

Peculiar Times!

Greetings! from the Mothers' Union Diocesan Trustees and Officers to all our Members....

Things are moving so fast, that I feel I must send Newsletter No. 3 which was going to be produced next week. However, yesterday we had an MSH Zoom meeting and have been asked to share the following with you, and to hear your comments: our next MSH meeting is scheduled for the 7th May, so if this newsletter happens now, the next will be in two weeks' time...

While everyone has been enjoying the sunshine, I have been indoors (poor me!) conferencing on Zoom. First, it was with Beryl to plan our next online Trustee meeting, then with my Cluster Group (Diocesan Presidents from Ely, Lincoln, Peterborough and Norwich) to discuss the Urgent Appeal (which by now you will have received). MSH want to know how we are responding at Diocesan level.

Yesterday it was another Zoom conference with Bev (our MSH CEO), Marian Pope (who came to visit us), Adam (Head of Fundraising and Communications) and several others from MSH wanting feedback, and to discuss how we feel MSH should move through and beyond the Coronavirus epidemic in Britain and Ireland.

The aim of the conference yesterday was 1) to agree 2-3 areas which will be the focus for MU external communications about members' work during the crisis, so that the contribution of members to their communities can be clearly and confidently shared in the wider world and the visibility of MU improved: and 2) to identify 2-3 areas where MU is uniquely positioned to support the recovery of individuals, families and communities after the crisis, so that programmes can be shaped and applications made for external funding for the work to start after the immediate crisis has passed.... It was a long afternoon....

Was our diocese currently involved, or did they want to be involved, in any of the four specific activities (see right) which have been pulled together based on initial consultation carried out through MSH development team and social media posts... ?

Knitted Hearts and Scrub Bags – These small hand-crafted hearts are given to patients who contracted Covid-19 and their families and the Scrub bags (also referred to as laundry bags) are used by NHS Staff.



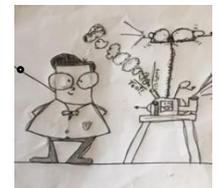
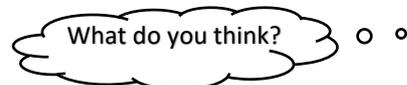
Phone Circles – contacting vulnerable members of the community and supporting them through this period of isolation and uncertainty.



Mask straps to provide relief to key workers that have to wear these for long periods of time, the straps release the pressure on the ears.



Midday Prayers - We are streaming midday prayers live on facebook. We are also looking at other ways to share worship and prayer online – what are you doing?



The Conference was also looking at ideas for MU post-Covid-19 programmes across multiple dioceses: longer term projects could include things like **building resilient communities** particularly in communities prone to natural disaster; **using craft and prayer** to support isolated and marginalised community members to bridge generations and rebuild relationships; **healing families and communities** – particularly those in grief; and identifying those providing **essential provisions** - those who are unable to access services, food, medicines, “holiday hunger” programmes and linking relationship healing and education for young people....

Does any of this resonate with you? What would your response look like? Do you have any other suggestions?

Newsletter No. 4 follows MSH briefing and key messages soon after 7th May.
 Contact for comments, ideas... (and let me know if you want them published at editor's discretion!) to Linda Ginn, DP at dpmusuffolk@gmail.com (01728 748365) or to Beryl Mee, secretarysuffolkmu56@gmail.com

I wonder how you are getting on – how are you coping? Life is very strange at present. Whatever is going on, I hope you feel well, rested and content and know in your heart that God is working his purposes out.

As I write this, I have joined the thousands of others who have loved ones on a Covid-19 ward in Ipswich Hospital – not knowing, not visiting, not touching, talking or whispering, or remembering special times together..... Staff there are frantically busy; it's difficult to know who is who behind their masks – their identities concealed; patients are scared, some inflexible, intolerant, swearing or shouting at everyone and anyone because they are angry, bewildered, and powerless against an unseen enemy. Wards are very different places now. Although not a “real” Covid-patient, (we've been self-isolating and shielding for the last four weeks), it is still a very difficult time, but very humbling to learn what the NHS staff are being faced with on a daily basis. And yet through all this I am re-learning so much more about prayer – the power of prayer, and about being vulnerable, and our need for each other.

How misguided I have been to think I could “go it alone”. How pride creeps in saying “you can cope – you don't need anyone's help - you're independent and strong”. But it is not so. Initially I did not want to share my story. After all, everyone has problems today: we are all facing difficulties – whether it be sickness, grief, loss, unemployment, family, insecurity, vulnerability and so on, so why should I bother others with my woes and add to their already heavy burden?

But today I have just read Ecclesiastes chapter 4: we are made to be together, to be in community. This is what we were created for – community means building relationships, and relationships are about love, and God is love (and it's about forgiveness and sharing too!). Alone, we are very vulnerable but there is strength in numbers (Ecc 4:12). In spite of our distancing, our social-isolation and our shielding, we need to maintain relationships with each other for encouragement, refreshment and growth (see also 1 Cor. 12:21). Our MU membership, fellowship and friendship is vital to see us through. By sharing our joys and difficulties, we learn more about love and more about God, and our relationship with God will grow stronger. To become vulnerable gives others the opportunity to love and grow in their faith too. Today Richard has come through major surgery. We watch and wait, and as we rejoice, pray and give thanks, it brings all of us closer to God.



This week's project..... !

How about doing some craft work? – don't stop the Seafarers hats, teddies, twiddle-muffs, but now you can also include even more items: knitted hearts and mask straps, sewing scrubb (laundry) bags, etc - so many things to do...!

Let us pray together

- 🙏 Give thanks to God for all the positives that we are experiencing at this difficult time – for those folk we have the opportunity to help, for those who are helping us, for the strength we are being given to keep going when things get tough, and for our friends and families who, although we cannot physically meet, we can have confidence that we have an all-seeing and all-knowing Heavenly Father who cares...
- 🙏 We thank God for his continued guidance for those who are making decisions which will impact on all our lives; for all those working in the NHS (particularly on the front line, and for all the support staff), and for the care homes and staff, the key workers, and unsung heroes; and for all those families who are at this time facing any kind of adversity - unemployment, financial worries, domestic violence, sickness, sadness and loss. It is through prayer and recognition of our own dependence on God that faith grows.

Notes from Beryl:

Your branch leaders have received an email from me giving details of things to do in lockdown. If you go onto the website (www.mothersunion.org) you'll find Craft and other Resources and instructions of how to get involved in these activities. You'll also find the way to Faith & Fellowship with April Midday Prayers. We share together....

One or two of you had paid either Monica or me for your trip to Canterbury, which has now been cancelled and I would like to think that those that have paid are willing to donate the £16 towards the amount of money we as a Diocese will be sending towards the Appeal. If I do not hear from you, I will assume you agree to do that.

Please take care and stay safe – with love from all of us.



PS: Many thanks for all your love, messages and prayers: Richard is beginning to improve - but still on a Covid ward without the virus!