



### **WWP Indoor Member Message - Christmas 2022**

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that we are coming to the end of another busy year! As I reflect on our MU journey in 2022, I take this opportunity to thank you for the way you make your faith count all year round, through your generous acts of love and ongoing prayers for the work of MU.

There is no doubt that we are living in changing times, the world is so different to all we have been accustomed to. However, through it all, I join you in thanking God for his many mercies which are new every morning, for the opportunities he gives us to make a difference, and his hope which is sufficient for anything that comes our way.

You will agree with me that we are living in very different times and change is never easy especially in a world torn apart by conflict and war. The challenges are many, and the social issues are affecting individuals, families, and communities more than ever, maybe more than this world has seen in the last 100 years. Globally, we continue to struggle through the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic and the devastating effects of Climate Change, bringing with them loss of homes and livelihoods; an increase in GBV; and other injustices, including poverty, hunger, and bereavement. Each of these has negative spinoffs – resulting in deep agony in the voices of our women as they feel the pain and suffering as stable family life for many is crippled.

As a movement, we never imagined that recovery from the pandemic would be this slow, but it is in our perception of “slow” that we need, more than ever, to depend on Jesus alone, recognising that he is able to fashion us into what we should become. It is this kind of preparation that equips us to do his work and use his resources, as we accept that it is His will and not ours.

I can see the bright light already emerging from the shadows and I am not fearful, for this light is the sign of what is to come, the flourishing and the manna for the journey ahead. The flood gates of heaven are already open, preparing us for the task ahead, if we choose to look upward to the hills from whence cometh our help.

I am inspired and encouraged by the MU 2022 stories from right across the globe which remind me of the relevance of MU in 21<sup>st</sup> Century life, the reach of our members and the commitment of our staff team. We continue to make huge impact as you will see in our Annual Review 2021 and the

stories on our website and newsletters. I'd like to share a few tidbits with you now from my recent visits.

On the Isle of Man I asked May, a 100-year-old member, what is different now as compared to 50 years ago, and she said, "Family! Families are different and we've lost the value for enjoying little things as a family. We must care for the family. We must revive the culture of sitting around a table and eating together".

I was captivated by a young mum at a MU Mothers and Toddlers group in Ireland. When asked what brings her to this group, she replied, "I can get out of the house, meet mums like myself and listen to their stories, and Tim learns to share his toys and play with others."

Claudia, a member from Trinidad and Tobago, said: "after my husband and son died, I felt God's call to use my learning from the MU Prison Ministry, and work with boys in the church and community to stop them offending and also help those who are victims of, or have witnessed, Domestic Abuse – I am fulfilled as I do God's work and glorify him."

As Christians and Members, we continue to be steadfast in faith, supporting each other and doing our little bit in our branches and new spaces, which when joined up has a transformational effect at Diocesan, Provincial and Global levels. Mary Sumner House too has been adapting and looking at new income streams to ensure that we are in the best position to provide support wherever needed. Our theme of Transformation-NOW! drives us to continue the journey of re-imagining MU within the context and culture in which we live, while remaining true to our Christian faith and relevance of MU in 21<sup>st</sup> Century life.

Our former patron, the late Queen Elizabeth II, served all humanity with distinction, and left us a lasting legacy of the true meaning of humility and service. We will continue in this vein and remain passionate about fighting for justice and speaking up for the voiceless. Her love for thriving families and communities encourages us to find practical ways to lift people out of poverty and remain passionate, while transforming communities from the inside out.

As the holiday season approaches and the frenzy of shopping begins both online and in person, let us join in and demonstrate the true meaning of Christmas, by sharing our hearts through gifts that change lives – a gift that would enable families to flourish or a gift to enable a mother to read and write. My recent visit to the Diocese of Down and Dromore reminded me just how valuable our Branches are to the vulnerable and how important safe spaces are in areas of violence and abuse. Please can I ask you to pray that members will be enthused to create their own story of change this Christmas, so together we can celebrate the peace, love, and joy that the Christ-Child brings ...

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6*

As we prepare our hearts through prayer and reflection this Advent season, and as we celebrate this joyous season of Christmas and the peace, love, and joy the Christ-Child brings to all the world, let us remain confident of the sure hope and bright future that lies ahead.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to spend this time with you and for all your prayers and support through 2022. As we thank God for the blessing of family and friends, and for providing for us from his bounty, let us also pray for all those who are having a very different Christmas this year. May they feel the unending love of Jesus Christ and be assured of the hope he promises us for the future.

A happy, peaceful, joyous and love-filled Christmas to you all. May the gift of a New Year bring transformation, and shape us into something magnificent, as together we build hope, tackle injustice, and share the good news of the Christian faith individually and collectively through Mothers' Union.

I wish you and your loved ones a very happy and blessed Christmas!

With my love and prayers as always,

Sheran.