**THE MOTHERS’ UNION – NEWCASTLE DIOCESE**

Minutes of Meeting held at St John the Evangelist, Kingston Park, and via Zoom on Friday 6 October 2021 at 7.00 pm. There were altogether 45 members participating and apologies had been received from a further thirteen.

Our Chaplain Revd Dr Sarah Moon read from the prophet Isaiahand led the meeting in prayer; she read the names of nine members who had died since the last meeting of Council. Diocesan President Barbara Packer then welcomed six new members and three attending Council for the first time.

**Minutes** of the meeting of Council held on 16 April having been previously circulated were taken as read and approved.

**Matter arising** Julian confirmed that the plan to provide officers with *Office 365* had been shelved.

**The Financial Report** had been previously circulated; the treasurer Dorothy Henderson had sent her apologies to the meeting as she had suffered a family bereavement, but had asked Barbara to inform the meeting that she had received some £2,000 in gift aid and £452 from MU Enterprises. She had also received £1,485 from the West Deanery Walk and Anne Blight mentioned that further donations were still being received which would bring the total to more than £2,000. Barbara thanked everyone involved in that event. She explained that items of expenditure listed in ‘Freemasons’ and ‘St Hilda’s Trust’ categories related to recent disbursement of grants received in the previous financial year. She recorded thanks to Dorothy for her commitment and dedication.

**The President’s Report** Barbara thanked the Deanery and Branch leaders for the splendid efforts made throughout the coronavirus lockdowns to keep members in touch. There would be a Thanksgiving service on 3 December which would provide an opportunity to recognise the service given by those whose terms of office were coming to an end; this would be followed by a ‘buffet lunch’ with individual boxed servings for safety reasons, and then after Midday Prayers the dedication and handover of shoeboxes. This event would take place at St Nicholas church, Gosforth, and the Archdeacon of Northumberland, Ven. Rachel Wood, would preach at the service led by Chaplain Sarah. Barbara encouraged members to attend the Provincial Service in Liverpool detailed in the Autumn Newsletter.

Barbara introduced her successor, Mrs Margy Tasker-Brown, who thanked members for electing her and looked forward to leading us through the challenging times ahead. Also introduced were Anne Cairns, the new Vice President for Lindisfarne and Anne Blight, the new Vice President for Northumberland, and Revd Anne Marr, the new Chaplain.

Barbara mentioned the theme for the new year, The Time for Transformation is Now, which she felt followed well on the ‘reimagining MU’ initiative which she hoped many branches had considered. The Annual Gathering was still available on YouTube and Barbara commended this; it included two items from this diocese.

**Safeguarding** Sheila Walker’s report had been previously circulated. Sheila stressed that concerns should be raised first with the parish’s safeguarding officer but also reported to her. The new issue of “Connected” included a card on safeguarding to which she asked all to pay attention. Barbara reported that in view of the importance of safeguarding this was now a Trustee role and she thanked Sheila for taking it on.

**The Unit Reports** had been previously circulated; some of the co-ordinators added in person to these.

Julian (Finance and Central Services) reported that the next Branch Return forms would be available in two formats which he hoped would give officers more space for the necessary information. The MSH Database was becoming more complete and he hoped that it would be possible to give branch leaders details of the information held about their own members; he had been informed of some whose details were not on the database apparently inadvertently, and hoped that there would be even more who would be willing to have their details included.Otherwise copies of the magazine and other papers could not reach them directly. Jackie Moore had copies of the new magazine to distribute to them.

Barbara (on behalf of Marketing and Communications) said that Linda Benneworth would be taking over this unit in 2022. She had already had considerable experience in speaking to branches and congregations on the work of MU and hoped to be able to continue to do so. The deadline for the next Journal would be 22 October and contributions should be sent to lesleywright43@talktalk.net, not to the now obsolete email address printed in the Directory.

Linda (Action and Outreach) had sent her apologies to the meeting but Barbara commended the excellent amount of work which had been achieved in the present very difficult conditions. In particular the number of AFIA arrangements carried out had been remarkable, and Margaret Crawforth had also made a large number of ‘trauma dolls’ for training purposes, some of which were on display at this meeting. Although there were people willing to take forward individual aspects of A&O work, a unit co-ordinator was still needed.

Jackie Moore (Faith and Policy) encouraged members to attend Midday Prayers at the Cathedral on the first Thursday of each month, especially in December when there would be particular focus on 16 Days of Activism. Sylvia Hickey spoke on ‘No More 1 in 3’ and asked branches to hold vigils in prominent places in their areas to raise public awareness of the growing problem of gender based violence.

News from the Deaneries had also been circulated previously.

**Speaker**

Barbara introduced June Houghton, the Provincial President, about to embark upon her second Triennium. June gave ‘A Bird’s Eye View of the Province’, with thumbnail sketches of Mothers’ Union in each diocese. These were very varied, but she called each one after a particular species of bird which she felt reflected some of its characteristics. She likened the Diocese of Newcastle to wise owls, and thanked us for what had been achieved.

**Other business**

Barbara thanked Bill Hickey, and Dan Doran who had provided technical services to enable this meeting to be available via Zoom, and the meeting ended with The Grace at 8.30 pm.

Signed: ……………………………………………………….. date …………………………

 (Diocesan President)