

E-NEWS



DIARY DATES

Cathedral Prayers:

10.30am 1st Wednesday each month keep free for Cathedral Prayers at home via *FaceBook*.

Letter from our Diocesan President

Dear Friends

As I write this we are yet again in "Lock Down". As I wrote in last month's eNews I hope you are all keeping well and also keeping in touch with members in your branches. What a blessing the telephone is! Regretfully, my branch didn't get our Holy Communion Service in November as planned but we hope to have it on 8th December when we will enrol two new members. It was good to catch up with many of you on the Zoom MU Information Day. I also much appreciated the responses to my letter to the membership re the change in our subscriptions. I have attended the Canterbury Province Presidents Conference on Zoom. Three days sitting at my computer was a bit of a marathon especially the Thursday when we had seven hours of presentations from Mary Sumner House Staff. I had a lie-in on Saturday!

News from MSH is that the finances are in a much better shape than they anticipated, regretfully, there has had to be redundancies and there will only be 27 staff from next year. Other senior staff have taken a 20% decrease in salaries. If you wish to read the Annual Review it can be found on the MSH Website. This year there will be no Christmas Raffle but there will be a Christmas Appeal which all members will receive when they receive their Prayer Diaries. All money raised by the Appeal will be used in projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MU has a partnership with the BIG GIVE which means donations received online via the Big Give website between noon 1st and noon 8th December will be doubled.

There will be the usual Summer of Hope Appeal; the proceeds will also be allocated to projects in the DR Congo. This Appeal will be to Honour Mary Sumner in the 100th year of her death in 1921. I am sure we in this Diocese will also find a way of celebrating to mark her work. We will keep you informed when we can confirm dates of any events.

The Mothers' Union will be broadcasting a special Nine Lessons and Carols at 7.30pm on 17th December via the MU YouTube and Facebook channel. The Festive Midday Prayers will be pre-recorded by

members of the worldwide trustee board including our Worldwide President Sheran and CEO Bev and they will continue Mon-Sat at 12pm throughout the Christmas break. It is exciting that so many members from around the world regularly meet up every day for Midday Prayers. I don't make it every day but to see the names of people I have met over the years when I attended Worldwide Council or Young Families Reps Conferences from other countries is so exciting.

I want to thank all those brave members who have recorded our Cathedral Prayers over the past few months. Even though we are not professionals we do it with love and well over 600 people have viewed the prayers and when we placed flowers on Mary Sumner's Grave in August.

You will have heard that the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Vigil outside the Cathedral on 25th November had to be cancelled because of the Lock Down. However, the Mothers' Union has declared Saturday 5th December Global Day for "No more One in Three" so we plan to be holding the Vigil outside the Cathedral that day from 12 noon – 2.00pm. It is a known fact that one in three women and girls in the world are affected by gender violence in the home or in their employment. Please come and join us if you can for all or part of the Vigil. Helen Pain will also be leading a Service of Reflection on this theme on Thursday 3rd December at 7.30pm via Zoom. If you email me or Sue Murphy we will send you the link password to join this Service.

I know Christmas will be very different for most of us this year, but however we spend Christmas Day I hope we can all rejoice that God sent his Son Jesus in the form of a little baby to bring love and peace to people from all nations. I pray you and your loved ones will all keep safe and well. Let us pray that the New Year will bring new beginnings of love and tolerance for the people of this world where ever they are.

With love and blessings for Christmas and the New Year.

Stella Roberts
Diocesan President

PS. Are you finding that there is a role reversal in your families? Grand children telling you to be careful, asking where are you going and not to be out too long!

News from Workbox Group at Highcliffe



This group was founded by the Branch in 2008 and our membership is mixed - members and non. Initially we formed as a Lent Knitting group to produce gifts for the Neonatal Unit at Poole. We enjoyed such great fellowship that we have continued to meet monthly since that time, reverting to weekly during Lent.

During the Autumn we knit hats, gloves, socks, scarves for the homeless people cared for by The Salvation Army, the project known as Mary's Men to support their work. (Mary Randall is the SA officer who washes the feet of the homeless when they come to the Night Bus for a hot meal). Normally these items would be presented to Mary at the MU Christchurch Deanery Advent Service but this year will go direct to them.

Recently we were pleased to deliver our Lent Knitting – 8 bags of knitting which they were overwhelmed by. One member also sews for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) – drawstring bags for the Mum to store their breast pumps and “shoulder rolls”. These are to put behind the neck of the baby to support the head and assist with breathing.

We are fortunate that we maintain good contact with the hospital, they organise a tea party each year for those who have donated and highlight their current needs so that we are able to make gifts which are appropriate and we know will be used.

Christine Clode



16 days' activism against gender-based violence has begun

Please put Saturday December 5th in your diaries, to attend (if we're allowed) or to support in prayer the Vigil at the cathedral's West Door from 12 noon to 2pm (1.30pm if it's freezing weather!). This was rescheduled due to the recent lockdown, and is an important opportunity for Mothers' Union members to stand up for the oppressed and highlight the damage violence does to individuals and families. Additionally a resource for an hour's reflective service is available on the Winchester Mothers' Union website (you can access it by clicking on this link: <https://www.muwinchester.org.uk/resources-for-guided-service/>) to raise awareness of gender-based violence and to pray for its elimination. It includes guidance for either a church-based service or an online meeting. I am running a Zoom service using these resources on Thursday, December 3rd 7.15pm for 7.30 start. Sue has circulated the joining details but if you have any queries do email me on helenpain@btopenworld.com I do encourage you to come to Winchester on December 5th, as part of the Global Day of action and it would be good to have a large number there this year. If you could arrive 11.30am to help put up the banner, flags etc that would be wonderful.

Thank you. *Helen Pain*



Christian Care for Families through praying, enabling and campaigning

Sue Murphy – Diocesan Secretary/Treasurer secretary@muwinchester.org.uk

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.
Ephesians 5 v 25

I read an article in a Mothers' Union magazine about a couple who were both university educated, but the husband used to beat the wife if she did not wash his clothes or serve his food on time, or if she talked to other men without his permission. He justified the beatings using Bible verses such as Ephesians 5 v 22: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord."

Obviously, you're shocked by the abuse. However I imagine that most of the people reading this, especially the wives, may find that verse a bit challenging. I think that's ok. We sometimes won't agree on the interpretation. But it's never ok to use God's word to justify beating your wife. Verse 22 is written in the context of verse 25 – a command for a husband to love his wife as much as Christ loved the church – so much love that he would rather die than see her hurt.

From 25 November until 10 December is the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Many organisations, including Mothers' Union, take part in this global campaign which aims to see an end to gender violence. The World Health Organisation has reported that 1 in 3 women and girls have experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse. This year's pandemic has meant that all over the world abusers and abused have been locked down together. Some have described domestic and child abuse as the 'second pandemic'.

During these 16 Days of Activism, please will you pray for all to follow Christ's example of treating children, women and men with equality and respect.

Almighty God, Thank you for your deep love for every one of us. Thank you that you sent your son – a living sacrifice to pay for our freedom from every kind of slavery and oppression. May we take courage to stand up for those who are being denied that freedom. Open our eyes to see injustice, particularly against women and girls at this time. Open our ears to hear their stories. Open our hearts, as the church, to be the place of safety where they can find healing and new hope in you.

Amen.

(Prayer from Tearfund)

Roo Joyner
Social Policy Officer

News from Brockenhurst Branch



Back in 1985, when Wendy Trundle and Lesley Munt moved to the village, they were instrumental in reforming Brockenhurst Branch after it had been closed for some years, and on a very showery Sunday morning in October, the heavy rain held off long enough for a native hawthorn tree to be planted in the grounds of St. Saviour's Church to commemorate our 35th Anniversary. Members and congregation met after the morning service and braved the elements for a short commemorative service led by Simon, our Vicar, who along with his wife, Gina, is a member of the Branch. Simon blessed the tree with holy water from the River Jordan and we hope it will grow well and grace the grounds of St. Saviour's Church for at least the next 35 years.

Lesley Munt



Letter from our Chaplain

As you might imagine, over the years I have collected many, many poems and meditations, also thoughts and writings. Possibly the largest collection is those connected to Advent and Christmas, I even have two actual 'Poems for Christmas' books. This year is one in that Christmas is going to be challenging and perhaps very difficult for our country, our world and families - both ours and all other families. The Covid-19 virus has driven us into lockdown again, and it is not entirely clear how things will be after 2nd December when it is concluded. This has meant that any of the customary celebrations of Christmas - especially Christian ones are not going to happen.

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Families and friends are not going to be able to gather as usual, only in small restricted and connected groups. Probably no Carol Services, No Midnight Mass, No Nativity plays, no Crib or Christingle services, except by Zoom, it is setting out to be in the words of a popular Christmas song of years ago, "A cold, lonely Christmas" for many. But if it is not the Christmas we hoped for in terms of gathering and travelling, there are still Christmas Trees covered in tinsel and twinkling with lights; Cards to and from family, friends and neighbours; Stockings hung up, presents wrapped and "Happy Christmas" to be shouted across the spaces we have to keep. And we can still listen to Carols on various audio devices, see the Candle Bridges lit in windows to welcome spiritually if not practically today, any passing stranger; and Nativity scenes in windows, porches and gardens, shining out to remind everyone whose Birth we celebrate.

And we can make it, if not the usual, then certainly the joyful celebration of all that is good and dear to us. The Birth of the Christ-Child with all its wondrous outpourings of love. Mary and Joseph faithfully obeying God's will, and having to rest in a Stable - no room at the Inn. Shepherds leaving a lonely hillside with choirs of Angels singing, and leaving their sheep to go and see a Baby in a Manger, Wise men travelling far across their world to follow a Star, and to see and worship the same Baby. To see a King born in a Stable, to worship Him born to be the Friend and Saviour of all humankind.

The great Gift of God's love, still freely given, still available to all and everyone, the glory of a Saviour God who came to be with us and for us, as One of humanity eternally. Christmas 2020 may not be the 'usual' it may not be the one we hoped for, but it can still be the celebration of Love, Joy and Peace which never changes. This is one of my poem collection, I have always loved it for its heart warming simplicity.

What the Donkey saw *U.A.Fanthorpe*

No room at the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What, with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host -
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love or money.
Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

Lynda Mead

News from Milford on Sea

We have been gathering Christmas thoughts, prayers, pictures to forward to Gill Coombs (Diocesan Links) as she has prepared a special 'Advent Calendar' which we will circulate to our members to open one day at a time: "No peeking!" says Gill and "Sorry, no chocolates!"

We are looking forward to our Carol Service at 3pm on Wednesday December 16th which again will be via Zoom. A perfect occasion for Christmas jumpers!
With love and prayers,

Val Butterworth

Celebrating Friendship across the Continents

Through a link shared on the main Mothers' Union Facebook page, I was pleased to join an online service on 15th November at which our President, Sheran Harper, was to be the speaker. Recorded in the Chapel at Lambeth Palace and titled Celebrating Friendships That Cross Continents. Well, I took a trip around the World! The service was led by Anthony Poggo, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Adviser on Anglican Communion Affairs (before that he was Bishop of Kajo-Keji in South Sudan, one of our former Diocesan Prayer Links). The first reading was brought to us in Spanish by a member of the Anglican Communion in Costa Rica. The Holy Gospel was read in Arabic by the Very Rev. Dr Hosam Naoum, Bishop in the Diocese of Jerusalem. I found it fascinating that the Bible pages were turned from left to right! Sheran spoke to us from St Sidwell's Church in Guiana, there being only one other St Sidwell which is in Exeter. This was where she was introduced to The Mothers' Union 33 years ago. She spoke of being able to share love and friendship within the Mothers' Union and to have the power to identify work where it is needed. It was very powerful. Jane Namurye and Caroline Welby gave a reflection on the Women on the Frontline initiative

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/346986/acc17-women-frontline.pdf> supporting Christian Women in places of conflict and particularly clergy wives who have to move around a country, and sometimes the world to support their husbands. I spotted Jane's MU badge.

Intercessions were led by Canon John Kafwanka, Director of Mission, Anglican Communion Office. The closing Lord's Prayer was said in many different languages from participants around the world.

What an uplifting start to the day in these troubled times. The service is still available on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7WMw9U18cw&t=1706s&ab_channel=TheChurchofEngland

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