

The Mothers' Union Diocese of Peterborough

Branch Handbook 2025



Mothers' UNION

**Diocese of
Peterborough**

Map of Diocese of Peterborough



Aim, Purpose & Objectives

The vision of Mothers' Union is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships. This is not a vague hope, but a goal we actively pursue by praying, campaigning and enabling.

The aim and purpose of Mothers' Union is to demonstrate the Christian faith in action by the transformation of communities worldwide through the nurture of the family in its many forms. We can do this through supporting strong relationships within the family and promoting reconciliation at all levels.

In furtherance of this aim and purpose Mothers' Union will carry out all or any of the following Objectives:

To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding;

To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the Church;

To maintain a world-wide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service;

To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children; and

To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

Values

There are more than four million members of Mothers' Union today in 84 countries around the world. Each member subscribes to the same values:

- We are firmly rooted in voluntary ethos centred on mutual respect and collaboration.
- Our governance, leadership and programmes are driven by and undertaken through members within their own communities worldwide.
- We are inclusive and work with people of all faiths and none.

Members of Mothers' Union believe firstly, in the value of each individual and their unique qualities, and in the value of relationships. Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself." Secondly, members of Mothers' Union believe in the value of family in its many forms as a source of love and support for individuals, and as the basis for a caring community.

Organisation

The Mothers' Union is a world-wide Christian charity and is organised by country, Zone, province, diocese, deanery and branch. A deanery may have a number of branches. It is entirely possible for any level to amalgamate to form cohesive groups.

For example the United Kingdom is divided into England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Countries are further divided.

England is divided into two provinces: York and Canterbury. The province is divided into dioceses, in our case for example, Peterborough Diocese.

The Peterborough diocese is then divided into archdeaconries (Oakham in the north and Northampton in the south) and then into deaneries:

Oakham: Higham, Kettering, Peterborough and Rutland,

Northampton: Brackley, Brixworth, Daventry, Greater Northampton, Towcester and Wellingborough

The deaneries are then divided into branches. **See map on page 2.**

Membership

Membership is open to all those, both men and women, single and married, single parents and couples, who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity or are on their faith journey which may result in baptism. Members will agree with and declare their support for the Aim, Purpose and Objectives of the charity.

There is an annual subscription, which can be paid to the Branch Treasurer or can be paid by direct debit.

There are various ways of belonging including Members, Indoor Members, Diocesan Members, and Central Members of the Mothers' Union.

Becoming a Member

To become a member of the Mothers' Union a person must:

- Have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity or be on a faith journey
- Declare support for the aim, purpose and objects of the Mothers' Union
- Have a signed membership card
- Pay an annual subscription

Members are foremost affiliated to their local branch of the Mothers' Union or to whichever way that membership meets their need.

If they are unable to belong to a local branch there are alternative options listed below:

Indoor Members

Indoor Members - Those members who while still paying a full subscription, for any reason of age, ill health or disability, are unable to attend meetings of a branch; they will remain as members and every effort will be made, particularly by Branch and Deanery organisations, to keep in touch and ensure that information is shared.

Diocesan Members

Diocesan Members - Those members who while still paying a full subscription, for any reason, are unable to attend local branch meetings, may become a Diocesan Member and every effort will be made, particularly by Branch and Deanery organisations, to keep in touch and ensure that information is shared.

Internet Branch

The Internet Branch has been set up to connect members who either cannot get to a meeting, those exploring what Mothers' Union is about and all members who would like to join in for a time of prayer and fellowship.

The meeting is always on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm and will last an hour. The Zoom link will be the same for each meeting. The format is that we open in prayer, have a short talk or other main event, then a chance for a discussion or just chat, and then the meeting will close in prayer. Bring along a cup of coffee or a chilled glass of wine and come and enjoy some fun and fellowship online.

The Zoom link, to join the meeting, is below and can also be found on our Peterborough MU website, click on the News/Events page and scroll down till you find the item:

Topic: Internet Branch Meeting Time: Apr 1, 2025 07:30 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84337881583?pwd=5ytYa46gwuGtMeQxuqtaGJeOugenPH.1>

Meeting ID: 843 3788 1583

Passcode: 44CsWj

Diocesan Structure

The Mothers' Union of Peterborough Diocese adhere to the constitution as agreed by the members. A copy is available in each branch. *If your Branch does not have a copy, please contact the Diocesan Secretary.*

There is an overall Diocesan President (DP) who chairs a meeting of elected Trustees comprising up to 4 Vice-Presidents (VP), who have responsibility for the Deaneries, and up to 9 other elected members. There is also a Diocesan Secretary and a Diocesan Treasurer. The Trustees meet regularly throughout the year.

Three times a year there are meetings of Forum (also known as Diocesan Councils), these are open to all members. Branch Leaders (BLs), Deanery Leaders (DLs) and members are particularly encouraged to attend. The Forums encourage communication between the branches, deaneries and trustees. These meetings ensure good practice across the diocese and instil a vision to which branches may aspire.

Deanery Structure

To ensure efficient management and effective two way communication the Diocese is divided in accordance with the Anglican Deaneries. In principle each Deanery will have its own management committee although smaller Deaneries may combine. The Deanery may be organised in a way that best suits its members, flexibility is key.

The Deanery Committee may comprise:

- The Deanery Leader (DL)
- The Leader/Contact Member of each Branch
- A Deanery Secretary
- A Deanery Treasurer
- Further representatives from larger branches as appropriate
- The President and/or a Vice President

A major role of the Deanery Committee is to ensure good communication to and from Trustees, officers and the general meeting and grass-roots membership, so that Trustees are well informed of what is happening in the Deaneries and have a rapid and efficient network of information and discussion through which to maximise the value of the work and influence of the Diocese as a whole.

Additionally the Deanery should ensure:

- a) Attendance at meetings of Forum (Diocesan Council) either personally or by a deputy.
- b) Feedback to branches of proceedings at Forum (Diocesan Council).
- c) Feedback to Trustees and Forum (Diocesan Council) from Deanery and Branches.
- d) Contact with parishes in which there is no branch.
- e) Contact with and support for Diocesan members in the Deanery.
- f) Full awareness of, and support for, the work of branches.
- g) Liaison with the Rural Dean and Clergy in the Deanery.

The Local Branch

Starting a Branch

A branch can be formed for a parish or a group of parishes and, in conformance with member's status as baptised members of the Anglican Communion. It would be normal practice to consult and work with the clergy of the church or churches concerned. All branches must work in accordance with the principles, purposes, values and objectives of the Diocesan Mothers' Union.

A branch may be organised in the way that best suits the members involved. The normal practice would be to form a committee and elect a leader/chairperson, secretary and treasurer, but it is also possible to share most aspects of the management of the branch.

To start a Branch – talk to your incumbent.

Gather together like-minded people

Contact the Diocesan President (DP), Vice President (VP) and Deanery Leader (DL) covering your Deanery.

Decide how you want your management structure to work, what best suits your situation.

Communicate with your incumbent and your Mothers' Union contact for support and assistance.

Hold an enrolment service for members to formally join the organisation or join as Friends.

Running a Branch

Be flexible to meet the needs and availability of your members. Meetings should be faith based and always include an act of worship / reflection / prayer (resources are available from the Diocesan Mothers' Union website). Most branches meet monthly but meet as often as best suits your members.

Meetings can be held wherever it is suitable – church, church halls, homes, or other appropriate spaces. Ensure there is clear access to all members.

If you can't meet in person, set up a Zoom meeting or form a What's App group.

Meetings should be fun and offer fellowship and support to members - never forget we have the Good News to share with others.

The branch should support their clergy and church activities.

The branch should prayerfully support all that happens for families and children in their communities and where feasible be involved – this is what Mothers' Union is - faith in action.

There should be an awareness of our worldwide role.

The annual programme can be flexible.

The branch should be aware of the MU theme of the year or triennium and use this as the theme for meetings.

The branch can raise funds for Mothers' Union projects at home and abroad.

The branch may also want to be involved in campaigning and advocacy – much information about social policies which affect family life can be found on the Mothers' Union website.

In addition to Sundays, members should try to support regular church services, and other services particularly relevant to Mothers' Union members as is possible.

The Branch Officers

The branch may be organised in a way that best suits its members. The following roles and responsibilities are set out as guidance but these can be shared.

The Branch Leader (BL). Elected by the members from their number once every three years (Triennial)

Responsibilities are:

- Normally chair meetings.
- Ensuring that the branch works efficiently to further the objects of Mother's Union.

- Working with all members to encourage the recruitment of new members; ensuring that those wishing to become members are instructed in the aims and objects of Mothers' Union and are enrolled within an act of worship: and provided with a membership card and a programme after admission.
- With the help of the committee arranging a branch programme using the annual theme for the year. This should be fun and based on the purposes, aims, values and objectives of the Mothers' Union and help to forward its work. Do consult the list of Mothers' Union diocesan speakers.
- Complete the branch returns report form annually and send it to the Deanery Leader.
- Meetings should include time to:
- Discuss matters referred from the Deanery or Diocese.
- Discuss matters which the Branch wishes to refer to the Deanery, to Forum or to the Trustees.
- To ensure that every meeting of the Branch includes an act of worship and a time of prayer.
- Engage in educative activity, project work and service to the Church and the local community.
- Pursue the Diocesan theme for the year.
- Raise funds for support of the objects of Mothers' Union, locally, nationally and throughout the world.
- Ensuring that the Branch is represented at Deanery level and at Forum.

The Branch Secretary is elected for each triennial from among the members. Specific duties are:

- To ensure that brief records of committee meetings and Annual General Meetings are kept.
- To call such meetings as are agreed and ensure that the agenda includes opportunity to discuss reports from the Deanery Committee, Forum and Trustees, and to provide feedback, for branch representatives to report back.
- To notify all members of the date and time of meetings and to distribute brief notes of the previous meeting and other relevant papers to all members of the committee.
- To ensure that all members are invited to support the activities of the Diocese, the Deanery and other Branches in the Deanery.
- To bring all Mothers' Union correspondence to the attention of the committee and to deal with it as the committee determines. To keep all correspondence and all responses to it.
- To ensure that safeguarding and risk assessment requirements are carried out whenever the branch is meeting or is running an activity or event.
- To consult with the Incumbent whenever the Branch wishes to use the church or church premises to fulfil any part of its annual programme.
- To ensure that all branch activity is in pursuit of Mothers' Union, purposes, aims, values and objectives, to advertise it widely, and if possible feature in church and village magazines.

- To keep the Trustees and the Incumbent informed of the activities of the branch.
- To keep in touch with and support all known Diocesan members who are within the boundaries of the Branch.
- To inform the Diocesan Secretary and the Deanery of any changes of officers or organisation, and member contact details, within the branch.

The Branch Treasurer. The Branch is legally required to open a bank account* in the name of the branch and fully record all receipts or use of money arising from Mothers' Union activity which is paid into and taken from the account. The branch should fully record all receipts or use of money received in cash. The Treasurer should be elected from the members and will have the following responsibilities.

- Maintain a branch fund and keep official accounts.
- The chosen bank will require a Mandate and at least three potential signatories one of which is the Treasurer.
- Ensure that all activities and use of funds is in accordance with the purposes, aims, values and objectives of the Mothers' Union. Branch funds may not be used to support the work of any other charity. It may only be used to support the work of the Mothers' Union.
- Ensure that the end of year accounts are balanced and agreed in a meeting of the Branch and then sent to the Diocesan Treasurer together with funds raised during the year. The financial year ends on December 31st. Documentation required are the gift-aid forms and branch income / expenditure forms which go to the Diocesan Treasurer by 31st January and subscription forms and money which should be sent to the Diocesan Treasurer no later than 28th February.
- Arrange collection of the annual subscription from members and of any other monies that have been agreed by the committee. Ensure that subscriptions are sent to the Diocesan Treasurer.
- Ensure that only sufficient funds to cover three months expenditure remain in the bank account at the end of each year.
- Ensure that all expenses and other outgoings are from the bank account are receipted and recorded. All cheques should be signed by the Treasurer and one other member chosen from those appointed by the Committee.
- Advise the branch on financial matters relating to Mothers' Union as required.
- On leaving office, ensure that records are up to date and are passed on to a successor. Also ensure that bank mandates are updated whenever a signatory is no longer a member or no longer wishes to act as a signatory.

** It is increasingly getting more difficult to open a bank account for small charity groups such as a Mothers' Union Branch. Do try various banks and see what is available at the time. Alternatively talk to your Church Treasurer and ask if it is possible for them to hold a Restricted Fund for the Branch within the church accounts.*

If in doubt, seek help from those supporting you.

Branch Committee Members

A branch may have as many members of committee as are considered necessary to run the branch and its activities efficiently. All the responsibilities of the leader and officers may be shared with members to ensure greater efficiency in carrying out the tasks and to develop in members the skills necessary for that efficiency.

Dissolution of a Branch

Every effort should be made to ensure that a branch remains open. Always consult with your Diocesan President (DP), Vice-President (VP), Deanery Leader (DL) and Incumbent. Once all avenues have been explored and discussed in a meeting to which all members have been invited with at least 21 days' notice;

A branch may decide:

To seek to combine with a nearby branch

To go into **Abeyance**. This does not close the branch but it leaves the branch inactive but retaining its assets until a change of circumstances would make it desirable to re-open.

To proceed with full **Closure**.

This is a formally considered procedure requiring:

- Consultation with the Diocesan President and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the parish
- Six months' notice in writing to the Diocesan Secretary of the Mothers' Union.
- Settlement of any debts and the closure of the bank account.
- Sending the closing financial statement and any balance to the Diocesan Treasurer. That balance will be held in trust to provide for the potential re-opening of the Branch.
- A closing act of worship at which the records of the branch will be handed over to the President or an approved representative.
- Members of the branch should be encouraged to become Diocesan members or to join another local Branch.

The Branch Banner is part of the assets of the Branch. In consultation with the incumbent it may be kept in the church. If this is not possible, it should be handed over to the President at the closing act of worship.

Legal Requirements

The Mothers' Union is a registered charity and must abide by the laws of the Charities Commission. If you are unsure, please consult with the relevant Diocesan Officer.

Copyright – To reproduce anyone's work you must have their permission to do so.

Safeguarding – The Mothers' Union at all levels holds a duty of care for those who meet under its name. Ensure your branch meeting or gathering is compliant. If requiring information, consult the Mothers' Union Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Health & Safety - The Mothers' Union at all levels holds a duty of care for those who meet under its name. Ensure your branch meeting or gathering has undertaken the relevant risk assessments and is compliant.

Insurance – Your meetings should be covered by your parish church or diocesan scheme, ensure this is so for the venue where you meet and the events that you hold.

Data Protection – Following a change in the law in 2018, members must give their permission before being contacted by the charity. For full implications please see the Mothers' Union diocesan guidelines to GDPR.

Equality of Opportunity – Mothers' Union is all-inclusive and non-judgemental. Any decisions to be made between people applying for roles should be based on their ability and willingness, rather than any other criteria.

If in doubt, please do ask your Deanery Leader (DL) or Vice-President (VP).

Resources

Mothers' Union Diocese of Peterborough website:
<http://mothersunionpeterborough.org>

Mothers' Union central website:
<http://www.themothersunion.org>

Prayer Resources available on the website:
Prayers before a Committee Meeting
A selection of short services for branch meetings

For a full range of prayer books available to purchase please see the latest Mothers' Union catalogue or check the MUE website <https://mueshop.org>
You may also order resources through your Diocesan MUE contact.

The diocese produces a magazine ComMUnicate twice a year.

Mary Sumner House produces a magazine in Spring & Autumn called Connected, and an annual Prayer Diary.

Mary Sumner Prayer

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.

