

150 YEARS OF Mothers' UNION

Join us, Join in



Southwark News

No 271 Spring 2026

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Forthcoming Events - 2026

- Sat 9 May..... Festival Service 11.30am Southwark Cathedral
- Wed 10 JuneNational MU 150th Anniversary Eucharist -
St Paul's Cathedral - 5pm
- Thurs 11 June....National MU 150th Anniversary Gathering -
Emmanuel Centre
- Wed 15 July.....AGM - Trinity House 11am - 2.30pm

(Saturdays in June - Areas/Deaneries
to locally hold 150th Teddy Bears' Picnic)

Please send your material for the Summer Edition by 28th June

Editor: Val@utopia-creative.com

Letter from Our President

Dear Friends

“Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in him and it shall come to pass.”

Psalm 37 v5



After building anticipation throughout last Year, we have now entered our 150th anniversary year and we give thanks for Mary Sumner's initiative and trust in God, as she set out on her journey which brings us to this year.

Thank you for the way you all continue to support Mothers' Union, as we seek to support families in their diversity, in our time. My challenge to enrol 150 new members over this triennium period continues. We need to gather momentum in this special year. After months of trying to find a suitable date, I had the joy of finally enrolling three gentlemen at St John the Baptist, Old Malden.

Internationally, nationally, diocesan and parish wide a series of celebrations are being planned. In January Pauline McCalla, DP of London and I, met together with members from both dioceses on London Bridge, for the annual Blessing of the River Thames service, which featured on the central website. This was the first special event of the year.

Members in Southwark will be embarking on personal or branch '150 challenges', be it making 150 pots of jam, knitting 150 items, or being sponsored for '150 something'. The Trustee Board and I look forward to hearing your plans. We hope as many branches as possible will rise to the '£15 Talent Challenge' raising funds for your own special local project or for the Diocese. There will be Teddy Bears' Picnics throughout the summer and we are encouraged to work with our parish priests to 'take on' the readings and collect appointed for Mary Sumner Day on the 9th August, as well as leading the intercessions. Our members are encouraged

to be involved as much as possible in the service.

The remaining tickets for the service at St Paul's Cathedral, which will be a Eucharist, are now on sale as are those for the Annual Gathering in the Emmanuel Centre the next day. I encourage you to book if you able to attend and have not yet done so.

In all we do we trust in our God who calls and equips us for his service as he did Mary Sumner 150 years ago. So go forward in 2026 encouraging others to Join Us, Join In as we light the way for generations to come.

“O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; For You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.” Isaiah 25:1

Yours in faith, *Penny*

Long Service Certificate

In February, one of our MU members at St Andrew's, Ham, Stella Hill, who is 97 years old and a former branch leader, received her long service certificate, after 60 years of membership!

Many congratulations Stella,



Ursula Hodges

Care Home Christmas Outreach



On Saturday 6th December 2025, the Mothers' Union at St Mary Magdalene Woolwich, joyfully hosted its annual Christmas outreach at Puddingstone Grange Care Home, in Plumstead in South East London. What a heart-warming event it was! Sixty-five residents joined in for an uplifting day filled with

carol singing, the delightful sharing of Christmas gifts and wonderful fellowship.

The residents' response was incredibly touching, with smiles and appreciation all around. Thanks to the devoted care home staff, the day ran seamlessly and they shared some lovely photographs on social media that truly captured the joy and connection we all felt.

This outreach experience not only deepened the bonds between our parish and the care home but also uplifted everyone involved.



Upholding the Mothers' Union values of supporting families and fostering community. We believe that our engagement enriches lives and strengthens relationships. The joy we shared during this event reflects our commitment to nurturing connections within our community, ensuring every individual feels valued and supported. The Mothers' Union is excited to continue fostering these connections and expanding our community involvement in the future!



Marina Kamara

Announcing the Retirement of CEO Bev Jullien



The Worldwide Board announces that Bev Jullien, Chief Executive, will retire following Mothers' Union's 150th anniversary celebrations in London this June.

Bev has served the movement for over ten years with dedication and faith, leading Mothers' Union through significant change and strengthening its global impact.

We thank Bev for her faithful leadership and look forward to celebrating her contribution during this special anniversary year.

For the full announcement - www.mothersunion.org

Southwark Monthly MU Prayers

MU midday Prayers are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month in the Harvard Chapel in Southwark Cathedral at 11.45am - 12.15pm - All are welcome. - However, the prayers continue to be distributed to branches beforehand for their own use.

Led by

- | | | |
|----------|---|----------|
| 22 April | - | Kingston |
| 27 May | - | Reigate |
| 24 June | - | Croydon |
| 22 July | - | Woolwich |



Please Note - there is no access for wheelchair users in the Harvard Chapel. If members who use wheelchairs want to attend Cathedral Prayers, the Cathedral has to be notified in advance and the Retrochoir would be prepared for the service

Fundraising Coffee Morning

As part of the Mothers' Union Big Give Challenge, the Mothers' Union at St Barnabas, held a coffee morning and raffle to raise money for their Christmas Appeal. In Rural Uganda, poverty often means more than just going without. It means living each day on the brink. For families, a bad harvest, a child's illness or a sudden rise in food prices can tip them into crisis. Without savings to fall back on or access to fair credit even a small setback can be devastating.



Raffle Prizes

The Mothers' Union's new Saving Project will support 1,200 participants, mostly women, in four Dioceses in Uganda. The women will form 60 self managed saving groups where they can save small amounts weekly, access fair and flexible loans, and gain vital training in financial, literacy and budgeting; small business and entrepreneurship; and climate resilient farming techniques. There was lots of friendly chatter at the Coffee Morning and the raffle raised £152.00.

On Tuesday, 23rd June, 2026, a former Mothers' Union Worldwide President, Rosemary Kempself, will be coming to St Barnabas Church at 7.45 pm to tell us how she set up Literacy Development Circles in Malawi, Burundi and Sudan. This illustrated talk will be open to everyone.



Sutton Women's Refuge

The Sutton Women's Refuge also gave members a list of items needed for the women and children in the Refuge at Christmas We had a magnificent response both from members of St Barnabas Mothers' Union and the wider St Barnabas congregation, including £60 of Sainsburys' £5 vouchers [see

photo of Christmas gifts]. Some of the items were donated by parents at All Saints' Carshalton Primary School. It only goes to show that Father Christmas really does exist!!!!

Janice Clarke

St Stephen's New MU Banner

We began work on our banner in Spring 2024, by designing motifs to reflect an aspect of Mothers' Union life or an activity from our weekly programme. This included, AFIA holidays, caring, craft, shared meals, coffee and cake, games, praise, prayer and bible study.



After transferring the designs to Bondaweb, we applied them to felt. The felt motifs were then ironed onto small panels of blue fabric and further secured by stitching.



Finally, the completed motifs were sewn together with panels of lettering.

The motifs were designed and/or created by Nusi Amade-Jaji, Cherelle, Sariyah and Kaiden Buchanan, Penny Elvin, Kerys and Louise Evans, Comfort Fearon, Clare Gardner, Rosalie Grant, Omoloto Monterio, Lynnette Paddy, Davena Payne, Roger and Vanessa Reid and Elicia Wilson. Overall design was by Clare Gardner.



Branch Leader, Emma Peters, holding the banner, along with members and visitors at a recent branch meeting.

Clare Gardner

Craft and Chat

Three members of our MU branch at Christ Church, Purley, take it in turn to run a 'craft and chat' table on Friday mornings at our Church Coffee shop. You can bring your own craft, knitting, sewing or you can just have a chat. As many people use our coffee shop it is lovely to invite any one to join in. For





Advent we enjoyed making simple Christmas table decorations and nearer to Easter we may do a spring arrangement. Some of us have made knitted chicks and bunnies containing cream eggs and they will be sold for MU funds. We always have MU Leaflets to hand to those interested.

We find these creative sharing times a blessing and we pray for all those who join in that they will be blessed.

Cynthia Smith

Celebrating 20 Years of Faith, Fun & Fellowship

The Mothers' Union at St Giles, Camberwell, Diocese of Southwark, joyfully marked its 20th anniversary with a vibrant celebration. Members, friends, and the wider parish community gathered to give thanks for two decades of prayer and service.

Over the years, the Mothers' Union at St Giles has played a vital role in the parish and beyond, offering care, encouragement, and practical support, while also creating space for friendship and celebration. This anniversary was not only a moment to honour what has been achieved, but also a joyful reminder of Mothers' Union continuing mission: to live out faith in action, to encourage one another, and to help transform communities for the better.

You are welcome to join in and join us at our monthly meeting where you will be made most welcome.



Ish Lennox

Christmas Carols in HMP High Down

As part of our continuing progress towards reimagining our support for our local prisons I was invited to join the Carol Service at HMP High Down. Comfort and I have had a few conversations with the Managing Chaplain, Dr Mamadou Bocoum and I was very pleased she was able to attend as well.

Guests, volunteers, staff and prisoners were all given a service booklet and the printed introduction began..... ***“During Christmas season, the sound of carols ringing through a prison is more than music. It is a reminder of hope, dignity and shared humanity. Carol singing in a prison setting brings together prisons, staff and members of the wider community, offering a moment of light and connection in a place that can often feel heavy and isolating.”***.....As the congregation gathered we listened to the choir of six prisoners supported by members of Liberty Choir, a national charity supporting prisoners in their rehabilitation, with music provided by more prisoners on drums, guitar and a splendid keyboard player. All carols were chosen by a poll of prisoners, with their favourite ‘Silent Night’ sung last. The Deputy Governor welcomed us all and Comfort and I enjoyed talking with him after the service over refreshments. When I mentioned next year will be our 150th Anniversary, his immediate response was ‘What can we do to help you celebrate’. The Rt Revd Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford, spoke on the overall theme ‘Emmanuel – God with us’. Chaplain Fr Egerton Gbonda (also licensed in Southwark) had written ‘God with us – a Londinium Nativity’ a modern Christmas Melodrama, with Mary and Joseph travelling by coach to Londinium and staying in his cousin’s overcrowded flat. This included a moving letter from a family member in prison sending his congratulations.

All in all a memorable and truly moving afternoon. All the invited guests, referred to as ‘priceless visitors’ were made to feel so welcome. We took home a bespoke Christmas card made by Darren. I valued the opportunity over refreshments to ask some of the prisoners which they had chosen as their own favourite carol. I felt privileged to share such an important afternoon and look forward to returning next year.



Penny Lohead

Art evening Fun Fundraiser

As a fundraiser, on a winter's evening, we held a fun art evening in our church hall, where all the proceeds went to the Mothers Union. As an artist and art teacher, I was able to deliver this event with the help of the Mothers' Union branch members who provided the drinks, chocolates and practical support needed.



I began the evening with a demonstration of how to create a fun, funky, colourful animal portrait using acrylic paints and plastic picture frames from IKEA. I chose a very simple method so that no artistic skills were required (so this could be presented by a creative person not necessarily an accomplished artist).

We were blessed with free church hall hire and low-cost equipment for this event, so we were able to raise over £400 for the Mothers' Union. This type of event is popular as an experience evening, often called paint and sip or paint and slurp, because a glass of wine (or other) is



provided and it is a social event as well as an art-making experience. If you would like more information about how to run or host a similar event, please do get in touch, I am happy to share my top tips! I am also on the speakers' list for 'Bring a Friend', 'Recruitment' and 'Creative/Arty' meetings'.

Kate Buckley

RISE UP



RISE UP against domestic violence aims to raise awareness about domestic abuse across Britain & Ireland

The letters of RISE UP stand for **Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray.**

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone from any walk of life. It's our goal that Mothers' Union members and churches will work together to be a part of the change and will get involved with our RISE UP challenge. This challenge is part of our wide MU National Domestic Abuse Programme.

The challenge assigns bronze, silver and gold awards for branches and churches that take part and complete various actions as we work together to raise critical awareness and take action against domestic abuse in all its forms.

Mothersunion.org



Margaret Simmons holding the Silver RISE UP award certificate. Awarded to St Mildred's Church, Addiscombe last year.

Join Our Team: Action and Outreach Unit Co-ordinator & Area Representatives

We are currently seeking a passionate and proactive member of the MU to join our team of Trustees as **Action and Outreach Unit Co-ordinator**. In this role, you will support project organisers across the Diocese, helping them to reach out to more of those families in need and providing regular updates at Trustee Meetings.

Additionally, we have exciting opportunities for **two Croydon Area Representatives**.

Area Reps play a key role on the Trustee Board, providing vital support to their Area Vice President and contributing to the strategic direction of our work.

If you're passionate about making a difference and want to be part of our collaborative and dedicated team, we'd love to hear from you.

To apply or for more information, please contact **Rosemary Walsh, Secretary**, at mu@southwark.anglican.org.

A Word of Thanks

A word of thanks from Jean Cartwright who has recently stepped down from the position of being our MU Diocesan Treasurer.....

“I wanted to say a big ‘thank you’ to you and all who contributed to the beautiful MU vase and very generous cheque you presented me with yesterday. I was so surprised as I was not expecting anything. I was more than happy to give of my time to support Mothers’ Union and hope to continue that in my new role of Trustee and Chair of the Finance and Admin Unit.



I would also like to thank all branch treasurers for their support and am so grateful to Mary for taking on the role of Diocesan Treasurer and wish her all the best.”

Jean



Blessing the River Thames: A Tradition of Prayer, Hope, and Stewardship

On Sunday 11 January, Mothers’ Union members from the dioceses of London and Southwark gathered on London Bridge for the annual blessing of the River Thames. Joining clergy from Southwark Cathedral and St Magnus the Martyr, the ceremony

was a visible and prayerful expression of Mothers' Union's presence as part of the Church of England in the heart of the city.

Although the day was cloudy and cold, members were delighted to mark the occasion alongside congregations of local churches and the wider public. The service was led by The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Fulham, and brought together clergy and communities from both dioceses. It was brief but rich in meaning, with prayers and scripture readings shared, linking ancient tradition with contemporary worship.

Prayers were offered for all who use the river and bridges, including the RNLI and River Police, and in remembrance of people who have lost their lives in the Thames. A wooden cross was blessed and placed into the water, a symbolic echo of the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan. Carried swiftly downstream by the strong current, the cross quickly disappeared from view as people leaned over the bridge barriers to follow its path.

Reflecting on the day, Penny Lochhead, Southwark MU Diocesan President, said: "Our dioceses share the river as our boundary, and the reflection that it is the lifeblood flowing through the city served as a reminder that we are enabled by the life-giving Holy Spirit as we fulfil our calling as members of Mothers' Union, supporting families in central London and across our wider dioceses. It was wonderful to come together in this way as our first act in celebrating our 150th anniversary year."

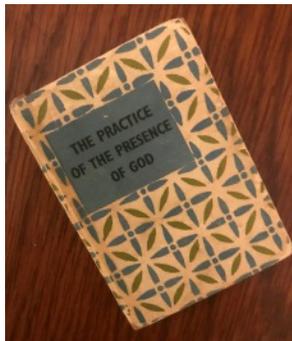
Article taken from the MU Website

Picture on front Cover

The Practice of the Presence of God

I treasure this little book (3x4 inches) which I bought for half a crown in 1957. Entitled *The Practice of the Presence of God*, it contains the conversations and letters of Brother Lawrence who learned through much suffering to do all for the love of God and recommended 'that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God's presence by continually conversing with Him.'

Placing God at the centre of everything he did, Brother Lawrence found that even his work in the kitchen (to which he had a great aversion) proved to become a time of joy and contentment. In fact by focusing on the presence of God at all times, he found that appointed times of prayer were no different to other times because he had trained himself to continually praise and bless God. His seemingly simple way of living in the presence of God continues to challenge me.



Who was this Brother Lawrence? Born Nicholas Herman of humble origins, he served as a soldier and then as a footman, but by his own admission, was no good as he was clumsy and broke everything. He joined the Carmelite Community in Paris in 1666 taking the name of Brother Lawrence. He thought he would be made to suffer for his awkwardness and sins by giving up life's pleasures, 'but God had disappointed him, he having met with nothing but satisfaction in that state.'

During times in my life when there seemed to be no time to pray or be quiet, Brother Lawrence's book has encouraged me. Talking to God throughout the day, asking His guidance, praising and thanking Him is one thing but to simply keep one's mind still and enjoy the presence of God requires further commitment. Brother Lawrence admitted to failing often, but with effort and will and trust in God's grace he continued to practice the presence of God until it became for him second nature.

Prayer: May all we do be for love of you, O Lord. Help us to learn to be still and enjoy being in your presence. Amen

Ann Fernihough - St.Paul's MU Hook