

A letter from the Diocesan President

Dear fellow-member

It is a joy, as lockdown eases, to be able to meet friends and family, either indoors or outside. I hope very much that this will soon be possible for some Branches – whether that is so for yours must depend on the circumstances of your members, and there is no right answer for all. Please do approach this prayerfully and sensibly.

At this time of year, around Pentecost, we can share with the early disciples in experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit to encourage and motivate us. It is a reminder that all we do is in response to God's love for us and for our neighbours, and is empowered by the Spirit. We look forward to worshipping together at the Diocesan Festival on 10th July.

In our response to MU LIVE (later in this edition) we celebrate all the many ways in which we have been enabled to reach out and help during the pandemic, and it is lovely to see that much of what we did was for those in our immediate neighbourhood: paradoxically, many of us have come to know our neighbours, and, indeed, our fellow-members, in a new way, through phone calls and help – I hope we will not lose this! Recognising that the pandemic has hit hardest those who are abused or in need, we have also reached out particularly to these groups.

Thank you for all your love, care and support, especially for those in need or distress

With love and prayers for you and your loved ones



Barbara

DIOCESAN FESTIVAL Saturday 10th July 2021

Last year the Lindisfarne Archdeaconry Festival had to be cancelled because of Covid restrictions, although we did have a wonderful Service of Celebration broadcast on YouTube which many of you enjoyed.

We have been living under restrictions since the beginning of this year, but we are very hopeful that we will be able to hold a Festival in St. James Church, Morpeth with many of you present. We have decided to make it a Diocesan Festival, with members from all the Diocese taking part.

Our speaker at the morning session will be Cath Hilton, Zonal MU President for York Province. Cath has responsibilities in many areas of the Mothers' Union, Development, Safeguarding, Remuneration, Fundraising and Communication. Her talk will be titled "The Bigger Picture of MU". I am sure you will find this very interesting, she will be willing to answer questions following her talk.

After Midday Prayers there will be a break for lunch and we will meet again at 2pm for a Service in the Church, led by the Rector, Rev Simon White, the Address will be given by our Diocesan Chaplain, Rev Dr Sarah Moon.

Plans may have to change, and we may offer some of the proceedings on Zoom if necessary, but final details will be sent to the Branch Leaders later in June.

Please put this date in your Diary and pray that we will be able to get together for a Festival and celebration of all that is good in the Mothers' Union in Newcastle Diocese.

Sheila Walker VP

ACTION AND OUTREACH



Staff at the Eothen dementia home in Wallsend were delighted to receive three handmade blankets made by Mothers Union members. These are just the right size to go over wheelchairs and will be most useful when residents in wheelchairs go to sit outside. Thanks to Elizabeth and Claire who made them.



Backpacks for the Departure lounge

Newcastle diocese members donated 12 prisoner backpacks to Acklington prison just before Christmas. Each contained useful items for the prisoners on their release. Typically, each pack will contain underwear, T-shirt and jogging pants as well as soap, shampoo, towel, deodorant, shaving gel, toothpaste and toothbrush.

Liz Arthur the NEPACS manager at HMP Northumberland, has sent a card thanking all the MU members for their generous donations to the Departure Lounge.



First Internet Branch “Adopt a Refuge” Project

The branch delivered their first consignment in early March. They provided items for women and children who arrive at the Refuge with little or nothing. This initial delivery consisted of four of everything and will be topped up as and when required. The cost was covered by a grant from the Freemasons and will, hopefully, secure the project for at least a year, but Covid makes it difficult to estimate the turnover of people entering or leaving the Refuge.



By the start of May the Refuge reported that every single item from the initial delivery had been used. With the opening up of lockdown, to quote the manager, “everything had gone mad”. As families had moved out demand for the vacant places was intense and so we now found ourselves doing “shop No. 2”. This time we felt that we needed to provide six of every item. How long this consignment will last we do not know, supply and demand is always hard to estimate and is made more difficult by the rise in Domestic Abuse during the pandemic.

Our grant from the Freemasons, though extremely welcome, would not be enough to cope and so I asked the A&O Unit to help from their funds so that we could add extra nightwear and underwear etc. for the children.

MULOA challenged us to ask what people required rather than us deciding what we thought was needed and this is just what we are doing. Giving these women and their children a helping hand at a time of crisis is a small but important beginning on the road to a new and better life, a life free from violence or control. For them this really is a life changing experience.



Sylvia Hickey V.P.



I visited the Northumberland Women's Refuge in Holy Week with Easter Eggs donated by members of St Cuthbert's Mothers' Union and a variety of outdoor toys including Hula Hoops, Frisbees and Balls, bought with donations from MU Members. I also took Toiletry Bags, made with love and care by Elsie Rankin (St Bede's MU) for families arriving at the refuge. The Refuge were, as ever, very grateful for our contributions.

Canon Jennifer Snowdon

MU LIVE 2020

Each year we fill in a survey sent by Mary Sumner House, to help build a picture of all that has been achieved over the year and its impact on the community. This year Diocesan President Barbara asked Deanery Leaders, Branch Leaders and project leaders to help. The result was astonishing, particularly given the constraints of the pandemic! There are 7 reporting categories, and our full report runs to 8 pages (Barbara can provide it, if asked), so this is just a snapshot of a few aspects:

Developing skills: focussed mainly on helping members and others to access technology, and particularly Zoom.

Impact: members keeping in touch, all committee meetings taking place, often with full attendance; many members joining with Midday Prayers and 'webinars' from Mary Sumner House; a new Internet Branch.

This links to **Nurturing Faith:** we have held several online services for special occasions – Mary Sumner Day, Diocesan Festival and Eucharist, and a service for the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence - also with **Campaigning** – including Zoom talks to Branches about surviving Domestic Abuse, and a public protest with 110 black ribbons, opposite a Metro station. *Impact: raising awareness of the magnitude of the problem, and supporting those suffering from it.*

Offering Service: shopping for those shielding, lots of phone calls and a virtual 'coffee morning', bereavement support and lots of cards. Branch Leaders keeping in touch with all members, and delivering MU communications and other useful information. Birthday, Easter and Christmas cards for our 50 Indoor Members.

Impact: e.g. 'Thank you – I was so scared to go out (to shop) and now I don't have to'

Crafting: 30 'Angels of hope', 30 prem baby clothes, 200 scrubs, 145 wash bags for scrubs, many knitted hearts and face masks, 70 Christingles – these are just the ones we heard about!

Impact: people feel cared for when given a hand-made gift!

Gifts of love: for the homeless - 110 shoeboxes of gifts, 23 pairs trainers, 77 clothing items

For ex-offenders – 20 backpacks full of necessities and treats

For hospitals – 2000 toiletry bags for emergency admissions, and holding crosses

For refuges – 246 gift bags of 'girlie' gifts, dressing gowns, 10 starter packs for women and children arriving with nothing, shopping vouchers, carpeting for two homes.

For community vulnerable: 10 'tea on a plate' and 45 cooked meals delivered weekly

For Fishermen's Mission: a tumble drier for fishermen in port, gifts for fishermen

Impact: 'Thank you for looking after my Mum when I can't be there' – and many other comments!

AFIA Holidays for 228 people during the Summer, when this was possible – mostly 4-day caravan holidays

Impact: families suffering Domestic Abuse were able to get away for a break – something to look forward to! It strengthened our links with the 5 refuges we work with.



The total number of people benefitting (just from those who told Barbara!) was 5,131!

Pictures from the top:

1. The White Ribbon Service in the Cathedral
2. Hand-made scarves for Eid
3. Waiting for the Santa Train
4. Toys for children in the refuges

MU members make a wall-hanging

Ten Mothers' Union embroiderers, under the guidance of Hilary Fielding, have created the wall hanging seen in the picture, with each member embroidering one flower. The completed hanging, made of lilac silk, was installed in St. Paul's Church, Seaton Sluice, in the parish of Delaval, on Sunday 9th May.

The hanging commemorates the life of Margot Watkins, whose husband, Bob, was at one time Vicar of Delaval Parish, where Margot was also a very committed Mothers' Union member. Margot loved spring flowers, so the hanging perfectly reflects her interest – both in spring flowers and in Mothers' Union's work with women and families.

A generous bequest from Margot has helped us in our work with women from the Changing Lives hostels, with whom we have run craft classes, pamper days and retreats, helping to give the women a sense of self-worth.

Thanks to all those who took part, and especially to Hilary Fielding, who embroidered the script and designed and completed the beautiful hanging.



This beautiful framing of two further embroidered flowers was given to Bob at the Dedication of the hanging.

COVID-19 SUPPORT

If you watched news bulletins in April you cannot have failed to notice the plight of Covid-19 sufferers in India, the desperate health care professionals working with a fraction of the oxygen supplies urgently needed, the critical shortage of hospital beds, the frantic families trying to get some help for their loved ones.

Diocesan President Barbara consulted with our Trustees and it was agreed to send £1,000 from our funds through BAPIO (British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin), towards provision of food for those made destitute by Covid, to provide oxygen, and to train volunteer doctors to conduct online consultations.

Barbara was able to do this through BAPIO's GoFundMe page. If you would like more information about their work, or, indeed, would like to make a further donation yourself, do put BAPIO in your search box, where there is ongoing news, and details of how the money is being spent.

In praise of members

Without doubt we will all agree that 2020 was a difficult year.

One of the saddest things was to have our churches closed and our Mothers' Union meetings stopped. As long-established Christians, we never would have believed that we could not go to church.

The ingenuity of folk soon meant that we were telephoning members regularly, learning to use the internet, doing Zoom for those able to do so. Along with doorstep deliveries we were able to keep members informed of church and Mothers' Union news and literature.

Our branch is small, with an average age of 79 and only a small proportion of members able to do online stuff.

Of course this has meant no branch fund raising. However our branch treasurer informed me that at the end of the financial year, with the remarkable and outstanding generosity of members, we had managed to give a total of £290 to Mothers' Union charities and appeals in the year.

We have all missed the fellowship and contact with each other, but it is heart-warming, and with pride we thank our members for their generosity. Despite the lockdowns and restrictions they still felt able to support the work of Mothers' Union so very well.

Jacqueline Rainford, Branch Leader, Holy Nativity Chapel House.

An Enrolment by Telephone

At the beginning of the year, one of our All Saints', Gosforth ladies, Hilary Hide, told me that she would like to become a member of the Mothers' Union. For years she had shown a great interest in the work of the MU and I've always given her copies of newsletters, journals etc.

Hilary agreed to be enrolled by telephone on January 21st. After thorough preparation including a doorstep visit on the 20th, we began the service. At the appropriate stage, her husband opened a sealed envelope and presented Hilary with her membership card and badge (thank you VP Sylvia!) Beside her, Hilary had daffodils and a card from our members, and the occasion was very memorable for both of us.

Pam Taylor, Branch Leader

The corona virus lockdown has been very hard for everyone, but to have been enrolled as a member of the Mothers' Union over the phone was a real bonus for me. I am so grateful to Pam Taylor for all the trouble she has taken to make this possible. Today was very special.

Hilary Hide

Four Candles / Fork handles—An Advent Service led by Rev. Sheila Auld. (Assistant Priest and Branch Leader)

Dec. 9th 2020 was a memorable day for us all, a day of hope inspired by the national launch of the Coronavirus Vaccine, and the opportunity to share together in our gratitude in our Advent Service.

Our Advent journey usually prepares us for Christmas with an incremental view of the historical, biblical development of humanity's relationship with God in weekly episodes. Sheila's services are always deeply thought-provoking and challenging – this was no exception, a pilgrimage of reflection on the insights and teachings of Old Testament and contemporary patriarchs, prophets and visionaries. Our journey had pit-stops lit by the Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. At each point we were guided in our reflections and self-examination with an insightful gentler direction and encouragement. Quiet meditative, wordless moments were supported by the music of oboe and cello, and the choral music of St John's Chapel Choir.

The importance of the towering examples of courage, obedience and service spoke loudly across the years, as they were illuminated by the light of 'their candle'.

1. The Candle of Hope shone on Abraham, Moses and Old Testament leaders.
2. The Candle of Peace on Isaiah and Micah, prophets who foretold a coming of the Messiah.
3. The Candle of Joy on the shepherds who were first to hear of the Birth of Jesus. It is a candle of our wonder and gratitude and the opportunity to consider the place of John the Baptist in the story of messengers and prophets. His courage and desire to speak 'truth to power' in the disregard for his own safety – and what it teaches us today. So John the Baptist forms the bridge between the Old and New Testaments, - between keeping 'the Law' and recognising 'God's Promises'.
4. The Candle of Love. The world lit by the glory of celebrating angels and for the example of Mary and all who 'mother' others, we give thanks.

We then turned seamlessly to the Fork Handles of the two Ronnies, and the gift of laughter, and of sharing our joy with all whom we hold dear. The simple, practical garden fork might be seen to represent all who work on the land, farmers, gardeners and the environmentalists – all serving to preserve God's creation and serving fellow humans. Finally, the everyday dinner fork reminding us of those who lack the basic needs of food, shelter and safety and can remind us of our responsibility towards others.

As our journey ended, we gave thanks for the shared journey and especially for Sheila's gentle guidance and challenges.

Wyn Findlay on behalf of St Gabriel's Heaton MU

What better way of helping families during lockdown than making sure that younger children were able to make up skills lost during school closures? We liaised with the Bishop's Primary School in Ashington and facilitated the purchase of stimulating games and puzzles that could be played at home. Story bags were designed to enthrall the younger children and encourage their use of vocabulary. Thank you all for enabling this to happen and we sent them good wishes from Mothers' Union as they put them to use.

Margy Tasker-Brown



Early Years Home Learning Bags

Bishop's Primary School was delighted to receive a donation from the Mothers' Union to support home learning during the lockdown period. After discussion with the Early Years team a decision was reached to use the funds to purchase a selection of games and jigsaws that the children could borrow on a weekly basis. A set of resources has been distributed to each class - all stored in individual 'home learning' bags, which are now being borrowed by some very excited children!

The decision to purchase games and jigsaws was made as teachers had identified areas of learning and development in which children had not progressed as well during lockdown, for example in their Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Teachers had noticed that some children were struggling to share or to take turns and that in some cases, their language development had also regressed. Board games really support children in developing these skills. The children already have the opportunity to borrow story books so it was felt that games and jigsaws would add an extra dimension to their 'play' whilst at home.

The Early Years staff team are extremely grateful to the Mothers' Union for providing us with the funds to introduce this extension to our home learning provision.



Mothers' Union participated in strength in the first ever virtual meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women shortly before Easter, with 26 members attending from 12 different countries. We were delighted to work closely with the Anglican Communion Office (ACO) delegation, and to hold joint sessions, as well as collaborating with fellow members of the global faith movement, Side by Side, and with members of the UK Women's Movement Alliance (NAWO). A number of speakers represented MU at various events and the delegates all took away specific personal actions to increase impact in their communities.

Mothers Union member walks 100 miles for charity

Each year for the past six years 1st Internet member Rosemary New has done a long-distance sponsored walk for *Restored*, the Christian domestic abuse charity that has provided the Church of England and other main denominations with material for domestic abuse safeguarding training. If you've had awareness training in domestic abuse, chances are, you'll have had *Restored's* material.



Gosforth-Whitley Bay

Restored has produced a wonderful 'Survivors' Manual'. It's a very well-produced book full of invaluable material to help survivors navigate recovery and get some sort of a 'normal' life back. Last year, *Restored* teamed up with Mothers' Union to get at least one Survivors' Manual into every refuge in the country as a resource for women while they are living there.

Ovingham-Corbridge



Since March last year, Covid has prevented Rosemary from doing a long-distance walk. Not to be beaten, instead she undertook five local walks totalling around 100 miles to raise funds to help in the *Restored*/Mothers' Union project. Her target was £1,000 to fund 100 books. After walking 103.88 miles, which took 256,454 steps, she raised an impressive total of £1,059.



HELEN ARMSTRONG died peacefully on 5th May at the age of 96.

Mothers' Union to the core, Helen was Hexham Branch Leader and Deanery Leader for many years. She was also Diocesan World Wide Link rep for a number of years. Throughout her service she gave unlimited energy and dedication to anything she was involved with. I will always be grateful that she introduced me to Mothers' Union.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

June Olliver, Hexham Branch

This picture was taken in 2018 at our annual afternoon tea at the home of Major Enderby, churchwarden at St John Lee, who is a big supporter of Mothers' Union and a former Equerry to Her Majesty The Queen.

Indoor Members Prayer Circle

This year marks 100 years since the establishment of 'The Indoor Members Prayer Cycle'. It was started in 1921 by Edith Moss, for members who were not able to take part in meetings in person at their branches but wanted to share in the prayer life of the Mothers' Union.

The IMPC grew out of Edith's own experiences and needs. After a busy life she suffered ill health and when confined to a wheelchair found prayer was important and that others in similar situations felt the same. She put together a scheme which she submitted to MU head office suggesting an idea of a group praying together. In 1918 an experimental group called 'Prisoners of God' was set up. This spread to other dioceses and in 1921 it was officially incorporated as 'The Invalid Members Prayer Circle.' A growing dislike for the word 'Invalid' emerged and in 1971 the title was changed to 'Indoor Members Prayer Cycle.'

In 1991 prayer leaflets were issued to IMPC members with weekly topics for prayer. These became popular, not only with IMPC members but with all members. In 2009 it became Families Worldwide with daily prayers and thoughts, including profiles on worldwide provinces. Now the new publication "Connected" and prayer diary are circulated to all members.

In this Diocese we have 50 Indoor Members, each supported by her own Branch. Please remember to support them.

The Indoor Members' Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, Lord of the world, you know the secret of every heart and hear the prayers of all. You have chosen us to work for you and be as one in prayer. Guide us in our prayerful task and strengthen us to do your will. Uphold us in our weakness and pray that those for whom we intercede may fully come to know your healing peace and love. We ask in Jesus name, your only son, our Lord. Amen

BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, DEATHS

BIRTHDAYS

80 Jennifer Beeston, St George Cullercoats
Margaret Dean, St Columba's Wideopen
Edna Walker, Holy Nativity Denton

90 Moira Allen, St Columba's Wideopen
Marion Thomas, St Columba's Wideopen

95 Joyce Hedley, Holy Nativity Denton
Lily McLachrie, Holy Nativity Denton

100 Molly Frost, St John's Killingworth

ANNIVERSARIES

50: Alan and Kathleen Verheyden; Kathleen is a member of Ovingham Branch

60: John and Helen Brunton; Helen is a member of St George Cullercoats

DEATHS

Margaret Abbatt, St Bartholomew Longbenton
Helen Armstrong, Hexham Abbey
Hilary Atkinson, Earsdon & Backworth
Elizabeth Bell, Holy Saviour Tynemouth
Edna Davis, St Mary's Monkseaton
Frances Dodds, St John's Killingworth
Martin Green, Seaton Hirst
Anne Hallatt, St Peter's Monkseaton
Edna Harrison, St Mary's Monkseaton
Margaret Hogarth, St Gabriel Heaton
Kathleen Hulley, Indoor Member St Columba's Wideopen
Angela Mason, Bothal Pegswood Longhirst Hebron Ulgham Widdrington
Joan Mills, Morpeth
Bill Shaw, All Saints Gosforth
Joan Stephenson, St Cuthbert Amble
Leonora Storey, St Luke Wallsend
Norah Tempest, St Francis Heaton
Rita Tough, St George Cullercoats
Irene Wedderburn, Indoor Member Holy Saviour Tynemouth
Irene Williamson, St Luke Wallsend

Calendar of events

May	31 st – 1 st June Diocesan retreat, leaders Jennie & Malcolm Jones
June	11 th Trustees meet by Zoom 10 am
July	1 st A&O and F&P meeting by Zoom 10 am – 12 noon 10 th Diocesan festival
August	9 th Mary Sumner Day – local events
September	17 th Trustees meeting 10 am 25 th Annual Gathering accessible to all by Zoom

Diamond Wedding Anniversary

Congratulations to John and Helen Brunton of St George Cullercoats Branch who married in February 1961 at St Paul's church, Whitley Bay (in the snow!); Helen is a former Diocesan President and a Life Vice President.



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 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.actin@charityId=-1008779>

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Charity number 249971

Diocese of Newcastle

Website:
www.munewcastle.org.uk

