

MOTHERS' UNION – DIOCESE OF SALISBURY

Charity No: 249696

MINUTES OF THE AGM/AUTUMN COUNCIL HELD ON ZOOM ON SATURDAY 16 OCTOBER 2021 STARTING AT 10.00 AM

Those present: 44 participant screens some of which are couples.

Rosie Stiven, Diocesan President, opened the meeting by lighting a candle which is in the shape of Salisbury Cathedral Font. Rosie thanked everyone for joining in and she is thrilled to see so many members virtually. Rosie outlined the technical points to keep in mind:

- (i) Rosie will invite you to mute yourself unless you are speaking;
- (ii) For the purposes of the minutes Rosie will attempt to record the meeting; if there is a complete breakdown we will re-schedule the proceedings for another date and time;
- (iii) Please put any questions or comments in the CHAT Box and either Rosie or Jenny Harrison will try and pick up comments as we go along.

Rosie then gave out the following notices:

- There will be a Songs of Praise from Salisbury Cathedral and a rehearsal and filming on 23 October. If you are taking part please wear your MU badges, scarves, etc. to identify yourself as MU so that we can be advertised on the TV – a wonderful opportunity for publicity not to be missed.
- Jenny has asked me to let you know that the Autumn edition of Windows which Liz Goater has put together is now in the Office and will be bundled and distributed over the next few weeks. If you are coming into Salisbury and could collect them please let Jenny know.
- At this point Rosie said she would normally invite our MU Chaplain, Revd Jo Naish, to open our meeting with prayer. However even as we speak Jo is up in Edinburgh and just about to begin her penultimate cycle to Callender; she should reach Iona on 20 October having left Tisbury on 4 October. Our prayers, thanks and congratulations go to her.
- We are also meeting during Anti-Slavery Week which began yesterday and concludes on Monday 25 October with Monday 18 October being Anti-Slavery Day. Rosie had the privilege of attending the Art Exhibition created by school-children and on show in the Chapter House of Salisbury Cathedral – it was very poignant stuff and part of the Clewer Initiative.

Rosie then began the meeting with the Clewer Initiative Prayer and read a passage from Scripture Isaiah Chapter 58: 1 – 12.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – AGENDA

Apologies: Evelyn Grant and Jan Seaman.

Approval of the 2020 AGM Minutes: These had already been approved at Spring Council 2021.

Presentation of the New Constitution: Rosie explained why it was necessary to update our Constitution dated June 2005; our membership has reduced steadily and we have much smaller groups. It was decided that it would be good practice to review the Constitution and make it workable and representative of who we are today and in the future. A small sub-committee was

formed and your new DP, Sandra Gamble, made a huge contribution since her background is legal. A lot of work went into this revision and the product of that work is now before you and had already been sent out by email. In brief the main changes are:

- ❖ The composition of the trustee board;
- ❖ Dissolution of the Diocesan Council;
- ❖ The process for electing the DP and trustees (no longer by the Diocesan Council but by the whole membership present and voting – the nomination and election process to be set out in a revised Terms of Reference;
- ❖ The replacement of the Diocesan Council Meeting by a Spring and Autumn Gathering open to all members (not just Diocesan which will no longer exist) with the purpose of keeping them informed and allowing issues to be raised;
- ❖ The process of re-electing retiring trustees at the end of a triennium in the same office by the members (with the agreement of the Board);
- ❖ The appointment of co-opted trustees (three instead of two elected by members subject to Board approval for a period to be determined by the Board rather than for a maximum of six years.

The Terms of Reference will be the next piece of work to be updated. Rosie said that the term *Gathering* is what MSH is now calling their Annual Meeting rather than a formal AGM as such. The idea is to bring our Constitution so as to reflect membership and how things are happening – bring it up to date, make it work and make all members feel part of this organisation. Rosie then invited questions but none appeared in the CHAT BOX so she called for a proposer to receive and accept the new Constitution to which Sheila Soper responded with Jeannette Guinness as seconder and everyone agreed with a thumbs up. Rosie said this therefore becomes our new Constitution going forward into the next triennium.

Proxy voting forms had been received from Evelyn Grant, Katharine Marr, Janet Hodges, Eileen Tucker and Jan Seaman appointing Rosie to vote on their behalf.

Presentation of the Annual Report 2020: The Report had already been emailed out and there were no questions. Thanks were given to Andy Hall who is willing to continue as our Independent Examiner. Rosie called for a proposer to receive and accept the Annual Report 2020 and the continuing appointment of Andy Hall as Independent Examiner – Jocelyn Short was the proposer and Liz and Mike Bowler were the seconds and everyone agreed with a thumbs up.

This concluded the AGM and the Autumn Council Meeting followed.

Approval of the Spring Council Minutes 2021: The Minutes had already been emailed out and Rosie asked for a proposer and seconder to agree that they are a true record – proposer was Anne Shire and seconder was Sandra Gamble with everyone agreeing with a thumbs up. Rosie was given permission to sign the Minutes.

Matters Arising from Spring Council Minutes 2021: None.

General Update by Diocesan President: Rosie said that the past eighteen months or so of the pandemic made normal life for so many of us very difficult. We couldn't hold our meetings, attend our Church Services, meet our loved ones and friends, visit the sick in hospitals or our elderly relatives in nursing homes. We couldn't get on with our fund raising activities. The Virtual Baby Project couldn't go into schools. The Holiday Home at Rockley Park couldn't open so no families

were able to benefit from that much needed break by the sea. Our MU Office remained closed – as did Church House and churches throughout the diocese.

But in spite of all the setbacks, we remained in touch – we stayed connected. Members telephoned or emailed or sent cards to fellow members. Information and magazines were posted out to members. Folks waved through windows. And the very brave even joined Zoom so that members' meetings could take place. Church congregations became virtual. We even managed to have a virtual AGM as well as a virtual 16 Days, Anti-Slavery Day, Lady Day and Mary Sumner Day Services. During these services we were able to celebrate some significant anniversaries of membership – June Doran- 70; June Watt, Jan Seaman and Rose Mary Robinson 60; and Beatrice Smith and Pat Cherrett 50 years. Chris Hodge also reminded me she had achieved 63 years.

But as things began to open up again and life slowly took on a more new normal so some of our projects came back to life.

Our virtual babies went back to school and spent the summer term in Clarendon and Matravers Schools. We now have a full programme booked for them for this academic year also.

Our Holiday Home at Rockley Park has re-opened and seven families have already enjoyed holidays there through the summer and the October half term is also fully booked. MU branches throughout the diocese have kindly donated Welcome Packs for the families. We now have professional cleaners come into clean the Holiday Home between our visitors. Rosie would like to thank those branches who have produced the Welcome Packs and she will be writing to them. Sheila Soper goes over and above her duties of role as trustee in looking after the Holiday Home; thanks go also to Liz and Mike Bowler. Rosie publicly thanked Cynthia Buss, Anne Shire, Pam Elliott, Jane Pike, Elaine Sullivan and Jill Beech for their support with the Welcome Packs – a very special MU touch which is so important.

Rosie was delighted to report that donations and collections of items for the Baby Bundles has continued throughout lockdown in partnership with Spurgeons. Also, members have knitted baby blankets for the Maternity Unit at Salisbury District Council in industrial quantities and we have received a lovely thank you email from the Sister in charge there. Some of you may also be having a go at crocheting those chain links to make Anti-Slavery Week.

Many of our members have embraced working towards a greener environment. Rosie commends the work being done by members in the parish of West Lavington in spreading the word about global warming and providing us with information about how we, as members of MU, can help to slow down the global warming process.

In spite of lockdown, the Angel Tree Project ran very successfully in HMP Erlestoke and Guys Marsh last Christmas. Fifty-five children received presents through this project. Arrangements are now underway to do this again this year. Our involvement with the Prisons is not only about providing Christmas presents for children but it is also about helping to make life just that little bit better for the prisoners. We have provided games equipment for prison recreational areas as well as providing start-up funds to help those recently released begin a new life.

The Court Café in the Salisbury Law Courts remained closed throughout the pandemic. Our project leader, Joanna Woodd, became Lay Chaplain to the Court and recommended that it would be best if the Café would run under the aegis of the Court Chaplaincy. This we agreed to do and took great comfort in knowing that having established a successful project, it would continue and flourish in the future. Some MU members will continue to serve at the Café.

As you know, in this Diocese we have strong links with Refuges and in particular highlight and support the work of the Salisbury Women's Refuge with both financial donations as well as donations of practical goods. The 16 Days of Activism Campaign Against Gender Based Violence is a major event in our calendar – culminating with an annual service in Salisbury Cathedral. In 2020 our service had to be virtual and throughout our movement we took part in a virtual Global Day of

Action. The day hinged on the statistic that 1 in 3 women and girls experience physical and sexual violence in their lifetime. This year's Global Day of Action is 27th November and the theme will be *No More One in 3* and we are being encouraged to wear purple scarves – purple being the symbolic colour for the campaign. Our Diocesan Service will take place in Salisbury Cathedral on 30th November at 12 noon. Please join us.

Of course the BIG fund raiser at the moment is GO THE EXTRA MILE. I know that many of you have already kindly donated monies to this – all of which will go to support Salisbury Diocesan projects. The sum donated so far is in excess of £4.5K – thank you. For my part I have clocked up just over 800 walking miles – my target being 1,000 by the end of the year. So please keep supporting and praying for us.

But now we need to think about the future – to RE-IMAGINE MU. Those of you present who have watched the Annual Gathering Presentation by Mary Sumner House on YouTube will have heard about how members can all take part in RE-IMAGINING MU. Our theme for 2022 is TRANSFORMATION NOW! Mary Sumner House is running a RE-IMAGINING MU conference at Swanwick from 7th – 9th January and there are still places available. To date no-one has come forward from the MU in this diocese wishing to take part. Do please consider if you would like to be involved in shaping the future of MU and put your name forward to take part.

Finance – Suzanne Waters MU Diocesan Treasurer

Suzanne gave a brief overview of the financial position as at now and how we are going to move forward. The working income at the end of 2020 was down to £30,164 (as against £34,970 for 2019) but the expenditure was £30,102 (as against £33,000) so we had a small underspend of £62.

Our membership continues to fall with 982 members in 2021 compared to just over one thousand in 2019 so we lose about 100 members every year. In 2020 there were no expenses with regard to meetings but we did spend over £1,000 on postage so that we could keep members in touch with MU and Rosie spent many hours in the Office filling envelopes. The MU Office was not open and Jenny Harrison worked hard to keep us in touch via email and on updating the MSH Member Directory – please let Jenny know when changes to the Directory are necessary especially regarding RIPs and addresses.

Alison Oakes deals with gift aid which amounted to £2,544 and Suzanne appreciates all the work she does. If you have not already done so please let us know if you can claim gift aid so that Alison can claim as much as possible.

Donations to the Overseas Fund was down to £1,345 from £2,084 in 2019 but this is because we could not fund raise. MSH also fund raise through direct Appeals so members cannot be expected to donate twice. The Holiday Fund had receipts totally £10,761 at the end of 2020 which included a grant from the St Mary's Fund of £5,500. There is a balance in the Fund of £17,982 which includes £4,000 for the Holiday Home replacement fund. Members generously donated £275 towards the Welcome Packs for the Holiday Home so if anyone needs reimbursement for items bought for the Packs please speak to Suzanne. The cleaning costs for the Holiday Home in 2020 was £250 which is extremely good value and a letter of thanks has gone to the cleaner Sarah but she will not be able to do the cleaning in 2022.

Suzanne thanked Joanna Woodd and her team for all the work involved in the Court Café which raised £2,413 in 2019 and is carried over for 2020.

Suzanne did the Consolidation of the Deanery and Branch Accounts in 2020 and noted that there appears to still be money outstanding in some accounts where branches have closed; Suzanne and Jenny will work together in tidying this up.

Suzanne explained that her budget forecast had been discussed by Trustees at their meeting in September 2021 and in order to reduce our working income deficit it had been agreed to increase

subs to £32 for 2022. Mary Sumner House have said that they will not increase their portion of the subs for 2022 which is £20. If we do not want a deficit we would have had to increase subs to £36 which the trustees felt was too much. We do hold good reserves but we have a responsibility as a charity and we cannot go on year after year suffering big deficits. Suzanne asked that everyone encourages their members to continue for 2022 – maybe putting aside a small amount each week. Suzanne finished her report by saying she has been following Revd Jo Naish’s progress on FaceBook (which also has a link to JustGiving) and thanked both Rosie and Jo for going the EXTRA MILE. Rosie thanked Suzanne for her financial report as detailed and thorough as always and commended Suzanne to everyone for the enormous amount of work she does on keeping us on the straight and narrow. Questions were invited:

CHAT BOX: Carole Long from Sarum St Francis Prayer & Fellowship Group commented that one option of joining Central Membership at Mary Sumner House is by a monthly payment of £3 by direct debit and asked if this was worth considering. Suzanne replied that currently in this diocese we do not offer direct debit only standing order but if members would like to do this she would be willing to liaise with Carole about this. However Rosie pointed out that there is a time frame for us to pay the £20 subs to Mary Sumner House which could lead potentially to our diocese being in deficit towards the end of the year.

A chance to own a Wooden Nativity Set – Liz Bowler

Liz gave details of the nativity set which is made of stained wood by a husband of a member at West Moors MU – the figures are 6 ins high and in a box. The nativity sets are donated to various charities to raise money. Liz asked members to make a donation and your name will be put into a hat and there will be a draw and it is hoped that we will raise more than £70. Suzanne gave details of how to enter and said the cut-off date is the 22nd November 2021.

Update on Current Projects – Laura Kachale, Community Development Coordinator

Rosie introduced Laura who has recently returned from maternity leave; baby Maya is now 16 months old. Laura said most of the projects were put on hold when she was on leave which also coincided with lockdown but in June 2021 the virtual babies were able to return to Clarendon School with Marlene Haffenden and her volunteers from the Bradford on Avon area; other virtual babies went to Matravers School in Westbury under the supervision of the teacher at that school.

For 2020-2021 we had six schools booked in but Laura is aware that COVID is prevalent in secondary schools so we will remain prepared that we may have to postpone or cancel. The virtual baby project is part of the Health & Social Care curriculum and so pupils have the practical opportunity to use their skills and to start this conversation about their goals and looking after a baby and how much of a responsibility it is. Laura is looking forward to being back in the classroom.

Laura confirmed that we are doing a full safe-guarding review as a project to ensure that we are upholding the standards we already adhere to.

Since June 2021 Laura has taken on the administration for the Holiday Home at Rockley Park and families have had a five day (four night) break with a two day gap to air the Holiday Home and reduce any risks. Laura also thanked those members who have made the Welcome Packs which are a defining MU special touch and particular thanks to Sheila Soper who is still doing a lot of work by checking the Holiday Home and ensuring that the Welcome Packs are in place. Thirty three guests were able to use the Holiday Home during 2021 and they were referred by churches, foodbanks, MU members etc. A family of four will use the Holiday Home in the October half term. Please do remind your members and churches to refer families for 2022 and that you can also book the Holiday Home yourself although preference goes to referred families. From 2022 we will operate a seven day

break at a cost of £300 for referred families. Please ask Laura which dates are available for 2022 as it would be good to have the Holiday Home full as it is a lovely resource to have.

Laura finished by saying that she is looking as to how we can develop more community projects within the diocese so please get in touch with any ideas or projects within the diocese – Laura would like to hear from you.

Rosie thanked Laura for her report.

News from Mothers' Union Office – Jenny Harrison

I am pleased to say that the MU Office and Shop has now re-opened on Tuesdays only between the hours of 11.00 am – 5.00 pm. I am also working from home for the remainder of the week. This one day opening seems to be working well and so MU life is starting to return to some sort of normality. I would like to reassure everyone that we have a robust COVID-19 Risk Assessment Policy in place which includes the regular sanitising of surfaces including door handles, light switches and office equipment and adhering to social distancing rules. People may also wear masks if they so wish and everyone will be required to sign in.

I would advise that if you are after any goods from the MUe Shop that you ask me in advance since, although we do have some stock, Rosemary is only placing orders on request especially for 2022 diaries, year planners and calendars.

We are accepting baby blankets for Salisbury District Hospital and any items for Baby Bundles as well as donations for the Salisbury Women's Refuge but please ask me if the Refuge is able to accept your donations before bringing them into the Office. (Baby blankets size – 60 cm x 80 cm).

Please note that there are spare copies of both *Connections* and *Windows* in the MU Office so please get in touch and I will post out as necessary.

This is Rosie's last Meeting as Diocesan President and so I cannot let this opportunity go by without saying a few words about Rosie who I have had the pleasure of working with for the past six years. You cannot over-estimate how much time, love, effort, care and devotion Rosie has put into our being our Diocesan President. Rosie is also the Deanery Treasurer for Salisbury with Alderbury and Chalke so she has many strings to her bow as well as other outside responsibilities. Rosie's enthusiasm for and commitment to all our MU projects is boundless and in particular she has embraced the Anti-Slavery and also the 16 Days of Activism against GBV Campaigns with a passion. So thank you Rosie for all that you have done for MU in this Diocese and all that you will continue to do. You have the love and respect of all members and I have very much enjoyed being part of your team. You have also continued the legacy of all previous DPs and left us with a firm foundation to build on and take forward into the next triennium.

I am delighted that Rosie has accepted the invitation to attend the Festival Service on Saturday 21 May 2022 at which a formal presentation will be made together with the commissioning of the new DP and trustee board. We are blessed again with a strong and committed board for the next triennium which will be led by Sandra Gamble who is another devoted MU member and a safe pair of hands and so Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Salisbury can again move forward with hope and confidence.

Introduction and Welcome to your new Diocesan President and Board

Rosie said and now, thinking of the future, as you know, this is my last AGM and Autumn Council as your Diocesan President. I wish to sincerely thank the current Board of trustees, Jenny, Diocesan Secretary, Suzanne, Diocesan Treasurer and all of you and all members for your support, prayers and encouragement over the last six years. It has been a wonderful privilege to have been able to represent you all and to have served you all.

I am delighted to be able to present to you your new Diocesan President, Mrs Sandra Gamble. Sandra has already served on the Board of Trustees for many years and I know she brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this role. I would now like to welcome and introduce you to your new Diocesan President, Sandra Gamble, who will say a few words.

Sandra began by saying some of you may already know me a bit and others won't.

I mostly am asked, "Are you American?" But as my email address suggests –

acanadiangamble@gmail.com - I am not! I was born in Canada and am a 3rd generation Canadian. Foremost, however, I have been a UK citizen for the past 50 years, married to a fantastic Brit, Richard, with two marvellous children now in their 30s and a granddaughter who is just learning to speak.

How did I get here? I studied law and was called to the Bar in London after my father was posted to the Canadian delegation to NATO in Paris – my family home from the age of 14, followed by Brussels. As well as Paris, Brussels and London, I have also lived in Ottawa, where I was born, Montreal where I attended university, New York where my husband was posted for work and, finally, West Lavington when we retired.

I joined the West Lavington branch of Mothers' Union at the invitation of its then and current leader Janet Hodges, and for three triennia have been a MU trustee, first as elected during Ann Howard's presidency, and subsequently as joint A&O co-ordinator during Rosie's incomparable double triennia.

So what about the new Triennium?

With COVID restrictions finally easing in September, Mothers' Union (Britain and Ireland) has considered it a good time to reflect on what we've learned during the recent difficult years and take this as a positive way of "*Re-imagining Mothers' Union*" going forward.

So when we enter the next Triennium we will be looking to put into effect how to move forward with confidence – emerging from discussions during the residential members' conference to be held in January 2022, and based on feedback from "coffee mornings" that are currently taking place at all levels in the Diocese with a view to gathering, from as many of our members as possible, their thoughts on what they consider our strengths and what they see as the need to adapt to new challenges.

In West Lavington, this gathering, which we undertook in traditional MU fashion with tea and cakes, allowed us to share views on issues such as resilience, sustainability, relevance, membership, perception, communication, partnering, community and social policy.

The overall aim of *Re-imagining* is a transformational process to re-imagine Mothers' Union – building on our strengths and, particularly, enthusing existing and potential members.

You will be well aware of the declining membership in Britain and Ireland - which is reflected in our diocesan numbers as well. Declining membership has the ability to affect our financial stability and potentially our very existence, at least in the form it now is. What may it mean for us in Salisbury? So indeed a challenging new Triennium but we don't intend to be daunted!

One very positive note is that we go forward with a full board of experienced trustees, including two new trustees, and the continuing support of our chaplain, treasurer and secretary – a true tribute to our retiring President Rosie's influence and leadership skills over the past six years. And a situation for which I am most grateful to her and to them.

I pray too that we will go forward with your, our members', support as the new Triennium kicks off with celebrations for our patron, the Queen, in her Platinum Jubilee year.

What I'm looking forward to most is getting to know you all much better and you me too, I hope!

Rosie continued – I am also delighted to let you know that the new Board will be made up as follows – Revd Jo Naish as our Chaplain, Sheila Soper, Marlene Haffenden, Jo Higgs, Rosemary Allen, Alison

Oakes, Liz and Mike Bowler, Elizabeth Wood, Carrie Walsh and Carole Jones. Jocelyn Short returns as a trustee and Jayne Davies joins as a new trustee. Jenny continues as Diocesan Secretary and Suzanne as Diocesan Treasurer.

Sadly we say farewell to Daphne Furey who is leaving the Board. Daphne, I know you will be missed and thank you so much for your considerable contributions as trustee over many years. May you enjoy a very well deserved break from all those responsibilities and sincere thanks for all your support and for all that you have done.

AOB – No matters arising.

Future Dates:

- ❖ MU Communion Services in Salisbury Cathedral at 12 noon on the 4th Tuesday of each month (except August and December);
- ❖ 30 November 2021 – 16 Days of Activism Service at Salisbury Cathedral at 12 noon when we will be joined by the Provincial President;
- ❖ 5/7 February 2022 – Wave of Prayer;
- ❖ 21 May 2022 – Festival Service in the Quire of Salisbury Cathedral at 11.00 am.

Date of Next Meeting: Spring Gathering at Market Lavington Community Hall at 10.00 am on Thursday 5 May 2022.

Closing Address – Rosie Stiven

As you know, in the MU calendar 9 August is Mary Sumner Day, the day, specifically dedicated to our foundress. And as this is our 145 Anniversary Year, our worldwide membership were especially united in prayer on that day. Mary Sumner died in 1921, 100 years ago. It was Mary's personal faith, her vision and her service which began our movement.

Wherever MU exists in the world (and today that's in 84 countries) we will express our Christian faith in the transformation of families and communities worldwide. Working as ambassadors for Christ our goal is to see all people enjoy loving, respectful and flourishing relationships. As *The Walking Madonna* purposefully strides out of the Cathedral Close towards Salisbury and into the wider world, so the members of MU go forward, strong in faith, and work to bring the love of Christ to all.

We know that Mary Sumner lived a prayerful life. She was deeply grounded in her faith. Whilst at prayer, she was frequently overhead saying – **Lord, teach me what to do and make me do it.** As we walk together in her footsteps, let us use her own prayer to inspire and inform our work in the days and years to come.

**All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee, and every life I touch, do thou by Thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live.
Amen.**

The meeting closed at 11.48 am and Rosie thanked everyone for joining.