

MOTHERS' UNION – NEWCASTLE DIOCESE

DIOCESAN CONSTITUTION March 2018

(first page amended September 2020)

Mothers' Union Aims and Objectives

Our aims and objectives are:

- To encourage parents in their role to develop the faith of their children
- To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service
- To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children
- To help those whose family life has met with adversity
- To promote and support married life

Mission Statement

We aim to show our Christian faith by helping the sustainable transformation of communities worldwide. We do this by helping to nurture strong relationships at all levels, promoting peace and reconciliation locally, nationally and globally.

MOTHERS' UNION PRAYER

Loving Lord

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union

as we seek to share your love

through the encouragement, strengthening

and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit,

may we be united in prayer and worship,

and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen

The following shall be observed annually as special days of prayer and thanksgiving for the Mothers' Union:

- The Feast of the Annunciation (March 25th or such other date as may be appointed by the Church for the keeping of that Festival)
- Mary Sumner Day (9th August)

All meetings of the Mothers' Union shall include a time of prayer.

DIOCESAN ORGANISATION

PATRON: The Lord Bishop of Newcastle

HONORARY CHAPLAIN/S: Appointed triennially by the President, after consultation with the Bishop – the Honorary Chaplain/s shall be entitled to participate in all meetings but shall not be entitled to vote. A second triennial can be served if agreed.

DIOCESAN TRUSTEES

The Trustees, in accordance with the Constitution, shall manage the affairs of the Mothers' Union in the Diocese. They shall meet at least twice a year. Seven shall form a quorum. The Trustees shall consist of: Chairman – Diocesan President, Vice Presidents, Co-ordinator for Diocesan Members, Diocesan Training Officer and All Deanery Leaders.

The Trustees have the power to set up teams or units as appropriate to cover areas of activity. Their coordinators shall be elected by Council, and may be Trustees. In addition, the Trustees have the power to co-opt up to three members.

The Diocesan Secretary or her/ his deputy will be in attendance to record the minutes of the meetings. The Diocesan Treasurer will also attend.

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

The Diocesan Council shall be the forum for discussion of the affairs of the Society in the Diocese and shall consist of the following:

1. Diocesan President
2. Diocesan Vice-President/s
3. Diocesan Life Vice-President/s
4. Diocesan Chaplain/s
5. Diocesan Secretary
6. Diocesan Treasurer
7. Diocesan Training Officer
8. Diocesan Unit/ Team Co-ordinators and representatives of projects
9. Deanery Leaders
10. Co-ordinator/s for Diocesan Members
11. Deanery Secretaries & Treasurers
12. Branch Leaders

The Trustees shall submit a report to each of the biannual meetings of the Diocesan Council. The Trustees shall also submit a report for the Charity Commissioners to be included with the Annual Accounts.

A person elected to fill a casual vacancy occurring among the Trustees shall serve for the remainder of the term of office for which the person they replaced was elected.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL

Elections for Council shall be held triennially and shall be carried out by nomination and voting papers.

1. **The President** shall serve 3 years, and may be re-elected for one further triennial period. Nominations for the office of President must be submitted to the Bishop and agreed by him/ her. On retirement the President will become a Life Vice-President.
2. **The Vice-President/s** shall serve 3 years, and may be re-elected for one further triennial period.
3. All members of the Council, apart from appointees, shall retire triennially and shall be eligible for re-election. However, they shall be ineligible for re-election to the same office if they have already served two triennials. (Filling a casual vacancy for less than one year does not count, but for more than one year counts as a full triennial.) They **must** then retire. The President and Council shall fill all vacancies until the next election.

METHOD OF ELECTION

Nomination papers shall be sent to each member of Diocesan Council, who may nominate one person duly qualified for each of the offices of:

1. Diocesan President
2. Two Vice-Presidents, one to represent each Archdeaconry
3. Co-ordinator for each Unit or team

Nomination papers shall include the signature of a proposer and seconder, and the signature of the nominee to demonstrate agreement to be nominated. Nomination papers shall be returned by the stipulated date, to the Diocesan Secretary.

Voting papers giving the names of the persons nominated shall be sent to each member of the Diocesan Council. They shall be returned, to the Diocesan Secretary not later than the date specified on the Voting Paper. An independent person will count all voting papers.

The Diocesan Secretary, Unit Co-ordinator of Finance & Central Services, Diocesan Treasurer, Diocesan Training Officer and Co-ordinator for Diocesan Members shall be appointed to their posts by the Trustees, who have the power to receive the resignation of these officers or to terminate their engagement.

The Diocesan Secretary and Diocesan Treasurer may receive a fee. They can participate in meetings but are not entitled to vote.

DEANERY ORGANISATION

The Deanery Leader is the leader of The Mothers' Union in a Deanery. Every Deanery Leader should be aware of his/ her/his duties **BEFORE** being admitted to office. Small Deaneries may be linked under one Deanery Leader. Please see the 'Guidelines' on page 10 for a role description.

Election of the Deanery Leader

1. Nominations shall be made by the Deanery Committee to the Diocesan President. Her/his appointment must be sanctioned by the President and the Area Dean to whom all nominations must be submitted and by whom she/he should be admitted to office.
2. If more than one nomination is received, voting papers will be sent by the Diocesan Secretary to all Branch Leaders in the Deanery. These must be filled in, and returned to the Diocesan Secretary by the date stated.

BRANCH ORGANISATION

A Parochial Branch may only be started with the consent of the Incumbent, and shall be run in agreement with him/her, and in accordance with the Diocesan Constitution.

The **BRANCH LEADER** is appointed by the Vicar of the Parish or, alternatively, nominations may be submitted to the Vicar from the Branch (or to the Area Dean in an interregnum). If more than one nomination is received which is acceptable to the Vicar or Area Dean, the Branch members shall vote. They serve a three-year term of office and may be elected for a further three years. They should then retire, as this is an official ruling for all members of Council. (See page 4, Election of Council, item 3.)

In the absence of a suitable Branch Leader, a Branch may be run by a committee, with a named contact to receive information.

Every Branch Leader should be aware of her/his duties BEFORE being admitted to office. The Vicar, or his/her deputy, in the presence of the Deanery Leader at a service in Church, or at a Branch meeting, should admit her/ him to her/ his office even if she/he has been a Branch Leader before.

For the Duties of a Branch Leader, please see 'Guidelines' on page 11.

Election

The Committee should be elected triennially, two or three retiring in rotation.

Branch Closure

Should there be a question of the closure of a branch, it is requested that this should take place only after consultation with the Parochial Church Council, and the Diocesan President, and that six months' notice of this intention should be given to the Mothers' Union Diocesan Secretary. Where possible, amalgamation with another local branch should be considered. Failing this, members may be encouraged to become Diocesan Members.

If, at the end of the six-month period, the Branch closes, the following steps should be taken:

1. The Branch Register and Minute Book must be sent for safe keeping to the Diocesan Secretary.
2. All bank accounts must be closed and the money transferred to the Diocesan Account. All account records must be sent to the Diocesan Secretary for safe keeping.
3. If, in due course, the Branch reopens, all monies and records must be returned to the new Branch Leader.
4. Members may transfer to another Branch or the Branches may amalgamate. In such circumstances the Branch name could be changed to include all names. Should this take place then the minute book, accounts and account records would be transferred to the new Branch.
5. The Banners could be paraded together. The Branch Banners should continue, with the agreement of the Incumbent, to be on display in their own Church.
6. Should an amalgamated Branch decide at any time to revert to the two original Branches, all monies at that time will be divided and the original books retained/returned by/to both Branches. The Branch in operation at that time would retain the current minute book and accounts records.
7. There is also the option of Diocesan Membership.

FINANCE

1. The Trustees shall present **True Accounts** of Income and Expenditure of the Society to the Diocesan Council at an Annual General Meeting held not later than 31st July. Audited figures previous year to 31st Dec.
2. **Auditor:** The Trustees shall elect an Auditor annually.
3. **Diocesan Cheques** There should be three signatories on bank accounts and finance related documents, two of whom must be the President and Treasurer. The third can be selected from any other current Trustee. Any two of the three can sign relevant documents and cheques.
4. The Trustees may appoint a Debit card holder.
5. **Incoming Cheques** to be made out to: *MOTHERS' UNION, NEWCASTLE DIOCESE*
6. **Subscription** An Annual Subscription is required from every member, (including Indoor Members) which should be sent to the Deanery Treasurer, who then forwards it to the Diocesan Treasurer for Central and Diocesan funds.
7. Tickets and posters advertising money-raising events **MUST** have printed on them what the money is for. **These are the requirements of the Charity Commissioners.** For information about the various funds, please see Guidelines page 13.
8. **Speakers' & Diocesan Representatives' Travelling Expenses (within the Diocese)** These are paid for out of the General Diocesan Fund, into which members' subscriptions are paid. Claims may be made to the Diocesan Treasurer on the appropriate form obtainable from her/him.
9. **Diocesan Representatives' Travelling Expenses (outside the Diocese)** Representatives need to complete a Claims Form issued by either Mary Sumner House (MSH) or the Diocese. The form from MSH should be completed and handed in at the Conference/Meeting. The form from the Diocese should be completed and returned to the Newcastle Diocesan Treasurer for reimbursement.
10. **Expenses** incurred by Deanery Officials must be met by the Deanery concerned. The Diocese must meet expenses incurred by Diocesan Officials for legitimate Diocesan events.

Charitable Appeals

Subject to the Aim, Purpose and Objects of the Society a Mothers' Union branch may support the needs of its own parish, but may not be used as a channel for charitable appeals on behalf of other Organisations, nor shall money be allocated to them from any Mothers' Union Branch, Deanery or Diocesan Funds, without the sanction of the Diocesan President who shall take advice from the Chief Executive on the legality of the proposed allocation. For the avoidance of doubt no part of the charitable funds of the Society nor of any Mothers' Union Branch, Deanery or Diocesan organisation shall be donated for a purpose that is not charitable in law.

If a branch wishes to support a project in its own parish it may only do so if the project is deemed "Charitable" and also falls within the Aim, Purpose and Objects of the Mothers' Union. For example, giving baptism gifts (charitable and 2nd Object) is allowed but buying paint (neither charitable nor Objects) is not allowed. If in doubt, the Diocesan President should be consulted.

Guidelines

These guidelines do not form a part of the Constitution, but should be read alongside it.

UNIT COMMITTEES

There shall be four Unit Committees each concerned with an area of activity or interest on behalf of the Society and each shall comprise of the following members:

Finance & Central Services Unit shall consist of the Co-ordinator, Diocesan President, Diocesan Secretary and Diocesan Treasurer.

Action & Outreach Unit shall consist of a minimum of, one Co-ordinator and three Diocesan Representatives (Worldwide/Links, Projects and AFIA)

Faith & Policy Unit shall consist of a minimum of, one Co-ordinator and three Diocesan Representatives (Prayer & Spiritual Education, Social Policy and Indoor Members' Contact)

Marketing & Public Relations Unit shall consist of a minimum of, one Co-ordinator and two Diocesan Representatives.

The Unit Committees shall meet at least twice each year. Subject to any requirements, which may be imposed by the Trustees, each Unit Committee shall regulate its activities, as it shall see fit. The Unit Committees will not utilise nor commit the resources of the Society to any undertaking or activity without authorisation from the Trustees.

Any member may apply to join the Unit Committee of their choice, with project leaders (Diocesan Representatives) being found from within the Committee or from other concerned members. Members are encouraged to contact the appropriate Unit Coordinator to seek membership of a committee.

Each unit shall report to every meeting of the Trustees.

The Diocesan President and the Diocesan Vice-President/s shall be ex-officio members of all the Diocesan Committees.

Speakers

Official Speakers for MU should be communicant members of the Church of England (or of a Church in communion with it) and be in agreement with its doctrines. They will be a member of MU and support its Aim and Objectives and be willing to take part in sharing days for Speakers in the diocese. Anyone wishing to be a speaker or who would like further information should initially contact the Training Officer.

Branches may invite Official Speakers and Diocesan Representatives without payment. (see Constitution page 7/ 8)

Duties of a Deanery Leader

1. To act as Chair of the Deanery Committee.
2. To arrange a meeting of the Deanery Committee within a month following each Diocesan Council, in order to receive the Council's recommendations and to discuss details of Deanery and Branch work.
3. To attend meetings of Mothers' Union Diocesan Council and Trustees, of which she/he is a member, or, if unavoidably prevented, to send a member of the Deanery Committee as her/his representative.
4. To inform the clergy in the Deanery of the work of Mothers' Union and, when appropriate, to endeavour to open a branch in each parish and to consider other opportunities (i.e. Residential Homes, Hospitals, etc.).
5. To ensure that all new, or revived, branches shall receive preparation by the Diocesan President, or by a deputy specially appointed by her/him, and that the Diocesan President and/or Diocesan Vice-President/s should attend the Inauguration Service.
6. To ensure that all the Branch Leaders are aware of their duties.
7. To arrange an annual Deanery Festival Service if no Diocesan Festival that year.
8. The Deanery Leader is asked to visit each branch at least once a year, and to encourage the Branch Leaders to have Branch meetings at least once a month, and to observe the Feast of the Annunciation (25th March), also known as Lady Day, and Mary Sumner Day (9th August)
9. To keep contact with Diocesan Members within their Deanery, providing them with Branch programmes and invitations to Deanery events, as appropriate.
10. To establish a Deanery Fund for expenses of Deanery organisation.
11. To be prompt in passing on to Branch Leaders any communications sent to her/him for distribution.
12. To receive and acknowledge the Annual Report Form from the Branch Leaders in each Branch, and to forward these Reports to the Branch Report Recorder once a year, by the date agreed upon, accompanied by a Branch Programme for the current year, together with the subscription and any other monies due.
13. To fill in the Deanery Report Form which she/he will receive annually, and to **return it promptly** and, in accordance with the instructions thereon, to the Branch Report Recorder.

14. To ensure the keeping of the Deanery Register, Minute Book and Account Book. In the event of her/his resignation, these books must be sent to the Diocesan Secretary until a successor be appointed.

15. To inform the Diocesan Secretary, in writing, as soon as possible of all changes of Office Holders within the Deanery, giving names, addresses, post-codes, telephone numbers and email addresses.

The Deanery Committee shall consist of:

1. The Deanery Leader
2. Secretary
3. Treasurer
4. All Branch Leaders

There may also be

5. One or two Representatives from each Branch appointed by the Branch Committee.
6. Co-opted members, by invitation.

Duties of a Branch Leader

1. To form a Branch Committee which shall assist in organising the work of the Branch.
2. To ensure the keeping of the Official Register of all members, the collection of Annual Subscriptions and to have the Branch Funds duly audited and presented to the Branch AGM early in the New Year.
3. To carry out the regulations with regard to the three months' preparation for membership; to give Instructions on the Objects of the Mothers' Union to those awaiting admission.
4. To arrange with the Incumbent of the parish for:
 - The admission, in church or at a Branch meeting, of new members.
 - The observance of the Wave of Prayer (29th November – 2nd December)
 - For additional services at a time suitable for members.
5. To arrange, with the Branch Committee, for a programme of meetings and services during the year.
6. To promote Mothers' Union publications, such as Families First and Families Worldwide, and distribute copies of our own Journal and emailed Newsletters.
7. To commend any members leaving the Branch to the Branch Leader of the parish to which they are moving. If moving to another Diocese, information should be channelled through the Newcastle Diocesan President.

8. To fill in the Branch Report Form which she/he will receive annually and return it promptly in accordance with the instructions thereon, to her/his Deanery Leader.
9. To notify her/his Deanery Leader and the Diocesan Secretary at once if she/he should resign her/his post.

Expenses incurred by Branch Officials must be met by the Branch concerned.

The **Branch Committee** shall consist of:

1. Branch Leader
2. Members to the ratio of at least one to every 10 in the branch.
3. Secretary (to be appointed or elected from the Committee Members).
4. Treasurer (to be appointed or elected from the Committee Members).

The Committee should undertake the following work:

1. To keep members informed of all aspects of the Society, both Worldwide and at home.
2. To arrange Branch Programmes to further the Aim, Purpose and Objects of Mothers' Union, which includes service to the community, while maintaining the spirituality of the Society.
3. All meetings of the Society shall include a time of prayer.
4. To maintain contact with any informal links, including Worldwide links.
5. To visit all sick members and keep contact with Indoor Members.
6. The Committee may appoint one or two Representatives of the Branch to the Deanery Committee.

Notice that, where a **Branch is being run by committee**, the roles of Branch Leader may be shared among the committee. There should be a named contact and a named representative to Council: the Diocesan Secretary should be informed of both names.

Indoor Members In general Indoor Members are expected to pay an annual subscription. In some cases, where the member is not able to deal with money, the Branch may undertake this for them. Otherwise she/he may be listed on the report form as still associated with the Branch but not paying a membership subscription.

Commendation If a member moves to a different area, please try to put them in touch with a branch in their new locality. The Diocesan Secretary can let you have a letter of commendation.

Banners Existing banners belong to Mothers' Union rather than to the Church. When a Branch is closed, the banner may be kept in church, with the Vicar's permission. Should the Branch re-open, responsibility for the banner reverts to the Branch.

The design for a **new banner** should be approved by the President and the appropriate Vice President.

Commissioning Diocesan, Deanery and Branch office-holders are usually commissioned at a service in church.

Statements to the media should be authorised by the Diocesan President.

Financial Guidelines

Money raised for a specific purpose must be sent to the Diocesan Treasurer immediately after the money-raising event. Tickets /posters advertising money-raising events **MUST** have printed on them what the money is for. THESE ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CHARITY COMMISSIONERS. If in doubt about the cause, please ask advice from the President.

Voluntary contributions can be made to any of these funds, through the Diocesan Treasurer; cheques should be made out to 'Mothers' Union, Newcastle Diocese', and marked on the back with the name of the intended fund:

1. **Diocesan Fund** Voluntary contributions to this fund help defray Diocesan expenses, such as travel and subsistence.
2. **M.U. Britain and Ireland Fund** helps augment any project work which requires more finance than the Diocese can provide.
3. **Overseas Fund** including Emergency and Relief Funds
4. **Other funds** are nominated from time to time to meet particular needs

Sundry Information

Long Service Cards (usually 25 years or over) can be obtained from the President

Commissioning cards can be obtained from the President

Membership cards can be purchased from MUE

Name badges can be obtained from the Diocesan Secretary

Publications

Families First is published 4 times a year, and is posted to those who subscribe to it.

Families Worldwide is published twice a year, and is free to all members.

Newcastle Diocesan M.U. Journal is published twice a year, and is free to all members.

Newcastle Diocesan M.U. Newsletter is emailed twice a year, in between Journals, to all Branch Leaders and contacts: they are asked to print (or email) a copy for each member, and are free to recoup the cost of this from the Diocesan Treasurer.