

President's Remarks for Council on 7th October 2016

2016 is proving a very special year for the Mothers' Union. It has been a delight to share with many Deaneries and Branches in 140th birthday celebrations, as well as in 90th Birthday celebrations for the Queen. Our 90-year-old members are celebrated on the special Birthday card for the Queen, of which you can see a copy today.

Thank you to all those Branches which responded to my request for a 'snapshot' of what you do. These were collated and sent off to Mary Sumner House; the range of our activities is truly amazing. We were also asked, as a Diocese, to put together a '3-year plan'; this consists of the 5 priority areas that we would like to work on during this triennium, to help us focus our activity. You will hear more of these priorities in the next Journal, but at present we are focusing on Baptism support. This is an area in which we feel that we can make a real difference, and which relates very well to our Aims as M.U. Of course what we can do depends absolutely on what our clergy would find helpful.

Thank you to all those who replied to Elizabeth Brown's questionnaire about what you do in your parish to support baptism. There is a huge range of ideas! The Trustees have decided to send to all clergy a letter with a copy of some of Mothers' Union's excellent leaflets and cards for baptism families, with an offer of more, if they would like to use them. With this will go a list of ideas for baptism follow-up (drawn from your responses), which could involve Mothers' Union members. Do look at the cards and leaflets that we plan to send out.

I would like to express appreciation of all those who have been Deanery Reps for the different Units. They have done much to encourage the work in the Branches, and to maintain the link with the Unit committees. We are now working in a slightly different way: because it was not always possible for all Deaneries to have a full set of reps, communication broke down in some cases. So now each Unit is sending information directly to Branch Leaders and Deanery Leaders by email, where possible. But we very much hope that those reps who have a particular interest in the work of one Unit will continue to go to Unit meetings, and that others may join them. Branch Leaders, please let the Unit Coordinators know what is happening in your Branch. So the people who attend Unit meetings will be those with a particular responsibility in that Unit, together with anyone else with a special interest in the work.

In some cases a Deanery Rep has already been freed to take on a specific job in the Unit – Barbara Bailes was the Prayer and Spirituality Rep for Newcastle West. She has now become the Prayer and Spirituality Diocesan Officer, as we saw earlier, when she was commissioned. We also have a new Indoor Members' Diocesan Representative, Brenda Mennear, who will be commissioned at the start of next year. Thanks to both of them for taking on the roles.

This brings me to two special 'Thank you's':

Jennifer has held the Prayer and Spirituality role magnificently for more than 6 years: she has supported our Service Day mid-day prayers at the Cathedral with her wonderful booklets of ideas, as well as by her presence. She has also arranged the Retreat each year, which has been very important to those who have attended it – and much more! Thank you, Jennifer.

Sheila has looked after our Indoor Members for more than 9 years, and supported the Deanery Reps and Branch Leaders in doing so – as well as sending presents and letters to the Indoor Members themselves. Our Indoor Members are very important to us, and they need to know that; Sheila has been instrumental in keeping that link. Thank you, Sheila! Thank you too for carrying on to the end of the year to ensure a smooth transition. (Flowers were given)

Thank you for all your support. I am very aware that we are a team, and that the work of each of us is important.