

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families



Southwark News

No 266 Summer/Autumn 2023

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Forthcoming Events

Friday 8 December - Diocesan Advent Service at St Stephen's,
 South Lambeth (Comfort's Church), 11.30am
 Preacher: The Right Revd Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston

2024

Saturday 8 June - Festival Service in Southwark Cathedral, 11.30am

Please send your material for the Winter/Spring Edition by 10 February 2024

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Letter from Our President

Dear Friends,

During the summer some fortunate individuals, including myself, planned our vacations to take a break and enjoy some time off, which was a well-deserved respite from all our hard work and considering, the kids were also on their vacation too. However, I am amazed at how many people go away on holiday to rest, yet pack so much into the holiday, with no time to put their feet up and rest and so, they come back feeling tired as if they never went away at all.



As I reflect on this, I am reminded of the story of Jethro and Moses in Exodus 18:17-18. In this passage, Jethro observed Moses running from pillar to post exhausting himself trying to handle everybody's problem, trying to meet deadlines and like some of us, never delegating but doing it all. While everyone was impressed and telling Moses "well done, you are doing a good job" Jethro was not impressed at all. He took Moses aside and asked him in Vs 14, "what is this you are doing?" Moses tried to put up a defence to justify himself but his father-in-law saw through him and said "what you are doing is not good" he was counselled on how to delegate and not become worn out or stressed before asking for help to make the load lighter.



In July we had an uplifting festival service where, sadly, the now late Bishop Karowei Dorgu, the Bishop of Woolwich, graced us with his presence. He praised the resilience

and commitment of members and it was heartwarming to see members staying behind engaging with each other in a relaxed manner, enjoying the Cathedral surroundings. I apologize for repeating some of what I shared during the service but it's worth exploring why we are so passionate about Mothers' union. Our



passions demand our attention and dedication, whether they involve sports, crafting or anything else. Our long standing members even in their 80s, 90s or 100s, continue to give selflessly. We must consider where our

passion for Mothers' Union will lead us. Only when we undergo transformation and embrace the next challenging steps, can we truly influence and transform our friends, families, and communities.

In the spring issue of our magazine Connect, our President, Sheran Harper, called upon us to have a heart of thankfulness and generosity. Being a member of the MU is not what you get but what you give. When we do a lot of fundraising for our branches, Diocese and the Central Mothers' Union, the Bible teaching in 2 Corinthians 9:6-98 encourages us to view giving differently - Giving generously and cheerfully enables us to experience profound transformation in our own lives. Receiving the grace to meet every need and empowered to engage in countless acts of goodness. Just to know that the money you give to the work of the Mothers' Union, is able to give a family a holiday, help a homeless person, make a prisoner or their families smile. The literacy campaign and education programme going on abroad should remind us to remain generous and not feel burdened. Where you cannot go, your money can reach people and places we may not have dreamed of. I pray that God will enable us as we seek to make a difference in our communities to remain passionate about Mothers' Union.

Finally, in times of weariness and burdens, let us find solace in the words of Matthew 11:28-30 –

"come to me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"



As we seek to make a difference in our communities.....

.....may our passion for Mothers' Union remain unwavering and may we continue to serve with gratitude and love.



Your sister and friend,
Comfort

Southwark Monthly MU Prayers

MU Midday Prayers are back in the Harvard Chapel, Southwark Cathedral on the 4th Wednesday of the month, 11.45am -12.15pm. However, the prayers continue to be distributed to branches beforehand for their own use.

Tadworth MU and Happy Babies

Some of you will have read before about our small group of knitters who are continuously producing lovely blankets for the Happy Baby Community in Thornton Heath. These little blankets go to mothers, pregnant or with young children, who have had to flee their own countries due to violence or who are the victims of traffickers. The wonderful team there provide a safe and friendly environment where the mothers can find support and friendship and the children can play.



I delivered 50 blankets recently to the converted church where they meet and was greeted with smiling faces and children's playful chatter. There were rows of pushchairs inside the door and a wonderful spicy smell was coming from the kitchen. I was taken through to see the garden out the back where the women sat in groups and some were doing yoga. There were about 40 families there (no men) and they are open 4 days a week. The noise from the happy toddlers as I wove among them was heart-warming and I was so glad to be able to pass on our offerings of the lovely little blankets which will be put together into a gift box or hospital bag with other things for each one of these women. Sue Balmer who showed me around kindly sent me the following heart-warming note from one Mum, which I wanted to share with you below.



Margaret Fox

'I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the hospital bag you recently sent me. As an asylum seeker, I am going through a very tough time, and your thoughtful gesture means a lot to me. I literally have tears in my eyes because I have no financial support at the moment and I am even struggling with the food & transport issues at the residence by the Home office. I cannot express in words how much I appreciate your kindness and support during this difficult period of my life. The hospital bag is not only a practical and helpful gift, but it also reminds me that there are still good people in the world who are willing to lend a helping hand to those in need.'

Linked Branches

At a Branch Leaders' meeting in February 2020, Comfort suggested that perhaps branches in different parts of the Diocese could link up and share ideas etc. Ursula Hodges, a newly appointed branch leader of St Andrew's Ham, was sitting next to Joy Morrall from St Mildred's Addiscombe – so the link between Millies and St Andrew's was born.

We had great plans to start off with a joint outing to Morden Hall Park – 'by crow' about half way between us... but a pandemic intervened. We had zoom meetings, a couple of Zoom anthologies, even a Zoom 16



Days service and a virtual BBQ, but only a virtual outing to Morden Hall – until Thursday 4 May when the long awaited face to face outing happened.

There were about 19 altogether - including 3 husbands, one granddaughter and Hanley the Show Spaniel. When we first arrived, a party of Preschoolers were shepherded past us and one of the children asked why there were so many Grannies and Grandads all together!

We made good use of the facilities - the adventure playground (though we didn't try it out), the multiple slightly soggy footpaths, the wetlands walk and of course, the cafe where we had lunch and Hanley a doggy strawberry, apple and banana ice cream. We had a really good time and are planning our next outing - to Ham House.

Margaret Simmons

Coronation Afternoon Tea Party



After watching on television, the wonderful Coronation Service from Westminster Abbey and the Coronation Concert from Windsor Castle, the following evening, Monday 8th May, St Barnabas, Sutton Mothers' Union, hosted a Coronation Afternoon Tea Party for everyone in the Mothers' Union, the church and other churches.

In the morning, 7 members of the congregation helped decorate the Church Hall for the occasion with Union Jack bunting and table cloths, Coronation paper chains, balloons, flags and banners.

In the afternoon 33 people came to the tea party including Patricia Butler with her Ukrainian refugee family and Feihong and Shirley with their nephew who was home from boarding school. The afternoon began with listening to "Zadok the Priest" by Handel.

There was then a short service which was based on a Church of England special Coronation Commemorative Service. This was combined with readings and thoughts from the Daily Prayers, for the Coronation of King Charles III, which had been distributed to the congregation on Easter Day.



Marilyn Curtis played the music on the keyboard for the hymns 'The Servant King' and 'Come Holy Ghost our Souls inspire'. This latter hymn has been included in every coronation

since 1625 when King Charles I was crowned,



At the end of the service everyone was handed a glass of Prosecco, or a non alcoholic Prosecco. Flags were handed out and the National Anthem was sung. With flags waving, a toast was made to our new King Charles III.



The afternoon then proceeded with games, quizzes and colouring for the children. There was the Coronation Wordsearch, the Royal Palaces Picture Quiz and the Coronation Picture Bingo. *(See front cover picture)*

Everyone had been asked to bring a plate of food and the table



was groaning with goodies. Sue Davis had made a beautiful, delicious, Coronation cake with the King's Coronation logo on top.

At the end of the afternoon a raffle was drawn and £102.00 was raised for the Mothers' Union 'Summer of Hope' appeal. Everyone seemed to have a wonderful time and all felt they had really celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III.

Janice Clarke

A Visit From the Local Mothers' Union

Until recently I was a member of Holy Trinity Branch, Sydenham. When I could not manage alone at home any longer, I moved to St Barnabas College, Lingfield. A retirement home for clergy, their widows, missionaries and committed lay people.

Local church members are Friends to the College. When one visited and chatted to me I asked if Lingfield had an MU Branch. This resulted in a member and her husband visiting me. It was arranged that their next meeting would be held in the Common Room here, so that I and any other interested residents could attend. On the day, a friendly group of members came here from Lingfield. They asked me to tell them about myself and membership.



I started with my mother's membership, then how I joined the local Branch when marrying in 1959 and moving with my husband Edward to the Devon/Dorset border parish where he became Rector. Being called from Devon by Bishop John Robinson to South London, Edward felt it right to respond. We moved to different surroundings in Camberwell but MU was there and I became a Southwark member, editing first the MU Diocesan Gazette, then Home and Family which in those days had a substantial circulation amongst the majority of members. Edward was invited to make yet another move to a central London parish with little resident population. With no scope for opening a Branch I took an interest in Mothers' Union in the London Diocese and grew to know some members as well as staff at Mary Sumner House. The central London church had no Rectory and we found our own house in Sydenham, where I joined the welcoming then active Holy Trinity Branch. When I became less mobile, I appreciated the Indoor Members' letters.

The MU meeting here at St Barnabas was a pleasant, friendly occasion for a group of us. We introduced ourselves, chatted and a member led prayers from the familiar MU prayer Book. Now I think and pray for MU here and worldwide with thanksgiving.

Mary Thompson

A Very Special Birthday

Margaret at 102 years!

On July 4th Margaret Munt celebrated her 102nd birthday with family and a small number of friends at her home in East Sheen.

Margaret has been a member of the Mortlake with East Sheen Mothers' Union for 63 years along with her friend Jeane Dunsford (a young 96). They were admitted together in March 1960 and both still attend Christ Church East Sheen. Although Margaret often receives Home Communion, Jeane regularly attends the Wednesday morning Eucharist.

The beautiful cake was made by her carer and granddaughter and I gave her flowers on behalf of our Mothers' Union Branch.



Wendy Moss, Kingston Area Vice President

Thanksgiving Service

At the Annual Thanksgiving Service at All Saints, Hatcham, our MU branch had its 20th year celebrations on the 11th June. This was incorporated in the 10.30am service.

The membership is growing and we hope to have a service with enrolment.

Mrs Rebecca Williams who restarted 20 years ago was able to attend despite some health issues.

Marion Williams - Branch Secretary



MU Cathedral Prayers

Prayers are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month (not December) 11.45am-12.15pm in the Harvard Chapel, Southwark Cathedral. All are welcome.

Led by

- | | | |
|--------|---|----------|
| 22 Nov | - | Croydon |
| 24 Jan | - | Woolwich |
| 28 Feb | - | Kingston |
| 27 Mar | - | Reigate |



Please Note - there is no access for wheelchair users in the Harvard Chapel. If members who use wheelchairs want to attend Cathedral Prayers, the Cathedral has to be notified in advance and the Retrochoir would be prepared for the service

MU Indian Adventure

Members at Holy Cross, Motspur Park Branch, had a lovely time at our June meeting when Ann Fernihough (former Kingston Area Vice-President) showed us how to drape ourselves in enormous



lengths of beautiful silk fabrics to make authentic saris. It wasn't easy, with an underskirt, pleats, folds, and over and under and round until the garment was complete. It was a hot afternoon, and we all agreed that the saris felt very floaty and cool.

But we also enjoyed Ann's talk about her time as a teacher in India working for the Church Missionary Society. She sailed from Liverpool Docks in January 1966 for the three-week journey to Bombay and on from there to the boarding school where she would be teaching children from the outlying villages. Despite being warned that the school was in a very lonely area and the chances of meeting a partner were slim, Ann met her late husband, Christopher (also a missionary), while working there. After getting married in England, Ann and her husband returned to India for a further nine years with the CMS.

Ann's love for India and the people she had met "so friendly and generous" shone through her talk. But she expressed her sadness that life there is very difficult now for many Christians, with even some churches being burned – a timely reminder of the need for our prayers.

Pat Affleck



MU Outing to Deen City Farm

On Saturday 13th May the Mothers' Union arranged an outing to Morden Hall Park and Deen City Farm, a children's educational petting farm. At 2.00pm fifteen of us adults and children met up. Luckily, the weather was kind to us.

We walked through the park on the boardwalk, seeing mallards, herons and moorhens, and then over the tram line to the farm. Here the children saw hens, ducks, turkeys, pheasants, tortoises, guinea pigs and ferrets, etc. We then bought special food and the children



helped us feed sheep, goats and



cows. The goats were very greedy and ate not only the food but the paper bags as well!! We saw two donkeys playing with a ball, kicking it with their hooves. The children also took the opportunity to stroke rabbits, fancy rats and guinea pigs.

After an ice cream break, the children played in the farm play park, enjoying a wonderful time being together. The day was a great success.

Janice Clarke

Coronation Day at St Mildred's Addiscombe



Seedling Success

At the Southwark Mothers' Union Diocese Quiet Day earlier this year, Revd Esther Foss, the Diocese Chaplain used an anemone seed to illustrate her talk and gave everyone a seed. A lot of seeds did not germinate but Shirley Tillman's from St Barnabas, Sutton Branch, grew into a full grown plant and produced a beautiful flower. - see attached photo.



Janice Clarke

More Quiet Day Notes

From the Revd Esther Foss

I recently learned that the Hebrew word for Egypt is 'mitzraim', meaning 'a narrow place' like a gorge hemmed in on both sides by high rocks. "To be a slave is to live in a narrow place. Anyone who's depressed or in need of hope is still living in mitzraim, but there's a place beyond Egypt. That place is the desert, where we try to find our way..." (Rabbi Marc Gellman)

Think back to our bulb, growing in a narrow place, the deep darkness of the earth, hemmed in on all sides. Think of a baby, growing within the confines of her mother's womb, or the pupa of a butterfly or moth, enclosed inside a cocoon. We can think of our own lives; those tough times where we felt stuck and wondered how we'd ever find our way out, back to life?

We think of Jesus, driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, tempted by Satan with the wild beasts, preparing for his ministry and journey to Calvary.

But – the story did not end there. "There's a place beyond the desert. That place is the promised land. There's a place beyond Calvary, the Garden Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, where Jesus rose from the dead. There is a place beyond all our times of

suffering and sadness... it's called Transformation – our MU triennial Theme – reminding us that things always “come to pass,” they never “come to stay” – and that is true, apart from one thing: love.

A contemporary poem ‘Into the Fire’ by Gail White puts it this way...

Into the Fire

*Every love counts, the puppy you were given
At six, the tadpoles that you tried to raise;
Even your silly parents and the siblings
You couldn't stand were loved on certain days.*

*The first love of your adolescence, later
Spoken of slightly as immature,
The love of marriage, even if it ended
In bitterness, the friends that still endure.*

*Into the mix, put in your charity
To those who had no one but you to love them.
All the loves given, even reluctantly,
Are still our loves. Let's not make little of them.*

*They form the only fire that burns on
When sun and moon and stars have packed and gone.*

Gail White

Love never ends. Today may we pray for the grace and courage to trust in the everlasting love of God, a love that walks with us through all our time – in this life and the next.

Rev. Esther Foss

Mary Sumner Day Strawberry Tea



On a beautifully sunny day, St Mildred's held their regular Mary Sumner Day strawberry tea, for their Branch and for Croydon North, Central and Addington Deaneries.

We also celebrated one member's Golden Wedding anniversary and consumed lots of cakes, scones and strawberries.

Here's the table after everyone's first helping - there was plenty for seconds and for all those who wanted one, a doggy box to take home.



The children of our two youngest members had a good time too - playing with the toy box and picking blackberries at the bottom of the garden!

We raised £212 for AFIA

Margaret Simmons

Peace Circle: Mary Sumner Day Reflections

At the invitation of Comfort, Amina Dikedi and Jane Namurye assisted by Comfort, led around 40 members in two introductory sessions of the Peace Circle from the material developed by Creators of Peace International (CoP). <https://www.creatorsofpeace.org/> This is an initiative open to women from all backgrounds, ages and cultures who want to

become more empowered, inspired, hopeful and effective in the current global climate. They organise Peace Circles throughout the year across the



country. They also run regular social events and talks in more than 55 countries which include the UK, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Australia, Kenya, Burundi, Sudan, Cameroon, New Zealand and the Solomon Islands. They firmly believe that women can be catalysts for peace in their homes, workplace and community.

Together we explored what peace means and who is a peace creator. In the first session 'What is peace anyway?' all participants were encouraged to select from a variety of pictures, one which spoke the most of peace to them and then to share why that picture was chosen. These ranged from people in different situations, to animals, to scenic views. After lunch, Sue Steele's drawing skills were put to the test in drawing a human silhouette, as we considered 'The Qualities of a Peacemaker. After sharing in pairs or small groups, these qualities were added to our silhouette as qualities of the heart, mind, requiring speech, actions etc.

At the end of the day of exploring and discussing, we were encouraged to take something away from our time together.....

Afterwards I found this version of the Beatitudes.

*Blessed are you peacemakers
who say no to war as a means to peace.*

*Blessed are you peacemakers,
who are committed to disarm weapons of mass destruction.*

*Blessed are you peacemakers,
who wage peace at heroic personal cost.*

*Blessed are you peacemakers,
who challenge and confront judges, courts & prisons.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who help those who are hurting.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who befriend perfect strangers.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who open doors for acting justly, loving tenderly
and walking humbly with God and all people of good will.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who welcome, encourage and inspire.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who offer hope and healing.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who care and comfort.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who help find answers.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who provide stability not insanity.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who help restore faith and love.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who delight in creation, art & creativity.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who see the good in others.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who never give up.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
who give and give and give. - Fr. Paul Milanowski Grand Rapids, Michigan*

Penny Lohead



A Special Anniversary Celebration

125th Anniversary of Mothers' Union at St Barnabas, Sutton Branch

The following item appeared in the St Barnabas Parish Magazine in 1898:

"We are now starting a branch of the Mothers' Union. A meeting was held on Friday 21st October when Mrs Jeff explained what the Mothers' Union has done elsewhere and what it may do here. We understand that 27 names have gone in for membership and we hope that, as it becomes better understood, it will grow in size. Meetings will be held 3 or 4 times a year".

On Saturday 21st October 2023, the branch celebrated its 125th Anniversary with a special communion service. Members from the branch, other branches in the Sutton Deanery and the Reigate and Croydon Areas, together with Diocesan President, Comfort attended the service. It was led by the Vicar, the Revd Dave Billin and included the Peruvian Gloria, the collect for Southwark Mothers' Union and a recording of St Mildred, Addiscombe's Ladies Choir, singing Mary Sumner's Prayer. The organ was played by Mothers' Union member Marilyn Curtis.



During the service five new members were enrolled, Sue Davis, Sue Stewart, Mary Okoye, Sheila McGowan and Dorothy Hannam and Marilyn Curtis and Marjorie Udall were welcomed into the branch by Comfort.

At the end of the service, Comfort officially cut the celebration cake. Then everyone had a cup of tea or coffee and a piece of the cake before watching a 30 minute film presentation of events in the branch over the last 125 years.

A really wonderful morning!



Janice Clarke

Red Chair Project

Those who were at Diocesan Council on 14 October at St Francis, Horley, would have seen Penny Lohead cover an ordinary chair with some red material and then place an A4 sheet of paper on it with the words 'A place for them'. This was to advertise the Red Chair Project as globally, every 11 seconds, a woman or girl dies at the hand of an intimate partner or family member. These women or girls should still be with us.



The Red Chair Project is a campaign, part of the **16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence** which takes place from 25 November - 10 December 2023, encouraging individuals, organisations or churches to reserve a chair marking the void left by each and every one of these women and girls.



St Mildred, Addiscombe's chair



A Place for Them

Harvest Display with a Difference

This year our flower team at Holy Trinity Church, Redhill, decided to have something a little different for the harvest display and requested church members, as well as Mothers' Union members, to display some of their hats. We had paintings, photographs, pressed flowers and much more as well as some fresh flowers. It was suggested that I did something with the hats that our MU and others had been knitting for Wandsworth Prison.



My idea was to depict a cell window (black frame with wire netting) as well as some plain colour flowers, hence all white with some dark prickly greenery).

I had some notices explaining about the prison and why we were busy knitting.

Jenny Kempsell

Helping Those Whose Family Life Has Met With Adversity

Does anyone remember a remarkable lady called Lynette Paul? She was the wife of an Anglican priest in Southwark and, at the time, was a leading light in Southwark Mothers' Union. Her husband moved over the Thames to become priest at the church of St Andrew's by the Wardrobe (yes, that's right!) and eventually Lynette became Diocesan President of London.

One of the projects Lynette devised in 2005, was the "3 C's" i.e. Coffee, Cake and Chat, at Great Ormond Street Hospital. I had frequently needed to accompany a patient to GOSH during my working life and as soon as I retired, Lynette insisted that I join her team there, despite my being a Southwark person, Mothers' Union after all is worldwide. The Chapel, outside which the 3 C's operated, is an amazing place. It is tiny and twinkles with gold leaf, painting and mosaics, has the original pews which are only a few inches off the floor (it is a children's hospital after all) and there are countless gold animals and birds sculpted at the top of the many pillars. Most surprising of all is the fact that it was moved, lock, stock and barrel, sideways and down one floor in 1990, some 115 years after it was originally built. Coffee, Cake and Chat always began with prayers in the Chapel and parents were taken into the Chapel, for individual prayers, to add prayers to the prayer tree or to light a candle. God was integral with every session.



The 3 C's was the model for what now happens at the Evelina Children's Hospital, which is part of St Thomas's Hospital. Tea @ 2 does not take place outside the vast Chapel but since 2012, up

on the sixth floor of the main hospital, in the parents' room of the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit and Special Care Baby Unit. We are more likely to see parents – and indeed the hospital care-givers – of babies rather than of older children, but the ethos is the same: listening with a kindly ear, a soft shoulder and loving arms to parents who are experiencing the severest of trauma in their lives. Always listening with prayer in our hearts and, only on request, on our lips. God is still integral with every session and is there to help the parents – and the volunteer listeners – when the going gets particularly tough. Before and after each session, volunteers are likely to commit their work to God in the Chapel down on the first floor. This chapel is about the same age as the one at GOSH and is the same basic shape but is at least six times the size, as it was built for a large general hospital. It is also a survivor of the London Blitz which destroyed much of the rest of the hospital.



It is an honour and a privilege to be part of this team of volunteers who go weekly to Tea @ 2 to fulfil part of their Mothers' Union promise "to help those whose family life has met with adversity." Do come and join us ...

Lord Jesus,

Be with parents and families in their stress, anxiety and fear. Surround them and the children they love with your healing light and your all-powerful love.

And all this day, O Lord, let us touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life we touch, do thou by thy Spirit quicken, whether through the words we speak, the prayers we breathe or the lives we live. Amen

Liz Pullen

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families