

 December 2022, No. 35

Dear Everyone !



This comes to you with the warmest of Christmas greetings on what is today the coldest day so far, although the sun is shining, the sky is blue and it all looks so beautiful outside! It’s a good day…..

In an effort to be brief (not my natural forte!) I’m trying to be concise…. Lots of information can be found in many different places. Do look at our [www.musuffolk.org.uk](http://www.musuffolk.org.uk) website for the latest prayers, reflections, trustees’ reports and important dates, and also the [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org), website for much more information, newsletters from across the Province, the Annual Gathering, global updates, and the Canterbury Province’s Christmas Lectio Divina on zoom on December 22, 2022 07:30 PM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87574082067?pwd=RTczRksxQzlyc3pSRnVPdW5VTHU4dz09>

Meeting ID: 875 7408 2067; Passcode: 762354 and led by Rev’d Emma, Provincial Chaplain. Do join us.

Everyone on the MU database should have received their latest edition of Connected, together with the 2023 Prayer Diary. You will also have had a letter from Clare about the Direct Debit scheme – if you have not yet paid your subscription (it’s £24.50 for 2023) now is the time. Post-Council, we have also submitted our three Reimagining pledges to MSH – 1. to introduce new ways of being MU; 2. to raise the profile of MU in our diocese, and 3. to work more visibly within the church with Clergy, Readers and Elders. The postponed Discovery Day workshop has now been provisionally rescheduled for the 29th June. Do book the date, and if you can help with this please contact Jeanette at (jeanette.appleton@mothersuion.org). Do you need a focus for your branch meeting programme? Check out the Prayer Diary themes. Branch leaders will also have received the Minutes of our last Council Meeting, together with the Power-Point presentation – there’s a lot of information on the slides, so you may have to enlarge the print to read it all).

If you’re not yet “internet-savvy” perhaps over the Christmas period you could ask the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews and nieces to bring up the website pages for you on their amazing devices, and show you… What a way to engage the next generation and tell them, as an organisation, diocese, branch, what we are actually doing… Tell them that Mothers’ Union members provide strong connections through fellowship, worship and friendship, online and in person – around the corner and around the world; that the Archbishop of Canterbury has just endorsed MU members as being “beacons of hope for so many in the communities they serve” – we need to share our stories and banish pre-conceived ideas – for example, did you know that on average of 1,000 people watch the **Midday Prayers** everyday on Facebook? Last year MU made a difference to the lives of over 1.94 million people worldwide? Our Summer of Hope campaign raised £80,000? (and I have not yet heard the total amount raised by the Big Give this Christmas. This year the money will be going to help women, girls and survivors of trauma in South Sudan. The Thy kingdom come service will be on 12th May 2023 in Coventry Cathedral - last year over 7,000 members joined in.

Other things to look up on the websites include: **Metamorphosis** (a new MU booklet - £3.00); **www.restored-uk.org for the Red Chair** project – “a place for them” highlighting the void left behind by women and girls (who may even be amongst our number) who die at the hands of an intimate partner or family member; **Women’s Aid**; **Lighthouse** (supported by Ipswich Area) report that the Women’s Refuge has moved to new premises – their recent newsletter has been circulated. **Clewer** and **Modern-Day Slavery** have resources (including posters that can be printed off for your church noticeboard) and pledges to sign up to *‘Make it Slavery free’*. The **Blue Bear Coffee Co**.want to draw attention to the estimated 40 million-plus people held in slavery today, one in four of whom are children. They source a variety of ethical and sustainable coffees from across the developing world and donate all of their profits to projects fighting human trafficking and caring for survivors. Richard Stainer spoke at our recent Council Meeting about **FairTrade** – and promoted **Kingdom Coffee Co.** – ‘*coffee with a conscience’* - which provides environmentally friendly goods helping to underpin corporate social responsibility (CSR) objectives.

MU branches and members in our diocese participated in the **Global Day of Action** which is tied into the

**16 Days of Activism** against gender-based violence and abuse. It is unacceptable that 1 in 3 women world-

wide will be impacted by some form of violence or abuse in their lifetime (see **#nomore1in3).** Across our

diocese and nationally, members joined together on Saturday, 26th November, wearing purple scarves and

specially branded #nomore1in3 MU badges; some gathered together in their local communities for a one-

minute silence at 1.03 pm, and others stayed home to pray. **16 Days of Activism** finished a few days ago

on the 10th December,- International Human Rights Day. **Able Community Care** have provided nationwide,

Live-in Care Support since 1980 ([www.ablecommunitycare.com](http://www.ablecommunitycare.com)) and **St Martins** have supported homeless

people in Norfolk since 1972 (helen.baldry@stmartinshousing.org.uk) – both groups have been in touch.

 Looking at all these websites will certainly keep you busy over the Christmas period!

MU is spreading her wings in our Diocese… We now have regular snippets of news (with our MU logo) in the

Diocesan eNews, and I’ve recently attended two licensing services on behalf of members, welcoming new young

clergy into their parishes; we’ve been invited by Graham Miles and Philip Banks to the Plough Sunday service in the Cathedral on **8th January, 2023 at 3.30 pm,** and MU is also being included in the next Suffolk Show arrangements….

The Rev Alan MacMahon is the lead chaplain at **Highpoint Prison** and is also our Christmas card contact. Recently, when asked at the Cathedral what ‘*members can do to help prisoners and the chaplaincies in all the prisons in Suffolk*’, his reply was to “pray!, pray!, pray!” – it’s what we as MU members can do with great effect! (James 5:16). We can also knit hats, scarves and gloves – but please *use bright coloured wool* – the other colours can be for the sea-farers! They also want unused Christmas cards and notelets (all those you didn’t send out this time) – and these can be left at the Cathedral for collection. Sue Norrington writes that *“the cards made by MU members have been delivered to Highpoint Prison. We pray for all the prisoners who will receive them and their families at home trying to create a happy Christmas when one member of the family is missing. May each card be a sign of your love for each prisoner. As Christmas approaches, we pray for all the staff at Highpoint and especially the chaplaincy team as they try to support the prison community. Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.”* We are still looking (and praying) for a Community of Interest Prison Lead, and need to start thinking seriously and praying about **succession planning** for the next triennium!

Our **Emergency Prayer Chain** is also up and running (01473 231558). Recently a lady picked up our phone number from a church noticeboard, and has been in touch. Do remember her (‘CH’) in your prayers, together with those on ‘the list’, the Prayer Chain pray-ers, our trustees, officers and COI Leads, all our members and the staff at MSH.

And from Sandra, the Ipswich Area Rep – “Thank you all for donating items and coming to support Ipswich Area. It was a great morning and also a warm space. This Christmas instead of asking branch’s to donate Christmas Gift Vouchers for the Woman’s Refuge in Ipswich & Bury we will use some of the money from Ipswich Area. Ipswich Area has bought £100 of vouchers from Asda for Ipswich Refuge. Jane Leung from the Cathedral Branch is buying £200 of Gift Vouchers for Bury Refuge. Also North Suffolk Area has donated £100 for vouchers for Ipswich Refuge which was purchased from Primark. Thank you to you all for all your support. Have a very peaceful Christmas and New Year.

A letter full of news, lots to check out on the websites - and I tried so hard to be brief…! But this comes with sincere thanks to all our Trustees, Officers, and Community of Interest leads for all that has been achieved during 2022. In spite of everything, we in St Eds and Ips are moving forward, changing, and transforming - both our organisation, and as members we are growing stronger in our Christian faith. May God richly bless you all as we embark of the challenges and opportunities of 2023 – it looks to be an exciting year!

So, on behalf of the Trustees, Officers and COI Leads, may the joy of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, the worship of the wisemen and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas, and the blessing of God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you, and all those you love and pray for, always. Amen

 Happy Christmas, with love, as ever, Linda (Diocesan President) 12.12.22