingham Rep.

**Rachael Blackmore**, 31, from Killenaule, Co Tipperary, became the first woman to ride the winner of the Grand National.

**Lady Justice Rose** has joined the supreme court as the second serving female justice in the UK's highest court. She replaces Lady Black who retired in January. She will join Lady Arden who is due to step down next year.

**Rebecca Welch** has become the first woman selected to referee a men's match in the English Football League. From County Durham, 37-year-old Rebecca has been a match official for 10 years and has twice refereed the women's FA Cup Final.

# Pledge to be free of modern slavery by 2030



THREE MEMBERS OF SI Medway and Maidstone attended the UKPAC Study Day on modern slavery via Zoom on April 17. We joined more than 300 women from across SIGBI plus members from the 6-0 Group (the leading women's organisation in the UK). During the morning session there were three excellent speakers:

*Dame Sara Thornton*, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner responsible for encouraging good practice in the prevention and detection of modern slavery and the identification of victims.

*Ben Brewster*, Rights Lab Research Fellow in Modern Slavery Perpetration.

*Phil Northall*, Rights Lab Research Fellow in Antislavery Resilient Cities

Dame Sara highlighted that there were 40 million victims of modern slavery on any given day in 2016 and this equates to 5.4 people for every 1000 people in the world and 71% of the victims are women and girls. She shared ways in which we as Soroptimists could join the fight against modern slavery by:

- Helping to spread the word about issues of modern slavery
- Working to support organisations who offer accompaniment to those seeking recovery from sexual exploitation



Talking to local businesses about their supply chains and challenge them about whether modern slavery might exist without their knowledge.

Exploring what can be done to reach out to vulnerable children and make the alternative to gang life more attractive.

Ben and Phil from the Rights Lab believe that by us all working together as part of the global anti-slavery community, we can achieve evidence-based strategies for ending slavery by 2030. (See the Slavery free pledge diagram above.)

The group was then split into 50 breakout groups to discuss our awareness of cases of modern slavery in our local areas, what we could have done to remediate or prevent these occurring, how to contribute by working in partnership to build community resilience to address the issues.

The Study Day on modern slavery proved to be an excellent and worthwhile morning that was well organised by UKPAC. Copies of the presentations and videos shown will soon be made available on the UKPAC website.

We look forward to the planned afternoon session based on Domestic Abuse. Due to the death of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, this has now been rescheduled for Saturday July 03, 2021 starting at 10:00.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



## Eastbourne Book Club

EASTBOURNE CLUB HAVE had a book club for the last ten years or more. This we have managed to continue during Covid on zoom.

In February we read, 'The Beekeeper of Aleppo' by Christy Lefteri about a couple travelling to the UK to seek asylum.

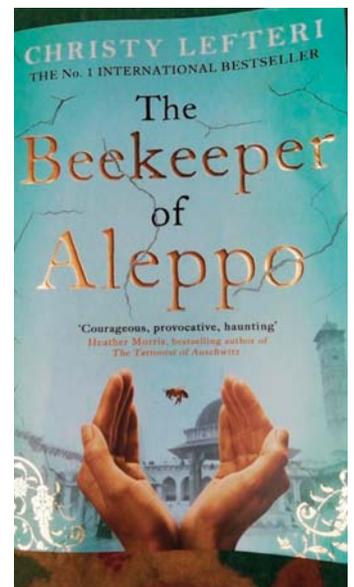
Knowing Pat Dale really well I asked if she would come and talk to the club, but especially the book club, about her role in the Home Office and all she has done to support people.

The talk was well received by the club who found her work in this country and overseas fascinating.

Pat has been given several awards for her work including the MBE. You may know that Jean Turner and I travelled to Kiev and China to visit Pat. I was delighted to hear that the school in China for special needs pupils that Pat set up and that I raised so much money for selling jewellery, especially pearls, and my jams and chutneys, is still getting new pupils and is running well.

Thanks Pat for an enjoyable evening.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE





At MEDWAY AND Maidstone's AGM on April 08 via Zoom, Rotarian John Miles gave us a lively and interesting presentation about Global Sight Solutions (GSS).

GSS was originally registered in 1994 as the Guildford Rotary Eye Project. A Guildford eye surgeon and consultant ophthalmic surgeon started the GSS project in Kolkata and West Bengal with a personal ambition to restore the sight of one million people.

There are estimated to be as many as 650 million people worldwide who, due to poverty, are just too poor to access the necessary eye care medical solutions for themselves. Of that number around 50 million fall within a category often known as the avoidably, or preventably blind. The vast majority of these 50 million people need what is invariably a straightforward cataract operation. Common causes of avoidable blindness are poor diet, genetic issues, poor education and lack of clean water and decent sanitation facilities.

GSS establishes eye hospitals, which provide free eye care to those who need it most. They ensure that each hospital becomes financially independent and offers sustainably high standards of care.



GSS provides surgeon training, bus transportation and surgical equipment so that free eye operations and treatment are available to those that need them.

To date GSS have opened more than 70 specialist eye hospitals in India, Africa and elsewhere with 100,000 cataract operations carried out each year. New hospitals are planned for the Middle East, Bangladesh, Sub Saharan Africa and India, and many more.

The club donated £100 to GSS, enough to restore the sight of 20 poor people.

GSS are always looking to raise funds and if you or your club also wish to donate to this worthwhile cause online you can do this at [www.justgiving.com/globalsightsolutions](http://www.justgiving.com/globalsightsolutions)

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATION OFFICER  
SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Before lockdown, Rotarians John and Fiona Miles travelled a total of 33,000 miles on a self-funded three-month journey in support of Global Sight Solutions' ambition to open more Rotary eye hospitals in the developing world.

## Together Talks

Region members are invited to join the following Zoom speaker meetings. Please register with the Club Secretary.

### SI Medway and Maidstone

Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 19:30

PROJECT HOPE : Guest Speaker from SATEDA

### SI Lewes

Monday, May 17, 2021 at 19:00

Faith from Zambia to talk about the 'Mothers of a Million' Project and the Football Boots Project

### Rotary Club of Croydon (contact Patricia Painting)

Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 11:45 for Noon

Guest Speaker Dr Catherine Jones, from Buglife  
'Saving the small things that run the planet'

### SI Canterbury

Saturday June 19, 2021 at 14:00

60th Anniversary Celebration  
and Award of Canterbury Inspirational Woman of the Year

### SI Lewes

Monday, June 21, 2021 at 19:00

Hazel Thompson author of e-book 'Taken'  
will talk about children and sex trafficking in India

### SI Lewes

Monday, July 19, 2021 at 19:00

Stephanie Pech  
'Boosting our Immunity through Nutrition' talk and Q&A

### SI Lewes

Monday, September 20, 2021 at 19:00

Brighton Women's Shelter on how they provide  
domestic violence support for women and their children

### SI Lewes

Monday, October 18, 2021 at 19:00

Update from Ram Rajil co-founder of Bloom Nepal School



*Regional President Melanie and National Association President Mary warmly invite you to join them at their Joint North South Conference (virtually) on Saturday 22 May 2021 at 10.00am.*

<i>Regional President Melanie</i>	<i>National Association President Mary</i>
 <p>“Courage for Change” encompasses the challenges we have all faced in the light of the pandemic. Courage to change our ways of doing things, courage to embrace new technology and courage to tackle some of the issues arising from such a difficult period in time. Women have been disproportionately affected by COVID and we, as an organisation who protect, promote and uphold the rights of women and girls, have been working tirelessly through projects and service to improve their lives.</p>	 <p>‘Stay Connected’ is the theme for my Presidency as I believe my most important objective is to encourage clubs to continue to function, club members to look out and care for one another and keep our focus on programme action. The virtual format has enabled a connection with Soroptimists worldwide and enhanced the local and regional connections.</p>

*Using both of their themes for the 2020-2021 year, “Courage for Change” and “Stay Connected”, delegates will hear from two inspiring speakers*

	<p>Jennifer Smyth, a 24 year old graduate from Birmingham University in Product Design. Jennifer exhibited her work in London Business Design Centre and produced devices aimed to help people with disabilities. Jennifer was a keen and successful gymnast but sustained a life changing neck injury during a training session. Jennifer decided that she wanted to walk again and inspires countless people with her Facebook group Jennifer’s Journey.</p>
	<p>"Alison O'Connor is a journalist, broadcaster and author. She writes a weekly column for The Irish Examiner, and as a current affairs commentator appears regularly on radio and television, including on RTE's Claire Byrne Live, and Virgin Media's The Tonight Show. Her most recent book "It's a Yes", co written with the directors of the It's a Yes campaign, examines the hugely successful, female-led, Repeal the 8th campaign."</p>

*Listen to International President Elect Maureen Maguire and Federation President Johanna Raffan who will also bring messages to the event and the Winners of the 2020 Youth Award Competitions both in Northern Ireland (Anna Woodside) and the Republic of Ireland (Isobel Tiernan) will be presenting their chosen topics.*

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZakduqvqDwsGNxXBtNNpFV9DNGa7uGa58zA>