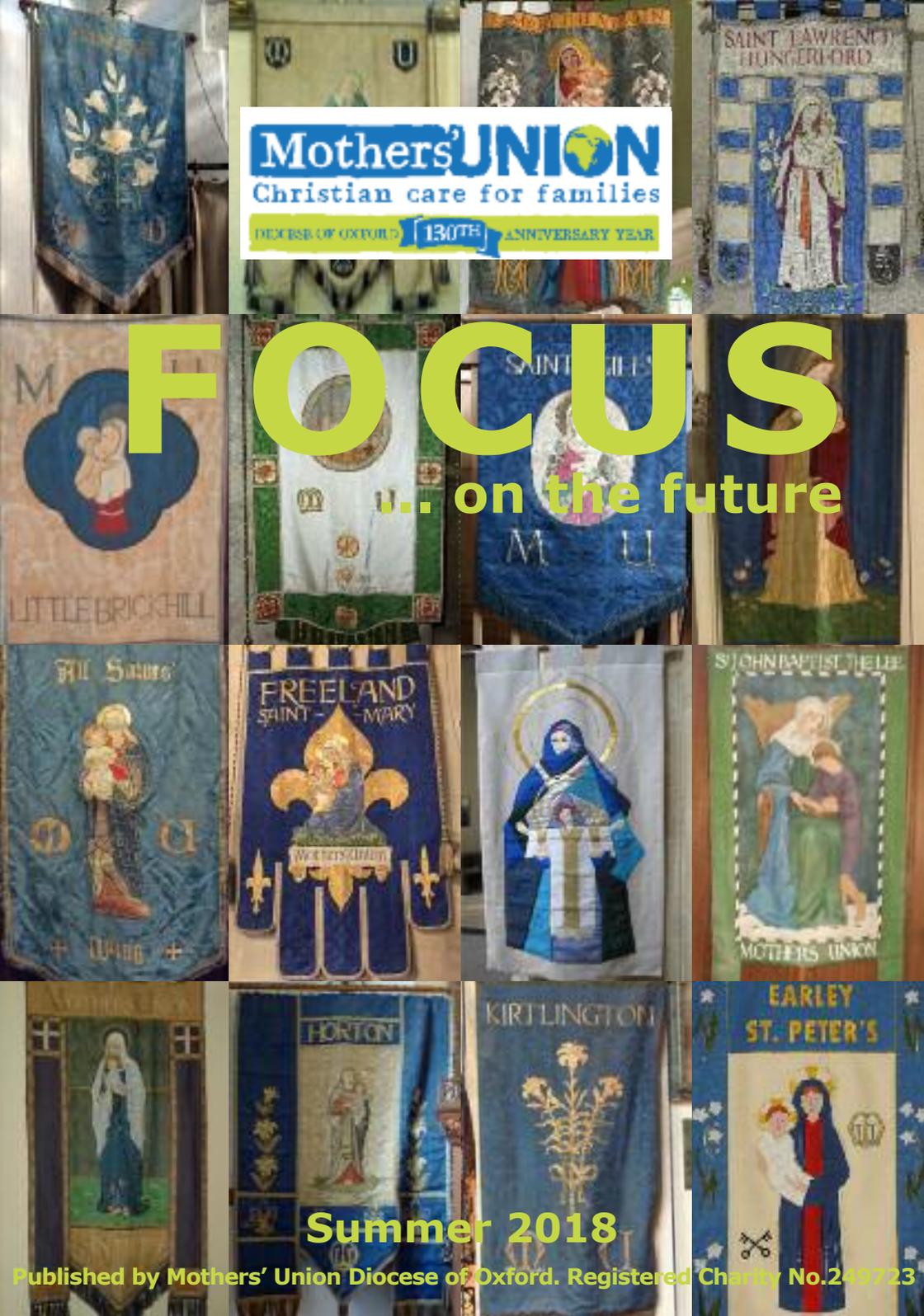


Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

DIocese of Oxford 130TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

FOCUS

... on the future



Summer 2018



ALL SAINTS
BOW BRICKMILL

PENN STREET

ST. MARY'S ROMAN LIBRARY

ST. MARY'S ROMAN LIBRARY

S. LUKE'S
GARFORD

PRINCES RISBOROUGH

M
1934

S. BARRY HITCHALL

S. NICOLAUS IN BLOW

ST. JOHN'S

NEWBURY

MANSLOPE

MOTHERS UNION

Dear Friends

This edition is full of reports from many parts of the diocese as well as past Presidents from the last 30 years – who all hope to be with us in Dorchester Abbey. I do hope you enjoy reading what others have sent in for this special edition of *Focus* and I thank you for all the Love that you share with so many and the difference you make to so many lives.



You will already have seen a large number of banners on the cover and we are so grateful to the Churchwardens and members who sent in photos of them. We were unable to include them all, but we hope you enjoy this lovely selection. Our editor has also included some snippets gathered for the Centenary book published in 1988 which I know you will enjoy.

Belonging to a global organisation is a privilege and blessing but it is not without its challenges. In order to bring us up to date, a new Central Mothers' Union Constitution (which has taken a long time to discuss and refine) has now received Royal Assent. This means that Oxford Diocese can now begin the process of writing a new constitution too.

The Central website has undergone a complete overhaul and will be much more user-friendly. When it is launched together with a database of UK members it will enable everyone to communicate more effectively with each other and comply with the new data protection law. Branch officers should look out for the invitation to attend one of the training sessions that we will be running in the autumn.

A new World Wide President will be elected later in the year – please pray for those offering to serve in this way and for those who will vote.

I do hope to see as many of you as possible at Dorchester Abbey – please follow the signs that will be put out for Event Parking. Denise, our chaplain has written a prayer walk to use in the Abbey before the service which will be available from 12 noon – and please keep praying for a fine day.

With my love and prayers,
Alisonx

From our diocesan chaplain

Dear Friends,

Your diocesan Board of Trustees met this week. We always start our meetings with a time of prayer. Over recent years that prayer time has taken the form of 'Dwelling in the Word' with which some of you may be familiar. It is a form of Lectio Divina – listening repeatedly to a passage from the bible and allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our attention to a word, a phrase or an idea provoked by what we are hearing. There then follows a time of sharing what we have heard.



This year we have been using passages from a resource based on our annual theme 'In the footsteps of Mary Sumner' and the passage we took this week was from Acts 13:

Journeying together

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 13:1–3;15:36–41

I was drawn to verse 3 'So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off' – how the gathered church prayed for and commissioned Saul (who became Paul) and Barnabas. It got me thinking about how we 'commission' our members when they are going out to do the work of Mothers' Union, whether that be knitting at home, helping to run a toddler group, gathering supplies for the hospital project or cards for prisoners, support of baptism families or parenting groups. When you are working for Mothers' Union, do you feel purposefully sent out by your branch or the group of MU members you know? Does your branch or church pray for your work?

If you do, I would love to hear more from you. If you don't, then I invite you to think about how that might happen.

A prayer

Lord, be with us in all we do as we journey together along your path.
Unite us as one in vision and purpose to serve your world and glorify Christ.
Amen

Yours in Christ, Denise

STOP PRESS

From 2019, our Diocesan President will be Mrs Maureen Weston. Maureen is a member of Abingdon branch and currently our Action & Outreach Unit Coordinator.

Maureen received nominations from across the Diocese and her position has now been ratified by the Bishop of Oxford. There were no other nominations. We give Maureen our congratulations and hold her in our prayers.

Louise Butler
Finance and Administration Unit Coordinator

There will be more about Maureen in the next edition

Money Money Money

We all know the song don't we? It is supposed to make the world go around...

MU Branch treasurers have a hard job, so we are going to make it easier for them.

Please read the article on page 29 and seriously consider signing up to paying your subscription by Direct Debit. So sorry to mess you all about, but hopefully this will make our life easier.

Forms and a FREEPOST envelope for every member will be sent to your MU Branch Treasurer during the second half of August. Diocesan members will receive the form and envelope through the post. All forms need to be returned by the end of October.

Please note that this is for your **2019** Subscription and thereafter.

RUNNING THE MU OFFICE DURING EVE'S MATERNITY LEAVE

How WILL we manage?! Well, Trustees are going to put their best foot forward. A Trustee will visit the MU Office at least once a week, to deal with incoming post and outgoing mail. Your letters, forms and cheques will be dealt with at this time and acknowledgements sent when necessary. Please avoid leaving a message on the MU answer phone as our response will not be in a timely manner. Contact a Trustee or MU Officer direct by phone or email. All the details you need are on page 15.

Most other administration duties can be carried out by Trustees in their own homes. Emails are now being picked up and answered remotely and MU files can be updated. We have been helped in this respect by the IT department at CMS House.

We believe we can function in this way during Eve's absence, but will look forward to her return in the Spring of 2019. Meanwhile we eagerly await her news as the months progress.

Messages from our recent past Presidents

BARBARA MCGREGOR, 1983–88

I so often think of Oxford and all the happiness and excitement we all had thirty years ago. A Celebration service in Dorchester sounds wonderful.

With every good wish for a Lovely Celebration and love to you all, Barbara

ROSEMARY PIERCE, 1989–94

Not having come across the Mothers' Union (MU) until I was a young mum in my mid-thirties, I appreciated their support and encouragement, and became involved locally. Attending worldwide council in 1988 as a diocesan members' representative, and meeting our link presidents from what was then Zaire (but is now the Democratic Republic of Congo), made a real impact on me, and influenced my new role as President.



I enjoyed working with our Executive team, who came with their different gifts from all parts of the diocese, with several of us benefitting from attending meetings at Mary Sumner House. It was good to be able to share the responsibility when deciding how to respond to the need for 'training and transport' in the Congo, whilst finding ways to improve communication with them and our link dioceses in rural Nigeria, and to encourage our members in local and diocesan activities.

There was a greater emphasis then on the dependency of our link dioceses upon our financial support, rather than the sense of a partnership and mutual support which we enjoy today. But there were wise women who encouraged and enabled us to learn about life for women and families at home and in other countries, and to play our part in helping them, as well as our neighbours.

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, which started in 1988, helped members focus on how we in the Church of England might respond to issues as diverse as HIV/AIDS and the potential for the ordination of women to the priesthood. The results of local discussions were fed back to Mary Sumner House, and then the government.

Indoor Members were treasured for the prayers they offered, and

received correspondence to keep them informed. Oxford diocese made a contribution to a new international MU Anthology of Prayers, whilst Diocesan Presidents wrested with producing a new MU prayer, as well as amending our Constitution.

One special highlight in the diocese was a Prayers & Bears event for young families, held near Pangbourne, with older members helping with the children, making it an enjoyable day out.

For myself and the Chairman of our Overseas committee there was an opportunity in 1994 for a two-week visit to Boga diocese, Zaire, to meet Mothers' Union members. This was a life-changing experience for me, and is an ongoing opportunity to bring our Congolese link alive to our members. Our Membership can still challenge and support us on our Christian journey, in a world where communication is much easier for most of us today.

BARBARA TEAGUE, 1995–2000

I was Diocesan President from January 1995 having been Diocesan Treasurer for the previous six years.

During my Presidency I visited many branches, large and small, in all parts of the Diocese and gained much insight into the faith and circumstances of MU members. A highlight of my time as DP was the visit that world-wide President, Christine Eames (and myself) made to so many Oxford Deaneries and larger Branches. She spoke about her own faith and travels around the Province and listened with interest from members themselves, about their lives and their faith. One evening, at home, I was astonished to answer the telephone to a caller who announced that he was the Archbishop of Armagh! It seems that he always called his wife where-ever she stayed overnight (and that pleasure was ours) to check that all was well with her and her journey around the different dioceses.



FELICITY RANDALL, 2001–03

I was first involved with Mothers' Union in Oxford Diocese as Young Families representative and, like many YFs reps from that time, ended as Diocesan

President. Because we were to leave the diocese on my husband's retirement I was president for only three years, a time bracketed by problems – gall stone op at the start and broken ankle at the end.

In between I remember, with pleasure, individual visits to branches, passing on the 'Journey of Hope' time capsule and even planting a Mary Sumner Rose bush

Photographs bring memories of many happy events. One highlight? Perhaps a service in Westminster Abbey with the brilliant colours and music of assembled Mothers' Union members from all corners of our amazing worldwide family.

PRIMROSE GALLIMORE, 2004–09

The need for a new Diocesan President for Oxford Diocese came at a good time for me. I had just completed 25 years of working for the Citizens Advice Bureau, I was in my late fifties and I wanted something really interesting and fulfilling to do. There were not many people who wanted to be President so you could say I was appointed rather than elected, but I always felt it was an honour and I thoroughly enjoyed doing it.



I had the advantage of following Felicity who was a person of ideas so I was able to take some of them over and set them in progress. For example, our work in the John Radcliffe Hospital.

One of the best things about being President is that you get to know so many members and I soon learnt that the age of members does not decide their effectiveness. I remember going to one particular branch and, seeing how elderly they looked, I did not expect a very lively meeting. I could not have been more mistaken. By the end I realised what good work they were doing and making a real difference in their parish.

At Worldwide Conference I met members from across the globe. I remember particularly having the MU President from the Congo to stay. Neither her English or my French was very good but, with patience and a certain amount of acting, we found great interest in each other's diocese. That same year I was able to attend a Worldwide meeting in Australia where

I appreciated what a huge and important organisation the Mothers' Union is.

After my six years as President I was asked to speak to one of our branches about what the job was like. Whilst looking for a suitable title for my talk my husband suggested 'How to get nine points on your driving licence'! I certainly did do a huge amount of driving around our large diocese. If I put together the branches I visited as Action and Outreach coordinator with those I visited as President, I think I want to all, or nearly all the branches in the diocese but I found that meeting the members was what makes being President such an interesting and worthwhile job.

GILLIAN JOHNSON, 2013–15

My term in office as Diocesan President in Oxford followed a period without a DP when the diocese was led by a committee consisting of the five Area Vice Presidents. Although this worked well it did not feel so "joined up" as having a "figurehead" to whom a member could speak with either problems or praise! So began my term as your president. I was commissioned on Lady Day in Christchurch Cathedral by the new Bp of Reading, Andrew Proud, who had just taken the role as Central Chaplain to the MU.



During my incumbency we were asked to vacate our tiny Diocesan office in Christchurch Cathedral due to reorganisation there. It was with relief that we found suitable accommodation in CMS House and it was lovely that Rennie, our Diocesan Secretary, moved there too. In time Rennie retired, and we appointed Eve, who brought fresh ideas and she and her husband soon became members!

We appointed Steve Jenkins to promote the Mothers' Union and as a result to encourage growth in membership, his time in office was short, and sadly we did not realise the aim. However some branches have grown, but not sufficiently to offset the gradual decline in membership.

I worked with a very enthusiastic and encouraging team and give thanks for the prayerful support of the members, thank you for enabling me to lead the MU in Oxford diocese, and as we celebrate 130 years and give thanks let us also go forward with hope, courage and commitment.

Mothers' Union Listening, Observing, Acting

We really enjoyed seeing many of you at the Spring meetings and all the information that we collected has been uploaded ready to be analysed.

We found out some very interesting facts about your activities that we didn't know before and over the next few issues of *Focus* will be sharing some of these with you.

We are very grateful to all the branches who hosted these events and the AVPs who set them all up. I am indebted to Norma who kindly gave me a bed for the night to save me queuing on the M40 early in the morning.

We are still willing to visit your branches if you would like to take part. Please contact Alison to arrange a date. Check the website for dates of these meetings.

Alison Bennett

Fundraising and Communication

Do either of these topics interest you? Do you have ideas about how the Mothers' Union could raise more money for its work, communicate better to its members and raise the MU profile in the Diocese?

If the answer is 'yes' then you are just the person we need to join the Fundraising and Communication Unit.

We meet about four times a year in South Oxford, to share ideas, discuss *Focus*, our website and our Facebook page as well as sales of Mothers' Union products through MUE.

I have been a member of the Unit for over twelve years and thoroughly enjoyed it but I feel it is time for a change. Could you take my place?

I am also, currently, the Assistant Editor of *Focus* and am looking for a replacement.

Ideally the same person would take on both roles but it could be two different people. If you would like more information do get in touch with me.

Valerie Rushton

valerie_rushton@hotmail.com (tel:01280 824942)

1976

Fifty Years on...

Little Marlow branch established friendly links with those M.U. members in Balcarres, Sask. Canada

1937



1939

Extract from Executive Committee Minutes

"The President read a letter from the E.M. of Little Marlow Branch, about the admission of a woman who had contracted a bigamous marriage unwittingly, she had left the man at once and was working to keep herself and her child. The E.M. asked if she could be admitted to the M.U. The Vicar was willing. There was much discussion and it was agreed unanimously that the woman be allowed to join the M.U."

R.I. 1/4
MINISTRY OF FOOD
 7953-1024

MF BA 275357

RATION BOOK

NUMBER 696: 1234 0
 AREA 14 2642 123
 5-3-40-123

IF THIS BOOK IS RETURNED TO ANY FOOD OFFICE

1939

September 20th. Emergency War Meeting of Executive

The organisation of the M.U. in the Diocese must be carried on from the office and officials and branches should keep in touch with each other and the Diocesan Office by correspondence. Mrs. Fitzwilliam Hyde, President, would try to be at the Office once a week to meet those who wished to see her. Notice of times when Office would be open to be placed in Oxford Times.

Branch work must be determined by local circumstances. Branches should be self-contained units and meetings continued. If the hall is commandeered the meeting to be in Church, with Incumbent's permission. Bishop had given permission for this to happen.

All public meetings cancelled. Triennial Elections postponed.

Owing to petrol rationing, lighting and transport restrictions, it would be impossible for Speakers to visit Branches; therefore only Speakers living near at hand to be asked.

Regular Intercessions, Services and Prayer Meetings should be arranged, and members asked to send in names of relatives and incenls on active service.

Members should be asked to do some sort of public work, such as mending, making clothes for needy evacuated women and others. Branches should co-operate with W.I.s and other organisations.

E.M.s to look up evacuated women and enquire if any belong to M.U. Every precaution to be taken before admitting evacuated members as members of M.U.

GDPR ... Again

Your Trustees have been working very hard so that we comply with the new regulations.

Branch Leaders and Correspondents should have had a conversation with a Trustee but we all have a part to play in safeguarding the personal data of our members, so please note the following:

1. If you haven't already done so, please destroy any old paper copies of personal information about MU members.
2. If you have any paper records of current MU members, these must be placed in a secure place i.e. in a locked drawer or filing cabinet.
3. Password protect your computer, phone or any other electronic device. If you do not know how to do this, please ask a friend or family member.
4. When sending emails to more than one person within Mothers' Union (and it's good practice anyway) you must use the Blind copy facility in your email browser – seen there as Bcc. If you do not know how to do this, ask someone else or email the office email and we can send you instructions.

These are important instructions. If you slip up, please report what has happened to our 'Acting' Data Protection Officer. For the meantime this is Louise Butler, whose contact details are on page 16. Louise will give advice on further action which may have to follow. The regulations tell us that we must report these mistakes very quickly so please report anything immediately!

CHANGE OF DETAILS

If you change your address, phone number or email address, please let us know us so that we can update our records. You might miss out on important communication like this magazine or the newsletter.



Families First

There are a few changes to *Families First* that you need to know about.

From 2019 there will be more focus in the magazine on what makes Mothers' Union unique, such as our development and policy work and a greater level of interaction with members. It will be sent four times a year – in February, May, August and November – and the price will be reduced to £10 per year for members.

The renewal process this year will come **directly to subscribers**.

For existing subscribers: Please look out for a letter inside the July/August edition of the magazine which will give you details of how to renew – including a letter telling you what's happening, a form to fill in and a freepost envelope.

If you are not a subscriber, please consider doing so. The magazine is excellent and keeps us informed about so many things – and the new format sounds very exciting. Please contact the office by email or call Alison if you would like to begin to receive our magazine.

VIDEOS ABOUT MOTHERS' UNION

Have you ever looked on the Mothers' Union YouTube channel?

There are lots of videos there, including one about Stories on the Street in our diocese. A quick internet search will easily find it.

Happy viewing!

Contact us

Diocesan Office

Membership secretary: Eve Madeley-Wyatt

Mothers' Union, CMS House, Watlington Road, Oxford OX4 6BZ

01865 787587 membership.secretary@muoxford.org.uk

Eve is now on maternity leave. Please email the office with any queries and these will be dealt with by the Trustees.

If it cannot be dealt with by email, please ring Alison or one of the AVPs.

Office holders

President: Alison Bennett, 01869 343760,
president@muoxford.org.uk

Chaplain: Rev. Lady Denise Brown, denisefbrown@gmail.com

Action and Outreach: Maureen Weston,
07762 015207, maureenpweston@gmail.com

Fundraising and Communications: Norma Clarke
01494 563116, normaclarke99@gmail.com

Faith and Policy: *Please pray for this vacancy to be filled.*

Finance and Administration: Louise Butler,
01235 851011/07837 009730, finance@muoxford.org.uk

IMPC correspondent: Rosie Kilham-Jackson
letters and emails to the Diocesan Office or phone the DP.

Diocesan Treasurer and MU Enterprises: Please pray for new holders to come forward to take on these important roles.

Focus editor: Ruth Sheppard, focus.editor@muoxford.org.uk

Editorial assistant: Valerie Rushton

Copy by post should be sent to
106 Moreton Road, Buckingham, MK18 1PW

Copy for next issue: 26 October 2018

We try to include all contributions sent, but may have to edit articles to fit. Please keep branch reports to a maximum of 350 words.

Webmaster: Rachel Buckley, webmaster@muoxford.org.uk

Dates for your diary

Everyone is welcome at area events.

- 20th June Oxford Deanery Festival, Bodicote Church, Bodicote.
5th August Bodicote Celebration
17–18th Sept General Meeting.
12th October Autumn Meeting and AGM. Speaker is Mrs Nikki Sweatman,
Canterbury Provincial President.
30th October Cathedral Pilgrimage, contact Jean Vaughan.
13th Nov Cathedral Pilgrimage, contact Rachel Buckley.

CELEBRATING 130 YEARS OF MOTHERS' UNION IN OUR DIOCESE

DORCHESTER ABBEY, 14TH JULY 2018

We will be welcoming people from 12 noon who wish to take part in a Prayer walk around the Abbey.

Please bring lunch to eat outside in the grounds – you will need to bring your own chair or picnic rug. If it is raining, then bring your lunch inside the Abbey but please be aware that others will be taking part in the Prayer walk.

There will be a Service of Thanksgiving at 2pm followed by tea and birthday cakes.

Car parking has been arranged and you should follow the signs for Event Parking. There are different plans for wet and dry weather so please look out carefully! Coaches should drop off their passengers in the bus stop by the Rose Walk to the Abbey and par. Coaches can either park in a layby further along the road or at the Berinsfield roundabout (where the A4074 meets the A415) where there is a large layby and café.

All banners are very welcome – especially from closed branches as it would be lovely to see as many as possible. If you are bringing a banner, please arrive at the Abbey by 1.15pm so that you can be given instructions about what to do.

Branch News

ST. JOHN'S CAVERSHAM

The group continues to pray and worship together and to play full part in the organisation of our church. We have a new clergy who has brought the missing enthusiasm to grow the church and its activities. We have taken part in the three Cs programme and Everybody Welcome course as well as Partnership Missionary Church which is in its third year. Our main missionary project is the shoebox mission through Samaritans' Purse ... we hope to send 100 boxes yearly – all contain hat gloves and scarves made by members. Sadly we have recorded deaths of four loyal members that we were able to support through terminal illness. Our hope is for growth with trust and prayer

BODICOTE

The Bodicote Branch of the Mothers' Union is planning a garden party for our members in July as part of our Celebration of 130 years of the Mother's Union in our Diocese. We will also be holding an Evening Service of Celebration on Sunday, 5th August in Bodicote Church and anyone would be very welcome to come and join us.

WALTON AND BEDGROVE

Highlights this year – have included a follow-up meeting to the Samaritans' Purse ShoeBox Appeal, when we learnt first-hand from a member of our congregation how the boxes were distributed to and accepted by children in Albania. This has certainly proved an incentive to continue our support, both individually and as a group. We also, held a Maundy Meditation – a thoughtful start to the Easter week. Our next 'big' event will be our summer party on 19th July at 2.30 p.m. at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Bedgrove – our major fundraiser of the year – so if you are in the Aylesbury area on the 19th, do pop in. We would love to see you.

Sue Hughes

CHESHAM

Chesham Branch held their 'Make May Matter' fundraising event early this year with a very successful Coffee Morning with Bring & Buy and Raffle on 14th April.

We were kept very busy making fresh coffee for our customers which they enjoyed with the freshly made scones, served with strawberry jam and cream. The grand sum of £182.55 was raised which will go to the Diocese AFIA fund.

ST JOHN'S, WOODLEY

Fifteen members met on the Friday 20th April for the Wave of Prayer and it was a real joy to be together on a lovely warm morning with the birds singing and the beautiful spring colours around us. Although we struggled with some of the names the overwhelming view was how much they had enjoyed the service this year and we even managed the hymn with gusto. It is humbling to remember Mothers' Union members across the world all praying the same words. However many would have had to undertake much more difficult journeys to come together. May we always remember that and continue to be thankful for our own blessings and friendships that support us through life.



Margaret Boys

CHINNOR

Chinnor Mother's Union is a village branch. We meet once a month throughout the year (excepting August). Our meetings are varied and include different speakers on various topics, also we have our annual Church service, and our summer tea party. Our Branch also helps out at Baptisms and our Toddler Group. Also we make up Posies for our Annual Mother's Day service. It is hoped that a few of us will be attending the special Service in Dorchester Abbey in July. Our wonderful Branch Leader, Monica Bartlett stepped down recently, she quietly led and guided us so well.'

Sue Marshall

COWLEY

Our branch has a wide-ranging membership which continues to grow slowly but steadily. We have several long-standing members, now in their nineties, who were enrolled as young mothers in their twenties. We have members who

have joined on retirement from work, and we have members who have 'found' us from various parts of Britain and abroad having moved into our area.

We work hard to raise our profile in the parish by holding outreach social evenings when 'other halves', family and friends and neighbours are invited to our regular, popular special evenings. Early in the spring when the weather is usually gloomy, we hold a puddings and quiz evening where a light-hearted quiz is interspersed with gorgeous home-made pud's as refreshments.

In the autumn, we hold our annual wine, cheese and poetry evening. Members and friends bring along a selection of their chosen poems (Some of them their own compositions!) and enjoy a good supper of cheeses from around the world with salad accompaniments and wine or soft drinks. The profits from these evenings go towards the MU harvest appeal.

We are enthusiastic supporters of AFIA and Make a Mother's Day and send regularly to Overseas Outreach but our main support in Oxford is for our Children's Hospital at the JR Hospital. Our knitters and their friends and families are sending exquisite little garments to the Special Baby Unit together with cot blankets by the score. We also collect good toiletries for parents staying with their children and colouring books, pens, pencils and stickers etc. for the older children confined to hospital.

For our 130th anniversary celebrations we are planning a 'pilgrimage picnic'. On the edge of our parish, we have a very beautiful medieval chapel built as part of the early Bartholomew's leper hospital on the outskirts of Oxford. We are going to hold our June branch meeting there with a 'bring and share' tea and cakes. Of course we shall be at the 130th celebrations in Dorchester Abbey and looking forward to meeting everyone then.

FINCHAMPSTEAD AND CALIFORNIA

Finchampstead Mothers' Union was started in 1916, and California and Arborfield branches joined us in 2012.

We have 42 members who meet monthly to pray and enjoy fellowship together, often with a speaker and always with an excellent tea! We regularly use our cooking and other skills to raise funds for our MU charities. We enjoy supporting our clergy, young families and other church activities. Our church toddler group (fledglings) will be raising money for AFIA again

this year to 'Make May Matter'. Some of our members will be on hand to do the refreshments!

Sarah Owen

CROWTHORNE

On the Saturday before Mothering Sunday Crowthorne Mothers' Union made 140 posies with the help of the children at Messy Church. We also served 50 bowls of homemade soup for everyone for lunch and made the Simnel cakes for the ten o'clock family service the following day when all the posies were distributed, so it was a busy weekend. We are now raising money to go towards the repair of the stained-glass window in the Lady Chapel at St John's to mark the 130th anniversary of MU in Oxford and continue to support AFIA, a charity close to our heart.



ASCOT HEATH

Recently our branch visited 15th-century Saint Mary's The Virgin, Ewelme.

The Rector, Dr, Rev, Patrick Gilday, having greeted us took us into St John's Chapel for prayers and then gave us a tour of this very interesting church with a fascinating history.

The weather was glorious and the picturesque Village as interesting as the church.

Treated to tea and scrumptious cakes to end our wonderful visit well worth the foray into Oxfordshire.

Thank you Patrick and members of the Church PCC.



BICESTER AREA

We held our Wave of Prayer at a member's house on Saturday 21st April with seven of our members present

On 10th April the Curate at St Edburgs Church, April Beckerleg, led our Deanery Quiet evening. April laid out stations for reflection around the church which were enjoyed by all. This was followed by refreshments



ABINGDON BRANCH

Many congratulations to Mothers' Union on reaching 130 years from Abingdon branch. Many thanks to all who work so hard to make it so successful throughout the world and especially our diocese of Oxford.

Abingdon branch is the only one in the deanery and we currently have 29 members, two of which are new this year. We are made up of all the churches in Abingdon and St Swithuns of Kennington.

We have a varied programme and try to get involved in as many causes as we can.

Barbara Earl, Branch Leader

ANNIVERSARY MUGS:

Have you got yours yet?
*They will be available at the
Dorchester service in July.*



Bucks County Show

Thursday 30th August

Once again we have been asked to provide craft activities for children visiting the Church Marquee at Bucks County Show near Aylesbury and we would welcome some volunteers to help. Visitors start to arrive from about 9.30am for a cup of coffee and a cake and the children are very pleased to stay busy while their parents have a chance to sit down and relax. We usually finish at about 5.00pm.

If you enjoy helping children with simple craft and can help for a 2–3 hour session in the morning or afternoon we would be pleased to hear from you. We order the tickets in advance for a small discount and at least some of the cost is met from other sources. It makes a very interesting day out.

Rachel Buckley 01908 618487 buckleyrm@btopenworld.com

Valerie Rushton 01280 824942 valerie_rushton@hotmail.com

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR ENTERPRISES (SALES) REPRESENTATIVE

As many of you already know, it is with regret that Pat Weeks, our Enterprises representative, is having to give up the job and although there are three other helpers we do need a replacement. Enterprises are greetings cards, badges, prayer books, etc.

There are several things to note about this job:

You need to be a car driver – goods need to be driven round the Dioceses (mileage is payable at 40p per mile).

You are responsible for ordering stock from Mary Sumner House for you and other representatives, and you need space to store boxes of goods.

You automatically become a member of the Fundraising and Communications committee, which meets four times a year.

You are responsible for banking your takings and letting the Diocesan Treasurer know.

For more information or for the full job description, please contact me on 01494 563116 or normaclarke99@gmail.com.

Norma Clarke

Branch history

MARY SUMNER AND HEDGERLEY MOTHERS' UNION

Notes from reports

Mrs Stevenson, who lived at Hedgerley Park, 'the big house' of the village and was a friend of Mary Sumner and often entertained her at Hedgerley Park, Mary Sumner often worshiped in our Parish Church.

In 1899 Mrs Stevenson held a meeting in her drawing room attended by Mary Sumner, Mrs Matthews (the vicar's wife) and Mrs Nutt, now living in Henley, who had been one of the first members enrolled in the Stoke Poges Branch which was formed in 1893. Mary Sumner spoke at this meeting explaining the Aims and Objectives, but it was not until 1901 that Hedgerley Branch was founded and registered in 1902, the subscribing members were Mrs Stevenson and Mrs Matthews, Associate Members were Mrs Bowden, Mrs Glennester (known to us as Granny Glennester), Mrs F. Glennester, Mrs Holme, Mrs Mumford and Mrs Smith.

In 1903 the vicar enrolled Mrs Stevenson, Mrs Matthews (both subscribing members) and five other ladies being Associate Members and came from all walks of life. Every member should be a worker!

25th March was generally observed as a day of prayer for the Mothers' Union, and the North Bucks President said 'more prayer needed, more faith, more zeal, more perseverance, more tact and more enthusiasm'. 239 of the 648 parishes in Oxford Diocese have a Mothers' Union.

At the Central Council Meetings, Mrs Sumner proposed increasing the subscribing member's subs to 2 shillings of which 6 pence was for the centre and 6 pence for the Diocese. The Welsh President suggested 3 pence for every member, 1 penny to branch, 1 penny to centre and 1 to Diocese.

In 1904 Oxford decided to send 10 shillings from every rural Deanery in the Diocese to central funds.

In 1907 Mrs Stevenson became PA for the Deanery and Enrolling Associate for Hedgerley, which now had 18 members. Dogmatic religious

training at monthly meetings of Associates, SMs and some EAs, should start at once, children in public houses was discussed at Central Council, all entertainment should be of a spiritual character, outings, treats and entertainments should not be planned in the name of the Mothers' Union.

An address was given at Hedgerley Park to educated mothers in the neighbourhood and in the evening to village mothers; greater care and a period of probation is needed before admitting new members and the decline in Sunday observance was discussed.

Granny Glennister, recounted how she, as a maid at Hedgerley Park, became engaged to the gardener, she was summoned to the parlour and was interviewed by Mary Sumner, who was staying at the Park. Her husband to be was also interviewed. In 1903 Granny was enrolled in Hedgerley and presented her badge by Mary Sumner who was staying at Hedgerley Park and attended the service. Granny's badge is now in the archives at Mary Sumner House and was on display at their recent celebrations.

TILEHURST

Tylehurst St George MU Branch is probably one of the older branches in the diocese, and it has an indirect link with our founder, Mary Sumner. The first branch to be formed in Reading Deanery was Beech Hill, now part of the Loddon Reach benefice in South Reading. Mary Sumner had a friend who lived there, and Mary encouraged her friend to gather the ladies of the parish together, from which a MU branch grew.

The lady at Beech Hill had a friend, an army officer's wife, whose husband was serving at Brock Barracks; the garrison church for the barracks is St George's in West Reading and from this Tylehurst St George Mothers' Union branch was formed, soon after the building of the church. We celebrated 125 years of Mothers' Union in the church a few years ago and continue as a fairly active branch with 18 members.

This lovely piece comes from the 115th celebrations, from the now-closed branch of Beech Hill (Reading deanery).

How does one start to give thanks for 115 years of Mothers Union? Over the years many enrolling members, including my own mother, have given up so much of their time to the MU. We have always understood that Mary Sumner herself came to start our branch, and in those days there was no TV, radio, cars etc, so the Mothers Union flourished, with 30 to 40 members.



One of our highlights was our 100th anniversary in 1988, when Tricia Beach ably lead us for the Deanery festival in our church, and an exhibition of 100 years of village life. The following Sunday the late Rev Peter Edwards let MU take the service when we all dressed in Victorian dress. For the festival, banners were taken into church but had to come straight out again as there were no room for them

inside! There was standing room only with some people having to stand outside. The late Rev Geoff Udall gave the address in which he called us 'the Grandmothers Union'!

We had outings to Mary Sumner House, and Old Arlesford, various gardens, and our own parties in different members' gardens over the years.

We made kneelers for our church, donated bibles for the children to use in church and we are always doing church cleaning and flower arrangement duties. In addition we have had fund-raising stalls at fetes and Christmas bazaars, selling many things there that we had made at meetings to support the church and Mothers Union. We have tried so hard to keep going and for 2 years Grazley MU has joined in all meetings, but there were not enough of us to continue.

It is with a heavy heart that I remember all of this as in 2003 we held the final meeting of Beech Hill's branch of the Mothers Union.—Dorothy Cripps



Mothers Union members, Dorothy Cripps, Iris Wait and Marilyn Burridge dressed up for the V E Celebrations of 50 years ago in 1995

The Event Box

During the last year, the Communications and Fundraising Unit have been putting together and trialling an 'Event Box': a portable resource for members to use at events to enable easy and consistent set up of a Mothers' Union information stall. This would be separate from any MUE stall.

The Event Box consists of a large canvas Mothers' Union Shopping Bag containing leaflets and posters, and display stands together with a pull-up banner, some videos which can run on a laptop computer, if you have one available, and a tablecloth; and, we are in the process of adding a free-standing display board.



This photograph shows a stall set up using the Event Box.

We have put together two identical boxes which are available for members to borrow. One is held at the Mothers' Union office in Oxford and the other by me in the Reading Deanery.

Please contact mothersunion@muoxford.org.uk or jennie.searle@gmail.com if you would like to borrow one.

Find Mothers' Union online

Diocesan website: www.muoxford.org.uk

Provincial website: www.canterburyprovincemu.org.uk

Central MU website: www.mothersunion.org

Facebook: search for 'Mothersunion Oxford'

Financial Matters

What's happening?

In September, you will be receiving a form asking you whether you would like to begin paying for your membership by 'Direct Debit'.

Many of us already use Direct Debits to pay subscriptions and bills. They are a modern alternative to a Standing Order, which allow you to make a regular payment easily, with a pre-confirmed amount being debited from your bank account on a set date.

Following the research we did a few years ago, we have wanted to offer this service for some time. We are now being given the opportunity to be the first diocese to do so, working in partnership with Mary Sumner House (MSH). MSH will be processing your payment on our behalf. We will also need to ask you to sign another Gift Aid form, as there will be an administrative change to this process.

How will it work?

You will have the option to sign up to pay by Direct Debit online (following a link which you will find in the July–October ENewsletters), or by using the forms and prepaid envelope which you will receive through your branch (or directly if you are a Diocesan Member). It will need to be returned by **31st October 2018**.

If you sign up to pay in this way, your **2019** subscription will be taken automatically from your bank account between 15th & 20th January 2019 – you will be told the exact date and amount in advance.

Why are we doing this?

We want to make life easier for treasurers so that they don't have the huge burden of collecting your subscription and you won't have to worry about paying them. Think what else we could do with that time and energy! It will also help us in the office, particularly whilst Eve is away; receiving funds like this means we can budget more effectively. Having this modern method of payment will certainly help you attract new, younger members.

For the first year of this trial, subscriptions will be collected in full in January. If this is a success, it is hoped that in the following year we will be

able to offer monthly direct debits, allowing the annual subscription to be spread over a year, which we hope will be welcomed by both current and potential members.

Is it safe? Will it work?

Thanks to the Direct Debit Guarantee, which protects you against payments made in fraud or in error, paying via this route is now the UK's safest payment method. Details of this guarantee will be provided on the form we give you, and can also be found online.

MSH has introduced a **brand new system** to manage the collection of subscriptions by Direct Debit and we expect all to go smoothly once you have signed up.

Signing up to this initiative is by no means obligatory, but it would be really helpful if you could begin paying your subscription in this way.

If you have any questions or concerns then please don't hesitate to contact either Richard Miller, Head of Finance at Mary Sumner House on 020 7222 5533, Richard.Miller@mothersunion.org or Louise or Alison (see Contacts on page 16).

AUTUMN MEETING AND AGM

FRIDAY 12 OCTOBER, BENSON VILLAGE HALL, OX10 6LZ

10.30 am Speaker: Nikki Sweatman Canterbury Provincial President.

Coffee available from 10.00am

Please bring your Christmas cards for the prisoners at Bullingdon prison. You should write this message underneath the printed greeting inside the card:

With Best Wishes from a member of Mothers' Union in Oxford Diocese

Please do NOT seal the envelope or write anything else. Please be sensitive about the cards you choose to donate and don't bring any with unsuitable printed words. Thank you in advance for making a difference to the lives of the prisoners this Christmas.

Celebrations

Ray and Monica Hester, Witney branch, celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary on 22nd March.

Mrs Anne Soley, St Catherine's, Tilehurst, celebrated her 80th birthday on 10th April.

Margaret Vaughan, Crowthorne branch, celebrated her 90th birthday on 8th May.

Jill and David Mapley, Newport Pagnell, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 18th May.

The Right Reverend Dr Steven and Mrs Ann Croft celebrate their Ruby Wedding Anniversary on 17th June.

Keith and Pauline Middleton, Newport Pagnell, celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 21st June.

Janet and Ken Chapman, Abingdon branch, celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 27th July.

Mrs Sheila Drew, St Catherine's, Tilehurst, celebrates her 80th birthday on 11th September.

Mrs Anita and Mr Alan Holbeche St Catherine's, Tilehurst, celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 21st September.

Mrs Valerie and Mr Bernard Rose, St Catherine's, Tilehurst, celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 7th December.

A prayer for Summertime

Loving and caring God,

We thank you for the special joys of Summertime.

For long days and warm evenings,

for a multitude of flowers and fruits to enjoy,

for opportunities for holidays and relaxation,

for life itself, with its challenges and moments of wonder.

We pray for those for whom holidays are a distant memory or dream, and

for those families who will spend precious time together through AFIA

holidays this year.

Loving and caring God, we thank you for your many gifts to us.



