

### Thurston Mothers' Union.

We thought that this month, as the Newsletter starts up again, we would use the opportunity to say more about our M.U. than we usually do. You may have read in the Newsletter that we are a group of ladies who meet on a Tuesday afternoon each month (in normal times) in The Rock, next to St. Peter's church. We invite speakers to some of our meetings, but during the year we also hold a Holy Communion service, take part in the World Day of Prayer and the MU Wave of Prayer, and have a Carol Service. The MU is a worldwide Christian group who welcomes everyone who has been baptised or wishes to be baptised. M.U. members now are not all mothers, nor even all women. Our main aim is to support marriage and family life. Married or single, male or female, young or old, there is a place for everyone in the Mothers' Union. We are a movement of over 4 million Christians in 84 countries round the world. We volunteer in our local communities putting our faith into action and giving people a helping hand in communities of all faiths and none. We welcome visitors to all our meetings.

The founder of MU was a vicar's wife called Mary Sumner. When she was a grandmother, she was very much aware of how much support her daughter needed with her first child in her new role as a mother. She then decided she would find a way of providing support for all new mothers in their parish. This led to the first meeting in 1876, when she was so nervous that she had to ask her husband to speak for her! What would she have thought if she had known that following her very tentative start there would eventually be 4 million members.

In our branch we support MU projects in this country and abroad. AFIA (Away From It All) provides holidays, days out, or school outdoor visits, giving a much needed break for families who are going through stressful times. We head up our church Christmas Bazaar which raises money for our church and our own MU. We raise money via personal donations, cake stalls and our Bring and Buy at each meeting. We support Storehouse along with the congregation and we knit hats for seafarers alongside other knitters; some of us volunteer for other charities; we pray regularly with guidance, if we wish, from our MU prayer books and other Christian publications. A new one is coming out now (called Words of Comfort) with prayers, poems, and reflections compiled by our members in Suffolk. We promote Fair Trade by having a Fair-Trade stall in church once a year – our church is a Fair-Trade church. We support the Women's Aid centre in Bury with donations of vouchers at Christmas and with good quality used household linen, and with toiletries.

Some of the Suffolk branches run parenting programs for parents of all children from babies to teenagers - and these are very popular; some members attend wedding fairs to help couples who are interested in having a church wedding and those who are already starting to plan one.

There are many flourishing branches in the African countries where they do the most amazing work caring for people, helping in war-torn situations and in natural disasters; teaching Literacy and Numeracy to many women (and men) which enables them to run their small businesses more efficiently. Many of the church members in African churches are in the MU.

As soon as we are able to start our meetings again you will find the notices in the MU section of the Newsletter. If you would like to know more you can ask Joy (231301) or Jill (231647) or any MU member, or go on the benefice website for St. Peter's and Holy Innocents, or the MU websites – for St. Edmundsbury diocese or the national website.

Joy Bolwell (Branch Leader)

Jill Rood (Branch Secretary)