



My Dear Friend,

It is an absolute joy to greet you once again in Christian love as we prepare our hearts and homes for the reflective season of Advent, followed by the joyous season of Christmas. Thank you so much for welcoming me into your quiet little space wherever you are and for giving me this time to spend with you.

I cannot believe how quickly the time has flown and we have come to the end of another triennium. Many Dioceses and Provinces are having their end of triennium Thanksgiving Services during this period. On Friday 19th November, the Worldwide Board of Trustees and Staff at Mary Sumner House joined Archbishop Justin Welby, some virtually and others in-person at Lambeth Palace, as he led our Thanksgiving Service. It was a very special occasion for us as he prayed and encouraged us in our work, both at home and worldwide. We will continue to lift him up in our prayers as he shepherds the Anglican Communion through its joys and challenges.

Following the pandemic crisis in 2020, Mothers' Union began 2021 with renewed energy and enthusiasm to rebuild hope and confidence, in what we believed, would be a recovering world. Little did we know that the uncertainty of the pandemic would be extended for reasons beyond our control and everything would progress slower than we imagined. By His Grace we persevered believing that the God of all knowledge goes before us. Therefore we used the time to review and reimagine our priorities so that Mothers' Union could survive to thrive in a changing world. Through it all, the new technology kept us connected and we give God thanks as we celebrate His blessings each day.

In June and October 2021, I had the privilege of showcasing Mothers' Union beyond the Anglican Communion by speaking at the World Council of Religions

for Peace as Archbishop Justin's special representative. As he highlighted the successes of the work of Mothers' Union, I was able to engage in round table conversations promoting our transformational work at the grassroots, a place where many organisations struggle to reach. Knowing that we make a difference wherever we are placed, even the difficult places, inspires and encourages us to look to the future with fresh vision, under our theme for 2022, "Transformation - NOW!"

I am deeply humbled by the faith you place in me to continue as your Worldwide President for a second term 2022-2024. With your continued prayers, love and support I am committed to devoting the time and energy required for Mothers' Union to transform the lives of individuals, families and communities. In everything we do as Mothers' Union, we must reflect the love of Jesus Christ while remaining faithful to our mission and values, to ensure Mothers' Union is relevant for 21st century life.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to you and your loved ones for your generosity, love and ongoing prayers for me. Knowing that you are praying and thinking of me gives me all the energy I need to continue my role as your Worldwide President, while I whisper Mary Sumner's Prayer for strength each day:

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee ...

The Christmas story of over 2,000 years ago reminds us of a time when Mary and Joseph were forced to flee their homeland to the safety of Bethlehem, leaving behind all that was familiar to them. The events surrounding their lives at that time must have been very difficult, especially with Mary being heavily pregnant. Today we boldly rejoice with the angels that in the most humble of beginnings our Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, was born.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ... and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6-7

This story lives on so many centuries later and strengthens my faith in the future for all refugees who were recently forced to flee their homes and will be in a strange place this Christmas. Praise God for our members who continue to lovingly extend Mothers' Union's hospitality wherever it is needed, including a warm smile, open arms, and an outstretched hand.



Some families have not been so fortunate and are now divided, with little or no hope of being reunited. They may never see the glow of Advent Candles or hear the heavenly sound of Christmas Carols but we pray that this Christmas will be a turning point for them. May God in His faithfulness provide for them and bless them with sandals as they journey to a new place that they can call home. May they receive the gift of His only Son Jesus Christ in whose Word we trust, in whose Presence we have confidence, and by whose Power we can do all things.

The Worldwide Board of Trustees and Staff at Mary Sumner House join me in wishing you God's blessings for a wonderful Christmas season. We pray that your Christmas will sparkle and your New Year shine with the peace, love and joy that the Christ Child brings.

With my love and prayers as always,

Sheran

Sheran Harper
Mothers' Union Worldwide President.

