Stapleford Mothers’ Union

Report for the AGM, 12 December, 2019

It has been another busy year for the Branch; our theme for the year was Listen, Observe, Act – in step with God. We have heard speakers on many topics in line with this topic, starting last January with Felicity Cooke, who told us the stories of many outstanding Cambridge women as they battled to overcome prejudice in the university and the wider world. We hosted a Deanery meeting for Hazel Williams, our Diocesan President when she talked about her life, heard about New York churches and their connections with the events of 9/11, and gained an interesting insight into the work of the Arthur Rank Hospice. There was a ‘round the world’ flavour too at some meetings; the Powells on Uganda and David Barnes on Botswana, as well as the slides from the women of Slovenia in advance of the World Day of Prayer on 1 March. There were meditations and services too from Suzanne Watt and Petra Shakeshaft, as well as a couple of Fellowship afternoons, led by Mary and Valerie. And we held a couple of Coffee Mornings to raise funds for the Branch as well – and thanks go to the hostess Mary on both occasions.

The social side with other Branches was not forgotten either. We joined Trumpington MU in June for afternoon tea at the Hotel Felix, and had a joint outing with Sawston MU to the Mary Challis house to celebrate Mary Sumner Day in August. Our invitation to Puddings and Coffee to Milton MU in July was reciprocated in October with their Sausage Sizzle evening. And we joined the whole Diocese for afternoon tea in July, held at St Mary’s church in Ely, when the Revd Susan Bowden-Pickstock gave a talk about her erstwhile role as faith co-ordinator for Radio Cambridgeshire. The Deanery Advent Carol Service took place at Linton this year, and some members attended.

There were two Diocesan Days in 2019, one in March in April, and the other in October at Milton, where the new Suffragan Bishop, Dagmar Winter, gave a very interesting talk about her life and background – starting with her childhood in Switzerland and studies in Germany. Also to support the Diocese, some members helped in the Mothers’ Union Baby tent at the Quy show in August.

The Branch continues to support church and village life in Stapleford, with stalls at the Village Show in June and the Nachingwea Fair in November. Another very successful toiletries collection this winter, in aid of the Cambridge Women’s Refuge, was supported well by the St Andrews congregation and the parish, and we supported the church with a Christmas Tree in the Tree festival in December, a fund raiser for the Village Warden scheme. The World Day of Prayer was again organised by our Branch at The Chestnuts on 1 March, and was well attended not only by members but others interested in this long established service; it was organised this year by the women of Slovenia. We also led a Compline service in Lent.

We said goodbye to Audrey Webb, a longstanding member, as she moved to a residential home near Knebworth – Mary visits her and reports that she has settled in well. Clare Coates, our new curate, was welcomed into the Branch at our Opening Service, led by Suzanne Watt, in September. Although our numbers are fewer, we still have a role to play in both church and village life, especially as some of our members play an active role in other village organisations, such as church wardenship of St Andrews and the Tanzania Link with Nachingwea, not to mention flower arrangers and members of the St Andrews choir.

And so our Branch continues I believe to be a functioning part of village and church life in Stapleford; I’d like to thank the Committee for their help in running the Branch and you the members for supporting us in the programme we have put together and the events we organise. We look forward to another interesting year in 2020, when our theme is ‘Building Hope and Confidence’

Hilary Street

December 2019