



## From the Diocesan President

Dear fellow member

### Rebuilding Hope and Confidence

It has been very cheering over these last months to see Mothers' Union members supporting each other in a whole variety of ways. Recently, some members have started making face masks for fellow-members and their local community. Phone calls and other contacts have continued, and I am grateful for all those who have persevered in this over many months. It has been a delight to see members in our virtual on-line services, reported here. Now the process of **rebuilding** our work for others is well under way, as you will see from the many examples in this Newsletter.

**Diocesan Council**, on **Friday 9th October at 7 p.m.**, will take place on Zoom – this can be accessed on your computer, or you can join by phone. Please do consider 'attending'! After our review of all that we are doing together (with the opportunity for questions), we will be joined by John O'Connor – an ex-offender who now works with the prisoner & family support charity Junction 42: John has an inspiring story to tell of the way his life was turned around, which can encourage us in our work with prisoners.

Some Branch Leaders have asked when and **how you can meet** – the thing we all long for. This must depend on your local church, and what arrangements are being made there. Some have already met in a garden, on a walk or even in church – do be imaginative, but also keep safe!

The **central Mothers' Union charity** is still facing huge financial challenges, and is making a third of its staff redundant: please pray for them in this painful situation. However, they are working creatively and persistently to support the whole worldwide movement: we will not be beaten.! The £1 million appeal has now received over £825,000, and still rising.

On **Tuesday 20th October at 10 a.m. – noon**, the **Virtual Annual Gathering** (or '**All members update**') will premiere on YouTube and Facebook Live. It will include contributions from Worldwide President Sheran Harper, and Worldwide Chaplain Bishop Emma, as well as members from Britain & Ireland and from overseas. It will focus on our theme for 2021 '**Rebuilding Hope and Confidence**', and look at the ways members have responded to the challenges of Covid-19. A good opportunity to share in the Annual Gathering without travelling to Belfast – either individually or (in a distanced way) as a group. You can access it at the time, or later.

With love and every prayer for your life, health, and work - and for your fellowship together

*Barbara*



*Canon  
Barbara Packer*

## Mothers' Union's 16 days of Activism against Gender Violence

is an international campaign. It takes place each year from 25th November – 10th December and Saturday 5th December is The Global Day of Action when members are asked, for the first time ever, to unite in protest by demanding "No more 1in3", the unacceptable statistic reflecting worldwide gender based violence. In Newcastle Diocese we plan to hold a YouTube recorded service to be premiered at 2pm on 5th December. Please join us for this service. Further activities may be planned by individual branches or within the diocese.

During MU World Wide Council in June 2019, members identified three global themes for effective policy development that would lead to positive changes in the world. These themes are Self-Reliance, Peace and Safety, and Gender Justice. Domestic Violence is a world wide problem and encompasses all these themes. It is an issue in in our own country that has increased greatly during the Covid pandemic and one we can all support through our prayers and actions.

## Diocesan Celebration 11th July 2020

I trust that many of our members have been able to watch this wonderful celebration of Mothers' Union in Newcastle Diocese. Since it was broadcast on YouTube there have been well over 400 views, not all will have been MU members from our Diocese or even Mothers' Union members. We have received a lot of very appreciative comments from people who have seen the Service, including Lynne Tembey, previous MU Worldwide president and June Houghton, MU York Provincial President. It has been a window through which all that MU is and does is there for all to see. If you have not yet seen the Service, it is available on YouTube, Morpeth Parish, Mothers' Union Celebration, or using the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NCm5NxXjes> Please watch it!!

This was a truly joyful celebration and Mothers' Union in Newcastle Diocese should be justly proud.

*Sheila Walker VP*

## Action and Outreach

Things have obviously been very different for A&O since March, but we have still been able to offer support in many ways. Newcastle is one of a very small number of dioceses that have been able to offer AFIA breaks once the lockdown restrictions were eased a little. Margaret Crawforth has been working very hard with the refuges, caravan parks and several agencies to provide holidays, and we have given assistance to 64 women, 104 children and three babies under a year old.

Since lockdown we've all become increasingly aware of an enormous increase in domestic abuse. Though we cannot have contact with clients at Changing Lives GAP we have been able to support them through the provision of 17 personal alarms to be included in safety packs. We are hoping to be able to support the 'Inspire' project at a local refuge, paying approximately £770 for room hire for 67 women to complete the programme in small groups. The programme increases awareness of what constitutes an abusive relationship.

We also hope to be able to resume craft sessions for residents of refuges and hostels; thanks to some extremely generous donations we will be able to offer an even greater range of resources.

Linda Benneworth has been in touch with the People's Kitchen about Christmas; they have asked for about a hundred shoe boxes. We are going to buy waterproof nylon drawstring bags to send to the Kitchen separately and gifts in the shoeboxes will then be able to go in the bags. The women's Refuges have asked for gift bags. Branch Leaders should have received lists for each. We're also planning to continue supplying 'Freshstart' backpacks for newly released prisoners. There will be more about all the A&O initiatives in the Winter Journal.



## Mary Sumner Day 2020

Like everything this year, Mary Sumner Day was different, no branch services, celebrations, walks, none of the usual ways of marking the day.

However we did have our extended Compline, or Night Prayer, which went out at 7.30 that evening. It was great to see so many familiar faces all coming together, maybe in a way we are not used to, but being connected just the same.

Zoom is a wonderful medium, though as we found, it can have a way of "doing its own thing"! Sadly some participants were "rendered speechless" which was frustrating and disappointing.

Thank goodness Bishop Mark Bryant came across loud and clear. He quoted Mary Sumner, who on a tour of Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century, asked the question "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" Bishop Mark reminded us that mothers can change the world for good and, if we heed God's call, we will not be sent away empty but will find our reward in serving.

At this difficult time in our lives and the lives of others both near and far, we need to echo Mary Sumner's question and be prepared to move forward with hope and confidence to do whatever God asks of us. I hope that we, as faithful MU members, can keep that prayer firmly in our minds in what will be challenging times ahead.

My sincere thanks to everyone involved in the service; it was still a lovely time of togetherness, despite the hiccups.

Sylvia Hickey V.P.



## Calendar of Events

### September

18th Trustees meet by Zoom 10am

### October

3rd M.U. Friends' meeting cancelled – hope to meet in April next year

9th Diocesan Council on Zoom. Speaker: John O'Connor 7pm

Link and phone number will be sent out nearer the time. All welcome!

24th Diocesan Members' meeting cancelled – more news later

### November

20th **Closing date for copy for Winter (almost) Journal**

22th White Ribbon Day service against Gender-based violence

16th - 2nd Wave of Prayer

### December

4th Shoe Box Day 10:30 – 12:30 to be confirmed

5th Service on YouTube for the 16 Days of Activism from 2pm

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