

**Excerpts from the Helensburgh Advertiser Edition of 7 January 2018 feature** (with permission gratefully acknowledged and thanks to Danielle Lapin – Helensburgh Advertiser)

The Helensburgh branch of **Mothers Union** is looking for new members to help them transform communities locally – and worldwide.

The **Mothers Union's Helensburgh branch**, which currently has 28 members and meets in the Church of St Michael And All Angels, believe they have outgrown the charity name but keep the charity's ethos, welcoming people of any age and gender.

The members work both within the local community and fundraise for projects worldwide.



Joan Thompson, 68, who has led the group up until last month, told the Advertiser that the group organises respite holidays for families in need of a break. Joan said: "We call them Away From It All Holidays and try and make sure that people in need of a break are put forward for a short holiday with their family."



The group also combine their efforts to help the wider community and often send items to the local hospital. Joan said: "We try to help people who may need something. We knit bonding squares which we send to maternity hospitals. They get handed to mums and their babies if they need to be separated for any reason. "We also make up emergency packs for people who might be taken into

hospital in short notice, it takes a little worry away of they have the basics they need." The emergency packs, containing shower gel, a razor, a mini soap, a comb, a toothbrush and tooth paste and deodorant, will this year be sent to the stroke ward at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley. Joan continued: "It's just a little thing that will help people and hopefully make them smile."

The group also took time to write a Christmas card to prisoners at Low Moss prison near Glasgow, some of whom won't get any cards because their families have left them.

As well as trying to make small changes locally members have a campaign called 'smalls for all', sending bras and underwear to girls and young women in Africa. And the group's Africa support also extends to helping young women receive an education and, if they wish, to start up a business to support their families.

Joan said: "Because we are an international group we raise money to send overseas. It goes to women in countries where women are considered to be disadvantaged or not receiving equal treatment. "The money goes towards educating them and giving them the tools to start a local business making jewellery or weaving boxes. "Once they are taught and set up the idea is that they then teach someone else and everyone is better off."

Despite being a Christian organisation the members don't push the Christian aspect and there is no obligation for anyone to join straight away.

The group's members meet on the first Tuesday and the third Thursday of each month at the Church Of St Michael And All Angels, Helensburgh.

The group are keen to make people aware that they are there to help if need be and ask that Anyone interested in joining can contact Joan on 01436 423451.