



# Newsletter

*Christmas 2023*



Dear members and friends of Mothers' Union

As we rapidly approach the end of another year we look back at a busy and eventful time which has not been without its challenges – but also times of togetherness and joy. You, our members, have worked hard to support those in need in your communities, and beyond. Members of Mothers' Union truly 'make a difference' in Lichfield Diocese. Woolly hats for farmers, premature baby knitting, emergency toiletry bags for hospital admissions, Christmas gifts for care leavers, AFIA breaks, cards for prisoners, emergency grants, - I could go on, and on, and on! Some of these are simple and may not seem significant to us but could just be the catalyst that turns someone's life around, knowing that someone cares. THANK YOU! Please let us know what you are doing!

Many of you will have received your invitation to renew your membership of Mothers' Union in Lichfield Diocese. We pray that you will continue to support this organisation which produces such life changing events across the world. Imagine a mother in Burundi, herself now literate with her own business, able to send her children to school, because of the MU Literacy programme. Who knows what they might become - teacher, doctor, scientist....? All because YOU have made that happen through your membership of Mothers' Union!

Please find later in this newsletter a summary of what your subscription enables. This appeared in a newsletter from the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in All Ireland, with whom we have a developing friendship link. It sums everything up, and I acknowledge that source.

May I draw your attention to our diocesan website

<https://mothersunionlichfield.org.uk>

where you will find the documents relevant to the end of year paperwork for branches, groups and individuals, as well as Diary Dates for 2024 and the application form for the Quiet Day at the end of March.

The trustees and I send our best wishes for Christmas and for the coming year 2024.

Love and prayers

*Helen*

## *From Our World Wide President*

Sheran Harper always writes a Christmas letter for our members who are unable to get out and about, but, as in previous years, I include some of her message here for us all, remembering our theme is still 'Transformation -NOW!'

*Thank you once again for your generous acts of love and compassion during 2023. Walking this journey of Transformation with you has expanded my heart and strengthened my determination to move Transformation to action beyond borders, where encounters with God are experienced by all.*

*And this brings me to Christmas 2023, where we praise God for the birth of his only Son, Jesus Christ. As we receive this most precious gift given to us and worship him in humble adoration, may we also offer Him the gift of our lives afresh, for the work of Mothers' Union and for the furtherance of his Kingdom.*

*This Christmas as we light the candles and break bread together, let us think of all those who are having a very different Christmas to ours this year, for whatever reason it might be. In the quiet, we pray for God's peace and loving embrace to enfold them, giving them comfort and blessed assurance. In faith we believe everything is for a reason and for a season. In all things we rejoice in the hope that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gives, from everlasting to everlasting.*



We pray,

*Ever-present God with us,  
Transform us with the glory of the Nativity.  
Illumine our lives as we behold  
the new-born Christ.  
Transform us into a people of his light,  
that we may reflect your glory  
in the shadows of life.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.*

*May the peace and love of the Christ-Child fill your hearts and homes this Christmas and always.*

*In love and prayer,*

*Sheran*

*Sheran Harper  
Worldwide President*

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## *What does your membership subscription deliver?*

Two editions of Connected magazine and the Annual Prayer Diary uniting members around the world in the MU Wave of Prayer.

Global programmes and development work overseas - enabling projects such as the 20 years of work in Burundi on literacy and financial education which has benefited over 165,000 individuals, helping to lift families out of poverty. MU continues to reach out to disadvantaged women across the world, support widows and advocate against child marriage.

Resources of many kinds, available through the website including midday prayers, ideas for worship and branch activities.

Reimagining MU in branches and across the Diocese to identify and support future Diocesan projects as we reach out to the needs of our communities and strengthen the Mothers' Union family.

MU policy and advocacy campaigns, including the 16 days of Activism against domestic abuse.

Branches receive ongoing support from their Diocesan, Provincial and worldwide Trustees, e.g., insurance cover, administrative support, training, sharing sessions etc, both in person and via Zoom.

Communities of Interest (COIs), give an opportunity for any member to join with likeminded members across Britain and Ireland to discuss improving the impact of our work on AFIA, domestic abuse, safeguarding, and other areas of interest.

Essential core staff at Mary Sumner House to lead our charity, provide advice to members and to deliver projects worldwide.

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## *Annual Gathering York 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023*

A goodly number of members and friends from Lichfield Diocesan Mothers' Union were in York for the Annual Gathering, joining about 700 others from across Great Britain and Ireland, as well as a few from overseas. The meeting itself comprised worship, updates from MSH staff as well as a keynote address from our Worldwide



President Sheran Harper and presentations from our hosts, York Diocese and York Province. (Apologies, the lighting was not great!)

The video of the impact Mothers' Union had worldwide in 2022 was shown, and we have since shown it at the Autumn Gathering at Doxey in November. It makes powerful watching to see the many ways in which MU has affected the lives of others. A link can be sent if you would like to show it to others.

Please contact the office - also for other resources from the meeting in York.

The main feature of the meeting was the launch of the new RISE UP! Campaign- an additional aspect of raising awareness of domestic abuse. There are new resources on the central website, posters, prayers, and much more.



At the end of the main meeting a march had been arranged between the Barbican, the venue for the meeting, and York Minster where Mothers' Union would be part of the Evensong service.

The only downside to that part of the day was the rain which poured on all of us going between the two venues.! It was WET! The sermon was delivered by The Rt Revd Stephen Cotterill, Archbishop of York, always a pleasure to listen to.



Preparing to set off



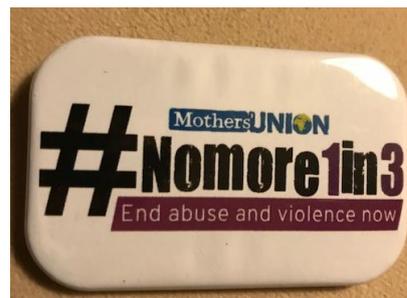
On the way - before the rain!



Out of the rain at last!

This campaign is not intended to replace the 16 Days or the #Nomore1in3 but to enhance both and become a 365 Days' campaign.

So, please keep wearing your badge!



## 16 Days of Activism -25<sup>th</sup> November - 10 December



Perton Mothers Union held an awareness activity session on Saturday 25th November, the first day of global awareness of the No More 1 in 3 Campaign against gender abuse, particularly domestic abuse against women. We also enacted the Silks session and held a minute's silence for all the victims of domestic abuse in 2023.

*Liz Gilson and Ann Bickley*

Helen with members of Berkswich branch who attended a candlelit vigil in Stafford town centre, along with members of Penkridge branch and staff, volunteers and trustees of Stafford Women's Aid.



Coven Mothers' Union members decorated their tree with purple and white knitted hearts, the colours of the RISE UP! Campaign to complement the 16 Days.

### *St Giles, Shrewsbury*

Debbie Clough and MU members work hard at this time of year! Over 240 young people between 18-21 years of age are supported at Christmas time by the Shropshire Council leaving care staff team. Each autumn, MU members and the wider church family donate Christmassy stuff that is added to individual gift parcels for each young person. An MU Christmas card is included, of course!

Christmas time remains a difficult time for some young people who have left the care system and are trying to establish themselves in the community. The Christmas gifts and MU cards continue to be very much appreciated.

A member of the leaving care team spoke to the branch meeting held early in October. During Q&A those present were able to promote other aspects of MU work, such as AFIA, that may well be applicable to one or two young people.

The leaving care team have their base but a stone's throw from St Giles Church and a relationship has existed for many years due to Beryl Jones' initiative of linking up and seeing what MU members could do to support the Christmas activity. Some members will remember Beryl Jones who passed away in the summer at the amazing age of 93+.

## *Autumn Gathering*

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November about 50 members and friends gathered at Doxey for the last Diocesan meeting of 2023. The morning session started with worship lead by Rev Kathy Trimby, one of our Diocesan Chaplains. The usual business of a members' meeting then followed with reports from trustees and updates on work in the diocese and from central Mothers' Union. The Impact video was shown just before the lunch break. After lunch our guest speaker Nadia Harushimana told us of her journey from her own country of Burundi to Wolverhampton, and how members of the church and Mothers' Union branch at Christ Church, Tettenhall Wood supported her on the long path from asylum seeker to qualified Mental Health Nurse. There were a number of ups and downs along the way but she has won through them and gives thanks to God for those who have been there for her.



The Diocesan meetings next year are Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May (afternoon), Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July in the evening (Diocesan AGM) and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November (daytime). This will be the last meeting of the triennium.

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## *MU@Home*

This a little 'extra' that we are pleased offer to longstanding subscribing members who, because of ill health or advancing years are no longer able to attend meetings of their branch or group. It was originally known as the Indoor Members Prayer Circle (IMPC) because, even if you cannot get out and about, you will be able to continue praying for Mothers' Union and the work we do. Prayer has always been at the heart of what we do, and nothing can be achieved without it. Our MU@Home members, as well as the usual membership benefits such as Connected and the Prayer Diary, receive a card at Easter and Christmas along with a letter from our WWP Sheran Harper and from Liz Binsley who coordinates the contact with these members.

Unfortunately, the list of MU@Home members held by Liz is woefully out of date. This can cause great distress to a relative if a communication is sent addressed to someone who may have passed away. Equally, we feel that there may be members who would benefit from this little extra contact. Some of these discrepancies, we suspect, are due to the disruption over the past three years of the Covid pandemic and the recovery from it. There is a slow return to confidence about getting out and about, but sadly for some life has changed and not for the better.

If you are a branch leader or group contact, please let the office know of someone you think would appreciate this extra contact and also, please let us know if a member has passed away or moved.

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## *Diocesan Chaplains*

Rev Jassica Castillo-Burley

[stoswald.minister@gmail.com](mailto:stoswald.minister@gmail.com)

Rev Kathryn Trimby

Llanyblodwel, Oswestry Deanery

[kathpant@aol.com](mailto:kathpant@aol.com)

07944 504330

01691 590025

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

# Social Media

## Lichfield Mothers' Union needs your help!



Do you use Facebook? Perhaps you share with family and friends using a personal Facebook page? If so, can you help with our promotion?

We very much want to reach out and invite others to take an interest in the work of Mothers' Union in this diocese, our nation and across the world.

And if you are currently not a user of Facebook, perhaps you will consider having an account and linking in with the Lichfield Diocese Mothers' Union Facebook page?

You may know this already and follow it. We do not as yet use Instagram, although central Mothers' Union does post regularly.

Other Mothers' Union dioceses have Facebook pages and some are far more regular in sharing information and events than is done on ours. Doing so, enables MU to get wider promotion and publicity. Our MU friends in Coven are wonderfully good at sharing on their Facebook page all the

projects they undertake, with other village residents, that support both MU and any local charity that is of interest to them.

Our Trustee Deb posts on our Facebook page daily – a mixture of prayers, bible readings and words of encouragement. Katherine puts something on the page weekly and shares whenever other dioceses MU have events and activities of interest. We do not have many 'followers' and the 'traffic' is low (that is number of people who open our Facebook page). You might have a Facebook account? If so, we would ask that you 'follow' the Lichfield Diocese Mothers' Union page. You can read what has been posted and 'like' it with a thumbs up gesture. Doing so would promote Mothers' Union locally and further afield if you will share any new pieces, that is posts, to your own page.

Will you give it a try? You never know, you might even enjoy the whole experience. 😊

Katherine May



## *Cards for Prisoners*

It is interesting to note that three years ago we delivered 900 cards and this year we delivered 2800. Three times as many in three years. Thank you to all who wrote cards and made sure they arrived at Doxey in good time.

I was also able to deliver several boxes of biscuits to Dovegate Prison and some chocolate as well, and will send thank you cards to the branches who kindly donated the same.

It can be difficult to make contact with the Prison Chaplains but I keep trying and will also try to find out more about the pen pal Scheme. There have been several expressions of interest in being involved with that.

My thanks go to Deb who delivered cards to Werrington and Stafford.  
Thank you.

Julia Collinson  
Diocesan Lead on Prisons

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## **2024**

Paperwork for 2024 has been sent out to Branch Leaders/Contacts and correspondents for groups. Documents included:

Letter to you

Letter and renewal of membership form for each current member

Diary Dates for 2024

Quiet Day form for March 25<sup>th</sup> 2024

Wave of Prayer Service

Wave of Prayer timetable

Treasurer pack (where appropriate) including letter, Financial Statement for completion and examination, and remittance slip for donations.

Please return all documents by **February 29<sup>th</sup> 2024**.

All these documents will also be on the Diocesan website but please do not hesitate to contact the office if you have any queries.

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## *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.

Many thanks.

Deb: [debtudor@live.co.uk](mailto:debtudor@live.co.uk)

01543 382390

Office: [office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk](mailto:office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk) 01785 227221

## Putting the FUN into FUNDRAISING

Members in Coven with the Scarecrow Festival and Teddy Tombola and members in Australia with a fun fashion show.

I am sure you can tell which is which!!



## *Connected and the Prayer Diary*

There have been a number of issues with delivery of the Autumn 'Connected' and the 2024 Prayer Diary, some of which have been through the mailing house. Please contact the office if you, or someone you know, have not had one or both of these publications this autumn especially if they have been received in the past.

## *Mothers' Union Diocesan Office*

**The Office will be closed the weeks beginning the 18<sup>th</sup> December and 25<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Also, on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024.**

**It will reopen on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**

**Diocesan Administrator: Adrian Palphreyman**

The times when Adrian will be available to take calls are **Normal Opening Times**

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](mailto:office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk)

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

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*Have a joyous Christmas  
and every blessing for a happy and healthy  
New Year.  
Stay safe and warm.*

*Helen, Celia, Deb, Julia, Katherine and  
Adrian*