**Mothers’ Union General Meeting**

**Edinburgh 2017**

The meeting opened with worship led by the Bishop of Edinburgh Rt. Rev’d John Armes. The Theme for the meeting was Peace and Reconciliation; the Bishop began with a Reflection and Prayer for Peace which set the tone of the day.

The opening address was given by the Worldwide President, Lynne Temby; when she welcomed all those present. She told us of some the visits she had made over the past year and how impressed she was with the Literacy programme’s success; she felt that among its many benefits, that Literacy is a tool for peace. Lynne explained about the new Constitution and how we must explore together for the best future for the Mothers’ Union. We are a unique organisation who with God’s help can overcome many challenges.

In her presentation the Chief Executive Bev Jullien explained how the Mothers’ Union makes a difference in so many ways; Parenting programmes as far apart as Jamaica and Guyana, challenging domestic violence, embracing difference in relationship, responding to crises (such as the Grenfell Tower disaster), training those helping refugees and connecting with church and communities.

She said that there would be a new website in 2018.

Fund raising had been a success story, the aim had been to raise £1.4 million in the 140th anniversary year but this target was exceeded and over £1.5 million was raised. This total was raised in many diverse ways, MU members abseiled, walked, climbed mountains and Bev herself jumped out of a plane!

Our Keynote Speaker was Canon Sarah Snyder the Archbishop of Canterbury’s advisor in Reconciliation. Her theme of course was Peace and Reconciliation, and restoring what has been broken. She used the quotation from 2 Corinthians 5, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God.”

She challenged us with many examples where people need to be reconciled and asked us to think of any way in which we personally may be a stumbling block to others in our church or community.

Bev spoke again in the afternoon and made a call for action “We, a global movement of 4 million members, many of whom have experienced directly the impact of conflict on the lives of women and children, and are actively involved in peacebuilding, call for women’s voices to be heard, and their needs represented, in all areas and at all levels of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.”

The closing Worship was led by Rt Rev’d Andrew Proud, MU Central Chaplin, he continued the Theme of Ambassadors of Christ taking his message of Peace and Reconciliation into the world.

There was an area set aside as the Community Hub, where there were exhibits of various projects in which MU members are involved. Among them an “Exhibition of Shoes”, a project in Scotland which works within prisons to help offenders see what it’s like in the victim’s shoes. AFIA , 16 Days of Activism, “Stories on the Streets”, pilot projects in the UK learning how communities can work to support each other with our members, and Hat-Te-Bah (place of safety), how Mothers’ Union is working with partners to support refugees facing a new culture.

These were very interesting and when viewed before the meeting and during the lunch break, provoked a lot of discussion among members.

The General Meeting is a time to learn about the latest plans for the Mothers’ Union and to be challenged to think about who we are and where we are going and to pray and praise God together. However it is also a time to meet old friends and to make new ones in our Mothers’ Union family.

Sheila Walker