



The clergy - our closest allies

All around the world, Mothers' Union supports and works in partnership with the local church; listening to and engaging with parents and families, identifying needs and offering support. Working together, each contributing our unique gifts, skills and time, we can serve both the Church family and the local community. United in faith, we work for the good of our neighbour, as we demonstrate the values and priorities of God's kingdom.

Use the following Talking Points to encourage the group to explore ways to develop the ministry Mothers' Union can offer to families and communities, as part of the mission of the Church. You could read out the following questions one by one, or alternatively cut them up and use them as random cards which different members of the group could draw from, to open up discussion. These questions are provided as cards, ready to cut up, below. If using as cards, hold back the final question about next steps until you are ready to close the activity.



Talking points

- *If you were the parish priest, what sort of relationship would you like with local members of Mothers' Union, and how would you go about establishing and developing this relationship?*
- *You are a diocesan Bishop - how would you encourage a) Mothers' Union and b) the clergy, to explore working even more closely together?*
- *As Mothers' Union members, what are the best ways to find out how we can best support our local clergy?*
- *Imagine you are having a first meeting with a new incumbent – how would you approach that meeting?*
- *Share with each other things you or people you know have done to welcome and support clergy. Would any of these or other acts of kindness be appropriate to offer to your current incumbent?*
- *Is there anything that Mothers' Union does at a national, diocesan or branch level that might discourage clergy from engaging with us? What might these things be and what can we do to change them?*
- *Sometimes, it's not easy for clergy to understand the range of activities Mothers' Union offers to support families – how would you explain the potential we have to offer to a member of the clergy?*
- *Our next steps: from our discussions today, are there things we might like to do to encourage and support our local clergy?*



Supporting and Working With the Clergy

Closing prayer

*Lord, thank you for the clergy in our parish and diocese.
Help us to know the best ways to encourage and support them.
Guide us as we seek to offer ourselves and the resources of Mothers' Union to them so
that together, we can further God's kingdom here on earth.
Amen*

Handouts and resources

You may find it helpful to draw from and possibly give out the following handout 'Supporting Parish Ministry'.

If you want to use cards to promote discussion of the Talking Points, these are provided below. Ideally, print them off on card rather than paper and then cut up. If you are going to divide participants up into several groups, allow a set of the cards for each group.



Supporting and Working With the Clergy

Supporting parish ministry

All around the world, Mothers' Union supports and works in partnership with the local church; listening to and engaging with parents and families, identifying needs and offering support.

Suggestions about how to engage with and support the clergy

- Pray for the clergy, for their encouragement and support.
- Try and arrange a face to face meeting, rather than relying on email/post, to help build an ongoing relationship.
- Ahead of any meeting, try to find out first what the priorities of the local clergy are, so that you can give some initial thought to how Mothers' Union might be able to support and work with the local church.
- At any meeting, encourage the clergy to share with you their priorities, vision, concerns for the church and wider community.
- Be ready to share your story of why Mothers' Union is important to you; why you are passionate about supporting families, offering any initial ideas about what Mothers' Union might be able to contribute.
- Consider which appropriate Mothers' Union events it might be most helpful (for the clergy!) to invite them to.

How can Mothers' Union be most helpful?

Sometimes, members of the clergy find it really helpful if we articulate the range of ways Mothers' Union may be able to help support families in and through the Church and in the wider community. The following are suggestions of just some of the support Mothers' Union could offer:

Support for parents and families, including

Parent and toddler groups

Parents' groups and more informal, friendship based groups for parents

Resources including: Tackling Torment, Labelled for Life, Top Tips for parents - see www.mothersunion.org/members/im-member/resources-order

Our magazine, Families First – see muenterprises.org/familiesfirst



Supporting and Working With the Clergy

Support for couples

Marriage preparation sessions

Wedding teas/breakfasts, informal support for couples preparing for marriage

Prayer

Access to centrally organised training

For those who want to facilitate parents' group or marriage preparation sessions so respectively, engaging with our central programmes Passionate about Parenting and Loving for Life. See our website www.mothersunion.org for more details.

Enjoying faith in the family

Hand in Hand: printed resource booklet, plus ideas sheets which can be downloaded from our website www.mothersunion.org/content/hand-hand-resources

Support for baptism families

A range of ideas re included within Inspired – website link as above.

Helping groups of Christians/congregations engage with their local community

Inspired is an accessible process helping groups to both celebrate current work being undertaken and prayerfully consider what new activities God might be calling us to be involved in – see inspired.mothersunion.org

Help with church services

Pram services, quiet days, etc.

Prayer ministry

Information about the wider work of Mothers' Union

Both here in the UK & Ireland and around the world, please see www.mothersunion.org

**"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it,
but God has been making it grow."
1 Corinthians 3:6**

Inspired is a Mothers' Union initiative encouraging faith based community engagement.
For further information please see inspired.mothersunion.org

mu@mothersunion.org

www.mothersunion.org

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Supporting and Working With the Clergy

Talking points

Cut up the following up and form a pile of questions, you may like to add in more of your own. Invite members of the group to pick a card and share the question with the group....encourage the informal conversations that follow.



If you were the parish priest, what sort of relationship would you like with local members of Mothers' Union, and how would you go about establishing and developing this relationship?

inspired.mothersunion.org



You are a diocesan Bishop - how would you encourage a) Mothers' Union and b) the clergy, to explore working even more closely together?

inspired.mothersunion.org



As Mothers' Union members, what are the best ways to find out how we can best support our local clergy?

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Supporting and Working With the Clergy



Share with each other things you or people you know have done to welcome and support clergy. Would any of these or other acts of kindness be appropriate to offer to your current incumbent?

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Is there anything that Mothers' Union does at a national, diocesan or branch level that might discourage clergy from engaging with us? What might these things be and what can we do to change them?

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Sometimes, it's not easy for clergy to understand the range of activities Mothers' Union offers to support families – how would you explain the potential we have to offer to a member of the clergy?

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Our next steps: from our discussions today, are there things we might like to do to encourage and support our local clergy?

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