

## **Mothers' Union Winchester Diocese**

### **Notes from the Information Day at St Barnabas' Church, Weeke on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at 6pm**

#### **1. WELCOME and OPENING PRAYERS**

Jane Horne welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the opening prayers. She noted that 15<sup>th</sup> July is St Swithun's Day, so she Jane gave a short talk about St Swithun who was bishop of Winchester for about 10 years until his death in 862 or 863. He was buried near the north wall of the Cathedral. About 100 years later on 15<sup>th</sup> July his bones were moved into a shrine inside the cathedral, although it was said that this move was against the saint's wishes and caused a great storm. St Swithun is one of the patron saints of Winchester Cathedral along with St Peter and St Paul.

16 members attended the meeting in person, and 9 joined via Zoom.

#### **2. Winchester Street Pastors**

Mike Hobby talked about the Street Pastors in Winchester who are part of the night economy. Street Pastors started as an inter-denominational response from local churches to the problems within the city and volunteer to care for those who need help. Gill Hobby is a Prayer Pastor in the same team, and spoke about her experiences with them.

Street Pastors started in Kingston, Jamaica, and were introduced into Britain by Rev Les Isaacs who felt that this would be a good response to the urban street crime in Brixton. One response when the Street Pastors started was "Good to see the churches on the streets – what took you so long?" There are now 250 Street Pastor groups in the country including about 10,000 individuals and covering approximately 600,000 sessions per year.

Each patrol includes a minimum of 3 people, and must include both women and men. A team includes 6 Street Pastors and 2 Prayer Pastors. There are different teams for Friday and Saturday nights and for each of the four weeks in the month (when there are 5 weeks in the month, the teams take it turns to cover those dates).

Each session starts at St Peter's Church at 9:30pm. Each group of 3 carries a phone and a rucksack and each team leader has a radio. The radio allows the pastors to be called to a venue by CCTV or PubWatch. The teams break for drinks at around midnight and then go out again, finishing their session at between 3am and 5am. There are now also early teams who patrol the streets between 5pm and 8pm to keep an eye on the teenagers who congregate. Because they are in cars, the patrol can include only 2 people, but there must still be a woman and a man in the group.

To become a Street Pastor you need a reference from your vicar and then training. The Prayer Pastors stay in St Peter's church with the radio. They can hear about situations and pray for them even if the Street Pastors are not involved. They also pray for those that the Street Pastors have met. The Prayer Pastors are an integral part of the team, but don't need the same degree of training.

Street Pastors carry a number of items with them in their rucksacks:

- paper cups, so that they can offer hot chocolate (or soup/pot noodles) to rough sleepers. They often offer a twix bar as well.
- dustpan and brush e.g. to sweep up broken glass. Ladies sometimes take off their high heels and try to walk home barefoot
- the pastors also pick up glasses, bottles & cans and put them into bins so that people don't hurt themselves
- lollipops (which are popular with the youngsters)
- Flip flops (they no longer use Street Pastor flip flops anymore as people regarded them as collectable!)
- First Aid Kit
- big plastic bag (in case you want to put people into a taxi and they think they will be sick)
- Aluminium poncho
- Bottle of water
- Torches and tissues

Street Pastors have to wear full uniform while on duty or they are not insured. So if students take one of the hats, then the patrol has to stop! They are involved with a "Ministry of the Moment" and they don't usually hear what happens to people after their encounter with the Street Pastors.

People often come up to them and say "Oh, I'm so glad that you're there". Because people know that the Street Pastors are volunteers and they have street cred. They often talk to the homeless or to the doormen at clubs. The police appreciate the presence of the Street Pastors as it means that they don't have to look after people who are sick. The Pastors try not to report people to the police unless really necessary.

The Street Pastors rely on donations and minimise their costs. The coordinator is paid for 20 hours per week, and meets coordinators from other groups to share ideas. Generally training is done for a number of groups together to reduce costs. Each group can agree to do slightly different things – eg the Southampton group gives out wine gums instead of lollipops. Stella commented that in Bournemouth the Pastors hand out socks.

Street Pastors are widely respected around the world and a group in Kenya provided a big plastic bag of flip-flops for Street Pastors in the UK.

Jane thanked Mike and Gill for such an interesting talk.

### **3. Feedback from the Provincial Conference**

Sue Murphy and Jane Horne had attended the Provincial Conference at High Leigh in May. About 35 people attended from dioceses throughout Canterbury Diocese, and 5 dioceses (including Winchester) have no DP and are running as a committee.

The purpose of the conference is to allow DPs to share ideas and get information about programmes in other dioceses or at National level. This year the main focus was on Domestic

Abuse with personal stories from two MU members on the steering group. MSH believes that MU is well placed to make an impact in this area, and suggests that we start by raising awareness of this issue and then perhaps start sessions to support victims. We can be advocates within our churches and encourage our churches to become Beacon churches. We can also write letters to our MPs (eg requesting that the government provides the resources to support the Domestic Abuse Bill).

We heard a story from Epping, where the vicar recognised that domestic violence was a problem in the area and started a prayer group for victims. This group has become a survivor group, and a new MU branch.

We saw a video from Revd Rose in South Sudan who is coordinating a project to tackle domestic abuse in her area. This project was supported by the BigGive last Christmas and has made a big impact.

Bev Jullien joined us for part of the conference to talk about developments at Mary Sumner House. She noted that MSH is still short-staffed (and is currently recruiting), they are installing a new finance system and are planning to replace the current membership database (probably in early 2024). She talked about the team at UNCSW and told us that this could really make an impact. The province receives some funds from MSH for training which enables the Province to subsidise training activities.

#### **4. Feedback from the Reimagining Conference**

Linda Hoskins took part in the Reimagining Conference in Liverpool on 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July. There were approximately 300 people at the conference and Linda found it hard work but inspirational. There were members in their 20s, 30s and 40s and all had great enthusiasm for Mothers' Union.

One point that came out strongly was the importance of the global Mothers' Union network. Other charities such as Tearfund piggyback on this network. For example, if Tearfund goes into an area, they later leave – but Mothers' Union is still there to support the local population.

#### **5. RAF Families Day**

Linda Hoskins thanked everyone for providing cakes for RAF Families Day. She said that RAF Families Day is under control and that they have enough volunteer but could do with more. If anyone wants to join the team, please let Linda know.

#### **6. Accounts**

Sue Murphy gave a presentation on the accounts for 2021. She reminded everyone that the subscription had been increased to £30 in 2021 to cover the cost of every member receiving the Connected magazine. Sue noted that there has been a change in the way the accounts are presented, in that project funds are now labelled as Restricted. The surplus over the year for restricted funds was £2,393, and for the general fund was £4,082.

For 2022 the subscription has been held at £30, but sadly 4 branches have closed. However, we currently have good reserves. There were teething problems with the introduction of Direct

Debits but Sue believes that it will be beneficial in the long run. Some branches are having problems with banks (HSBC causes particular problems) and branches are using more cash because of the difficulty of accessing their bank account. This is fine as long as all transactions are properly recorded.

## **7. Cathedral Prayers**

Stella reminded anyone involved with leading Cathedral Prayers on the first Wednesday of the importance of using the microphone. The cathedral is often noisy, with visiting groups being directed around the building and this can make it difficult for people to hear. It is also necessary to ensure that we get reasonable sound quality on the recording which Terry does and then uploads onto Facebook.

## **8. News from the AFIA team**

Sue Tickell was unable to be at the meeting in Weeke, but had sent a report on this year's AFIA holiday which was read by Sue Murphy. Three members of the team visited Lodge Hill at the beginning of July and found that the staff are looking forward to welcoming us back this year.

We have eleven families going on the holiday, three are returning families. The returning families help new families settle in and gives them reassurance that it is a safe and caring environment. This year we welcome four new team members to make our team of eleven and the team has been working together to provide group and evening activities.

A coach is booked to take the families and team on an outing to Littlehampton on the Wednesday. There will be a chance for a few supporters to visit Lodge Hill on Tuesday 9th August, but numbers will be restricted – please contact Jane Chick if you are interested in going along. Everyone was asked to pray for the continuing preparations, the families, the team and the week of the holiday.

## **9. Mary Sumner Day and Prayer Vigil in November**

This year we are able to hold a service for Mary Sumner Day in St Mary's Church in Old Alresford at 2pm on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August followed by tea at the Christie Hall. St Mary's will also be celebrating their Patronal Festival at the same time. (*Secretary's note: Please note that the time for this service is 2pm and not 2:30pm as stated at the meeting.*)

Stella noted that Mothers' Union will be holding their usual vigil outside the West Door of the cathedral on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November between 12noon and 2pm. She also encouraged branches to organise their own local events to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

## **10. Presentation about Istanbul Convention**

Terry Roberts then spoke about the UK ratification of the Istanbul Convention:

In the light of our concerns about Gender Based violence and our Prayer vigil outside the Cathedral I was interested when our MU CEO Bev Jullien posted a video on the official Mothers' Union social media pages concerning the Istanbul Convention. I reposted it on our own diocesan facebook page on the 11th June. She said that the Istanbul Convention, a treaty of

the Council of Europe against gender-based violence, is generally considered as the gold standard in the movement towards gender equality because it is legally binding and mandates that each signatory country adheres to a set of minimum standards when it comes to protecting women and girls. It opened to signatures in 2011, and ten years on, the UK is finally ready to ratify the convention.

Some Background - the Istanbul convention is the first legally-binding instrument which "creates a comprehensive legal framework and approach to combat violence against women" and is focused on preventing domestic violence, protecting victims and prosecuting accused offenders. It characterizes violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination.

The draft of the convention was adopted by the Minister's Deputies of the Council of Europe on 7 April 2011, and it opened for signature on 11 May 2011. It entered into force following 10 ratifications, eight of which were required to be member states of the Council of Europe. As of December 2015, the convention was signed by 39 states. On 13 June 2017, the European Commissioner for Gender Equality signed the Istanbul Convention on behalf of the European Union.

Interestingly, States that have ratified the convention are legally bound by its provisions once it enters into force. The Home Secretary recently announced that the UK would ratify it towards the end of July, but with reservations on a key article that would grant residence to those survivors of violence whose immigration status relies on their partners. This decision was heavily criticised as it excludes migrant women from protection.

An open letter addressed to the Home Secretary was recently signed by more than 80 women's organisations, including Mothers' Union's CEO, Bev Jullien. She suggested that we could take action by calling on your MP to demand ratification without reservations,

I went to see our MP and talked about what I understood about the Convention – and I was promised it would be looked at and taken to the Home Office. I have since received a copy of the Home Office's response.

As far as I understand it - the reason why the Home Office is seeking to ratify the agreement but with reservation is that anyone who is a victim of GBV or Domestic Abuse (it could be argued they are the same!) and whose residency is dependant of the spouse is challenged by how to respond – if they leave the abusive relationship they lose their right to residency.

The Home Office is equally challenged in how to respond. They have started a pilot scheme and await the results of how it works – a destitute, homeless victim of Domestic Violence who leaves their abuser, will have support provided and then has 3 months in which to apply for residency. Given the length of time it usually takes to apply for residency 3 months is not long, it may be a step in the right direction but there is still some way to go.

## **11. Closing**

The meeting closed with prayers. Jane thanked Mike and Gill Hobby for all the work they had done to organise the meeting.