**UNIT REPORTS FOR DIOCESAN COUNCIL – 7TH OCTOBER 2016**

**Finance and Central Services Sept. 30th 2016**

Two successful trainings were led by Jennie Jones for Branch Officials and due to the good fellowship shown by everyone, we had a non-confrontational space in which to air the many and various problems that can arise within branches. Money matters were to the fore and mainly sorted out, but we still need some help for the Small Donations Gift Aid scheme which seems to be interpreted in many different ways. Thank goodness we have Lesley Bolton to help us out.

The subscription for our Tribute this year will be £19. MSH have increased their part to £13. The extra £6 will be the contribution to the Diocese.

I trust that members have checked the safety of their meeting venues, especially kitchens, paths and trailing cables. Check with you Parish Safety Officer if you have any concerns.

Envelopes with the Report Papers will be distributed at the meeting in St. John’s Kingston Park on Friday Oct. 7th.

Anne Lloyd

**Sharing Day in November**

Whilst the prime aim of this morning is to encourage confidence in those who speak at meetings, we should like to use the opportunity also to look at ways of helping groups to facilitate d-i - y style meetings sometimes. At Council I shall invite those who might be enthused to come to bring an idea that might be shared with others. There is so much experience across the diocese which would help everyone of us.  
(This is the piece going in the next newsletter)

'Speak up for the MU!'

If you were asked to share just one thing about our wonderful MU - what would it be? And might you be a little shy to share it! Whether you are a confident speaker, or would just love a little more confidence when sharing thoughts and ideas at a branch meeting, then we invite you to join us at Church House on Friday 4 November from 10.00am to 1.00pm. The morning will finish with lunch, which will be provided.   
You will hear more about the day at Council on 7 October, but please do book in as soon as possible. Email me: jenniejonespcdc@hotmail.com or call me on 0191 2677829

Jennie Jones

**Marketing Unit Report September 2016**

**Web site** – Margaret Weaver has done a wonderful job updating the website on a regular basis, it has more photographs and is better set out, but we are unsure if it has increased the volume of use.

**Twitter** – this remains a useful tool for passing on relevant up to date about MU and MU interests across the diocese and beyond.

**Face Book** – Lesley remains committed to the positivity of the Facebook page.

**Journal** – Feedback has been extremely positive, 17 emails who liked the new format and one who did not. We strive to make The Journal not only informative for members but as a tool to attract new members.

Next issue will be distributed at the Christmas Box event on 2nd December at Church House.

**Newsletter** – The September Newsletter was designed by Barbara and sent out to all branches. It is hoped all members will get either a copy or sight of the newsletter. If anyone knows of a potential editor for the newsletter, only 2 sides twice a year, please let us know.

**Marketing meeting** – I will advertise and contact individuals to come along to a marketing meeting to plan until the end of 2018 and beyond. It is hoped this can be arranged for late October.

**Promotional Talks** – These talks about growing seeds have been very successful when delivered using the MU format. Unfortunately there are no requests in the pipeline for any more. I encourage branches to take opportunities to grow and promote their branches seriously when planning next year’s programme.

Lynne Craggs

Marketing Co-ordinator

**Action and outreach report, September 2016.**

Action and outreach is an essential part of the Mothers’ Union’s activities. We are very fortunate to have so many people in the diocese who are willing to give their energy and time to support a wide range of activities.

**AFIA Holidays.**

This year has been another very successful one for our AFIA holidays. Currently eleven families have been given holidays, mostly to North Berwick. The feedback has been very positive.

This year we are trying the Sandy Bay site. This is because the site has been modernised; there is more entertainment and the cost of the swimming pool is included in the rental. The site is closer to the main urban areas and for families without a car there is direct access to the beach. It is also a short walk to Newbiggin. Families do need to take their own towels, but at present we have a stock of towels for them to use. There is the opportunity to hire towels for the Platinum range of caravans and we may use these caravans next year. Three families have been booked into Sandy Bay for the October half term.

Up until October, 124 adults, 150 children and 6 babies had benefited from a holiday. There are already several provisional bookings for next year.

A new venture this year is to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation in Whitley Bay for mothers with just one child. This is cheaper than renting a caravan. Initially, we are using Cara B&B where the rooms have central heating, en-suite facilities and a hot breakfast is supplied. The accommodation overlooks the sea. There are facilities in the town centre including a cinema, and bus links to Newcastle and Waves swimming pool. We will evaluate the success of this venture later, but we hope that it may help single mums feel less isolated and lonely.

This year too, on the recommendation and suggestion of her vicar, we gave one lady a weekend retreat at Shepherd’s Dene. She has medical and mental health issues. Her own teenage daughter was looked after by a friend. She had managed to save some money but a grant from the Lady Grey Trust paid for the rest. In her letter of thanks she stressed how much she had enjoyed it; she said that it had really recharged her batteries.

**Away Days.**

“Away Days” are very useful for families who find it too stressful to go on holiday. One popular away-day is a coach trip for a group. Again this year suitable recipients were identified by social workers, refuge managers and local clergy. Mothers Union arranged to pay for the hire of a coach. In the main, the coach was booked by the leader of the group who were going. As always, emphasis was placed on early booking to get the best possible deal with the bus company. This did not always happen and in one case the bus which was booked by the refuge manager, just the week before the trip, cost £100 more than groups which made an early booking. We will try to emphasise the importance of early booking again next year. Entrance fees are paid by MU and in most cases a picnic was provided by the generosity of our members. The booking form has been changed to allow for food allergies and religious restrictions to be covered. Groups from “Walking With”, who work with refugee families in Wallsend, provided their own food

Recently, a group from Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services visited the BLUE REEF Aquarium, had a picnic lunch and then enjoyed the sunny weather on Tynemouth Long Sands using the buckets and spades lent to them by MU. MU volunteers also took towels and sun cream which the mothers were invited to use for their children.

Another regular favourite for away days is a visit to Whitehouse farm near Morpeth. One of its big advantages is that it has wet weather facilities. Groups can have their picnic in the barn and there are activities throughout the day both inside and out for children and parents alike. On August 30th 2016 Rev Diana McNaughton brought a group of families from Byker. It was Diana’s second last day before retiring as vicar of St Silas. It was lovely to be able to thank her for all her work in the church and its wider community. It was also an opportunity for Gladys McColough, who came with us, to meet up with a family who had befited from an AFIA holiday two years ago.

Another mother and daughter enjoyed an “away day” treat at Tynemouth, visiting the Blue Reef aquarium, having lunch and being given a bucket and spade to enjoy the sands. Transport was paid for so that the day out could be as stress-free as possible and a real treat for both of them.

Jennifer Snowdon led a visit on Tuesday 23rd August to Blyth Ridley Park with families who are currently living in the Northumberland Women's Refuge. There was a group of twenty-one mums and children; Gladys went along too. The transport cost £40 with £16:64 being spent on hoops and balls. The use of the Friends of Ridley Park Pavilion was negotiated as free.

**Other activities.**

One area which needs more support is our World-wide links. Helen Armstrong who has organised the World wide links so well for so long would like to be replaced and I hope we can get one or two willing volunteers to take over this role. Jenny Lee sent this report emphasising the importance of one such link:

“I am delighted that I have been able to establish a link with the Mother’s Union in the Diocese of Mmpumalanga, South Africa - very close to my heart. I have visited the areas of Nelspruit and White River, which appear on their letterhead. My contact is Mrs Patricia Faith Mathe who is the Diocesan President and she is also the Deputy Chief Education Specialist, Public Examination & Assessments. The Diocese of Mmpumalanga was inaugurated in 2004. The first MU Diocesan President was elected in 2005. The diocese is a small one with three Archdeaconries and has a total membership of 750. The diocese is dominated by pensioners and unemployed mothers with some young mothers. They are in the process of finding land so that they can start a farming project to help the struggling community to find some income for their families. Our prayers for their success are vital.”

Donations to help the fight against the Ziko virus have come from running “Mosquito Drives”. Lesley Bolton and Ann Mitchell raised £142.50 with gift aided donations through a mosquito drive for Diocesan members. It was a lot of fun too.

Our members continue to make valuable contributions, including making Activity Aprons, (fiddle-pinnies), hospital bags, specialised clothes for premature babies and hats for fishermen. We have already booked Church House for the annual shoe box collection coffee morning on Friday December 2nd. It is always inspiring to see how our members work so hard to bring some Christmas cheer to those who need it most.

The items required for the shoeboxes are: Hat, scarf and gloves, socks, tee shirt, boxer shorts or knickers, toiletries (tooth brush & paste, deodorant, shampoo, soap etc), wipes, paper tissues, sweets – chocolate bar, possibly a pack of cards or puzzle book, Christmas card.

I am most grateful to those who have helped me so much this year especially Margaret Crawforth, who works so hard organising the away days and AFIA holidays. She is already planning to buy pantomime tickets for families in the women’s refuges at Christmas time.

Linda Benneworth

**Faith and Policy Report September 2016**

We look forward to our next meeting in October when we will welcome Brenda Mennear and

Barbara Bailes who will be joining us as for the first time. Brenda Mennear, who worships at St.

George’s, Cullercoats, will be taking over as Indoor Members’ Representative from January 2017,

taking over from Sheila Smith, and Barbara Bailes becomes Prayer and Spirituality Representative, taking over from Jennifer Brown. Sheila and Jennifer have done wonderful work in their respective roles and I’m sure Brenda and Barbara will maintain the tradition of commitment and diligence established by their predecessors.

Jennifer will, I’m sure, give a report about the retreat at Shepherds Dene which will take place at the end of September. As ever, she has been efficient enough to book the retreat for September 2017; however, it seems that the ‘rules’ for booking have changed and that a deposit is required so this needs to be discussed by the Trustees. We can’t know now how many will be at the next retreat so if it’s a deposit per person, then that’s difficult to assess.

I’m assuming that representatives and Branch Leaders try to ensure that all members have the

opportunity to read the monthly Faith and Policy Watch so I’m not including any information from those documents this time.

Next year, our theme is ‘Faith in action’ and I’d like us to try something that fits in with this. As

members of Mothers’ Union, along with others in our various parishes, I’m sure that we try to assist those who we find have problems or who approach us directly for help. We do our best, but we’re not experts in everything. I’m suggesting that we try to find out where we can find the nearest source of help for those who need bereavement counselling, help with addictions of various kinds, homelessness, financial problems and any other difficulties. Telephone numbers, emails and addresses of agencies which can provide expert help can be collated and be on hand so that we go directly to an appropriate source should we be approached by those in difficulties. Maybe Mothers’ Union can get this started in our churches so that our faith can be put into action as quickly as possible to assist those in need.

'To celebrate the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, we will hold a service in the Cathedral on Thursday, 1st December at mid-day, led by our new Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator, Barbara Bailes, using the yellow and purple colours associated with the campaign.  All are welcome!

Josephine J Kulke

Faith and Policy Unit Co-ordinator

**Diocesan Members Coordinators Report**

Our numbers of diocesan members have increased from last. year. We have gained two new members and have enquiries from 2 others.

We have given all Deanery leaders/contacts an updated list of Diocesan members in their Deanery. In most cases but not all they have provided a programme for each branch in their Deanery to enable Diocesan members to attend a meeting if they wished. We have provided Deanery leaders with an up to date email list of those that have this facility. We hope that Diocesan members will be invited to Deanery events.

It would be good for Diocesan members to feel more involved in the life of the Mothers’ Union.

On 9th September we held our Diocesan member’s day at Church House. We had a talk on our overseas links from Barbara Packer. We then had a mosquito drive to raise funds for mosquito nets. £116 was raised for mosquito nets and this will rise to £142. 50 when gift aid is added.

The autumn newsletter and the September Marketing newsletter has been sent to every Diocesan member.

Lesley Bolton & Ann Mitchell