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THEME FOR 2023 –  
TRANSFORMATION – NOW!

**OUR NEWSLETTER  
FOR NOVEMBER 2023**



Dear friends,

Welcome to our November newsletter. This edition finds us in the middle of our Annual [16 Days of Activism campaign](#), and eagerly awaiting the start of Advent this coming Sunday.

As ever, this newsletter contains some key updates from MU locally and nationally - including details of [an exciting way to double the value of your Christmas campaign donations](#) (without spending a penny more)! We are also sharing updates from our project leaders and the usual news from our branches across Birmingham, **including some of the Christmas services and events run by our branches.**

Yet as we look forwards to advent, Christmas, and spending time with loved ones, we remember all those in the UK and beyond who will suffer loss and hardship over the next few weeks. We think especially of those who are alone and homeless at Christmas, those living under the shadow of domestic violence, and the countless innocent victims of conflict in Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza.

We hope that you will join us to pray for all who are suffering and in need, that they too may know peace.

*"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined".*

Isiah 9:2

## MESSAGES FROM NATIONAL MU

### OUR CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN



Our 2023 Christmas Appeal is once again being matched through the Big Give, which gives you the opportunity to double your donation so that even more communities can lift themselves out of poverty. This year's appeal will focus on supporting our savings and skills training project in Tanzania. By donating, you'll be helping us to support people to use their dignity and ingenuity to find local solutions to local challenges and break the cycle of poverty.

The appeal goes live on **28th November at noon** - [just come back to this page](#) (or click the link below) and you will be directed to our Big Give donation page, where any donation you make in the following 7 days will be **DOUBLED!** This means even more families will be given the start they need.

<https://www.mothersunion.org/christmas23>

**WELCOMING ISH LENNOX - ADVENT RESOURCES**



We are delighted to introduce our new Faith and Church Relations Manager, Ish Lennox, who has recently joined the Mary Sumner House staff team. She has produced some Advent and Christmas Prayers, an Advent service and some Advent Prayer Resources and Activities for our members to use.

Read about the impact faith has had on her journey to join Mothers' Union and [access our new Advent Resources](#) by clicking the link below.

[https://www.mothersunion.org/news/our-new-faith-and-church-relations-manager-and-advent-resources?utm\\_source=The%20Mothers%20Union&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=14158204\\_November%202023&utm\\_content=Advent%20Resources%20%26%20Ish&dm\\_i=1I8Y,8FGJG,JJRFRZ,YSRBW,1](https://www.mothersunion.org/news/our-new-faith-and-church-relations-manager-and-advent-resources?utm_source=The%20Mothers%20Union&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=14158204_November%202023&utm_content=Advent%20Resources%20%26%20Ish&dm_i=1I8Y,8FGJG,JJRFRZ,YSRBW,1)

**DIOCESAN NEWS**

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## ERIC SWINDELLS - In Memorium



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Eric Swindells - Diocesan MU member, formerly of St Peter's, Maney branch.

Eric will be well known to many of you as he was much involved with MU Birmingham, serving on the Board of Trustees and the leading the MU Birmingham Action and Outreach committee, for many years. He also regularly played the piano at our members meetings! Eric was also involved with National MU, and was a tremendous support to his late wife Angela, who served as our Diocesan President from 1998 to 2001.

Eric's funeral will take place on  
**Thursday 7th December, 12 noon**  
**St Peters Church,**  
**14 Maney Hill Rd,**  
**Sutton Coldfield**  
**Birmingham**  
**B72 1JJ**

I'm sure you will all join us in praying for Eric's family, and for all those who knew and loved him. We will share a full tribute to Eric with all members following his funeral.

**WAVE OF PRAYER- 15-17 JANUARY 2024**



Wave of Prayer for MU Birmingham takes place from 15-17 January each year.

In the past, we have allocated specific service timeslots to branches. However, we know that some branches have found this challenging due to the availability of churches and/or their members. **So, for 2024, year, we are simply asking branches to hold their services at whichever time over the two days works best for them and their members.**

The trustees have asked us to remind branches that the Wave of Prayer services may include a collection for our overseas fund. Donations made specifically to this campaign should be recorded and submitted to Peter Johnson separately to other donations. Don't forget that eligible members can Gift Aid their donations!

The Wave of Prayer service leaflet will be sent out to all branches just before Christmas, along with details on how to access more information about our link dioceses.

## PRISONS PROJECT UPDATE



### **HMP Birmingham**

I received 800 cards from Mary Sumner House which are being signed by MU members. Our members have been most generous in providing gifts for visiting children to prison during the Christmas season. The wrapping, distribution etc are organised by PACT, the charity working with families in both prisons. They will also distribute any leftover gifts to other prisons. The cards will be taken to both Birmingham prisons for distribution by Chaplaincy and PACT to prisoners and families

I am currently awaiting PACT clearance, after which I will be assisting PACT on Family Days and the possibility of a Being Dad course,

### **HM Young Offenders, Swinfen**

Jackie Brocklebank had a final session with the lads from the Being Dad Course, including the presentation of certificates by the Governor. Also, three of us attend the Sunday service every week. It is encouraging to see the development of those attending and how well they work together especially for the Fifth Sunday, Takeover Sunday, which the lads take responsibility for. One of those attending was baptised as part of the service earlier this month, he will

be confirmed on Christmas Day when the Bishop of Lichfield comes.

I shall take in 120 Chocolate treats for distribution during the Christmas season to those attending Christian worship. Christmas Cards are being taken in for distribution by the Chaplaincy to prisoners. Cards will also be given for PACT to pass on to visitors during the Christmas visits. PACT are organising the Christmas Family events involving children.

Rita Evans

## KNITTING PROJECT UPDATE



Throughout the year, I have taken hand-knitted items made by our members to the neonatal units at Heartlands, City and the Womens' Hospital. In 2023, we have donated 3212 items.

All are items that the units desperately need, and we always receive a

positive reception from staff, especially at Heartlands. I always make sure to include a card with our donated items to let the hospital know that they were made by members of Birmingham MU.

Claire Laland reports that one knitter from her branch at Balsall Common branch donated blankets and hats that were made for us by her sister in Holland!

Many thanks to all our knitters!

Judy Townsley

## AFIA UPDATE



In 2023, we funded 12 family holidays, and funded or part funded 3 day trips.

One Mum, who is recovering from cancer, sent us this message

*“A year ago we didn't think I'd ever get to see a beach again but after a lot of treatment and your generosity I got to play on the beach with my beautiful son see him relax listen to him laugh and watch him play. No matter how many times I say thank you it will never be enough you gave us beautiful memories sending so much love and gratitude along with a couple of pictures of our perfect holiday.”*

We at AFIA Birmingham want to say a huge thank you to St James, Shirley who will donate half of the money raised by their 2023 Christmas Tree festival to AFIA!

The difference that our holidays make to vulnerable families is beyond measure, and they are only made possible through the generous donations of our members and patrons. **Thank you to you all.**

You can donate to AFIA by sending a cheque to the office, or contact Liz, our Diocesan secretary, for details on how to make a bank transfer.

Our address is:

Mothers Union Birmingham  
The Church of England Birmingham  
JOHN CADBURY HOUSE  
190 Corporation Street  
Birmingham B4 6QD

You can contact us on:

Tel 0121 643 0938

e-mail: [office@mubham.org.uk](mailto:office@mubham.org.uk)

**WOMENS' AID**



Diana Murungu, our Womens' Aid lead, attended St James' Hill branch to talk about the vital work that Womens' Aid does, and to collect items that members had donated.

Our members across the diocese continue to do a wonderful job of supporting Womens' Aid through their collections, donations and by raising awareness. A representative from Womens' Aid will attend the upcoming MU carol service at St Mary and St Margaret's, Castle Bromwich MU, during which she will collect items donated by the branch and by others. We will share details of the service below, should you wish to attend.

We understand that it is difficult for some members to travel to Ryland House to deliver their Womens Aid donations. However, if you contact Womens' Aid directly, they may be able to come and collect donations - please call them on [0121 685 8687](tel:01216858687) (ask for Kathleen) if you have a large donation that you may need collecting.

**PAT LAW LEGACY FUND**



Pat Laws – a former member - left a generous legacy to help MU Birmingham support and deliver projects and initiatives to further the aims and objectives of the Mothers' Union.

Further in this newsletter, we share a wonderful update from Castle Bromwich branch, who used their Pat Law grant to help a local playscheme replace their toys! Other branches have used their grants to purchase materials for knitting projects, and to launch baby box schemes for local new mothers in need.

If you would like to apply to the fund or have an informal discussion with a trustee, please contact the office on [office@mubhamorg.uk](mailto:office@mubhamorg.uk) for an application form!

**CONSECRATION OF REVEREND DR MICHAEL VOLLAND -  
NEW BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM**



The Reverend Dr Michael Volland will be consecrated as Bishop of Birmingham on Thursday 30 November, the Feast of St. Andrew. Michael succeeds The Right Reverend David Urquhart, following his retirement in October 2022.

Bishop Anne, Bishop of Aston, will continue as Acting Bishop of Birmingham until Michael's installation in 2024, and it remains her office and support staff that should be contacted over any matters or requests.

You can [read more about Reverend Michael's journey in faith on the Diocese of Birmingham website.](#)

## BRANCH CHRISTMAS EVENTS

ST MARY AND ST MARGARET, CASTLE BROMWICH

**St. Mary and St. Margaret  
Mothers' Union Castle Bromwich  
Invite you to their Annual Service of  
Nine lessons and Carols  
To be held on Wednesday 20th December  
From 2pm to 3.30pm  
All are welcome to attend**



**We will be collecting toiletry items on the  
afternoon for Women's Aid they have requested  
*Full size Shampoo, Conditioner, Toothpaste  
Soap, Deodorant, Toothbrush, Body wash***

**Please join us afterwards in the hall  
for a cuppa, chat and mince pie.**

**We wish everyone  
A Joyful and Happy Christmas**

St Mary and St Margaret invite you all to their carol concert on Wednesday 20th December. Donations for Womens' Aid will be collected at the service, and Kathleen Williams from Womens' Aid will attend the service to collect them!

We will also be welcoming our incumbent, Reverend Fiona, back into the MU Castle Bromwich fold and enrolling our church wardens into MU!

**ST JAMES THE GREAT, SHIRLEY**



Our Christmas Tree Festival at St James, Shirley takes place from Thursday December 7th - Sunday December 10th, between the hours of 10am-5am

The opening hours for Thursday and Sunday vary, so we would suggest that anyone who would like to visit to [check the parish website](#) or telephone the parish office on [0121 745 8896](tel:01217458896)

Half the donations from this event will be going to AFIA. Deirdre has agreed to put up a tree and our branch will be represented!

Linda Pitt

## CATHEDRAL BRANCH



We are the Birmingham Cathedral Branch, and we especially welcome members whose own church does not have its own MU branch.

We invite all members to our Advent Meeting!

It takes place on Monday 11th December, and will be an Advent Meditation. We will meet from 10.30 for coffee and chat, and start our formal meeting with prayer at 10.30.

Our advent meeting, and all our branch meetings, take place at the hall of the Church of the Ascension, Pineapple Grove, Stinchley B30 2TJ.

All are most welcome.

Jenny Uff

## NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

**Here is the latest news from our branches across the Diocese.**

### ST ALPHEGE SOLIHULL



St Alphege Mothers' Union welcomes our new Priest-in-Charge

Mothers' Union members coordinated and served tea, coffee and cakes in the Parish Hall following the service to license our new Priest in Charge – Revd Nick Parker.

There must have been over two hundred people in the hall, on one of the hottest nights of the year. People from across the parish donated cakes, we really had a big spread.

It was certainly hard work setting up, serving and clearing up afterwards, but it was so worthwhile, and a fitting finale to what was such a joyous occasion after a long interregnum. We are so lucky in our branch of Mothers' Union that we have younger members who are able to organize these large parish events. It was after 11.00pm before some of us were able to go home!

Susan Leach

#### DEREK OWENS - IN MEMORIUM

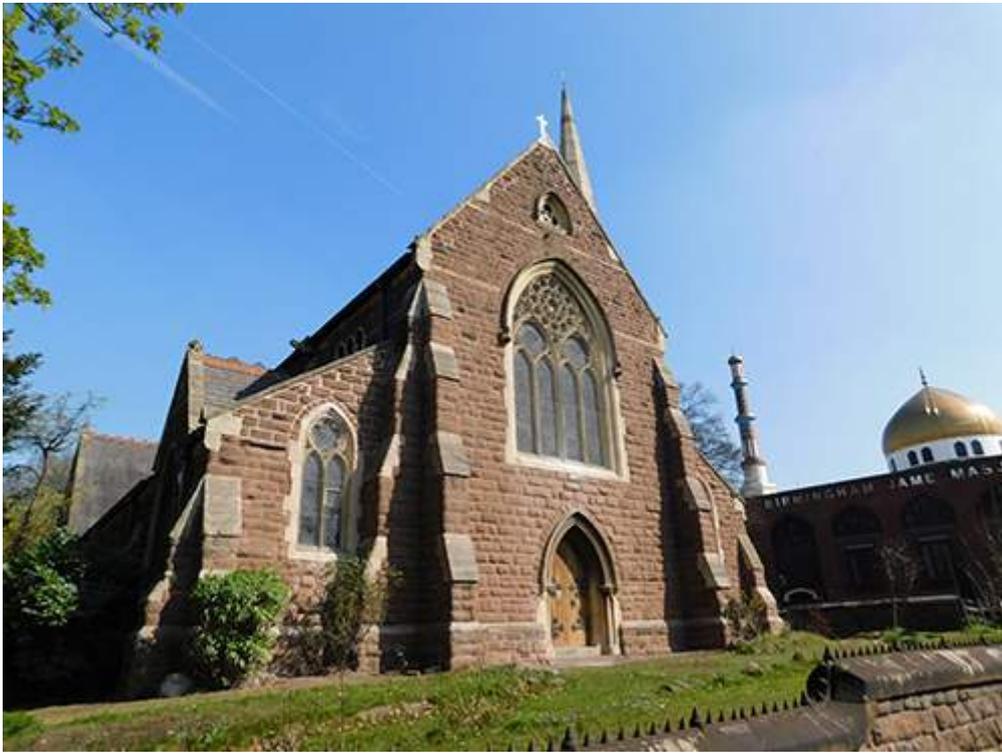


Members will have been sorry to hear of the death recently of Derek Owen, the widower of former Birmingham DP Jennifer Owen.

Derek supported Jennifer regularly at the many MU events she attended, both locally and nationally, and his friendly but unassuming manner made him a pleasure to talk to. Longer serving members will remember the very enjoyable Garden Parties they organised each year in the garden of their Solihull home in aid of our Overseas Fund. They were also both involved with the Cathedral where Derek was a Deputy Warden.

No doubt he missed Jennifer, who died in September 2022, and it is a comfort to their many friends to know that they are now together once again.

Peter Johnson



The branch began meeting actively again last year, and we were delighted to welcome a large group of their members to our recent Diocesan Members' Meeting at St Mary's Handsworth! We are especially grateful for all the donations Holy Trinity branch have made to the Malawi container and our upcoming Souls of our Shoes exhibition.

**ST JAMES, HILL**



Here is a lovely photo of Knit and Natter members from St. James', Hill MU at our Christmas Fair in November. They always have a stall to raise funds to purchase more wool to continue knitting for the MU projects they support.



Members of our branch have been hard at work supporting MU Birmingham prisons project by collecting gifts for collected for Prisoners children. These were handed to project lead Rita Evans.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, KNOWLE



The autumn has seen us collect for Women's Aid and for Children of Prisoners and enjoy talks, in September from Roxanne, one of our newer church members from Hong Kong, on her first year in the UK: it was such a delight to hear all she had to say.

Then in October, we heard about the Narthex Foodbank and how it helps those in need in very many ways, all round the year. November brought us time to sit back and consider with our Associate Vicar, Steve Johnson, how God speaks to us, under the title 'Nudges, Whispers and a Megaphone: How does God get your attention?'

Like everyone else we now look forward to our Christmas celebrations and in our branch we will be enjoying a bonanza of poems, sketches, Bible readings,

Carols and prayer, before we wait to see what God has in store for us in 2024.

Ann Bower

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### ST PAUL'S, HAMSTEAD



Our pom-pom tree project was shared on [the MU Birmingham Facebook page](#), and we had an enquiry from a MU member from another diocese who wanted to create a similar display with her own branch!

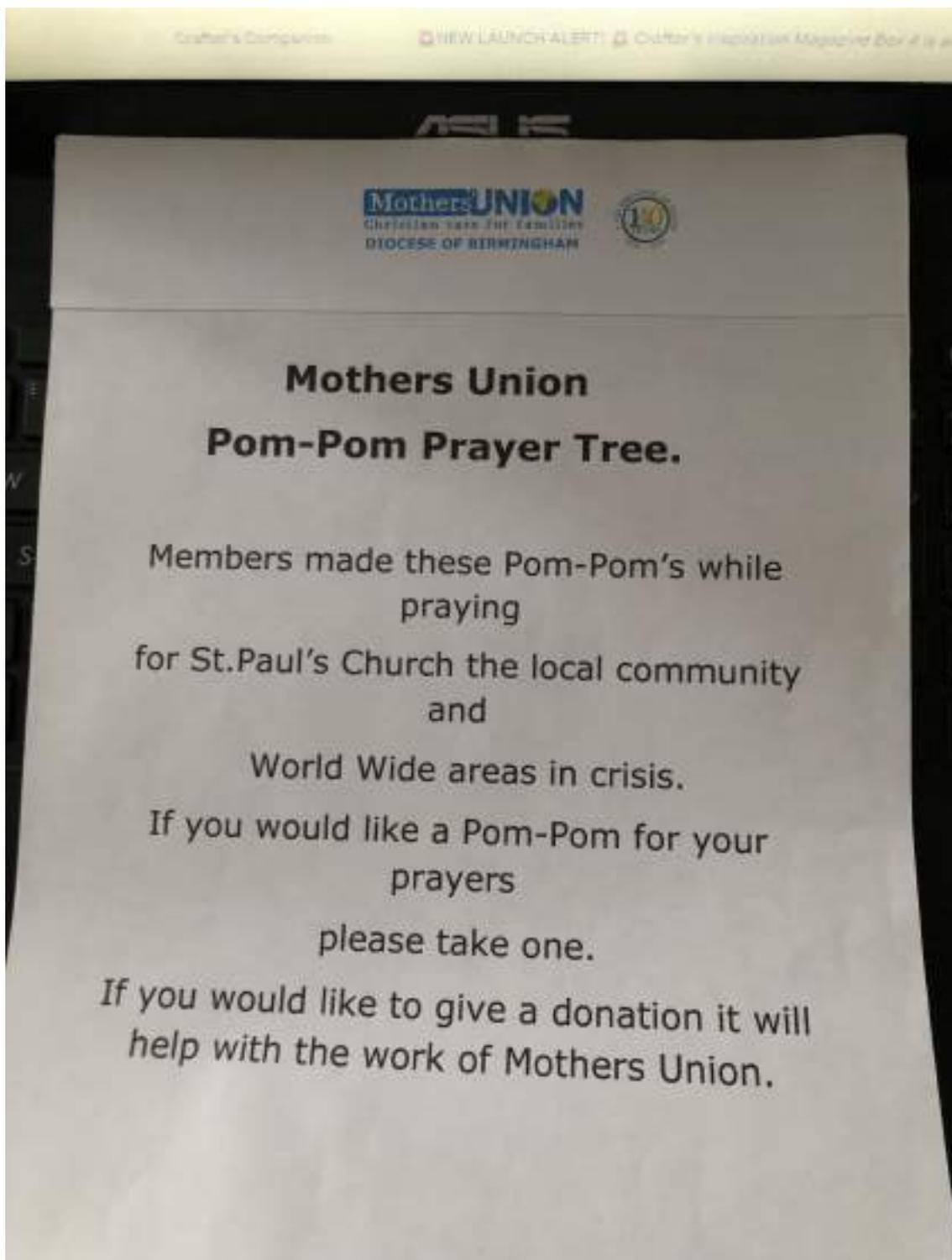
So here is what we did, in case you and your members would like to make a pom-pom tree for your church.

We met together to make pom-poms, which we used to decorate a model tree. We made a notice to go with the tree (see photo) - you can customise the

wording to your own church. The tree, sign and donation box was placed in church for two months, and we then moved them for one further month to a side room that is used for meetings and coffee. The leftover pompoms were sent to a care home where they like to decorate their walking frames, and also to a home-bound lady.

We enjoyed making them together, and shared our techniques along with a lot of laughs and fun. Tip: we emptied the donation box after every service. If anymore info needed please contacts us via the diocesan office.

Jean Munro



## ST MARY AND ST MARGARETS, CASTLE BROMWICH



God moves in mysterious ways known only to him. At our October meeting, I reported that I had received a letter from our treasurer Peter mentioning the wonderful Pat Law legacy.

Our new rector Revd Fiona's ears pricked up and she told us all about Hope on Smiths Wood Rainbows Stay and Play group, and how they were struggling to get funding for replacement toys.

We immediately put in a request for help with funding, the wheels turned fast, forms were filled in, funds were agreed and items bought. Mothers' Union working at its very best.

In November, we were able to present to Jo from Rainbows Stay and Play with the items they requested, which included a much-needed sensory tent. It was a joy that we were able to help this little group in our local community and it also gave us encouragement as a group to share what we as the Mothers' Union stand for in helping them build a future where children thrive and can share fun

and joy with each other, we hope to continue to have contact with them and offer other support when needed.

So many thanks to the trustees and of course the generosity of the late Pat Law: it was a very good day.

Mary Jones  
St Mary and St Margaret Castle Bromwich.

## AROUND THE DIOCESE — NEWS OF MEMBERS



### **Birthdays**

#### **ST JAMES' HILL**

Gwen Giles - 70 in September 2023

Janet Jetson - 80 in October 2023

#### **ST PETERS', HALL GREEN**

Barbara Griffiths - 95 in November 2023

### **Anniversaries**

#### **ST JAMES' HILL**

Tina Ambrose - 10 years Service to MU

### **In Memorium**

#### **ST JAMES' THE GREAT, SHIRLEY**

Brenda Goudie - September 2023

Janet Butts - October 2023

#### **KNOWLE**

Suzanne Nicholls - October 2023

#### **ST ALPHEGE**

Derek Owens - September 2023

## MOTHERS UNION ENTERPRISES



Pack of 10

MUe Christmas cards are still available from [the MUe website](#) and calendars for 2024 are also available. This year's Christmas cards feature several beautiful designs with a religious theme, which will be pleasing to many of our members.

Birmingham Diocese receives a commission from Mary Sumner House for all items purchased either via our MUe representatives, and through online purchases. So, if you're ordering online, **don't forget to say that you're from Birmingham Diocese so we can earn a commission for the Diocesan funds!** In 2021 we received £589.79 in commissions – some very valuable income for our work here in Birmingham. Some Dioceses get three times this amount – so come on, let's get ordering!

If you would like to order items directly from the diocese, please contact one of the MUe reps. Don't forget, they are always very willing to come along to any branch meetings or events with their box of goodies!

Our MUe representatives for Birmingham are:

**Lynn Penny and Rowena Nicholls.**

Please contact the office on [office@mubham.org.uk](mailto:office@mubham.org.uk) for more information on placing an order

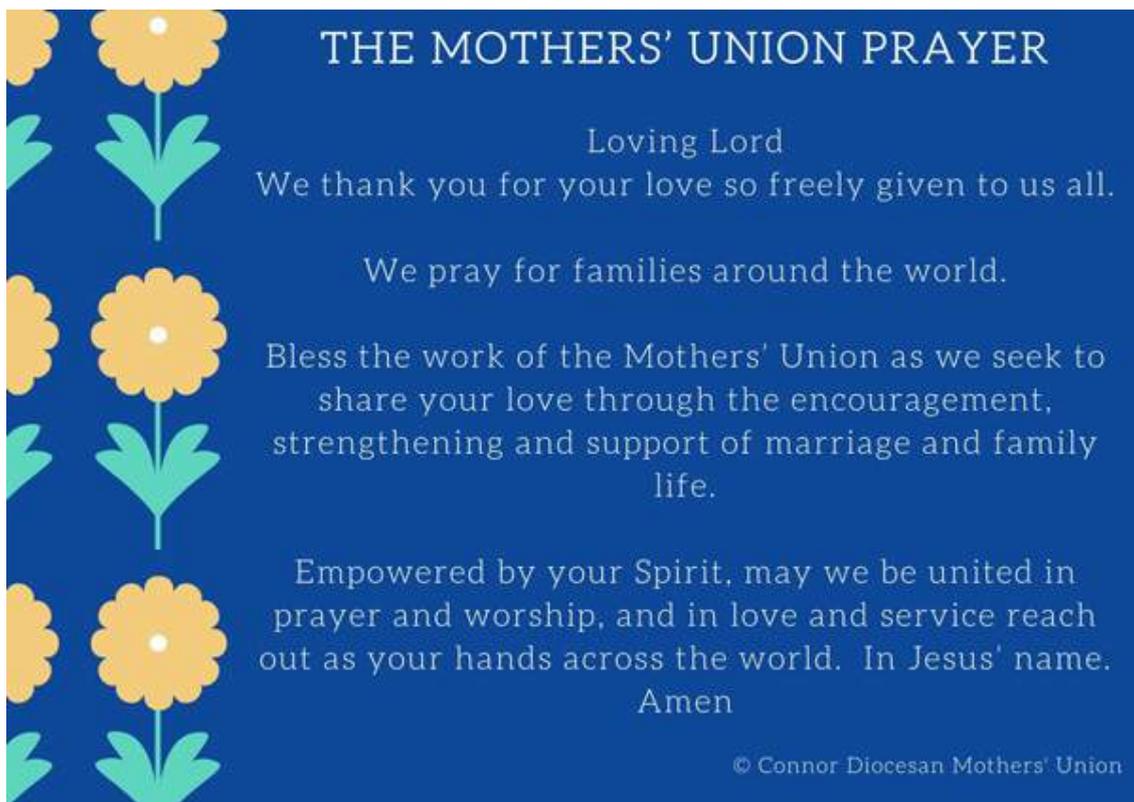
The MUE website can be accessed at:  
<https://mueshop.org>

## FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BirminghamMothersUnion/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/birmingham\\_mu](https://twitter.com/birmingham_mu)

Website: <https://muenterprises.org/birmingham/>



Please get in touch if you require more information.

With warm wishes,  
Deirdre Moll, Diocesan President

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## Find Out More

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[View this email in your browser](#)



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