

April 2024

Dear members and friends

I wish you belated Easter greetings. I hope that you have had a joyous Easter with perhaps the chance to catch up with family and friends. My own church was packed on Easter Sunday with friends old and new, Messy Good Friday was an amazing experience and we had a donkey as part of the Palm Sunday procession and drama!

This letter includes an Easter message from Sheran Harper, our Worldwide President and some updates from Mary Sumner House. Also included is news of the Gathering for Canterbury Province which, I am sure, will be an exciting and informative day in Oxford on Saturday 22nd June.

This is a busy year for Mothers' Union as it is the third year of the triennium and elections will be taking place across all levels from Worldwide President, down through zonal trustees who represent groups of provinces, provincial presidents, diocesan presidents and members of trustee boards. The newly elected post holders will take office in January 2025 with the term of office ending in December 2027. Elections for Diocesan President and members of the Trustee board in this Diocese are planned to take place in May through to June/July 2024. Once the plans have been finalised all members will be informed of the election procedure. With our new constitution in place and the move to all being equal members of Mothers' Union in this diocese, all paid up members have the right to take part in the nomination and voting process. Please pray for the right candidates to come forward at all levels and watch this space!

My love and prayers to you all

Helen

County Show



Preparations are well in hand for the County Show to be held at the Showground Stafford on Wednesday 29th and Thursday 30th May. The rota for helping with the refreshments is filling up, with both mornings sorted. If you would like to help in the afternoon (from 1.00pm onwards) of either day, please let me know as soon as possible.

Attractions will include the JCB Dancing Diggers as well as all the usual animal classes, exhibitions, food hall etc. You will have time to look round the Show before and/or after your duty, making good use of your free entrance ticket. Please let me know, via the office or direct on hapalfrey@sky.com if you would like to be part of the team. An indication of your preference of which day and time would be helpful.



Provincial Gathering



Canterbury Province is holding a gathering for all members on Saturday, 22nd June 2024 at The King's Centre in Oxford. This is going to be a wonderful opportunity to meet members from across the province; share information about what we are doing in our local dioceses; enjoy fellowship; and worship together. There will be plenty of time during the day for socialising and to have some fun too. The event is open to all members and you are welcome to bring friends with you; what a great way to learn about Mothers' Union.

AGENDA

10am Venue open

10.30am Gathering opens with Welcome and Worship

Morning includes: Presentations by 2 Clusters
Hymns We Love – presented by Pippa and Steve Cramer
12 Midday Service with Communion
1 – 2.30pm (approx.) LUNCH (please bring your own)

2.30pm **Afternoon includes:**
Presentations by 2 Clusters
Andy Kind – comedian
4.30pm Notices!
(approx.) Thoughts for next year
Close with prayers and the Grace
5-5.30pm End of our day

INFORMATION

Venue The King's Centre, Thames Hall, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Tickets £20 per person and are available at
www.ticketsource.co.uk/mothers-union

Time Doors open 10am
Meeting 10.30am – 4.30pm
Coffee/tea - on arrival and at lunchtime

Food Please bring your own lunch/food
There is no onsite catering

Parking There is limited car parking onsite and we will give priority to those needing disabled/accessible parking. Please apply by ticking the appropriate box when buying your ticket **AND** email
MUgathering2024@muoxford.org.uk
with your name and car registration

Walking route - From Oxford Train Station to The King's Centre, map available

Seacourt Park & Ride - 234 Botley Rd, Oxford, OX2 0HP,

Bus to **Osney Island** bus stop and a 10 minute walk

Accommodation - There is good availability at **Premier Inn Botley** (register there for free car park-ing in adjacent car park) and **Premier Inn Cowley** free on-site car parking)

<https://www.premierinn.com/gb/en/home.html>

Rooms in **Oxford University Colleges** can be booked via

<https://www.universityrooms.com/en-GB/city/oxford/home/>

For full information pack, please contact Adrian at the diocesan MU Office (contact details at the end of this newsletter)

An Easter letter from Sheran Harper Worldwide President



***He is not here ..., for He is risen ... as He said ...
Hallelujah!***

My Dear Friends,

You may be wondering what's up with this photograph and why am I dressed in this fashion! Well, the answer is simple as I too was pleasantly surprised when this happened. After I delivered the Address at St. Aidan's Nongoma, Diocese of Zululand, two Zulu Queens transformed me into a Zulu Queen in front of the entire congregation. It was their way of showing gratitude for my visit, respect for my role as WWP, and acceptance by the whole community. As you can imagine this was an honour for MU and very humbling for me.

Approximately 250 MU leaders, members, and Clergy from 4 cluster Dioceses gathered at St Aidan's and we worshipped, shared stories of MU joys and challenges, and encouraged each other to find much needed solutions. Members of all ages were engaged and passionate about their call to serve in MU, with strong commitment to taking care of the vulnerable and marginalized in their communities. I was heartened by the enthusiasm of the young women and their willingness to work hand in hand with the more experienced women.

I was also impressed by the way in which all organisations in the Church consult with MU on a regular basis and act together to achieve their goals of transforming the lives of individuals and families in the Archdeaconries. Their goals based on the MU priorities of ending violence, injustice, and poverty. I felt very excited to see MU leading the way in many areas including -

- Support for the Clergy and the Anglican Nuns and vice versa, with Convents providing safe spaces for MU to use.
- Care for lone members, the elderly, and widows, by involving them in income-generating projects e.g. making various pieces of craft items, household furnishings, and clothing for sale. Many of them said, "We feel good because we can help MU and make our contribution."
- The funding and building of the Kwanzimela MU Hall and Pastoral Centre, a well-equipped modern facility that accommodates in excess of 4,000 people for Diocesan Events. It is a wonderful project that brings communities together in fellowship, and it is widely used by the Church.
- Sustaining the "Right to Life" Albinism MU project which started in 2017 provides safe spaces for children and teenagers to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to society.
- Having a strong drive to stand together in huge numbers and move forward with the necessary programmes to increase awareness and end all forms of violence and injustice.
- Assisting with boreholes which provides a consistent and reliable source of water for families and communities.
- Making and producing soap and fabric softener to generate funds for members and families.
- Rearing poultry for income and providing a ready source of protein for the communities.

And so much more ...

I believe that in addition to their faith, the exceptional support and appreciation for MU in the Diocese of Zululand by the Clergy and wider community is the incentive for a passionate, engaged and purpose driven membership.

A membership with no hidden agendas just pure hearts for making the love of Jesus Christ visible and known to the four corners of God's land. This story reminds me so much of the reason for Easter with its profound message of renewal and hope. It also speaks of the confidence we have right across the globe in the transformational work of MU, the work we have been given by God to do, a holy ministry to which we have all been called and chosen. Today as we celebrate the Risen Christ with our unique expressions of faith and love; let us renew our commitment as we journey forward on the path that God has ordained for us as members and Christians. Jehovah Nissi our Banner goes before us, and we have hope in the Risen Christ. May the miracle of Easter fill you and your families with joy and happiness to last a lifetime, even to eternity. May the divine love of the Risen Christ descend into your hearts, homes and communities making it a heavenly and peaceful dwelling! May the Spirit of Hope that Easter brings help you find contentment in little things of life and restore your faith in the Lord above, who first loved us!

Our Easter Thank you Prayer ...

***For your humble birth in Bethlehem
For revealing the presence of God in your humanity
For your obedience to the divine will of your Father
For the simplicity of your teaching
For your loving compassion
For the forgiveness of our sins
For your suffering on the cross
For the triumph of the resurrection,
And the promise of new life in the Spirit
Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.***

(Written by Rev Dr John Davey, Nottingham City Branch Mothers' Union, UK)

The Worldwide Board of Trustees and Staff at Mary Sumner House join me in thanking you for your generous love and prayers that mean so much to us. We wish you, your family, and friends a very Happy and Blessed Easter ... *For He is risen, He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

With my love and prayers as always,

Sheran

Sheran Harper, A.A.
Mothers' Union Worldwide President

Matlosane

In the last newsletter I reported that a number of baby items, hats and jackets, were to be taken to our friendship link Diocese of Matlosane (South Africa) by Rev Mandy Walker of Streetly when she was part of a group accompanying Bishop Sarah on a visit. I am pleased to let you know that all the knitting went to the prem baby unit at the hospital in Potchefstroom where, I'm sure it would be much appreciated. Thank you to those who put their love and care into these items.

Diocesan Day of Prayer

As on previous occasions. Mothers' Union will be taking part in the Diocesan Day of Prayer which runs from noon on Wednesday 1st May until noon on Thursday 2nd May. Please check the Lichfield Diocese website for details.

Quiet Day

On Monday 25th March, 27 members and friends gathered at Shallowford House for a time of fellowship and contemplation. The day focussed on 'Wilderness', was led by Val Cox and proved to be a worthy start to Holy Week. The weather was not the sunshine we usually enjoy so there was not the opportunity to walk in the grounds. However the opportunity to put aside the busyness of life to one side for a few hours was beneficial to all.

The next Quiet Day is planned for Monday 30th September and details will be sent out nearer the time.

News from Coven Group



Members of Coven MU held a very successful 'Meet the Easter Bunny over breakfast' event. The children made Easter lanterns and crosses and coloured pictures which were then displayed in St Pauls' Church. Funds were raised for their projects.



Membership 2024

Adrian, our Diocesan Administrator, would like to thank everyone who has renewed membership of Mothers' Union in Lichfield Diocese for 2024. A special welcome back goes to those who may have lapsed for a year or two but have rejoined. If you have not yet sent back your membership form it is not too late - or if you have mislaid it please contact the office and a replacement can be sent to you! Your membership makes a difference not just in this country but changes lives all over the world. Thank you.

Books for Prisons



May we remind you of the request from Julia Collinson, our trustee with responsibility for Prison contact, appealing for children's books to be used at the visitors' centre at Swinfen Young Offenders Institute.



The new Family Engagement Manager employed by PACT has started a small library of books which the children have access to during visiting times and which they can take home with them if they so wish. PACT stands for Prison Advice and Care Trust and it is a charitable organisation which supports prisoners and their families in making a fresh start so it is very much part of the Mothers' Union ethos.

Julia is not available for a few weeks but please contact the office if you would like more information.

Mothers' Union at UNCSW, March 2024

The 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), the UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's empowerment, took place from 11 - 22 March under the priority theme, "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective".

A joint delegation of Mothers' Union and the Anglican Communion attended the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and advocated for:

- Funding of adult female literacy programmes, to enable women to lift themselves and their families out of poverty increase their self-esteem; improve the wellbeing of their communities and reduce Gender Based violence.
- Engagement with faith-based organisations to implement grassroots, transformational programmes which are sustainable, because they are anchored in their communities and act as volunteers, often in the hardest to reach, most marginalized communities.
- Reform of global financial injustice.



During the week, **Mathilde Nkwirikiye**, former Provincial president of Burundi, talked at side events organized by the UKCSWA, Christians for the elimination of violence against women and girls and NAWO on the role of literacy, as

evidenced by the MU experience over 20 years, in helping women to build their self-esteem and become able to support their families and strengthen their communities, also leading to a reduction in domestic violence

The **Anglican Communion and Mothers' Union** organized an event, Chaired by Bishop Rachel Treweek of Gloucester, at which Mathilde spoke, looking at the practical ways in which the Church and related organisations address the issues of poverty.

Rev Sarah Pidgeon, provincial president for New Zealand and Aotearoa, spoke at a NAWO event on Social Protection, where she called for protection of the most vulnerable women and girls, especially those in care, and for support for survivors.

The delegation also held meetings with government delegations:

Mathilde Nkwirikiye and CEO Bev Jullien, together with Genny Kresic from MU Canada, met with the Ambassador to the UN and Minister for Human Rights for **Burundi** and the wider delegation met with Maria Wynard, **UK** Head of Women and Girls international engagement.



Throughout the week, the delegation also started each day in worship with Ecumenical Women, and led worship on Thursday, with the theme of Thursdays in black, calling for an end to gender based violence.

Thy Kingdom Come - resources and "5 + 1."

'Come Holy Spirit.' This simple, profound prayer is at the heart of Thy Kingdom Come. This worldwide wave of prayer which has spread to over 172 countries around the world is rooted in the practice and experience of the earliest church as they obeyed Jesus' command to wait for the outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:14 tells us their mission planning was founded in constant, groundbreaking prayer: They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Thy kingdom come is an invitation to bring five people before God - family, friends, neighbours, or colleagues to come to know the love of God for



themselves. This ecumenical initiative takes place between Ascension, 9th May and Pentecost 19th May. We encourage everyone to choose 5 people and pray for them throughout the 11 days and to invite 1 of those people to an MU event.

For more information and resources:

www.mothersunion.org/ThyKingdomCome

Supporting "5 + 1"

Diocesan Presidents, Comfort Okon (Southwark) & Emily Brailsford (Derby)

We hope you have had a blessed Easter.

Best wishes

Mothers' Union Membership Team

membership@mothersunion.org

Diocesan Meetings - Dates for the Diary

Thursday 9TH May(afternoon) Spring Gathering:

Speaker: Emily Brailsford, MSH Lead for Rise Up!

Thursday 4th July (evening) Diocesan AGM:

Speaker: Farming Community Network

Saturday 9th November (daytime) Autumn Gathering:

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

01543 382390

Office: office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk 01785 227221

MUenterprises



The new catalogue for Spring and Summer is available, with wide selection of cards and gifts. Please contact Ann Hodkinson, our diocesan MUE representative, if you would like to place an order or arrange for Ann to bring goods to a deanery festival or garden party.

You can order direct from the central Mothers' Union website but will be charged more for postage. If you do order direct don't forget to fill in 'Lichfield' in the optional 'Name of Diocese' box!

Telephone: 01785 712357

or email: riverpenk9@gmail.com

Mothers' Union Diocesan Office

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

Please call if you intend to visit to ensure Adrian is available.

Tel: 01785 227221 (answer machine available)

email: office@mothersunionlichfield.org.uk

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