**Reports for Council – 18th November 2020**

**DP Report for Zoom Council 18th November 2020**

Having spoken with most of the Branch Leaders in the last two weeks, it is good to report that  branches have continued to meet via Zoom, and others are meeting in social groups of up to 6.  Another branch has reported that during lockdown they have “raised the profile of the branch in the parish and community, through project work, magazine articles, and virtual fund-raising….”.  And   another branch has reported that following the reprint of their first edition of the very successful “Prayers from the heart”, they are about to launch a new collection of Scripture Verses and Bible Readings.  Sheran Harper, our Worldwide President, has even mentioned our “*Book of Comfort*” in the latest issue of *Families First* – have you spotted it?.  I’ve been encouraged by the stories of branches holding their membership together through regular visiting, telephone calls, emails, branch newsletters, and even the odd “Bags of Love” being delivered. Another imaginative and  innovative meeting included a special “Bingo” session!  In spite of everything around us, MU is still working away in the parishes and communities they serve.  Congratulations to all, and a huge thank you to  our Branch Leaders, their committees and the membership for all they are doing on behalf of MU.

Our Trustees too have been working hard – thinking up new ideas and ways of “doing MU”, attending MSH webinars, promoting MUe sales, and sorting out MSH database queries and our own website.  Much hard work is going on behind the scenes for the preparations of the up-coming I-Chameleon pop-up shop; our money is in safe hands; Cathie sorting out the Charity Commissioners; anniversary cards and cheerful letters sent out to our members; Diocesan members, whose numbers are increasing, receiving current information and  thoughtful reflections, and the work of AFIA still reaching out to those less fortunate and to key-workers.  Our links with the Women’s Refuge are on hold at present due to covid, but we still hold them in our heart …., and there is just so much more going on…. and all of us praying for the work of Mothers’ Union here and overseas alongside, of course, our Prayer warriors in the Prayer Chain.   Beryl has continued to hold the fort and been a tower of strength, keeping us aware of all those who are unwell (including our own trustees and officers and their families in these difficult days), those who have recently lost loved ones, or their jobs or security (flowers have been sent to Angus Travel who have served us well over the years) - our thoughts and prayers go out to them, and especially for those who have lost so much.

Disseminating information:  The latest edition of Families First with MSH information has recently been dispatched to all members on the database.  I have attended a Cluster Zoom meeting from which there is very little to report, and I have delayed sending in this report in the hope of bringing more up to date news from a Zoom webinar this afternoon, but registration failed.  Yesterday we heard that our November DP Conference at High Leigh has been cancelled again and will now take place on zoom.  Representation in the diocese has been exclusively via zoom, and sadly I have had to send apologies to two Diocesan Synod and two Mission and Ministry Team meetings (although I do still get the minutes) as my internet connection is not sufficiently robust, nor can I see more than 9 participants without having to flick between screens.  I have also been declining opportunities to speak at Zoom Branch meetings but hope that, with practice, I can remedy this – possibly by pre-recording talks – still a work in progress!  A pop-up Mary Sumner Day service, although well prepared with MU resources, was not a success.   One branch has closed due to dwindling numbers.

But on a much more positive note, our bi-monthly newsletter, produced by Trustees, is going down really well with branches who are glad to receive regular news about the Diocese and the wider work of MSH.  During lockdown, it has been amazing to learn of all the things that have been going on in Mothers’ Union in our Diocese – projects ranging from individual members, at home, knitting and sewing, craftwork and facemasks, preparations for making Christmas cards for prisoners and their families, and prayer “bubbles” and fellowship gatherings whilst still maintain social distancing.  Working alongside others fund-raising and support for parochial activities on behalf of the local church has included the Historic Ride and Stride challenges, food-bank deliveries, and supporting local clergy and pastoral care.

We are in a time of transition, and as Trustees in our Diocese, we have much optimism about the way ahead.  We want to maintain our small groups meeting regularly together, but maybe now in new and different ways.  We want to “Rebuild hope and confidence” – our MU theme for 2021; and we want to grow our fellowship, caring and supporting one another.  There will come a time when all the MU members across our diocese will be able to affirm our identity as Mothers’ Union members, meet up again face to face (be it in the Cathedral or the Cathedral grounds) and “rejoice and give thanks for all the blessings that we have received”… and what an occasion that will be!  Take heart – things will change for the better!

Linda Ginn MBE

Diocesan President

**MUe**

Thank you to all branches and members who have ordered from the MUe catalogue. There have been delays in getting some items, due to issues with suppliers – and I can only apologise to anyone who is still waiting for items. I have a good selection of Christmas cards, diaries and calendars, as well as other items in the catalogue, so it is never to late to give me a call or post me an order!

The new MU Cookbooks are now available, they cost £5 and contain recipes from members around the world.

We also have beautiful handmade face coverings for sale – made by one of our members out of MU fabric. They are £4 each – just contact me if you would like to buy one.

And finally I have a small stock of copies of our new Book of Comfort, so if you would like me to post you a copy do let me know.

Clare Thomas [clare.thomas@btinternet.com](mailto:clare.thomas@btinternet.com) or 01473 832808

**Membership Database**

Just a reminder that Mary Sumner House will be posting the prayer diaries direct to members, so it is essential that any address changes, new members or resignations / deaths are notified to Beryl Mee regularly to ensure that the publications reach our members.

**A.F.I.A. report Council 18th November 2020**

There is not much to report, I had an enquirer about sending families on a Zoo trip. But as the Zoo are now closed, will we not be able to help.

I am also not very happy to send anybody away or on a day out with this virus still about.

Mary Sumner house is running a ***Thank you Key workers appeal***, key workers and their families have a choice of an activity hamper, experience day or a short break. These will be taken in 2021.

Mary Sumner house have set up forms for key workers to apply themselves, also for people to nominate key workers. They can be found on the main Mothers’ Union website.

Val Jeffreys AFIA Trustee.

**Faith and Policy Report November 2020**

**Book of Comfort:** the paperback edition of the Book of Comfort has sold over 300 copies. Because the eBook is free, I have no sales information, however I am trying to find out how many have been downloaded. An audio book for the RNIB will be recorded in the near future, when COVID-19 19 restrictions are lifted.

**Blue Christmas service**: recording has taken place in St Peter’s Westleton, Bures St Mary and St Andrew’s Rushmere. This represents the three areas in our diocese. Editing will now take place and the plan is for the service to be available from 5pm on Monday 21st December, which is the beginning of the longest night of the year.

All branches have been sent a short notice for their parish magazines advertising the service. A press release will be sent out nearer the time to media outlets in the diocese and Church Times as well as posting on social media.

**Art and Scripture reflections.**

I am very aware that branches need more faith resources during these months when we cannot have our usual meetings. To meet this need in addition to the monthly prayers, Art and Scripture reflections are now available to download from on the musuffolk.org website.

**North Suffolk Area Report for Council. November 2020**

We were extremely pleased that it was possible to run the Pop-Up shop in October in spite of Covid 19 restrictions. Thanks to members, both in the north and further afield, we started our week with a very full shop and continued to stock the shelves as things sold. Clare also provided MUe Christmas and birthday cards. The weather was not kind to us, Covid placed restrictions on how many shoppers we could accommodate at one time and fewer people were prepared to browse the shop but we still had a very worth while week. Together with some private and eBay sales we made over £1200 plus £238 on MUe cards!! Thanks go to everyone who supplied goods, was on duty in the shop or came as customers.

The NSA committee had a Zoom meeting at the end of October to decide how this money should be used. £300 has been sent to both the Overseas fund and the Britain & Ireland fund. Like last year, we are going to provide guests at the Ipswich Night shelter and tenants in Hope for Action housing with a pair of Christmas socks containing useful items like a diary, torch, hand warmers etc as well some fun bits and pieces. We also hope to be able to support ‘Open the Book’ teams in our area, with additional books, when they are once again able to visit schools. This still leaves us with funds to book the shop in 2021 and to use during next year.

We hope that in 2021 we may be able to resume ‘business as usual’, and so intend to plan a Quiet Day for the end of June, the NSA Morning in September and run the shop in October. We look forward to meeting up once again.

Anna Vessey

North Suffolk Area Representative

**Ipswich Area Report**

Ipswich Area cancelled the Ipswich Area Coffee Morning in November due to the Corona Virus.

I have kept in touch with the Woman’s Refuge and they are all ok at the moment.

We hope buy to some Christmas Gift Cards again this year for the Woman’s Refuge in Ipswich & Bury st Edmunds.

Ipswich Winter Night Shelter were wanting Ladies and Men’s Pyjamas as yet I have not heard any more so I will wait until I am contacted again..

We hope to buy Christmas Gifts for the children and mum’s in Peppercorn Lodge again this year.

Sandra Griffiths

Ipswich Area Rep

**Secretaries Report - November Council Meeting**

Over lockdown 1 I was in contact with Branch Leaders ensuring they and their branch members were OK. Several contacted me with bits of information which was good. I sincerely hope this lockdown is not as long as the 1st but I am here at the end of my PC or phone if I can help anyone again.

I have also been in contact with Trustees and officers over the past few months, keeping them up to date with news from Mary Sumner House and our DP.

I will shortly be sending out nomination forms for the trusteeships where some post holders will be stepping down at the end of the triennium in December 2021. If you know of someone that would be suitable and like to take on one of these roles, please ask their permission before nominating them and let me have your nomination papers back in a sealed envelope as they are opened after the closing date by an independent non-member.

The latest dairy for 2021 is also attached with these reports, please note dates of events you and/or your members would be available to join in. If there are any dates you require to included please let me know for when I update the diary again.

Take care and stay safe

Beryl Mee Diocesan MU Secretary/Administrator