

Peculiar Times!

Greetings! from the Mothers' Union Diocesan Trustees and Officers

Latest Update from Canterbury Strategy Group

In our Diocese, during lockdown, the Trustees and Officers have been meeting via "Zoom" to conduct our MU business, and prayerfully seek God's plan for all of us here in Suffolk.

Mary Sumner House have also been meeting – daily in some cases – to work through the difficulties which this pandemic brings, so herewith the latest information:

Good News! We rejoice and give thanks to God that, to date, £567k in donations* has been sent to MSH for the appeal and money from overseas is on its way too.

When Nikki Sweatman (our previous Provincial President) attended the recent Worldwide Council in Rwanda, she told us it was the first time some of the African nations realised that the money they received as grants came largely from ordinary members in Britain and Ireland through their fundraising and donations. They were very concerned because they had not considered their grants in that way, and many acknowledged they could do more for themselves.

Also reported - 50% of MSH staff are working at the moment. However, due to Coronavirus, there will be some restructuring taking place around the conference facilities, as part of cost-cutting measures.

There has been much discussion about harnessing the technology that people have got more used to for keeping in contact, particularly for younger people.

We, as Diocesan Presidents, have also been asking for more communication from MSH about structure, finances, meeting times etc, in order to be kept abreast of all that is going on so that we can inform our MU members.

This newsletter comes to say we have not forgotten you. We still care about you! We recognise the difficulties that all of us are facing - every day is different – some days are good, and others are not: we are losing loved ones – our friends, relatives, and those who are dear to us, but we cannot grieve in ways familiar to us; some marriages are beginning to feel the real strain as the roles of parenting changes, and that too impacts on us; for others it will be work-related; and we know that some churches and charities will make it through this crisis – others will not – but prayer changes outcomes...

In order to survive we need to embrace change – to be flexible in our thinking, to be creative and find new ways of doing things. Crisis is also an accelerator! So, we ask, "what do these changes now make possible for us?"

We are a local charity with a worldwide vision. As one of our trustees says, "We are not a diocese with members too old and frail to make a significant difference to the Mothers' Union [locally and] worldwide. We are in fact a diocese with members who have an incredible wealth of life experiences. Our members pray, reach out in love to their communities through their smiles, conversations and friendships and have been steadfast in their support of Mothers' Union for a combined number of years that probably reaches the tens of thousands." (JA) Now, there's a thought!

Did you know....?

We have so much going on in St Eds and Ips – so much talent spread around our diocese. Take Westleton for example (in the Yoxmere Branch) where **Kathryn Branch**, an MU member, uses her gift of writing and singing songs. She was recently interviewed on the radio and is really singing into our current situation in such a positive way. Then there is Rushmere who have produced a lovely book of "**Prayers from the heart – talking to God**" – an inspiring and encouraging collection of favourite prayers from members of the St Andrew's Branch. Or there's the virtual "**Strawberry Teas – with a twist!**" organised by the Cathedral Branch between the 3rd-6th June. (Why not join in – they are really sorry

their delivery system may not extend to your front door (social-distancing), but you could enjoy your own strawberries and cream, sitting outside in the sunshine, and even purchase a raffle ticket at £1.00 a strip, or the tombola (£1 a strip), order a jar of jam or marmalade, buy some wool, jigsaws – contact eliza.nunn@uwclub.net or Jane on 01284 762162 for more details.) It could prove to be their biggest strawberry tea event yet!

Other members are in a position to help through financial donations to the MSH Urgent Appeal. We also have branches **engaged in craft work**, making scrubs/laundry bags, mask straps (East Bergholt et al), and other are knitting prayer squares. And, of course, there is the making of **Christmas cards** for those in our prisons. Many members are simply going about their business, whether it be supporting local clergy, pastoral care, dispensing 'bags of love' or just showing kindness and making the world a better place, underpinning their and everyone else's projects - everything we do for the Mothers' Union - with prayer. If your branch hasn't given up to date information to Cathie, do let her know what you've been doing (guy.mcgregor@suffolk.gov.uk).

Covid-19 responses from branches (May '20)
Replies from 10 branches + diocesan members (CM)

NEW PROJECTS

(61) Laundry bags and scrub bags (similar)
for use in care homes

Making Scrubs (one branch)

Donation of pillowcases to make above

Contributing to the new 'Book of Comfort'

Mask + mask making extensions

Sending cards to care homes

Organising ZOOM meetings

Organising 'Buddy Scheme'

EXISTING PROJECTS

Seafarers hats – 8 responses

Supporting FIND (2 branches)

Drain bags

Memory Bags

Bags of Love

Twiddle muffs/ quilts / drip bags

Hearts

Women's refuge 3 branches

Food bank 2 branches

MEMBERS INITIATIVE

Delivering food x 6

Delivering medicine x 6

Phoning and emailing and checking X 7

One member has joined an IP help forum,
and another a local village support group

The self-isolating and vulnerable

A synopsis of responses requested re work
being done by our branch/indoor/diocesan
members. Thank you very much for your
help and well done. Cathie McGregor

Due to the coronavirus, instead of the end of May, the Families First magazine will now be dispatched in mid-June to everyone on the MSH database. Not received yours? Please let us know.

The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, Lutheran pastor and author (and now podcaster - The Confessional) offered this reflection – a different perspective.....

I do not know when we can gather together again in worship, Lord.

So, for now I just ask that:

When I sing along in my kitchen to each song on Stevie Wonder's Songs in The Key of Life Album, that it be counted as praise. (Happy 70th Birthday, SW!)

And that when I read the news and my heart tightens in my chest, may it be counted as a Kyrie.

And that when my eyes brighten in a smile behind my mask as I thank the cashier may it be counted as passing the peace.

And that when I water my plants and wash my dishes and take a shower may it be counted as remembering my baptism.

And that when the tears come and my shoulders shake and my breathing falters, may it be counted as prayer.

And that when I stumble upon a Tabitha Brown video and hear her grace and love of you may it be counted as a hearing a homily.

And that as I sit at that table in my apartment, and eat one more homemade meal, slowly, joyfully, with nothing else demanding my time or attention, may it be counted as communion. Amen. - Nadia Bolz-Weber

***To God be the glory:** ... Let us rejoice and **give thanks** to God that money for the MSH Urgent Appeal is still coming in, and hopefully we can send more from our diocese after the next Trustee meeting; for all the opportunities we have to serve others through the gifts and talents God has given us; and thank God for his love and shielding when everything around us seems to be falling apart – His faithfulness/constancy endures for ever.

Ask for God's help and guidance as we take even more responsibility for our own, and our family's, spiritual growth and development whilst our churches are closed; pray for our clergy, and remember the families of those who have recently died or lost their jobs, and we ask for God's protection on our loved ones. We bring before God all the MU decision-makers, here and worldwide, our church leaders, our government and ourselves.

Newsletter No. 6 will be sent out in mid of June. If you would like to contribute something (subject to editor's discretion!), please send your comments, opinions, thoughts to Linda Ginn, Diocesan President at Wisteria Cottage, The Street, Hacheston, IP13 ODS, phone 01728 748365 or send an email to me at dpmusuffolk@gmail.com or to Beryl at secretarysuffolkmu56@gmail.com Take care and stay safe.