

Winchester (2024)

We pray for and give thanks for our trustees, Joanna Criscenti, Jane Horne, Linda Hoskins, Stella Roberts and Sue Tickell. We also give thanks for our Mothers' Union diocesan chaplain, Rev. Terry Roberts.

We are extremely grateful to the trustees especially as the trustee board has reduced in size from previous times, resulting in extra work for those now in place. We therefore now pray for each member to consider whether they might now be able to take on the role of trustee, or perhaps a role in their own branch.

The Away From It All residential holiday project has run very successfully since the 1960's, an incredible achievement for which we thank all the willing volunteers across the years. Unfortunately, the cost of the holiday has steadily increased and our ability to raise the funds to finance it has declined. The expectations of families have also changed and the type of family holiday that we offered in the past no longer meets their needs. A number of our amazing team of helpers who have supported the Family Holiday are also no longer available to help. After discussing the position with our team leaders, our trustees therefore decided that we will not run a residential holiday in 2024 but will look at other options for supporting families who need a break. Ideas will be gratefully received.

Similarly, for the past 12 years members in Odiham Deanery have been co-ordinating the hugely successful project 'Cakes for RAF Families Day'. Members across the diocese have provided home made cakes as a thank you to the RAF service personnel working together to keep us all safe. Each year more than 3000 visitors attend the day and there are always long queues for our free cakes and drinks. This year our lead co-ordinators, trustees Linda and Sue, are stepping down from their roles. We thank them both for all the effort and hard work they have put into this project. To enable the project to continue in 2024 we are therefore looking for members to take over from Linda and Sue and, if it does continue, and as the number of cakes received has greatly reduced, for more members to once again contribute a cake or two.

The Popley child contact centre is run mostly, but not exclusively, by MU members who are trained and help out on a regular basis. It operates under the umbrella of the NACCC (National Association of

Child Contact centres). Child contact centres are safe, friendly and neutral places where children of separated families can enjoy contact with their non-resident parents and sometimes other family members such as grandparents. Contact Centres are there for the children to maintain or re-establish contact with their parents. The family can continue to use the centre for as long as they want. We thank all our volunteers for their commitment to this invaluable work.

For another year running our members have teamed up with the charity Spurgeons to spread a little Christmas cheer to families affected by imprisonment, donating gifts to the children of parents who are in prison in HMP Winchester. At a special Christmas Family Day organised in conjunction with Prison Fellowship, all 72 children visiting a parent at Winchester received a present. Volunteers dressed up as Father Christmas and other festive characters to deliver the presents and families were able to come together and enjoy the opening of gifts, singing of Christmas carols and making Christmas arts and crafts.

With our campaigning arm, we give thanks that members were once again able to show and give their support for victims of social injustices, such as human trafficking, domestic abuse and modern day slavery throughout the worldwide 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign. Particular thanks go to Helen Pain who again arranged our presence for this campaign in Winchester, this time for a day in one of the chalets at the Winchester Christmas market.

We thank you Lord for all the good things that the trustees and members and helpers achieved this year. We thank you and pray for Sue Murphy, our Secretary and Treasurer, who always carries out much supporting work so willingly and diligently.

Amen

Gill MU / Winchester 2024