



WHAT HAPPENED IN THE WORLD IN 1876

In 1876 our world was a very different place... Queen Victoria was on the throne... there was much difference socially and financially, as indeed as we have now, so let's have a quick look into history various events which occurred in 1876:

Internationally, Alexander Graham Bell received a patent for the telephone, The USA hosted its first official World's Fair, Robert Koch established the germ theory of disease... the Ottoman Empire experienced revolts leading to a massive outrage, a massive cyclone hit British India causing 2000,000 deaths.

Here at home Queen Victoria was created Empress of India from 1877, the Elementary Education Act prevented the employment of children under 10 years old and imposed compulsory school attendance for children 5-13... George Eliot published Daniel Deronda, Nigel Gresley (railway engineer and designer) died, Robert D'Oyly Carte died...

There's such a great deal of information revealed in the history of 1876 and tucked away in August of that year Mary Sumner founded the organisation we know as **THE MOTHERS' UNION...**

So, who was Mary Sumner?

Mary Sumner, the wife of a rector in Hampshire, formed a group to support mothers from all backgrounds in bringing up their children. After delivering a speech in 1885 to the Portsmouth Church Congress, she inspired many women present to go back to their parishes and set up similar groups.

Over time, the groups that met as Mothers' Union became embedded in their communities. They forged strong links with local people and the Anglican Church. They worked to support one another and give a voice to disadvantaged women while addressing wider societal issues. Driven by Mary Sumner's passion for the role of women in bringing about a better society, the groups proved very popular.

By 1892, membership had reached 60,000 in 28 dioceses, which was to grow to 169,000 members by the turn of the century. In 1893, annual general meetings were organised, and, in 1896, Mothers' Union Central Council was formed.

Our work covers three core pillars

We make a meaningful difference in the lives of millions worldwide through our unique, faith-based and community-led approach to tackling poverty, injustice and violence. We understand that these challenges are deeply interconnected and as such, our response is holistic, while confronting the systemic causes and consequences of marginalisation and oppression.

We use an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to unlock local potential. Rather than imposing external solutions, we help communities recognise, value and build on their existing strengths. This model fosters self-sufficiency, replaces dependency with dignity, and ensures that solutions are driven and sustained by local people. The result has not just transformed lives, but communities have been strengthened from within, capable of sustaining change long into the future.

Ending injustice

We are committed to challenging the deep-rooted injustices that prevent individuals, particularly women and girls, from reaching their full potential. Our work focuses on promoting gender equality, advocating for human rights and addressing systemic inequalities that fuel discrimination and marginalisation. Our members stand at the forefront of change: campaigning for access to education, amplifying the voices of people who are not being heard and

equipping communities to challenge harmful practices. Guided by faith and grounded in dignity, we strive to create a world where justice is not a privilege, but a right shared by all.

Ending violence

We believe that every person has the right to live in safety, free from violence, fear and harm. Across our global movement, we work tirelessly to end violence in all its forms, especially gender-based and domestic violence. We promote peace by fostering healthy relationships within families and communities, supporting survivors and challenging harmful cultural norms. From community education and advocacy to practical support and safe spaces, our members are at the heart of this mission. Empowered by faith and compassion, we walk alongside individuals and families, helping to build stronger, safer communities where dignity and respect prevail.

Ending poverty

We believe that poverty is not inevitable, and that lasting change begins within communities. In 2024, our members supported over 2,700,000 people across 35 provinces through practical, locally led programmes focused on economic empowerment, education, and resilience.

Christian faith is at the heart of all we do at Mothers' Union. We believe that prayer and worship can be transformational and make a huge difference in the lives of individuals and communities. We work in partnership with churches to serve God in local communities, support clergy and congregation with practical help, pastoral support and with our faith and worship resources. We have a network of Diocesan Chaplains supporting the faith of our members as well as acting as a link between the Church and Mothers' Union. Our Central Chaplain supports both members and staff as well as being our advocate within the wider Anglican Communion.

This year, 2026, is our 150th anniversary...worldwide we have over 4 million members in 80 countries, our local branch is Launceston

and Werrington, the only branch in our deanery of Trigg Major. A few years ago a former Archbishop of Canterbury called the Mothers' Union the fourth emergency service... also a few years ago I, as President of Truro Mothers' Union at the time and part of a diocesan group from Truro Diocese visiting South Africa, heard a local priest of a parish say to me "Ah the Mothers' Union, the engine of my parish"!!!

To return now to the beginning of this article, many things have happened since 1876. The Mother's Union is still here, you can support this fine organisation if you wish by support, not also by becoming a member but also by prayer, prayer and love for families around the world, of whatever creed, whatever age you are, female or male, prayer is at the heart of what we do.

I leave you with The Mothers' Union Prayer,

Loving Lord, We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.



Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name, Amen

**Blessings, Pauline Darby, Branch Leader,
Launceston and Werrington Branch**