

Issue 3/21

July - September 2021

Newsletter



Celebrating 125
Years



Welcome to our new Chaplain!

It is a wonderful privilege to introduce our new Mothers' Union Chaplain for Canterbury Diocese.

Revd Emma Pennington is Canon Missioner at Canterbury Cathedral and we are delighted that Bishop Rose has appointed Emma to assist us with our work for Mothers' Union. She has written the prayers for this edition of the Diocesan Newsletter and we look forward to working with Emma in the future. **Editor**



We can't wait to welcome you back!

Canterbury Cathedral reopened to visitors from Monday 17 May 2021, and we're looking forward to welcoming you back.



With new visitor experiences and 'Kids Go Free' until 31 October 2021 (T&C's apply), there's never been a better time to rediscover the Cathedral. Whether marvelling at medieval stained glass, or exploring the cloisters and green spaces, there's plenty to do. Full information on the cathedral website

Copy for the next Newsletter to be with Chris Cook by Friday 30th July 2021.

Please let me know what is happening in your area.

Send an email to Christopher.Cook@mothersunion.org

Dear Friends

What can we see in the word h**EART**? Simply put, a reminder that to capture someone's heart we **listen** to them. Mary Sumner would be the very first to listen, adapt and change the world around her. Her grassroots' vision meant she looked around her, saw the need and responded to it.

We too must be confident with our Reimagining MU. MU does not yet attract our younger church members. My insight for new ways of 'blended' working was creating a wifi hot spot from a parked car, to then participate in a membership' Zoom!

Branches close where our membership is ageing and are in difficulty getting officers but will transform happily into active Fellowships. Individuals who are joining directly with the Diocese can liaise with any existing or create new informal groups.

In my MU collection I have an FOM badge. Cordelia Moyses' *A History of the Mothers' Union* pp135-6 describes and explained FOM. Fellowship of Marriage was an early Young Wives group started in 1921, which gave women automatic membership of MU. It lasted until the 1930s when it was decided that it wasn't achieving its purpose. "One manifestation of the problem was that it had an aging membership who joined as brides and did not progress to a MU branch. In 1935 the Central Council decided that the upper age of membership should be 40 years ..." Any of you involved in Young Wives will laugh; there was exactly the same problem in the 1990's with Young Wives' groups.

Celebrating 145 years of MU and our own Diocese' 125 years will bring extra pleasure, after the disappointment in June, in meeting together to replenish the project pot and to celebrate **MARY SUMNER DAY**. I look forward to a memorable fun day with a variety of 'Lots in the 'bible auction' (see back page).

Did we learn from lockdown? What did we do well? Visit the central website which has practical documents to download for our meetings such as an MU Act of Reflection and Remembrance and Ideas for Celebration and Thanksgiving.

Grace and Peace

Marianna Poliszczuk Diocesan President

email: marianna2@compuserve.com



Metamorphosis

Principles of Building Relationships

- Seeing every human being, of any faith or none, as a person made in God's image and with something to teach us.
- Collaborating and acting together with others, not as 'us' and 'them', but as a shared and mutual community.
- Focusing on relationships, not projects, acknowledging that it is encounter with others which transforms.



'Metamorphosis' may sound like a very abstract concept to you, especially as only a handful of members are currently receiving the Metamorphosis training from Mary Sumner House. You will probably have heard that Mothers' Union Canterbury Diocese has agreed to pilot this training on the Isle of Sheppey, partnering with others in the community to achieve community transformation there.

Now, 'transforming communities' is a phrase that is much more synonymous with the work of the Mothers' Union. You are all familiar with the small and large scale activities that we as members are engaged in to bring about transformation in people's lives and their communities all over the world. A lot of what is taught on the Metamorphosis course members are already doing, naturally.

Having said this, I'm sure you'll agree some projects continue to thrive whilst others have since ceased over the years for a variety of reasons.

Those piloting Metamorphosis are keen to share their experience of the new tools that they're learning. We've already received Praying with Purpose materials in the last DNL issue recognising that prayer and seeking God's will is paramount to all that we do. This DNL issue commends the problem tree activity to demonstrate how members

have identified and responded to needs in their community.

The tools learnt on Metamorphosis are empowering, energising, easy to use, fun and effective. We identified through MULO what the MU currently does well but also identified areas of need in our community where we could do more. Try using the problem tree activity to solve a problem yourself, it can be a personal or community related problem. The tree trunk represents the problem. The branches are the symptoms and affects caused by this problem and the roots identify the causes of the problem. When you can visualise all of the different aspects of the problem you can begin to prioritise how you want to tackle the problem. You may identify that you only have the capacity to respond to the symptoms. Root causes may be more political and outside your control. Or maybe, you are led to take action against the political causes and you may wish to unite with others to lobby local councillors or MP's about the problem.

We hope you enjoy learning more about the tools members are learning on Metamorphosis. Maybe ask a member who is on the course to attend a branch meeting to complete one of the tools with you. The community mapping exercise (to be included in the next DNL) is a very useful exercise particularly as we begin to understand our communities post Covid.

Updates on links between the MU and Prison Fellowship on the Isle of Sheppey have been shared at the MU Zoom Coffee Lounge but please feel free to contact me if you'd like to hear more about opportunities to facilitate on the Sycamore Tree restorative course that is run at HMP Swaleside.

Sally Phillips - Archdeaconry President Maidstone

A Walk to Celebrate our 125 years!

Rita Pengelly, Archdeaconry President for Canterbury and Ashford, is undertaking a sponsored coastal walk in August to London to raise funds for AFIA. She invites all members to join her for 125 minutes either personally for part of her journey or virtually! Or hold your own sponsored pram/dog/child/fancy dress walk.

Contact Rita for further route details!



Fundraising in 2021

As I am sure you are aware the last year has been very difficult for all charities as far as fundraising opportunities were concerned and Mothers' Union is no different! In order to ensure that we can maximise our fundraising over the next few months some ideas are detailed below, all of which have no cost to you as Mothers' Union members!

Gift Aid

If you are a UK tax payer you are able to Gift Aid your annual subscription which enables us to receive 22% of the total paid. If you have not already done so and are able to Gift Aid please contact your Branch or Group Leader for a Gift Aid Declaration! £785.23 was raised last year for our funds!

Online Shopping

Shopping online has become more of a regular activity particularly over the last 12 months. We do hope that as lockdown restrictions have lifted you will return to support the local independent businesses that rely on our custom. However, if you are buying online it is useful to know that our funds can also benefit from your purchases at no extra cost to you.

EasyFundraising is a website that supports most of the national retailers and a percentage of your purchases are credited to our funds as a donation. All you need to do is register on the site, select **Mothers' Union Canterbury Diocese Projects Fund** and you are all set. Anything that you purchase through this site will then benefit our funds. To date we have raised £1077.54 without lifting a finger!

Amazon Smile

Amazon has become very popular over the last few years but rather than go to the usual Amazon site just search for **smile. Amazon.co.uk** and this will take you to a site where you can select **The Mothers' Union (Diocese of Canterbury Branch)** and anything you purchase will again enable a donation to be made to our funds. If you already have an Amazon account there is nothing to do except use the Smile Amazon site rather than the normal one.

Let's Get Fundraising!



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Praying through the word

I always remember my failed attempts as a child to try and read the Bible. Each Lent I would set myself the task of reading one chapter of the Bible every day. Of course when you begin a book you start at the beginning, so I opened up the Bible at Genesis chapter one. I'm sure you can imagine that even without reading notes or study aids the stories of Genesis still gripped my young imagination. It was only in the books of law that I started to get bogged down and gave up. Looking back I'm always surprised at just how many times I tried to do this in the Lenten season always ending by feeling a bit of a failure.

Now I'm older and experience has taught me that the Bible is more a library of books written in different times, by various people and covers many forms of writing from history, poetry, biography, letters, songs as well as the law. And there's also different ways to read the bible. One way is known as *lectio divina* which means in English 'holy' or 'divine reading'. Of course, in one sense, all reading of scripture is an holy act because of the nature of the text itself but *lectio divina* is a certain way in which someone approaches the Bible and reads the words in expectation that they will lead them into a closer relationship with God and a fuller understanding of themselves and the world as a result.

In his second letter to Timothy (3:16) Paul outlines how:

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that those who belong to God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So he sees scripture as God's textbook to us on how to live. But it was Origen writing in the third century who really developed the idea of scripture as a sacrament, that within the written words of the Bible the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, was present and the words on the page could lead to an encounter with him. For Origen reading the Bible was a pathway to the living Word himself, Jesus Christ.

This holy reading was quickly picked up by many, not least St Benedict whose motto *Ora et labora*, pray and work consisted of three elements: liturgical prayer, manual labour and *lectio divina*. Later in the twelfth century the elements were formalized into four parts:

Lectio or simply reading the text very slowly and watching for the word or sentence that speaks to you or shimmers as you read

Meditatio or pondering that word, not trying to deconstruct it but allowing it to unfold in your mind and heart

Oratio or prayer, as you speak to God and listen to what he says to you.

Contemplatio or silence, as you rest in the presence of the Word.

If you would like to do a guided *lectio* then please go to where I will talk you through.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd5hBBZxCyk&t=419s>

Over the next three months here are three meditations I have written for you to read, ponder and prayer.

Faith Seeking Understanding

For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, 'Read this, please,' he will answer, 'I can't; it is sealed.' Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, 'Read this, please,' he will answer, 'I don't know how to read.' The Lord says: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.'

There's a big difference between reading something and understanding it. The eye swoops across the page, registering the curve and stroke of the letters, but I am sure I am not alone in experiencing those occasions when I have got to the end of a page of words and not had a clue what they mean. 'Words, words, words' responds a despairing and lost Hamlet to Polonius' question of what is he reading in the famous play by Shakespeare. Words mean nothing without their corresponding sense.

For the people of God, the words of the Lord have become like this, marks on a page which no longer have any meaning or relevance to them. They have lost their sense, their holy connection with the Lord, to such an extent that the meaning, the vision of God is now a 'closed book', inaccessible as well as incomprehensible. Such is the sorry state of the relationship between the people and their God during the time of Isaiah.

When asked by his disciples why he spoke in parables to the people, Jesus replied that: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given". The meaning of his words are hidden, closed to many who hear them. Yet it is not that ordinary people are incapable of understanding Jesus' words but rather whether they can hear them with the ears of faith. For both Isaiah and Jesus it is faith, the vision and knowledge of God in one's heart that gives sense and meaning to the words on a page.

We may not understand every word of scripture, there will be passages that baffle and bewilder us but that does not mean they are a closed book. If we come to God's word open and expectant to hear his Word in our hearts then marks on the page will be given life through faith and we will be becoming God's living words to the world.

Reflect on the text of your life, where do you identify the Word within it.

Living Courageously

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’

To stand up for our faith, to speak when those around would silence us by ridicule, scorn and possibly even death, can be one of the hardest things we ever have to do. It is therefore not surprising that the stories of those who have born witness to their faith at moments of crisis and to great personal cost are cherished and told and retold to inspire all of us at those difficult moments.

The story of the three young men in the book of Daniel is no less famous. Written in the second century BC the story looks back to a time when the people of God were dispersed across the region. God seemed to have deserted them and hope was gone. But the flame of faith was kept alive by the stories of good faithful men and women and were retold at another time of persecution and dispersal. Daniel was one such person who was exiled to Babylon. His reputation grew as a statesman and for the courage of his convictions. Despite repeated attempts to force him to give up his Jewish faith, he refuses. Now he and his three companions are threatened with a fiery end and their words to the king are remarkable.

One statement is placed in the mouth of all three, so united are they that they must have found strength from each other. Firstly, they feel no need to even defend themselves, their faith sets them apart, not subject to the king’s demands. Secondly, they trust in God and God alone but this trust is not that he will simply rescue them, it is not dependent on what he does but who he is. In comparison to faith in the Lord of heaven and earth, who would bow before an image of gold made by human hands?

In is often hidden and unreported yet across the world today good faithful people receive the gift of courage to witness and speak of their faith. They do not stand alone but with all people of faith across the world. And so we, when we are called upon to speak of our faith will find we are not as alone as we think, but are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses and on their courage we can find strength.

Pray for the gift of courage for yourself and those who are persecuted this day.

Bearing the Light

I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Etched into the wall of a cellar in Cologne where Jewish people hid from Nazi officers and soldiers you will find these words:

I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.

I believe in love where feeling is not.

I believe in God even when he is silent.

It seems incredible that, in the midst of so much fear, such lines were ever written. The faithfulness of those Jewish people who sang psalms in the gas chambers of Auschwitz stands as a truly humbling testimony of their courage, fidelity and trust in the Lord. Despite all that they were experiencing around them, they had not been deserted by their Lord and even here he was worthy of praise.

But from Job to Habakkuk, the faithful people of the past to the present, it is often hard to reconcile a loving God with the suffering of good people, his people. For the prophet this dilemma presented itself in an acute form. For he has been given the message that the Lord will use the Babylonian people, a wicked people, as harbingers of the day of calamity on his own people. And yet the prophet, even though all around him is being destroyed still refuses, like Job, to complain against the Lord. It is his unshakeable belief that, despite all that life may bring, God is present. Both Job and Habakkuk trust that although they may not know the full picture, God will bring good out of the very worst of situations to those who are faithful. His faith shines out from these words.

Sometimes the darkness of our perspective and hardness of experience can shake and hide this gospel truth. But it is then, at those times of despair, that we can turn once more to those who are the light bearers amongst us and trust in their message of light and hope. Then we too can sing in the darkest of times and bring the light to others.

Who are the light bearers in your life and who needs you to bear the light to them.

Reflections first published in Worship: Bible Reflections, Holy Habits series, ed Andrew Roberts (Abingdon: BRF, 2020).

Financial Review

As you are all aware 2020 has been a very difficult year for all charities and Mothers' Union is no exception. It has been a significant problem for the central Mothers' Union charity which resulted in the need to reduce the staffing at Mary Sumner House to a third because of the requirement to reduce costs and remain solvent. Your Trustee Board approved an emergency donation of £5000 to help alleviate their financial situation as did many members who responded to the emergency appeal. It is pleasing that this appeal did achieve the required result and Mary Sumner House can continue to provide support to us in Britain and Ireland as well as our work overseas.

As far as our own financial situation is concerned we have experienced a reduction in receipts. Income for year ending December 2020 was £18667.44 as opposed to £35676.34 in December 2019.

AFIA is a major Diocesan project and at December 2020 the sum of £2798 was credited to this fund. As you know we are hoping to run a residential week in August 2022 and therefore fundraising for this project will hopefully restart in earnest soon!

The Trustee Board adopt a policy of ensuring that there is at least 6-9 months unrestricted funds available for payments. We have met this target but of course hope that once branches and fellowship groups can start meeting again fundraising will ensure that our reserves are back up to levels that will enable us not only to ensure the continuance of existing projects but will allow us to explore and develop new and innovative ways of supporting families within our area.

A full copy of the accounts will be available prior to the Annual Meeting in June within the Trustees' Annual Report to members.



Branch and Group contacts will have received details of possible fundraising activities for the appeal.

If you are holding a cream tea or other activity let the editor know in time for the next edition of the newsletter!

Around the Diocese - MU Live

Lenham and Boughton Malherbe

.This was a last minute idea from the Lenham branch to leave Daffodils and MU bookmarks outside the church porch on Mothering Sunday during COVID lockdown as there was no Mothering Sunday service. As the notice says we wanted people to take a daffodil or two or three with our love. To our delight we received many positive responses. Sally our branch leader posted a message on the Keep Lenham Safe page and received nearly 60 positive responses. Most of the bookmarks were taken and so did all the flowers. The Church is on a regular footpath for dog

Walkers. One lady said that she dreaded Mothering Sunday because her Mother had died over 20 years ago but seeing this had made her feel better and put a smile on her face.

I'm sure many Parishes distributed flowers but we were so pleased to have the opportunity to promote the M.U in a very simple way and give people pleasure at the same time.

A positive outcome from covid restrictions preventing a service! Our branch started thinking of something we can put in a bucket for men on father's day! So far we've thought of a 'car' air freshener that we could hang on twigs that will stand in the bucket.



St Dunstan's Canterbury



Members of St Dunstan's Branch made some beautiful flowers to decorate a wooden seat to celebrate Mothering Sunday.

Congratulations to Valerie Stickland St Michael and All Angels Maidstone and to June Gouge St Michael's Sittingbourne on their 90th birthdays!

Summer Events with MU

Summer of Hope Appeal

2021 marks the 145th year of Mothers' Union and also the 100th anniversary of our founder Mary Sumner's death, after a life of tremendous achievements for women and mothers worldwide.. This year, it feels especially important to take the time to share together our collective strengths, resilience and faith, and to use that time to support more women to reach their potential. By joining in the Summer of Hope Appeal you can celebrate the extraordinary gift that Mary left to us all, to connect people who have felt lonely during lockdown and to spread the message of Hope far and wide. We've come up with another option alongside the Cream Tea, which some members may prefer, or wish to do in addition, and this is called MU on the Move. Members can walk or run a distance of 5km, alone or with a friend, and raise sponsorship. Why not contact Canterbury and Ashford Archdeaconry President Rita Pengelly and take the 125 minutes challenge?



A Virtual Annual Gathering

The plans for a pre-recorded event on 25th September are currently being finalised. There will be a morning session from 11.00 am – 12.00 noon leading into an act of worship including Midday Prayers until 12.30 pm. The afternoon session will run from 1.30 pm – 2.30 pm. Belfast meeting is once again postponed to 2022.

Together Coalition

Mothers' Union is in partnership with the Together Coalition, which is aiming to heal divisions in the UK exacerbated by Brexit and COVID. This includes developing messages to counter division at a national and local level, and building relationships and a sense of community. We are working with them on their **Thank You Day** on 4 July, which aims to get people out and about through park runs, picnics and community work such as litter picking, and appreciates people like Mothers' Union members involved in community support. Our support of this will run alongside our existing Summer of Hope Campaign and will look to link up on social and other media platforms.

Editor's Note Sadly, Old Alresford Place in Hampshire has now been sold and is now a private residence. Fortunately a number of our members in Canterbury Diocese were able to visit the house when we attended the Annual Meeting in Basingstoke 5 years ago.

Are there any skills not being fully used?

We are looking for members with hidden talents that could be used to support Mothers' Union in Canterbury Diocese!

Currently there is a vacancy for an editor and compiler for this Diocesan Newsletter and if there is anyone who has skills using Microsoft Publisher or any other desktop publishing program please step forward! The task is not onerous and will enable the four times a year newsletter provided for each member to continue!

Rosemary McArragher, Literature Rep for Maidstone Archdeaconry, is also retiring and she writes about her experiences below. Dorothy Manning continues to do a sterling job in Canterbury & Ashford Archdeaconry.

I have been the Literature Rep for Maidstone Archdeaconry for eight years, after taking over from Betty Heppenstall. It has been an enjoyable time meeting members from so many branches, especially when taking a Literature Table to branch meetings. It has been a rewarding time too, meeting many MU members and making long term friendships. It is good to know that the literature sales have been supporting the Diocese financially. There have been big changes to the MU Enterprises shop this year, as they shut down for a month after Christmas and have outsourced the shop to a new company. There are a few teething problems at the moment but these will hopefully be resolved soon and the new system promises to be much better.

Thank you so much to all my customers and friends for the support you have given me.

Many thanks to you Rosemary for all your dedication and hard work over the last 8 years!

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Dates for your Diary

Please remember in your prayers

Thursday 29th July	Zoom Coffee Lounge with Midday Prayers
Friday 30th July	Copy deadline for Newsletter
Monday 9th August	Bible Auction St Paul's Canterbury - 1pm
Thursday 26th August	Zoom Coffee Lounge with Midday Prayers
Saturday 29th August	Coastal Walk for AFIA with Rita Pengelly
Wednesday 8th September	Diocesan Trustee Board
Saturday 25th September	Virtual Annual Gathering
Thursday 30th September	Zoom Coffee Lounge with Midday Prayers

In Memoriam

Canterbury & Ashford Archdeaconry

St Mary & St Ethelburga Lyminge Gladys Harris (1922 - 2021)
Gladys worked at Bletchley Park during the war, and was awarded the Bletchley Park commemorative medal in 2009. She would have been 99 in May.

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Registered Charity No. 250124

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Mary Sumner Day

9th August 2021

Fundraising Event

Place: St Paul's Church Canterbury

Time: 1.00pm – 4.30pm

A light lunch will be available to
purchase at 1pm

(further details will be circulated nearer the time
when the up-to-date regulations are known)

Bible Auction will start at 2.00pm

Members and guests are asked to bring items relating to a bible verse. The verse needs to be attached to the item. A prize will be awarded for the most unusual item. Also have cash to make sure you are in with a chance of getting your hands on any of these items available at the auction.

Our auctioneer for the afternoon will be Sue Spillett

Crafts or colouring will be available for Children with the possibility of a quick game of stand-up bingo.

**The proceeds of this event are going to be split
between our General Fund and AFIA.**

