

**A letter from the President**

Dear Fellow-member

I am writing to you as Lent begins – a time to re-examine our way of life, as we prepare for the joy of Easter. Thanks to all of you who have cared for each other during this difficult year, and have renewed your membership of Mothers' Union, showing your faith in our fellowship and outreach.

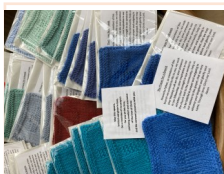
**Diocesan Council and AGM** on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April at 10 a.m. is open to all members: your Branch Leader will receive the Zoom link for those with internet access, and a telephone number so that you can join by phone if you wish. We will look at all that we have achieved during 2020, especially to help those particularly hit by the pandemic, and at plans for the future - as well as hearing from Carol Butler, our Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. Do consider attending!

**Election time!** During the course of this year, triennial elections will take place for all M.U. elected positions – starting with Diocesan President (shortly after Council), and ending with Branch Leaders in the Autumn. Nomination papers and role descriptions will come to Branch Leaders and other members of Council. Since no officer may serve in the same role for more than two 3-year periods, we are looking for new volunteers!

With love and prayers for you and your family this Lent and Easter time



*Barbara*



Recently 'prayer squares' like this were made and sent with prayer cards to all members of St Francis' church MU and some of the church congregation. The pattern is available on line from MU.

Jackie Moore

Celebrating Easter 2021 at Holy Saviour's Church, Tynemouth. Help us celebrate Easter this year. Join in by:

Making and decorating an Easter bonnet.

Or decorating a paste egg.

Or creating an Easter tree.

Then send a photo to [Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com](mailto:Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com) by Monday 29th March.

All entries will be included in the church's virtual Easter Festival. By submitting a photograph, you are giving permission for it to be used on the church's website and social media pages.

[www.holysaviours.org.uk](http://www.holysaviours.org.uk)

**A new and "different" branch for Newcastle**

On November 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 MU in Newcastle Diocese opened a new branch. This is the first branch to open on Zoom, after 6 months of preparation also meeting on Zoom. This branch will always meet on-line and is discussion / project based. We have 11 members including branch leader Sylvia Hickey.

Our first project is "Adopt a Refuge" and we will be supplying the basic necessities for mothers and children who arrive at a Refuge with little or nothing. We meet the last Friday of the month at 7.30pm. on Zoom. If you are interested in finding out more, contact e-mail: [billandsylviahickey@btinternet.com](mailto:billandsylviahickey@btinternet.com)

**26<sup>th</sup> March 7.30 pm A service for Lady Day.**

First Internet Branch invite you all to join them for a short celebration of Lady Day. Please note the date; this is the normal branch meeting day. The Zoom link including a phone number will reach all branch leaders and trustees at the beginning of that week

**Diocesan Eucharist Saturday May 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 at 11.00am**

This service will go out on Zoom, the COVID situation remains too uncertain to plan it any other way. It will take the form of a Eucharist but with a Spiritual Communion. Nearer the time Sylvia Hickey will send out suggestions as to how we can still come together at that part of the service. The Zoom link will also be sent, **this must be shared with Mothers' Union members only and not passed to anyone else.** The service will be hosted by St Nicholas Gosforth (as planned for 2020). The celebrant will be the Rev Jane Natrass Vicar of St Nicholas and Area Dean, Central Deanery. The preacher will be our Central Chaplain, the Rt. Rev. Emma Ineson, Bishop of Penrith. We rarely have the opportunity to hear or see our Central Chaplain, but Zoom affords us the ability to share fellowship with anyone from far and wide, a real bonus.

Don't forget, if you don't use Zoom you will still be able to join in by telephone, the numbers will be sent with the Zoom link.



**CHRISTMAS GIFTS for the NORTHUMBERLAND WOMEN'S REFUGE**

Christmas 2020 was like nothing we have experienced before, nothing we had done previously was easy. The MU branch at St Cuthbert's Blyth normally supports the Northumberland Refuge so this year members gave cash donations which branch leader Jennifer Snowdon converted to suitable gifts such as hats, scarves, books, chocolate, extra-special toiletries. This made a huge difference to the families involved.

Some sad information: in the week before Christmas there were only three available spaces in women's refuges in the whole of the country. Food for thought!

## “Unmute”

During lockdown many of us have been very grateful for the opportunity to be able to talk with one another via Zoom. We have been able to hold meetings, pass on information and generally keep in touch with one another. We can listen to talks and then ask questions without leaving the comfort of our warm dry homes in the most inclement weather. Some groups are able to hold their branch meetings via Zoom. Some can hold prayer meetings. There is now a list of MU speakers who can come and talk to your members on important issues. The list of these speakers is available from Sandra Davison and branch leaders. Why don't you let the rest of us know of some of your innovative Zoom successes? You could put it on the web page.



## An update on Action and Outreach projects February 2021.



The Fishermen's Mission in North Shields Even though we can't meet up, it is wonderful to learn that our members are still helping to support vulnerable groups throughout the lockdown. At Christmas, Margaret Crawforth took warm thermal hats and biscuits for the fishermen at the fishermen's mission in North Shields. Since then we have heard of the hardship faced by the families of local fishermen. The centre itself is also in need of a tumble drier to help the overseas fishermen as they come to use the facilities at the centre. Generous donations from Mothers' Union members will allow a new tumble drier to be bought and some supplies bought for the fishermen's families as the need arises.

## Freshstart backpacks for prisoners February 2021

Norma Willmott is still taking backpacks for some of the prisoners who are released from prison in Acklington. The problem for these prisoners is that they may have nowhere to go after discharge and, if they are banned by the courts to return to their previous location, they may be leaving with virtually nothing and not knowing where they will find accommodation (perhaps a hostel). This situation is much worse on a Friday or weekend, as by the time they reach their destination the probation and/or social security offices may be closed. MU were asked to help this relatively small group by providing them with a backpack containing a change of clothes and basic toiletries to tide them over until they get help at their destination. The pack itself is important, as all they are given by the prison is a black plastic sack. Whilst lockdown has made the usual collection of items to go in the backpacks very difficult, Norma has still managed to buy and fill the packs using cash donated by MU members. This year Norma has provided 18 packs for the prison. On behalf of the newly released prisoners, thank you.

## MU HELP IN ADVERSITY

The Mothers' Union is ready to help those whose family life has met with adversity.

Recently we were asked for assistance by a Domestic Abuse Charity. We were pleased to be able to assist in buying carpets for a client who had been settled in a new home with few home comforts.



Here is the list of the most needed things for the backpacks:

- Hand towels and face cloths
- Shower gel and soap
- Shaving gel or foam
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Tooth paste and brushes
- Boxers
- T-shirts
- Black jogging pants (NOT grey as that is what they wear in prison!).

Linda Benneworth

## Calendar of Events

### March

- 12<sup>th</sup> Trustees meet by Zoom 10 a.m.
- 26<sup>th</sup> Lady Day Service by Zoom 7.30 p.m.

### April

- 16<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Council & AGM by Zoom
- 17<sup>th</sup> Friends' Meeting and AGM 10 a.m.
- 30<sup>th</sup> Copy date for Summer Journal

### May

- 15<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Eucharist by Zoom 11 a.m.
- 31<sup>st</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup> Diocesan Retreat, leaders Jennie & Malcolm Jones

### June

- 11<sup>th</sup> Trustees meet by Zoom 10 a.m.

### July

- 1<sup>st</sup> A&O and F&P meeting by Zoom 10 am – 12 noon
- 10<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Festival

### September

- 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering accessible to all by Zoom

## February 2021 Support for The People's Kitchen.

As I sit here with the snow gently falling outside, I thought it would be a good time to thank all Mothers' Union members who so generously support the work of the People's Kitchen. I hope you don't mind but I have listed all the item of clothing which you bought for those using the kitchen. As the manager wrote, it truly is an impressive list and will be really appreciated on these cold snowy days and nights.

My thanks and theirs,

Linda Benneworth

This is a list of the items of clothing that we were able to purchase with the generous donation that the Mothers' Union sent to The People's Kitchen:

23 pairs of men's trainers, 10 fleeces, 10 sweatshirts, 5 jumpers, 15 parkas, 3 pairs of jeans, 30 t-shirts, 30 pairs of joggers, all in a variety of sizes.

That is an impressive list of clothes! We have been able to select the items that we need and give our friends new, warm clothing and new trainers. Thank you for your generosity.