

Peculiar Times!



This newsletter comes from the Mothers' Union Diocesan Trustees and Officers and hope that it finds you well. It brings you the warmest of Christmas greetings, and all good wishes for the New Year.

And so we have come to the end of the triennium.... And what a time we've had! Our thanks go to all the Trustees and Officers, to all the Branch Leaders and Committee Members, to our Diocesan and Indoor Members, and of course to our wonderful members, supporters and friends who have encouraged and sustained us through these difficult times. To those leaving the Trustee Board, we thank them for all that they have done for us, and to those returning, we brace ourselves for what the future holds, starting with a Reimagining Mothers' Union residential conference at the beginning of January when Jeanette and Amanda will be representing our diocese. Please pray for all to be protected and that much is achieved. Almost every diocese in the Province has been engaged and participated in the cascaded Reimagining MU coffee mornings so there is much to be discussed.

Our theme for 2022 "Transformation - Now" will bring changes to absorb, challenges to inspire and chances to take as we build on the strengths and transform MU to adapt to new opportunities. Is the Mothers' Union still relevant? Yes – because it is the means by which many of us have the resources available to help us to be able to have the confidence to show God's love to others in our communities, our county and across the world. *Together we do:* we pray, we read the Bible, we serve, we share and we meet in fellowship; and *as individuals we are:* faithful, loving, respectful, generous and compassionate and recognise how much all this is needed in our world today. We have a reason for being, a 'calling', a purpose in life

Although small in number, in *our* Branch we have been regularly meeting together for worship, thinking and praying through the *16 Days of Activism and "No more 3:1"*, using the Prayer Diary with its particular emphasis on domestic violence, displaying information in the church, wearing purple scarves and generally raising awareness of all these issues... We have continued with our monthly meetings where and when possible, and even as I write, covid has meant cancelling our December meeting but we will be delivering Christmas treats to all our members – a variation on Bags of Love.



Permission given, Dec 2021



We'd love to see pictures of your Branch on our website (with photo consent forms completed please!) and tell us what you've been doing in and around your local community.

Do catch up with all the latest information by looking at the websites (www.musuffolk.org.uk, and www.mothersunion.org); read through the *Connected* magazine, look at the online MSH newsletters and Reflections, listen to the Daily Hope telephone line (0800 804 8044) for Midday Prayers, and check out our MUE sales catalogue (particularly the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Collection (contact Clare) and of course, look all the new resources for training and webinars, for projects and parenting courses like Reflect and Review, Communities of Interest and all the new material for upcoming festival services like Mothering Sunday, Easter and Thy Kingdom Come (27th May 22). Don't forget to catch the MU

Carol Service on YouTube and Facebook (streamed on 15th December at 7.00 pm) – as well as all the overseas initiatives and campaigns, the appeals and fundraising events: MSH has just raised £74,000 through the Big Give matched funding appeal for the Christmas campaign focusing on Kenya, Uganda and South Africa..... Congratulations and many thanks to all who helped surpass anticipated targets.

MSH have written to ask us to send them the contact details of new officers as soon as possible. These will of course be recorded on the new branch/group forms that will be sent out, but if you know before then, please can you pass this information on to Beryl. If you are a running your branch by Committee, and want members to be on the email distribution list, Clare is happy to help set this up for your branch – for example, the email address could be something like middletonmu@suffolk.org.uk) and then any emails to that single address can be forwarded on to the personal email addresses of whoever in the branch wants them. This would mean no additional passwords or anything to log in to – it's just automatic forwarding of your email to those who need it.

Communities of Interest are taking off via email and zoom – 13,500 Christmas cards were dispatched to 8 dioceses for distribution to prisoners and their families. MU Representative continue to be part of the Board of Reference for Prison Week. Interested in joining a Community of Interest? The next CoI for Prisons will be in January. We are part of this project sending out cards to our local prisons here in Suffolk, and if you would like more information on joining this one, or different CoI's – doing something real – visit the MSH website, contact MSH direct, or get in touch with Linda...

The Direct Debit project is progressing well with 17 Dioceses in our Province now participating in using this method to pay their subs. Payments will be taken on the 31st January 2022 from the accounts of those members who have 'opted in'. MSH have much appreciated the impact this has on the finances.

With all the ongoing covid issues, Ipswich Hopsital still needs all sizes of male and female underwear. With restricted visits from friends and families, patients are in need of underwear of all sizes (contact Beryl or Jeanette for details).

At the Canterbury Provincial Conference, delegates were given a power-point presentation by Debbie Huxton on Transforming Communities Together, and talking in depth about the Clewer Initiative. Christine told us as the North Suffolk Area Day in Fressingfield that she would be happy to come and talk to branches and groups about how we as MU, are rising to the challenges here in Suffolk, and how we can get involved (do get in touch with her - again via Beryl).

The Ipswich Area had a wonderful Coffee Morning at St Michael's church in Martlesham in November and raised £663.25. There was a great buzz around the hall with members catching up with one another having not seen some members for two years. Thank-you's all round to everyone! The morning had a real feeling of fellowship about it. As one door closes – the Special Baby Unit at Ipswich Hospital cannot take any more baby items at the moment as they have nowhere to keep the items (information will be circulated as to when we can start collecting again) – another door opens.....Ipswich Area has also purchased ladies and men's pyjamas and underwear for the Ipswich Night Shelter.... Sandra thanks everyone for their continued help and support which is very much appreciated by all. The North Suffolk Area also had a great time at the I-Chameleon shop raising £1,437 with a further £327.55 for sales of MUE cards. What a lot is happening!

As we draw to the close of this triennium,



- we rejoice in all that has been achieved through Mothers' Union in our Diocese;
- we remember before God all those who mourn for past members and loved ones, praying that they will be comforted;
- and we look to the future with eager anticipation as to what God has in store for us - we could well be amazed!

With our love and thanks to all. May you have a truly blessed Christmas, and as we contemplate and reflect on the birth of Jesus, who entered our troubled world bringing us hope and love, let us together, praise God, rejoice and give thanks!