

## Knowle Mothers' Union, Branch Report for 2023

### Theme for 2023: Transformation – Now!

The year began with our annual service, at which Geoff Lanham spoke and Deirdre Moll, MU Diocesan President was present, and the AGM followed as detailed in the minutes. Patti Rollinson was enrolled, and Shirley Vincent was welcomed from another branch.

The committee has worked well together, each using their different God-given talents for the benefit of the branch. The ten members of the committee for 2023 are listed below.

Yvonne Abrahams	Penny Harbour	Ann Shaw
Ann Bower, Branch Leader	Adrian Harris, Treasurer	Janet Stewart
Carolyn Cornfield	Margaret Pountney	
Susan Ditchfield	Claire Rebeiro	

In June we enrolled Hilary Wynde and sadly, Suzanne Nicholls died In September. Six memberships have lapsed, and we now have 82 Members, most of whom come to the branch meetings in the hall.

### Prayer

Mothers' Union is based on prayer, and we continue to meet monthly in Carolyn Cornfield's home to pray together. Often there are only two or three of us; so, many more are welcome! The annual Wave of Prayer took place in January, when we met in the church to pray together for branches around the world whilst some prayed in their homes. In church and in our branch, we have prayed against modern slavery and gender-based violence and on Mothering Sunday we have encouraged prayer for all who have care of children.

**Branch meetings** We have enjoyed a range of speakers from different backgrounds, professions or areas of interest. Each meeting includes a time of worship and prayer and usually an opportunity to buy MU cards from Carol Kay, from her attractive and well-stocked stall. The speakers included:

Bruce Richard: Facial Cosmetic surgery and who you are. Does surgery make the changes that you are hoping for?
Sarah Covington: Children in the Heart of God
Diana Murungu: Mothers' Union in Zimbabwe, a lived experience
Margaret Fulford: MU in Malawi - our Diocesan Link
Susan Ditchfield: I was a stranger and you invited me in
Roxanne Chung: From Egypt to Canaan (about her move to the UK from Hong Kong)
Jamie & Margaret Walsh: on the Narthex Food bank and its other services
Steve Johnson: Nudges, Whispers and a Megaphone: How does God get your attention?
A Christmas Special: Fun, Carols, Sketches, readings, poems and prayers, devised by Margaret Fulford

The committee has continued to work through the suggestions from members, made in our session on following in Mary Sumner's footprints, in September 2022, some of which we have now implemented, such as more emphasis on standing against gender-based violence and we know more about our link dioceses, very much due to Susan Ditchfield's perseverance with the contacts.

### Supporting others

We contributed some 87.5cu ft of materials to the container going from the Birmingham Diocese to Malawi, double last year's contribution and £2,251 towards freight costs and the Malawi Fund. We were also able to send 187 items (i.e. 12 carrier bags) to Women's Aid and to contribute about 50 toys along with £175 as gifts for the children of prisoners, as well as signing 60 Christmas cards for the prisoners themselves, which I believe are greatly appreciated. KnitWits, led by Judy Townsley and Margaret Pountney, has made and delivered to Birmingham hospitals, some 1700 items for premature babies, which are so much appreciated by the new mums. We made financial contributions to the

various MU funds, as detailed in the Treasurer's report and MU members continued to play a full part in many church activities, taking opportunities for service locally.

### **Publicity**

We are very grateful to Sheena Clark, who updates our notice boards in Church and Saint John's Hall. I'm sure you will agree with me that they look extremely attractive. Ann Shaw kindly provides photographs for us to use for publicity and we endeavour to have an article in the Parish Magazine each month, generally telling people about the next event and including photographs of recent activities. Our page on the Knowle Parish Church website has recently been delightfully updated by Catherine Robinson in the Parish Office and can be found on: [https://www.kpc.org.uk/Groups/404640/Mothers\\_Union.aspx](https://www.kpc.org.uk/Groups/404640/Mothers_Union.aspx) . There remains the sale of MU cards to be added to the page.

### **Diocesan events**

We have supported Diocesan meetings and events for all members in the diocese, the annual Festival in the Cathedral and the Away Day, held at Temple Balsall. Knowle hosted the Diocesan Summer Social, which was very well supported and greatly enjoyed. Thank you to all involved in making it come together so well.

### **Special events**

This past year, these included a lovely strawberry tea in Margaret Fulford's garden, a much-enjoyed outing for 34 members to the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, organised by Penny Harbour, a children's games stall for the village Coronation celebrations, one Lent lunch and one Advent lunch, welcoming any from the village and each serving around 60 meals and a Beetle Drive organised by Adrian Harris.

### **Our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

We will celebrate this in 2024 and have commissioned a new banner for the branch to mark the occasion. This will be hand made by Liz Paine, who made the seasonal banners in church, that are widely loved. Part of Stella Jarman's legacy of £1000 to our branch, will be used to pay for it. Bishop Anne of Aston, will join us for a special celebration and service, planned for 9 May 2024.

### **Working with the MU diocese**

Some of our members continue with roles at diocesan level:

- Margaret Fulford (past Diocesan President) and Susan Ditchfield on the Worldwide Committee
- Adrian Harris as Gift Aid Administrator
- Jill Harris as AFIA Facilitator (AFIA = Away From It All, holidays for needy families in Birmingham)
- Peter Johnson as Diocesan Treasurer. Peter has just retired from the board of MU Enterprises Ltd as a non-executive director after 10 years in this role and before that he served on the central Finance Committee for 6 years.
- Judy Townsley with oversight of the Baby Project, Knitted Items

### **Thank you**

Thank you to the committee and all members for your support and encouragement. This year Yvonne Abrahams, Margaret Pountney and Ann Shaw step down from the committee and Judy Townsley steps back from nine years of leading KnitWits. I am so grateful to each one, for all that they have contributed. We now ask God to guide us into 2024 and to keep us open to His will in 2024 as we continue to live by the aims and objectives of Mothers' Union worldwide.

*Ann Bower, Branch Leader, 11 January 2024*