

Mia Mia Article - Spring 2009.

Hello Everyone,

I am literally “just home” from the Provincial Presidents’ Conference at Canterbury from 19 - 26 June, which was followed by some Diocesan visits and a short holiday in Ireland and south west England. I still feel a little jet lagged.

We began with an evening service on 17 June in Southwark Cathedral in South London. Next day an AGM was held in Fairfield Hall, East Croydon which was attended by over 1500 MU members from across the UK. We then travelled by coach to Canterbury. The theme of the Conference was: **Pilgrimage – journeying together**. The venue was the Canterbury International Hotel beside Canterbury Cathedral. Each morning I awoke to a view of the sun shining on the Canterbury Towers. The Hotel courtyard had beautiful beds of roses.

The participants at the Conference were 24 Provincial Presidents from around the World representing the Provinces of: Australia; Burundi; Canada; Canterbury; Central Africa; Congo; Indian Ocean; Ireland; Kenya; Korea; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nigeria; Papua New Guinea; Rwanda; Scotland; Southern Cone (South America); Tanzania; Uganda; USA; Wales; West Africa; West Indies; York. Unfortunately five PPs were unable to attend. From MSH there were: Rosemary Kempself; Reg Bailey; Roberta McKelvey; Karen Higgs; Bp Richard Bedford (Central Chaplain), and on a daily basis, Unit Heads and staff from Mary Sumner House.

Our Bible Study was based on the theme **Pilgrimage – journeying together**, and used the following passages:

Study 1. **Journeying together – embracing uncertainty.**

Genesis 12: 1 – 9. Luke 9: 57 – 62.

Study 2. **Journeying together – travelling light.**

Matthew 13: 1 – 9; and 18 – 23. Luke 9: 1 – 6.

Study 3. **Journeying together – as a family.**

Romans 12: 1 – 21.

Study 4. **Journeying together – with a companion.**

John 14: 15 – 27. Luke 24: 13 – 35.

Study 5. **Journeying together – to a destination.**

Philippians 3: 12 – 21 Revelations 4.

As so often happens, there was not always enough time to fully explore the associated questions with each study.

Reg Bailey used passages from Acts to make us aware of Christian planning and leadership qualities. Unit Co-ordinators and their staff enhanced our knowledge of the many aspects of the work of Mothers Union Worldwide as we strive to fulfil our Objectives and live Mary Sumner’s Vision. As the week progressed, we explored in family groups and workshops, our role as leaders; the work we do, could do, or have yet to consider; planning for succession and identifying needs.

Each Province presented a 15 minute Highlight of their Province and the work undertaken. These were great learning experiences. Similar problems were seen in a different light according to cultural approaches. Here in Australia, we don’t think of Africa as being concerned by ageing membership, but they are.

Before I went to the PPs Conference at Wydale in 2005, I had met only two other Provincial Leaders, but at Canterbury there were six of us from Wydale and six from the Toowoomba Conference still in office, as well as Rosemary and Reg. It was a time of meeting old friends and making new ones. MU members, in spite of our diversity, work in harmony and understand differences. In the closing address by Bp Llewellyn, we were urged to continue to be peacemakers and reconcilers and to keep alive Mary Sumner's Vision.

In reflection, the highlight for me was the candlelight Prayer Pilgrimage around Canterbury Cathedral when Canon Clare from the Cathedral; Patricia, an observer from Uruguay; Peter, an interpreter from Korea and Sit, an interpreter from Myanmar, were all admitted to MU by Rosemary as we stood in candlelight around the Compass Rose on the floor of the Nave of the Cathedral, which represents the Anglican Communion. The Pilgrimage, lead by Canon Clare, was a very moving and reflective time, undisturbed by the hundreds of daily visitors.

Other memorable moments were Sunday worship in the Cathedral and dinner with Jane Williams, wife of Archbishop Rowan, in the old Palace at Canterbury. In free time, I walked around the walls and also to St Augustine's monastery nearby.

While I was in Canterbury, Eddie met with members of Wakefield Diocese. After the Conference, we drove in a hire car to Oxford Diocese where I met with MU members in the garden of their President, Primrose Gallimore. Later I spoke to the Council of Southwell/Nottingham Diocese before we began our holiday.

There is so much to share and so little space in this article. I hope I have given you an idea of how much was covered in a short time. Those who were in Toowoomba send their greetings to all the members they met while in Australia – some are planning to return for a visit.

World wide MU Leaders believe the Vision of Mary Sumner to be relevant to today's World and our Objectives help us to achieve this Vision. We are peacemakers and reconcilers, positive and enthusiastic, as we continue to win homes for Christ.

Best wishes,

Deane.