

The Journal



Walking the Branches in West Newcastle

Winter
2021

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Charity number 249971

Diocese of Newcastle

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DIOCESAN COUNCIL LIVE MEETING

FRIDAY 8th October was the first 'in person' Diocesan Council meeting since lockdown and it was good to have 45 members join together in person with others on zoom. Our chaplain Sarah Moon led our opening prayers. The meeting followed our normal format with reports to give information on the current work of the Mothers' Union and an opportunity for members to ask questions. I have collated some of the important points.

Thanks went to Deanery and Branch leaders for the variety of ways they kept in touch with members during lockdown.

Barbara introduced her successor Mrs Margy Tasker-Brown and new vice presidents Anne Cairns (Lindisfarne) and Anne Blight (Northumberland) alongside Revd Anne Marr, the new chaplain. Thanks were expressed to all retiring trustees and a thanksgiving service will be held on 3rd December at St Nicholas church, Gosforth. On the same morning we have arranged for deanery leaders to be able to collect copies of The Journal for their

branches; also the shoe boxes and gifts for the refuge will be blessed and handed over, and this will be followed by mid-day prayers and lunch.

Subscriptions for 2022 will be £27. In the new edition of Connected there is a direct debit form for those who would prefer to pay in this way. We are all encouraged to do this as it reduces work at a local level.

The Annual Gathering was on YouTube this year giving us all a chance to share the occasion. It is still available if you missed it.

The MU theme for 2022 is 'The time for Transformation is Now'.

June Houghton our Provincial President was our speaker on the night and gave us a 'Birds Eye View of the Province'. She likened each diocese to varieties of birds such as Starlings, very busy and noisy, and wrens, quiet but very active. Newcastle was described as wise owls, with their eyes open, ready to see and respond to needs. She told us what we achieved was exceptional. Let's see if we can keep it up for the future.

Jackie Moore





From the Diocesan President

Dear Friend

Greetings to you and your family as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus! – the incarnation – when God became man, accepting the vulnerability of a baby. ‘He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.’ (Philippians 2: 6). His vulnerability led eventually to his death for us. Our joy in the infant Jesus should be joined with awe at all he accepted for our sake.

Throughout his life, in his vulnerability, he reached out to the most vulnerable in society – the disabled, the poor, the abused and despised in the society of his day.

What a powerful incentive for us, in Mothers' Union, as we reach out to prisoners, to the homeless, to refugees, to those affected by domestic abuse, particularly during the pandemic. It has been a joy to be able to offer holidays and other gifts, to support refugees in their work, and lessen the strain for families in need. During COVID it has been good to expand our work to include story

sacks for young children suffering from the isolation of the pandemic, as well as welcome packs for abused families fleeing to a refuge, leaving their belongings behind. It has also been important to support our own members, especially those living on their own. Members have benefitted from online ‘coffee mornings’ and from phone calls and doorstep visits. Thank you for all you have achieved during this difficult time, by looking outwards when it was tempting to become self-absorbed.

I have felt privileged to lead our Diocesan Mothers' Union over the last six years. It has been a collaborative effort! I would like to pay tribute to all those who have worked with me, on the Trustee Board, as well as at a more local level. Thank you for your support and encouragement! It has been a pleasure to visit Branches and take part in worship and celebrations with you. Now I feel confident that Margy Tasker-Brown and her team are in a



good position to continue and expand the work we do.

As we continue to meet together in person, I am sure that we will reflect on what we have learned during these last months – perhaps with the help of the **‘Reimagining Mothers’ Union’** questions (see the article later in this issue) – and welcome change where that is helpful. The theme for 2022 is **‘The time for Transformation is now’** – or just **‘Transformation now’**, and resources on the central Mothers' Union website will help us to embrace the possibilities.

With love, prayers and best wishes as you celebrate with your families, and as Mothers' Union move forward together in mutual support and vision
Barbara

DIOCESAN EUCHARIST 15 MAY 2021

Like so many things necessity decreed that this was a service with a difference but, although it went out on Zoom, many who contacted me after agreed with me that it was a lovely service. We were encouraged to join in the responses in the quiet of our own homes and President Barbara read a lovely Reflection at Communion time which joined us together spiritually as we were unable to be together in church.

My sincere thanks go to Rev. Jane Nattrass who prepared and celebrated the service for us, to Jackie and Linda who provided prayers and the reading, and a member of the host church St Nicholas Gosforth, who read the Gospel.

We were extremely fortunate to have as our preacher our Central Mothers' Union Chaplain Bishop Emma Ineson. She based her sermon on the Gospel reading of the day John Chapter 17 Vs 6-19 which has been described by Bishop Temple as an especially hard passage to interpret and is very repetitious in its wording.

Bishop Emma focused on the word “Given” to illustrate her key message. Every human being is a gift of love by God to his son. In return we must also give through love of him to one another. She noted that MU is also a “giver” through all that it does both at home and worldwide, we who are given so much must also give to others in return through our love of God and his love of us.

Bishop Emma reminisced about her own loving and giving grandmother who spoilt her with sweets and hugs, small but hugely important memories of her own blessed childhood. Love must also be the prime reason for giving, we can only give love if we recognise that love itself comes from and through Christ.

The service was followed by opening breakout rooms. We were all put in small groups selected at random, it was lovely just to chat informally with one another.

My sincere thanks to all who helped to make 15 May special by taking part or by just being there!

Sylvia Hickey – VP

From Margy Tasker-Brown

MY early years were spent growing up on a hill farm in the Coquet Valley in Northumberland before moving to the home farm at Flotterton near Thropton.

From Hepple Village School I progressed to becoming a boarder at Polam Hall in Darlington and was honoured to be appointed Head Girl during my final year.

I fulfilled my desire to become a Primary School teacher and taught for 27 years in Northumberland's Church Schools before retiring in 2009. Relishing my time as a teacher, embracing new opportunities and facing exciting challenges year by year, I was privileged to lead and support successful and vibrant school teams whose outstanding achievements were given the highest accolade by Ofsted.

Mothers' Union has been part of my life from a very early age, my Grandmother a member in Usworth and my Mother Enrolling Member for Hepple. Whilst holidaying from school and college I helped with events and fund-raising; I remember standing for hours cooking breakfasts for families who attended Rothbury Music Festival. I have always been a contributor to my local community, sitting on committees and as a stalwart Churchwarden.

My life has been enriched by my family and grandchildren, it is a joy watching them gain skills and become useful members of society.

Since my retirement I have been able to commit more fully to Mothers' Union in a variety of roles within the organisation, as Branch Leader, Deanery Leader and a Member of the Trustees. What has become abundantly clear during the recent pandemic is the importance of communication and new technology; we must use it to become even more effective. We are a remarkable body of people who accomplish so much in support of family life, and we must grasp every chance to further our goals.

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Meet my two Vice Presidents

ANNE BLIGHT - VP Northumberland

Anne (right) grew up, a miner's daughter, in Choppington, where church was always part of her life. Having moved to Westerhope in 1969 she has worshipped in St John's Whorlton ever since. She married Jim and together they raised a daughter and a son, and enjoyed five grandchildren; sadly Jim died in 2006.

Anne joined, and enjoyed, the Young Wives club at church, became a member of MU and has served as Branch Leader and Deanery Leader for Newcastle West.

Anne has attended national Conferences, now Gatherings, and also delights in our Retreats at Shepherds Dene. From being shy when young, she has developed the gift of being approachable and her enthusiasm for MU shines through.



ANNE CAIRNS - VP Lindisfarne

Anne (below) spent her childhood in the village of Rochester, roaming the hills and paddling in the river Rede. She attended the local Presbyterian church, and visited Christian conferences, even a talk by the 60s Evangelist Billy Graham.

She spent forty one years as a nurse, and ended up as a Modern Matron.

Married to Malcolm, they have two sons Christopher and Benjamin; they have lived in Ovingham for over 37 years and now enjoy their retirement

with more time for the children and grandchildren.

MU has become an important part of Anne's life and she is very keen to help us move forward.

I look forward to working closely with them and all you marvellous people, taking Mothers' Union on its next steps along our global path.

Margy



Passion and compassion

HAVE just spent a joyous, if a little windswept, week on Iona. I have been a member of the community for 20 years and associated with it for much longer. It is an ecumenical community of women and men dispersed across the country and across the world. We are linked with a common desire to see the justice called for by the prophets and declared by Jesus become a real and present reality for all the Earth.



We spent time together in the Abbey for the first time in five years, the restoration of the living quarters finishing around the time Covid-19 restrictions took hold; so there was a sense of joy at returning and sorrow at the friends we will not see again in that place.

The highlight of the week, apart from the awe-inspiring scenery and daily worship in the abbey, was a panel session with Douglas Alexander (former MP and great friend of the community) Ruth Harvey (current leader of the

community) and James Macintyre (who is volunteering on Iona while on sabbatical from his job with Christian Aid as a journalist). We were skilfully led in a thought-provoking conversation around the place of people of faith in the current times.

- How do we respond to the terrible events we see around us and hear on the news?
- How do we play our part in wider civic society?
- How can we make a difference in the world?

We talked about finding ways to disagree well, respect other people's viewpoints and perhaps most importantly to always strive to see the image of God in all we encounter, those who agree with us and those who hold opposing views.

This is where my title comes in; Douglas encouraged us to always be **passionate** about what we believe in and to strive to be **compassionate** to all those we encounter.

Over the last three years I have seen this lived out among members of the Mothers' Union here in Newcastle Diocese. The compassion shown to those in great need in our communities: young men leaving prison, women at risk of trafficking, the homeless, all those affected by Gender based violence. That compassion rooted in prayer and expressed through practical action, during one of the most trying times we have ever faced.

Please don't ever lose your passion for justice, your passion for helping those on the margins of society, because your compassion and passion gives me hope for the future of the church here in Newcastle Diocese and in every community throughout the world the Mothers' Union is found.

Thank you for welcoming me as your chaplain over the last three years and I look forward to continuing my journey as a member for many years to come.

Sarah

Other new office-holders

It is always encouraging when, at the end of a period of office in one role, someone takes on a different 'hat', learning new skills. So, for the next Triennium:

Linda Benneworth will be our Marketing Unit Coordinator, and, as such, a Trustee

Sheila Walker will take on the newly created Trustee role of Safeguarding Officer

Sylvia Hickey will become our Diocesan Members' Coordinator, also a Trustee role

Barbara Packer will be Journal Editor

Several of the Deanery Leader roles had not been filled by the time this Journal was compiled, as this is usually agreed during the Autumn. There are also a few other roles available! Please ask if you would like to be more involved!

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Helen Cooper will become Deanery Leader Alnwick, Bamburgh, Glendale, Norham

I first became a member of the Mothers' Union Amble Branch in 2008, following in the footsteps of my mum Kate Watling (I'm sure some of you will still remember her! And she followed her mum as a member, as did my uncle – one of the first men to join).

After marry Revd Barrie Cooper, and following his appointment as Assistant Priest to Alnmouth, Lesbury, Longhoughton and Howick, I joined Alnwick and Lesbury MU. I was Branch Secretary before swapping roles and taking over as Branch Leader. At the same service, Barrie also became a member, and that was the last church service we had before lockdown. So, challenging times ahead from the start. But that's what Mothers' Union is all about. I am so proud to support MU as we move forward into the challenges of our next chapter.

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Revd Anne E Marr will be our Chaplain from January 2022



I am married to Revd Derek Marr and am a Mental Health Chaplain. A local lass, I'm a member of MU Holy Nativity Chapel House branch.

I was formerly a teacher of Biology at Gosforth High School, and a Dof E Expedition Assessor. I am co-ordinator of a local itinerant dance ministry (*Beyond the Barricades*).

My passions include Trees, Bees, and Grandchildren.



MU Diocesan Festival

Saturday 10th July 2021 - St James the Great Church, Morpeth

AT last we were able to meet for the MU Diocesan Festival! Unfortunately there were still restrictions, but those who were able to be there 'in the flesh' really did enjoy meeting together, listening to our speaker and taking part in the Eucharist in the afternoon. The Rector, Revd Simon White organised a Zoom link for those who were not able to be present in person, and a good number of our members joined in this way.

In the morning, Barbara Packer, our Diocesan President opened the meeting with prayer, then Mrs Cath Hilton spoke to us about the "The Bigger Picture of the Mothers' Union". Cath is the Worldwide Trustee for Zone H, York Province – our province. Her responsibilities include Development, Safeguarding, Fund raising and Communications.

She began by telling us about the World Wide Council in Rwanda in 2019; she quoted Jeremiah 29: 11, **For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope**, the verse used every morning of the conference. The 70 delegates from 40 countries were asked each morning to share their burdens with other delegates in their groups. Cath said her burdens felt very light when compared with many of the others, especially those from some African countries who live and work in such difficult circumstances and yet still manage to further the work of the Mothers' Union and God's kingdom.

She told us how important it now is for all members in every country to contribute to Mothers' Union. There is great need in many countries and Mary Sumner House continues to fund overseas projects. However, there is now also local involvement in the funding and World Wide President Sheran Harper is leading a move to ensure that all MU members make a contribution.

We were told of the difficulties that Mary Sumner House staff had during the current pandemic. Their staff numbers were reduced from 40 down to 25, and most have been working from home. Some of the staff also took a 20% pay cut. Before the first Lockdown Mary Sumner House was fully booked for meetings and seminars, which had provided a good income stream for the Mothers' Union but it was suddenly cut off. Because of reduced funding there has been a complete restructuring of the funding of Overseas projects. In the past when MU saw a need, a promise was made for funding and in time there was enough to fund the project. Now before a project is agreed there must be funds in place in advance for it to go ahead.

Mary Sumner House, even with reduced staff, is still trying to improve communication with all its members. The new publication "Connected" has been well received and is a valuable tool in furthering our connections with MSH and with each other.

Cath then was willing to answer questions, and we had a lively discussion along with favourable comments about her talk. Margy Tasker-Brown, our Diocesan

President elect told us about the Story Sacks for the children in Bishop's Schools in Newcastle Diocese, a new project for us, meeting the needs of children whose education had been badly affected by the recent lock-downs. Linda Benneworth, our Action and Outreach Co-ordinator, told us about the various projects her Unit is involved in and explained how important it is to give people the help they want and need, not what we think they might need.

After Midday prayers led by Josephine Kulke, we broke for lunch before meeting again for the Service. It was such a joyful occasion, many meeting friends in person for the first time in over a year. For some, it was the first time they had been to any church service or taken Communion in all that time, and we are honoured that they chose to join us on this occasion.

My thanks are due to Revd Simon White for his welcome to St James Church and for all the help he gave me in making this event possible, and to Revd Dr Sarah Moon, our Diocesan Chaplain, for giving the address at the Service in the afternoon. Thank you also to Pauline Young, Branch Leader of Morpeth MU, who helped with the practicalities of organising this event and stayed all day to make sure all went well.

All in all a successful event enjoyed by those who were there in person and those who joined virtually on Zoom. I am encouraged that Mothers' Union is going forward with Hope and Confidence in Newcastle Diocese and World Wide.

Sheila Walker – VP

Visit of Gloucester Diocese Mothers' Union

MOTHERS' Union members from the Diocese of Gloucester visited Northumberland for five nights over the first weekend of October. We discovered this rather late in the day so our contact with them was restricted to just Sunday 3rd October.

Why were they here? Well, Gloucester Diocese always uses the Annual Gathering to organise a diocesan holiday trip and, with the Gathering cancelled for the second year in succession, they decided to get away anyhow and chose Northumberland.

Barbara and I met them at our newly opened Cathedral for the 10am

Service which was an All-Age worship for Harvest. Canon Clare Maclaran and Canon Peter Dobson led a lovely and lively service much enjoyed by our visitors.

The Gloucester group were staying at the Holiday Inn at Washington Services; in the evening, Bill and I joined them for their evening meal and I was able to speak to every single member (all 33 of them). This was a huge joy to me personally as Gloucester is "my Diocese". I was born, baptised and confirmed there and spent much of my teenage years very involved in one particular church, and two members of that congregation were present. They gave me an



update on life there today where our previous Central President Pat Harris 1989-94 now worships (and promotes MU!) having moved to Cirencester on retirement.

After our meal I took the short service of Compline with them, having gone prepared with the necessary service sheets! Their Diocesan President Kay Hensley read the Psalms with me and we all much enjoyed sharing a very short time of worship together.

The Gloucester group really explored the area covering visits to Holy Island, Kielder, Woodhorn Museum with its Ashington Pitmen's Art, Beamish and a guided tour of Newcastle starting at Royal Quays (to see the Queen Elizabeth cruise liner).

The group gave us a lovely memento of their visit, a free standing MU logo, created by a member. It will stand on the altar beside our diocesan banner, please make sure you go to see it when next in the Cathedral.

We all vowed to meet up next year at the Annual Gathering in Belfast (23rd-24th September), hopefully it will be third time lucky and we will finally make it there in 2022.

Sylvia Hickey - VP



Diocesan Festival Service • 10 July

OUR Diocesan Festival Service began at 2pm. It was led by the Revd Simon White and the preacher was our own diocesan Chaplain Revd Dr Sarah Moon, who began her Sermon declaring herself a fan of the Antiques Road Show. She compared our fragile and often broken emergence from the 2020 crippling pandemic to a damaged item as sometimes seen on the Road Show.

Sarah talked of the Japanese art of repairing cracked and broken pottery, where the cracks are mended and put back together again using gold leaf. This may change the outer appearance but returns the object to its original form. She recalled Christ's broken body on the cross, a body broken for love of us. We too must "paper over the cracks", remain firm in our purpose, reflect on where we are going and move out into our communities, showing God's love, the God in whose image we are made.

We must give voice to the gospel, spread the good news of justice and compassion, and mend the God/man relationship made real for us in sharing the bread and wine of the Eucharist. MU in the Diocese made remarkable progress during the pandemic, now with God's love to support us, we must renew and rebuild.

Though we were unable to sing, six members of St James choir sang both hymns and prayer responses which added to the uplifting message of both the service and Sarah's address.

Our grateful thanks to all who either took part or attended, another step on the road back, moving forward with hope and confidence.

Sylvia Hickey - VP

MOTHERS' UNION RETREAT



31 MAY-1 JUNE 2021

“What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare...”

JACKY Moore opened this year's retreat by reading us W H Davies' famous poem, and then introduced Jennie Jones, our retreat leader. Jennie began with chapter 23 of St Luke's Gospel, where Martha is complaining to the Lord that Mary has done nothing to help; Jesus of course pointed out that Mary has made the better choice. She included several memorable quotations in the session. “We can become prayer on two legs, as the simple things of prayer and worship lift us”. “In the way of God, very little counts. Love does it all.” “If only you and I existed, Jesus would still have died for us.” The first session ended with John Michael Talbot's beautiful setting of the prayer of St Teresa of Avila, “Christ has no body now but yours”.

Sheila Walker led Midday Prayers including Sheran Harper's prayer for Building Hope and Confidence, the theme for this year. After a simple but excellent lunch, we had the choice to make friendship bracelets with Jackie, or to join Jennie and prepare the Intercessory Prayers for the Eucharist, to simply to explore

the area around Shepherds Dene or sit chatting in the house or in the lovely grounds.

In Session Jennie read us a reflection by Bridget Plaas who described her feelings on seeing her small boys being greeted by their father who'd been away for some time. They'd had to wait for ages in the

Arrivals Terminal and the boys had got quite restless, so she'd been cross with them. They were a bit subdued by the time Daddy's plane arrived. But as soon as they saw him their faces lifted, they waved and he went straight to them and hugged them – their previous bad behaviour didn't matter. “God's crackers about us” was the really memorable quote in this session, together with “God ‘zooms’ with us all the time”! Then Jennie moved on



to the Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit, and asked us to write some good quality about our neighbour who then read it; fortunately I think we were all sitting beside someone who wasn't a total stranger. The comments were very humbling, and Wynn said it was like reading one's own obituary! That session ended with Margaret Rizza's inspiring song "You are the centre, Lord of my life". After the evening meal (which ended with the best apple crumble ever) Barbara Bailes led Evening Prayer in the Franciscan style, and we shared wine, chatted, went out for a walk or simply went to our rooms to absorb some of the food of every kind that we'd been fed so generously all day.

The second day began with Morning Prayer in the Celtic style led by Revd Sheila Auld. By the way, Grace before each meal was chosen by one of us from a book of Graces and Reflections on Food provided by Shepherds Dene, "Blest be our table" by Neil Taylor, a Wild Goose publication I think it was Jacky who chose our Grace before breakfast that day and it was one written by Sheila. In our third session together, Jennie reminded us "we are workers, not master builders". This session ended with Stuart Townend's rousing hymn "In Christ alone".

After that session we had the powerful experience of a simple Eucharist celebrated by the Revd Malcolm Jones; because of COVID restrictions we couldn't have service books, so we had no written words to follow, and this meant that we simply concentrated on what we were doing together as a community. It made us wonder if we ever need the books. And before lunch it was my turn to select a Grace and I was really delighted to find another, highly appropriate, written by Sheila. I would really commend the book.

Session 4 began with Graham Kendrick's "Beauty for brokenness", then Jennie told us a moving anecdote of a man whose new car had been damaged by a half-brick thrown at it by a small boy; the man had got out of the car to go and remonstrate with him, and was horrified to discover that the poor child was simply desperate for someone to stop and help him to lift his disabled brother back into a wheelchair. The moral of the



story: "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention." Then Jennie used Powerpoint images to illustrate the story of people at the End of Time complaining to God in heaven that He couldn't possibly know how it was to live through the Holocaust, or to suffer slavery, or torture . . . only to realise eventually that actually God knows all about suffering, as in the person of Jesus He suffered worse things than many of us ever will.

Finally, Jacky with the assistance of Anne B, Jennie J, Dorothy, Pam and Jenny G, treated us to a lighthearted lesson in working together: "We are here to tell you how very important it is that everybody - and I do mean everybody... " If that's a sketch that's new to you, catch up with someone who was at this Retreat to hear how funny it was but how direct its message actually is. Then we all tied a friendship bracelet around the wrist of our neighbour (these were mostly the bracelets made the previous afternoon). On our behalf President Barbara thanked Jennie and Malcolm and we gave them two beautiful Canna lily plants for their garden; Barbara also expressed our

gratitude to everyone else who had contributed to the success of the Retreat, and offered a final prayer on behalf of us all.

We all rejoiced at being able to see people in the flesh, to laugh and feel normal, after more than a year of restrictions. Wynn told me she had been moved by the way people cared for one another in a veritable smorgasbord of fellowship, ideas, and gentle challenges; Anne A particularly appreciated the mixture of silence and chat, as well as the beautiful surroundings, while Sheila A said she would take away the sound of laughter, together with the song "Christ has no body now". Sheila W shared her amusement at how long it must have been since she'd needed her sponge bag; Barbara P was going to take away the conviction that God delights in each one of us. Jennie J, as the person who had spoken to us most, said that she had been impressed though not surprised by how attentively we had all listened. And Jenny G summed up the whole Retreat in the one word "JOY".

Put the date for next year, 21st-22nd June, in your diary now, there's a booking form here for you.

Life is only 10% what happens to you, it's 90% how you deal with it.

ACTION AND OUTREACH

AFIA holidays

The last months have increased the demand for Away From It All holidays. Many more families have suffered traumas and MU knows that they would greatly benefit from a break away. Margaret Crawford, the MU AFIA rep, has worked tirelessly to try to book suitable accommodation. This year Newcastle Diocese Mother's Union has sent 51 adults and 55 children on caravan holidays. Margaret has had to find five replacement families at very short notice because of changing circumstances and personal family problems. It has been important to do this because of the very high cost of hiring caravans this year. Prices have increased as the demand has grown. However, the response we have had from families shows just how valued the time away is and the thank-you letters which Margaret has received show just how much the families appreciate the time away.

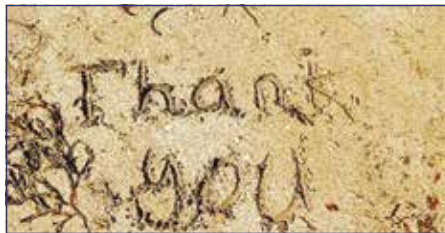


A typical letter says

"I just wanted to write and say thank you so very much for the holiday. We had the most amazing time. So lovely after the challenges of the last two years. My Dad said he came home feeling much brighter and more positive about life after really struggling losing my Mother. They were together 55 years. My son at his check up at the hospital showed improved

blood pressure and kidney function, his specialist saying his health had really improved by de-stressing. It's been more than ten years since we've had a family holiday and more than two years since I've put my feet on the sand or in the sea and I am so very grateful. Thankyou ever so much from us all. God Bless to you all! In these harsh times so wonderful to find some kindness!"

I think that says it all.



It is significant to note that a large number of the families this year have been recommended by health visitors, crisis workers, or the Northumberland Domestic Abuse services. There have been more children and adults with health problems this year and some who rely on the Food Bank because of severe money problems. Some sponsors also stress the mental health problems of several of the clients.

In their requests, sponsors have stressed their desire to give the families something to look forward to, in order to help them recover from abuse and to brighten their lives. For those with life threatening conditions the hope is to create lasting memories for their families.



Mother's Union hopes that in some small way we have helped some families "get away from it all". Sincere thanks to all of you who have made this possible.

Linda Benneworth

Homeless Hub

Mothers' Union supports the fishermen and the homeless in North Shields at the NEH North East Homeless Hub.



North East Homeless provides support to those who are vulnerable and homeless in the North East of England by providing food and emergency equipment.

The new Fish Quay Hub is based in North Shields. Fishermen from the Fishermen's Mission are welcome to use the facilities.

Linda Benneworth and Margaret Devlin, a long-time supporter of the





Fishermen's Mission, met with Mike Smith at the North Shields Hub. This was to hand over the remaining wellington boots generously donated by Carr's Billington. Most will go to the fishermen but the rest will be given to anyone homeless in North Shields who would like them. The Hub has been set up to support the homeless by providing food, support and companionship. The fishermen are welcome to use the showers and laundry facilities as well as the library, café and food store.

Aquarium



Away days have been difficult this summer. Several of the commercial organisations would not accept group bookings and several other attractions were closed. It was wonderful therefore to be able to take a group of families, 13 adults and 17 children, from Harbour Refuge to Tynemouth Aquarium on a special coach. Barbara Packer and Dorothy Henderson came to welcome us as we arrived. The children and parents were all very excited and enjoyed all the attractions including the seal show and the many different varieties of fish. The weather was sufficiently good that after lunch the families could go to the swing park to play until the bus came.

The hope is that next year more of these away days can be arranged.



Northumbria Healthcare 
NHS Foundation Trust

Ward 15 North Tyneside General Hospital

Holy Saviour's Mothers' Union

Dear Ladies,

On behalf of the staff and patients on ward 15 at North Tyneside Hospital we'd like to thank you for your time and effort in making the colourful and bright fiddle mits for us to use on the ward. They have been immensely helpful in ensuring drips stay safely in place and preventing staff having to replace lines repeatedly. This reduces distress for the patients and takes pressure off the busy ward team.

You have been so prolific in your activities, we have been able to distribute them amongst many of the elderly care wards at North Tyneside, who also send their thanks.

With best wishes,


Dr T. O'Brien, CONSULTANT

Catherine
Dr C. Deakin
Consultant Gynaecologist, MSc


Sian Usher
ward Manager.



AFIA Day Away to Whitehouse Farm... ...for families at the Northumberland Women's Refuge.

This day away was quite difficult to arrange for several reasons, mainly Covid related.

The farm wasn't taking group bookings to begin with, then some of the families weren't well or had other problems, but those who managed to go all seemed to have a wonderful day and were very grateful to the Mothers' Union. They all got to enjoy something, even the little 4-year-old who was frightened by any bird or animal she saw. She clung to me when she

saw her first sheep and try as we might, she barely touched a lovely, fluffy baby rabbit. Somewhere in her short life she must have had a real scare to make her so terrified, and Mum couldn't help us with her small splintering of English. However, she came to life on the tractor ride and in the play parks.

One lady with us was convinced that she was in conversation with the sheep, but that's another story!

The farm continues to cater well for a wide age range and as our guests ranged from 4 to 65 years, they all were able to get pleasure out of something.

To give a breakdown on costs for the day was just a little over £10 per head which included entrance and coach transport. Food was funded by members of my branch. I think you will agree it was money well used.

On behalf of the refuge families thank you so much for continuing to donate so generously towards days such as these, it really does make a tremendous difference.

Canon Jennifer Snowdon



This Christmas will be my last as Action and Outreach coordinator for Newcastle Diocese. As I plan for the shoe box collection, I am reminded yet again of all the marvellous support I have had from members through their efforts, enthusiasm and skills to provide so many things for vulnerable people. On behalf of all whom you helped, and on my part for the friendship and support, thank you.

Linda Benneworth

MU ANNUAL GATHERING 2021

HAVE you watched the Annual Gathering? I do hope so, but if you haven't, it is available on YouTube, "Mothers' Union Annual Gathering 2021"

The whole event is in two parts, the first session lasts just over an hour, ending with Midday prayers, and the second session lasts just under an hour.

Our Worldwide president Sheran Harper, opened with welcome and prayer.

Bev Jullien, CEO, greeted everyone and gave an overview of where Mothers' Union is after this very difficult year. She said that when we all pull together amazing things happen. Mary Sumner House staff numbers have been greatly reduced but they have still managed to support members as have MU Leaders with on-line Services, Phone calls, WhatsApp groups and Zoom.

We had MSH Updates on Finance, Development, Communications, Policy and Faith. However, what impressed me most were the video clips, and the opportunity to hear

from members all over the world about their work. This truly is a global organisation.

There were two videos of special interest to those of us in Newcastle Diocese.

Our Diocesan president elect, Margy Tasker-Brown, told us about the "Story Sacks" which have been given to the children in the Bishop's School in South East Northumberland. These help the Early Years children who have lost so much schooling in this past year. We saw some of the children being shown the contents of one of these sacks, which contain toys and story books which they are allowed to take home.

Another Video of great interest was the one by Sylvia Hickey, one of our Diocesan Vice-presidents, who told us about the new Internet Mothers' Union Branch which has been formed. Some of the members explained how valuable this was to them, and also about their project, which is helping a refuge for Domestic abuse victims.

I especially enjoyed the MU Chaplain from Tuam, Ireland, Canon Jen McWhirter, who said that Prayer and

Worship was central to the MU. As both an MU member and a member of the clergy, she gave us advice on working with the clergy, reminding us to keep in touch with them, invite them to join meetings, ask how and what support they need (not only in hospitality!) and to pray for them

There was a moment for quiet reflection before Midday Prayers, which were led by Bishop Emma Ineson, Mothers' Union Central Chaplain, who quoted from 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 1 Verse 3 "We always have good reason to thank God for you, because your faith in God and love for each other grows all the time".

This year in Mothers' Union we look forward with Hope and Confidence. Next year the theme is "The time for Transformation is now" – something for us to work towards and aspire to.

There is so much more to see than I have told you, so I do hope you will watch this, perhaps get a small group to watch it together, and join the over 3,700 people who have already watched it on-line. I am sorry that we could not get together in person for this event but with the power of YouTube, many people have been able to watch these proceedings.

Sheila Walker – VP

Why run when you can walk?

While the north applauds the Great North Runners, the MU brings the hare and the tortoise to mind... after all, Jesus is not recorded as running to raise a profile... he walked everywhere and talked en route and welcomed hospitality wherever he stopped. So it was that during one week in August MU members in the west deanery of Newcastle elected to walk to all the MU branches in the deanery.



When Anne Blight came up with the idea of a sponsored walk for MU funds and the Literacy project, she hoped a couple of people might join her on the way. Twelve did! ... ably led by Anne, Pam and Dorothy, the three key organisers. (Aren't numbers interesting? – the walkers in Jesus' time thought so too.)

Women and men together (octogenarians included and walking

sticks too) we walked from the western fringe of the city to the ancient Big Lamp hill top; from the river to the northern hills of Ponteland. We talked as we walked through the city streets and housing estates and ambled along country footpaths. We trod the ground of centuries of communities; we walked on holy ground.

We were welcomed warmly and truly blessed by MU members at St John's in Westerhope, Holy Nativity in Chapel House, Holy Cross in Fenham, The Venerable Bede in Benwell, St Matthew's & St Philip's in Westgate and St Mary's in Ponteland. Relationships were built, networks revived and ideas shared – such a breath of life after the Covid lock-downs. Oh! – and generous sponsorship raised over £2,100 for MU projects. Howzat for a co-operative 'Personal Best'? The Jesus Way wins in the end!

MU West Deanery

PINNIES REPORT

I was interesting for me to read, in the Alnmouth Bridge magazine, that Helen, our Branch Leader, was seeking comforting aids for those with dementia – and I am glad to feel I have been of help.



I created in all six fiddle pinnies / twiddle aprons from bits and pieces that I already had at home. And I loved that. It inspired me to be more creative in where I looked and sourced what fabrics and materials

would work. Knowing the pinnies had to be resilient and washable created extra interesting challenges.

I found resources such as elastic, keys, key rings, beads from old necklaces, zips, buttons and ribbons. And then I thought of another resource.

This April I sadly lost both of my beloved dogs. Firstly my dear 11 year old pug died as a result of neurological challenges – and then, ten days later, my gorgeous 16 year old chocolate Labrador succumbed to quick onset dementia which unsettled her greatly. My heart was so torn and I felt quite bereft. My life had been shaped by both dogs for many many years – particularly so by Doug, my little pug. He and I had worked together voluntarily, through the U.K. charity Pets As Therapy, for nearly ten years.

Doug and I supported many people of all ages and abilities over this time together – but one of the regular commitments we shared was to visit the elderly in a care home. Our friends with dementia brightened at seeing a friendly little dog – and this helped to rekindle memories long past, enabling them to enjoy conversations whilst recalling past lives and

experiences with a feeling of being part of a reciprocal conversation. Reconnecting in such a way enabled our older friends to feel a part of the environment they shared. As we know, those suffering from dementia often only feel disparity.

So, reading of those with dementia needing sensory aids was something that tugged at my heart – and it made me feel the loss of my little dog even more acutely.

I then gathered Doug's collars, toys, blankets and harnesses together to see how I could incorporate them into my designs. In this way, I felt Doug's legacy of supporting the elderly could be ongoing.

So, each of the pinnies created has at least two pieces of Doug's attire or toys sewn into its design. It might be a buckle or a clasp from a harness, a button from a coat, a furry or scrunchy piece from a toy, or a section of fabric from a blanket.

So I am glad this little project Helen gave me has gone on to help others. It certainly has been a therapeutic path for me in my grief – and has helped occupy me fruitfully in a period of bereavement which I often found isolating. Many people, understandably, are unable to relate to the depth of losing what they see as just a pet.

*Cate Archer
Alnmouth and Lesbury Branch*



was what was needed. So, where is this going? Our fundraising was for a local project (backpacks for prisoners leaving a local prison). Rural branches are a bit isolated from projects based in towns and cities. We also have the challenges of how and where we can travel to meet up. Smaller branches have benefited from 'joining forces'. Starting to support members, in other branches with their fundraising, has been an exciting and very enjoyable way of working together. Northumberland rural branches are looking at how they can support local needs, for example: local schools, Forces families. After all, the strength behind Mothers' Union is members: at the face, ground level, and for rural members...knowing your community and their needs. And, also recognising further afield projects here, and in other countries that need our joint support.

Mothers' "UNION"...
working together, we can do it!

Helen Cooper

COMING out of Lockdown and being able to meet with members from more 'urban' branches has got me thinking...

The picture is of Tea by The Sea. This was the second time we had tried this fundraising event bringing together

members, family and friends from Amble, Alnmouth and Lesbury. During Lockdown we started weekly Zoom Tea and Talk which regularly brought together MU members (including Indoor Members) from at least 5 branches reaching down to Durham. Looking after each other at this time

'Reimagining Mothers' Union' meetings in Newcastle Diocese

Next year's theme is
'Transformation now!'

During these last 18 months our Mothers' Union membership has, perforce, been expressed in very different ways. As we move out of lockdown, we are asked to consider what this says to us about the future. We don't necessarily want just to return to 'business as usual'. We were asked to get together in groups (by Zoom or in person) to consider some questions. This is a synopsis of what the first 10 groups said: I wonder if you agree?



Imagine first that a magic teapot enables you to make one wish for Mothers' Union!

Wishes for Mothers' Union (in 5 words or fewer)

- New image
- Attract members of mixed ages
- More online branches
- Our voice heard
- Wider project base
- Relevant and dynamic
- Increase membership
- More proactive
- Be compassionate, not judgemental

Question 1 After the pandemic...

We want to keep

- Regular communication with members
- Giving printed newsletters etc. to Indoor Members
- Fun, fellowship, caring and worship
- Midday prayers; monthly reflection leaflet
- Sense of belonging to worldwide organisation
- Improved diversity of speakers and topics
- Link with other groups
- Relationship with projects, action
- Discussion
- The bonus of the internet and Zoom

We don't need

- Rigid meeting format, time and place
- 'We've always done it this way' mindset
- Speakers every time
- Current branding, name and logo
- Excessive bureaucracy & paperwork
- Unimaginative fund-raisers
- Time spent in collecting items

Question 2 Ideas to build on in the future:

- Find out the whereabouts of the poor, homeless & refugees in our area
- Discover what their actual needs are – find a need we can meet
- Combine with other organisations doing the same thing
- More sharing branch to branch
- Build on support networks we have developed during COVID
- Festival services sent by Zoom as well as face to face
- Keep some ideas and actions local
- International Zoom meetings with our links, & other Zoom speakers
- Recognise younger women are interested in outreach – flexibility
- Story sacks initiative with local primary school will lead to other initiatives (e.g. parenting classes) (margy@tasker-brown.com)
- Build on members' links with Messy Church/Tots' Praise
- Two branches in one Deanery are 125 years old, and still recruiting members
- Need for enthusiastic and professional leaders at all levels

Question 3 What stops us moving forward?

- The name
- Image as 'tea ladies'
- Average age of members – need for suitable projects
- We are too parochial in our thinking
- Too much negativity, reluctance to change, timidity, complacency
- We need to be brave enough to talk about gender violence in our branches
- Poor communication
- Lack of technological skills in members (but improving!)
- Lack of appreciation of global M.U.
- Younger members have too many pressures
- Reluctance of some members to release contact details

If you or your group would like to consider these ideas, please contact your Deanery Leader or Archdeaconry Vice President for the questions in full, and send your responses to me, if you would like them included in the survey.

Barbara Packer

AROUND THE DIOCESE



These clothes were knitted by Yvonne Holmes and her team of knitters at Holy Cross Fenham branch. My friend's daughter, who works in Maternity at the RVI, took them in for us. The staff were delighted with them.
Anne Blight / West Deanery Leader

Sending our Congratulations to Sheila and Cecil Smith.

Sheila was Diocesan Indoor Members Contact for over 10 years. She and her husband celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary in May. Obviously, one was taken on their wedding day and the other was on their Anniversary Day; sadly torrential rain in the afternoon slightly spoiled the festivities.



It is with deep sadness that we record the passing of Mrs Angela Mason, a highly valued member of our branch since 1982. Angela fought a courageous battle against cancer and was an inspiration to us all.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for her devoted service to The Mothers' Union as Branch Treasurer, as Deanery Secretary, for baking and opening her home and garden for our Branch Annual Strawberry Tea, which raised substantial funds for The MU AFIA (Away From It All) project and for all the hard work on our Hospital Emergency Toiletry Bags team, which as a branch effort we did for many years. Her two grandchildren, Libby and Rowan, were even roped in to help make up the bags.

Angela was a very warm and engaging person and a wonderful and loyal friend. She will be greatly missed by all the members of Longhist/Hebron/Bothal/Pegswood/Ulgham/Widdrington branch.





Cambois branch welcomed two new members at its first face to face meeting for months, and also shared with neighbouring branch Choppington in a meal at the Half Moon.



*Two members of St Cuthbert's Blyth were honoured by the Royal School of Church Music this year. **Dorothy Bassam** (left) received a Long Service award; she has sung in the church choir ever since moving into the parish about twenty years ago. **Ann Pearson** (right) received the Organist medal; she played the organ in St Cuthbert's for over twenty years until forced by arthritis to retire, but still manages to play the piano for the MU.*



During the summer the Ven Bede (two) branches met on Zoom but also enjoyed a barbecue at the home of Leahan Garratt their Leader in the very large garden where she keeps chickens in a pen at the bottom. This being a city garden, it's rather a novelty.

The ladies all made a contribution to the food and we had a good social evening. The group responded to the request for a donation for hand held crosses which the Deanery are collecting for. The crosses, from the Holy Land, have been given to the Head of the Hospitals Chaplaincy as a thank you from us for the care that James Garratt received at Christmstime in ITU after a big operation he had.

This photo from the Garratts' garden shows a screen they made out of pieces from a reclamation yard, which hides the BBQ etc area.



*Mrs Una Peel is the Oldest Member of our MU Branch at St Bedes Church Newsham. She received flowers for her 95th Birthday on Sunday 1st August from all our Branch Members. Congratulations were given to her from all the church congregation.
Myra Turner / Branch Leader*



Saint George's Cullercoats Branch celebrated their 90th Birthday in September with a party. Helen Brunton gave a talk on the changes in the Mothers' Union since she joined forty four years ago. Members then enjoyed a buffet supper followed by the cutting of the cake, and a champagne toast to the past, present and future of the Mothers' Union. An Exhibition of photographs showing the life of the Branch was enjoyed by everyone.



A Tale of the Unexpected Walking the Branches in West Newcastle

I've been asked to share the following 'little story' with you all. Hankies at the ready!

I was about to leave a certain shop where I'd purchased (with money donated by friends at church) a trolley full of toiletries for the arrival of five hundred refugees from Afghanistan, when a young member of staff stopped me in my tracks. "Excuse me, but I heard you telling the manageress that all of these items were for refugees." "That's right," I said, "Well, can we give you some clothes for small children?" Before I knew it, I was with him at a rack of tee-shirts which had been reduced and he had grabbed about half a dozen.

I tried to stop him to make sure that I didn't have to pay for them. He shook his head and told me **he** was going to pay for them! 9, 10, 11 tee-shirts! "Stop!" I uttered, once again. "You can't give me any more if you're paying for them." 14, 15... he turned,

looked me in the eye and said, "I **am** a refugee. I got here safely from Iran, I have a job and every month my father

and I put money aside to give back for the kindness we have received."

Well!...my bottom lip was quivering by now. He checked all fifteen tee-shirts through the till, paid for them himself and placed them in my trolley. Still plenty of good people in this world, eh?

Pam Taylor
Central Deanery Leader



MOLLY SMITH - 100th BIRTHDAY

Molly (Margaret) Smith and her twin sister Gweneth were born prematurely in Goadby, a small village, in Leicestershire on 20 May 1921. Molly was 2½ lbs and Gweneth 2 lbs at birth. Sadly, Gweneth only survived for a week. But Molly defied all the odds and enjoyed her 100th birthday in her flat in Bewick Lane, Ovingham on 20 May 2021.

Her parents were both teachers and accomplished musicians, a talent which she inherited; indeed, she was still playing the piano in her flat until very recently and she played hymns for the Methodist Chapel in the village until it closed.

Molly spent her childhood living in Leicestershire, Lincoln and Rutland. In 1940 she met her future husband George (also Smith!), who was from Co. Wexford in Ireland, when he was stationed at the local RAF base in Cottesmore. When George was posted abroad in January 1941 Molly decided to join the WAAFs and she then spent the rest of the 2WW with postings in Morecombe, Shropshire and Edinburgh.

At the end of the war George arrived back in Rutland on 1 September and they were married in Cottesmore Church on 15 September 1945. They spent the next two years at RAF bases in the Isle of Man and Yorkshire before George decided to leave the RAF.

Over the next 15 years they moved with George's work and lived in Co Wicklow, Rutland and Co Antrim. In 1965 they moved to the 'new' Welburn Close in Ovingham with their three children, two dogs and a cat. In 1971 they moved again to Yorkshire and then retired to Gloucestershire in 1986 before returning to Ovingham in 1999 to be near their daughter Christine who lived in Wylam.

Sadly, George died in 2003 but Molly and her various dogs have continued to enjoy life in Ovingham where she has now spent the longest time in one place in all her 100 years!

Molly and her family would like to thank all the wonderful neighbours and friends in Ovingham who have made her 100th birthday so special.



RETREAT AT SHEPHERDS DENE Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st June 2022

Our retreat gives us the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful surroundings at Shepherds Dene, with time for fellowship and fun as well as times of silence and reflection.

Our leader will be Revd. Canon Peter Dobson who works at Newcastle Cathedral as Canon for Outreach and Discipleship. The theme for the retreat is 'Hidden Figures.'

'An opportunity to spend time with some well known and much loved stories from the Gospels, a chance to look a bit closer and wonder about some characters who might be pushed to the edge of the story and overshadowed by others. What gifts might these hidden figures have to offer us, what lessons might they have to teach us about what is truly at the heart of the Good News of God.'

DETAILS

The residential cost is £105. The daily cost is £26 and an extra £20 if you wish to stay for evening meal on Monday.

For further information please contact Jackie Moore.
jackiemooreuk@yahoo.com • Phone: 0191 281 1325 / 07801 748887
30 Cotswold Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7AE

Please complete the booking form below and return to Jackie with a £20 deposit for residential or £10 for each individual day.

(Cheque payable to Mothers' Union Newcastle Diocese)

BOOKING FORM

Name Branch

Address

Telephone no.....

Email

Dietary Requirements

I am willing / not willing to share a room *(delete as appropriate)*

I require transport / have transport and can take passengers

I am non-resident and shall attend on Monday / Tuesday / both days

I will / will not stay for evening meal on Monday

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2022

JANUARY

21st Trustees meet at Church House
10am for 10.30am.

FEBRUARY

19th Commissioning Service in
Newcastle Cathedral 11am.
Preacher: The Right Revd
John Packer, Assistant Bishop of
Newcastle

26th Deadline for Spring Newsletter:
copy to Barbara Packer, please
(bppacker@googlemail.com)

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new
members to our fellowship:

Sheila Forster
Sandra Miller
Fiona Moore
Anne Pickering
Edith Reed
Gill Thomas
Stephen and Jacky Wilson

• BIRTHDAYS • ANNIVERSARIES • DEATHS •

BIRTHDAYS

- 80: Margaret Chamberlin,**
St George Cullercoats
- 80: Dorothy Davies,**
St George Cullercoats
- 80: Bernice Storey,**
Earsdon Backworth
- 80: Val Woodman,**
St Paul Choppington
- 90: Sylvia Berry,**
St George Cullercoats
- 90: Helen Jackman,**
Earsdon Backworth
- 90: Rita Manning,**
St Columba Wideopen
- 90: Jeanne Thompson,**
Earsdon Backworth
- 100: Molly Smith,**
Ovingham

ANNIVERSARIES

GOLDEN WEDDING

Peter and Sue Flood;
Sue is a member of St Francis
High Heaton branch

DIAMOND WEDDING

Tommy and Joyce Elrod;
Joyce is a member of St Columba
Wideopen

Cecil and Sheila Smith;
Sheila is a member of St
Cuthbert Blyth branch

DEATHS

- Helen Armstrong** – Hexham
- Betty Bell** – St George Cullercoats
- Margaret Bell** – Haltwhistle
- Helen Clark** – St Peter Monkseaton
- Revd Richard Ferguson** –
husband of Liz (Branch Leader
Stannington)
- Anne Hallett** – St Peter
Monkseaton
- Muriel Knox** – Chevington

Angela Mason – Bothal Pegswood
Longhirst Hebron Ulgham
Widdrington

Doris Macdonald – St Luke Wallsend

Mary Moody – St Columba
Wideopen

Jeanette Seales – St Luke Wallsend

Pat Seymour – St Columba
Wideopen (Indoor Member)

Eleanor Storey – Bothal Pegswood
Longhirst Hebron Ulgham
Widdrington

Joan Wallace – St Columba
Wideopen (Indoor Member)

Florence Whiteman – St Cuthbert's
Blyth (Indoor Member)

Doris Wright (aged 107) – St Peter
Monkseaton

ERRATUM:

Martin Green whose death was noted
in the 2021 Summer Almost 'Journal'
was wrongly described a member of
Seaton Hirst Branch; he was actually
a member of Delaval, Seaton Sluice,
New Hartley.

Mothers' Union in Newcastle Diocese is a charity
formed to serve families either in a family group or as
individuals and walk with them by support through
challenging times in their lives.

The charity is 100% volunteer led, all monies raised go
into the many projects Mothers' Union develop and
deliver. If you would like to contribute to the work that
Mothers Union is active in both in Newcastle Diocese and
Worldwide you can contribute to our Virgin Giving site
[http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/
finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1008779](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1008779)



Pinnies report - see page 14



Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Newcastle

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: ??????????????????
Tel: ??????????????????
Address: Church House, St Johns Terrace,
North Shields NE29 6HS
Website: www.munewcastle.org.uk

