

The Journal

Summer 2025

Commissioning for a
new triennium:
see page 5

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Charity number 249971

Diocese of Newcastle

MU AND ME: THE YOUNG MAN OF ALNMOUTH & LESBURY

If you imagine your average MU member, I am not that member. My name is Tom, I'm 23 years old and I'm just about to finish my degree in English and French at the University of St Andrews. I am also a Diocesan member of Mothers' Union. I suppose the question you are probably asking right now is: how did this Gen Z man get to know MU and who was the organiser who got him to join in the first place?

Keeping in touch with one's former teachers can lead to interesting places, not least the annual Mary Sumner Day service at St Mary's, Lesbury. For context, I occasionally play the organ for services in the Coastland Churches parishes – what I lack in competence, I make up for in shamelessness – and after one such service, "Mrs Cooper", now better known as Helen, approached me with a request that I play for the branch's annual service. As I had been looking for an excuse to try out the organ there for a while, I agreed.

On the whole, the musical side of things went very well. A friend came up afterwards to say how nice it was that I had played one verse so quietly during the final hymn. Naturally, I took the compliment, but confessed that such sensitivity was truly spontaneous: in other words, I had pushed the wrong preset and ended up with exactly the opposite effect to the one desired. [God's mysterious ways.] During the service, I was struck by the prayer of Mary Sumner: 'All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee'. What a beautiful prayer. It made me think about how I 'touch' people in their lives – not how I 'treat' them or 'talk' to them, not even how I 'live' or 'work' with them, but how I 'touch' them. Hearing about the work of MU encouraged these thoughts, whether that was MU members witnessing in prisons and hospitals, bringing relief to families through AFIA, campaigns like RISE UP and international development. There was something about the MU vision that seemed different to other campaigns on similar issues, a rootedness in something more basic, more loving than simple advocacy.



A little later that year, I became Co-Editor of our local parish magazine and we would publish MU material, mainly local news, campaigns and reflections from Chaplain Revd Anne Marr. You could say that I was being drip-fed MU without realising it! I found the chaplaincy reflections particularly moving and began to look more into MU. Maybe not the most high-profile charity of its kind, but what it is, is kind. Simply put, I knew I wanted to be a part of it.

Whilst I am best described as a 'distance member', being in St Andrews for most of the year, I try to keep up to date with the various MU campaigns and always appreciate the MU prayer diary and journal that come through the door. For me, this coming summer already has two highlights pencilled in: my graduation and my induction to MU. One will certainly 'touch' me in many ways and my prayer is that, by the other, I will be able to 'touch' the world.

Thomas Rippon

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Newcastle

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President's Letter

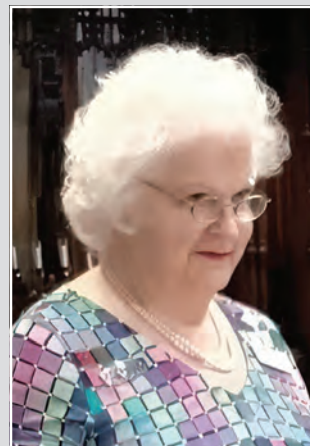
Dear Friends,

Next year is our 150th Anniversary! We are working closely with the Cathedral this year with our 16 Days against gender violence and **Rise Up** campaign. They will host a Celebration for our 150th – it may not be a service but a Happening!

Central and East Deaneries may hold a Lunch – these dates are yet to be confirmed.

We really need to follow our World Wide President's theme of **Join us, Join in!** We have proved many, many times that working together is so very rewarding. Fellowship is a powerful tool. At the moment we are relying on too few people. I am aware that we need to make our endeavours easier to run. Working with other charities may be the way forward but we still need our own folk to coordinate them. The Leadership Team is very stretched.

We are very excited that our WWP is visiting the **'Something Wonderful in Benwell'** project on July 8th (see page 9). On her arrival she will meet Trustees and those who work in the Writing and Art projects; she will be with us for Midday Prayers and have Lunch. At 1.30pm she will meet any member who wishes to come to St James Church – all are welcome. She will do a presentation then chat to those who attend. You all do such wonderful work on behalf of MU and it will be a chance to get to know her and tell her about your projects.



With love, *Margy*

A VIP invitation to the Commissioning of our World Wide President!

BECAUSE of the work that he does on the Mary Sumner House new central membership database, Julian Brown received a VIP invitation to the Commissioning, on 24th March, of our new WWP and Worldwide Trustees in the wonderful setting of St Martin in the Fields.

'The service was led by the Archbishop of York, and very much took the form of our own Commissioning service, with the ceremonial part, where Kathleen Snow was presented with the Badge of Honour from her predecessor, there were speeches from the Bishop of Kathleen's Diocese in Canada, and after the Communion, by Kathleen herself.

The service ended and those with an invite were directed to make our way to Mary Sumner House for a reception. Fortunately, John and Christine knew the way (Christine Sharp, our York Provincial President, attended our own Commissioning Service in January).'

To read Julian's full account, and see the pictures of some of the main players, see our website (details on page 2 and QR code on the back page)

Editor



Northern Province President – Christine Sharp and her husband John, who is Diocesan Finance Trustee



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

REVD ANNE MARR

Hopes Ahead

New Patron and new WWP

This Triennium heralds a significant event in our history – Mothers' Union will be 150 years old next year. It is timely that we have welcomed not only Kathleen Snow as WWP but also our new Patron, Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh. So what may lie ahead?



Cathedral Links

We have strengthened our 150-year association with our Cathedral. This year, on Thursday 7th August at 12.00, we shall be remembering Mary Sumner Day

in the Cathedral, both at Midday Prayers and in Holy Communion. We shall also be welcoming new members from the Cathedral staff, and blessing the kneelers made by MU for the Chapel of the Resurrection. Another link with the Cathedral is developing, following the Diocesan three-year pattern of 'Seeking, Sharing, Sending'. This year we are seeking

ideas for sustained joint action for 2026 on one of our 'shared passions' – the issues around Gender Based Violence. We wonder how God will guide us.

Getting ready for 150th Anniversary

On a Saturday in July 2026 (tbc) there will be a celebration in the Cathedral, with the bishop present, when we can give thanks for the founding of MU 150 years ago, for its growth world-wide and in our Diocese, and for its current commitment to life-giving projects. Branches will all be invited to contribute ideas.

Favourite hymns:

Mary Sumner House is preparing a collection of favourite hymns for the 150th Anniversary. If you haven't already done so, please send a list of up to five favourite hymns from your branch to the chaplain who will collate the top most favourites. If you can add a single sentence to say what you find most special about the hymn, that would be great. We can include some in our 150th celebration services.

Anne Marr

Open our eyes, Lord

Sometimes we stumble upon old words long hidden within files on an office shelf. Sometimes they chime with new resonance. It's like that with familiar prayers, scripture readings and hymns: we read and hear them often but one day, for no apparent reason, they take on a new meaning and speak to us personally in a new way to fit in a new situation.

As we journey through this year and into the years ahead, perhaps this newly rediscovered prayer in my files may be a helpful one for branch meetings or services. It reminded me of Mary Sumner's prayer that God will touch and bless those we meet.

Open our eyes, Lord
to gently scan the life we lead...
the home we have...
the world we inhabit...

Give us, whose eyes are dimmed by familiarity,
a bigger vision of what you can do...

Open our eyes, Lord
show us the world as in your sight
shot through with possibility...

Today, tomorrow, this week,
open our eyes to one person, or one place,
where we might find and wean
a potential in the waiting...

Open our eyes, Lord God,
in yearning for you.

Tynemouth Deanery Quiet Afternoon

CHRIST Church North Shields branch hosted an afternoon of reflection based on a painting by Wm Holman Hunt, "The Shadow of Death" painted between 1870 and 1873.



Image courtesy of Manchester City Galleries

The birth, life and death of Jesus are all featured in this one painting, showing Jesus as a working man, exhausted after a hard day's work, stretching out in the evening sun. As a simple carpenter, surrounded by wood shavings, he would acquire the skills of patience and persistence that would strengthen his resolve in the ministry to come. His pose casts a shadow on the wall of the carpenter's workshop prefiguring the crucifixion. Mary, in the authentic dress of the Holy Land, sees this, as she sorts the objects given by the Magi at his birth, just like we would hang on to objects reminding us of our own children.

She foresees the eventual fate of her dear son, and ponders, worries, and reflects like any other mother, just as she had done after the Annunciation, Christ's Nativity, and when he disappeared and was found in the temple, talking to the elders. The painting is full of symbolism and authenticity as the artist purchased all the "props" in Bethlehem! The arched window behind Christ's head is like a halo and the star shaped window reminds us of the Star of Bethlehem. Through the windows can be seen the hills of Galilee, the future landscape of Christ's ministry and on the windowsill are a scroll, representing the Old Testament prophecies, and two pomegranates, symbols of the Passion. The plum bob hanging from the rack suggests Christ's heart and reeds stacked in the corner suggest the mock sceptre.

A lot to think about in just one painting!

Jean Scott



Margy and Anne Cairns are commissioned

2005-2027 – our New Triennium opened with joy



UR Triennial Commissioning Service was held in Newcastle Cathedral on 25th

January, by invitation of the Dean, the Very Reverend Lee Batson, and attended by our newly appointed Provincial President, Christine Sharp.



Margy with Provincial President Christine

The occasion was truly wonderful. Our choir were in tuneful accord; Margy re-told a story from Acts; our banner was lifted high by Malcom Cairns; images of all the other MU banners were projected onto two screens; Dean Lee Batson preached and also commissioned the officers and trustees; and Catherine Sourbut Groves, archdeacon of Lindisfarne, presided. (Catherine had become a grandmother the day before so the event was extra special for her; she promised to become a member in celebration of the event.)

A number of visitors to the Cathedral joined in the worship and engaged in conversation; the café was full

of Mothers' Union members; and by no means least – we remembered all those who never made it despite their good intentions, many of them prevented by bad weather and unexpected, restricted rail and bus transport. Our new Provincial President, Christine Sharp, was delighted with everything. Canon Ruth and Canon Zoe at the Cathedral have both asked to become members of MU so we shall welcome them in our August service.

A big thank you from MU goes to all involved in the planning and events of the day – including the amazing team of vergers who set out all the chairs and managed the magic technology. All that remains is for us to go forward in faith into whatever

circumstances life leads us, rejoicing in 150 years of Mothers' Union world-wide, and to spread the good news of God's love in the words we speak, the prayers we breathe and the lives we live.

Anne Marr,
Diocesan MU Chaplain



Procession of Trustees



Archdeacon Catherine



Singing with our choir

Photographs by Anne Blight and
Linda Benneworth

A New Way of Delivering AFIA (Away From It All holidays)

Our Action & Outreach highlights in 2024

In her report to **Council on 4th April**, President Margy gave us a revealing synopsis of the number of people who had been helped through our various projects in 2024:

| PROJECT | NUMBER | BENEFICIARIES |
|----------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Hospital bags | 540 | Toiletries for emergency admissions |
| AFIA holidays | 15 holidays | 110 children & adults |
| Prisoner 'Fresh Start' rucksacks | 9 | Prisoners on day of release |
| Fishermen's hats | 22 | |
| Refuge gifts | 780 | Family members in refuges |
| Foodbank help | 100 | |
| Care home visits | 15 | |
| Christmas gift bags | 170 | Homeless People's Kitchen users |
| Gifts of Love | 185 | GAP girls, school starters |
| Various gifts | 29 | Asylum seekers |
| Knitted items | 300 | Prem babies, care home residents & others |

Action, Outreach and new Project Team

As Kathleen Snow, our WW President, has reminded us – we are stronger together...and this is very much in evidence in those projects we support across the diocese. Teamwork has become more essential. Following up on all the action and outreach work forged by Revd Diana Macnaughton, our new 'Project Team' is reviewing and developing our project links. The Project Team welcomes new members: please contact Karoline Wellbourne (contact details on page 2).

ReNEw

Mothers' Union in Newcastle Diocese has always worked in partnership with outside agencies whose aims and values fit in with our own. This year our AFIA support will be given to a new partner, ReNEw North East, who organise holidays for families in need.

John and Lena Stephenson from ReNEw gave us a very interesting talk about the work of the Charity at Diocesan Council in April. ReNEw is a Christian Charity which support young families in the North East.

next generation. They work with churches in devising programmes of activities with children and young people.

They also run a residential family weekend at the end of August in Dunbar, North Berwick and we hope that our AFIA referrals can go to them for this weekend.

Accommodation is arranged in cabins and each family would have their own cabin. Transport from Newcastle station is provided, all catering is included and a full programme of activities arranged, such as family group activities, crafts, and a day out. In the evenings there will be end of the day reflections and worship and, depending on the ages of the children, "Open the Book", or a dedicated youth hour.

It seems like a very busy and exciting weekend which I'm sure will be greatly enjoyed by all the participants.

This is a very different offering to our AFIA clients but it is hoped that those who can take part will find it an inspiring experience.

Sheila Walker

Those involved come from different church backgrounds to share the good news of Jesus with the



Margy thanks John & Lena Stephenson for their talk

Action and Outreach



Christmas menu for families at our Refuges

For the fourth year running the First Internet Branch provided a complete Christmas Day Menu of food for the families at Harbour Refuge. We were supported financially by members from Ponteland and St Columba's branches plus donations from many who are not MU members but wanted to help with the project which they felt was so worthwhile.

This year for the first time we supplied both Harbour Refuges, North Tyneside as usual, but also, by request, the Northumberland Refuge too. This meant that we actually provided food for 26 family units in total. As ever we were helped by the Community Champion at Tesco Kingston Park who put the considerable order together for us to collect on 23rd December. It took four cars to carry all the supplies to St Nicholas South Gosforth who allow us the use of their Hall to pack everything for delivery.

It was a mammoth task but our small but efficient team worked well. It was fun and we all enjoyed the fellowship and satisfaction we felt for a task well done

My personal thanks to all who contributed either financially and/or hands on – it was a great success

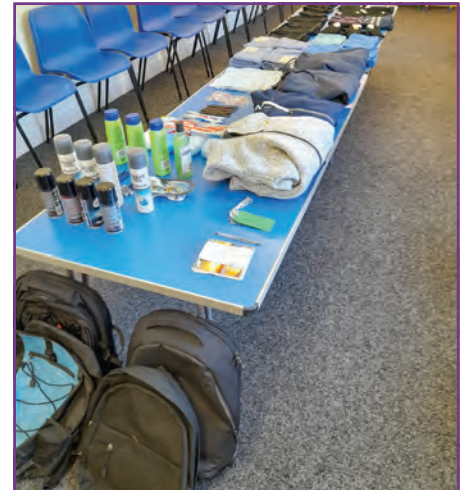
Sylvia Hickey

'Fresh Start' Rucksacks

During Lent the Mothers' Union of St Peter's, Monkseaton aimed to buy and assemble some rucksacks full of gifts for prisoners at HMP Northumberland who have no family to return to on the day of their release.

We did this with the generous help and support of our congregation:

sharing Mothers' Union projects with them helps to bring us together and highlights what MU seeks to do. Together we collected over £200, which enabled us to buy and fill four rucksacks: each contains a full range of toiletries and warm clothing, as well as a fleece top and joggers to enable the ex-prisoner to be presentable to sign on or look for accommodation or a job interview on the day after release.



It can make the difference between sinking or swimming. Norma Willmott, who volunteers at the prison, collected our gifts and delivered them to Acklington.

Barbara Packer, Branch Treasurer





The First Internet Branch provided 24 Real Easter Eggs, one for every child at Harbour Refuge. The 18 women each received an Easter card containing a Greggs £10 food voucher, generously donated by Greggs themselves.

Sylvia Hickey, Branch Leader

Easter eggs for Northumberland Women's Refuge

I visited the Northumberland Woman's Refuge in Holy week to deliver a large selection of Easter eggs donated by our members and congregation for the families. I also delivered the fantastic toiletry bags donated from St Bede's branch, and outdoor toys, books and craft items. The staff were, as ever, very grateful for these donations.

Jennifer Snowdon



Projects at St Bede

On Mothering Sunday our Branch Members had their Annual Bakery Event after Church Family Service. Once again it was a huge success, money raised goes to our Branch Project Funds.

For Easter Myra the Branch Leader delivered ten handmade bags full of Toiletries for the Northumberland Women's Refuge to the co-ordinator at St Cuthberts Church. She would deliver the bags and her collection of Easter Eggs to the Refuge.

The Northumberland Woman's Refuge appreciates all items and presents they receive from MU Members within the Bedlington Deanery.

Myra Turner, Branch Leader, St Bede's Church Newsham Mothers Union

St Bartholomew's Long Benton Branch

Plans for our Annual Walk of Witness in support of the RISE-UP Campaign were somewhat scuppered by the arrival of Storm Bert on the very day of our walk. However, a small group of members and friends braved the storm, trudging through the icy conditions from the Church gates to the local shopping centre where a minute's silence was held. We hope for better weather for the next walk.

(Left)

With the help of our congregation, we also collected another set of children's clothes for delivery to the Harbour Refuge before Christmas.

(Centre)

We also had two stalls at the Church Christmas Fair on 30th November. As well as the regular Jams and Preserves stall, this year we ran another stall to add to MU funds selling floral arrangements, cross stitch tree decorations and handmade Christmas cards, all made by our members. A busy run up to Christmas, but so rewarding.

(Right)





Something Wonderful in Benwell

The Art Project had an Exhibition in Newcastle City Library for two weeks in April

was given a £50 donation from a friend in Benwell and was able to get them another slow cooker to help them in their kitchen. Shirley – cook, Anna Chaplain plus other things was delighted and hasn't yet decided what else they need. Spending it wisely!

Many of you will recognise Barbara Bailes, Branch Leader at Holy Cross Fenham. You may have been the recipient of a Bookmark or card in the past from Barbara, who is a talented artist. However she slipped quietly into the Art group run by Petra on her Disability Scooter and is enjoying the new friends she is

making, and seeing folks produce Art through Collage, graphics etc. She is delighted to have found out about the group.

Anne Blight



Community Art meets Local History

N March, members of the Art Club in Benwell and Scotswood (part of the 'Something Wonderful' Community Project supported by MU) helped to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the local Montagu Pit Disaster when 38 men and boys lost their lives. They researched and painted some of the scenes and people of the time. This portrait was painted by Nabilah, a former teacher from Iran. He has captured the distress of the event in the eyes of the pitman.



Nabilah is a tall, quiet and modest man who is no stranger to distress in his own life. These eyes could be his. He has found a place for his family in the Christian community in Benwell and is one of many who have discovered ways to express emotions through art. His son took part in the dramatic reading of the Passion Gospel on Palm Sunday.

Many MU members have donated much appreciated art materials for the Art Club in Benwell's 'Something Wonderful' Community Project. Here is a place where people can meet to discover and create 'something wonderful'. Membership is free and all are welcome.

Revd Chris Minchin says: "We are incredibly grateful for the help Mothers' Union members have given us recently, in a climate where more and more people are in need... A meal eaten together, or the joy of creating something good and beautiful through art, are small but direct and tangible ways of transforming lives."

AROUND THE DIOCESE

A chance encounter

The daughter of a friend, (Heather) got into a conversation with a lady on the train, as she travelled to work one day.

The day was the 24th March and the lady was Kathleen Snow (right) who was on her way to be commissioned as our Worldwide President. Kathleen asked Heather to take a photograph of her and to pass on greetings to St Cuthbert's branch! During my time as Diocesan President we were encouraged to explain the work of Mothers' Union whilst travelling in a moving lift, perhaps the train led to a more leisurely explanation of who we are and what we do.

Jennifer Snowdon, Branch Leader, St Cuthbert, Blyth



Easter Chickens



During the last week of term, we had a wonderful day at St Cuthbert's, where we welcomed nearly 100 children from our local school, Croftway Academy, who came along and learnt about the Easter egg and that an empty chocolate egg is symbolic of the empty tomb.

Members of the congregation, including Mothers' Union members, knitted or crocheted over 100 chicks for the children to take home with a chocolate egg hidden inside their chick.

Jennifer Snowdon, Branch Leader



Wylam St Oswin's Mothers' Union invite a Bishop

Having read an article in a recent MU Journal by the Right Revd John Packer on the role of Bishops in the House of Lords, we invited him to speak at our April meeting. We were joined by branches in the Hexham & Corbridge Deanery and also members of our church congregation. Over 20 of us were enlightened by what Bishop John had to say on the role representatives play in the legislative procedure, and also the valuable work he undertook during his eight years as Lord Bishop of Ripon & Leeds.

With a better understanding of the process we will now be more able to follow Bishop Helen-Ann (her speeches are broadcast widely) as she fulfils her role as Lord Spiritual, raising matters of concern, particularly those relevant to this part of the UK.

Karen Webster, Branch Contact





Morpeth Deanery new members

This photo shows President Margy, Pauline Young (Branch Leader), Joan Howard (Deanery Leader), Revd Simon White and the new members in the Morpeth Branch.

Taken at the Morpeth Deanery Service at Stannington on 12th December 2024.

This was also Joan's last official duty as Deanery Leader and the closing service for the Stannington Branch.

Sandra Davison



President Margy said 'Don't forget the fun!' So at Gosforth we re-created the Cook Island atmosphere to experience the World Day of Prayer service written there.

Dial 999



Craig, from the Northeast Ambulance Service, visited our DIOCESAN MEMBERS. He used his models to show us how to perform CPR, how to use a defibrillator, and how to deal with choking. Speed is of the essence in this life-saving work, and it is not scary – verbal prompts are given by the defibrillator! Visit our website for the full story!

Sylvia Hickey, Diocesan Members' Co-ordinator

Love Grace Bags

Bishop Helen Ann's Christmas Appeal was Love Grace and the big bag pack happened at Holy Saviour's in Tynemouth on 2nd February. 376 handbags were packed with toiletries, and Mothers' Union served tea, coffee and delicious cakes to all who helped.

The picture shows Diane Bayley and Elizabeth Lee with Bishop Helen Ann, with some of the handbags. Elizabeth Lee is the cousin of Grace, the girl murdered in New Zealand in whose memory the charity was set up.



The Rise Up display in the Cathedral to combat gender-based violence – with Jackie Moore and our Chaplain, the Revd Anne Marr.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE

23rd-24th Retreat at Shepherd's Dene, led by Canon Clare Maclaren

JULY

8th at 11.30am. Something Wonderful event in Benwell, attended by our World Wide President. See President's letter for details.

25th at 11am. Commissioning of York Provincial President and Chaplain in York Minster: all welcome.

AUGUST

7th Mary Sumner Midday Prayer and dedication of kneelers in Cathedral

9th Mary Sumner Day: Fellowship Lunch and local events

SEPTEMBER

1st at 2pm. Tynemouth Deanery Festival at Holy Saviour, Tynemouth

8th Deadline for Autumn

Newsletter: copy to Barbara Packer, please

26th at 10am. Trustees meeting on Zoom

OCTOBER

10th at 6 for 6.30pm. Diocesan Council at Kingston Park

NOVEMBER

28th Gift Bag Day and collection of Winter Journals at Church House

• • •

JUNE 2026

Our celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Mothers' Union

10th at 7pm. Evensong in St Pauls' Cathedral

11th Gathering in Emmanuel Centre, next door to MSH.

• BIRTHDAYS • ANNIVERSARIES • DEATHS •

BIRTHDAYS

80th Jennifer Brown

St Bartholomew, Longbenton

Brenda Graham

Christ Church, North Shields

90th Sheila Robson

Holy Nativity, Chapel House

Elsie Rankin

St Bede, Newsham

95th Nancy Rudd

Amble

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

GOLDEN WEDDING

Sheena and Jon Haynes

St Bartholomew, Longbenton

DIAMOND WEDDING

Lesley & Eddie Bolton

Diocesan Member

DEATHS

Vera Huntley

Indoor Member

Dorothy McLean

Morpeth

Mary Watson

Holy Saviour, Tynemouth

Ruth Wolf

St Mary, Monkseaton

Rachael Taylor

St Bartholomew, Longbenton

Margaret Coulter

Stannington

Mary Embleton

Whorlton St John

Simon Embleton

Whorlton St John

Marjorie Forster

All Saints, Gosforth

Pauline Aylett

Christ Church, North Shields

Alan Walton

Earsdon & Backworth

June Johnson

Earsdon & Backworth
(63 years a member)

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members, including:

Ruth Stradling

Diocesan Member

Revd Francesca Walsh

St Peter, Monkseaton

Gillian Buxton

St Peter, Monkseaton

Jane Skinner

St Gabriel, Heaton

Heather Wear

St Gabriel, Heaton

Linda Hammond

St Gabriel, Heaton

Helen Blythe

St Gabriel, Heaton

Yasmin Qureshi

St Gabriel, Heaton

Maureen Austin

St Gabriel, Heaton

Fiona Ingham

St Gabriel, Heaton

Do visit our growing website at
www.munewcastle.org.uk



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 develops and delivers.

If you would like to contribute to the work that Mothers' Union does both in Newcastle Diocese and Worldwide you can contribute to our Virgin Giving site:

www.uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1008779

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Newcastle

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