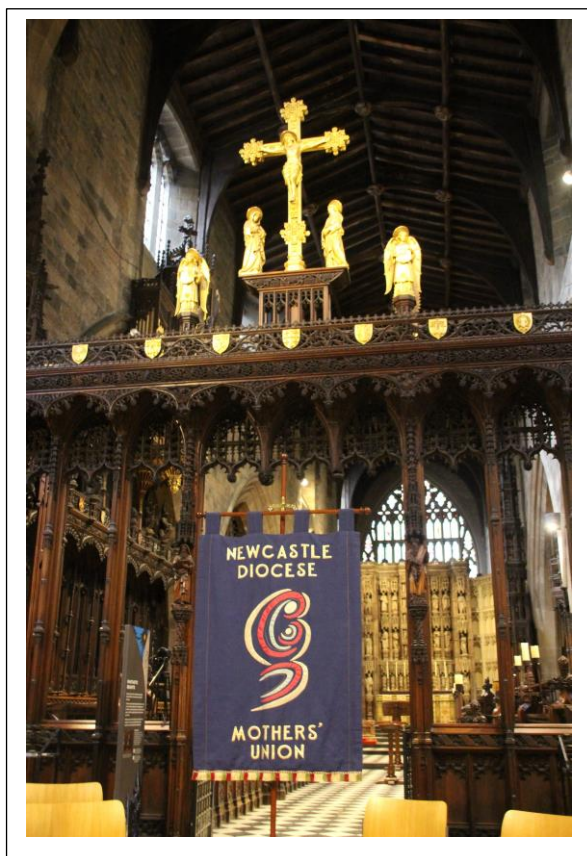


Mothers' Union, Newcastle Diocese & Cathedral: partners for 140 years.

Newcastle Diocese was founded in 1882 out of Durham Diocese, the same decade that Mothers Union became established across the nation. **Newcastle was the first Diocese after Winchester to adopt Mothers Union.** The first President was Mrs Emily Wilberforce, wife of the bishop. In recent years, Mothers' Union Presidents have been made honorary canons of the Cathedral.



Mothers' Union was founded in 1876 by Mary Sumner in Old Arlesford Parish, Winchester Diocese, where her husband was Rector. **The first MU meeting in Northumberland was in Embleton in 1879**, led by Louise Creighton, the wife of the vicar, Revd Mandell Creighton, who went on to become Bishop of London.

The first Bishop of Newcastle, Rt Revd Ernest Wilberforce, was deeply impressed by shy Mary Sumner's ministry with mothers and persuaded her to speak about her Mothers' Meetings at a Congress in Portsmouth in 1885. She spoke extemporarily and passionately about national morality and the importance of women's vocation as mothers to change the nation for the better. As a result, many delegates set up Mothers Meetings. By 1900 membership across the UK reached 169,000. By 1921 there were 400,000 members world-wide.

Mary Sumner's vision was radical and pioneering in its day, calling upon women of all social classes to support one another and to see motherhood as a profession as important as those of men. Social attitudes have changed considerably since then but Mothers' Union still challenges unjust attitudes in society. Despite their name, Mothers' Union is an inclusive organisation with many men as members.

Queen Victoria offered her royal patronage to MU in her Diamond Jubilee Year 1897. HM Queen Elizabeth II was its Patron throughout her reign. **In 2000 the United Nations gave Mothers Union consultative status** within its Economic and Social Council on issues such as poverty, gender equality, HIV and AIDS.

Rooted in prayer and action, members believe that prayer is transformational and supports their work around the world. Their daily midday prayer focuses on their projects, locally and world-wide. Midday Prayers in the Cathedral are led by Mothers' Union members every first Thursday of the month.

The new Diocesan Banner, in the **Cathedral's Chapel of the Resurrection**, replaced the original, which was burned accidentally. The banner with a modern portrayal of mother and child was designed and made by Mrs Edith Coulton, the wife of a former Dean the Very Revd Nicholas Coulton (2001-2003).

Mothers' Union Worldwide Projects include supportive work with prisons, refuges, survivors of domestic or gender abuse, community crafts, families in adversity, advocacy and campaigns, literacy and numeracy programmes. Newcastle branches have many ongoing local projects supporting families in need, people in hospital, 'Away from It All' holidays for struggling families, books for young children, help for women in refuges, support for homeless people and asylum seekers, fresh start support for people leaving prison and many more.

More information can be found on the MU national website www.mothersunion.org.