



January 2021

Dear AMUA members

Welcome to 2021, a year full of hope and possibilities to serve God more fully as members of AMUA.

Recently, I was asked to present a short segment on hope. I began thinking of that verse in Jeremiah 29:11 that gives us the assurance that hope in God carries into our future or in this case into 2021. "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope". Here in Australia, we have much to be hopeful about. While we have suffered the inconveniences of COVID restrictions, we have not experienced high rates of infection and death as our MU members have in many other countries. We live with hope that will come from the availability of a vaccine, the same cannot be said for our MU members in some of the less resourced countries. With the beginning of every day in Australia, we have hope through our faith in God and our relative safe, well-resourced communities.

Being the summer season, wet season with cyclones in the tropics and thunderstorms hopefully with rain where it is needed, I decided to focus this newsletter on our members in the Pacific. The next issue of MiaMia has a detailed article on the ways the northern outreach grants were used in 2020, so I will leave that news for you to read in MiaMia.

### **PNG Parenting Program**

As you can all imagine, little progress has been made on the Parenting Program project itself as Mary Sumner House staff have been restricted in the work they are able to undertake especially work that would normally require them to travel overseas.

Please be assured, the money raised for this project has been quarantined (they describe it as "ring fenced") by MSH so it will be available to use once the COVID pandemic is under control.

In conjunction with the PNG leaders, the worldwide manual for parenting will be adapted for the local context and local facilitators will be trained. In the meantime PNG MU leaders are drawing on the resources of programs like UNICEF that are locally available. Also their Provincial President Rosa Sitae with a few other leaders have been traveling in PNG where possible, to implement strategies to address gender based violence.

### **Fiji**

In recent years Mothers Union has had a resurgence in Fiji. Sadly, for our members and their communities, close to Christmas, cyclone Yasa – a category 5 cyclone - one of the worst cyclones on record, tore through Fiji. Families and entire communities were left



without shelter, water and medical supplies. Emergency relief is being provided, but the long term clean up and rebuilding is not easy with limited resources. Please keep our MU members and their families in your prayers as they grow MU in Fiji and support their communities in recovery.

### **Exciting news from the Anglican Church of Melanesia, Solomon Islands.**

MU is the largest national women-led organisation in Melanesia. In exciting news, as part of a wider Australian Government supported grant, Mothers Union members are staffing a women-led response to gender based violence designed to bring lasting, resilient change in remote communities especially in the remote Province of Isobel. Through raising awareness, education and discussion, the program addresses women's rights and gender equity in a culturally appropriate manner, promoting community awareness, developing appropriate reporting channels and organising protective services.

MU leaders and members in these Pacific countries live in difficult situations. It takes faith and courage to undertake this work in their communities. Thinking about hope and courage, I would like to leave you with this quote from Michelle Obama:

"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own."

Take courage and hope in Jesus into 2021 as you keep the AMUA members and people of the far north of Australia and our MU sisters overseas, in your prayers.

As you develop your plans for the year, please keep in mind that I am available to zoom into your meeting or where practical, visit in person to share more about ONO with you.

God bless you all

Robin Ray

Coordinator- Overseas and Northern Outreach Department.