

## Peculiar Times – Epiphany Edition, 2022

To all our branch leaders and officers, indoor members, diocesan members, central members, Life Vice Presidents, those associated with Communities of Interest and friends of Mothers' Union... this comes with the warmest of Christian greetings at the start of our new triennium. As we say thank you to all those who have held positions of responsibility over the last three years, so we welcome our new Trustee Board and Officers who took up their roles on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Our Commissioning Service will be on Lady Day, Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 11.00am in the Cathedral with the Rt Rev Tim Stephens. Many in our branches will be returning for a second (or more!) term of office, and others will be starting afresh with new ways of doing things, different structures, committee-based groupings – do be assured of our love and prayers as we strive to serve God in the places where we live.

Our theme for this year is “Transformation – Now!” - (*definition: – “a dramatic/radical change in form or appearance into another one of similar value - are you ready? !*). Many needful changes are afoot within the Mothers' Union organisation, and we need to be upholding our CEO Bev, and Worldwide President, Sheran, and all the Senior Team, trustees, and office staff at Mary Sumner House - and in particular Kathryn our Provincial President - remembering them all before God in our prayers, especially as they navigate all the hurdles and pitfalls whilst still rejoicing in all the challenges and opportunities which will come their way.

It's on, it's off, it's on, and now as I write, it seems to be off again... what *peculiar times* we are living in! Sadly, the residential “Re-imagining Conference” next week (which Jeanette and Amanda were attending on our behalf) has again been cancelled due to the Omicron variant. Marian Pope writes that “we are looking at different options to move things forward with this important process for Mothers' Union”. How wonderful that we have a God who knows, and cares, and sees, and on whom we can fully rely because He is unchanging - “He is the same yesterday, today and forever” – or, the same as then, now, and always.

I wanted to write this first newsletter of our triennium to share with you some of the things that have been happening in our Diocese, but firstly to bring you the sad news that Jane Drew, from Lavenham, died on Christmas Day. Jane was the MU Diocesan President in St Albans in the mid-90's. Her then Secretary writes that “Jane was a hard-working DP who did not shy away from difficult decisions, and steered her trustees and other diocesan officers through some choppy waters. Her faith was very precious and at times, Jane clung to that, sure that the work she was doing in the name of MU was important and in line with what she believed”. Ann, in our Diocese, also added that Jane “was kind, compassionate and fun loving. She had an inner joy and a zest for life, a great example of service both to her family and community”. I too would like to pay tribute to Jane in appreciation for her love and support over these last years, and for all that she has contributed to the MU here in Suffolk. She will be sorely missed. Jane's Service of Thanksgiving and Commendation will be taking place at the Parish Church in Lavenham on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2022 at 2.30 pm followed by tea and cake. Beryl has sent a card to husband Gerald on behalf of our Diocese, sending him and the family our deepest sympathy and knowing that they will be comforted by the love, thoughts and prayers of her many friends, both within the Mothers' Union and beyond.

This also comes to say thank you to all those who have given so generously to the recent MU appeals whether it be financially, MUE merchandise, supporting coffee mornings, services (virtual and otherwise), preparing and sending Christmas cards to prisoners and their families, and for all the prayers and other unseen acts of kindness over the recent weeks – they have not gone unnoticed! Change brings its challenges (unfamiliar formats, new ways of working [as in Direct Debits for subscriptions], zoom meetings, and leadership roles, etc.....), and it is that same Christmas spirit of generosity that will help us to navigate our way through the uncharted waters ahead.

Our first Trustee meeting will be on *Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022* when, as a smaller team, we will be discussing the way forward for our diocese. Please pray that God will guide and lead us through ‘all the changing scenes of life - in trouble and in joy’, as together we seek to do His will.

May God bless you richly in 2022, and we look forward to meeting up again, in person, as and when.....

Take care, keep safe, with our love – Linda, and the new Trustee Board and Officers