**A Call From Heaven by Diana Bancroft**

 Someone to say Brrr, Brrr, Brr ,Brr or to actually let a phone ring (more effective!)

**MU member**

Hello

**Extra**

Hello, Heaven Telecom calling, please hold the line.

**Mary**

Hello this is Mary Sumner. I’m calling to enquire about Mothers’ Union.

Is the organisation I founded in 1876 in Old Alresford, Winchester still going strong?

**MU member**

Oh Mary……..

**Mary**

Oh no!

**MU member**

What’s the matter Mary?

**Mary**

You’re going to tell me that Mothers’ Union is no more!

**MU member**

No Mary, on the contrary, Mothers’ Union is flourishing, especially in Africa. There are now over 4 million members, in 82 countries. Some of these members are men, which you may be surprised about. The majority of our membership is overseas.

**Mary**

You mean there are branches all around the world. How *on earth* do you keep in touch with them?

**MU member**

Well that’s pretty easy nowadays, with modern technology and communication.

**Mary**

What kind of help do they need?

**MU member**

One thing we do which is proving very successful, is our Literacy and Financial Education Programme. Many of the women are unable to read or write. Indeed many of the clergy wives are illiterate.

As a result of not being able to read or write many problems arise, often life threatening. We fund raise to help this project, and thus enable women to be made literate and business savvy, and as a result they become self-sustaining. The women then are much more respected by their husbands.

We also have parenting courses, which members find very helpful.

We have Mothers’ Union workers all around the world, to whom we send the money, to spend on what is required.

**Mary**

How interesting? How do you raise the money to do all this?

**MU member**

 Well, we hold a variety of events, like Strawberry Teas and Rainbow Fairs, to raise money. Coffee mornings and cake sales are popular, and sometimes sponsored events like marathons, and even daring things like swimming with sharks! So we have fun too, as we raise funds.

**Mary**

How do you know that the money is put to good use?

**MU member**

We have Mothers’ Union Workers in countries where there are **members** so **they** ensure that the money is used for the **right** purpose, and **all** of it goes directly to grass roots, so **no** money is lost in administration.

**Mary**

What else do you do to help?

**MU member**

Well it’s not all doom and gloom, Mary. There is a lot of happiness amongst the people, and they are so proud to be Mothers’ Union members. They sing and dance as they walk, often for days, to their meetings, wearing the Mothers’ Union colours and logo.

Mothers’ Union members will often visit these countries, to see for themselves how we can help or support them.

**Mary**

And do you help members in your own country?

**MU member**

We certainly do. We support couples who are planning to marry with the Loving For Life programme.

We try to support families, so we have trained parenting facilitators, who arrange parenting courses. Parents enjoy meeting with other parents, and sharing notes.

Virtual babies are taken in to schools, so that the girls and boys have an opportunity to handle the babies, and know what it’s like to have 24 hour care of a little person. As a result many say they will only consider starting a family when they feel able to cope with parenthood, and when they are in a stable relationship.

**Mary**

That sounds wonderful.

**MU member**

Another project we have is Away From It All holidays, when every summer we send families who have met with adversity, to the seaside for a few days. These short breaks are so much appreciated.

Members also help in prisons looking after the children during visiting, and every prisoner is sent a card at Christmas. Baby boxes are also provided for babies who are born to mums in prison.

Some members knit for the neonatal units in hospitals too.

**Mary**

That sounds very practical and hands on. Is there any other sort of work that you do?

**MU member**

 Yes Mary. Every year we remind ourselves that there is a lot of gender based violence around the world. So for 16 days we campaign and pray that there will be an end to this. We also lobby parliament about social issues which we feel are wrong. We tell shops if we disapprove of items on sale targeted at children which are totally unsuitable. We continue to carry out **your** wishes, when you founded Mothers’ Union 140 years ago.

**Mary**

What do you think keeps you all working so hard and gives you the faith to carry on?

**MU member**

 It’s definitely down to prayer, Mary. Every day at Mary Sumner House at midday, and at all gatherings of Mothers’ Union, prayers are said. We have the Wave of Prayer, when each branch in turn, prays for each other, and for members around the world. And we know that God answers our prayers.

**Mary**

 I’m pleased to hear that .Well, it has been interesting talking to you but I’ll have to go now because these calls from heaven are **not cheap**. I pray you will continue the organisation I started all those years ago, and that your membership will flourish.

Goodbye.

**MU member**

Thank you Mary. It has been good to give you some positive news about Mothers’ Union. Goodbye.

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