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Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Diocese of St. Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Charity No. 24972

Peculiar Times!



Sheran Harper (WWP)

Greetings! from the Mothers' Union Diocesan Trustees and Officers to all our Members, (Sue (Diocesan Members and Monica (Indoor Members) will be writing separately but will enclose this newsletter along with their letters and we are also including our Life Vice Presidents:

We hope this finds you well, and that Easter has been, in spite of all, a blessed time! Although we are currently surrounded by much sadness in the losing of loved ones (for which our sincere condolences), in shielding, imposed self-isolation, social distancing, absence of family and friends, and missing the fellowship and friendship of others within our church membership and social circle.... we still have so much for which to rejoice and give thanks...

Springtime, and we rejoice in new birth...



Congratulations Grandma on the safe arrival of Eliza-Beth - born this very morning! We love to receive pictures, and messages albeit by internet and email. For the rest of us, we still have pen and paper, cards, letters and phone calls, and together we can freely share in the wonderful dawn chorus, the warmth of the sunshine, the beauty of the flowers and budding trees, the wildlife, the unclouded skies, music and laughter, and the kindness of others. And we can have confidence because "we know that **all things work together for good to them that love God**, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28). Even though, as yet, we do not fully understand, we can still encourage one another, and we will get through this together - we can have confidence because we know that God sees the bigger picture, and He knows and cares for each one of us.... We just have to trust...

BUT it's not always easy...

And as MU we are going through a time of testing. We are being challenged to trust God with the very future of our organisation.

All members on the MSH database will be receiving, along with Families Worldwide (either by email, post, or distribution), a letter with an urgent appeal for financial donations to enable the work of Mothers' Union to continue.

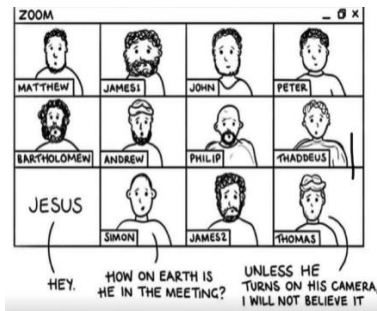
As with other charities, Mary Sumner House is struggling financially, and the situation is now urgent. Because of the devastating effects of coronavirus, along with declining membership, reduced income from cancelled conference fees, events, and fundraising, etc... MSH is anticipating a loss in excess of £1m.

Members are not being expected to bear the burden of this short-fall alone - only those who wish to and are able to contribute, are being asked to help with donations. MSH recognises that many of us will also be experiencing financial difficulties. Corporate funding is being sought. As a cost-cutting exercise, MSH is now closed until the 21st April, staff are being furloughed, working from home, and making huge sacrifices.

If you are in a position to help with funds, and would like to do so (be it as a branch or as an individual), please send your gifts to Keith, our Treasurer, clearly marked for the Urgent Appeal, so that the money can be sent to a third party in Slough who are responsible for the management of donations on behalf of MSH. Any gift will be much appreciated.

Thank you.

But the story doesn't stop there..... We want to record our gratitude to all at MSH for the measures they are taking to try and remedy the situation, and the tremendous efforts they are making on our behalf.



Last week, our Trustees, together with Beryl and Keith, met for the first time by Zoom (that is, conferencing over the internet) where we could see the faces and hear the voices of each other to discuss how we feel our diocese should respond to this Appeal. Two weeks' ago Diocesan Presidents from the Canterbury Province, received a devastating letter from Mary Sumner House explaining the profound problem that we, as an organisation, are facing. It took a while to digest. In response, all Diocesan Presidents were summoned to a Zoom meeting arranged by MSH (56 of us were present on the computer screen!). We listened to staff presentations from the CEO and department heads, and had the opportunity to ask questions. Together we have been praying and searching for a way forward, and now all MU members are included.

Via email, I passed on the information and asked for a response from our Board of Trustees. Having been pre-warned, the Trustees decided to set up our own Zoom conference (our first!) to ensure that everyone's voice was heard. After much thought and discussion, and individual prayer, a proposal was put forward on behalf of the members of St Eds&Ips, to immediately send £5,000 from the General Fund to MSH, and this to be reviewed at our next Trustee meeting in May – again probably via Zoom. The proposal was unanimously agreed, and funds sent on Maundy Thursday.



As we are accountable to our membership, we would be very glad to hear your thoughts and views, either by letter, phone or email, but above all we would value your prayerful support as we make these difficult decisions on the very future of the Mothers' Union both here and overseas. As one of our Trustees said, "If central Mothers' Union closes then our diocese closes its doors to our worldwide members". We knew the MU had to change and because of the virus, now is the time.

Please tell us what are you thinking...



This week's project..... !

In some care homes residents are feeling very isolated. If you have a little spare time, and are in touch with a care home, you could contact the manager/matron with your phone number and a convenient time (am or pm). You could be there for any resident needing "a friend" or just a listening ear: someone just might be waiting to talk to you at this difficult time. Let's make MU visible!

Let us pray together

- 🙏 Give thanks to God for all the positives that we are experiencing at this difficult time – for God's faithfulness and all-seeing-ness; for new life; for the kindnesses we have been able to give and receive; for time to stop and reflect, and for shared and common experiences, support and encouragement.
- 🙏 Ask God for his guidance for all our leaders and those deciding on the future of MSH - for Sheran Harper (WWP), Bev (CEO), Trustees and especially Nikki and Kathryn; for our own Bishops and clergy, our Trustees, Ian (Chaplain), Officers and Members as we consider the MU future in this diocese, and the impact on members across the world; pray for God's protection on all those we love and care for.

Notes from Beryl:

The next donation to MSH would be from money claimed from gift aid and the MU dividend and made up to £5000 by money from the general fund again. Would you like us to also add the refunded money from the cancelled coach trip to the Thy Kingdom Come service in Coventry? As Linda has said, if you are able and wish to donate either personally or through your branch, please send any donations via your branch treasurer to Keith our Diocesan treasurer. Your branch treasurer has Keith's address and can send them all at once in one envelope thus saving postage. Please do not use the envelope that comes with the MSH letter as we would like to know how much our diocese is helping and by Keith having the donations to send in one lot we will be able to do this. Thank you for your cooperation.

Hopefully more up to date news will be issued again at the beginning of May after the MSH briefing. Contact details for your stories, thoughts, suggestions, views and ideas, (and let me know if you want them to be published at editor's discretion!) to Linda Ginn, Diocesan President at dpmusuffolk@gmail.com (01728 748365) or Beryl Mee, secretarysuffolkmu56@gmail.com