

Mothers' Union Winchester Diocese

Notes from the Information Day at St John's Church, Hedge End

on Thursday 14th November at 10am

1. WELCOME and OPENING PRAYERS

Sue Murphy welcomed everyone to the meeting and Revd Terry Roberts led the opening prayers. 33 members attended the meeting.

2. Diocesan Leadership Team

Following the elections earlier this year, the following have been elected to lead the diocese for the Triennium 2025-27:

- Sue Murphy (Diocesan President)
- Ann Barker
- Revd Jo Criscenti
- Linden Hansen
- Linda Hoskins
- Anne Pycock
- Sue Tickell

3. 16 Days campaign and Rise Up Challenge

Stella told everyone about the Prayer Vigil outside Winchester Cathedral on Monday 25th November, and encouraged everyone to come along and support this if they can. MSH are asking groups to hold 3 minutes silence on Saturday 30th November at 1pm as part of the 16 days campaign against gender-based violence.

Sue Murphy then talked about the Rise Up Campaign and encouraged branches to work for the Bronze award (or higher awards!)

4. Empower Her campaign

MSH have recently launched a new campaign against illiteracy in adults (called "Empower Her"). Sue then showed the slides downloaded from the MSH website about this campaign.

5. Banners

Christine Clode talked about a Mothers' Union banner that she had spotted at an emporium in a very poor condition. On investigation, she discovered that the church had obtained a faculty to dispose of this banner (amongst other items) and that the buyer had bought it in good faith. In spite of a number of enquiries, Christine has not found an organisation which is willing to accept banners that are no longer required. She encouraged everyone to document the banners in their churches, and send her the information.

6. News from the Provincial Conference

Sue Murphy attended the Provincial Conference between 11th and 13th November. Sheran Harper had joined the conference briefly, and we also had a Zoom meeting with the new Worldwide President, Kathleen Snow.

Bev Jullien joined us, and told us about the difficulties over staffing at MSH at the moment, with a number of key staff away for various reasons. She also gave us an update about Mary Sumner House. Currently Mothers' Union staff occupy only about 10% of the building. Some of the space in the building is rented out and currently the income from this exceeds the running costs for the building. However, the building will need a considerable amount of money spent within the next 10 years (eg the roof is old, and so the boiler) and we are unlikely to be able to recoup this money. The Worldwide Trustees have agreed that it would be better to sell the building, invest the proceeds and move the staff elsewhere. This will not happen immediately as the market is expected to improve in the next few years.

Bev also told us that we should expect an announcement about a Royal Patron on 30th November, and this patronage is guaranteed for 5 years. The National Gathering in 2026 will be held at the Emmanuel Centre (next door to Mary Sumner House) on June 10th 2026 with a service in St Paul's Cathedral that evening. Locally, we will be celebrating Mary Sumner Day at Evensong in the Cathedral on 9th August 2026. Next year there will be a gathering for Canterbury Province at the King's Centre in Oxford on Saturday 27th September 2025.

MSH are also asking dioceses to find ways to encourage new members to join Mothers' Union. Sue suggested that we start by publicising what we do, and inviting people to our meetings. Our 150th Anniversary is a good focus for publicising what we do and putting on events that appeal to the community.

7. Celebrating our 150th Anniversary

Everyone discussed ideas for celebrating our 150th Anniversary. The following ideas were suggested:

- Celebrate the oldest member, oldest active branch
- Celebrate the member who was enrolled earliest (and date)
- Garden party in Bishop's or Dean's garden
- Banner display in Winchester Cathedral (and a booklet detailing their history?)
- Display about history of Mothers' Union (start from the display prepared for 2016)
- Tea party for Northern Archdeaconery (and another in the south?)
- Knitted flowers in MU colours outside church in Brockenhurst
- Pilgrimage Winchester to Old Alresford (8 or 9 miles)
- Find 150 things that MU does
- Slide show of our history and our projects

8. SW Cluster Pilot

Sue Murphy noted that we are making slow progress on with the SW Cluster pilot. The Constitution should be sent to the Charity Commission by Christmas, and Sue hoped that we would be able to transition into the SW Cluster Charity in mid-2025. However, before we do that, we will need to move to new accounting software which will allow the Cluster treasurer to have an overview of the finances without re-entering the information manually. Richard Miller would prefer branch treasurers to send updates quarterly instead of annually.

9. Update on projects

Angel Tree – Jane Horne told everyone that we are supplying chocolate selection boxes for 64 children, and cuddly toys for 6 babies who will be attending the Families Days at the prison on

30th November and 1st December. Unfortunately we can't include the angels from the Brockenhurst Christmas Tree festival because the Families Days are so early this year.

Contact Centres – Caroline Scull gave an update about the Popley Contact Centre. We have had a large number of referrals recently so we now have a waiting list for the Popley Contact Centre. We currently have 5 families on the register although they do not turn up for every session, and sometimes there are relatively few families at a particular session. We could do with some additional volunteers for this project

AFIA - This year we supported the group from Bournemouth again, and we have also funded a number of other trips, including a trip for the families at the Winchester Refuge to a Longdown Activity Farm. Sue Murphy said that the income we are receiving for AFIA is currently higher than our expenditure, and encouraged everyone to look out for families who would benefit from our support.

Supporting Women's Refuge – The Women's refuge in Basingstoke is very grateful for our donations of toiletries. However, they would prefer to receive large bottles rather than small individual bottles, and they do not need toiletry bags. They are also keen to receive underwear, socks and pyjamas for the women as they often arrive at the refuge with only the clothes they are wearing.

10. Close

Sue Murphy then ran a quiz. She thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and thanked the members of Hedge End for providing refreshments. The meeting then closed with the Grace.