

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families



Southwark News

No 262 Spring 2022

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*MU members at the Wychcroft Retreat
in October 2021 - page 8*

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Forthcoming Events in 2022

Sat 7 May - 11.30am

- Festival Service at Southwark Cathedral

Wed 6 July

- AGM, at Trinity House

Sat 15 Oct

- Diocesan Council, at St. Mildred's, Addiscombe

Please send your material for the Summer Edition by 6th June

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Letter from Our President

TRANSFORMATION - NOW!

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Spring edition of our newsletter.

First, let me ask. How are you? This may come as a surprise but this all-important question is one we must ask and answer honestly because too often we do not want anyone to press further if we say otherwise. As things are in the world we are in today, it may not be easy to say “I’m fine”; we may have a good job, a happy marriage, wonderful friends, yet the happenings around the world that include teenagers murdered on streets, and the destruction of human lives in many countries in the world today, leave us gasping for breath and, it appears, we can only watch helplessly. The talk on climate change remains huge and we are told that if we do not do anything, there will be consequences for the human environment but how effective can all our talks and conferences be in the face of human suffering?



Our theme once again for this triennial is Transformation – Now! What does this mean? It is defined as a “marked change in form, nature or appearance” This theme is a challenge in many ways because, as I see it, making a marked change in ourselves or others in our communities does not come easy. So, as an individual, what change will you make or, as a diocese, what change(s) are we going to make for our theme to be realised? Let us pray that whatever we choose to do in this Lenten season, may it lead us to becoming change agents in God’s world.

Massive thanks to Reverend Esther Foss our Chaplain, who never fails to deliver. She led us on our Lenten Quiet retreat on zoom under the same theme of transformation. We had a wonderful time

and a quote from the retreat:

“There will always be rocks in the road ahead of us. Will they be stumbling blocks or stepping stones?” It all depends on how you use them.”

At the diocesan council, we also had a talk on spiritual gifts by Father Stanley Njoka, who delivered in a different way from what we are used to. The power-point for this has been sent out, please request a copy if you want it. Thanks to all who are taking up roles on the trustee board newly and for all who are staying on. Your labour of love will not be in vain.

So, if you are seeking where to make a change, there are lots happening. The Communities of Interest is an opportunity to register your interest. The Re-imagining MU conference scheduled for January will now take place in July in Liverpool. Would you see this as a chance to get on the transformation bus? We still have lots of vacancies on the Trustee board, is God calling you to use your gift to bless others?

The times we are in are challenging and so is our theme, but let me encourage you, if you love the Lord and you have made him your rock, fortress, deliverer and strength (Psalm 18:1-2) then listen to what the Lord says in Joshua 1:9 “Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage be not afraid, neither be though dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest”

Our Festival service comes up on the 7th of May, please plan to come and make it a truly festival service. Invite your friends, non MU members and all. Also, Queen Elizabeth II, our MU patron, is celebrating her Platinum Jubilee – 70 years of faithful service to her God, her people and family. We pray to the Lord to continually bless and keep her.

Finally, let me close in the way I started “How are you?”, may you know the peace and love of God in your hearts daily as you continue to serve him.

Your sister and friend,

Comfort

New Members

St Mary Magdalene, Woolwich held an enrolment for four new members in November 2021.

Celestina Madu leads what the branch describe themselves as 'one big happy family' who look after each other. Most of the members are young and very vibrant, working well with the vicar. They have face-to-face meetings and will continue to work in the community during this year. Comfort Fearon, the Diocesan President and Catherine Hall and Jennifer Davis the VPs were privileged to take part in this very happy occasion.



Jennifer Davis

Southwark Monthly MU Prayers

MU Midday Prayers are currently being held in the Lady Chapel, Retro Choir, 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.



All About Me

Very often when you go to a funeral and you hear the eulogy, you think 'I did not know that, I would have loved to have chatted about that with the deceased'. So the St Barnabas, Sutton Mothers' Union branch decided that its February meeting would be 'All about Me' and everyone was asked to tell the members about something to do with their lives.

The meeting began with a short service including Psalm 139 (God's complete knowledge and care) then everyone in turn told something about themselves for about 2 to 5 minutes. Everyone participated.

We heard about one member working in Switzerland at aged 17; how another met her late husband; another had lived abroad in Peru, South and Central America, Indonesia, South Africa, Italy and France; another had enjoyed amateur dramatics which began with her playing Toad of Toad Hall in a school production of 'Wind in the Willows'. We also heard how nursing has changed. Another lady had worked as a record copywriter in a factory and had been in charge of a doctor's health centre and looking after grandchildren. Another member spoke about her love of watching tennis; yet another member talked about her trip to Canada and another spoke about her trip to Oberammergau with her mum and another spoke about her allotment.

From the male members we heard about one member being shot at in a bank raid, from another about how his aunt started his love of football; from a third, about playing rugby, the piano and his love of motor bikes and cars. We also heard about one man's apprenticeship in making handbags out of leather.

When we had refreshments there was an awful amount of chatter about what everyone had said.

This might be an idea for a meeting at any branch.

Janice Clarke

Lady Day Service

On Friday 25th March the Mothers' Union of Croydon Central, North and Addington Deaneries, came together at St Alban the Martyr, South Norwood for the Lady Day Service - *Annunciation of the Lord*. The service, which was a Mass, was led by Reverend Sean Gilbert and members of the Mothers' Union did the readings and prayers. It was a lovely service, full of meaning.



Afterwards, there were refreshments at the back of the church where we could relax, chat and catch up with old friends.

Val Green

Annual Gathering 2022 *Transformation - Now!*

Friday 23rd & Saturday 24th September
St Anne's Cathedral &
Waterfront Hall

International Convention Centre (ICC) Belfast



Mothers' Union
Mary Sumner House
24 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3RB
Registered Charity no 240531

Rainbow God – Our Wychcroft Retreat

“We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich, poor, educated, not educated, male, female, gay, straight, all, all, all.

We all belong to this family, this human family, God's family.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Welcoming sunshine greeted the 24 Mothers' Union members on arrival at Wychcroft in October for a short Retreat led by Revd Esther Foss, Vicar of St Andrew's in Coulsdon and Southwark Diocesan Chaplain. The old Diocesan House would be our home and quiet place to recharge our spiritual batteries with sessions based on the theme of Rainbows.



After settling in and getting to know one another on the Tuesday afternoon, we were treated to an excellent supper and a little later we gathered in the Chapel for Night

Prayers, after which silence was requested. Our first Session on Wednesday was Rainbows of Hope which brought some hilarity as Esther challenged us to imagine we were staying for a night in Noah's Ark! However, this led to the more serious question 'Can we see God at work even in the stormiest times?' How would we answer if Jesus's words to his friends were put to us 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' The song 'True Colours' played us out.

Session 2 was Rainbows of Confidence. 'Whatever your cross, whatever your pain, God always sends rainbows after the rain'. Noah gets out of the Ark and plants a vineyard. 'Don't doubt in the dark what you heard in the light.' Let us be confident that He will be there for us when we need Him. Our final music was the hymn Dear Lord and Father of Mankind.

In the afternoon Session 3, Esther quoted Maya Angelou when she asked us to 'try and be a rainbow in someone's cloud' in Rainbows of Blessing. What a lovely thing to aspire to. Proverbs 25 :11 says 'A generous person

will be enriched and one who gives water will get water'. We exchanged memories of small acts of kindness and how much they had meant to us. Some moving stories were offered.

Our final Session on Thursday was Rainbows of Joy. Charlie Chaplin wisely surmised that we would never find a rainbow if we were looking down. As we had left the Chapel that morning, a large white peahen had flapped across our path, while a green woodpecker swooped noisily through the blue sky and the hot colours in the autumn leaves and berries sang out for all to celebrate. Our own small rainbow I believe. Esther told us about Anthony de Mello, Indian spiritualist, who advocated that we 'Wake up! Put on a new mind, see the joy around us. Don't suffer from the pain of the past. Be ready to learn something new.' One contagion we can all spread is JOY. The final music had to be 'Somewhere over the Rainbow'.

This is just a flavour of our time on Retreat (organised by Margaret Fitch) for which we were truly grateful to Esther for steering us through some thought-provoking times with warmth and insight. Not only were we blessed with our sessions together, we were also offered pace to take ourselves out in the surrounding countryside; enjoy delicious home-made meals in friendship; or stay quiet and just 'be'. We prayed, worshipped and meditated and our Rainbow God was never far away.

*I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have*



*to possess it. Life is not hurrying on
to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

Margaret Fox, Tadworth Branch

The Bright Field by R.S. Thomas

A prayer for Ukraine

by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York



God of peace and justice,

we pray for the people of Ukraine today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

*We pray for those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.*

*We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.*

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen

Our members worldwide continue to fervently pray for the safety of people in Ukraine and for peace to prevail. You can join us in our daily mid-day prayer on our Facebook page.

Gifts for Charity



*In February St Alban's Mothers' Union,
helped the church raise funds of £160
for St Christopher's Hospice.*

*St Mildred's gifts ready to be
delivered to the Refuge*

A Reflection

A few weeks ago, I was privileged to be in New York for the service of Induction and Institution of the Rector of Trinity Church, Wall Street. The service was historical, as it turns out, he became the first black Rector after 325 years of the Church's existence. In the sermon, the preacher reminded the Church of all her history, how the most important job for the church right now, was getting Jesus known to those around them and around the world.



A day before the service, I was able to walk around the city and was privileged to stand where the twin towers had been – now replaced by two pools with names of the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives in the 9/11 attack. The World Trade Centre and the Liberty



Towers looking very impressive. As I look at all these memorials and the effects, my mind goes to Ukraine and the thousands of people being killed and homes being destroyed. When the fighting stops, new buildings, fountains and memorials will be raised to remember

those who lost their lives It appears that world leaders never learn anything from the past. In Syria, Ethiopia, Afghanistan etc, the killing continues, Governments continue to show their military and atomic might while ordinary citizens fall victims of these senseless acts.



These often lead me to ask where is God in

all of this? If God says he loves us and cares about us, why does he allow evil rulers to take over our world? Why all the injustices? All we need to do is go back to the Bible. God did not create the world with evil in the state it is now but man's rejection of God's love that has made the world evil (John 3:16) Isaiah reminds us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways - Isaiah 55:8-9. Romans reminds us of the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgements. (*Romans 11:33*)

In Philip Yancy's book *What's so Amazing about Grace?*, he defines grace as the Church's great distinction, it is the one thing the world cannot duplicate and the one thing it craves above all else, only grace can bring hope and transformation to a jaded world.

If grace is God's love for the undeserving, then what does it look like in action? If Christians are its sole dispensers of grace, then how are we doing at lavishing grace on a world that knows far more of cruelty and unforgiveness than it does of mercy? These questions again takes us back to the scriptures. From the Old Testament through to the New, we see God's act of mercy and love all the time.

This takes me to think of the season we are in now, which is the season of Lent. Lent is a time of preparation, waiting and penitence. Lent consists of three things, of times of praying, fasting and acts of mercy and these three are what we are being called to do.



So as we think of Ukraine and all the other countries of our world in conflict, let us do simply what God is calling us to do, let us walk with him, and trust him. It's our time to do acts of mercy.

Comfort