

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Diocese of Birmingham

**BRANCH
INFORMATION PACK**

CONTENTS

	Page
What is Mothers' Union?	1
Diocesan Mothers' Union	2
Branch Leader Role	3
Branch Secretary Role	4
Branch Treasurer Role and Annual Accounts	5
Gift Aid Scheme	8
Mothers' Union as a Charity	9
Planning your Programme	10
Booking a Speaker	11
Leading Branch Worship	12
Branch Annual Meeting	13
Mothers' Union Year - what to expect and when	14
Safeguarding	15
Mothers' Union Enterprises	16
Mothers' Union Vocabulary	17

FORMS - The following forms are all available from the office

Gift Aid Declaration

Safeguarding Return

Branch Report Form 20..

Expenses Form

Speakers' Expense Forms

Mothers' Union Birmingham

The Church of England
Citadel
190 Corporation Street
Birmingham
B4 6QD

0121 643 0938
office@mubham.org.uk
www.muenterprises.org/birmingham

For all officers see Diocesan Directory - available from the above office

What is Mothers' Union?

Mothers' Union is an international Christian membership charity that aims to demonstrate the Christian faith in action through the transformation of communities worldwide.

We are working with people of all faiths and none in 84 countries to promote stable marriage, family life and the protection of children through praying, enabling and campaigning.

Our aims and objectives are:

- To promote and support married life.
- To encourage parents in their role to develop the faith of their children.
- To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service.
- To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children.
- To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

Our vision

Our vision is a world where everyone prospers. We actively pursue this vision with prayer and action, helping to build confident people and resilient communities. Our movement seeks to bring about justice, challenge prejudice and advocate change.

Our values

Mothers' Union is a Christian mission organisation working with people of all faiths and none. Mothers' Union is firmly rooted in a voluntary ethos centred on mutual respect and collaboration. Our governance, leadership and programmes are undertaken and driven by members within their own communities worldwide.

Our membership

Our members are not all mothers, or even all women. They are single, married, parents, grandparents, or young adults just beginning to express their social conscience. Mothers' Union provides, for all four million members, a network through which they can serve Christ in their own community - through prayer, financial support and actively working at the grassroots level in programmes that meet local needs.

How We Work

Mothers' Union's governance, leadership and programme work are driven by and undertaken through its volunteer membership.

Being part of Mothers' Union is an important step in our members' journey in faith as they seek to promote stable marriage, family life and the protection of children. This is achieved within the context of three clear strands that form the core of all Mothers' Unions throughout the world.

The first is the centrality of **prayer** to all we do.

The second is how members **enable** individuals, families, and communities to discover and utilise the skills and knowledge that they possess, which are culturally relevant and appropriate for their circumstances.

The third is **campaigning** to challenge the mechanisms that perpetuate social injustices. In order to do this Mothers' Union provides its members with the resources they need to help identify the needs of their local communities and plan how they can help effectively.

Our Governance

Having established its constitution in 1896, Mothers' Union was granted a Royal Charter in 1926 which has since been updated by several supplemental charters. We are registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales (240531).

The full Mothers' Union Constitution can be downloaded from the website:

<http://muenterprises.org/birmingham/members/>

Mothers' Unions in the UK and across the world

There are 68 independent local Mothers' Union charities in the UK & Ireland who serve their communities and are affiliated to the Central Mothers' Union which supports them in their activities.

Diocesan Mothers' Union

(Birmingham Mothers' Union Charity No is 1065815)

Mothers' Union of Birmingham is an independent charity which is governed by a Constitution and Regulations. Every branch in Birmingham can have a copy of this sent to them upon request to the office.

Birmingham Mothers' Union is led by the Diocesan President and a board of Trustees with co-opted members as necessary. They meet regularly throughout the year to fulfill the responsibilities of the charity and to agree local strategy and projects.

The branches and friendship groups of Mothers' Union Birmingham are divided into areas based on geographical location. These are supported by an area coordinator.

North: All Saints, Four Oaks. All Saints, Grendon. St Peter and St Paul, Kingsbury. Polesworth Abbey.

East: St Mary and Margaret, Castle Bromwich. St Richard, Lea Hall. St Peter and Paul, Water Orton. St Peter, Balsall Common. St Alphege, Solihull. Knowle Parish Church.

South: Cathedral. Ascension, Stirchley. St Peter, Hall Green. St James, Shirley. St Stephen/St Wulstan, Selly Park. Christchurch, Yardley Wood. St Laurence, Northfield. St Anne, West Heath. Cathedral Branch.

West: St Barnabas, Erdington. St Paul, Hamstead. Holy Trinity, Birchfield. Zimbabwe Group. St Mary, Handsworth. St Michael, Handsworth. St Mark, Kingstanding.

Running a Branch

Mothers' Union branches are made up of a group of Mothers' Union members who meet to pray and worship as well as consider how the group can support families within their church and local community.

Local branches take on many forms depending on the community in which they live. As a branch, you will be able to share ideas, support each other in fellowship and reach out to those in your community and the wider church.

Running a branch can be hard work but it is also immensely rewarding. There are great ideas on the websites to help with ideas for running your branch, and for prayers and services or contact the Diocesan President or Area Coordinator.

This pack is to try and make things easier for you, especially if you are new to Mothers' Union.

Use the websites for lots of other information and help and in some cases the link is included but there are regular updates so always check these out on a regular basis.

You will need to register as a member on www.mothersunion.org website and then also as an officer (Branch Leader, Secretary, Treasurer,) which will give you access to extra information.

BRANCH LEADER ROLE

The Branch Leader is the named person to contact within the branch and is supported in prayer and practical matters by branch members, group and diocesan leaders.

What does it involve?

- Develop ways to carry out Mothers' Union Aim and Objectives.
- Promote Mothers' Union within the church and local community.
- Attract new members and arrange for their admission into Mothers' Union.
- Support existing members (whether they attend meetings or not), helping them to appreciate their part in the worldwide fellowship and ensuring appropriate pastoral care when needed.
- Inform members of forthcoming events, Mothers' Union prayer needs and developments.
- Keep the incumbent informed of what is happening in the branch by providing them with relevant MU literature.
- Chair meetings or delegate this to other members of the branch.
- Plan the branch programme with the committee, if you have one.
- Ensure that essential records are kept including list of branch members name, address, telephone and email contacts.
- It would also be helpful to know members' date of birth and their date of Mothers' Union enrolment.

- Ensure forms required by the diocese are completed and returned on time. (Help is always available from the office with form filling.)
- Arrange for an Annual Branch Meeting at which the reports and accounts are presented and committee are elected. January/February is the best time to hold the Annual Branch Meeting in order to receive the accounts for the preceding year.
- Act as a link between your branch, the other branches in your area and Mothers' Union Birmingham.
- The Branch Leader serves for a three-year period of office, and this can be renewed for one subsequent term of three years and requires the approval of the incumbent. Elections can be held for the post if there is more than one candidate.
- Mothers' Union Birmingham holds Members Meetings 2 or 3 times a year, Spring, Summer and Autumn for all members across the Diocese. It is an excellent way of meeting other members from your area and becoming aware of forthcoming events and other information.
- Try to keep yourself up to date with Mothers' Union activities using website/publications.

BRANCH SECRETARY ROLE

Each branch runs differently, but the following tasks are an example of some of the things that may be needed. Agree between you all, who will be responsible for what, so there is no confusion.

What does it involve?

- Keeping an up-to-date list of members and their addresses - postal and email and telephone numbers.
- Arranging for long-membership certificates - 25, 30, 40, 50 years etc. Certificates are available from Mothers' Union Enterprises Representatives (see Directory for contact details).
- Notifying the Mothers' Union Diocesan Office of members' deaths.
- Notifying the Mothers' Union Diocesan Office of special birthdays (e.g. 80, 90 years); anniversaries (Ruby, Golden etc.) These can be published in the bimonthly edition of the newsletter.
- Providing a printed programme of meetings.
- Ensuring speakers are booked and arrangements confirmed.
- Writing/email to thank the speaker or asking one of the members to do this.
- Providing posters and tickets for Mothers' Union events.
- Distributing the agenda and reports for the Annual Branch Meeting.
- Writing minutes for the Annual Branch Meeting and committee meetings.
- Dealing with any correspondence (in consultation with the Branch Leader and committee).
- Ensuring that annual returns and other forms required by the Diocesan Mothers' Union are completed and sent back on time.

Where there is a branch committee:

- Serving on the branch committee.
- Distributing the agenda for committee meetings.
- Taking and circulating minutes of committee meetings.

A secretary is normally appointed by the Branch Leader and is part of the committee. Help with paperwork or procedures is always available from the Admin Unit Coordinator or Area Coordinator.

Mothers' Union office can always be contacted for help or advice if needed.

BRANCH TREASURER ROLE AND THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

It is essential that each branch appoints a Treasurer to manage the finances of the branch, keep accurate records and prepare the Annual Accounts up to the 31st December in each year.

What does it involve?

- Keeping a careful record of all items of income and expenditure and of the cash and bank balances.
- Controlling the branch's bank account and ensuring that all withdrawals are in accordance with the instructions given to the bank (the mandate). All withdrawals should be confirmed by any two of a panel of (say) 4 signatories appointed by the branch.
- Collecting subscriptions and donations and recording them accurately in the 'books'.
- Filling in and returning the annual Gift Aid claim form (even if this is blank). See below.
- Preparing the annual accounts, arranging for them to be examined by an 'Independent Examiner' and presenting them to members at the Annual Branch Meeting.
- The Independent Examination is a simple form of audit. The Examiner need not be an accountant but must understand figures and should be independent of any member of the Branch Committee.
- Completing and returning to the Diocesan Treasurer, within the time scales set out, the Branch Accounts Summary Form.
- This and any other forms required will normally be sent direct to treasurers in November each year.
- When you have collected money from subscriptions etc or if you have surplus funds available, please send them in to the diocese as soon as possible rather than retaining them in your bank account. Branches should not keep more in their accounts than they are likely to need. It is helpful if any payments to the diocese in any one year could be sent in no later than the 9th December annually.
- When sending money into the Diocese please always use a Branch Payments Form. A revised copy is sent out each year. When sending in subscriptions it is helpful for us to receive also a simple list of the names of the members covered by those payments. This will enable us to maintain our database.

- Payments to the diocese can either be by cheque or direct to our bank account via the internet. The latter is convenient for both the branch and us. Please contact the Diocesan Treasurer if you would like more details.
 - Money collected by the Branch should be used only to support the work of MU both locally and further afield. See Notes on Page 7 about donations to other charities.
 - Providing floats for fund-raising events if required.
 - Reimbursing approved travel and other expenses using the agreed rates.
 - Reporting regularly on the financial position of the branch to the committee including any recommendations as to monies to be transferred to the diocese.
- Help with paperwork or procedures is always available from the Diocesan Treasurer or Gift Aid Officer.**

The Branch Treasurer's Year

November

As mentioned above you will receive the forms you require for the following year by the end of November. These will normally be sent by email. They will also include an advice of the subscription for the following year.

January

Collect subscriptions

- Collect subscriptions for the year from members.
- Check and update the list of members who have signed a Gift Aid declaration.
- Send any subscriptions collected to the Diocesan Office by the date advised (usually the end of March).
- The amount of the subscription will usually be announced at the Members' Meeting the preceding autumn. **Please do not collect subscriptions until the beginning of January as otherwise it makes the book-keeping more complicated.**

January/February

Annual Branch Meeting

- Complete the accounts for the previous financial year.
- Collect together all the papers that will be needed for the examination of the accounts, e.g. bank statements/building society passbook, cheque and paying in books, cash book etc
- Arrange to have the accounts checked by the Independent Examiner who, along with yourself and the branch leader should sign the accounts and the form.
- Provide a copy of the accounts for members at the Annual Branch Meeting. Report on the figures at the Meeting and be prepared to answer questions from members.
- Send a copy of the accounts, using the Branch Accounts Summary Form, signed as above, to the Diocesan Treasurer.

31 December. Close off and balance your accounts for the year.

Notes

If any Mothers' Union Collection boxes are in use ensure that they are opened during the year (as regularly as required or agreed within the branch) and the proceeds sent in the usual way.

As mentioned above all money collected by the branch should be given to Mothers' Union. Mothers' Union needs its members to support its own work.

If you have a speaker from another charity and individual members wish to make a donation, this should not be passed through the branch's books. Although not ideal the money should be handed direct to the speaker as a donation for the charity represented. However, fees agreed with a speaker beforehand should be paid from the branch account. All forms should be returned to the person specified by the date given on the forms.

Handy Tips for Treasurers

1. All cheques for Mothers' Union should be made out to 'Mothers' Union Birmingham Diocese' and sent in with a Branch Payments form which should specify what it is for.
2. Funds raised for Central Mothers' Union funds should be sent via the Diocese office, and not directly to Mary Sumner House.
3. Write things up as you go – you may think you'll remember later, but experience often proves otherwise!
4. Check in advance whether the speaker at your meeting charges a fee or has any expenses, and make sure you are prepared for this.
5. Although less common now, some members may still have Overseas boxes at home. As mentioned above arrange to open these boxes regularly so that the contents can be dealt with. You might like to hold a special box-opening event such as a coffee morning.

Don't struggle alone. We're here to help. If you have any queries, contact the Diocesan Treasurer.

Gift Aid Scheme – Information for Treasurers

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to reclaim from HM Revenue and Customs the tax paid on gifts and donations made to that charity (in our case Mothers' Union Birmingham Diocese) by individuals. Certain conditions apply:

- The donor **must** be a UK taxpayer. This obviously includes income tax, tax on interest from bank and building society accounts and also capital gains tax. It does not include VAT. Members that have regular payments from private pension schemes will often have had income tax deducted. We can still reclaim tax paid in these ways.
- The amount of tax paid by the donor must be at least equal to the tax reclaimed on donations. (Remind members that they must take into account **all** donations made under this scheme when calculating how much tax can be reclaimed – e.g., they may also have made Gift Aid declarations for the church, National Trust, etc.). In simple terms tax paid must at least equal one quarter of the amount given under Gift Aid.
- The donor must have signed and dated a declaration form, giving full name and address and stating that s/he wishes the charity to reclaim tax on the donation made. The form is available from the Branch treasurer who should receive the most up to date version each year from the Diocesan Gift Aid Administrator.
- Each donation must be traceable back to the individual donor.
- A signed declaration remains in force until cancelled by the donor, so it is good practice to remind individuals periodically in case their circumstances and/or financial arrangements have changed.

See www.mothersunion.org website for further details.

How the Scheme operates

There are two main sources of relevant donations from which tax can be recovered – annual membership subscriptions and one-off gifts and donations.

Annual membership subscriptions

We have confirmed with HM Revenue and Customs that tax can be reclaimed on the annual membership subscriptions to Mothers' Union subject to the conditions mentioned earlier.

One-off gifts and donations

Envelopes are available for those (MU members or other friends) who wish to make a one-off gift or donation to MU or to specific funds such as Overseas, Away From It All etc. Please ask the donor to fill in, sign and date the declaration on the slip or the front of the envelope. You should then mark the amount received on the envelope, and initial and date it. The money should be banked into the branch accounts and the envelope should be sent on to the Diocesan Gift Aid Administrator or may be retained in the Branch, so that we have a record of the donation. The amounts should be included in the annual return to the Gift Aid Administrator.

This can also be used when collection boxes from individuals for these funds are opened. If the member has already signed a declaration the contents of the overseas box can be included provided this is made clear to the member. (The Gift Aid declaration includes a statement that the declaration includes ALL donations paid.)

However, if the member has already signed a declaration form, this will cover one-off gifts and donations as well, and such gifts / donations should be recorded in your normal fashion and transferred to the Gift Aid form which you will receive each year.

Each year, we will send you a list of the members of your branch or deanery who have filled in a declaration form and will ask you to confirm that these members have paid their subscriptions for the current year, **including the date on which you received the subscription**. You may like to remind them that they have filled in a declaration form and check that their tax status has not changed.

We will keep all necessary records and claim the tax back annually. We would ask you to keep your records for a minimum of seven years in case we have any queries from HMRC.

Mothers' Union as a Charity

Mothers' Union is a registered charity with the Charity Commission and must therefore abide by charity law.

This means whatever we do as Mothers' Union must fit into our Aim and Objectives.

The central Charity No is 240531. **Birmingham Mothers' Union Charity No is 1065815.**

All branches in Birmingham Diocese work under the Diocesan Charity number. This means branch accounts have to be consolidated into the Diocesan accounts before being submitted to the Charity Commission. Therefore, it is important that Branches get their accounts in on time otherwise it holds up the whole procedure.

Remember also when speaking about Mothers' Union to differentiate between your personal opinion, or the opinion of your Branch, and anything said by Mothers' Union in Diocese or centrally.

It is essential to speak to the Diocesan President or a Trustee before, for example, speaking to the press unless just giving straight forward facts such as date of an event.

Information on governance may be found on Central Mothers' Union website:

www.mothersunion.org and also on Birmingham's Mothers' Union Diocesan website <http://muenterprises.org/birmingham/>

It may seem complicated but remember there are plenty of people around to help you - you can contact Diocesan Officers through the MU Office.

Planning your Programme

Your branch should be run however it suits you and your members. If you have regular meetings, some of these should reflect Mothers' Union Aims and Objectives.

It may be helpful to use the Mothers' Union theme for the year. (See Website)

To provide a balanced programme, try to include opportunities for spiritual growth, information on social concern / local issues and Mothers' Union topics.

Include some social events – outings, garden parties, quiz nights, Christmas/New Year party.

Lenten lunch and Advent lunch which could be followed with a meditation.

Reflect the needs of the members and potential members.

Meet at times to suit members and potential members – this may include an irregular pattern, providing daytime and/or evening meetings on different days of the week to allow everyone the opportunity to attend at least one meeting during the year. Also consider meeting virtually using Zoom, Teams or similar.

Ten top tips for Programme Planners

- Consult with clergy about future dates and events in the parish and include Diocesan events in your planning and printed programme.
- Allow space in the programme for current issues that may arise.
- Take advantage of resources offered by the Mothers' Union – Website, 'Connected' and other publications from the Birmingham Diocese and Mary Sumner House.
- Include some Mothers' Union topics each year so that members are kept up to date with the worldwide organisation, its aim and objects.
- Vary the format of meetings – use speakers, try discussions, PowerPoint, video/slides/tapes, craft activities, involvement in a local Mothers' Union project etc.
- Invite the President, or Area Coordinator to attend a meeting to get to know your branch and members better.
- Have an idea for a meeting 'up your sleeve' in case the planned programme falls through at the last minute.
- Publicise your programme effectively – through church notice sheet, parish magazine, posters,
- Be aware of the financial implications of your planned programme and budget accordingly, e.g. speakers' costs.

'Home-grown' Programme ideas which have worked

- Discussion on articles in 'Connected' (see p. 17).
- Social Policy discussion papers – you can report any conclusions to Mary Sumner House even after the closing date.
- Themed celebration – poems/music/readings on Advent, Christmas, Lent etc.
- Make Palm Crosses.
- Collage on Mothers' Union's five objectives – this can be displayed in church as publicity for Mothers' Union.
- Members Meeting – bring choice of readings, music, etc. – could have a theme or be completely open. Favourite things – ask members to bring and talk about heirlooms, family treasures, memories, holidays, childhood memories, etc.

- Discussions with a small group of different generations e.g. views on marriage/co-habitation, discipline of children, housework, beauty etc. (may require an experienced facilitator).
- My work – ask several members of the branch (or church) to talk briefly about their work and their faith.
- Impromptu brief talk on a subject pulled at random out of a hat.
- Fundraising events for Mothers' Union projects – e.g. quiz & supper, beetle drive, cheese and wine ... Provide information / display about the projects you are supporting.

If you have any queries, contact your Area Coordinator, or the Diocesan Office for help.

Visit <https://www.mothersunion.org/resources> and click on the drop-down box to find ideas for Branch meetings and prayers.

Speakers

Speakers need to be booked when drafting your programme – they don't mind being booked 12 months in advance. This can be done by the Branch Leader, Secretary or another committee member with this specific responsibility. The following guidelines may be helpful.

Booking a speaker

Contact the speaker and make initial arrangements about date, time, topic, title etc. If this first contact is by telephone, be considerate about the time you ring – it is normally sensible to ring between 9 am and 8 pm.

It is helpful to provide information about your branch at this stage e.g.

- Location.
- Type of venue – house, church hall etc.
- Size, age group, any specific facts about the group so that the speaker will understand the group s/he will be addressing.
- General shape of the meeting (e.g. when you have prayers, notices, tea) and length of time normally allocated for the talk.
- Check whether the speaker has any special requirements e.g. projector and screen for an illustrated talk or TV/DVD player/laptop, PowerPoint projector (don't forget extension leads if needed).
- Confirm the arrangements in writing or email as soon as possible after the initial conversation. Include instructions on how to find the location of the meeting, information about parking facilities and one-way streets for those travelling by car or availability of public transport as appropriate. A map is often useful. If you would like a reply from the speaker, do enclose a stamped addressed envelope.
- Telephone or email 7-10 days before the meeting to ensure that nothing has been overlooked and to check on practical arrangements and requirements.
- Agree the cost of expenses to enable you to have the correct money available to reimburse them at the meeting.
- Find out as much as you can about your speaker so that you can introduce them properly at the meeting – this is especially important if they are officials of an organisation.
- Check all equipment that you are providing in advance to ensure that it is in working condition.

On the day

- If you are likely to be busy with other things before the meeting, ask one of your members to act as host to welcome the speaker. It is always helpful to point out the toilets and where to put coats and offer a drink.
- Start the meeting on time – especially if it is in the evening. It may be helpful to leave your own notices to the end if the speaker needs to leave promptly.
- Either thank the speaker yourself at the end of the talk or arrange for another branch member to do this.
- Remember to pay travelling and other expenses incurred (such as photocopying) before the speaker leaves. Travelling expenses can be either the actual cost of public transport or the current mileage allowance.
- A prompt thank you letter or email to the speaker after the meeting is always appreciated.

Leading Branch Worship

Our aim in worship is to please God and to show that we appreciate His worth in all that we do in order to communicate our love for Him.

Every branch meeting should have an element of worship – it may be just saying a few prayers together or a more structured act of worship.

Preparation

Take plenty of time to prepare.

Share responsibility

The Branch Leader does not have to lead the worship. This may be delegated to another person or one person could be responsible for finding the worship leader. Try to involve as many as possible in preparation, reading a lesson or saying prayers, etc., don't do it all yourself.

Resources

Make use of Mothers' Union prayer books and other resources. The Mothers' Union website has many downloadable resources and suggested themes to use www.mothersunion.org. There are books available to buy from your Mothers' Union Enterprise representative.

Relevant

Try and make the worship relevant to the subject of the programme.

Song

Singing songs or hymns has always been an integral part of worship but if you are a small group this can be intimidating. Try reading the words of a hymn sometimes.

Quiet

Remember the words 'Be still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46). Don't be afraid to introduce a period of quiet or stillness into worship.

Branch Annual Meeting

Each branch should hold an Annual Meeting to which all members are invited, and where the report and accounts for the previous year are presented. This is an important meeting which requires some preparation if it is to run smoothly.

Agree the date of the Annual Meeting. This will probably be done as part of your normal programme planning. You will need to consider the normal meeting day for your branch but do allow time for the treasurer to prepare the accounts. Mothers' Union financial year is the same as the calendar year (1 January to 31 December), so it is usually sensible to hold the meeting in late January or February.

Check the date with the parish clergy (and parish diary if you have one).

Prepare the agenda. This should **always** include:

- Prayer.
- Minutes of the previous annual meeting.
- A report on the previous year's activities from the branch leader or secretary.
- Presentation of the accounts by the treasurer.
- Adoption of accounts and reports.
- Appointment of the independent examiner for the current year's accounts.
- Opportunities for members to make comments or suggestions, or to ask questions.

It may also be helpful to include:

- Reports on specific areas of branch and wider Mothers' Union life by committee or branch members with special responsibilities e.g. overseas links, prayer group, deanery committee representatives, literature reps, indoor members.
- Information about plans for the forthcoming year.
- Sharing ideas and vision for the future of the branch.

Every third year, we hold elections for Mothers' Union office holders, including branch leaders. You will receive information about this when appropriate. However, you may wish to elect / appoint new committee members at other annual meetings, if this is the case, ensure that elections appear on the agenda.

Agree who will be responsible for each part of the meeting and for presenting reports.

Notify your members in the most appropriate way – branch news sheet, parish notices or magazine, personal letter, email etc.

Inform the clergy / invite to attend – you may like to invite them to take the opening prayers or chair the meeting.

Ensure that you have a copy of the agenda and accounts for each member. Some branches also circulate the minutes of the previous meeting; others have them read at the beginning of the meeting.

Following the Annual Meeting

- The treasurer should send a copy of your accounts to the Diocesan Treasurer by the end of February.
- Notify Mothers' Union Office of any changes in office holders – especially branch leader, secretary or treasurer.
- It is good practice to approve the draft minutes of the annual meeting at the next branch committee whilst it is fresh in the memory.

Extra Ideas

Following the official and business part of the meeting you could try to add something extra to make the annual meeting a special occasion. You could:

Invite your clergy to celebrate communion with you before or after the business meeting.

Include refreshments or a meal.

Some branches incorporate their annual meeting alongside worship or a social meeting.

Mothers' Union Year – What to expect and when

Major dates for each year are circulated by the office at Members Meetings and as well by email/ mailing an annual calendar. Dates are planned annually and all officers in the Diocese, including Branch Leaders, are provided with details well in advance, as a reminder.

January

Annual Branch Meetings are held at the beginning of the year due to presentation of accounts for the previous calendar year.

Branch report forms need to be sent back to the office by the end of the month with details of your branch. Accurate details of current members paying subscriptions are required to ensure copies of Connected are received.

Wave of Prayer

Each year Birmingham prays for each of our link Dioceses during 15th – 17th January. Services, prayer groups or meetings are organised around the time slots each branch/group are given, and if at all possible, the whole 12 hours of each day is covered by members praying continually. A prayer leaflet is supplied with gift aid envelopes to assist with a collection

February

Branch accounts must be submitted to the office by the end of February.

March / April

Subscriptions should be returned to the office from the 1st January but no later than the end of March. Copies of Connected are sent out directly to all members.

Members Meeting - the first meeting of the year is usually in March or April.

Diocesan Festival Service at Birmingham Cathedral - March/April/May we have a Diocesan Service in the Cathedral. This may be to commission a new Diocesan President, other Trustees, or new members or officers within the Diocese. Mothers' Union Chaplain and Faith and Policy Coordinator plan the service which may be Holy Communion, Family service, or other worship. It is also an opportunity for branches to enrol new members into Mothers' Union, whilst others may prefer to keep this to their own church service during the year.

July / August

A Summer Members Meeting is sometimes held, usually in an evening, when the annual accounts are presented. This is also a time to meet others and worship together.

Birmingham usually holds a fundraising Diocesan event in July/ August, e.g., Summer Fair, Summer Lunch. Please encourage as many members as possible to attend as it provides an excellent opportunity to be together socially as well as raise money.

9th August - Mary Sumner Day - Branches may wish to recognise this day as part of their programme.

Birmingham Mothers' Union Office is closed for some weeks in August.

September

Start to think about planning your branch programme for the following year with your committee.

Order Mothers' Union Christmas cards, diaries and calendars from MUe.

The Annual Gathering is held in various locations around the British Isles and all members are welcome to attend this meeting. Ticket arrangements depend on the venue and host diocese

October

Copies of 'Connected' and the Prayer Diary are sent out directly to all members.

Members Meeting – The final meeting of the year is usually in October or November.

The subscription for the following year will be announced (to be collected from 1 January).

Events such as Quiet Days, or retreats may be organised at different times through the year.

Safeguarding

The following is a statement from the Central Trustees of Mothers' Union:

'As an organisation concerned with Christian principles and ministry in family life, the nurture and protection of children is at the heart of Mothers' Union. Both individually as members and collectively as an organisation, Mothers' Union has a duty to protect children and vulnerable adults, doing everything possible to ensure that they are safe when left in Mothers' Union temporary care.'

Everyone working with children or vulnerable adults in the name of Mothers' Union must be covered by a Safeguarding Policy. All churches in the Diocese are required to have a policy and nominated officers and, in most cases, any work done by Mothers' Union members will be covered by these policies. Birmingham Mothers' Union agrees the policy each year.

Branches are required to complete and return a form to Mothers' Union office to confirm the above. Please see forms section for the form to be returned.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding working with children or vulnerable adults or if you have direct involvement in projects you are advised to contact the MU Birmingham Safeguarding Officer through the office.

MOTHERS' UNION ENTERPRISES - 'MUe'

This is the commercial fundraising arm of Mothers' Union.

It has the following elements:

Mothers' Union has a twice yearly catalogue selling a wide range of cards, gifts and seasonal items. Items can be bought directly from Mary Sumner House, at diocesan events or through one of two enterprises reps (see list of Diocesan Officers). Items purchased through the diocese provide a 'commission' to the diocese and this money is used to further the work of the Mothers' Union in the Diocese. The MUe representatives are willing to attend branch and/or group events, meetings and/or festival services – just give them a ring. MUe sells a range of Christmas Cards, diaries and calendars – details are published around June/July each year and members are advised to get orders in early as items (particularly Christmas cards) can sell out quickly. Individual members can buy online or from the catalogue. You might want to make a group purchase to save on post and packaging. In advance of Easter and Christmas can be a good time to make a group order.

Mothers' Union Vocabulary (Mothers' Union language explained)

Here are a few terms you may come across as a member of Mothers' Union:

Admission : New members are admitted (or enrolled) to membership of Mothers' Union at a special service usually held in church. At the service, they promise to uphold the aims of Mothers' Union and to be faithful in prayer, bible study and worship, and are welcomed into the branch/group/diocese. The service may be a dedicated Mothers' Union service or be included as part of the church's regular worship. New members may also be admitted at the Diocesan Festival Service.

AFIA (Away From It All) : This is the name given to our holiday scheme. Breaks maybe offered to families who are referred to us by local clergy, doctors, social services etc. In our diocese, the AFIA representative arranges holidays individually as appropriate for the family – usually self-catering in a holiday park or a caravan belonging to another diocese. Breaks may also include day trips. The scheme is funded by donations made by individuals, branches or churches and other outside bodies.

Commissioning : People who hold an office in Mothers' Union (leaders at branch, deanery, or diocesan level) are commissioned for their work at an appropriate church service

Connected : The centrally produced magazine for Mothers' Union which is posted to all members twice a year.

Diocesan Members : Mothers' Union members who pay subscriptions to Birmingham but do not belong to a local branch.

Diocesan President : Member elected for a term of 3 years to lead and coordinate Mothers' Union in Birmingham

Enrolling Member : A previous name for the Branch Leader, who originally held the branch roll and was responsible for enrolling new members.

Enrolment : Another name for admission to membership of Mothers' Union, so called because the new member's name would be added to the branch's roll (or register).

Faith & Policy : One of the MU sub-committees concerned with prayer, spirituality and with social policy.

Festival Service : A special Mothers' Union celebration service. The Diocesan Festival is usually held at the cathedral annually in March/April/May. This may be an opportunity for enrolling new members or Commissioning post holders.

Finance, Administration and Projects (FAP) : Sub-committee which takes responsibility for Mothers' Union work in the diocese, which covers financial and administrative tasks.

Friendship Groups : These can form when a branch wishes to formally close but wants to maintain links as a group of MU members. There are no officers needed and the bank account is closed. Members are encouraged to become Diocesan members and continue to support MU by fundraising and taking part in projects such as knitting baby clothes and dementia fiddle muffs. Please contact the Diocesan Treasurer for details as to how any money raised can be paid directly into the Diocesan account.

Indoor Members : The Indoor Members Prayer Circle is for housebound members to support the work of Mothers' Union and to encourage them in their own prayer life. Members receive letters and information from the Diocesan representative but should also be visited by the local branch or group to which they pay subscriptions.

Lady Day : 25 March - the Annunciation (Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would have a son). Mothers' Union branches and groups are encouraged to mark the day with a special service.

Linked Dioceses : Each Diocesan Mothers' Union is linked to other dioceses for prayer and mutual support. Birmingham is linked to Seychelles; Bukedi in Uganda; Enugu in Nigeria; Malawi in Africa and Marathwada in India.

Mary Sumner House : The Headquarters Mothers' Union at 24 Tufton Street, London. The House is named after Mary Sumner, who founded the Mothers' Union in 1876, and was financed **by donations from members in the 1920's**.

Members Meeting : Meeting for members to receive and share information on the work of Mothers' Union in the Diocese and further afield. The meetings (usually 3 a year) are open to all members.

MUe : Mothers' Union Enterprises is the commercial marketing unit. Birmingham has 2 MUe Representatives and you may have a rep in your own branch to sell cards, diaries, pens and other goods. A percentage of the profit goes to Birmingham funds.

Newsletter : Every other month a newsletter is electronically sent out with contributions of forthcoming Diocesan events, branch events and news of individual members.

Overseas Fund : A centrally administered fund at Mary Sumner House supporting Mothers' Union projects worldwide, including the innovative Adult Literacy and Development programme.

Prayer Diary : A Mothers' Union daily prayer publication distributed to all members with the Autumn edition of Connected.

Province : A geographical area of the Church of England. Birmingham is in the UK Province of Canterbury and has a Provincial President.

Relief Fund : A centrally administered fund held at Mary Sumner House

Trustees : The group of members who act as the board of the charity in legal terms. The Diocesan President chairs the Trustee Board.

Wave of Prayer : Mothers' Union members pray for each other and the work of Mothers' Union at midday, creating a 'wave of prayer' around the world. Specific groups of dioceses are remembered in prayer each day – Birmingham's dates are 15th - 17th January.

Worldwide Council : The Worldwide Board of Trustees is accountable to a Worldwide Council. This council comprises the leaders of MU Provinces from around the world as well as the worldwide Board and former worldwide presidents. The council meets at least once in every 3-yearly cycle.

Zonal Trustee : The central charity is divided into 11 zones. Canterbury province is a single zone with a Trustee representative who sits on the central board.

NOTES

The Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord,
we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union
as we seek to share your love
through the encouragement, strengthening
and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit,
may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service
reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Published
October 2022