

DP Annual Report for 2019 for AGM, 11th March 2020

As my first year as DP drew to a close, there has been so much for which to thank God, so many ups and downs, joys and sadness's, and lessons learned. We were saddened to lose two (Susan and Catherine) from the **Trustee Board** within the first few months of 2019, but two more (Jeanette and Viv) have since joined making the team complete again. We were also delighted to welcome Sandra back on to the Board. After several abandoned attempts, we also welcomed our new **MU Diocesan Chaplain**, the Rev Canon Ian Wilson who was well worth the wait! In charge of a multi-parish benefice, school chaplain, chaplain to the High Sherriff, family man and several other major responsibilities, his prayerful role and attendance at trustee and diocesan meetings would be different from previous patterns of chaplaincy, but nevertheless much valued and appreciated.

Under **Faith and Policy** we continued the theme from our 2018 Retreat, developing a focus on promoting prayer in its many forms. Our prayers are such an important part of the MU. Over the year, trustees, officers and members have been involved in organising and participating in Area and Deanery Quiet Days, Reflections, Songs of Praise services, **MULOA** group sessions and other special occasions. The more formal services held in the **Cathedral** were well-attended with over two hundred members and friends at the Commissioning Service on Lady Day. Other Cathedral services included the Seafarer Sunday Service (at which the MU knitted hats were presented), celebrating the Mary Sumner Day Eucharist (with over 70 members present), and a Vigil for the 16 Days of Activism. Our St Luke's Healing Service of Praise and Thanksgiving took place at St Felix Church, Rendlesham, and branches have been encouraged to 'experiment' with a Blue Christmas service designed especially for those for whom Christmas is not always a welcome and joyous occasion. Many Branches have also organised their own services for Mothering Sunday and All Souls services, and supported the new format introduced for the **Wave of Prayer** service remembering our overseas links with the dioceses of Lake Malawi, Byumba, Jalingo, and Lucknow.

In a wider context, the Canterbury Province organised the **Thy Kingdom Come service in Coventry Cathedral**, and our diocese, with sufficient numbers to arrange a coach party, had the opportunity of meeting Sheran Harper, the new Worldwide President and also had time to network, renew acquaintances and make friends. Our diocese was also well represented at the General Meeting in Portsmouth, with most of the Trustees and Officers present. Our coach party also included spouses, members and friends, in all 17 of us stayed in the hotel in Bournemouth (with three more making their own way). A very worthwhile excursion filled with friendship, fellowship, food and much fun. As DP I also attended two residential conferences at High Leigh, and met up with members of our Cluster Group from Peterborough, Lincoln, Ely and Cambridge to share our stories, and encourage one another.

Following the General Meeting in Portsmouth in 2019, members were challenged to "**make MU visible**". Raising awareness of the MU in the diocese included MU representation at **Diocesan Synod**, the **Mission and Ministry** team meetings, **Clewer** workshops and seminars, and the **World Mission Conference on Climate Warming** organised by the Diocese alongside Cafod, Christians Aware and Eco-watch, and other events. Mothers' Union has also had a significant presence at the **Diocesan Ministries Fair**, a stand at the **Clewer Exhibition** during Prisons week at the Cathedral, and ran a stall at the **Wedding Fayre** at Trinity Park. Other activities have

included the successful fund-raising Pop-up Shop in Halesworth organised for the third year running by North Suffolk Area, volunteer support for SELIG, the Winter Night Shelter programme in Ipswich, Hope into Action, the Women's Refuge and victims of domestic violence. Toiletries, gift vouchers, socks and underwear were collected and appropriately distributed. Craft skills, knitting hats for seafarers and premature babies, quilts for the neonatal unit, bags for drain bottles, twiddle-muffs for victims of dementia, and the making of Christmas cards for prisoners kept our members busy. All these, and other projects not mentioned here, have provided examples which demonstrate how Mothers' Union members have given of their time, energy and practical skills to show Christian care for families.

Also in a bid to raise the MU profile in our diocese, I submitted articles for Families First, the local press, attempted Facebook and social media postings; sent material to the diocesan e-News, various parish magazines (where I have spoken at branches) and the Provincial and our own website - it's been a really busy year!

Our **Prayer Chain** continues its quiet work, with 13 names read out at the Healing Service. **Indoor members** were regularly kept informed of MU activities; over 73 members received **90+ birthday cards**, 7 of whom were over 100 years old! Out of 45 branches, three closed at the end of the year (Campsea Ashe, St John's Cauldwell Hall, and Waldringfield Branches), due to diminishing numbers as a result of age, increasing frailty and transport issues. Many members have chosen to move to nearby branches or join the ever-increasing number of **Diocesan members** (see Trustee Report). One Trustee, new to the Mothers' Union, has been impressed by the faithfulness of members, and in particular their "long-term commitment over many years" as they continue to support MU activities. **Prayer cards** for those "out of circulation" continue to provide comfort, as do our new initiative of "**Bags of Love**" given by one person to another – for example, to celebrate a new birth, or give a person who is lonely, isolated or sick in hospital or to prison families. Some have been used for families attending baptism or wedding preparation classes, and others for the families and friends of the bereaved. Each bag contained a special message, text or prayer appropriate to the occasion. Members have also supported parent and toddler groups, Open the Book, Bible stories for school children, parenting courses and worked with refugee families.

Our **Diocesan Strategy** for this triennium is as simple as A, B, C.... – a special emphasis on AFIA, Befriending and Clewer. In 2019 **AFIA** reached out to 7 school children from 3 different schools providing a school activity holiday, 2 families received caravan holidays and one family a day-trip to Banham Zoo. Permission was given by the headmistress to publish photos, and she reported that one child "gained confidence and showed some leadership skills that we had not seen before". AFIA expanded its scope within the diocese and began working more with school governors, deanery synods and uniformed organisations, and already grant applications for AFIA holidays, camps and days out are being received for this year. With over 3,300 stores online The Easy Fundraising website (<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stedsipswichmu/>) made it even easier to raise more funds for AFIA. Throughout the summer, **Befriending** initiatives such as "tea and toast", coffee mornings, *Meet Up Mondays*, lunch clubs, and numerous garden parties, open afternoons and strawberry teas were recorded in support of the national MU fund-raising appeals with money being sent to Mary Sumner House for their general fund. The occasions were good fun and raised the MU profile in local communities. At the start of Freedom Week (18th October) **Clewer**, in partnership with MU, recently put together an exhibition in both the Cathedral and

Suffolk University again raising awareness of issues around modern-day slavery. Three of our members represented MU at diocesan level, and attended seminars and workshops working with Social Policy students at the university. Caroline Virgo addressed the November Council meeting. The publicity “credit cards” were given out at all our diocesan meetings, and every branch was encouraged to print off “Hidden in Plain Sight” posters to display in local churches and raise awareness across the diocese. The three most prevalent issues in Suffolk centred on county lines, sex workers and “factory” venues.

MUe – particularly the diaries, Christmas cards and calendars - raised in excess of £2,400 partly due to new ways of working. A box of MUe merchandise has been taken, where possible, to every branch who invited an MU speaker (and to every deanery and area event, and service), thus giving branch members the opportunity to see what was available for purchase.

Our **website** was constantly being updated, GDPR and all safeguarding policies and protocols signed off. A start was made on plans to update our constitution and revamp our welcome leaflet; the speakers’ list has been well-maintained; and risk assessments and photo consent forms have become a matter of routine. A new format of Pathways was being considered to offer more online accessibility, and as social media and technology has moved on, so have the design and impact of our publicity material.

We were delighted to report that, due to the generosity of our members through various **fund-raising activities**, our finances which were carefully managed and looked after, were in a healthy state allowing us to contribute significantly to the MSH general fund, fund-raising appeals and other demands. In particular, a substantial sum was raised for our linked diocese in Lake Malawi, following the devastating cyclone in the spring of 2019 (see Treasurer’s Report).

Two new imaginative outreach programmes took place in 2019. The first being an “**I-Spy an MU banner**” competition which encouraged families to participate in a “treasure hunt” across the diocese to find as many MU banners as possible. A prize for the branch with the highest corporate effort was shared between the branches of East Bergholt and Campsea Ashe. Over 50 banners were “spotted”. The project was not just about the banners, but raised our MU profile and, being in the school holidays, was intended to build relationships and encourage families to work together (across generations – i.e. needing a car driver, map-reader, planner and recorder, smart phone to photograph, Facebook-posting, etc). This not only established the whereabouts of our banners, but we were able to identify the location of a particular banner in the church, its prominence, condition, and note available access to the church building. Many of our rural churches were locked during the daytime, a matter that was referred to the Mission and Ministry team. Such access to church buildings should be considered important as a public space for prayer and meditation. It was noted that many banners needed attention, and this included our diocesan banner. Plans were put in place to have a Diocesan Re-think about the way forward with regard to replacing our banner, observe necessary risk assessment and identify health and safety issues.

Another initiative was a local “**Park Run**” experiment run by a small branch over the five Friday evenings in August: four times round the local village hall field equalled 1 mile! Through door to door leafleting, word of mouth, posters, social media, parish magazine and local press – new residents, and acquaintances, dog walkers and pram-pushers, Zimmer frame- and walking stick users, were all encouraged to join in, meet the neighbours and begin to rebuild the fragmented local community – a starting

point to build the kingdom of God in the place where we live. A good proportion of the village turned up, and more than half-a-dozen continued with their endeavour to “get fit”.

Being the new DP, I was invited by Bishop Martin to be the Bishop’s nominee at Diocesan Synod, and also invited to serve on the Diocesan Mission and Ministry team. Our MU overseas links are “not considered a priority for hospitality for next year’s Lambeth Conference”, but MU is growing in influence within our diocese, and we have much to look forward to in networking, building relationships, raising our profile and “making MU [even more] visible”.

My heart-felt thanks go to all Trustees and Officers for their support and encouragement in this my first year of the triennium. And thanks to all Branch Leaders, officers and members who work so hard behind the scenes, often in unsung roles. Much goes on within the Mothers’ Union. As a Trustee Board we are keenly aware that members are volunteers, and not everyone can do everything, but each of us can play her/his own part, can pray, and encourage others working on the front line. May God continue to richly bless us as together we seek to build His kingdom across our Diocese, network with others in our diocese, strengthen partnerships, and continue to show *Christian care for families* through the work we do, the projects we undertake and the quality of the lives we live, which in turn will influence not only our neighbours and families, but have an impact worldwide through our MU membership.

Linda Ginn, Diocesan President 8th February 2020

A.F.I.A. Report Trustees

2019 was a successful year we were able to help 2 families enjoy a caravan holiday and a family enjoyed a day out at Banham Zoo.

Seven pupils were able to go on school residential holiday, a head teacher reported that one pupil ‘had gained more from the experience than anyone else – she had gained confidence and shown some leadership skills that they had not seen before’.

The easyfundraising flyer given out at council has encouraged members to use this fund raising website. We have 17 supporters who have raised £325.29 and over the last 30 days £6.84. During Advert they had a £500.00 draw which I entered every day but sadly we did not win.

Val Jeffreys AFIA Rep.

IPSWICH AREA REPORT JUNE - DECEMBER 2019

The report for Ipswich is just for six months of 2019 since I took over from Catherine Kersey in June.

As always the Area Coffee Morning at St Mary Stoke was a great success raising almost £600 despite the closing of the Orwell Bridge owing to bad weather and the Rugby World Cup.

Ipswich Area bought Christmas presents for the families at Peppercorn Lodge which is part of the Riverside English Church Housing Group which supports and helps teenage parents.

Sensory Lights were purchased for the children’s room at the YMCA in Ipswich.

The parent and child provision at YMCA was first set up approx. 5 years ago because at the time we had no housing support for expectant mothers/those with children. We started with a small provision that was only able to house 4 parents and their children however over time it has grown and we currently are able to house 12 parents and their babies. We are able to house parents between the ages of 16-25 and their children up to the age of 2.

Val Jeffreys found out about this at the Contact Centre in Ipswich, which Mothers Union helps with,

Thank you to all for your continued support these last six months.

Sandra Griffiths - Ipswich Area Rep.

Report for Indoor Members 2020 Feb.

Due to the closure of a couple of branches, indoor members have gone up to 43. Although I always welcome New Members, it is sad to think Branches have closed. I realise this is a great problem nowadays, as so many mums are working and when not working they are usually running the children around to their functions. However, sometimes it is good for mums to have a little me time. Mothers Union is an ideal time to spend with friends and God. Rejuvenate yourself for the next few days. If you have problems and are overworked, God is a very good listener. Why not try it?

Monica

Vice President's REPORT for Council Meeting 11th March 2020

Thank you to all Branch Leaders who have submitted their Branch Annual Returns for 2019 and to Deanery Organisers (where appropriate) who have forwarded them to me.

The information is very useful in knowing the composition of the St Edmundsbury & Ipswich MU membership, and also helps us to evaluate the 'hidden work' that each branch is involved in.

I am currently collating the information and a breakdown will be available at the Council Meeting in July and in Pathways

Cathie McGregor. Vice President February 2020

Social Policy Report

We supported 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence with a beautifully written daily prayer and reflection resource prepared by Sue Norrington which was distributed to all branches. Our Diocese is also supporting the Clewer campaign against modern day slavery which Christine Ward is leading.

MUe

Penny and I took over running MUe at the start of 2019. We took the 'MUe shop' to seven branches during 2019, as well as setting up the shop at many Diocesan, Area and Deanery events. We received £518 from MSH in turnover grant, which is 10% of our sales over the previous twelve months. Thank you to everyone who supported our Diocese by buying from MUe online, with group orders or from our stall.

MSH membership database

During 2019 the new Mary Sumner House membership database was set up, and all our membership information is now held securely on it. We have three people in the Diocese who can update members' details – Anna Vessey, Cathie McGregor and Clare Thomas, who are responsible for North Suffolk Area, Sudbury Area and Ipswich Area records respectively.

Safeguarding

All our Trustees are up to date with safeguarding training.

Website & Facebook

Our website www.musuffolk.org.uk continues to generate a lot of interest, from our members and also from users outside Suffolk and even abroad. New pages on safeguarding, Bags of Love, recent bereavements and a gallery of all our Diocesan banners were added to the website during the year.

Our Facebook page has attracted more followers and posts regularly reach over 100 people.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in photos or information for the website and Facebook.

Clare Thomas

Secretaries Report

Over the last few months I have sent several emails to branch leaders on behalf of Linda and some Trustees, I get good feedback from branch leaders regarding these. But understand that some branch leaders that do not have an email address and I only have a contact email address are not always getting items I send out, Would contacts please pass on the things I send as otherwise it is no good having a contact address. I will try to continue to keep them up to date with what is happening in this Diocese. There are likely to be several changes to the 2019 directory due to change of leaders and the closing of some branches. I have emailed all branches and asked they inform me of any changes so that I can update the directory and inform all branches of the changes. But, I will send an email to all my branch contacts and ask they acknowledge the email so I know if it is getting to the person it should going to,

Dates for the diary:-

AGM Salvation Army HQ Stowmarket 11th March 2020 at 9.30am for 10am.

Lady Day Service at St Andrews Church Rushmere Ipswich 25th March 2020 at 3.00pm. With Banners.

Discovery Day at Darsham Village Hall 31st March 2020 at 9.30am.

Thy Kingdom Come Service at Coventry Cathedral 22nd May 2020. Names for coach to Beryl or Monica.

Council Meeting at Rougham Sports Hall BSE 15th June 2020 at 9.30am for 10.00am

Mary Sumner Day at St Edmundsbury Cathedral at 3.30pm on Sunday 9th August 2020. Joining Evensong.

Bell ringers needed.

Praising, Praying and Healing Service at Kirton Church on Friday 16th October 2020 at 11.00am.

Council Meeting at Sancroft Memorial Hall Fressingfield 18th November 2020 9.30am for 10.00am.

Beryl Mee Diocesan Secretary/Administrator

World Wide report.

I attended the World Mission Group meetings on 26th November 2019 where we received an update on Kagera.

Bishop Martin is to visit in January 2020 and Bishop Darlington is due to visit Britain in 2020 could his visit be tied up with the 1000 year celebrations of the cathedral? Bishop Mike to ask Bishop Martin . Due to income reducing there is concern regarding ongoing financial commitments except lent appeals. There is no commitment on paper but this is an important part of the diocesan link. Kagera are aware that giving will probably taper.

World Mission Conference could there be a more central location so more could attend.

Review of Anti-slavery day – a positive event and should happen again in 2020.

Requires a more action based event eg. Walk of Freedom.

Bishops Lent Appeal 2020 – this will raise awareness and share best practice for environmental issues (rather than fundraising). Archbishops lent material will be a 40-day action challenge booklet.

Fairtrade Churches – this year all churches will need to reregister via Fairtrade website. Fairtrade Fortnight is 24th February to 8th March 2020

At the time of the meeting Mothers Union were in the middle of their 16 days of Activism and prayer.

Janice Brett

World Wide Officer

Diocesan Members Report January 2020

When subscriptions came in during Summer and Autumn 2019, Diocesan Membership stood at 36. Since that time 6 new memberships have been received due to the branch closures at St John's Ipswich and Campsea Ashe.

There were six mailings to Diocesan Members during the year. The last of these was a short note with a Christmas card, sent out in December. Some members write to me and it is always a pleasure to receive their letters, which I try to reply to.

Many members have been collecting Christmas cards ready for the card making Day on Tuesday 9th June at Di Barker's house when cards are made to send to Suffolk Prisons.

Sue Norrington

Faith and Policy

Blue Christmas services took place in seven out of the now 36 branches in the diocese. Which is 20% of the branches, considering how short notice the branches had in arranging the service this was most encouraging. We will never know how many people our prayers reached, whether by attending the service, seeing a poster advertising the poster, or by being named silently in one of the services. Several branches sent photos of their services for inclusion on the website and all have sent positive feedback. Sadly, some people who attended the service report that every Christmas has been a time of sadness. Others were lonely or isolated and Christmas made their situation even worse.

I have already had requests for the Blue Christmas Service for 2020, which will be available at the summer council meeting, thus allowing plenty of time for these to be arranged.

Jeanette Appleton

F&P Trustee