

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all your love, service, dedication and support throughout 2017. You have been so generous and you have demonstrated so clearly God's love through all that you have achieved. I am most grateful to you all.

As we go forward into 2018 may we also look back – look back to our roots and to our Foundress, Mary Sumner. Let us reflect upon why Mary began what has become **OUR** wonderful organisation – the Mothers' Union.

As you know, our theme for 2018 is **In Mary Sumner's Footsteps**. When the theme was announced at a gathering I attended recently, I overheard the following comment from a member 'Oh! Not that old chestnut again!' I hasten to add that the member was not from Salisbury Diocese.

My reaction to that comment is **WHAT A TERRIBLE SHAME!** Mary Sumner had so much Inspiration, Vision and Energy and all of it rooted in her deep, Christian faith. If only I could be just a small part of the woman she was – I would be delighted. And she began all of this – not as a young thing in her twenties but as a grandmother rising fifty! My goodness, she kept going strong into her nineties! It is so easy to forget this fact. What was so remarkable about her was that her very deep Faith drove her on to seek out what was needed in a Society, riddled with class distinction, that had no National Health, no social care and frankly, didn't have much time for anything women had to say. What an amazing person – how inspired – how dedicated - can we ever live up to her example?

In February I am attending the World Wide Conference and the launch of the Mothers' Union initiative, MULOA. Just to remind you, MULOA stands for Mothers' Union Listening, Observing, Acting. When you think about it, this is exactly what Mary Sumner did and what we are being called to do now. It is a call to arms. In our own Branches and groups, please ensure that our Indoor Members are well looked after. Please keep in touch with them and make sure they know what is going on.

Look around you in your community, your church, your school, your street – what's going on and more importantly, what isn't going on? Is there someone living nearby who can't get out and about – and has no one to talk to? Would that homeless person sitting on the street corner like a hot drink? Why are they homeless in the first place? Have you ever spoken to them? Are there young people hanging around with nowhere to go and getting into trouble as a result? Would some kind of activity in a Church Room or Community Centre make all the difference? Have young Mums somewhere to get together? Have pre-school children somewhere to play together indoors/ outdoors? These aren't someone else's problems – they are very much our concerns. Let's ask ourselves – what needs to be done and what can we do to help? Just as Mary Sumner did.

Mothers' Union prides itself on being an organisation driven by its grass roots membership. Mary Sumner set the bar very high and we must all do our absolute best to live up to her excellent standards of Christian care for families through our faith, our love and our service.

Are we up for the challenge? Do we have the energy and enthusiasm to continue in the 21st century what she began, as a grandmother, 142 years ago? Are we properly equipped and are we aware of what is needed to be done? These are our challenges and with God's help, we will all continue to do His work, following **In Mary Sumner's Footsteps**.

May God Bless you in everything you do and hold you and take care of you throughout 2018.

Rosie