**THE MOTHERS’ UNION – NEWCASTLE DIOCESE**

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held via Zoom on Friday 16 April 2021 at 10.00 am. There were 64 members participating and apologies had been received from a further six.

Our Chaplain Revd Dr Sarah Moon read St John’s Gospel 61-15 and led the meeting in prayer including the musical setting of the Gaelic Blessing by John Rutter and a prayer written by Sheran Harper, Worldwide President of Mothers’ Union, and remembered those members who had died since the last meeting of Council. Diocesan President Barbara Packer then welcomed fourteen new members by name.

**Minutes** As the current global pandemic had prevented an Annual Meeting being held in 2020 there were no minutes to approve.

**The President’s Annual Report for 2020** had been previously circulated; Barbara said an impressive amount had been achieved in a very difficult year, and she thanked all who had taken responsibilities for this.

**The Financial Report for 2020** was presented by Treasurer Dorothy Henderson; the end of year balance was healthy. All grants had been spent and the full Report was available from Dorothy for anyone who wished to read it. Barbara thanked Dorothy for her work.

The Reports were unanimously accepted and the Annual Meeting concluded at 10.22

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

 (Diocesan President)

**Ordinary Council Meeting**

Canon Barbara Packer welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Sonia Downing participating for the first time and those using Zoom for the first time. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 12 October 2018 having been previously circulated were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the President as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

**President’s remarks** would be distributed with the Minutes,

**Safeguarding** Sheila Walker had been encouraging people to undertake a safeguarding training course and felt that everyone who had done so had found it a worthwhile experience.

**Unit Reports** had been previously circulated and Barbara thanked everyone who had compiled these. Some of the co-ordinators highlighted particular aspects of their report:

Julian Brown (Finance and Central Services) spoke on plans from Mary Sumner House to make free copies of ‘Office 365’ available to all officers of MU which would greatly assist in record keeping and streamlining of processes.

Barbara (Marketing and Communications) thanked Lesley Wright for producing simplified editions of the Diocesan Journal during lockdown, and Margaret Weaver and Lesley Bolton for maintaining our website and facebook page.

Linda Benneworth (Action and Outreach) highlighted support given locally, to the Fishermen’s Mission where many of the men had been furloughed with drastic consequences for their family budgets. She also commended the story bags being given to The Bishop’s School, the range of Christmas gifts and other items to the People’s Kitchen and women’s refuges, and the prisoner backpacks which, as they were of varying designs, did not mark their recipients out as ex-offenders. Barbara thanked Linda for all she had achieved, and also thanked Margaret Crawforth for arranging an amazing number of AFIA breaks.

Jackie Moore (Faith and Policy) mentioned that she was the person to whom to apply if people did not receive copies of the new members’ magazine ‘Connected’ from MSH, especially those who had chosen not to allow their personal details to be included on the central database.

**Deanery Leaders’ reports** had also been circulated; some branches were finding it difficult to persuade their members to meet via Zoom but leaders and others were working hard to keep everyone inter-connected. Jennie Jones particularly commended Anne Blight and members of West Deanery who had whole-heartedly taken up the challenge of having Zoom speakers. Pam Taylor mentioned that there had been no requests for Hospital Bags from St Nicholas Hospital for many months, and this would be pursued. It was good to note that the Hexham Abbey branch was beginning to be re-established. Barbara thanked all the Unit Coordinators and Deanery Leaders.

**Other business**

Linda suggested that people might be more willing to attempt online meetings if there was an obvious element of fun involved.

Barbara mentioned the quilt now completed in memory of Margot Watkins and thanked Hilary Fielding and her team of embroiderers for the work which had gone into this; it would shortly be dedicated and hung in St Paul’s church, Seaton Sluice where Margot’s husband Bob had been the Vicar. Hilary mentioned that two extra squares were being framed and would be given to Margot’s Bob; a generous bequest from Margot helped support our craft workshops and other work with the women at ‘Changing Lives’.

There was no other business.

Barbara then introduced Carol Butler, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, who gave a brief but encouraging resumé of her work. It was vital to enable people to flourish by **R**ecognising potential victims of abuse, **R**esponding well, **R**ecording factually and accurately and **R**eferring instances to appropriate people as no one was on their own, all had a part to play. Although the NSPCC video she played to the meeting refered to children, Safeguarding applied also to vulnerable adults and Carol would be very happy to be a speaker for a branch or deanery meeting.

Sheila Walker led Midday Prayers at 11.22 and the meeting closed with The Grace.

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

 (Diocesan President)