

## **Diocesan President Report Council April 30th 2025**

### **Governance**

Introducing our new trustee board.

Jeanette Appleton, Diocesan president and a member of Constable churches branch, formerly known as East Bergholt and Brantham. Past MU roles include trustee in the diocese of Chester. Worldwide Members rep for the Province of York 2010 - 2012, member of the Central Action and Outreach Unit 2013 - 2015. A retired paediatric Occupational therapist and member of General Synod House of Laity.

Rev'd Canon Alison Alder is a member of Wenhaston branch. She is a wife, mother, grandmother, ex-teacher, SSM priest and long-standing member of MU; she also has a role as Diocesan Environment Officer

Ruth Dennigan is a member of Henley branch and licensed Lay Minister (Reader), diocesan officer (vocations and ministry) for the diocese of St Albans, a tutor, writer and musician.

Rev'd Canon Alan Forsdike is a member of Westerfield, Tuddenham and Witnesham branch. He also shares the role of Bishop's chaplain, with our Diocesan chaplain Rev Catherine Forsdike,

Clare Thomas is a member of Henley branch she is also our MUe rep, membership secretary, Website manager and database lead. She has been a valuable member of the team at Mary Sumner House creating the new national database.

At our first trustees meeting the focus was on governance and setting the agenda for the next few months. This has been continued at our April trustee meeting and the focus in June will be on our Diocesan projects and outreach.

### **Policies**

Members of the trustee board have had the opportunity to review the existing policies and new policies for expenses, social media policy is still in draft form and awaits further comments from the trustees.

### **Grandparent day:**

Our new partnership with the Growing Younger Team has strengthen our presence in the diocese. Demonstrating that we are not just there for the cups of tea and cake, but we are a strong force when it comes to nurturing faith in families. As well as the fact that we have the skills and resources to work as partners on projects and events.

The day was attended by 29 people, who gave extremely positive feedback, with 19 people out of 21 who provided feedback giving the day five stars and 2 people giving the day four stars. One person praised the day as *a truly excellent day - one of the best I've ever attended, really. I was thankful that the programme was concise, well-planned and executed.*

### **Lady day**

My thanks the Rev Catherine Forsdike for all her work on the liturgy for this service, to the Very Reverend Joe Hawes for being the President and preacher for the service and to the cathedral branch members and cathedral staff for all their help and support. It was encouraging to have so many people in the cathedral for the service and to have such a committed team of members who had

stepped up into branch and diocesan roles. I thank them for their dedication and commitment to Mothers' Union and our aims and objectives. Over 100 members attended the service in person and a further 156 viewed the service using the livestream platform.

### **Save the date**

The Mothers' Union Gathering 2025 committee for the Canterbury Province are busy organising this special occasion which will take place on Saturday 27th September 2025 at The King's Centre, Oxford. We would like to invite all MU members, plus interested friends, to come and share in this event. I have circulated the flyer to all branches and groups which gives the details and link to buy tickets.

Christine Ward and I went last year and made a weekend away of it. There are some excellent guest houses within a short distance of the venue. Or a Premier Inn a little further away.

Oxford is a wonderful place to visit, and I recommend travelling by train as the traffic in Oxford is terrible. The venue for this event is close to the station as well.

### **150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration news**

On June 10<sup>th</sup> 2026 at 7pm there is to be a Mothers' Union service in St Paul's cathedral with seating for 1800 people. This will be followed by the Annual Gathering the next day at the Emmanuel centre, which is next to Mary Sumner House. The Emmanuel Centre seats 800 people so you will need to look out for when the tickets go on sale. There will be more information about other events and a fund-raising appeal in due course.

### **Modern Day Slavery**

October 8<sup>th</sup> is Modern Day Slavery Day and branches are asked to make paperchains, knitted or made of paper to act as a symbol of the plight of victims of Modern Day slavery.

### **Link Dioceses Anji Dawkins**

Anji Dawkins is our new worldwide Contact and she has raised the fact that we do not have any functioning communication with any of the five dioceses we are linked to. As a result, we are not in a position to pray meaningfully for their projects or their named leaders. We do however have strong links with Kagera Diocese, which is currently linked to Manchester Diocese. A fact that the Kagera DP Pensia Mathayo was unaware of.

I have asked if the Wave of Prayer current list of link diocese could be discussed at the DP conference in June, with a request that each diocese could have their Church of England link diocese allocated to them. Bishop Martin has already initiated this for us on an informal basis and Pensia and I have established email contact.

### **Christmas Cards for Prisoners at Highpoint Project- Sue Norrington - February 2025**

Di Barker and I have had a steady stream of used Christmas Cards donated to us. We trim all the suitable cards to the correct size ready for use in the workshops that have been arranged in the months ahead. Thank you to all the people who have been saving their cards for us.

This month we have been to Wenhaston Branch where 12 ladies seemed to enjoy an afternoon of card making. Other branches who have made arrangements to hold card making workshops this year are the Cathedral Branch, Needham Market, Barham & Henley, Constable churches, Fressingfield and Rushmere St. Andrew. We have carried requests from two other branches over to next year.

### **New links with Highpoint Prison**

I was able to visit Rev Wendy Norris, the Anglican chaplain at Highpoint prison this month to explore ways in which Mothers' Union could work more closely with the prison chaplaincy. We have a group of twelve MU members who are willing to support new projects with the prison, the need was to find one person to co-ordinate this group. I am delighted to let you know that Rev Wendy has joined Mothers' Union as a Diocesan member and will be linking with our group to highlight areas of need for the prison chaplain and the prisoners. One of Rev Wendy's first priorities was for Bibles, both in print and as audio cd's for those prisoners who are not able to read. A full list of items that are needed will soon be placed on the website.

### **RISE-UP Bronze Award**

Fressingfield branch and St Mary's MU, (the full branch name has not been given to me ) have both achieved the RISE-Up Bronze award this spring. I know than many other branches could also be awarded a Bronze award as so many branches have supported the Women's refuge and displayed the RISE -UP Posters. First is to register your branch with Emily Brailsford via her email [EMikly.Brailsford@mothersunion.org](mailto:EMikly.Brailsford@mothersunion.org) and the guidelines for how to complete your submission are on the MU website.

### **AFIA**

Emma-Louise Syrett from Hadleigh Branch has joined Mothers' Union specifically to take on the role of AFIA rep. She is currently having a handover from Val Jeffreys. Trustees have approved exploring a new way to give AFIA holidays to children, though funding day camps working in partnership with the Christian charity Kick. This is in the early stages of development and more information will be forthcoming.

### **Supporting Marriage.**

The first Mothers' Union object is to uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and promote its wider understanding. Trustees have approved the setting up of a fund to support marriage preparation in the deaneries and parishes across our diocese. This fund could cover the cost or hire of a venue, speakers, refreshments or printing costs. This Mothers' Union fund will be advertised through the Church of England diocesan channels and promoted at rural dean network.

Jeanette Appleton

Diocesan President Mothers' Union Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich