**Mothers’ Union CEO Update**

**Bev Jullien speech – 20th October 2020**

A huge thank-you to each and every one of you for the myriad of ways in which you have been supporting one another and your communities through the crisis, and as far as you have been able, through prayer or financial support, the central charity. You have given the Trustees and ourselves as staff the gift of time, to continue to provide services, whilst also working to cut our cloth to make sure, whilst living within our means, that we can continue to support your work and fellowship, wherever you are.

We are delighted that both the Annual Review, and the Annual Report and Accounts are now available online for you to view. I find the Annual Review especially uplifting, because it shows just how much members right around the world have been doing for others, thanks in no small part to the gifts which you have given.

Thanks to MU Live, a way of capturing stories and statistics created by members for members, it is wonderful to be able to show that over 1.1m people were helped by members last year, of whom over 110,000 right here in Britain and Ireland. The review also shares the outcome of our conversations over 2 years with MULOA, in which over 200,000 members took part.

Drawing it all together, last year, in Kigali, Rwanda, leaders from around the world distilled our common overall aim as **helping to build a future where everyone thrives.** To achieve this, members aim to stop violence, by working to create a peaceful and safe environment for all; stop injustice, by focusing on ending gender injustice; and to stop hunger, by helping families everywhere to build self-reliance, there are stories of how members are already doing this, for example, building peace in South Sudan, in the review.

With these clear and powerful outcomes defined, the Board then worked with the team at Mary Sumner House, to look at how the central charity could help to make those aspirations a reality and created a new strategic plan to follow on from Vision 20:20.

Helping people to **transform their lives** is what MU is all about, so this is critical and the dream is to be able, by 2026, to be helping over 2m people around the world. As well as continue supporting programmes in key areas of peace and safety, self-reliance and gender justice. Our aim is to make the voices of members heard and to change policy by standing up against gender injustice, especially domestic abuse.

This goes hand in hand with **nurturing o**ur own community of members, through worship and mutual support, around the corner and around the world. But to make this possible, we also need to make sure that the **foundations**, especially in the areas of IT, Governance and Safeguarding, are robust – and, as I am acutely aware in the current climate, we need to work together to find the necessary resources, whether **financial** or in working in partnership with others, to support you and fellow members in all that you do.

So did all of this become irrelevant when COVID-19 struck – the short answer is – no! As Archbishop Justin Welby says ‘***I see Mothers’ Union doing so much in the UK and beyond for people who are most in need. You are wonderful servants of Christ, and I rejoice in your work. The worse the crisis, the more the light of Mothers’ Union shines.*’**

When COVID struck, we were able to build on the learning and relationships built over recent times, keep the long-term aims in mind, and then to focus on what was most needed, here and now. Within this, a big gift has been technology, which means that, across the world, the MU family has been more in touch with one another than ever before! The way in which members have “given it a go” on Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, Facebook Live, has been awesome and has helped us all to respond to the crisis much faster than we would ever have thought possible.

So as well as the uplifting daily Facebook live Midday Prayers led by members and staff, and the online services and resources, far more conversations are happening across dioceses, countries and continents. Plus, the series of online events known as webinars have created an opportunity for members to build skills, for example in social media, or to share experiences and learning, for example in how to reach out into the community and provide support to those not able to go online.

Worldwide, the MU teams, skilled members over time through programs such as literacy or savings and credits, thanks to the gifts over many years from members here in Britain and Ireland. Members have transferred those skills, to educating their communities, on hand hygiene and correcting misinformation around COVID-19.

Your support has also helped us to find additional funding from outside to support vital projects in DRC, Uganda and Myanmar to counter the second pandemic of Domestic Abuse and through it all, programs such as the savings and credit programme in Tanzania, which you help to support, have been able to continue.

Sharing more has helped to grow the profile of MU in a whole range of ways, for example, national coverage on Radio 4, Christian radio and the Church Times of your work, for instance with the amazing provision of much needed items such as scrub bags. In addition, works of love, such as the hearts and prayer squares; and the Thank you to key Workers programme, which has also attracted outside funding.

On the global stage, we have been able to make a submission to the UN together with the Anglican Communion office about the impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse, and include examples of how members are addressing it. In Britain and Ireland, we are able to provide a strong voice to influence the Domestic Abuse Bill.

So, despite the darkness and the challenges, you could say that MU was *made ‘for such a time as this’* – one Trustee recently said she felt that Mary Sumner would indeed be proud!

So I look forward with real hope and confidence to 2021, having witnessed what has already been possible!

In Mary Sumner House, we will be a smaller team of 27, to support a membership here of 50,000 and worldwide of some 4 million. But staying focused and listening to what God is asking us to do, we are confident that we can do it!

In November, you will receive the new Annual Prayer Diary, which will be replacing Families Worldwide, containing reflections and prayers from members around the world. In March, direct to your home, you will receive the new member publication, similar to Families First in look and feel, and containing stories and reflections by members for members.

Mothers’ Union is a truly remarkable movement, never underestimate the difference which you can and do make, as Archbishop Justin Welby says *‘****Your work is essential, and you have shown for many decades your capacity to adapt and evolve. May God be with you and encourage you to flourish’.***