

Peculiar Times!

Dear Everyone,

And still we are living in *Peculiar Times* – and even more so with the resurgence of covid, wars, rumours of wars, unemployment, petrol prices, food shortages, broken relationships.... But we have a God who is faithful and sees the bigger picture. All we are called to do is to trust and obey.....

Yesterday we held our Annual General Meeting in Stowmarket. It was a first combining in-person attendance with zoom. It was lovely to see everyone again, and we welcome our “new” – but largely the same – Board of Trustees, Officers, and Community of Interest Leads. Jo Copsey, from the Town Pastor scheme in Bury St Edmunds, gave us a wonderful talk about her work (see AGM Minutes for more details) and do pray for all those involved in this work.

There's so much going on.... Do read the comprehensive Minutes from yesterday's meeting ... we touched on many things. To supplement what was said, here are a few extra snippets in some kind of random order.....

News from the Branches

Slowly, slowly the numbers are beginning to creep up! Imagine! The Cathedral branch is growing; East Bergholt, Brantham and Needham Market are doing (knitting...); Claydon and Barham are fund-raising (MUe cards, teas, etc) and yesterday in our Yoxford branch, a newcomer turned up in response to what she had read in the parish magazine. In the Farmshop Fellowship Family (previously the MU Branch at Campsea Ashe) we had a pancake party (100% attendance), and at the AGM yesterday Val, from Needham Market, shared that “in this Queen's Platinum Jubilee we have been asked to 'Plant a tree for Jubilee'. As the Queen is Patron of the Mothers' Union, for over 70 years, Needham Market Branch are going to plant a Queen Elizabeth rose in the garden surrounding the church.” Can you plant a tree somewhere? Tell us about it. I also wrote to the Queen on behalf of the MU at St Eds and Ips.... More about that next time.... What's going on in your branch? How are you surviving as a Branch/Fellowship? What can we help you with? – please send us Snippets to inspire and encourage... Great things are happening out there!



News from the Diocese

We have a new Diocesan Chaplain - and delighted to welcome the Rev Catherine Forsdike, known to many, who will be joining our team (see yesterday's Minutes). We desperately need to find a few more trustees to serve for three years on our Trustee Board, and in particular, someone to help us with Communications (publicity, social media, twitter, facebook etc); and we are looking for Community of Interest Leads to co-ordinate our prison work; someone for faith, for fund-raising projects, and for the newly revamped parenting initiatives. Could God be calling you? (1 Cor. 12). Cathie is our Social Policy Lead and guides us on all the important regulations for toy-making (see website), Christine keeps us up to date with Clewer and Clare continues to do the website (along with everything else IT-wise). Here in St Eds/Ips Disability and Diversity will be coming to the fore.... more later. We have a brilliant team! Come and be a part of it and join in the fun!

Don't forget our Lady Day Service and Commissioning in the Cathedral, 11.30 am on 25th March, **and – hot news – on Mothering Sunday, 27th March, we're on Radio Suffolk at 8.00am** – do tune in, or listen again on BBC Sounds for up to 28 days after broadcasting. All 39 local radio stations, up and down England, will be joining together for the programme. A real privilege to be invited to say the prayers. The next new “Connected” magazine will be on your door step beginning of April (see Clare if there's a problem). MUe have ethical goods and gifts for sale. Still time to say thank you to all mothers and care-givers for their selfless nurture, love and helping us to flourish. Sales have been up on last year – congratulation Clare and Penny (see Minutes). We also want to have more input at our Council Meetings (eg. where?, when? timing?, content?, ideas?, suggestions?) for moving forward, etc.) from all our Branch and Diocesan Members – we're all in this together and need your help. We all have different gifts to offer - all parts of the one Body.... (see Minutes again). Our Trustees are now completing their safeguarding, and don't forget Risk Assessments are important.

News from Mary Sumner House and the Province

Our theme for this, and the next three years, is *“Transformation – Now!”* Expect changes! Following St Alban’s lead, we are piloting Fellowship Groups (no admin, bank a/c, minutes, etc but still having fellowship, fun, food and friendship) alongside the more traditional Branch structures, and/or joining up with Diocesan Members (see Minutes/Sue). Same MU aims, objectives, values – but a different (less arduous) approach. We already have two established groups in our diocese, and some branches are thinking of making the change. More details in the July Council Meeting. Delighted to tell you that Amanda (our Treasurer) and Christine (my predecessor) will be representing us at the Reimagining MU Conference in July in Liverpool. I will shortly be going to the Diocesan Presidents’ Conference in Hertfordshire where together we pray for the work of MU, discover what others are doing in their dioceses, and reconnecting with new and old friends. “Thy Kingdom Come” service will be live streamed from MSH on 27th May. MSH have reported that the Direct Debit scheme has helped enormously - around 15% of our membership took this up, and MSH have sent a letter of appreciation. Thank you!, Passionate about Parenting is being re-vamped and will come under a Community of Interest, as will all Prison involvement. MSH supports the designs and helps with cost-price Christmas cards (see Sue) for use in prisons and represent MU on Prison Week Board of Reference.

The matched funding for the Christmas pledge unlocked £72,000 online and postal donations came to just over £101,000. Thank you to all who supported this. Due to financial constraints, staff at MSH have been reduced from 40-25 positions, and if you need to get in touch with them, I have a list of who is available when.... everything has changed now. Do remember them in your prayers as they cope with all these pressures.

News from across the World

See the MU website (www.mothersuion.org) and our website (www.musuffolk.org) for up to date information..... Make a Mothers’ Day (campaign is now on MU website), Reflections, Prayer, Wave of Prayer, 16th-18th July (remember that if branches meet outside this time we still have a responsibility and commitment to pray for our members on these specific dates – it’s a global ‘wave’) and don’t forget Midday Prayers on Facebook and the Daily Hope Telephone line (0800 804 8044 and follow options), and Reflections from MSH and the Central Chaplaincy team. The Annual Gathering for Britain and All Ireland will be in Belfast on 23rd-25th September. Tickets coming out now - see website or contact Beryl.



And finally, Sheran Harper, our Worldwide President, has asked us to really think....

1. What does the 2022 theme “Transformation – Now!” mean to you and your MU work?
2. How can you transform yourself to live out your faith?
3. How can you encourage membership to transform the church/community to reflect God’s kingdom?
4. How can we make sure MU remains relevant in this triennium?

A prayer for Ukraine:



God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine today. We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons. We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow, that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them. We pray for those with power over war and peace, for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions. Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear, that you will hold and protect them. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, Amen. Archbishops Justin Welby and Stehen Cottrell (2022)

Mary Sumner’s Personal Prayer

All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for you, and every life I touch, may you by your Spirit, bring to life whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. Amen