

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Dear member

It has been really heartening over these last difficult weeks to hear of the ways in which members are keeping in touch and supporting one another. **Communication** is more important now than ever. I know that many branches have organised into groups to keep in contact with everyone, others have prayer circles, and at least one Branch (Benwell) is still meeting using Zoom or some other virtual method. The telephone has become a lifeline too, especially to those who are isolating or shielding! Thank you for all your care of each other, which is at the heart of Mothers' Union.

I hope you are aware of all the prayer resources provided by Mary Sumner House. Many of them are accessed through their website, but the new Families Worldwide gives a prayer for every day, as well as a wealth of information, and a letter from our Worldwide President.

Although Branches can't meet physically, a great deal is going on as many members join in community initiatives, including some members sewing items for the protection of health workers. Please let me know if there is a particular local need which Mothers' Union can meet, which is beyond what the local group can supply.

We are also giving much thought to the ways in which our work will need to adapt as the country recovers from COVID-19: for instance, AFIA will need to adapt, and may be able to support tired care workers; the 'holiday hunger' project will be important, but may need to be adapted; Mothers' Union will have an important role in helping those affected by domestic violence during this time. All of these are things that have been at the heart of virtual conferences I have been a part of with leaders from all over Britain & Ireland. I am very glad that our Trustees will be able to have our usual June meeting by video link, so that we can discuss projects during recovery.

As we look towards our future together, I am reminded of this lovely picture of members in our linked Diocese of Bo in Sierra Leone, when, at the end of the Ebola crisis, they were able to meet for the first time as a large gathering. We will have many small steps on the way to such a gathering, but God will guide us in how to proceed. Meanwhile, I am delighted that many of us will be able to share an online **Diocesan service together on Saturday 11th July**: please see the notice below.

My thoughts and prayers are with all those who have suffered bereavement, and those struggling with self-isolation.

With love

Barbara

In November 2015 they had their MU conference. They met with great joy!



Lindisfarne Archdeaconry Festival—Saturday 11th July

You will not be surprised that the plans we had made for the Archdeaconry Festival on 11th July have had to be cancelled. This is such a shame as plans had been made for the day. Steve Forster was to speak to us in the morning about Modern Slavery, and a Service was to follow in the afternoon in St. James Church in Morpeth with Bishop John Packer giving the Address

However, we are still going to mark the occasion with a Service. We are organising a **Diocesan Service** for all our members in the Diocese on that day.

I am delighted to tell you that Rev. Simon White, Rector of Morpeth and Rev. Sarah Moon our MU Diocesan Chaplain are planning a Service for that day. **It will be on Facebook at 2pm but can also be viewed on You Tube then or later.** The Service will be much as originally planned with Mothers' Union members involved and Bishop John Packer giving the address. Sarah will be contacting Branch leaders for pictures or short videos which can also be included.

I know that in these different and difficult times many of you are already joining in Church Services by video, Zoom and Facebook. The Mothers' Union in Newcastle Diocese is hoping to bring this Service to as many of you as we can.

More details will be sent to Branch Leaders soon.

With Love and Prayers for you all

Sheila Walker VP



Apologies to everyone who sent in news from their branches which we have not been able to use; we did not think it right to produce a full printed edition at this time, but inevitably not everything could be included in this extended newsletter.

For obvious reasons the following article has been written anonymously. I can tell you that the writer has been a M.U. member for nearly 30 years and belongs to a branch in my Archdeaconry. She, like me, wants to highlight the issue of Domestic Abuse; it is here in our churches and in our M.U. branches. We need to be informed and aware.

Sylvia Hickey V.P

Further to the report on Diocesan Council in the Winter 2019 Journal, regarding Domestic Abuse and Exploitation, I am now strong enough to put my head above the parapet. As Sylvia Hickey has bravely said, she has rebuilt her life; and I am doing so too.

My ex-husband walked out one dark winter evening two years ago, completely out of the blue. He then made life extremely difficult for me, refusing to take part in the divorce proceedings, reducing and reducing my maintenance, ignoring the solicitor's letter to pay a fixed amount. I had to go to court eventually, where he told lies and where his stated intention was "she gets nothing". It is so true that when you are in an abusive situation you do not recognise it. After my ex left, it was one of my daughters who quietly said, "But Mum, that's abuse!" He tried to control all of my life with him; I was constantly told "That won't happen", "You can't do that," "I have to do this"

I have survived an abusive relationship and have emerged from it scarred and weary, but still smiling. I'm trying to be the person God meant me to be, doing my carer's job, doing my voluntary work for the Church, being there for my daughters and my new granddaughter. Healing will probably take the rest of my life; and as for forgiveness – who knows?

God will judge my ex-husband. I shall not.

It is vital that Mothers' Union and the Church recognise that abuse happens. It isn't always a black eye. It isn't always a vulnerable woman who has perhaps been in care. It is ordinary people. It is me. I come from a comfortable, happy, secure background. My 'mistake' was in assuming that the man I married would be like my father, loving and caring.

ANON

White Ribbon Service November 24th 2019

On a dank Sunday afternoon in November we gathered at St Nicholas Cathedral for the White Ribbon Service. This Sunday was the nearest one to the actual White Ribbon Day which is 25th November, the **U.N. International Day for the elimination of Violence against Women** and the start of our **M.U. 16 Days of Activism**.

I had appealed for as many volunteers as possible to carry a named card to remember a woman who had died as a result of gender based violence during 2018. The actual number required was 144, of which M.U. provided 50 members, each carrying a card with the name and age of a victim. Revd Canon Clare McLaren conducted the service, the Dean the Very Revd Geoff Miller introduced and concluded the worship. The Cathedral choir sang, seated at the west end of the Cathedral, and our own M.U. choir sang three beautiful pieces, adding an extra special dimension to an emotional and moving service.

As the Cathedral clock struck four o'clock the lights were dimmed and the Cathedral choir sang while a long procession of card carriers moved slowly forward in pairs from the rear of the Cathedral to the nave sanctuary where large tea light candles had been arranged in the shape of a white ribbon. Every candle was lit by a card holder, it took over fifteen minutes to complete the task.

I did a bible reading with interspersed commentary by Canon Clare. Ruth Rogan our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser read a very poignant poem written by a domestic abuse survivor and Chris Greene founder of the White Ribbon gave the Address.

I do not think that anyone present that afternoon could fail to be moved by the service and the issues it addressed. This was the culmination of a weekend dedicated to raising awareness of Domestic Abuse among Christians and bringing it to the attention of our respective churches which is where help and support for victims should start. Sadly all too often this is not the case and it can be conveniently "brushed firmly under the carpet".

It is now up to us as Christian women and M.U. members to be at the forefront of a campaign to stop this happening.

I hope and pray that this special Service has inspired us to carry the work forward and, with God's help, bring about change.

Sylvia Hickey V.P.



WRAPPING GOD'S LOVE UP IN A SHAWL

I recently read a book written by a woman about her work in a women's prison. She taught crafts and encouraged the 'residents' (as she liked to refer to them) to be creative. She was often amazed by the creations they produced. The writer also gave an insight into the many sad and disruptive lives experienced by these girls and women which resulted in them being imprisoned. The fact that prison was the only place that some could call 'HOME' stayed with me. A bed to sleep in, food to eat daily, somewhere they felt safe.

I then read an article in our M.U. magazine entitled "WRAPPING GOD'S LOVE UP IN A SHAWL" Shawls are knitted or crocheted and given to those facing difficulties in their life such as illness, loneliness or bereavement. I particularly liked this prayer which was suggested to be attached to the shawl.

May this shawl be for you a mantle of security and wellbeing sustaining and embracing you in good times and difficult ones.

May it bring you comfort from all that appears too much to bear, from all that feels as if it might break you, from all that threatens your peace of heart. Rest within its softness so that you will be cradled in hope kept in joy graced with peace and wrapped in God's love.

AMEN

It seems to me that a girl in prison may receive this gift as a blessing. I intend to knit one and pass it on. If you feel inspired patterns can be found in the CRAFT resources on the M.U. website. (www.mothersunion.org/craft)

Margaret Riches, St Cuthbert Amble Branch

The following article was written by someone who was only enrolled into MU in October 2019. The Service in Leeds Minster was her first experience of a MU event and I felt that her input would be especially valuable.

Sylvia Hickey V.P.

Mothers' Union in the Province of York Thursday 7th November 2019 Leeds Minster Address by Sheran Harper the Worldwide President of MU

Sheran is a physiotherapist. She is a Guyanan and has opened Physiotherapy units in hospitals across Guyana as well as lecturing on Rehabilitation Therapists Training Programme for the Government. She is now in her late 50s, a wife and mother, has been a vital member of Mothers' Union for 17 years and visited 16 countries during this time (primarily as the Worldwide Parenting Programme Trainer).

Sheran, a quietly spoken lady, addressed MU members in the Minster in Leeds in November and I was lucky enough to be in the congregation. She



thanked us all for being there and then advised us that she had been told that Mothers' Union in the whole of the United Kingdom is a declining organisation. Haven't we all heard that? She however refuted that! For her the "impact" of Mothers' Union is still there and very vital. She reassured us that she saw God's hands and feet around her, that by people giving so selflessly in all the large and small ways that MU members do we do make a difference - the result is life and hope! She thanked

everyone and then illustrated what our help had provided in Guyana.

Sheran described how she had prayed for the ability to help people in her country and the wonder of her prayer being answered. She told us that the money we raise and send abroad is what makes so much of this possible. She compared this to the parable we had heard of the shepherd searching for and carrying his lost sheep safely home upon his shoulders and the old woman who searched for the lost gold coin. With God's strength we can move as one heart and one community to make a difference. Sheran then told us a story to illustrate this. While attending synod she met Canon Alfred from a parish in an undeveloped area of Guyana called the Potaru. He beseeched her to come and visit the parishes there. She asked her Bishop if she could do just that but was refused. The area was not easily accessible, was malaria infested, etc. etc. and as at that time she was a young married woman with a young family - the Bishop felt it was much too dangerous. The following year at synod Canon Alfred again approached her to come and visit. This time she went to see her Bishop's wife. She explained to her all the reasons she wanted to go and the Bishop's wife completely understood. "Go" she said, "but say nothing and I will cover you when the Bishop finds out." Next, she discussed it with her vicar's wife and the decision was made to go together. They got the funding they needed from the trustee board and they set off. The vicar's wife prayed constantly all the way there as it was so terrifying but they got there ultimately. They travelled in a huge truck during the night when it was cooler and were accompanied by two of her vicar's sons. Lena, the vicar's wife, was heard to pray "God, why do I travel with this crazy woman?"

Once they arrived they spent 2 weeks in the 4 villages talking to the 40 plus women there. They took mosquito nets, medical supplies, food, etc. etc. and the women joined Mothers' Union and got their admission cards during their visit. In the villages, at that time, there was incest, injustice, violence, persecution for example of Down's syndrome individuals etc. Now there are schools, health centres; some of the money we raise and send overseas with our coffee mornings, cake sales, craft fairs etc. helped to make this possible. What an achievement!

Sheran was inspiring! She was forgiven by the Bishop for going without his permission and she was thanked. For me, I would like to thank her too for giving me an insight into how our small steps become huge when included in God's plan. Thank you very much Sheran for giving all present that insight and your encouragement to continue with our 'declining' organisation. May it long continue and once more grow.

Dorothy Russell

We welcome the following new members, who joined after the last Journal went to press and before all our lives became so strange:

Janice Stait to St John's Whorlton
Pam Tomlinson,
Barbara Rhoades and
Joan Armstrong to
Earsdon Backworth,
Jennifer Kenyon to
St. John Killingworth,
Sean Mitchell, and
Louise Reid to St George
Cullercoats,
Clare Connors to St Mary's Monkseaton,
Revd Barrie Cooper, to Lesbury & Alnmouth.



We hope that your membership of MU is being of help and support to you in these difficult times.



A trip on the Santa Train Saturday December 14th 2019.



The kindness and generosity of Mothers' Union members allowed children from our local refuge and a local estate to travel on the Santa Train leaving from the Stephenson Museum on North Tyneside. Before boarding the train, they had the opportunity to get some magic reindeer food, try some quizzes and enjoy some craft activities in

the museum. On the train they listened to stories told by staff members (one dressed as a Victorian lady, one as an elf) and heard carols played by local musicians. The highlight of the trip had to be meeting Santa. when he boarded the train at the "East Pole". Each child was given a gift in a festive bag with their name on, by Santa himself. On returning to the museum there was juice and a gingerbread man for the children and tea or coffee and a mince pie for the adults. The cold crisp bright weather made adults and children alike think that "It was beginning to feel a lot like Christmas." On behalf of the children, and the adults who travelled with them, I would like to thank again all our very generous members who made this possible.



Linda Benneworth, Action and Outreach Coordinator

ANNUAL GATHERING (the new name for the General Meeting)

This September's conference has been postponed to the same time next year (24th and 25th September 2021), when we will be meeting in Belfast as previously arranged, with the service at St. Anne's Cathedral and the meeting at the International Convention Centre. We hope to share our trip with Carlisle Diocese MU.

Mothers' Union in Newcastle have joined with other dioceses around the country to write prayers for Families Worldwide. A small group has written prayers for the last 2 editions and the one starting in July. We are currently working on prayers for the January magazine. In the current edition we contributed to 3 weeks, 15th March–United Nations, 26th April–Holiness and 24th May–The Kingdom of God. In the next edition we contributed to 9th August–MU Family, 6th September–Learning and Sharing and 8th November–Memories. If you wish to join our small team please let me know.

If you haven't received your copy of Families World Wide that begins in July, do get in touch with me (0191 2811325 or faithandpolicy@munewcastle.org.uk. I will post you a copy; I have plenty so if you need extras, just ask.

Jackie Moore

Hospital Emergency Bags.

I have a contact at Cramlington Hospital for Hospital Emergency Bags, all I have to do is ring her and she arranges for someone to pick them up from my house. Thank you to those who help me to put them together, they are much appreciated.

Edna Maddison

The current coronavirus pandemic meant that the MU **retreat** planned to be held at Shepherds Dene early in May could not take place. Participants will be very glad to know that we have been able to book Shepherds Dene for Monday 31 May-Tuesday 1 June next year for our Retreat, and Jennie Jones has agreed to lead it; her husband Malcolm will celebrate a Eucharist for us on the second day.

Put the date in your diary now, and keep an eye out for booking forms in the Winter Journal.

TREE OF HOPE

To combat the feeling of despair A Tree of Hope has been created by people from the local community and the wider world from as far away as the USA with messages of hope in the shape of hearts which are being hung on a tree in Anne Bradley's garden in Northumberland.





THIS GIRL CAN

On Thursday 5th March, 6 members of Mothers' Union (and 3 daughters), took part in "This Girl Can—Newcastle" in Exhibition Park, to mark International Women's Day 2020. We donned our neon face paint, glow sticks, and of course, our freshly made Mothers' Union Sashes (super easy to make and what every member needs!).



It was a fantastic evening and there was something for everyone - a 5k or 1 mile walk/run/jog across the Town Moor. And it wouldn't have been a Benwell Mothers' Union event without the curry and wine waiting for us at the end! Perhaps next year we can have even more Mothers' Union members joining us?



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 6TH MARCH 2020

Friday 6th March was not only used to celebrate the Women's World Day of Prayer but also "International Women's Day". At "Walking With" in Wallsend it was celebrated with a fun day for clients and friends. Henna hand painting was very popular along with hand massages and eyebrow waxing. Members of Mothers' Union donated gifts of jewellery. After lunch which included Syrian bread made by some of the Syrian ladies, there was a jewellery making



session organised by Mother's Union and led by Sue Croome. It was very enjoyable and productive. Two of the ladies, one from Syria and one from Jamaica, made several pairs of earrings and some bracelets. Both said that they had made jewellery in their home countries. They said that they had enjoyed the actual session so much that they wanted to donate things which they had made back to Mothers' Union funds. We hope that these can be sold at the next MU Council.



KEEPING TOGETHER IN LOCK-DOWN

This photograph shows Canon Jennifer Snowdon with Revd Canon Ian Flintoft (St Bede's Newsham) sorting food to take out to known families struggling during these 'strange times' caused by the pandemic. Deliveries of food from various local supermarkets in Blyth area are being coordinated by the local Community Food & Friendship group normally based at St Cuthbert's Blyth, but at the moment working from a warehouse in the Port of Blyth to cope with the extra demand. Jennifer is proud to represent the Mothers' Union in this small way.

Though the country is in lock down, we were still able to respond to an urgent appeal from Junction 42, an organisation that deals with prisons, prisoners and ex-prisoners. We had recently explored the possibility of working with them, then Sylvia Hickey received an urgent phone call for help. We were able to supply them with soap, tissues, toothpaste etc. which we did not need at present, but which were critical to their work at this time. It is good to know that even in these desperate times, MU was able to support a need.

Branches have found a variety of ways of keeping in touch with our members. This contribution is from St George, Cullercoats:

We were disappointed that we could not celebrate Lady Day this year in our usual way, with a service and supper. However, our vicar, Fr Adrian Hughes, asked Sheila, Branch secretary, to send out a photograph of our MU banner, together with the Collect for the Day, to as many members as possible. During lockdown, each committee member is keeping in touch with 6 or 7 members by phone or text or email every week and Sheila is writing a letter to everyone on what would have been our Branch meeting days.

The Collect for Lady Day

We beseech you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts that, as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



The other need we regularly support is the annual Shoebox appeal; last December many of you gave so generously that 561 boxes were given to the People's Kitchen and the women's refuges. Thank you all, and thanks to those who provided seasonal refreshments to share that morning. This picture shows President Barbara at Church House with Bishop Mark Bryant, who blessed the boxes for us.



Mary Sumner House Coronavirus appeal

Thank you to all who have responded individually to the appeal to help the central charity to survive the pandemic financially, and also to Branches who have decided in addition to give from their branch funds. The appeal is now half way to the £1,000,000 needed, so this gives them some security for the immediate future, although much more is still needed.



Last November, fourteen members of the Morpeth branch of Mothers' Union were presented with Long Service Awards by Morpeth Deanery Leader, Joan Howard. Four members were unable to collect on the day, including the longest serving member, Margaret Sutcliffe, who has been a member for over 60 years!

Our group photo shows from left to right (number of years' service shown in brackets): Simon White, Rector of Morpeth; Joan Howard; Ruth Lennox (50); Dorothy McLean (55); Jean Mills (50); Joyce Whitehead (30); Nancy Flitcroft (25); Rev Ann Peat (50); Muriel Harris (25);

Please note a changed telephone number for our Children & Young Families Co-ordinator Karoline Wellborne: it's now 0191 285 2533

BIRTHDAYS : ANNIVERSARIES : OBITUARIES

BIRTHDAYS

- 80:**
Margaret Campbell St Mary Monkseaton
Helen Brunton, St George Cullercoats
Sheila Torrance St Mary Monkseaton
Margaret Carmichael (Indoor member)
Rita Tough, St George Cullercoats
Edith Reed, Delaval
Mary Grant St John Whorlton
Brenda Mennear, St George Cullercoats
Barbara Box, Haydon Bridge
Jenny Rochester, Bothal Pegswood Longhirst Hebron Ulgham Widdrington
- 90:** Jean Woodruff, St Mary Monkseaton
Joan Rodgers, Seaton Hirst
Jean Goudie, St Mary Monkseaton
Joyce Paterson, St George Cullercoats
Marian Burton, St Mary Monkseaton
Pauline Dean, Newsham
Kathleen Keay, Bothal Pegswood Longhirst Hebron Ulgham Widdrington
Ella Wonders, Bothal Pegswood Longhirst Hebron Ulgham Widdrington
Margaret Dean, St John Whorlton
Mary Grant, St John Whorlton
Mary Embleton St John Whorlton

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

- Ruby Wedding** Sharon and Paul Bain, St George Cullercoats
Golden Wedding Dorothy and Dave Walker, Holy Nativity Chapel House
Vivienne and Bob Scott, Delaval
Diamond Wedding Robson and Jenny Rochester Bothal Pegswood Longhirst Hebron Ulgham Widdrington
John and Pat Inman Bothal Pegswood Longhirst Hebron Ulgham Widdrington

DEATHS

- Linda Middleton, Holy Nativity Chapel House
Joyce Hall, Morpeth
Jean Raven, St Mary's Monkseaton
Margo Wade, Amble
Eileen Gair, Amble
Jean Bairstow, Indoor Member
Margery Knott, Earsdon & Backworth
Wyn Blake, St Columba Wideopen
Johanna Davison, St Columba Wideopen
Jean Lotz, St John's Whorlton
Gladys Bates, St Gabriel Heaton
Ray Dixon, Delaval
Pat Golding, Delaval
Jean Richardson, Indoor Member
Audrey Welford, St Gabriel Heaton

Apologies to two ladies from Holy Cross Haltwhistle, whose milestone birthdays were apparently not recorded at the appropriate time; Peggy Henderson is now 96 and Margaret Bell 101. We do like to mark significant dates a bit nearer the appropriate time!

Dorella Addinall, the very much loved Branch Leader of St. Luke's, Wallsend, died on 9th May, after a long and courageous battle with Cancer during which she continued to lead the Branch. Love and prayers to all her family.

Paul Benneworth, only son of Linda (our Action & Outreach co-ordinator) and Chris, died unexpectedly in his sleep on 11th May, aged 46. Our love and prayers are for his wife Leanne, and for Theo (9) and Martha (3), as well as for Chris and Linda.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Newcastle

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