



February Newsletter 2021

In the short term before we can meet and worship together there is much to be done through prayer, support and fellowship and witnessing to our faith in difficult times.

In the words of Paul, also written in lockdown, in Philippians 3: 12 -14

"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus"



Brampton MU branch has tried to keep in touch with each other throughout 2020 with phone calls, online messages, letters and personal doorstep deliveries. We usually fund raise for MU through special events but this not being possible recently we wanted a special project to end the year. Through her work one of our members has contact with the Women's Refuge manager and we asked her to find out if there was a Christmas gift we could give to the Refuge. It was suggested that a pair of cosy slipper socks for each of the ladies would be well received. These were duly purchased and beautifully wrapped and labelled by Julie Anderson. A pre-Christmas delivery was then made of the socks and we also included tins of chocolates for all the residents to share and some Christmas flowers to brighten the communal areas. Having had a talk from the Women's Refuge manager at our meeting in January 2020 we felt it was a nice way to end the year being able to give these Christmas gifts.

Please would Treasurers complete the annual returns for 2020 and send to Catherina Griffiths if they haven't already done so and also any money should be sent to Claire Booth. Everyone should have the addresses but if not please get in touch with Hazel.

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<https://www.facebook.com/MUElyDiocese/>

“Life During Lockdown” Photo Competition and YouTube Channel.

Some of you may have been wondering about the Photo Competition we ran during lockdown last year. Members were invited to submit up to 3 photos of something that meant anything to them throughout this time. We had so many lovely photos from people representing different aspects during the lockdown, with a variety of shots, capturing many meaningful subjects and memorable moments.

It had been planned that we might have a display when we met up for the Autumn Festival Day in October but that was not possible. **We have now set up a YouTube Channel which will enable you to see a video of the photos that were submitted.** It has been posted as an “unlisted” video which means it is “semi-private” and can only be seen if you have the link. You are welcome to share this with family and friends.

Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMuzeJuxz_c

We had hoped to be able to vote for our favourite photos but this aspect of the competition is in abeyance for the moment, as not everyone will have internet to enable viewing online. It is possible that, if there is enough demand, we might be able to produce a DVD, available for a small donation, for members to keep as a record of our project. If anyone is interested, please let me know.

We will also be recording and posting videos of Thursday Prayers which can be shared with members, if you are unable to join in with the Zoom Meeting at the set time. Again this will work along the same lines as the photos video. Here is the link for the Global Service held in December for the 16 Days Campaign:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntjGsuLN790>

December Thursday Prayer: Worship and Working with Mothers and Toddlers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTzttFn6Svg>

More will be posted each month as and when available.

Hope you enjoy looking at the photos and videos.

Debbie Tye, Communications Task Group Co-ordinator

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This is a photo of the gifts from the **March Deanery Branch** taken to the Fenland Refuge before Christmas. The gifts for children in the red wrapping, their selection boxes in the 'pudding' and 'reindeer' paper and the 'shiny' paper gifts for the women. One of our members donated the gingerbread house (which Jocelyn was thrilled with) and we bought the tub for the staff. At the moment there are 11 children and 12 women.

REFLECTION FOR FEBRUARY

Philip Baker

About the time of writing this it is *already* 4 months since dear Susan passed away and I am *already* a quarter of the way through reading the bible, a task I set myself about 3 months ago. I say *already* since the intervening time seems to have passed very quickly whilst, at the time of the event or decision, both seemed to be challenges which I was not sure how to deal with. These are examples of how amazingly resilient we are as humans and how well we can cope with whatever life throws at us. Each such event or decision contributes to what we are, our identity, and taking any one away would make us a different person to who we are. Pip in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* puts it rather well - *"That was a memorable day for me, for it made great changes in me. But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day."*

How different my life would have been without the riches Susan brought following our chance pairing in a lunchtime dance class at school. And the events consequent upon the moment Susan decided to follow her mother and become an active member of the Mothers' Union were transformative (in a good way) for us both. More recently, I remember the day I determined I was going to read the bible and now experience growing enlightenment every day from new passages. It is, in fact, so successful that I have now added reading the MU Prayer Diary every day and find it surprisingly rewarding, possibly as I am looking up where the places we pray for are in the world with some results which are surprise me!

If we can deal with the shock of losing someone so close to us, so that, unthinkable at the outset, we even become comfortable in that loss, or make decisions which appear at the start to be virtually impossible to achieve but which become by our perseverance almost easy, then there is surely nothing that, given the will to succeed, we cannot do. So take heart, there is hope even in the darkest of places and with God's grace success can come out of each decision we make and circumstance in which we find ourselves, however unlikely that may seem at the outset.

I leave you with a little challenge: to read Proverbs 8. It is written in praise of Wisdom, that essential but rare commodity. I have struggled with much of Proverbs but this makes eminent sense to me and I hope you find it so too. With the application of Wisdom at least the decisions we take, and our response to circumstances in which we find ourselves, have a better chance of happy outcomes and of making us better people of God.

Trustees have agreed that the money donated in memory of Susan will be held by the Diocese in a restricted fund named the **Susan Baker Family Fund**. Susan was very committed to our MU work helping families in both this country and worldwide. Over £2000 has already been given and as Philip said *'The family are convinced that this is exactly what Susan herself would have wanted to happen (although I am also sure that she would have been amazed at the generosity by so many contributors which has brought it about!)*'. From this year when branches wish to allocate donations to specific projects it will be on the list alongside AFIA, Worldwide and Diocesan Fund.

Sawston Branch held its first meeting of 2012 by zoom on Thursday 14 January. Thirteen people joined the call and we had a nice service led by the Rev Petra Shakeshaft, and prayers by Rosey Fuell. Our AGM will be on Thursday 18 February and we are putting together a programme of monthly meetings by Zoom until the restrictions ease

Burwell Branch also met using Zoom, on Wednesday 25th January. Simon Rogers gave an interesting talk on 'My Christian Journey'. Meetings will continue by Zoom on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 3pm until we can meet together in person.

Faith In Action – February 2021

Hazel's Reflection for January's Thursday Prayer recalled all we had done during 2020 to support the vulnerable in our local community, and afar, and to live out our MU 5th Aim.

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU for all the Christmas Giving to the Refuges and Hostels we support. I have received many grateful thanks, in person and by email, from Support Workers.

"I just want to let you know that the Asda vouchers had arrived safely and will be of great use to the families in refuge".

"I would like to say a massive thank you on behalf of all the women it will support. Aldi vouchers are so perfect as they stretch the budget a little further and are the closest store for the women to get to".

"It is very kind of the Mothers' Union Branches to keep raising money to support the refuge and these vouchers will be most welcome".

Before Christmas we were able to pass on warm clothing and blankets to help the homeless in Wisbech, many household goods were given to hostels/refuges and Maureen took a fully laden car of knitting to Christian Hope International. We also delivered knitted items to Hinchinbrooke, the Baby hats were greeted with "You are the best – Thank You", and for the soft twiddle muffs the Frailty Nurse wrote "They are beautiful and ideal for our patients".

We have now been asked if we could make some lap blankets for the Elderly Frail, these can be knitted or crocheted.

It is always a thrill to receive a bag of beautifully knitted goods, so many items made with love and care.

We have a new outlet for baby goods – Fenland Family and Baby Bank is based at March, and caters for children up to 5 years old. Maureen has contact details. Ely baby Bank is now well established and is proving a much needed resource.

In these unusual times there have been ingenious ways used to raise money without meeting together. Many branches are well supported by their church communities; advertising our projects raises awareness of the work we do, and helps us have more to pass on. Unfortunately there continues to be a great need for foodbanks; and the refuges are busier than ever. With Lent approaching perhaps your branch would like a Lent Project – collecting toiletries, cleaning items, tinned and packet goods, or something similar. Whatever you do, it will be most welcome.

Jean Webb Faith in Action Coordinator



Gifts of cleaning materials from **Haddenham Branch** to Hostels and Refuges. Particularly useful for those moving on to their own accommodation

Please join us for MU Thursday Prayer on Zoom. Topic: Lent

Time: Feb 18, 2021

Open at 10:00am for 10.30am start

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89646644088>

Meeting ID: 896 4664 4088

By Telephone ring 0203 051 2874 then follow the instructions given.



Mothers' Union in Myanmar (formerly Burma)

Mothers' Union is a truly international movement. We are represented in 84 countries spread all around the world, practicing our faith and doing God's work. Mothers' Union in the Asian country of Myanmar celebrated its centenary in 2014 and continues to grow and flourish with over 8,600 members today. A visitor to the Diocese of Toungoo writes about her experiences with the remarkable women who make up our fellow members overseas. [Read the full article here.](#)

News from St Mary's, St Neots branch

February 2021



In February we will be saying farewell to one of our branch stalwarts who will be greatly missed in our community, **Sylvia Watson**. Sylvia was the driving force behind the reforming of the branch in 2001 when the branch reopened with just nine members. Under Sylvia's leadership it grew to 34 members in just four years! She was an inspiring and committed branch leader. Sylvia also held office in Ely diocese MU, as Action and Outreach coordinator from 2004 to 2007. We wish her every blessing as she moves to a retirement village south of Bedford, where she

intends to become a diocesan member in St Albans diocese. As she says, "As a MU member in St Albans diocese for over 20 years, it will feel like going home" The photo above shows Sylvia, far right, with Jill sitting next to her, when Winnie Muvunyi, wife of the then Bishop of Kigali and DP of MU in Kigali, paid us a visit. Joan Turner is also in the group, far left.



On a happier note, congratulations to **Jill Henthorne** who this month will have been a MU member for 65 years, a remarkable achievement. Jill joined MU before she was married, which must have been a rare thing in those days! That explains why the name on her membership card is not Henthorne! (see photo) Jill is one of our most devoted members, seldom misses a meeting and is always ready to offer her help for MU events.

We have sadly lost two of our oldest members, **Maureen Burrows**, died on the 19th October just short of her 85th birthday and **Dorothy Langham** died on 7th January 2021, aged 96.

Another funeral attended by a good number of MU members in the parish church just before Christmas was for the husband of one of our indoor members, **Joan Turner**. Jim and Joan were a devoted couple and had been married for more than sixty years.

Thank You God.

"We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you". Psalm 33 v 20 - 22.

It was encouraging as we began our third lockdown when reading the Church Calendar to find inspiration to blow away the post-Christmas blues. Epiphany, Prayer for Christian Unity, Candlemas and Lent are just some of the themes to ponder and celebrate during these cold, dark months. Rebuilding hope and confidence is our MU theme for this year- a positive thought to be thankful for, both as individuals and together in our organisation.

It is trepidation that we have watched the daily headlines and graphs highlighting the social failings that have continued with us into the 21st century. The dark areas of poverty, the loss of work and homes, the lack of food, the increase in domestic violence and sexual abuse, more reliance on addiction to drugs, betting and alcohol and mental health issues us. All these areas crying out for our support and prayers.

Sally Welsh, Vicar and Author writes -

"If you have food in your fridge, clothes on your body, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you're richer than 75% of the entire world"

Thank you God for the MU - that constantly has these causes close to its heart.

Thank you Loving Lord that when gloom and despair threaten to overwhelm we can turn to you. We can share our thoughts, fears and feelings and have confidence that He is walking beside us. Even when the darkness may threaten our faith and our hope and confidence are tested. We have been given the opportunity to rebuild and renew our altered lives.

We are being given this opportunity to pray and talk to God in our need. Most of us have extra time to spend with our heavenly Father to consider our prayers and actions. Let us open our lives to reflect the light of Christ's love as we travel together in hope and confidence. Giving thanks for God's gifts to us, the amazing grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit that we may increase in prayer, commitment and action as Mothers' Union members. For "We can do no great things - only small things with great love". - Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Helen Banyard Praying our Faith Co-Ordinator

DAILY HOPE. A reminder that there is a free Church of England phone line which includes the MU midday prayers plus a variety of hymns and prayers. This service is open 24 hours a day. The number is 0800 804 8044.