**Unit Reports for Council Meeting on Friday 31stMarch 2017**

**Action and Outreach Report Spring 2017**.

MU members generously continue to provide hats and scarves for the Fishermen’s Mission. Our members also continue to make Activity aprons and twiddle muffs for dementia patients. Many were delivered just before Christmas. We also continue to take hospital bags and tiny clothes for premature babies.

This winter, for the first time, we were able to support Changing Lives, the charity which works with some of the most vulnerable members of society. MU funds helped to pay for a Christmas party, and Christmas gifts were bought for the residents of some of the refuges. Iceland and Morrison vouchers were given to mothers in other refuges. Selection boxes were also provided.

We provided “Pamper Days” for the residents of the refuges, either in the health and beauty departments of colleges (where a group lunch was also provided), or where staff from the college came to work in the refuge. Child care was also provided. A very generous donation from one individual provided a significant proportion of the money for this. North Northumberland had a pamper day for eight adults and one teenager.

We are planning to provide Easter eggs for the children in the refuges at Easter. and contribute towards an afternoon celebrating Mothering Sunday for vulnerable women whose children are in care.

In 2017, a group of eight adults and fourteen children from “Walking With” had a visit to a local pantomime. MU paid for the refreshments

Seven AFIA holiday bookings have already been made for this year. Three have been booked for the Easter holidays and four for July. One large caravan that sleeps 8 is for a family of 7 where the father has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Our latest project is in a response to a request from the north of the county to provide backpacks containing toiletries and other essentials for some of the prisoners being released from Acklington prison.

Another new project in Blyth called “ Up our Street aims to help more people in the local community.

Plans are in hand to provide volunteers at St. Silas Church on Shields Road Byker to work alongside adult learners whose first language is not English so that they can qualify in social care, thus enabling them to gain employment.

Another new idea is being developed, Benwell branch is taking over responsibility for World Wide links rather than leaving to one individual. At last Helen Armstrong may be able to take a well earned rest. We send her our grateful thanks. Ruth Wood will be the new contact name. Her email is npworrchida@tiscali.co.uk . This seems to be an excellent idea and we wish it every success.

**Linda Benneworth - Action & Outreach Co-ordinator**

**Marketing Unit Report March 2017**

**Web site launch** – Margaret Weaver launched the new MU website in Church House in February. She has worked very closely with Church Edit who have helped with the design. Margaret gave a presentation about how to navigate the site and encourages anyone who thinks they may have suitable content to get in touch. weaver.marg@btinternet.com

**Twitter** – We have some technical issues at the moment but hope to resolve them soon.

**Face Book** – Lesley is growing Facebook and is looking for more content. If anyone is planning a sponsor event please contact Lesley so that it can be promoted and we can offer a place to donate through our Virgin Giving page. bolton66meadway@sky.com

**Journal** – The December Journal was well received with some high quality, interesting content. We need stories with interesting photographs to keep coming as the Journal is a vehicle to sell MU as well as inform. The new way to distribute the Journal to branches worked very well by fitting distribution alongside a diocesan event. We will repeat the process with the May Journal, linking into a Diocesan Members event on Friday 19th May at Church House. Branches should ensure someone is allocated the task of picking up their Journals.

**Newsletter** – We have a new Newsletter Editor, Daniel Doran from St Peter’s Monkseaton. Daniel has produced a very high quality publication that is attractive and relevant. The next newsletter is due in September, please send all content to me.

**Marketing meeting** – The Marketing meeting took place in October with seven people attending. Social media and publications seem to be very established but promoting MU at branch level through talk and event support is very poor. There are no requests for help to grow in the pipeline. We hope to host an event led by staff from Mary Sumner House which will concentrate on growth.

**Lynne Craggs - Marketing Co-ordinator**

**Diocesan Members Coordinators Report**

Our numbers of diocesan members have gone up slightly from last. year. We have had one member who has died and one resignation. One member has become an indoor member and one has returned to a branch. On the plus side we have gained five new members. There are now 53 Diocesan members.

All Deanery leaders/ contacts have an updated list of Diocesan members in their Deanery. We hope that they will be able to provide a programme for each branch in their Deanery to enable Diocesan members to attend a meeting if they wished. We have also 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 may be that many will be unable to attend but it would be good for Diocesan members to feel more involved in the life of the Mothers’ Union.

We plan to have 3 meetings this year.

Our first meeting was on 18th March. Linda Benneworth, action and outreach coordinator gave an excellent presentation on all the projects going on in the diocese and Barbara updated us on the work of Mothers’ Union followed by a delicious faith lunch. This year we are having an extra meeting on 19th May. All unit coordinators or their representatives will be giving a short presentation of the work of their units. It will be a really good opportunity to get the big picture of the work of the Mothers’ union in the Diocese. Journals and Families worldwide will be available on that day.

Our 3rd meeting is on 16th September. Details to be arranged.

We believe diocesan members have a big part to play in the life of the Mothers’ Union even if infirm and unable to attend meetings.

Their prayers are a great support.

**Lesley Bolton & Ann Mitchell – Diocesan Members Co-ordinators**

**Financial and Central Services Report February 2017**

Thank you to the 95% of Branches who completed their forms in time for Paying In Day. They made the long job of recording details for the Diocese very much easier. A number of reports also came by post and were soon into the system. However the last forms arrived on 19thFebruary which meant the whole report could not be finished until they were included. We are just in time for the date MSH sets when more information has to be recorded and sent to them.

In general our numbers have gone down through death and resignations. We have a loss of around 60 members. There are now 10 Deaneries with 49 Branches. Some of the Deaneries have been put together. We have some branches in abeyance and thankfully some possible new branches. Of our membership we have 13 ordained people, 19 men, a large number of Diocesan Members and a group of Friends.

It has been mentioned that I do not give you enough warning about Paying in Day so I hope this will help. Next year, Paying in Day will be, as usual, on the first Thursday of the month, 1stFebruary 2018. This is very early, so all Deanery Collecting days and Deanery meetings will have to be early in 2018. I suggest you give this some thought and work out well in advance when your branch and Deanery can meet. It may help if the tributes are collected in the last three months of the year 2017. All the forms will be ready for distribution in October.

Health and Safety. Please make a check of your meeting place and entrances as on the Safety Check List. I have spare copies if you have mislaid them.

**Anne Lloyd – Finance & Central Services Co-ordinator**

**Faith and Policy Report February 2017**

I continue to be impressed by the work done by Mothers’ Union representatives in this country and worldwide, so it seems appropriate to give a summary of the plans for 2017. The following was in the December edition of ‘Faith and Policy Watch’ so you’ll all have read it! However, it does no harm to give a reminder.

* We will review the format and content of Faith & Policy Watch, in consultation with members, to ensure that it is an effective resource
* Mothers’ Union will have a greater impact at UNCSW with a larger delegation, following the introduction of an open application process for members to attend
* We will take forwards our work on sex and relationships education, following analysis of responses to our questionnaire sent out earlier this year.
* We will continue lobbying against charges for using the Child Maintenance Service
* We will work with new and existing partnerships to strengthen our public affairs work
* We will develop our global advocacy focus on gender, and strengthen our advocacy work with members throughout the world, including through the Church and Community Mobilisation Process.

UNCSW is the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

A huge workload, but it will be done, or if not completed, then it will be ongoing.

The Faith and Policy Unit met at the cathedral on 23.02.17. We had a lively and interesting discussion ranging around

* the initiative about baptism which is being sent to all parish clergy
* our response to the global ‘Light a candle’ for the 16 Days of Activism’
* the launch of ‘Labelled For Life’ a booklet which gives advice and support to parents and family members about managing the influence and impact of the commercial world on children
* following from our last meeting, our list of useful organisations which can be used to get help quickly for those who seek our assistance and which has been compiled by our secretary, Alma Miller
* the launch of the new website for Newcastle Diocese – we like it!
* we should aim to publicise the work of Mothers’ Union in our respective churches.

It was a most enjoyable and useful meeting and anyone who would like to join us will be most welcome. The date of the next meeting will be in October; the date will be confirmed nearer the time.

Thanks were given to Alma for the work she’s done relating to the list of organisations which we hope will be accepted by all churches in our diocese; work towards achieving this aim is proceeding. Barbara Bailes was also thanked for preparing this year’s Service Booklet, for organising the retreat for this year and for taking the service on our Service Day last December.

There are changes at Mary Sumner House which could affect Faith and Policy Units. The following was sent in January to co-ordinators and other relevant contacts.

*As we mentioned before Christmas, there is no Faith & Policy Watch this month. If you receive the monthly e-newsletter from Mothers’ Union, you will also know that we are evaluating Faith & Policy Watch, and the best way that we can communicate the faith and policy work of the organisation; and therefore there will not be an edition in February.*

*We are also going through some personnel changes at Mary Sumner House. As you know, Lucinda Hasell, Head of Faith & Policy, left Mothers’ Union before Christmas, and her post is yet to be recruited. I too will be leaving Mothers’ Union at the end of January. In the meantime, we would be grateful for your bearing with us, as the capacity of the team will be considerably limited for the immediate future. Please do continue to contact Catherine Kyte, Faith Support Officer for any faith related matters, and Rose Wright, Campaigns and Social Policy Officer for any policy and campaigns related matters.*

*Thank you to you all for your hard work in your dioceses and your commitment to the faith and policy work of Mothers’ Union, you have all done some magnificent work – 16 Days of Activism last year in particular really highlighted to me the power you all have to create change, at the local, national and global levels. I have had the pleasure of getting to know a number of you over the past ten years, and Mothers’ Union will always have a very special place in my heart.*

As you can read, there may be changes which could affect ‘Faith and Policy Watch’. I hope that we can continue to receive updates, in some form, about the important work done by Mothers’ Union representatives.

**Josephine J Kulke - Faith and Policy Co-ordinator**