

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families



Southwark News

No 253 Spring 2019

Contents

Front Cover: Comfort Idowu-Fearon, Diocesan President & Sheran Harper, the Worldwide President at her Commissioning Service at Southwark Cathedral

Pages

- 3 Letter from Our President
- 4 MU Cathedral Prayers
- 5 Away From it All - Can You Help?
- 6 A Big Thank you and Moving on
- 7 Toilet Bags - A Project
- 8 Southwark Splash
- 9 Centenary Celebrations
- 10 Feeding the Hungary
Community of the Cross of Nails
- 11 Congratulations - 100 Years Old
- 12 MU in Harare, Zimbabwe
- 13 MU 5k Walk
- 14 From Mary Sumner's Footsteps
- to Being In Step With God



Back Page: Diocesan Details

Forthcoming Events

Four training days for new and continuing branch / deanery officers

Wed, 3 April - St Francis, Horley, 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Sat, 27 April - Holy Trinity Centre, Wallington 10.30am -12.30pm

Tues, 4 June - St Peter's, Norbiton, 10.30am - 12.30pm

Sat, 22 June - Trinity House, 10.30am - 12.30pm

Thurs, 4 July Southwark MU AGM - Trinity House. 11.00am

*Deadline for any articles for the Summer 2019 Southwark News is:
Tuesday 11th June*

Letter from Our President

Dear Sisters in Christ

Welcome to our Spring Southwark News for 2019. I can't believe I will be writing to you as the new DP following Cynthia. When I joined in 2016, I remember the call by Cynthia for vacancies to be filled. At my second meeting, I agreed to be the Action and Outreach coordinator not really knowing what I was letting myself into. Now two years on, I am being called to be the Diocesan President for the next triennium.

Before I introduce myself, let me say thanks to Cynthia for her leadership role these past three years. You are indeed worth emulating. I also thank all those who have completed their terms or chose not to carry on. I pray that you will all find joy and contentment in whatever you will be doing, but don't forget MU. Your expertise will always be needed.

My name is Comfort Amina Idowu-Fearon, originally from Nigeria. A retired nurse, married to a clergyman who was Bishop/Archbishop in two dioceses in Nigeria for 25 years. I was Diocesan President during this period. My husband is now the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion and an assistant Bishop in the diocese of Southwark. We have three children and two grandchildren.



We give thanks for all we were enabled to do in 2018 and our plans for the year ahead. Our AFIA and Tea @3 continue to grow as we are able to give more holidays for people with various needs. Offering our services at St Thomas' Evelina Hospital, means we encounter mums each week with our tea and cakes and a chance to talk. This year we are embarking on a new project, Communicating English - Women to Women. As we continue to focus on families, we also want to continue our prison work especially with families of prisoners. Last year, we teamed up with

Prison Hope when they had a family fun day. We were able to provide food and fun activities for about 400 children and their families. It was a great event. We also want to re-energize our focus on parenting which is very important.

Thanks to all who turned up for the Summer of Hope programme at the Cathedral and also to each one of you in your deaneries and branches for all you are doing to share God's love with others. MULOA continues and we hope that all our deaneries and branches are engaged in this process which also informs the theme for this year "LISTEN, OBSERVE, ACT ---- in Step with God." Mary Sumner listened to God, observed what was going on around her and acted. As a result, MU is represented in 84 countries of the world.

We have vacancies on the Trustee board, (Faith and Policy coordinator, Kingston Vice President, Reigate Area Rep and Safeguarding Officer) and are still short of some deanery leaders and members of Unit committees. I pray for all who will say yes and make a commitment as I look forward to working with you all.

Blessings
Comfort

MU Cathedral Prayers

Prayers are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month 11.45am-12.15pm in the Harvard Chapel, Southwark Cathedral. All are welcome.

Led by

- | | | |
|--------|---|----------|
| 27 Mar | - | Croydon |
| 24 Apr | - | Woolwich |
| 22 May | - | Kingston |
| 26 Jun | - | 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 and the Retrochoir would be prepared for the service

'AWAY FROM IT ALL' - Can you help?

Many consider AFIA to be the best MU project in the British Isles and it is certainly very popular with MU members.

As Southwark's AFIA Representative, I have found it a very worthwhile, enjoyable and rewarding job, especially when having overcome difficulties and setbacks, I am able to send a family away on a holiday where they can forget their worries and have an enjoyable and healing time together.

2019 is my fourth year as AFIA Rep and I feel, at my age, it should be my last. So I am looking for someone to work with me on AFIA holidays, as an additional contact and back-up, with a view to taking over from me in 2020.

The work mainly involves telephone calls and use of emails, and is therefore light, intermittent, occasionally intense, and it can easily be done from home. (A dedicated AFIA email address is shortly to be set up for data confidentiality.) Although, open to requests throughout the year, the bulk of holidays, outings, etc. take place during school holidays. So, it would be helpful if you are able to make and receive telephone calls during the working day, and to be generally contactable during school holidays.

So, do think about joining me. You won't regret it.

Pat Fisher, AFIA Rep

(contact: Anne Love, Diocesan Secretary, if interested.)



A Big Thank You and moving on...

Dear friends, At our thought provoking Advent Service you kindly gave me flowers that matched my outfit which made me smile – colour coordination is so me!! Joking aside, I love flowers and they were truly beautiful. You also gave me a card, thanking me for my term as Diocesan President, enclosing a generous cheque. Thank you all so much. In 2020, I am (all being well) going with a group led by The Dean, the Very Revd Andrew Nunn, on Pilgrimage to Austria and Oberammergau and your gift will go towards this exciting trip. Bless you all. I will tell you all about it on my return.

In the meantime I will be busy doing lots of different things but my main focus will be to get the new MU Southwark initiative off the ground, up and running. 'Communicating English' - Women teaching English to non-English speaking women within friendly groups. In the last few weeks, I have visited two places in South



Croydon where I have met so many women who speak little English and therefore lack confidence and find everyday tasks difficult. We are now ready to offer a good 'start up package' which includes funding for the training of one facilitator, a resource pack and for refreshments. There are many women in our Diocese whose first language is not English and through the generous legacy left by our faithful member, and retired teacher, Sheila Dibben, we can be of help and a real blessing. In reaching out in this way we and our community will benefit and become more integrated. For an application form to start up a group please apply to Anne Love. Please pray for this new initiative.

Cynthia & Comfort at the Advent Service

I have also taken on the role of Action and Outreach Coordinator for the next triennial which means I will be encouraging us all to keep serving families.

With love and prayers for our new Diocesan President, Comfort and for everyone of us as we go forward together supporting each other and the families around us. May we reflect the love of Jesus and may God be glorified through who we are and in all that we do.

Cynthia

Toilet Bags - A Project

A friend of one of our committee members was recently rushed into hospital. In her assessment ward she was really grateful to be given a bag of toiletries (comb, soap, shampoo, flannel etc.) that was provided by the Mothers' Union. We thought this was a marvellous idea to provide a little comfort to people in distress.

We set about collecting toiletries and small bags to put them in.

Our September meeting was spent putting together the bags and labelling them up. Men's toiletries with, for example, shaving cream and razors, were also included.

We assembled forty bags and these were delivered to Kingston hospital acute assessment ward.

Our branch, Holy Cross, Motspur Park, isn't able to do a great deal in the way of active projects, but in doing this small thing, we can give a bit of our love to others.

Sarah McAlister



Southwark Splash

A Messy Celebration of Baptism



On Saturday 19th January 2019, children and young people along with their parents and family members, joined together at the cathedral for a Messy Church celebration of Baptism, under the title of SPLASH.

Chairs had been removed and the cathedral space was taken up with tables of craft and different activities exploring the meaning of baptism. The session ended with a service of praise and thanksgiving as three youngsters were baptised.

Mothers' Union members were behind the scenes providing a "Quiet Space" for families to come and chill out for a while. We provided squash, biscuits and fruit as well as colouring activities.



Several families availed themselves of our hospitality. We were able to learn where they had come from and their enthusiasm for Messy Church and also had opportunity to highlight the work of Mothers' Union. Other MU members led

a prayer activity in the cathedral. Many children and adults wrote short prayers onto folded paper flowers and placed them on to water and watched them open. Altogether it was a great morning where we were able to bless families and learn more about baptism and in doing so we were all blessed.



Centenary Celebrations

On Sunday, 9th December 2018 the Mothers' Union branch of St. Dunstan's Cheam celebrated their Centenary with a rather special Family Mass, led by Fr. Derek Brice.

It was a great pleasure to welcome our Diocesan President, Cynthia Smith, Vice President Croydon Area, Norma McKnight, Sutton Deanery Leader, Janice Clarke and members of other branches in the Deanery who had come to offer their support and share in our important day.



The numerous, colourful Mothers' Union banners looked magnificent as they were carried by members up the aisle of the church and placed by the altar.

During the service, the St. Dunstan's banner was rededicated by Fr. Derek and all members renewed their vows. Gifts of a baptismal ewer and a lectionary, purchased with contributions from branch members, were presented to the church providing a lasting memorial of this important and happy occasion.



The church was full and it was a real joy to share our Centenary celebrations with the many families and members of the congregations of Cheam Parish who were there with us. After the service, we enjoyed a glass of fizz and the delicious cake made and beautifully decorated by one of our members.

It was a memorable, enjoyable occasion and before leaving, we gave a thought to those women of Cheam who 100 years ago had agreed to open a branch of Mothers' Union here at St. Dunstan's and become part of this amazing organisation.

Sue Wass

Feeding the Hungry – Hand to Hand

Packing Food to Feed the World

The Trustees were invited through Bishop Karowei's office, to a 'Feed the Hungry' event at Trinity House, on Friday 29th June 2018. Those who were able to go had an enjoyable morning packing food. When we arrived all the equipment that was needed, was laid out for us. This included equipment to measure out the correct quantities of each ingredient, the heat sealers which keep the food enclosed, fresh and clean during the shipping process, and the boxes which hold 216 meals. Every box we packed would help feed six children for a month!

We packed in groups of six, wearing fetching plastic hats and gloves. When the bags were filled we passed them down the line to be sealed, then put on a board, when that was full, they were packed into the boxes. A bell went at the end of the session indicating a total of 5,000 bags had been filled.



Ann Squirrell

Some of us filling the bags in our red hats

Community of the Cross of Nails

On Monday, 12th November, it was my joy to represent Southwark Mothers' Union in our Chapel in Mary Sumner House for a Ceremony for the presentation of a Cross of Nails. Mothers' Union has joined the Community of the Cross Of Nails.

The Community of the Cross of Nails is a network of Churches and Christian organisations who, inspired by the story of Coventry Cathedral, share a common commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation. This they do through seeking to heal the wounds of history, learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity and building a culture of peace.



After our Affirmation of Commitment, we were presented with a Cross of Nails which our Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey, received and graciously handed it around to every one of us who were in attendance, to hold. It was a very moving service and was

followed by a very friendly reception, where I met our Worldwide President Elect, Sheran Harper, who told me that she already has a special relationship with Southwark as she has stayed with Jodie Lomax on more than one occasion. I was able to thank Lynne for her inspired leadership and assure Sheran of our prayers as she prepares to take us forward.

Cynthia Smith

Congratulations: 100 Years Old

Irene White who is a member of MU Holy Trinity, Redhill, reached the grand age of 100 on 17th January. She enjoyed two parties, one given by the residents of the flats where she lives and the other arranged by MU members in our church centre. She was joined by some very good friends and members of our branch. She had a special birthday cake and a beautiful flower arrangement. The highlight of her day was undoubtedly receiving a greetings card from HM The Queen.



Irene was admitted to the Mothers Union on 7th March 1945, so with 74 years membership, perhaps she is setting a record for Southwark?

Jenny Kempsell

Mothers' Union in Harare, Zimbabwe

On 12th February St Barnabas, Sutton Mothers' Union Branch had a visit from two ladies from Zimbabwe - Perpetua, a Mothers' Union member at Banstead in Guildford Diocese who used to live in Harare Province of Zimbabwe and whose brother is still living there, and Imelda who was in Zimbabwe just two weeks before.

They told us about how life used to be in Zimbabwe and how things have changed. With greed and corruption and political in-fighting the situation has got decidedly worse, with unreliable electricity and sanitation, violence and unrest on the streets, food shortages, strikes, rises in fuel costs and fuel shortages, soldiers on streets searching homes, children unable to get to school, breakdown of social media. Perpetua's brother lives in a rural area and is self sufficient but he still needs cooking oil, petrol and paraffin to survive.

The Mothers' Union is very important in Zimbabwe and women are very proud to wear the uniform. Each part of the uniform has a special significance, one of them being that the five white buttons on the blouse represent the wounds of Christ at his crucifixion and another is the pocket, for keeping money to give to the poor. MU members support one another in times of crisis, at weddings and especially at funerals. A video of a funeral was shown, where at the end of the service all the Mothers' Union members linked arms around the grave and said the Mothers' Union prayer and Hail Mary.

Until quite recently Harare Diocese branches were very similar to those in the Southwark Diocese, doing the same Action and Outreach work, helping the poor and disadvantaged and even hosting the Worldwide Mothers' Union Conference on the Community and Church Mobilisation Process. This teaches people how to help themselves through Scripture, how to grow their own crops, start saving plans, start micro businesses and saving for healthcare but, of course, things in the recent past have been so much more difficult. The situation in Zimbabwe has been reported in "The Bridge" and Zimbabwe is one of the projects for the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call this year. We have been commended to

pray a prayer written by the Dean of Southwark Cathedral, for the people of Zimbabwe:-

Loving God, strong and merciful, we hear the cry of our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe and we place them into your hands. May the hungry be fed, the sorrowful consoled, the injured healed, the hopeless encouraged and the dead have new life in you. May justice flow like a river and may your peace rest upon them.
Amen.

When Perpetua and Imelda were asked for what they would like us to pray for Zimbabwe, they said "Peace and Security"

Janice Clarke

Mothers' Union 5K Walk

On 5th October, St Nicholas Sutton MU walked around Nonsuch Park in Cheam, through Warren Farm, which is a Woodland Trust area. There were more of us than I anticipated - about 20 in the end, plus Sunny, the dog! Our oldest walkers were, we think, aged 85, and our youngest only 7. The weather was, unfortunately, not kind to us, and we did get very wet



and cold! However, we all had fun and enjoyed each other's company and talking to people we passed in the park (also rattling our donations bucket at them!).



Everybody completed 5 km and some of us did 6 km! We finished at the cafe for a warming drink, lunch or cake!

Our youngest walker, Maya, aged 7, came with her grandmother (one of our 85 year olds). Maya particularly wanted to walk with us as she and her mum had received an Away From It All holiday this year, and Maya wanted to give something back to the MU. She was very proud to collect her sponsor money!

Nicki Richards



From 'Mary Sumner's Footsteps' to being 'In Step with God'

What is the collective noun for a group of Diocesan Presidents?



This lovely group, accompanied by Anne Love, Diocesan Secretary, were all present at the Diocesan Advent Service in Kingston in December 2018, and span the last 20 years of Mothers' Union in Southwark Diocese. That time has seen many changes, and,

with Diocesan President-elect, Comfort Idowu-Fearon also being present, leads us forward into the next phase of the story.

Having followed in Mary Sumner's Footsteps in 2018, now we are Listening, Observing, Acting – In Step with God. Some of the first steps for this new triennial took place in Southwark Cathedral on 26th February, at the Commissioning Service for the new Worldwide President, Sheran Harper, and the new Central Trustees. It was a joy to be present, and for Southwark member

Kate Buckley to lead the procession with the cathedral's Mothers' Union banner. The Archbishop of Canterbury called Mothers' Union "one of the greatest gifts of the Anglican Communion to the worldwide church", and also urged us all to "make yourselves known!".

The following prayer is taken from this Commissioning Service.

We pray for Mothers' Union members throughout the world as they share the love of Christ through their witness and their work. Thank you for the signs of transformation in the families and communities they serve.



We give thanks for the many who work for peace and justice at local, national and international level, and pray that the justice and mercy of the Prince of Peace will increasingly hold sway in our world.

We pray for all facing adversity in their lives, whether known to us or not, and thank you for those who reach out with the support they need as they walk through challenging times.

We give thanks that all we do as Mothers' Union is centred on faith and prayer, and ask for your guidance to enable our mission to thrive in the present, and lead to a sustainable future ahead.

These prayers are taken from the prayers on the Mothers' Union website, following the theme for the year.

We pray for the flourishing of Mothers' Union as we adapt for the needs of this present age, and entrust ourselves to God to lead us forward.

We step into the future with Christ as our guide. Where he leads we will follow; where he pauses we will wait; united together as pilgrims of God. Amen

We bring these and all our prayers in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen

Hilary Richardson