

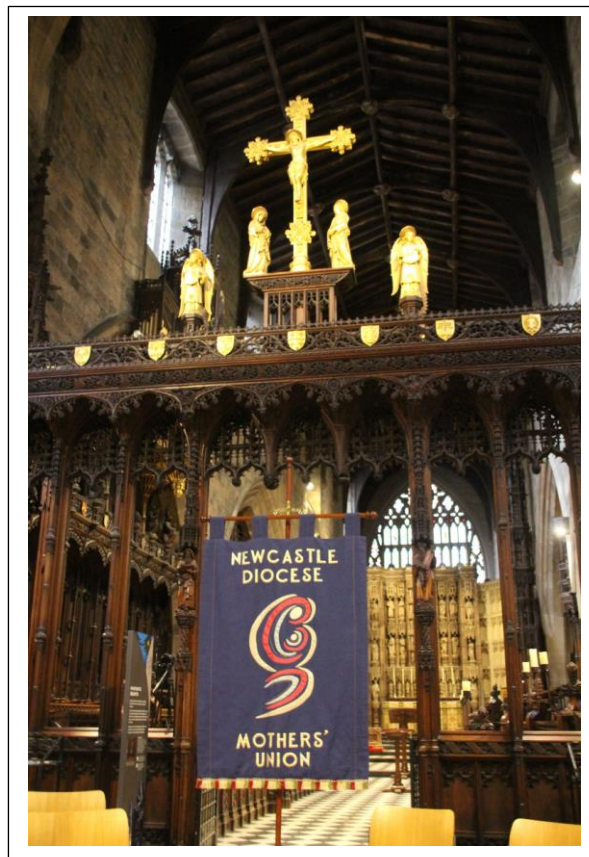
## **Mothers Union, Newcastle Diocese & Cathedral: partners for 150 years.**

**Newcastle Diocese** was founded in 1882 out of Durham Diocese, the same decade that Mothers Union became established across the nation. **Newcastle was the first Diocese after Winchester to adopt Mothers Union.**

The first President was Mrs Emily Wilberforce, wife of the bishop.

More recently MU Presidents have been made Lay Canons of the Cathedral.

**Mothers' Union** was founded in 1876 by Mary Sumner in Old Arlesford Parish, Winchester Diocese, where her husband was Rector. **The first MU meeting in Northumberland was in Embleton in 1879**, led by Louise Creighton, the wife of the vicar, Revd Mandell Creighton, who went on to become Bishop of London.



**The first Bishop of Newcastle**, Rt Revd Ernest Wilberforce, was deeply impressed by shy Mary Sumner's ministry with mothers and persuaded her to speak about her Mothers' Meetings at a church congress in Portsmouth in 1885. She spoke passionately about national morality and the importance of women's vocation as mothers to change the nation for the better. As a result many delegates set up Mothers Meetings. By 1900 membership across the UK reached 169,000 and by 1921 there were 400,000 members worldwide.

**Queen Victoria offered her royal patronage to MU** in her Diamond Jubilee Year 1897. HM Queen Elizabeth II is its current Patron. **In 2000 the United Nations gave Mothers Union consultative status** within its Economic and Social Council on issues such as poverty, gender equality, HIV and AIDS.

**Mary Sumner's vision was radical and pioneering** in its day, calling upon women of all social classes to support one another and to see motherhood as a profession as important as those of men. Branches and activities are parish based, with elected trustees across the Diocese. Despite their name, Mothers' Union is an inclusive organisation with many men as members.

**Rooted in prayer and action**, members believe that prayer is transformational and supports their work around the world. Their daily midday prayer focuses on their projects, locally and world-wide. Midday Prayers in the Cathedral are led by Mothers' Union members every first Thursday of the month. In recent years, Mothers' Union Presidents have been made honorary canons of the Cathedral.

**Mothers' Union Banners and information can be found in the Cathedral's Chapel of the Resurrection. The new Diocesan Banner**, with its modern portrayal of mother and child, replaced the original, which was burned accidentally. It was designed and made by Mrs Edith Coulton, wife of a former Dean the Very Revd Nicholas Coulton (2001-2003).

**Mothers' Union Worldwide Projects** include supportive work with prisons, refuges, survivors of domestic or gender abuse, community crafts, families in adversity, advocacy and campaigns, literacy and numeracy programmes.

**Newcastle branches** have many ongoing local projects supporting families in need, including people in hospital, 'Away From It All' holidays for struggling families, reading books for young children, help for women in refuges, support for homeless people and asylum seekers and 'Fresh Start' packs for those leaving prison.

**More information** can be found on the MU national website. [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)