

COVENTRY DIOCESE MOTHERS' UNION MAY 2020

Diocesan President's report to members May 2020

The role of Diocesan President is so varied – it never ceases to surprise me when I reflect on what I've been involved with. It continues to be a privilege to meet up with members from around the diocese, to worship and pray together, to hear about the activities with which members are involved, and to represent Coventry Diocese MU in a range of different contexts.

During Autumn 2019, I made visits to several branches, enrolled new members, presented long service certificates and shared in food and fellowship with members and friends – always my favourite part of the role! The Advent service at All Saints Church, Warwick was an absolute highlight – so many of us worshipping together, rejoicing in the singing of the children's choir, and being inspired by Revd Diane's preaching.

I continued meeting with Bishop John and others, planning for the pre-hospitality programme for the Lambeth Conference 2020; began preparatory work with Rachael Anderson from Mary Sumner House in readiness for the "Thy Kingdom Come" service at Coventry Cathedral; attended the MU Annual Gathering in Portsmouth, and Canterbury Provincial conference in Hertfordshire. All of these activities contribute to my deeper understanding of the global movement that is Mothers' Union.

Towards the end of the year, we introduced Direct Debit as a method of paying subscriptions for membership of MU – not the most straightforward process initially, as we were part of the Pilot for this new system. Thank you for your patience!

2020 began with such promise – looking forward to Lambeth, Thy Kingdom Come, and a whole range of other exciting developments for MU in Coventry diocese and further afield. We held all our meetings with branch leaders and other officers at the beginning of the year, and set targets for the year ahead, in line with MU objectives. I made visits to 2 branches and had a wonderful time with friends at St Andrew's Church Rugby, several of whom subsequently became members of MU and want to continue to meet together as a group.

Then, of course, the reality of Coronavirus hit us all: meetings, services, gatherings of all sorts were regrettably postponed or cancelled. For a few days, I relaxed and thought there would be no MU activity until all this was over. How wrong I was! Emails arrived from staff at MSH, Zoom meetings convened, live streaming prayers and services on facebook, plenty of sewing and knitting in response to requests from local hospitals, care homes and most recently Warwickshire Police.

Significantly, you will have seen the Urgent Appeal from our Worldwide President, Sheran Harper, in the light of lost income due to the pandemic. At an early stage, Dioceses were asked to respond to this appeal. Following many discussions amongst Trustees in Coventry and after scrutinising our finances, it was agreed that we would donate £10,000 to the appeal from Diocesan funds. This decision was not taken lightly, and involved several video conferences with senior staff at MSH and fellow Diocesan Presidents. Our donation was broadly in line with that of some other Dioceses in the Province. And I'm pleased to say that approximately £500,000 has been raised so far. Praise God!

There are many challenges ahead and I am regularly in contact with fellow DPs and staff at MSH to decide priorities for the future of this wonderful movement, whose members seek always to serve God by serving families and communities in our own localities and further afield.

May God continue to bless you and keep you safe, Jane

Report on Finances

The Accounts for the MU for 2019 have been completed but have still to be examined before they can be published and then sent to the Charity Commission.

Subscriptions had been received from most branches and Diocesan Members before I self - isolated in the middle of March. Since then, any envelopes with subs in them sent to Hill Top will be at the office, unopened, waiting for lockdown to be lifted. I have sent a sizeable sum of money to MSH. This is the portion of each member's subscription which MSH ask for. For all those members who paid by Direct Debit direct to MSH, for their membership subscription, we have received the portion of this that is for the use of our MU Diocese. We have around 625 members.

We have been able to send £10,000 from Coventry Diocese MU to MSH towards the Emergency Appeal, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Margaret Siggers

Trustee (book keeper)

ALISON WIGGINS VICE PRESIDENT, COVENTRY DIOCESE.

I am still keeping the database up to date at MSH. We have 11 Branches who do their own Admin.

Due to the pandemic I have only received the 2020 Member data lists from 18 branches. The rest I assume are stuck in transit because of the lockdown.

I am working on an up to date Branch Pack, this is taking longer than expected due to other jobs taking over my time.

I attended the funeral of Gladys Briscoe, who had been a member of St Nicholas Kenilworth for many years and previous to that was attached to Berkswell branch.

I have attended 2 Trustee meets.

2 meetings for Deanery Chairs/B/L/Contacts/Treasurers. One at St Michaels Budbrooke and the other at St Pauls Shotton. I intended showing a presentation at both meetings, unfortunately a Gremlin stopped me getting into the MU website account so I couldn't show this at St Michael's. Things were put right for the next meeting at St Paul's and I was able to do this. Paper copies showing how to access your own account were given out at both meetings.

I attended the Candlemas Service at St Paul's Stockingford followed by a bring and share lunch, with lots of chatter and friendly MU members.

I attend Deanery Prayers regularly each month.

I attended the Foundation Safeguarding Module (C1).

I attended the Kenilworth Deanery meeting in March.

Then there was Shut Down and I have been sewing Scrubs for the NHS. Keeping in touch with people on the phone.

May 2020

AFIA Report

Due to the current situation with COVID 19 I have not had any requests.

I had booked one holiday which sadly couldn't go ahead as it was during the Easter holidays.

I will rebook with Haven when I am able to.

God bless

Lynda Howells

Prayer and Spirituality Report

Rev Pam Gould and I met a few months ago with Rev Gail Phillip and members of St Giles MU to discuss the Lady Day Service. At this meeting we put together the outline of the service most of which Pam had taken from the excellent MSH website for such services. Nicola has now produced the full service and this will be printed as a booklet. Thank you to Nicola as she had to completely type this out!

MU Emergency Prayer Circle

I am in the process of writing an article for the Link Up Magazine to remind everyone that we very much need the prayer requests to be sent to us....plus make sure contact details are with Branch Leaders. I hope to be able to say more about this at the Members evening on 13th May if possible.

Also, I am looking into preparing a poster that can be used on MU notice boards in churches/ halls to promote the EPC and details of contact.

Taking Healing and Refreshing Service to other MU Branches.

Lynda Howells and I write and co- lead the Healing and Refreshing Service Monthly at our church. Each month has a different theme.

Last year we took this H&R style service to Wellesbourne MU on two occasions (having been twice the

previous year). This week we are going to St James MU in Styvechale Coventry and in June to Kineton MU.

Members really enjoy these times.

May 2020

As you will gather the report above was written before the Covid 19 lockdown affected all our plans, with services and meeting having to be cancelled. It is planned that the Lady Day Service next year will still be at St Giles Church.

During the lockdown the Monthly Prayer Diary has continued to be written and sent out to branch leaders. The problem at the moment is how copies could be delivered to those who are not able to receive this online, and of course must only be done where it is safe to do so.

Thank you

Ann Gibbons (Trustee Faith and Spirituality)

Report from Alison Selwood, Trustee

I never underestimate the privilege of being a Diocesan Trustee. Whilst I have not missed a Committee meeting, I find that it is a difficult balance trying to offer a lot of extra physical time when I am working, have a family, mature parents and a husband that works away. So I try to make sure to use my experience of the voluntary sector to question and impart knowledge where appropriate at meetings, or when we asked to comment on documents from Mary Sumner House. Having experienced being on a central committee first, it has given me a different perspective now as a Diocesan trustee.

I was involved in volunteering at the Thy Kingdom Come service in May at the Cathedral. Helped and hosted the Mayor at the Arabian Bites evening. Attended the members day as a trustee and helped run the MU gift and card stand. Helped in a team to start planning a families event. Lead a small team on the ongoing challenge on how best to communicate within the Diocese.

Diocesan Members

Unfortunately, my aim of phoning weekly three members who do not use e-mail has fallen woefully short. However, Felicity's special edition of Link Up was posted to about 40 such members during Easter Week, along with Jane's letter and e-mail text. A number of very appreciative responses have been received, also for my periodic updates to members who do use e-mail.

Several members are involved in making face masks and bags for carers and nursing staff, in response to appeal.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, our Make Lunch team at St Michael's Budbrooke has been unable to function as normal; however, we are instead providing weekly food parcels to the families whose children would normally have free school meals, and others on a tight budget. Our numbers have

grown to currently 27 families with over 70 children provided for in the eight weeks to date. Several of these are new to us because their income has reduced or disappeared in this extraordinary time. I've been kept busy with the paperwork and applying for funding from various sources – we can testify that God is indeed good.

The Arabian Bites evening at St Nicholas Church, Warwick has been postponed until next year, and it seems likely that our Bring & Share Lunch for Diocesan Members and friends on Sat 25th July at St James Styvechale CV3 5BT will also not go ahead.

Val Brant
Diocesan Members' Correspondent
e-mail: valbrant@sky.com

Indoor Members' Prayer Circle

We started the year with 36 members – the lowest number in recent years but sadly, no fewer than four of our ladies have passed on to receive their reward with their Lord – Phyllis Mason (St Nicholas, Kenilworth), Sylvia Bailey (Stockingford), Sylvia Brooks (Bilton) and today I have heard that Shirley Mallard of Styvechale died at Easter. In these difficult times when we are hearing of so many dying of COVID19, it is still sad to hear of any of our members being victims to this virus.

I am continuing to contact the members on their birthdays, and had begun to include the prayer letter from MSH for the month on which their birthdays fell but of course, this has now been suspended for a while.

There is an issue with collection of subs – I understand some members who are not connected to a Branch have not paid, so this may be an issue for discussion for the future.

Please continue to pray for these ladies who have been the strength of our Organisation in past days and who are now our great prayer support.

Pauline Wilkes

Passionate about Parenting Report Spring 2020

There has been a variety of work going on since last autumn's report, to support parents. Increasingly we are finding that we can use our skills for things other than a straightforward parenting group. It is not easy to ask parents to commit to six or more weeks of attendance, but offering one off sessions and shorter courses can work too.

Karen has completed Barnardo's Parent Group Leader Training (PGL) and started a Being a Parent course with 4 parents, before Covid-19 shut everything down. She has also helped a Family Support Worker deliver a series of monthly workshops to parents at Meriden CofE School, covering topics such as emotions, self-esteem, and resilience. These have been attended by an average of five parents.

Ba Marsh has been continuing her cooperation with Brooke School for children with Special Needs. She ran six sessions for four parents with children at the school, followed by five sessions focussing on

ASD. Seven parents were involved in all, one attending both courses, and the feedback was very encouraging. This year, a similar course which began in February had to be postponed after three weeks due to Covid-19, but eight parents were attending, and it is hoped to pick up again later in the year.

Felicity has also been at Brooke School, running the What Should We Tell the Children about Relationships and Sex course. Nine parents including three men signed up initially, and an average of six attended each session.

Our newest Facilitator, Jackie Gardiner, has achieved her accreditation, but due to family pressures has not been able to deliver any further groups.

Sadly, we lost a facilitator, Norma Mitchell, in the summer, after a long battle with cancer. Norma moved to Coventry from Nottingham and was keen to get involved when her illness allowed. She lived in Rugby, so helped Ba and Felicity with courses in that area, and we all valued her insights and enthusiasm.

The Coffee Tots facilitators now work independently and have developed a range of courses and resources which suit their parents. Karen and Felicity stay in touch with all the facilitators, meeting up when possible and holding extra copies of resources to lend out.

Mary Sumner House is undertaking a review of the Passionate about Parenting programme, using an outside evaluator, Keith Etherington. Coventry is one of the few dioceses which is still actively engaged with the programme, and there are very few requests for training now. Keith held a meeting which Felicity attended, to help in his evaluation, and a visit to Coventry was planned in April, when he was due to meet Karen, Lorraine, Catherine, and facilitators from elsewhere in the Midlands. However, this was cancelled, so he has spoken to a number of people by telephone, and his report is due soon. Keith is looking for evidence not just of benefit to parents, but also impact on society more widely, how it raises awareness of MU and the potential to recruit new members. We await news of how the programme might develop in the future, and whether the training will continue. This is now, of course, tied up with the general funding crisis in Mothers' Union.

Karen and Felicity are very grateful for the prayerful support from members for the parenting programme. As well as helping parents directly, the groups have enabled us to build relationships with schools and other parenting practitioners as well as the local authority. It has also equipped us with the skills to facilitate other groups such as MULOA.

At this difficult time, please keep praying for parents whilst they juggle so many balls such as homeschooling, on-line working and many other responsibilities. The school staff also - to give thanks for their vital role protecting the children of key workers and vulnerable children. And for the quiet voices also who may be afraid to seek help or do not have the means to do so.

Felicity Hawke and Karen Morris
Joint Parenting coordinators
May 2020

MULOA

As you will know, Karen Morris, Jane Hill and I have been delivering MULOA sessions in various branches over the past 18 months. We have reported on the results of those at Members Day last autumn. The formal MULOA process requested by Mary Sumner House has now finished, but the Trustees both here in Coventry and in London are always keen to hear what members are doing for Mothers' Union, and how they live out their faith through the membership.

This year, Karen and I were due to deliver some more MULOAs-type sessions to branches, but these of course has been postponed during the pandemic. So we are starting to think ahead about how we can adapt the session as a future branch or group activity, and wondering if we can do something online for members while we are not able to meet as usual. This year's theme, **Building Hope and Confidence**, aims to help us think about what we do as MU and what difference this makes, which is very much in line with the MULOAs process. It may be possible to provide something that members could think about on their own, or discuss in small groups using Zoom, and this could also be a good way of involving members who aren't usually able to get to meetings. We will explore options, and let you know.

Felicity Hawke 13th May 2020

Link Up

The last edition of Link Up was rather different to the usual format, as we realised that Members' Evening would not be happening, and the lockdown would mean that it would be difficult to get the magazine to branches and then to individual members. I hope you were able to read a copy of the simplified version that was sent out.

The disadvantage of the simplified version is that the pictures are not so clear, depending on whether you see it on screen or printed, and it is not possible to include so much without making it a huge document to email.

I hope that the autumn edition will be back to normal, but we are also exploring with the printer how it can be put on the website in a format that you could read there, and which could also be shared more widely with members who have moved away, or others who are interested. He has also said that he may be able to deliver some to other parts of the diocese for us, to help distribution.

So do keep taking photos, remember to submit your entries for the Photo Competition, and we will all keep hoping for normal service to resume as soon as possible

Felicity Hawke
Editor