

MOTHERS' UNION NZ

In the Anglican Province of AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND AND POLYNESIA



Dear Members and Friends,
We are in the season of Advent, and Christmas is just around the corner.

This year has been eventful, not in the way we would want, but because of lockdowns and the uncertainty of the thoughts, that go through our minds each day, we feel less focused.

We have all kept in touch with members and friends, but somehow even that has not seemed enough, less satisfying, our feelings have been laboured. We don't have face to face contact to see the smiling eyes and the tears. Our Mothers' Union journey has been interrupted.

Through the uncertainty we lose direction and we all react to the decisions of each day in different ways. But the way to go forward is to, jump back on the journey and find new ways to enhance what we love about our voyage, take our faith for a restart. 'From adversity - comes opportunity'. Let us start with Faith.

Faith is a mystery; it is a journey without a map. It unfolds like a rose, sometimes tightly budded, sometimes in full bloom.

When you think it has withered, it sprouts somewhere else.

When you think you've figured it out, you discover a deeper layer or path you never knew existed.

I once was lost, but now I'm found. Amazing Grace.

Sue Infield : Editor

This quote is true for us, as it sort of conveys the thoughts and feeling everyone has about the uncertainty of 'what will happen next'. The opportunity is to be ready when the New Year 2022 starts in earnest.

We need to gird ourselves with our faith and follow 'The Light of Christ' and get on with 'Time for transformation'. We need to stay on course for our journey and follow that light into the future wherever it leads us.

So, as we shall shortly kneel at the foot of the Nativity. We shall follow the star, and stand in the stable to adore the heavenly scene of Mary and Joseph, and the newborn babe lying in the manger. We shall hear the angels sing, "Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace on earth to whom he is pleased. Let us all sing O Holy Night and thank our God for this precious gift to mankind.

I send you all blessings, and hugs. May peace, hope and love be yours, but the sweetest of all is love.

Joan Neild.

Your Provincial President. Mother's Union, Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia



Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families



My Dear Friend,

It is an absolute joy to greet you once again in Christian love as we prepare our hearts and homes for the reflective season of Advent, followed by the joyous season of Christmas. Thank you so much for welcoming me into your quiet little space wherever you are and for giving me this time to spend with you.

I cannot believe how quickly the time has flown and we have come to the end of another triennium. Many Dioceses and Provinces are having their end of triennium Thanksgiving Services during this period. On Friday 19th November, the Worldwide Board of Trustees and Staff at Mary Sumner House joined Archbishop Justin Welby, some virtually and others in-person at Lambeth Palace, as he led our Thanksgiving Service. It was a very special occasion for us as he prayed and encouraged us in our work, both at home and worldwide. We will continue to lift him up in our prayers as he shepherds the Anglican Communion through its joys and challenges.

Following the pandemic crisis in 2020, Mothers' Union began 2021 with renewed energy and enthusiasm to rebuild hope and confidence, in what we believed, would be a recovering world. Little did we know that the uncertainty of the pandemic would be extended for reasons beyond our control and everything would progress slower than we imagined. By His Grace we persevered believing that the God of all knowledge goes before us. Therefore we used the time to review and reimagine our priorities so that Mothers' Union could survive to thrive in a changing world. Through it all, the new technology kept us connected and we give God thanks as we celebrate His blessings each day.

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In June and October 2021, I had the privilege of showcasing Mothers' Union beyond the Anglican Communion by speaking at the World Council of Religions for Peace as Archbishop Justin's special representative. As he highlighted the successes of the work of Mothers' Union, I was able to engage in round table conversations promoting our transformational work at the grassroots, a place where many organisations struggle to reach. Knowing that we make a difference wherever we are placed, even the difficult places, inspires and encourages us to look to the future with fresh vision, under our theme for 2022, "Transformation - NOW!"

I am deeply humbled by the faith you place in me to continue as your Worldwide President for a second term 2022-2024. With your continued prayers, love and support I am committed to devoting the time and energy required for Mothers' Union to transform the lives of individuals, families and communities. In everything we do as Mothers' Union, we must reflect the love of Jesus Christ while remaining faithful to our mission and values, to ensure Mothers' Union is relevant for 21st century life.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to you and your loved ones for your generosity, love and ongoing prayers for me. Knowing that you are praying and thinking of me gives me all the energy I need to continue my role as your Worldwide President, while I whisper Mary Sumner's Prayer for strength each day:

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee ...

The Christmas story of over 2,000 years ago reminds us of a time when Mary and Joseph were forced to flee their homeland to the safety of Bethlehem, leaving behind all that was familiar to them. The events surrounding their lives at that time must have been very difficult, especially with Mary being heavily pregnant. Today we boldly rejoice with the angels that in the most humble of beginnings our Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, was born.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ... and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6-7

This story lives on so many centuries later and strengthens my faith in the future for all refugees who were recently forced to flee their homes and will be in a strange place this Christmas. Praise God for our members who continue to lovingly extend Mothers' Union's hospitality wherever it is needed, including a warm smile, open arms, and an outstretched hand.

Some families have not been so fortunate and are now divided, with little or no hope of being reunited. They may never see the glow of Advent Candles or hear the heavenly sound of Christmas Carols but we pray that this Christmas will be a turning point for them. May God in His faithfulness provide for them and bless them with sandals as they journey to a new place that they can call home. May they receive the gift of His only Son Jesus Christ in whose Word we trust, in whose Presence we have confidence, and by whose Power we can do all things.

The Worldwide Board of Trustees and Staff at Mary Sumner House join me in wishing you God's blessings for a wonderful Christmas season. We pray that your Christmas will sparkle and your New Year shine with the peace, love and joy that the Christ Child brings.

With my love and prayers as always,

Sheran Harper

Sheran Harper
Mothers' Union Worldwide President.



One of the most inspiring places I had the opportunity to visit was the Holy Land, Israel and Palestine. In East Jerusalem, St George's College is an Anglican college that offers hospitality to the pilgrims from all over the world, who are coming to the Holy City, to visit the sacred places connected with life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, as well with our faith.



American Colony, East Jerusalem; photo: Trip Advisor

Just a short walking distance is an exquisite hotel, that gave its English name to the whole neighbourhood: American Colony. It was established by a group of American (and Swedish) Christians and is somehow connected with a hymn that brings so much consolation to many, which is 'It is well with my soul'.



Horatio Spafford; photo: Library of Congress website

At the beginning of this lockdown, in August, the Methodist minister Rev. Robyn Goudge sang it beautifully on social media in English and Samoan. This was the inspiration for this reflection. Though beloved by many, the story of that hymn is extremely tragic, but it shows how from great tragedy something beautiful can be born.

The author of text is American Presbyterian lay person and lawyer, Horatio Spafford, who lived in the second half of the 19th century. Early in his life, he and his wife Anna have lost their first son of scarlet fever. In 1871, when he was only 43 years of age, the great fire of Chicago destroyed most of his investments. Everything he invested in real estate was gone over night. Few years later, they have decided that it would be good for them to take a break in the UK, as situation was not getting better for them.

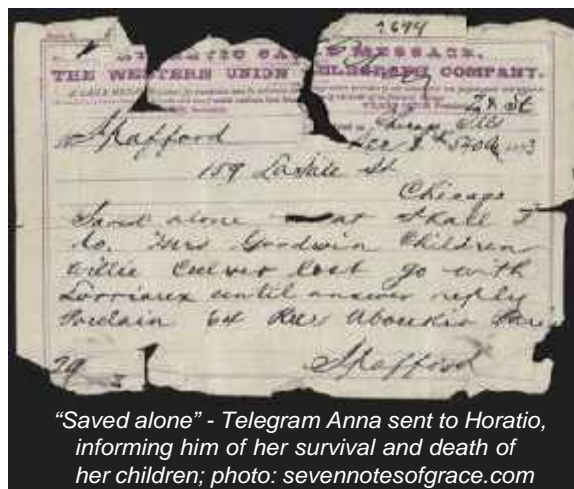
As Anna and Horatio prepared to travel to Europe, by steamer, an urgent matter arose, which prevented Horatio to travel immediately, with his wife and four daughters. The steamer's name was 'Ville du Havre' and on 22 November 1873, in the middle of Atlantic, there was a terrible accident. All four daughters drowned, and Anna was the only one, in the family that survived sinking of the ship. Anna sent a telegram to Horatio, informing him

of the tragedy, so he immediately embarked on the next ship to be with her in the UK.

As they were passing the place where his four daughters lost their lives, the captain pointed to the place of tragedy. Then and at that place Horatio was inspired to write his poem, that starts with those wonderful words: 'When peace like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know It is well, it is well, with my soul.'

Later in their life the couple had more children, but tragedy still followed them. Their first born after the tragedy, young Horatio, also died, who was survived by his sisters Bertha and Grace. Spaffords moved to Jerusalem, to American colony which has developed a wonderful and diverse charitable activity between all peoples in Holy Land. Horatio died in 1888.

While still in the United States, Spafford has shown his poem to his friend and composer Philip Bliss. He composed the music for this hymn, but his life is also a part of that great tragedy of this hymn. Bliss was killed at the age of 38, when the bridge collapsed and the train by which he and his wife Lucy travelled fell into the ravine. Philip saved himself and came out from the pile of steel that was left of the train, but when he noticed that Lucy was still buried underneath, he returned to save her. Fire caught the train. Lucy was caught under the piece of steel. Philip decided not to leave her alone and he stayed with her until the end, when both were killed by fire.



"Saved alone" - Telegram Anna sent to Horatio, informing him of her survival and death of her children; photo: sevennotesofgrace.com

A beautiful hymn, with beautiful words, with so much tragedy surrounding it.

It is my constant prayer that we are always able to say 'It is well with my soul', not to give us some false security and illusion, but to remind ourselves that God never abandons us and that the Divine presence is with us, no matter what happens. Horatio and Philips believed that.

From Reverend Anne Priestley THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS



Aotearoa celebrates Christmas at the time when days are full of light. I wonder if this abundance makes it harder for us to appreciate the ancient symbolism of light as a sign of Christ's presence among us?

For me from my earliest days, Christmas was always associated with LIGHT. Perhaps this is because I was born in England, and brought up there and in Scotland. In Edinburgh, from sunrise to sunset the shortest day is less than 7 hours long! Get up in the dark, go to bed in the dark: add in rain, wind and cold, and the result is bleak. People yearn for colour and light!

In the dark weeks of December, preparations for Christmas were a riot of colour. We children gummed paper chains together or diligently folded crepe paper strips of contrasting colours, while our mother pinned crepe streamers across the rooms. There was holly to adorn pictures and photos, and Christmas cards set up on a shelf.

Decorating the Christmas tree was the most exciting part. The lights were always a source of tension. If one lightbulb had blown, the whole string was useless. Each bulb had to be tested and the dud one replaced... the process seemed to take ages! At last they were arranged on the tree, and rearranged for balance and beauty. After that, out came battered old shoe boxes, holding precious ornaments. The most special were glass balls, fragile, intricately made to catch and reflect light. We children were NOT allowed to touch them! When all was done, the tree gleamed with red, blue, green and golden lights, the special ornaments shone as if with their own light, silver tinsel glowed in reflected glory.

Our tree always stood in a window where it could be seen from the street - that was what most people did. I loved being out after sunset, seeing Christmas trees lit up in other windows. In Edinburgh, where many streets are lined with continuous flats reaching 5-6 stories high, the many trees were a sight to behold in windows high and low, shining cheerfully in the dark.

In my years of family life in New Zealand, we have always put up a Christmas tree decorated with coloured lights. Often in the evenings, I would simply sit in silence before it, letting the lights connect me with past times and present mystery. Even in the years of our growing children, I could usually find a few quiet moments late at night, to let the light shine into my heart.

Candles are another precious childhood memory of Christmas LIGHT. Candles on the table. Candles (or torches) held by carol-singers, who would tour the streets to sing at closed doors until someone opened the door, with thanks and perhaps a gift. Candles - occasionally - to light special Christmas services. In the cold darkness (churches were rarely warm then), these small lights promised life and warmth. 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not' (John 1:4-5). The wonderful words of the King James Version might pass over my head, but candle-light in the darkness made visible sense.

So when I've had the joy of arranging Christmas services, I've always tried to use candles generously. The Advent wreath: all four candles and at last the central candle lit. New beeswax candles on the altar. For mid-night services, a candle for each person to hold (health and safety permitting!) A sermon will be forgotten, but fragile lights in the dark convey a message of wonder and excitement, an aching hope, lifting the heart in difficult times.

All these lights, candle-light and sunlight, remind us of God's presence: coming to us in weakness, small, needing care, seeking out our love - coming to us in dangerous power, bright, burning source of life. We need light to shine in the dark corners of our individual and corporate lives... Think of those parts of your life which you would rather not face, the parts which disturb you... think too of the chaos unloosed (we've seen it on TV) when people become the tools of misinformation, or disinformation. LIGHT dissolves and disinfects the darkness. Let us pray for LIGHT to shine within us, within our churches, and within our society.

This year, maybe we hesitate to attend a Christmas service in person. We certainly have to 'do church' differ-

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ently. We may lament this, or we may see it as an opportunity. Remember, part of the LIGHT has come to dwell within you.

- * Could you bring together some neighbours or friends to sing Christmas carols? Do include 'Silent Night' – with hushed voices if possible, for the great wonder of Christ our Saviour, born among us.
- * For an evening meal with the children, grandchildren, and the wide whanau: could you try telling the Christmas story again, in your own words? Practise before, and use plenty of expression!
- * For a small group, here is one possibility, which you can vary as you please:

Call for quiet, for a few special minutes.

Light a candle in the centre.

Sing a familiar carol - one or two verses only.

One person (ask them in advance, perhaps!) reads a few verses from scripture - eg. Luke 2:1-7, omitting verse 2, or John 1:1-5 plus verse 14.

You preach the sermon as follows: 'This is why we celebrate Christmas: Jesus comes to us!'

You pray a simple prayer: 'Lord Jesus, light of the world, be born in our hearts today. Amen.'

End with another short carol.

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' (John 1:5) Alleluia!

I'd love to hear what YOU do this year, to celebrate the coming of God's LIGHT among us.



Greetings from Capt. Monika Clark Church Army NZ, to the Mothers Union

Dear friends and fellow Mothers Union members,

What a year we have had!

We live in a time and culture that wrestles with change at an ever-increasing pace. For some change is unsettling, for others it can even be threatening, while others relish the excitement of new things and ask for more! It can be difficult to remain focussed and faithful as ambassadors of God's Kingdom, but with challenges also come opportunities. We all know that the



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only constant in life is change, as Heraclitus so wisely pointed out. It's a good thing!

For Church Army NZ, the cloud of Covid19, still, had a big silver lining: Everyone got used to working online, which increased our training capacity exponentially, especially since our appointment of our trainer Rev Brian Bullen, who is beautifully supported by his wife Stephanie!

Through online training and mentoring/coaching he is reaching individuals, groups and churches from all over NZ, and places as far away as Quebec, and far more efficiently.

The zoom groups (believers and non-believers) are based on various commonalities.

We also managed to do some face to face training events, as the pandemic restrictions allowed.

Ongoing training and leadership coaching/mentoring/peer learning is the key here to paradigm shift and application. Multiplication, training trainers, is the aim.

Our ministries up and down the country experienced similar changes: a lot of the work was forced into cyberspace, and they are now continuing with that work, as it is effective!

For example Canterbury Kids Coach (CKC) is doing online training with families as far away as China! I had the privilege of being one of the online speakers at the Auckland Prayer Breakfast.

If it is women leadership development, Children's ministry, working with the broken and neglected or developing catalysts and movement leaders, it's all about equipping and empowering the next generation and expanding capacity to be obedient to God in growing His Kingdom. 2021 as any other year. It's just the format that changed. If anything, we were busier than ever, as people realised their need for hope and power from outside their own abilities. There was a surge of interest in faith related conversations. We need to be equipped and ready to engage! For that purpose CANZ is working more and more with other evangelistic organisations, like YWAM, OAC, NZCMS, Hope Project, etc to work more efficiently and effectively... Church with a capital 'C'!

As Rev Brian is now covering the North Island, since my move to Christchurch, I am focussing more on South Island. I also have joined every prayer (Zoom) meeting going, local, regional, national, interdenominational... as prayer is key for Holy Spirit impact! I have settled into my wee new whare, painted every surface I could find, planted an orchard of fruit bushes and -trees, for when the promised grandies arrive! My son and daughter in law bought a house in North Christchurch a couple of months before I bought mine. I found a handful of churches on both sides of the Anglican divide I am worshipping and working with, and the recent joint mission with two YWAM teams at St Timothy's was a great Kingdom success. I just LOVE working with keen young evangelists to light God's fire in groups and whole churches, seeing them gaining confidence in their call witness to God's love and redeeming power! I hope for Church Army NZ to become even more effective as a catalyst for the whole Church in NZ to work together more closely and more effectively in reaching the laden and lost, to be the Christlike beacon for God's hope and love we are meant to be.

I recently met up with the Christchurch Mothers Union, hoping to be of use to them regarding growing it in size, strength and vision.



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I am so grateful to the Lord for the national and global Mothers Union doing great things in His name, changing lives and communities. I member my time with my Auckland MU friends fondly and miss you all terribly. Come and visit me!

Kia tau te Rangimarie
Aroha nui

Monika
Monika



A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU!



I want to **take this opportunity** to say a very big THANK YOU to all our Executive, Branch Leaders and Mothers Union Members throughout the Diocese for the way in which you have kept in touch with each other and also continued to maintain your support for the varying projects Mothers' Union is involved with in this Diocese, especially during what turned into another very uncertain year of upheaval. To those members who were classed as Essential Workers throughout the Lockdown and had to continue to put the care of others ahead of their own needs and safety I thank you and congratulate you for getting on with the job at hand. I know that for most of you your work was within our hospitals.



You have all made numerous phone calls to each other, put out Newsletters for your branches and members as a whole and raised money to give to those in great need. Loeta Taylor from Kohi / Orakei branch organised an on-line MU- A-Thon raising almost \$3,500 for the Mothers Union in Vanuatu to help them purchase Sewing Machines and equipment. This was raised in just 4 weeks. Pukekohe Branch raised money to donate to Granger Grove so the young mums and their children could have a lovely outing during the year. And of course there was also the money raised to go towards our Jammies In June project, aiding The ATWC and the Middlemore Foundation together with the Far North Mothers Union, to help purchase warm winter pyjamas. WELL DONE EVERYONE.



Myself and 4 members (one of which was our Priest in Charge, Rev Sheryl Hogan) met at St Georges, Papatoetoe in our Purple scarves in recognition of the 16 Days of Activism.

I know you will all be looking forward to being back in your local churches for Worship especially during this time of Advent. I know I am. I think maybe we are all just a little Zoomed out now. It has been a great way of staying in touch though. Several of us together with our Provincial President Joan Neild have had zoom contact with the staff at Mary Sumner House and it has been my great pleasure to pass on to Jeanette Lawrence, the Regional Development Co-ordinator, at Mary Sumner House, the amazing things that you have been doing here in Zone C. They always love to hear news from the Mothers' Union members in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia.

Christmas celebrations will be the next thing for us all and being able, where possible, to be with our families again. My daughter put some lovely photos on her Facebook page recently of her husband and my two granddaughters in the kitchen at home making Ginger Bread Houses. I have a very patient son-in-law who just loves to cook and he is imparting this knowledge to both his girls. The finished products looked amazing. Lovely to see families doing things together. Maybe I may get to try some on Christmas Day?

My husband and I are heading out of Auckland when the border opens on the 15th of December to attend a wedding on the 18th December, in the very same church we were married in, in Whangarei 51 years ago. The

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bride is the daughter of a chap who was Best man at our wedding all those years ago. It will be lovely to catch up with old friends.

I wish to extend to you all, our two Norma's and their members in the far north, our two South Island members, Jane Peters in Motueka and Cathy Gunther in Dunedin and to you all here in the Auckland area my very sincere wishes for a very Happy Christmas as we remember and celebrate the wonderful coming of our Lord Jesus and the HOPE that arrived on earth all that time ago with the birth of a tiny baby in humble surroundings.

We will enjoy singing those much loved Christmas Carols as we gather to worship. I am reminded of a song written some time ago and sung by Boney M.

Long time ago in Bethlehem
So the Holy Bible said
Mary's boy child Jesus Christ
Was born on Christmas Day

Hark, now hear the angels sing
A king was born today
And man will live for evermore
Because of Christmas Day

Mary's boy child Jesus Christ
Was born on Christmas Day.



May God Bless you all richly with his love at this Christmas time.

Aroha me nga manaakitanga
(Love and Blessings)

Raewyn Skipper

Raewyn Skipper
Auckland Diocesan President

News From St Andrews Mothers Union, Kohimarama

Dear Mothers Union, Members, and associates,

Dear All ,

Yesterday 9th December I banked the final amount that St Andrews M.U. and friends and associates have so generously given over these past four weeks. Today in Total we have as a "Kohi St Andrews M U Team" banked **\$3,500 NZD**

I have enclosed Fr Anthony Ling's reply to you all. I think you will all agree, it has been one of our highlights of our Kohi branch for 2021 to support our M U sisters in Vanuatu.

We have all certainly experienced God's goodness and love throughout this project. This Mothers Union a thon has given us all the opportunity to tell the wonderful story of how Mothers Union began when the Founder Mary Sumner introduced it, in 1876

M U vision is of a world where God's Love is shown through love, respect, and flourishing relationships.

To promote conditions in society favorable to stable family life and the protection of children.

To demonstrate the Christian faith in Action by the transformation of community worldwide through the nurture of the family in its many forms.

Mothers Union Motto is....

To Help those whose family life has met with adversities.

I personally would like to thank Susan our Leader, Margaret Wilson, Margaret Baker, and my family who have encouraged and supported me

Throughout the 4 weeks. It has indeed been a blessing to all.

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Look forward to seeing you all in Auckland at Margaret's Garden on the 16th December.

Love and Blessings,
Loeta Taylor.

*Reverend Anthony Ling
Principal
Fisher Young School of Theology and Ministry
Diocese of Banks and Torres
P.O. Box 19, Sola, Vanualava, Banks.
Republic of Vanuatu*

7th December 2021.

Dear Loeta,

Greetings in the Lord. I write on behalf of the Port Patteson community to convey to you the sincere, heartfelt and deepest gratitude, appreciation and thanks of the women and all our families and friends of our community for recognizing and assisting to addressing the needs of the women here in their life and mission.

We thank you Loeta. You are God's wonderful gift to us and we thank God for you. Thank you for your thoughts, time, energy and commitment in finding ways to support the work of the women and mothers here in our community in rural Vanuatu. Thank you for assisting us with gifts of money and of love. Thank you for sharing your money with us which you have worked so hard to earn.

We thank all those who gave freely and most graciously for the work and learning of the women here. Please thank them on our behalf. Thank them for their thoughts, their hearts and their commitment. They also are God's wonderful gift to us and we thank God for them. Thank them for sharing their money with us for which they worked so hard to earn.

In the past, no one or even no one organization have given more money to assist us and especially our women in the magnitude you all have assisted us. We thank you and we thank God for you.

Thank you once again and our prayers remain.

In God's Grace,

Yours Sincerely,

Anthony Ling

Rev'd. Anthony Ling (Principal).

ST FRANCIS' PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Help us to live this day
quietly, gently.
To lean upon your great strength
trustfully, restfully.
To wait for the unfolding of your will
patiently, serenely.
To meet others
peacefully, joyously.
To face tomorrow
confidently, courageously.
AMEN

Prayer by Katherine McIntyre
Photo by Susan Bowkett



All Saints Mothers Union, Birkenhead parish

Dear MU Members,

It is with pleasure I introduce this newsletter to our Group in the hope it finds you strong, in good health and staying safe. I think and pray for your health in what can be stressful times.

I have been in contact with all of our Members. Jocelyn is doing very well. Jean has a broken arm but is doing very well and Judy Cranch is so much better. Wendy Dowsing is doing alright, I keep her up to date and send her everything. I had an email from The Revd Anne Moody to say she had posted the latest 3 Months Prayers to me. I will forward them to you all when they arrive.

I am still busy knitting for Helen. I hope the knitters in our group are still knitting for her as she does a good job with our Missions. Thank you.

Mothers' Union Global Day from Mary Sumner House and **International Womens' Day** will be on 24 and 25 November. There will be worldwide Mothers' Union Gatherings and Services. International Womens' Day and Mothers' Union Global Day are marching for "**Violence Against Women and Children**" and participants will be wearing Purple Scarves in recognition of this event. We too have been asked to wear a **Purple Scarf** at our 24 November M.U. meeting which will also be our A.G.M. It is fortuitous as our group will be able to celebrate with our World Wide Sisters.

If we are able to have our 27 October meeting, the speaker will be Cushla from Seasons for Growth. All Saints and Revd Jordan are involved with Seasons for Growth. It will be very interesting and I look forward to seeing as many members as possible who are able to attend. A reminder to support Colleen's sterling efforts with her Trading Table. Please bring something for her to sell or better still buy something, since it's a major source of our income.

Enjoy the magazine.

Blessings

Pamela

Pamela, MU Group Leader

The Reverend Jordan Greatbatch

As many of you will know I have worked with large Mothers' Union groups in both my ministry positions. When I was a curate at All Saint's Howick we had

quite a large Mother's Union Group. As a Curate one of my responsibilities was to take the Mother's Union services and in a sense be their chaplain. I understand this group is essentially gone now which is sad but perhaps inevitable. So it was quite interesting when I arrived here at Birkenhead to find a thriving Mother's Union group.

It has of course been a joy to support this group in any way I can. One of the interesting things I have discovered about Mothers' Union groups is that their survival seems dependant on the Vicar. What I mean by that is if the Vicar does not support them then it seems that over time this demoralises a group which can eventually lead to its decline. The sad truth is that many Vicar's don't support Mothers' Union groups, largely on theological and social grounds. The argument they make (or at least my interpretation) is that Mothers' Union as an entity belongs in a different era. With all the changes in society they argue that the concept of a 'mothers' group is no longer necessary.

There are so many big challenges facing us, not only as a Mothers' Union group, but also as a Church. We have to try and find that balance between being accessible to people but also to hold fast to our fundamental principles. There is no easy answer to this but I feel if we remain faithful to our expressions of faith, society may find itself moving back towards the important concepts of family and motherhood. We can only hope and pray.

Now while there may be some valid concerns there I believe that what the Mothers' Union represents is more

MY JOURNEY WITH **MOTHERS UNION**



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than just 'Motherhood' it can also offer friendship and encouragement. And for someone like myself who lost their mother at a young age it has offered me 'motherly' support in my ministry and life. And for that I am grateful.

Jordan

The Reverend Jordan Greatbatch

Mothers Union Waikato/Taranaki Diocese

Celebrating the Life of Mary Sumner and celebrates the Feast of Assumption in honour of the Blessed Mary. (15/08/2021)



Archbishop David Moxon celebrated Eucharist at St. Peter's Cathedral on the 15/08/2021 to celebrate the life of Mary Sumner and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The service began with "A Mother's Call To Worship"



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First MOTHER – Joy

We are three mothers, gathering to celebrate motherhood in the presence of God.
I light my candle for all mothers throughout the centuries who have loved,
laughe and laboured

Second MOTHER – Valentine

I light my candle for all mothers alive today, who still love and laugh and labour for their children

Third MOTHER- Pat

I light my candle because Jesus was born of a woman and nurtured in her love, so that in later years he compared himself and his people to a mother hen gathering her chickens under her wings.

First MOTHER -Joy

(Extinguish candle)

But I must put out my candle, because mothers across our world mourn for their sons and daughters who have been displaced - Silence

Second MOTHER – Valentine

(Extinguish candle)

I put out my candle because in parts of our world mothers have witness their children die of starvation and fight for their children who are victims of violence and abuse – silence

Third MOTHER - Pat

(Extinguish candle)

I put out my candle for mothers who weep for the children they cannot bear -silence

First MOTHER - Joy

Nevertheless, there still abide faith, hope and love

(Relight candle) So I relight my candle in the faith that God is present in every mother's suffering and in every mother's joy.

Second MOTHER – Valentine

(Relight candle)

I relight my candle in the hope of a world where all mothers raise their children in peace, dignity, and delight.

Third MOTHER – Pat

(Relight candle)

I relight my candle because God is love and as humankind is made in the image of God, so motherhood most fully focuses that image of love.

The three MOTHERS – Joy, Valentine and Pat.

Now abide faith, hope, and love, these three, and the great of these is LOVE

Valentine Ling Ronolea

Valentine Ling Ronolea

MU President,

Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki.



- A** Angels
- D** Days of preparation
- V** Voices singing carols
- E** Expectation
- N** Nativity Plays
- T** Time to share with family, friends and Foodbank





While there have been no meetings in Kapiti since the last Provincial Newsletter, there has still been much activity.

Members were involved in gathering Christmas Shoe Boxes. As these cannot be sent overseas at this time, the boxes will go to needy local children. We are very fortunate to have a children's and Families Minister in our Parish. Rev Fiona Thomson (known as Rev Fee – see photo 1) works tirelessly to offer new experiences of the Good News to children either on Sunday or those attending the various Toddler's Plus Playgroups, run by Katie Lewis or the after school gathering on a Wednesday afternoon. In addition, Rev Fee is also chaplain to a local Primary School.

Through these avenues, Rev Fee gets to know the families and is aware of the ongoing need of many local families. Aa parish we support families and schools with fresh veg and fruit each week. At Christmas time, there is much joy in being able to provide a gift box for a child who would otherwise miss out. In addition to the Christmas boxes which Rev Barbara Bonifant is blessing before Rev Fee collects them for a final sort and distribution.(see Photo 2)

As it was not possible to have an Advent Service in St Paul's Cathedral in Wellington, members were encouraged to attend their local Parish Advent services.



A small group of 10 of us met for food and fellowship in local café. It was obvious by the level of chatter that everyone enjoyed the afternoon immensely and have asked that we do this again in the New Year.

In Waikanae, a Wellington City Mission representative came to talk about the work – particularly at this time of year. A new initiative IS THE Toy Store . This Christmas, The Mission will provide families in the Wellington region the dignity of choice, through our Toy Store.

Rather than receiving generic toys from The Mission, parents and caregivers will be invited to the Toy Store to choose a gift for their children.

Supporting parents in this way, provides the mana-enhancing experience of intentional gift giving, and enables families to enjoy a very special Christmas morning.

A substantial donation of new toys were presented to The Mission to increase the choices that parents and caregivers have. (unfortunately the photos aren't available).

All this demonstrates that we are all family and that contact, and conversation is so necessary.

Thank also to all those members who have sent emails letting me know how they are coping and for the many good wishes for the Christmas season when it arrives.

While we are still in Advent and looking to the coming of our Lord, we pray:

Some Simple Things to Pray for During Advent:

Pray for attentiveness to what truly matters, without being distracted by trivial things.

Pray for opportunities to learn something new regularly.

Pray for discernment of how God would like you to set your priorities and the ability to focus on them consistently to fulfil His purposes in your life.

Pray for the grace to be able to rest, become aware of God's presence, and enjoy it.

Pray for strong relationships with other people in the bond of a loving community.

Pray for peace in all situations, no matter what the circumstances.

Pray for an enlivened imagination that helps you contribute to the world in creative ways.

Pray for freedom from all that burdens you - past mistakes, fears, destructive habits, hurts other people have inflicted, and more.

Pray for joy and a sense of humour.

Pray for confidence in God's love for you and trust in His power to work things out for the best in your life.
Pray for a clear mind and the ability to clearly communicate what you value to others.
Pray for purity so you can grow as a person and encounter God more fully.
Pray for a passion to pursue justice.

~ Edited from Whitney Hople's "Pray for Simplicity this Advent"

Peace and blessings,
May each of you know the Love and Joy which is at the core of Christmas,

Ann Desmond

Ann Desmond,
President, Wellington Diocese

EPIPHANY BRANCH, MASTERTON

The last three months of our year are very straightforward:

October is our AGM and we added two new Committee members to our number which is great. At this meeting we also decided to sponsor three children to the summer camp at Riversdale Beach (in conjunction with the Open Home Foundation).

November is our Branch birthday and this year we celebrated 73 years. Mrs Bernice Olsen, a past Branch Leader, cut the cake which had been made by a member's nephew. We also admitted two new members to our branch.

Sadly at this meeting we farewelled members Shirley and Jim Ball who have gone to live in Levin. They will be sorely missed as Jim has chaired our AGMs for a number of years. We also had an extra collection for the local Food Bank which was very generously supported.

December is our Advent meeting - "Unless the church keeps Advent, nobody will" - our service this year focused on the Incarnation and Jesus' journey into our world. Each year we have a theme for our social time and our friends from St Patrick's join us. This year was Joseph's Amazing Dream Coat and members were encouraged to wear many colours. Our committee gave an overview of the biblical story and much to the horror of those present, they had to listen to some 25 colours and remember as many as they could! Some did very well indeed. We then sang Any Dream Will Do which is a great tune.

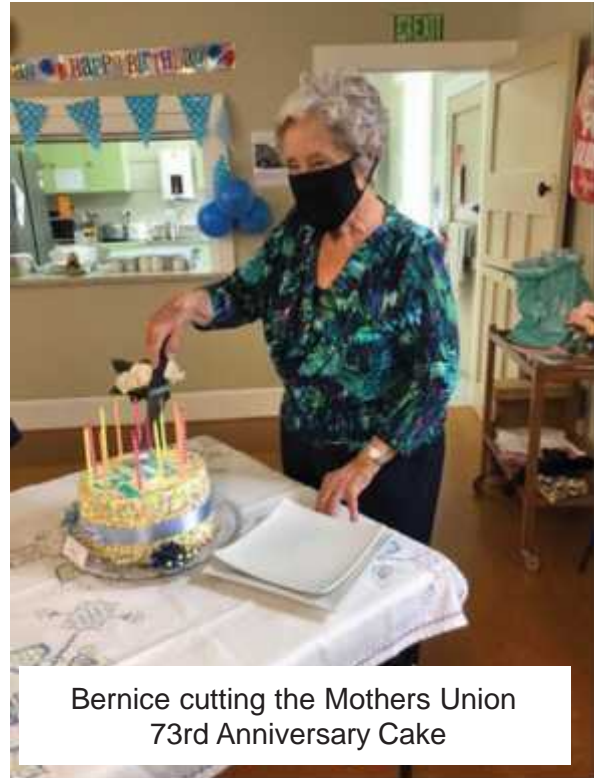
Second time around, we added the in-between sounds to the music.

Finally everyone was on their feet for the "colour parade" and again the dream song was sung with even those on walking sticks joining in. It was fantastic fun with thanks to Vicar Hennie for taking care of the technology for us.

At this meeting we have a special collection for the Hospital Chaplaincy and members are very generous. Before folk left, everyone was given a little card with a scripture verse on it to take home with them and encouraged to pray for each other over the holiday period. It was a great way to end our year.

Cheryl Hansen

Cheryl Hansen, Leader



Bernice cutting the Mothers Union
73rd Anniversary Cake



Jim and Shirley's Farewell



The grand colour parade



Sheran Harper
our World President

