

## Letter from Our President

*Dear Friends,*

Welcome to 2023 and I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year; though spring is just round the corner. My excuse is that I have not seen many of you since the year began, so, I can still say 'happy new year'.

As the new year dawned, different places around the world ushered in the year in different ways. We watched with joy and utter amazement, the different fireworks displayed across the world. Some of you may have gone to big or small displays in your local community. These fireworks were meant to help us look forward to a new start to the year, hoping for better relationships and better opportunities as we go through the year. History has it that fireworks started from China, it was to ward off evil spirits while new year resolutions started with the Babylonians who made vows to appease the gods so they could have a secure future.

It maybe that you too made resolutions, or promises to do better than last year. You may have promised to work harder in your marriages, plans to make adjustments to the waistline, to behave better, to break some habits. It may not be to appease any god like the Babylonians but certainly, to feel good in yourself. All we may try to do are all man's inventions. Our future and security is in God alone. Let us take a look at Isaiah 43:1-3 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine---"

It is a wonderful thing to walk around knowing God knows our names and says to us 'be not afraid.'

In this new year, we will continue with our theme on Transformation.

Let us look back at ourselves, our Diocese or Branches, what transformations took place in 2022? What did you do differently that brought about change and how are we going to carry forward the change that has occurred? This leads me to talk about Re-imagining Mothers' Union.

Our organisation has been in existence for one hundred and forty seven years and we are looking forward to our 150th in a few years' time. What shall we be celebrating? We are just finding out that people in and around us have never heard of Mothers' Union. We need to ask ourselves 'what have we been doing?' What I am finding at the moment, is that one branch after another is closing down, even though the church still has congregation, many are reluctant to become members. While vacant positions are not being filled, or leaders who have served their time cannot find people to succeed them, then it is time to take another look at stepping up, that is to say, look at new ways of being MU.

Re-imagining Mothers' Union is the new song from the Central MU.

We are being asked to think and look at new ways of being MU. So in the current climate, what can we do to prevent branches from closing down and how can we resuscitate dead ones or even think of opening new branches. The real question is how do we want to re-imagine MU in our diocese? Many suggestions have been made in the past, like changing time of meeting, moving to joint leadership roles, ensuring that members who over many years were faithful and are now unable to pay their subscription, should not lose their membership.

I am grateful to Bishop Christopher for introducing us to the Communications department in the diocese. We have had time to meet with Vernia Mengot, the Editor and Communications Manager, to look at the various ways and possibilities of how MU in the diocese can be re-imagined. We have plans to take a new look at our prisons' work, as we partner with the diocese and what new innovations can take place. There are lots of ideas and plans of what we can do.

In Ezekiel 3:1-14, we read about the valley of dry bones where God assures Prophet Ezekiel that dead bones will rise. Yes let us rise and breathe new life into our MU, so that together we can spread the good news of Jesus to our families and communities, in doing this, through prayers and actions, we will see transformed people.

As I write, we are now in the season of Lent, that time of the Christian calendar when we remember the 40 days leading to the death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. I pray that for each one of us, whatever we choose to do, it will not be another ritual but an intentional time of prayer, seeking and listening to God and doing acts of Mercy.

We have just had our Lent Quiet Day, ably led by our chaplain the Revd. Esther Foss, exploring Peace, Growth and Awakening. For each of these, there was the constant reminder that Jesus is always there calling us to follow. One of the quotes we had was a quote from Pope Francis:

*"Lent comes to make its prophetic appeal, to remind us that it is possible to create something new within ourselves and around us..."*

Finally, we have begun to hear the joyful song of the birds, daffodils etc beginning to show colours to tell us that spring is around, what will you be growing in your garden this spring/summer? How marvellous that a little seed, a little soil and water bring abundant life and joy when it grows.

As we continue faithfully our journey with God in this year 2023, I pray that each one of us will experience God in a new way.

I conclude with this prayer taken from the Platinum Prayer book:

***"Lord Jesus,  
May we be inspired by your life of service and follow in your way  
To learn to selflessly serve you and our neighbour  
To be more thoughtful and respectful of others.  
To be ever observant and ever alert to others' needs  
To be wise and sensitive helpers – and, in our daily lives, doing all  
things through love as we serve you Lord. Amen."***

*By Diocesan members, Rattlesden Benefice,  
St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocese*

Your sister and friend,

*Comfort*