



PETERBOROUGH DIOCESE MOTHERS' UNION - ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020

President's introduction

The word has been overused, but 2020 has certainly been unprecedented. We were able to meet together and worship at Forum in March. Immediately thereafter the impact of the COVID 19 virus led to lock down of all meetings and church attendance, until relaxations relatively recently. This has been a difficult time and we will all have missed face to face contacts. However, much has continued to happen in MU worldwide and in the Diocese. This report aims to provide a summary. More details can be gained from any of our officers and trustees whose details are available in "Communicate."

Mary Sumner House and our worldwide mission and ministry

As MU members we are part of what Archbishop Justin Welby describes as the world's oldest and largest women's movement, supporting Christian family life. In the light of a worldwide pandemic there has never been a greater need for our worldwide charity of prayer and action. You will be aware that, like many charities affected by the pandemic, MU faced a deficit in funding of £1 million. An appeal to members worldwide was launched. As trustees we sent £20k on your behalf which represents our usual fundraising of £10k doubled. Thank you to many of you who contributed individually. As a result of the appeal, the deficit has almost been covered. It has been a hard time for staff at MSH who have taken a salary cut, or been furloughed. The staff group has decreased to ensure we can go forward in a financially strong position. There have been Zoom meetings with all Diocesan presidents and worldwide representatives. As I said in a recent bulletin, never before have I felt more informed and consulted by staff at MSH. We are in good hands as we move forward. In the next year all members will get 2 new publications from MSH about our worldwide work, including the prayer diary.

Social action

Faith, fun and fellowship. Members have found a variety of ways of keeping in touch by phone, cards, newsletters, or Zoom meetings. More recently some have been able to get together, gathering outside or in their churches. Please do think of inventive ways to keep this going in 2021.

Crafting. Many have used sewing and knitting skills. We have tried to collate activity across the diocese and the following results are impressive. *Covid related* - Face masks 285, Scrubs 68, Caps 22, Headbands 30, Laundry bags 288, Chemo bags 30, Hearts 192. *Regular crafting* - Hats 103, Scarves 39, Gloves 20, Blankets 23 Angles 500, Vests 10, Fish and chip vests 92, Pencil cases 5, *Baby basics* -

Cardigans 9, Mittens 9, Hats 9, Bootees 9, Blankets 2. Please keep Jennie Eddis and Juliette Dunkley updated on what you are doing.

Christmas cards. Jill Goodman usually asks branches to take and sign cards, and return via forum. This has not been possible, but we took the decision to get members in Greater Northampton deanery to write the cards. Batches were delivered to branch leaders and collected ready for delivery to Peterborough prison by Maggie Lovell. Cards have also been sent to our link dioceses and via Barbara Haynes to the Daylight centre.

Away from it all (AFIA) Our coordinators Anne Touchin and Margareta Hallam have been busy offering a flexible approach, in consultation with the trustees. The results and feedback from families have been amazing. Anne and Margareta will be happy to supply a full report, and are available to do talks. In summary 12 families, referred by Young Carers, Homestart and a primary school have been offered a flexible package of support to enhance their family life. Examples were the purchase of play / activity materials, financial support to attend activities, funds to purchase leisure and / or school clothes, a television, a trampoline, and a swing seat – all examples of a flexible approach to faith in action. One family was able to go on holiday in Hemsby, with another deferred to next year. Feedback makes heart-warming reading. One young carer's Mother cried, as she never believed anyone would be able to do anything to support their family. Another said the help had "made a HUUUGE difference in our lives. Now we can spend more time together". The child using a trampoline was described as "over the moon!" He was able to have exercise and fun. One Grandma wrote, "Thank you so much for the fabulous books! Please pass our thanks and appreciation on to the Mothers' Union". As MU members your support has been invaluable in making the life of vulnerable families slightly easier in the context of social isolation.

Lunch club A flexible approach has also been needed for the Frances lunch club. They have not been able to meet but have provided food and activity boxes during the holiday periods. Food poverty has been highlighted as a big issue and we are contributing in this vital support to families.

Worldwide One of our trustees, Victoria Gascoyne is supporting those who write to our link dioceses. She has been able to make an additional contact in Aba Ngwa North via Facebook and will keep us posted. We have had contacts with Soroti. These need to be followed up after the death of Pamela Woods who has for a long time been our link person. Sue Tringham continues some of her contacts, particularly with Seoul. Jill gets between 5 – 10 blessings and scriptural greetings on Whatsapp each day from NECA as a follow up to her visit to Antigua in January. The MU tradition of midday prayers is very important. Some of you have been joining together to do this on Zoom and many of us have been able to join the prayers put out daily on video via the main Mothers' Union website. These remain available to view any time after midday. They have also posted impressive worldwide services for Black Lives Matter, a virtual Thy Kingdom Come service and Mary Sumner day.

Faith and Spirituality This is at the centre of all we do. Revd Christine Ostler and our Chaplain Revd Deborah Marsh work closely together. There are excellent resources on the Mothers' Union website and our Peterborough site. The daily free phone line for hymns, reflections and prayers on 0800 804 8044 also includes MU midday prayers. Christine revised the Wave of Prayer service with the year's theme "Building Hope and Confidence". This was made available for all, and used in groups who were able to gather in church, or via Zoom or individually. 9 of us were able to attend a retreat at Launde abbey. They made us very welcome and feel safe. 20 places have been booked for next year 18 – 20 October. People who deferred from this year will get priority, but if interested apply via Lyn Ridley. Christine also shared "A prayer walk at Home" and a story about an imaginary encounter with Jesus. Both have been developed by Sue Moore in the diocese. Perhaps one of the blessings of more limited outside contacts has been more time to spend on prayer, bible reading and reflection. Our diocesan quiet evening was deferred to Wednesday 12th May 2021 to be held at St Benedict's church Northampton 7-9pm when we are delighted that Bishop Andrew Proud (one time MU central chaplain) will lead us. Our Peterborough diocese prayers that appear in "Communicate" have been prepared by St Benedict's. Many thanks to them.

Policy Nicky Vaughan, one of our trustees, enthusiastically leads on our awareness of policy issues. She attended a Zoom meeting as part of the MSH led community of interest which focused on Gender Based Violence. A letter has been sent to lobby all Bishops regarding the Domestic Abuse Bill. We have the support of Bishop Donald.

There are new resources on the MU website regarding **16 days of Activism and Global day**. The theme **No more 1:3** is highlighting the appalling fact of women affected in some way around the world by domestic abuse in their lifetime. This problem has proved more concerning during the pandemic. We continue to raise awareness of **Modern Day slavery** and again there are good resources giving fuller information. 17.10.2021 will be a day to continue to highlight this issue next year. Nicky will be keen to give further information or talks.

Communications Helen Lynett continues to produce "Communicate" our diocesan newsletter. She appreciates brief stories and lots of pictures to showcase all we do. We have produced two full copies and one mini edition this year. We have also circulated monthly bulletins from the President, Vice Presidents and Revd Christine and Deborah. We have updated our Peterborough website which you can find on <http://mothersunionpeterborough.org>. We can post lots of information about what we do. We appreciate that not all members can access such websites, and so try to find a variety of ways to communicate. You all receive "Communicate" and will get 2 new publications directly from MSH.

Central services Treasurer's report Our treasurer Sylvia Rowley has been working hard on our behalf. The full financial report has been seen by the trustees and independent examiner and lodged with the Charity Commission. Sylvia will be happy to give any member a copy or financial summary and answer any queries.

She has prepared the financial returns that will be circulated via Deanery and Branch leaders.

Constitution The constitution, having been agreed by our Trustees and members, was seen by our Provincial President who recommended a few changes. A small group considered these and a revised Constitution has been agreed by the Trustees. It now needs to be presented to two Forum meetings hopefully in March and June 2021. Trustees can then accept it for a second time and then it can go to MSH for ratification by the Head of Finance, Richard Millar and thence to the Charity Commission to be lodged. If anyone would like to see a copy of the constitution under consideration please ask Jean Rose.

Branch Handbook This has now been printed and will be distributed through the deaneries. A copy will be loaded to our Peterborough website.

GDPR The documents have been revised by Jean Rose and Helen Lynett, and agreed by the Trustees. They will then be presented to the next viable Forum, hopefully March 2021. Most of the documents are for the use of the data controller, Jean. There is a new membership form to be completed by every member.

Membership lists Our diocesan membership list has been updated by Helen Lynett. Considerable additional work was needed to ensure that the MSH database was accurate. This is important as in the future publications will be sent directly to members. Enormous thanks to Jean Rose for doing this work. In the future it is vital that Helen is notified of any changes in membership.

Speakers list This valuable resource for branches is co ordinated by Raymond Goodman. We need to continue to update and put new names on the list. If you do talks or know other speakers please let Raymond know.

MUe Since March due to no further Forum or meetings MUe activity has slowed down considerably. Pre ordering of diaries has worked well. Hazel and Raymond Goodman will be happy to make orders, or advise on doing this directly.

Plans for the future We will have a full diocesan calendar for 2021. This will be available for all in "Communicate," and on our website. All events will either be real or virtual. Though face to face contacts are preferable, Zoom meetings have proved useful across our large area. Next year is the last of our triennial. The theme will be "Rebuilding Hope and Confidence." Jill will serve her final year as Diocesan President. In March 2021 we will elect a new Diocesan President. Most officers and trustees can continue, but in November we will need to elect one Vice President and 3 new trustees. Do please consider what you can offer, or encourage others to come forward. Next year Mothers' Union celebrates 145 years, and on Mary Sumner day we will celebrate 100 years since the death of our founder. There is much to celebrate and build on. Jill and has set herself the challenge of undertaking 145 events virtual or hopefully real. She has set all of us the challenge of finding 145 new members. We have solid roots, but must develop green shoots for the future.