

## **Chaplain Peter reflects on an anniversary**

Do you enjoy anniversaries? Do you use them to reflect on the period or on the person involved? There are happy ones and sad ones too. Do you give time for rejoicing and thanksgiving to God? Even harder; do you give time for remembering the sad ones and spend time recalling the person or experience that you have lost? Perhaps you make a pilgrimage to a graveside and pause to thank God for that person's life or thank God that the person can no longer hurt you. Anniversaries can be really tough even though we know that Jesus accompanies us through the unwelcome thoughts and feelings.

The anniversary that caused me to stop and reflect was the fifteenth anniversary of becoming a member of Mothers' Union. The branch I joined, though small and rural, was actively involved in praying, producing soft toys for the local children's ward and providing hospitality for the mums and tots fellowship meetings. So why would I want to join? Let me tell you.....

In 2000 I had trained as a counsellor and was working in two Christian counselling agencies in the UK. In 2005 I began training to work with couples because the agency had asked me to work with married couples. Both my work and my training revealed to me the passion I still have for Christian marriage and family life.

The purpose of Mothers' Union is to be specially concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and Christian family life. In a very unseen and confidential way I was also concerned to repair and strengthen the strained or broken marriages of the couples who worked with me.

The aim of Mothers' Union is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life. I was working for an agency whose mission was to bring God's kingdom into the community and bear witness to His life through the delivery of professional counselling and pastoral care. I discovered that my work was in very close alignment of our Mission Statement: Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life.

The Mothers' Union delivers on the Five Objects in a great variety of ways depending local culture and needs. My work with each married couple started when the couple realised that they have met with adversity [Fifth Object] and needed to work with a counsellor or, as I was later described by one couple, a compassionate stranger. Where there were children present in the relationship, then I promoted stable family life [Fourth Object] and had a legal duty of care to protect children at risk too.

I still work with couples in distress and find that God sustains my passion and energy for repairing and rebuilding where that is possible. Sadly, on occasions, it is not possible and those times feel heavy indeed, especially where vulnerable children are involved. Over the years of experience and many hours working face to face with couples; I have watched God do amazing things with the two individuals and their relationship. My purpose in this work is expressed most clearly in the words that characterise Mothers' Union.

