



A message from Liz Binsley, Diocesan President 2010- 2015

Dear Friends,

We belong to an amazing organisation that does tremendous work throughout the world, and, over the years has transformed the lives of many, many families.

We've been through our own tough times over the last three years and there are very few people who cannot say they weren't affected in any way. Not being able to visit someone you love in hospital was heart breaking as I can testify, and those who were living in Care Homes could only wave at their families through the windows, children were unable to attend school, doing all their learning online, causing them to lose many social skills, as well as interrupted education – all these and many other situations affected so many people – causing physical, mental and emotional stress.

This took a great toll on our lives and as we emerged from the pandemic it seemed to be a struggle to get back to something like normal. As a result of this many institutions and organisations have suffered.

This is true of Mothers' Union as with churches and other organisations, however, during the pandemic the work of Mothers' Union continued – albeit in a changed way. But we still responded to the needs in our society here in Lichfield Diocese, the UK and internationally.

It would then be tragic if the work of Mothers' Union floundered due to a lack of members stepping up to take on the reigns of leadership. This time next year we will be involved in election time – our current Trustees have worked tirelessly throughout very difficult times. It would be a poor return for all their hard work and commitment if we did not have new people stepping up to take on leadership roles.

There is an old saying 'It's hard to win the war, but even harder to win the peace'. We've won through the hard years of pandemic, now we need to step up and ensure that the work of Mothers' Union continues to be a force for good in this Diocese. Families, more than ever, need support. The cost of living crisis means more people need our help, there is still campaigning to be done on many issues affecting our society and last, but definitely not least, we need a growth in faith – many people are searching for something, but they don't know what and we have the answer with a loving, creating God – a Saviour who gave his life for us and the Holy Spirit to help and encourage us each day. All this gives plenty of scope for MU members to work on.

Please think about putting yourselves forward for positions on the Trustee Board next year and help to continue to make Mothers' Union a force for good in this diocese.

Liz

Annual Gathering – York, Friday 22nd September 2023

Would you like to attend the Annual Gathering?

Final Call!

The Mothers' Union Annual Gathering is being held in the lovely city of York on Friday 22 September. Several trustees and other members already have their tickets and plan to attend. But you could too, with expenses paid by MU in our diocese.

At our Autumn Members' meeting, last November, Trustees extended an invitation to support two members to attend the Gathering, covering reasonable costs of transport and accommodation. One member who expressed interest has had to withdraw so the invitation still stands to allow someone else to be one of our Lichfield Diocese MU representatives.

All we ask is that, in exchange, a report of some kind is presented to other members at the Autumn Members' Meeting in November 2023 and a write-up in between times for one of our e-newsletters.

There are only a few tickets left for the meeting so please contact us and the LDMU office as soon as possible if you'd like to take part.

We look forward to hearing from you soon,
Katherine May

kemay1957@gmail.com and /or office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk

More information about the Annual Gathering York 2023

This can be found on the central website. Please go to

<https://www.mothersunion.org/annual-gathering-2023>

for all the information as it is added.

Ticket sales and accommodation have been going well so please do not delay if you are interested.

It has been decided that this year's Annual Gathering will be the last until 2026 when Mothers' Union will celebrate 150 years since Mary Sumner invited the mothers in her community into her front room. How the world, and family, has changed since then! But the needs are still many and we must continue to make Mothers' Union relevant and 'out there'!

Making a Difference

Following on from the '*Meeting Together*' sessions in 2022, the trustees have planned a similar programme of events with the theme 'Making a Difference'.

The events are be planned to last 1½ - 2 hours and be a mixture of getting to know one another, worship, learning from each other and fun! The session could be held in the morning, afternoon or evening (summer months!) in church, a hall or even in a house if a small group is involved. We shall be keeping in mind the ideas which came from the Re-imagining process last year.

The first of these events was held recently at Tettenhall Wood but only one other date had been booked so far. If you, your branch, group or church would like to host a meeting please contact the office or the trustees for more information to offer a date, time and venue.

It is hoped to have at least one session at Doxey but a date has not yet been arranged yet.

Staffordshire County Show 2023

A huge thank you to all who volunteered in the Churches' Tent at the Staffordshire County Show at the end of May. Our presence is much appreciated by visitors and stall holders alike and it is good to fly the flag for Mothers Union. There were a few technical issues on the first day and a medical hiccup on the second, but the days were dry although a bit chilly. At least we did not have to worry about cars getting stuck in mud on the car park field!

I took 2 large bags of woolly hats for farmers to hand over but for various reasons I still have them, but they will go to farmers as soon as possible. It has not been weather for woolly hats recently, but I have no doubt there will be cold weather soon enough! I think the total number of hats is now approaching 100! Thank you for your support for this project which I have publicised to other Dioceses, received with great interest. Information about the project can be found at: www.fcn.org.uk/wool-and-wellness

I am sorry I have no photographs of the show but, if you have any please send them to the office and they could be added to the website. Please check that you have permission from those in the photo.

Helen

Lichfield Deanery Festival of Thanksgiving

On 22nd May members and friends from all the branches in Lichfield Deanery gathered at St Michael's Lichfield for a Service of Thanksgiving.

A true celebration of being back together with banners processed and a magnificent spread of cakes and other goodies to round off the afternoon.

Thank you to all involved.



Prayers



The prayer link continues using Email, phone, WhatsApp. Just say how you want to be included.

To offer to be a 'pray-er' or request prayers for yourself, someone else or any situation, please contact Deb or the office. Details are below.

Let's share.

Deb : debtudor@live.co.uk

01543 382390

Office: office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk 01785 227221

Many thanks.

Communities of Interest

Perhaps you, like me at times, have puzzled about the Communities of Interest? My guess is that COIs are virtual Units – areas of MU work in which we are engaged and active.

Trustees have obligations to represent the diocese in COI to do with governance and finance – but general members can become involved in them too. Helen (DP) and Celia (Finance Trustee) will welcome you with wide open arms!

Parenting Community of Interest

One morning in April, whilst on holiday, I rose early and joined a Zoom organised by Mary Sumner House staff for members of the *Parenting Community of Interest*. I remain passionate about supporting parents across all stages of their offsprings' lives. After all, you and I know that 'parenting' does not cease when our children become adults. Indeed, being a grandparent too can make one's heart ache!

Mothers' Union centrally has been revising its parenting materials and '*Flourishing Families*' is ready to roll-out to facilitators. I anticipate the on-line familiarisation training in due course. And I plan to pilot a Flourishing Families course with parents via Zoom. Oh, the joy and possibilities of the internet abound! It is an exciting prospect.

Why am I sharing this with you? You are invited to join me in a virtual parenting community of interest for Lichfield Diocese. *Could that be you?* If you are familiar with using Zoom at a basic level AND have an interest in parenting / grandparenting – I would welcome hearing from you.

Katherine May
Parenting Community of Interest

Coven Mothers' Union



Coronation Cake

Coven Mothers Union ran an incredibly well supported Coronation celebration event on 8 May 2023 at the Memorial Hall. A grand total of £629.80 was raised, absolutely amazing! Coven Mothers Union work really hard, truly engaged in their local community which seems to love supporting their creative events.

The funds raised were given locally, to the St Paul's First School, St Paul's Church and Mothers' Union funds.

[Thanks for Coven MU group for their regular posts on social media, from which these details and photos were taken.]

'Guess how many balloons are in the car?'
(There were 118!)



Teddy Tombola



Central Mothers' Union needs your help

Mothers' Union are working with the Church of England to ensure we are all equipped to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. In partnership with colleagues that have been involved with Diocese of Melbourne and the Cumbria research project, we have developed a baseline survey which will allow us to further understand our current culture, behaviour, skills, and knowledge in terms of recognising and responding to domestic abuse.

The Web address below will provide you access to the survey, which is open to all to complete and completely voluntary. The survey is constructed around 15 multiple choices questions and takes 10-15 minutes to complete, with no personal identifying information required. You are able to specify if you are a Mothers' Union member in the survey and there are helpline numbers at the beginning and end. Link to the survey:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/I5YH0B/>



Dear members and friends

First of all, I must apologise for the length of time since the last e-newsletter. I hope that this 'bumper' edition will make up for it! I have also decided to abandon the colour fill of the sections to make it is easier – and cheaper – for you to print off and share with other members and friends. Although we have not been sending out news it does not mean that nothing has been going on. I am sure that you can see that from the other items in this document. The

trustees have been meeting regularly, sometimes in person but also by Zoom as and when necessary. I have been following the 'Metamorphosis' course which consisted of 8 Zoom sessions with staff from Mary Sumner House, along with times of personal study using an online learning platform called 'Moodle'. I confess to being somewhat behind on that aspect of the training and am glad that the material will still be available until the end of the year at least. I have found it interesting and rewarding sharing with others on the course, and some of the ideas will be useful for planning our way ahead in the diocese. There is a publication called 'Metamorphosis Bitesize' which I commend to you for use within branches, or in a church setting, to look outwards at the communities around and discern needs and potential solutions to those needs.

In May I spent a couple of days with the other Diocesan Presidents from Canterbury Province at the Provincial Conference, held at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire. It is always good to meet with others and realise that many of the issues we have are shared by them. Rev Emma Ham-Riche, Provincial Chaplain, prepared all the worship – I am sure many of you will remember that Emma was our speaker at a diocesan meeting a few years ago.

All of this means that my garden has not been tended as well as I would like. In fact, I only sowed some cucumber seeds about a month ago but already they are needing to be moved up into their final big pots. However, as you can see from the photo some plants (and the bees!) will do very well without me! It is a shame that the thunderstorms prematurely finished off many of the blooms, but we certainly needed the rain - and now the weeds are flourishing!!

I hope that you will have a good summer, sunny weather for Summer of Hope events and I look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM or the Cathedral on Mary Sumner Day.

Love and prayers

Helen

An Update on Prison work from Julia Collinson

I recently visited Dovegate Prison near Uttoxeter with Rita Evans who is from Birmingham Diocese but who volunteers at Swinfen prison. We went at the request of Chris Milton who is the new Church of England Chaplain at Dovegate.

Chris is very keen to encourage Mothers' Union or anyone who is interested in going into the prison to visit some of the prisoners who do not have visitors. Dovegate prison is a private prison for young men, a Category B prison. It is a fairly new prison, and I was impressed how well the buildings and grounds were kept. We met with some of the prisoners and although security was tight, I felt very safe. If anyone from Mothers' Union or family or friends might feel that they could become a prison visitor, I will arrange a visit to Dovegate with them.

Rev. Chris also asked if we would consider becoming a pen pal to a prisoner and he assured me that the prisoner would never know the address of those they were communicating with, or indeed their full name. We also met with other members of the chaplaincy team.

As we enjoy this lovely June weather Christmas seems a long way off but I would be delighted if cards could be delivered to Doxey at the September meeting. Stocks are low so I would be very grateful if branches were able to send 50 cards to boost stocks. May I gently remind everyone that the wording on the cards should read '**With love and prayers from Mothers' Union**'. Perhaps some branches would consider giving cards which say Seasons Greetings, rather than religious Christmas cards, for those prisoners who are not Christian.

I attended "Prisons Communities of Interest" meeting on Monday 15th May by Zoom when all manner of things were discussed including providing bags, toiletries and clothes for prisoners leaving prison, but one report stood out which was from Jenny Beaney of Rochester Diocese. They delivered 750 Easter cards and eggs to Rochester prison. One prisoner wrote a letter of thanks and Jenny has consented to sharing with us all of that letter:

Dear All,

I wanted to write and thank you for your thoughtful idea of distributing Easter Eggs to the wing. It was such an unexpected and welcome gift, which gave me a sense of normality when I find myself in such a strange place. As an older inmate in prison for the first time, I struggle with the thoughts of not being with my wife and children. This is especially so at times of celebration and your kind gift was so normalising at a difficult time to be away from my family. I was able to tell my children about your gift and I felt it helped to reassure them that prison isn't the terrible place they imagined. I know many people who have no experience of prison would be outraged by the idea of us receiving an egg (indeed in the past I might have been one of them!) but being here has shown me how important it is to retain your identity as a person, father, brother, uncle or whatever you may be.

Everyone deserves the right to be forgiven and treated as an individual, even if they haven't always made the right choices in their lives, I struggle with the idea of religion, but try to live a good life. The kindness shown by yourselves shows what for me is the basis of all religion and that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect.

I'm sorry I've rambled a bit, but I just wanted to express my gratitude. I hope you have had a peaceful Easter and hopefully received a gift or two yourselves.

Warmest thanks

I do hope you read this letter over and over again. It is so powerful. We may think sometimes we don't do much but what we can do means such a lot. I also hope that some of you will consider again becoming a prison visitor or pen pal to someone who has no one.

I have recently been contacted by Staffordshire Probation Service to see if we can assist them in anyway. I will let you know when more information is available.

Julia Collinson

**Lichfield Diocesan Mothers' Union
Annual General Meeting
Thursday 6th July at 6.00pm, at Doxey Church**

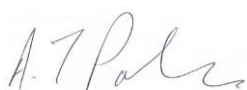
All members are welcome to attend this meeting and we look forward to seeing many of you - please note the earlier than usual start time of **6.00pm**. We are trialling some minor changes to meeting times to encourage a greater attendance and would therefore appreciate your feedback, positive or negative!

As in previous years, there will be a light buffet supper (including tea/coffee) available before the meeting, from **5.00pm**. For catering purposes, it is very important that you book places for the buffet by contacting the office with relevant information such as name and contact number, as well as any dietary requirements such as dairy or gluten free.

Please do this by Thursday 29th June. There is no charge, and you may, of course, attend the meeting without participating in the buffet.

Unfortunately, because of some technical issues, we regret that we are unable to offer Zoom for this meeting. We do apologise for this and hope that we can find a way to make the Zoom a good option for future meetings.

We look forward to welcoming you on 6th July



Adrian

Crafting Community of Interest (COI)

So many of our members make products as part of their MU work. The 'Wool for Wellness' project, launched by our DP Helen earlier this year, is an example of crafting that has met with a fabulous response from you, our members. Others knit and crochet premature baby items, make cards and demonstrate these skills to others.

So, there is a newly formed ***Crafting Community of Interest*** initiated by MSH and you are warmly invited to become involved with that! A few members to lead on this in our diocese will be fabulous. Members can meet either face-to-face and/or via Zoom. How this community will be shaped over time is up to those involved. ***Will you step up and volunteer to be a representative for LDMU?***

Diocesan Chaplains

Rev Jassica Castillo-Burley interimteamvicar@gmail.com

Rev Kathryn Trimby Llanyblodwel, Oswestry Deanery
kathpant@aol.com 07944 504330 01691 590025

Please remember that the Chaplains are there for every member, in every part of the Diocese.

Our Associate Diocesan Chaplain, Rev Chris Rushton, is taking a step back at the moment because of family circumstances. Please keep Chris and his family in your prayers.

Diocesan Office – Normal Opening Times

The times when Adrian, Diocesan Administrator, will be available to take calls are:

Monday 9.30am – 1.30pm

Tuesday 10.30am – 2.30pm

Thursday 9.30am – 1.30pm

Mothers' Union Office, Parish Church of St Andrew and St Thomas,
Doxey, Stafford, ST16 1EQ

Tel: 01785 227221 (answer machine available)

email: office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk

website: <https://mothersunionlichfield.org.uk>

SUMMER HOLIDAY CLOSURE: MONDAY 24th July–FRIDAY 4TH AUGUST.

REOPEN MONDAY 7TH AUGUST