The beginning of The Mothers' Union in Australia.

In the village of Old Alresford in the south of England a young Vicar's wife, Mary Sumner, looked at her first born child. Amazed at the enormous responsibility of nurturing a human life, and conscious of her own inadequacies, she dreamed of a union of mothers coming together regularly for encouragement, support and education.

It was not until 1876 that she was able to gather together a group of mothers to discuss her ideas of meeting together to help one another, and realise more fully their responsibilities as wives and mothers.

> **The Mary Sumner Prayer**
> *(Written in 1876 by Mary Sumner)*
>
> All this day, O Lord,
> let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
> and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken,
> whether through the word I speak,
> the prayer I breathe,
> or the life I live.
> Amen.

The women were also helped to understand the significance of the sacrament of baptism and the teaching of the faith to their children. In 1885 at the invitation of the Bishop, Mary spoke to a large gathering in Portsmouth and from this Mothers' Union grew to be a diocesan organisation within the Diocese of Winchester.

The society quickly spread throughout England and as women migrated it was established overseas.

By 1892 Mothers' Union had reached Australia.

Mrs L'Oste, wife of the Rector of Christ Church, Cullenswood, Tasmania met with a small group of ladies on the verandah of the Rectory to form the first branch of the Mothers' Union in Australia in 1892 under her enthusiastic leadership.

The Church is now on private property and no longer used; it is in poor repair.

"As we approached from Fingal, there was the little Church! The gate was open, so we began pottering around the graveyard. Then, I noticed the Church door was open, and crept in. I was startled by an employee of the Cullenswood property who was assessing what repairs were needed. We took photos of the interior and exterior, then we gave thanks for the history of MU, and prayed for its future." Georgina Shillito (Diocese of Melbourne 2011)