



2023 saw the celebration of 70 years since St Paul's MU Branch was formed in 1953.

Mothers' Union was commenced in England in 1876 by Mary Sumner who wanted to create an organisation for women that brought together rich and poor to build a network that would support mothers of all kinds as they brought up their children in the Christian faith.

Mary could not have conceived how the seeds which she planted would grow into a movement 4 million strong today, of members in 84 countries putting their faith into action to nurture healthy relationships in families and communities and to fight for social justice.

## 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations:

A meeting was held in April with Kaylene, Chris, Rev. Claudia and Ian Stanley (PP Slides) to plan our 70<sup>th</sup> Branch birthday.

The service was held on July 30<sup>th</sup> during the 10am Sunday Service to celebrate and give thanks for the 70 years.

The service began with the MU Celebration Hymn – 'Holy and Gracious God, we bring' which was written for the Australian Centenary of Mothers' Union in 1992 by the Rev. Elizabeth Smith.

Folders containing copies of the Minutes of each meeting and activities held during the seven decades, and a 70-year Member Roll Call together with current MU Projects were placed in the Sanctuary.

A Candle Liturgy for celebrating MU was held followed by an Admission Service and presentation of Long Service Awards.



Mary Bawden who has been a Caritas member (part of MU) for many years, was admitted to Mothers' Union.

Long Service Awards were presented to:

### 25-year badge and certificate

Suz Fischer 27 years



### Long Service Certificates

Chris Hughes	37 years
Mary Bawden	35 years
Kaylene Vlasveld	30 years

Unfortunately, two members were unable to attend due to illness. Jean Jones (admission) and Betty Scolah who has been a member for 29 years to receive her 25-year badge.

Angellia Brown (*far right in photo*) who recently arrived from New Zealand was welcomed from New Zealand Mothers' Union into the fellowship of the Melbourne Diocese MU within the Anglican Mothers Union Australia.

Angellia shared with us about activities in her New Zealand branch where they have 90 members.

1 John 3: 16-24 was read by Mary Bawden. The Gospel - Luke 18: 1-8 was read by Rev. Claudia.

Intercessions were presented by Chris Hughes.

Diocesan President Kären Hayden attended and was interviewed by Rev. Claudia re MU beginnings and Projects.



A Display depicting highlights of our 70 years and MU promotion brochures were displayed in the Baptistry.



A celebration birthday cake was cut during Morning Tea.

We thank all those who made this Historical Celebration Service a memorable occasion for St Paul's MU.

## St Paul's MU in 2023:

Following Covid, 2023 has again been a challenging time for our branch. Although we didn't have many contact meetings, Phone-Link Meetings between Kaylene and Chris took place. Betty Scolah, Jean Jones, Mary Bawden and Suz Fischer continue to be supportive of branch activities when able.

Unfortunately contact meetings were not possible August - Sept - October but Kaylene and Chris kept in contact. Jean Jones and Betty Scolah have been unable to attend due to health issues. All members receive MU Thought for the Week, Mia Mia and Australian / Diocesan Newsletters, keeping them informed of MU happenings here in Australia and worldwide.

## MU Branch Projects:



The **Baptism Bears**, knitted by MU members and friends (Chris Hughes and Mary Stanley) are presented as a gift to the baby / child at their baptism.

MU also provide the '**Baptism Folder**' with prayers and information for the child, the parents and the godparents.

**Embroidered Baptism cards**, hand-embroidered by MU Friend (Sofia Gerandt) are given to the baby.

**Blessing Tins:** continue being packed and distributed to several parishioners throughout the year by the clergy and Pastoral Team on behalf of MU.

Members wrap the seven small presents (one gift for each of the next seven days). Each gift has a bible verse of encouragement attached.



## Mini knitted Prayer Squares / Pockets



Knitted by Chris Hughes.

*"May this square, knitted and given in love, be a reminder of my prayers for you at this time, and bring comfort and assurance of the love of Christ and his constant presence with you".*

## It's in the Bag' Project

'Share the Dignity's' annual event ensuring women and girls who are waking up in a domestic violence refuge or homeless shelter at Christmas feel a little bit of love and hope by receiving large handbags with essentials. Five filled bags were donated in November 2022. The 2023 Bags will be delivered to the Collection Point at 'Bunnings' in November.



## Prayer Resources

MU Australia provides 'MU Thought for the Week', Advent, Easter and Midyear Prayer booklets which are made available to parishioners.

## Financial Records

We wish to thank Ian Stanley who has audited our Annual Financial Statements for many years.

## Summary



Although few in numbers, St Paul's MU undertakes each of the Five Objects of the Mothers' Union.

We give gratitude for God's faithfulness in leading and guiding the hundreds of members over seven decades as they served Him while fulfilling the Five Objects of the Mothers' Union.

We look ahead as we continue to pursue our God-inspired vision of transformation in our own lives, in MU and in the world.

## 2024

As we look at how MU can continue to have a presence in this parish and the Melbourne Diocese, we need to transition to a Mothers' Union that is relevant for 2024.

People now, generally do not have time to attend meetings but they want to support the work of MU in its work of supporting children and families and advocating social justice issues facing children and families. They can still do this by becoming MU members.

Supporting the work of Mothers' Union by becoming a member without the need to attend monthly meetings may be the way forward.

We would love to welcome all parishioners to support Mother's Union in the way that best suits them in 2024.

With MU blessings,

Kaylene Vlasveld and Christine Hughes (*Co-Leaders*)