**Reports for 2023 AGM**

**Diocesan President report for the Council Meeting on 23rd April 2024**

An overview of how the year unfolded, and the opportunities and challenges which arose during 2023. Changes at all levels in the organisation were inevitable, and with zoom well-established, new ways of working, and Mary Sumner House adapting, the pressures and volume of work increased substantially. The year started cautiously post-covid with a Trustees and Officers Tea Party at the Station House in Campsea Ashe – only the DP was late because the jam and cream had been left at home on the kitchen table. After a promotional Power-Point presentation, and the singing of Mary Sumner’s prayer to the tune of Ode to Joy, the penultimate year of the triennium had begun. A few days later I represented the MU at the annual Plough Sunday service in the Cathedral and in the same week, a Trustees meeting via zoom. At the end of the month, I went to London for a Metamorphosis Conference at Mary Sumner House only to find it had been cancelled the night before due to lack of numbers attending. It was rescheduled for zoom three days later. Then another zoom meeting with Amanda to talk finance, a face-to-face meeting with Beryl re the Constitution, and then with Jeanette to organise a display at the Cathedral for the forthcoming Coronation and also an opportunity to go through the AGM report together. Diocesan Synod at Stowmarket and Lady Day celebrations happened in the same week, and two weeks later the MU AGM – it was a very busy first quarter of the year.

Spring heralded new beginnings, and it was a real privilege to attend the Licensing Services of three new clergy and welcome them to their parishes on behalf of the Mothers’ Union assuring them of our support and prayers. We were invited, for the first time, to attend and have a stall at the Annual Vocation Fair in the Cloisters, and the following day I attended the Vocation Day service in the Cathedral. With cutbacks in staff at MSH and new ways of working, a DP all-day zoom conference was organised three days before the Coronation of King Charles III. Representing the MU again, I also attended the Licensing Service for our new Archdeacon (Archdeacon Rich) and immediately left for the DP Residential Conference at High Leigh in Hertfordshire.

Summertime brought its ups and downs. The Suffolk Show was difficult having been “squeezed” in and feeling superfluous to proceedings, but two days later it was a real joy to be able to speak at the MU Branch at Whitton. I flirted with a 3-minute “AI talk” to see how it would be received (and felt a certain amount of guilt!) – it went down well, but the remainder of the talk was properly prepared and carefully thought through. The week ended with a much-enjoyed Annual Strawberry Tea fund-raiser run by the Cathedral branch. Also in June, together with Clare, we were invited to the Martlesham Branch to help them as they pondered their future. Trustees met at Westerfield, and a week later we held a really successful Discovery Day at the new venue in Shepherds Drive Baptist Church Ipswich. Diocesan Synod again followed the next day, and two days later the North Suffolk Area Quiet Day took place at Holton where we learned much about iconography. At the beginning of July, I attended the Bishops’ Garden Party which had been reinstated post-covid and provided a useful opportunity for networking and raising the MU profile. As usual, Janice had prepared the Wave of Prayer for our linked dioceses of Byumba, Jalingo, Lake Malawi and Lucknow providing us with information for our branch services.

As the weather warmed up the Wickham Market Fellowship Group had a Strawberry Tea Party in Westleton for the Summer of Hope campaign, and then there was the local MU branch group meeting, more zoom sessions, the Fressingfield Garden Party, celebrations for Mary Sumner Day at St Mary Stoke, a Cream Tea at Farthings (Yoxford), and coffee with Amanda to talk about her health issues and seek a way forward. It was an exciting and fun time meeting members and their friends.

Over the summer nominations for the next DP had been received, and it was a pleasure to announce that Jeanette Appleton would be my successor. September started with another Trustee Meeting when the way forward was discussed. It was a joy to be invited to welcome two new members to the St Mary Stoke branch and give them their badges and certificates. Our Cluster group met on zoom, the following day it was the North Suffolk Area morning at Hoxne, and two days later we were up in York for the Annual Gathering. St Eds and Ips was well represented with seven members attending and staying in two separate hotels. Sue and I, under Amanda’s tuition, concentrated on perfecting the art of crocheting woollen hearts for the latest MU campaign. On returning home I was invited to attend the local Christians Against Poverty (CAP) course in order to understand better their aims and objectives should any of our members need help struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Autumn came all too quickly and October was a really busy month with MU activities and engagements happening nearly every day, beginning with the I-Chameleon Pop-Up shop in Halesworth, another Cluster meeting via zoom, the Healing Service in the Cathedral, Metamorphosis in our local branch, and the Retired Clergy Conference - again in the Cathedral. The admin from Mary Sumner House was increasing with new staff and new initiatives which in turn meant more emails and key messages, policies and documents, newsletters and reflections, MU Live data and stats - all of which needed to be read through carefully, and where appropriate circulated to members.

I attended two more Licensing Services in Ipswich, had a formal coffee session with the new Archdeacon to “re-introduce” him to Mothers’ Union in our diocese, enjoyed a very happy occasion arranged by Sandra for the Ipswich Area Coffee Morning at Martlesham, the 16 Days of Activism campaign and the Autumn Council Meeting at Coddenham which afforded the pleasurable opportunity of announcing that Jeanette would be our next Diocesan President. The weather was atrocious – with snow and flooding – and numbers attending were somewhat down. Christmas arrangements began in earnest with many branches having been involved in making Christmas cards for the prisoners at Highpoint, in Yoxmere a new travelling crib was being taken around families with children in the benefice, and I learned of other Branches too who were decorating their churches, promoting the Blue Christmas service arranged by Rev Catherine, and purchasing MUe gifts, Christmas cards and calendars, etc. The year finished on a high with the Rushmere Branch Christmas Party where we were entertained by a Ukelele band and wonderful afternoon tea, and the last event of the year was the local Mothers’ Union branch meeting in my home for a wonderful seasonal service and afternoon tea – our normal venue at the church was just too cold!

It's been a real privilege to serve the Mothers’ Union in 2023 as we emerged from the covid pandemic and confidence in coming together once more enabled us to meet up face to face. Over the year, several new members joined Mothers’ Union, but sadly the loss of members was greater. To all those who are grieving we send our condolences. Branches changed and amalgamated, Fellowship Groups started up and Diocesan Membership increased. Looking back we can see how much has changed; how in 2023 we tried to put into practice the pledges we made in 2022 to Mary Sumner House; how our ABC structures guided the programmes of AFIA, Befriending and support for the Clewer Initiative. We have an amazing team of Trustees, Officers, Community of Interest Leads and STARs – all with very different gifts and abilities - but each one playing a really important and significant role in helping the Mothers’ Union to flourish and thrive. My sincere thanks to each one of you as we now embark on this final year of the triennium, confident in the knowledge that we have a Heavenly Father who knows, and sees and cares very much for us as we seek to serve Him in the places where He has called us to live. Again, we praise God, rejoice and give thanks for his faithfulness, goodness and provision for us, leading us forward according to His plan and purpose.

LG /19.3.24

**Ipswich Area AGM Report 2023**

During the year branches have been busy knitting Seaman’s Hats, making Drain Bags, making up Emergency Toilet Bags and collecting Food for Families In Need.

Ipswich Area Coffee Morning on November 18th 2023 At St Michael’s Martlesham.

It was once again a great success even though the weather was very wet. It was lovely to see members and friends have a lot of fun and fellowship which was had by all.

We raised approximately £600.

Christmas Gift Cards were purchased out of Ipswich Area Funds for the Refuge in Ipswich and the Woman’s Refuge Bury St Edmunds.

Letters of thanks that are sent to me and passed onto Beryl who very kindly scans them and sends them out to all branches.

Thank you all for your continued support in supporting these worthy causes.

Sandra Griffiths

Ipswich Area Rep

**REPORT FOR INDOOR MEMBERS 2023**

I can’t believe another year has passed already!

This will be my last report. I am now 81 years of age and disabled. It’s time to pass on the baton to a younger healthier member. I can’t remember how many years I have been writing to all the Indoor Members, it’s too many to count. I took over from Linda Cadman when she was feeling poorly. I am sure some of you will remember Linda.

The numbers for members has gone down a little, only today I have heard of the death of the oldest member at 102. What a wonderful achievement! May she rest in peace.

I want to say how much I have enjoyed writing to you all. I now leave you all in the safe hands of Margaret Morrison.

Love and blessings to you all.

Monica

**COI Craft Year Ending December 2023**

Across the diocese members continue to make a range of items.

The knitted hats are made for both seafarers and prisoners at Highpoint HMP.The hats for the prisons should be labelled but not those for seafarers.

Embroidered labels have been sent to members on request throughout the year.

A new initiative started in the autumn of 2022 of knitting breasts for the Community Nursing Service went well during the year and by December 107 had been sent to the coordinator. (our target was 120) The aim was to provide each midwife, HV and support worker with a knitted breast to use as a visual aid when working with new mothers. They have been very well received and are knitted in bright colours. New staff join the team regularly necessitating a continuing small supply required.

Knitted and crocheted hearts were also made to support the ’15 Days of Activism’ campaign starting in November.

In addition, drain bags, twiddle muffs and other items have been made and sent to where they are needed.

Sue Norrington organized the recycling of Christmas cards into new cards for prisoners at Christmas.

The support given by members in the ‘craft’ area of giving continues to be very strong in our diocese and a big thanks goes out to you all.

There was a ZOOM meeting with Deborah Munday in July providing continuing update from MSH.

Cathie McGregor COI Craft March 2024.

**COI Report for Policy Y/E Dec 2023.**

Again the ‘Make a Mothers Day’ Appeal information was delivered centrally to members by mail and regular email notifications.

Also delivered centrally was the ‘Sixteen days of Activism’ prayer information which was partnered with ‘women’s Aid which was well received and user friendly for members. Many branches and groups had displays in their churches using knitted/crocheted purple hearts and information sheets relating to domestic violence plus various readings and activities.

A Britain & Ireland policy COI Zoom meeting was held in January 2023 to discuss Domestic abuse. COI reps shared local initiatives and strategy used in their own dioceses.

Robyn Boosey at MSH who coordinated Social Policy left in March with a replacement being advertised.

Cathie McGregor. COI Lead for Policy.

March 2024

**Secretary’s Report AGM Y/E Dec 23**

Once again it has been a busy year, ensuring that branches received the information from Trustees and MSH. I have tried to arrange venues for meetings and services in different parts of the Diocese to help ease travel for members, this is not always possible as we now try to use venue’s that can provide equipment and Wi-Fi to enable us to livestream or use Zoom for members that are unable to attend in person.

The trustees met on 5 occasions, there were 3 council meetings, 4 Services and the Discovery Day. We are an active diocese and enjoy meeting up for fun and fellowship.

If anyone feels they would like to apply for the job of Diocesan Secretary I will be pleased to have them shadow me for the rest of the year, so the tasks are not too strange when I step down in December. I have enjoyed the last 6 years but feel it is now time to hand over the reins to someone else.

Beryl Mee Diocesan Secretary

25.03.24

**Over 90’s report**

I have 35 members on my birthday list.

Have a good meeting I send my apologies.

God bless.

**Margare**t

**MUe**

During 2023 we sold just over £10,400 worth of goods on the MUe stall and personal orders. This is an increase on 2022, and should bring us a good ‘dividend’ from Mary Sumner House of about £1000. Thank you to all branches which invited us to bring the MUe stall to meetings and events, and to everyone who ordered either via me or directly via the website.

**Membership**

At the end of 2023 we had 579 members paying subs, and 45 indoor members. The Diocesan members group continued to grow, partly due to branch closures.

Another 44 members changed to paying their subs by Direct Debit, which takes the total to 154 which is approximately 26% of our membership.

Thank you so much to the branch leaders and treasurers who let me know as soon as new members are enrolled, and of any address changes / deaths.

**Website / Social Media**

Thank you to everyone who has sent me news for the website and Facebook. Please remember that any photos with people in do need to be accompanied with a signed permission form otherwise we can’t publish them.

Clare Thomas 21/3/2024

Away From It All Report for AGM.

I had only 3 referrals for 2023, but 3 different requests for support.

A small donation was sent to Claydon & Barham Young Families, with the rise in heating bills and the cost of food and rent for the hall all rising. The group has been running for 32years, they meet in the village hall the heart of the community and is well supported. A small fee is charged but this is kept low so families on low income can attend. MU sent a £100.00 so they could carry on with supporting young families in their community.

A family of 7, mum dad and 5 children enjoyed a week away at a Parkdean’s Cherry Tree holiday park near great Yarmouth. This family were referred for a holiday by Rev Mary Sokanovic, from Whitton parish church. The children aged from 14 years – 8 months had never been on holiday and Mum and Dad had been going through a stressful time, so a holiday was just what they needed. I have photos and thank you letters from the family they had a really good time.

The third referral was from Rev Graham Miles for a pair of school shoes. A family on a low income needed help to buy a £60.00 pair of good school shoes. The family attended a holiday club and then started coming to church, Graham had attended a trustee meeting where he heard about AFIA and just asked for help.

MU has now produced a School Uniform Grant form to help with Shoes, Uniform and PE Equipment.

Thank you for all your donations and all who shop online via the easyfundraising.org.uk website, all donations count whether big or small.

With thanks.

Val Jeffreys AFIA Trustee.

**Diocesan Members – Annual Report for Trustees 2023**

There were, as always, some changes in Diocesan Membership through 2023 but we also welcomed new members. The number of Diocesan Members was in the low fifties for most of the year but by the time we collected subscriptions at the end of 2023, the branches in Felixstowe, Martlesham, Halesworth and Ipswich St. Margaret had become Fellowship Groups. Many members from these branches became Diocesan Members. At the end of the year our numbers had grown to 85. I continue to send out monthly mailings by Email or post, so that Diocesan Members feel in touch with MU in St. Eds&Ips and with the worldwide organisation.

The cards needed for prisoners at Highpoint Prison were completed in the 4 workshops held at East Bergholt, Fressingfield, Ipswich St Margaret and Newmarket. Di Barker and I enjoyed working with members in these branches to complete 1,500 cards. We are grateful for the used Christmas card that are given to us. These are trimmed ready for use in the workshops planned for 2024.

Sue Norrington – Diocesan Members Rep.- March 2024