



Registered Charity No. 251394



Thursday Prayer 2024

"Transformation - Now!"

Thursday Prayer is held in Ely Cathedral (usually in the Presbytery), on the 3rd Thursday of every month unless otherwise stated from 10.30-11am

They are also held at All Saint's Church, St Ives on 4th Thursday of each month at 2.30-3pm

See dates below.

Friends and family members are very welcome to attend as well. Each month we use a common theme and pray for a special concern. We also reflect upon our own membership of the Mothers' Union. If you are unable to attend, please use these prayers in your own group or home.

Thursday Prayer is now available on zoom.

Please see monthly MU Newsletter for details.

Dates for Thursday Prayer 2024

	Cathedral, Zoom	and St Ives
January	18	25
February	15	22
March	21	28
April	18	25
May	16	23
June	20	27
July	18	25
August	15	22
September	19	26
October	17	24
November	21	28
*December	12	19

***Please note following changes:**

a) Change of date in December from 3rd week to 2nd week due to Nativity Service in the cathedral.

b) Change of date in December from 4th week to 3rd week in St Ives.

Suggested Guide for Thursday Prayer

Introductory prayers

- *opening prayer;*
- *prayers for members and events in the Diocese;*
- *prayers for the theme and focus of the month;*

Bible reading and meditation

- *Bible reading;*
- *Meditation spoken upon the theme/focus or Bible reading either using own words or a chosen passage;*

Further prayer

- *an opportunity to offer personal concerns to God, either aloud or in silence;*
- *the Lord's Prayer;*
- *the Mothers' Union Prayer;*
- *the Thursday Prayer;*
- *the Grace;*

Hymn

- *a hymn or piece of music of the leader's choice may be used where it is considered appropriate. The Cathedral hymn book is the New English Hymnal.*

Our intercessions

In our intercessions we are asked to pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper (from Guyana) our Worldwide President;
- The Chief Executive; Beverley Jullien
- The Task Group Co-ordinators in Faith in Action, Praying our Faith, Finance & Administration and Communications.
- All who work in Mary Sumner House;
- Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President.
- Our Worldwide Links:
Lusaka in Zambia
Shyogwe in Rwanda
Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria
Karimnager in India
Plus Diocese to Diocese with Kigali & Vellore

The monthly prayers included in this booklet are mostly taken from the new MU books of prayers, "Dear God", "Praying in Every Season", and the Pocket Prayers series – "Faith in Action", "United in Fellowship" and "Vision and Mission"

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

The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

JANUARY

FOCUS: TRANSFORMATION - NOW!

READING: 2 Corinthians 4: 16

PRAYER: Gracious God, make known to us your plans for peace and wellbeing; to bring lasting transformation. Lord, we pray that lives would be transformed into ones of self-respect and sufficiency through effective use of your resources. We pray that families would be transformed into strong and loving households as they explore your ways for relationship. We pray that communities would be transformed into ones of resilience and prosperity through trust and cooperation.

Gracious God, guide us in your plans for peace and wellbeing; to transform lives for good.

Amen

FEBRUARY

FOCUS: SERVING OTHERS

READING: 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, that as we reach out in service, you are at the heart of our endeavours. Thank you that when our support fails, you uphold; when our arms grow weary, you sustain; when our love wavers, you stay constant. May we serve with the love of Christ and bring comfort that comes from God. May we share burdens through the power of Christ and bring strength that comes from God. May we view others through the eyes of Christ and show compassion that comes from

God. May we respond with the forbearance of Christ and show grace that comes from God. Amen

MARCH

FOCUS: LENT

READING: Mark 1: 9-15

PRAYER: Temptation: temptation besets our daily lives; temptations encircle our every situation, our every move and action. Temptation separates us from God. Lord, we pray to be alert to temptations and ask for the enduring strength and fellowship of the Holy Spirit to help us grow closer to You this Lent. Amen

APRIL

FOCUS: UNITY

READING: Acts 4: 32-35

PRAYER: We join with our family throughout the world, with one voice, to glorify God's name. Though we may never meet, we are united in prayer. We share our sorrows and joys and together praise our God. As the family of God we are united in love. We glorify our Father with thankful hearts. Amen

MAY

FOCUS: SERVICE WITH LOVE

READING: 1 John 5: 1-6

PRAYER: Lord, let us serve your world with love as we mirror the example of Christ: Help us to love unconditionally. To refrain from needless expectations; to be generous in acceptance; to be selfless in support; as Christ has loved and forgiven us. Gracious Lord, show us the way to serve one another with love. May we place the needs of our neighbours above our own as we mirror the example of Christ. Amen

JUNE

FOCUS: TRUSTING IN CHRIST

READING: Mark 4: 26-34

PRAYER: Loving Father, our faith is in you: we trust in your plans for a future where we will thrive in showing love to those we seek to serve. Saviour Christ, our faith is in you: we trust in your plans for a future where we will bear eternal fruit as we follow your commands. Holy Spirit, our faith is in you: we trust in your plans for a future where we will be filled with power and guided in every truth. We place our future in your hands. May we continue to enrich family life for future generations. Amen

JULY

FOCUS: GOING FORWARD IN GOD'S PLAN

READING: Ephesians 1: 3-14

PRAYER: Lord mighty and righteous, our hope and our inheritance, we give you thanks for all the spiritual blessings you have for us, your people. In Christ you gave us new hope. By His grace you redeemed us and adopted us. You accepted us as heirs and co-heirs of your kingdom. And that is the hope we live by in faith. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

AUGUST

FOCUS: GIVING THANKS FOR MARY SUMNER

READING: Ephesians 4: 25-5:2

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the vision of Mary Sumner who gathered women together to be a wave of prayer to take the love of Christ into their homes and families. Help us to spread your word through love and prayers into every family home. Strengthen and bless all our members around the world as we carry out your mission. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen

SEPTEMBER

FOCUS: NURTURING FAITH

READING: Mark 8: 27-38

PRAYER: Our Heavenly King, may we treat those for whom we care as though we were serving Christ. We thank you for the nurturing of faith in families and individuals by Mothers' Union throughout the world. We pray for those with questions of faith; whose lives are dry without God. Make us eager to offer the water of life that many may drink and be refreshed by the Spirit. May we see the image of God in the face of our neighbour and lovingly care for their needs as though we were serving Christ. Amen

OCTOBER

FOCUS: PEACE

READING: Matthew 5: 9

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Prince of Peace. Look with love and compassion on those who are at enmity with one another. Grant them the grace of reconciliation and peace of heart. May we all be granted a share in your grace and enabled to live in love and harmony. This plea is not for our own selfish ends but to promote your greater honour and glory. Amen

NOVEMBER

FOCUS: CAMPAIGNING FOR CHRIST

READING: Psalm 82: 3-4

PRAYER:

Righteous God, we embrace our mission to share your love through speaking out for the helpless and campaigning for social justice.

Righteous God, we commit ourselves to campaign for equality and justice for all. Help us play our part in creating a just and peaceful society for your people on earth. May hope be stronger than struggle, may celebrations be more frequent than trials, may kindness prevail over judgment, may equality dissolve oppression, may love break walls of hate. Lord, as we go in your name, we celebrate our mission with thankful hearts. Amen

DECEMBER

FOCUS: THE GOOD NEWS

READING: Luke 3: 7-18

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus Christ, You came to us as a servant, not as a great ruler who wanted only to be served. Your teaching showed us how to care for each other in the world, with your love and peace. In our today, help us by your example to share those things you taught us in service to all whom we meet in our lives.

Amen

We pray that through the power of Christ and in love and unity with each other we may be enabled to:

- **support, promote and strengthen marriage;**
- **help families to explore and enjoy faith together;**
- **build a Christian community that is grounded in faith and love;**
- **support all forms of family life;**
- **help those facing adversity.**

“How lavish is our God! We celebrate his generosity to us with thankful hearts”.



The Thursday Prayer is prepared and published by the Praying our Faith Team of Ely Diocese Mothers' Union. Please feel free to photocopy as many booklets as you need for your branch/ group's use.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Ely

Registered Charity No. 251394

Thursday Prayer

**18th January 2024 at 10.30am at Ely Cathedral and on Zoom
Hazel Williams speaking on Transformation Now.**

Topic: Thursday Prayer Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

Meeting ID: 838 4780 9128

Passcode: 338053

TRANSFORMATION NOW

As we begin this service let us start with a prayer for the New Year. Together we say:

**ALL Lord, at the beginning of this New Year I offer you my life,
Come take my voice, may the words I speak be filled with encouragement and goodness.
Come take my hands, may the work they create be generous and giving.
Come take my feet, may the journeys I walk be led by your Spirit within.
Come take my life Lord, for I love your goodness, your kindness and your leading. Amen**

This week is also the first day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and is celebrated in many churches. This is one of the prayers they are using this week.

*Holy God, Your Son Jesus Christ came among us to show us the way of compassion.
Help us by your Spirit to follow his example, to serve the needs of all his children,
and so witness together as Christians to your ways of love and mercy.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen*

Our bible reading for today's theme is from **2 Corinthians 4: v 16** and is very short.

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Let us say together the prayer for the month:

**Gracious God, make known to us your plans for peace and wellbeing; to bring lasting transformation.
Lord, we pray that lives would be transformed into ones of self-respect and sufficiency through effective use of your resources. We pray that families would be transformed into strong and loving households as they explore your ways for relationship. We pray that communities would be transformed into ones of resilience and prosperity through trust and cooperation.
Gracious God, guide us in your plans for peace and wellbeing; to transform lives for good. Amen**

REFLECTION

This is the third year of Transformation Now as the theme for the year. The theme used to change every year but be much more specific. This is an all-encompassing theme covering both personal, community and worldwide action.

If you look at your prayer diary for 2024 the January title is Faith for the Future. The Faith in Action story for this month is from South Sudan and the differences in responsibility between men and women. Participants in the programme marked on a daily activity chart what they did over a 24-hour period. Women cleaned, washed, cooked and looked after children. In contrast the men read the bible, listened to the radio, went to community meetings and watched sport. This revealed the level of responsibility in a household. Despite the men believing they had a full day, the activity

showed that this was not the case. More importantly the knowledge gained by the women gave them confidence to ask for help and raise their voice not just for themselves but also for the children. This learning trickles down into the community from the initial training. Literacy circles led by trained community volunteers also become a safe place to speak freely on a range of topics affecting their lives. Around 70% of participants now feel they have the coping mechanisms as well as being involved in advocacy activities for peace in their communities. Certainly, Transformation for the many communities where similar activities continue to be supported by the Mothers' Union for the empowerment of women.

MU members and their congregations are involved in several campaigns over the course of a year and sometimes you hear various stories and wonder whether it is really making a difference.

UNICEF's latest figures show that Child Mortality Rates are dropping sharply. In the space of a single generation the number of children dying under the age of five has fallen by 59% globally. Since 1990 in 19 of the lower income countries the figure is 75%. But there is still more to do.

Steady progress is being made towards eliminating Female Genital Mutilation. 22 out of 29 African countries that once allowed the practice now have national laws banning it. Data shows that worldwide in the 31 countries where it is still practiced the percentage of affected girls between 15-19 has fallen to 28%. But there is still more to do.

Globally, there are 50 million more girls in school today than there were in 2015. In Western and Central Africa almost all children attend primary school compared with only 50% in the 1990s. But there is still more to do.

New legislation banning child marriage has come in force in England and Wales. Children younger than 18 can no longer get married even if their parents give consent. Previously religious marriages that were not formally registered were permitted at any age.

This has all been achieved by organisations like the Mothers' Union working both in their own community as well as across the world continuing to raise awareness.

We know that our numbers in the MU in this country are falling while increasing significantly across most of the rest of our world membership. Let us hope that Britain and Ireland members can work on how to transform what is happening here, not only continue to carry out the good work that is on-going at the moment, but to move forward into the future and survive as a vibrant organisation.

The last line of the prayer we have just said together was **"Gracious God, guide us in your plans for peace and wellbeing; to transform lives for good"**. Remember we are not on our own.

Let us start our time of prayer, for our worldwide organisation, by saying together the Thursday Prayer:

ALL: Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In our intercessions. We pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner House;
- The President and Trustees in the Diocese of Ely and the Task Group Leaders in: Faith in Action, Praying our Faith, Finance & Administration, and Communications;
- Our Province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julia Jamieson our Zonal Trustee.
- Our Worldwide Links:
Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnagar in India;
Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore

In our wave of prayer for today we pray especially for

- St. Mark the Evangelist in South Africa
- Butare in Rwanda
- Okigwe-South in Nigeria;
- Gambia
- Rajasthan in India
- British Columbia in Canada

We also pray for:

- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.
- Our local parishes, our families, and our friends, and give thanks for our many blessings.
- Anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.

Short Silence.

Let us join together in the Mothers' Union prayer we know so well.

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

Our hymn for today is:

LORD JESUS CHRIST (LIVING LORD)

Lord Jesus Christ

You have come to us

You are one with us

Mary's Son

Cleansing our souls from all their sin

Pouring Your love and goodness in

Jesus, our love for you we sing

Living Lord

**Lord Jesus Christ
Now and every day
Teach us how to pray
Son of God
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance Lord of you
Into our lives your power breaks through
Living Lord**

**Lord Jesus Christ
You have come to us
Born as one with us
Mary's Son
Led out to die on Calvary
Risen from death to set us free
Living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord**

**Lord Jesus Christ
I would come to you
live my life for you
Son of God
All your commands I know are true
Your many gifts will make me new
Into my life your power breaks through
Living Lord**

Our final prayer for this service is a prayer for courage to do all we can to support the Mothers' Union in its quest for transformation.

**Courage comes from the heart
and we are always welcomed by God,
the Heart of all being.**

**We bear witness to our faith,
knowing that we are called
to live lives of courage,
love and reconciliation
in the ordinary and extraordinary
moments of each day.**

**We bear witness, too, to our failures
and our complicity in the fractures of our world.
May we be courageous today.
May we learn today.
May we love today.**

The Grace: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen

Mothers' Union Thursday Prayers, 19th February 2024

Zoom Contact details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Serving Others

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Welcome everyone to our Thursday prayers here in the Cathedral and those joining from home via the internet.

St Paul writes to the people of Ephesus 'Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's Gift. **Amen**

We say together 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

Prayer of the month

Thank you, Lord, that as we reach out in service, you are at the heart of our endeavours. Thank you that when our support fails, you uphold; when our arms grow weary, you sustain; when our love wavers, you stay constant. May we serve with the love of Christ and bring comfort that comes from God. May we share burdens through the power of Christ and bring strength that comes from God. May we view others through the eyes of Christ and show compassion that comes from

God. May we respond with the forbearance of Christ and show grace that comes from God.
Amen

The Reading Today is taken from the First letter of Paul to the people of Corinth

Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9.24-27

Reflection

The focus for the prayers today is 'Serving Others'. What does that suggest to you? Does serving make you a servant? Are you happy with that connotation of one serving another. The prayer for today gives several examples if you happen to be stuck for an idea how best to serve the other person. Christians are called by God to be there for each other, whenever the need arises. The commandment to 'Love your neighbour' covers all eventualities suggested in the prayer. Having acknowledged that God is there in all we do and seek assurance for his strength, being in the right place at the right time should it all go horribly wrong.

Then a request, reminding us as we pray how God can be there as we serve that one true God in love, bringing comfort, sharing the burden through Jesus and the strength he brings, to see others as our Lord sees them, with compassion that can only come through the grace of God and his gift alone.

So that's the challenge, as much as the one St Paul lays down to the folk in Corinth. He does so at the end of a lengthy speech with the illustration of athletes running a race. Only one will receive a prize and at that time, the prize of a garland of laurel would soon be fit only for the compost bin. Better still says Paul, God gives an imperishable gift of love by grace; this is the reward for service. How does this play out in our lives? God calls us and we respond. For me the call to ordination wasn't as obvious to as it might have been to others. My sense was to serve in the choir, PCC secretary, Synod rep, co-leading Confirmation classes and odd job man. Changing light bulbs, vacuum cleaner belts and leading bible study groups. And fit most of that around family and a career in the Royal Air Force.

All that had to be laid to one side when the recommendation of training as an ordinand in Durham came from Archbishop David. At Cranmer Hall there was an emphasis on the call to being a Deacon, a servant exemplified in Acts chapter 6. The apostles addressed the perceived problem of neglecting the word of God whilst attending to the needs of the community and waiting at table for mealtimes.

My experience at Cranmer was something bordering on the bizarre at breakfast. Following on from Morning Prayer, staff and students would make their way to the dining room, standing for grace then offers to get cereals, toast, porridge, or the cooked items of the day. All wanted to serve the other such that it was quite uncomfortable to be served. The question in my mind, and lingers with me to this day, for servants to be effective there must be people to be served.

The lesson learned for me was to offer to help in all sorts of ways; but trying to oust the Mothers' Union from the kitchen and sink to do the washing up was a challenge too far.

The word serve/service occurs many times in the New Testament, usually in part of Jesus teaching. Martha served whilst Mary prayed. Choices had to be made between serving God and money. And no servant can serve two masters (Lk16.13)

However we may view being a servant and serving others, as we approach Ash Wednesday and begin our annual walk beside Jesus to Jerusalem it is to him I should leave the last word. The disciples had been arguing among themselves (Lk22.24ff). The usual stuff about who was regarded as the greatest. 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and are called benefactors.' But this isn't the way Team Jesus should behave. He leaves them pondering that the greatest must become like the youngest and the leader like one who serves. Then an open question 'who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Jesus reminds them he is there as one who serves. Ordinands mull over that question on a daily basis.

Time for prayer

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

In our Intercessions today we pray for –

The Worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and our worldwide president Sheran Harper, our chief executive Bev Julian and all who work in Mary Sumner House. Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President. For our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees and all task group leaders and MU members and all Clergy within the Diocese of Ely.

Worldwide Links of the Mothers' Union we pray for:

Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; plus diocese to diocese with Kigali and Velore.

In the Wave of Prayer for:

Bentui in South Sudan; Bunyoro Kitara in Uganda; Okigwe-North & Omu-Aran in Nigeria; Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh in All Ireland and Krishna-Godavari in India.

Praying in confidence as Jesus taught his disciples to say:-

**Our Father Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen**

We are a pilgrim people and our destiny is Heaven, as we travel towards the light of Christ, may we encourage one another through life's rough seas and stone filled paths.

All Stand for our Hymn, please join in at home:

Over the centuries poets and hymn writers have explored the nature of service and servant hood.

Charles Wesley in his extensive output of hymns explored every aspect of faith, left us Ye servants of God your master proclaim. A contemporary non-conformist (Wesley still an Anglican) Philip Dodderidge penned 'Ye servants of the Lord, each for his coming wait'. More recently well the 1980s 'From heaven you came helpless babe' by Graham Kendrick and Richard Gillard composed a delightful hymn 'Brother Sister let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you'. But locked in the mists of time, the words of Simeon we know as the Nunc Dimittis have been set to chants and musical settings to be sung at Evensong, here in this very place every day of the year.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace :
according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen :
thy salvation;
Which thou hast prepared :
before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles :
and to be the glory of thy people Israel

Bishop Timothy Dudley Smith, adapted the words from St Luke to give us a simple yet thoughtful hymn Faithful Vigil ended. Our hymn for this morning.

**Faithful vigil ended,
watching, waiting cease;
Master, grant your servant
his discharge in peace.**

**All the Spirit promised,
all the Father willed,
now these eyes behold it
perfectly fulfilled.**

**This your great deliverance
sets your people free;
Christ their light uplifted
all the nations see.**

**Christ, your people's glory!
Watching, doubting cease:
grant to us your servants
our discharge in peace** (words Timothy Dudley Smith 1926-)

Closing Prayers

Go now and know that the Lord walks before you. Let him lead you each day into the quiet place of your heart, where he will speak with you. Know that he loves you and watches over you. Know that he listens to you in gentle understanding. Know that he is always with you leading the way. In hope and trust with the living God. Amen

The prayer of Mary Sumner:

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee, and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. Amen

Seeking God's blessing on our work today, as we step forth from this place, give us the Grace to be authentic witnesses to your love by our lives and proclaim you on our lips with joy. Help us to walk in newness of life with your blessings upon us, this we ask of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

We bid farewell until we meet again in this place or in our homes as we say the **Grace together:**

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen

Thursday Prayers 21st March 2024

Ely Cathedral

To join the meeting, follow this **NEW ZOOM LINK** (not same info as last month):
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84399690933?pwd=uVOgZJOKhdu4yR1ZKebODANtiIJPLC.1>
(**NEW MEETING ID:** 843 9969 0933 & **NEW PASSCODE:** 835537)
By Telephone ring: 0203 051 2874 - then follow the instructions given.

Focus: Lent

Welcome to Thursday Prayers today.

Opening Prayer

As we gather today Lord, we pray for an open heart to hear your voice as we continue in our Lenten reflections
Amen

Let us say together our MU 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 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.

Prayer for Lent

Almighty and ever loving God,
you invite us deeper into your world to share your Lent.
May this time be one of outward focus;
seeking you in those we meet.
May this time be one of inward focus;
recognising our short-comings and turning to You.
Give us hearts hungry to serve you
and those who need what we have to give
Amen

Prayer of the Month

Temptation: temptation besets our daily lives; temptations encircle our every situation, our every move and action. Temptation separates us from God. Lord, we pray to be alert to temptations and ask for the enduring strength and fellowship of the Holy Spirit to help us grow closer to You this Lent.
Amen

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Meditation

During the Season of Lent, we are invited to join Jesus in the wilderness. Sharing His deprivation and loneliness, it is hoped that we will be encouraged to be less reliant upon ourselves, choosing to depend on God for all our needs and thereby gaining a closer relationship with Him through Jesus. Spending time with our Saviour with a pattern of fasting, prayer and giving, makes Lent a place of reconciliation and healing.

We see how the Devil tempts Jesus when he is hungry and exhausted after His 40 days in the desert. Firstly, Satan taunts Jesus with the temptation to turn stones into bread. Yet this short-cut to instant gratification would not serve God's will. Jesus fights his hunger to repel the Devil and obey God. In the second temptation he is told to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple, in the expectation that God will send His angels to rescue Him. Jesus refuses saying 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Thirdly, Satan offers Jesus all the Kingdoms of the world and their glory. But Jesus remains loyal to God and refuses to bow down and worship the Devil in order to rule with him.

As the season of Lent winds down and Easter approaches, reflecting on Christ's time and temptation in the desert serves as a guiding beacon of hope. He, too, was tempted, just as we all are; yet he proved that through steadfast prayer and total reliance on God the Father, temptation loses its power.

Intercessions

We ask for God's blessing on Beverley Jullien, our chief executive; Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President; Julia Jameson, our Zonal Trustee; and, in our own diocese of Ely: Hazel Williams, Diocesan President; the Trustees, the Task Group Leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner House.

We remember in our prayers, our MU links world wide: Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria, Karimager in India and our diocesan links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India.

In our Wave of Prayer

We pray for Antisiranana in Madagascar; Busoga in Uganda; Yola & Oke-Ogun in Nigeria; Algoma in Canada and Jabalpur in India.

We shall now have a few moments of silent prayer to offer personal concerns to God for those in need, remembering all those who suffer in the wars that are happening around the world.

Hymn

**Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.**

**Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.**

**Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.**

**Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.**

**High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.**

The Lord's prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy Kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Thursday prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Grace

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all
evermore.**

Amen.

Thursday Prayer 18th April 2024 at 10.30am

Focus: “Unity” – Philip Baker

Zoom connecting details and link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

Meeting ID: 838 4780 9128

Passcode: 338053

Welcome to everyone taking part this morning, whether in the Cathedral or joining remotely via Zoom.

Introduction and opening prayers:

We gather our thoughts and start by praying for members and events in the diocese: For those working to implement the conclusions of the recent Diocesan Spring Meeting and for the Task Group Leaders reviewing their work during the year; for all those working for the end of modern slavery in all its many forms both here in the UK and around the world. We give thanks for the work of the Branches whatever that might be. We give special thanks for our members around the world, all 4 million of us, who share the desire to improve the lives of others, through work with families and support of family life. Finally, we give thanks for Mary Sumner, a most special lady without whom our movement would not exist.

The theme for this morning is “Unity” and the reading is taken from Acts.

We say together – **We join with our family throughout the world, with one voice, to glorify God’s Name. Though we may never meet, we are united in prayer. We share our sorrows and joys and together praise our God. As the family of God we are united in love. We glorify our Father with thankful hearts. Amen**

Reading: Acts 4: 32-35 - “Voluntary sharing among believers at Jerusalem” (NIV)

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the Apostles feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Reflection:

Unity. It is a word we use quite commonly but, until it was given me as the subject for these prayers and thoughts, not a word I had given much deep thought to. We use “unity” as a word to explain the concept of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit being one. I have not, however, ever heard a satisfactory explanation for that concept which is any better than the single word “unity”! It also covers the concept of each one of us being in unity with the Holy Spirit and, through that, in unity with all other Christians around the world. So, we are used to this little word of just 5 letters conveying meaning beyond our comprehension. Let us see if we can make some sense out of it in the context of the reading we have received from Acts, which opens with the words “All the believers were one in heart and mind.”

This reading is all about a special sort of unity and a special time. About sacrificial giving which serves as an example to us all even now. A little background to set the scene will help us. The author of Acts was Luke, writing in about AD 60. Luke’s Gospel is about the origins of Christianity, but this book is about the origins of the Church. This was a time of conflict; the Jewish and Roman authorities were in conflict and Christians this early in the establishment church did not know what the church they were starting should look like. How should it be organised? Who would run it? What should we do. How do we protect ourselves?

We would have had the same problem if it were us. But they all shared a strong belief in God and that Jesus had been the son of God on earth. This would have brought them together out of a common belief and sense of purpose. A “unity” of mind. However, in this hostile and confusing world, the early followers of Christ would have had to support each other, would have had to identify with each other and with their core beliefs and aims, which they were not, as yet, at all clear about. Jesus had shown them that compassion and mercy was to be one of their trademarks, so what better way of living that out than to share everything they had, thus ensuring that none were destitute. Unlike today, the alternative to “having” was “not having” at all, there was no support from the state. You can see this today, in the way that people gather resources after a disaster to mitigate the impact on those affected. This would have been a great comfort to them individually, knowing that there were others looking out for them.

But there is more to it than that. This was the first thing these early Christians did. They did it because it was how they saw their place in the world as Christians – what we would call today their “USP” – Unique Selling Point - the one thing that most showed what they were about. So, it is about more than the dictionary definition of unity – it is about the very ethos of being a Christian. And that is a message which has survived time, about 2,000 years of time, and is still true today. First and foremost, it is about our individual unity with God, God living in us and us in Him, and then there is the unity of all Christians, brought about by us all being with God and therefore all being together as one. It is why we describe ourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ, because, in a sense, we are all related by our faith.

I do not know whether they were conscious of the other benefits which would accrue to them through this show of unity. It would have given them protection against those who wished them harm. There would be others with whom to discuss how the church should be set up, how it should be organised, in what ways it would spread the word of Christ. That would also give them encouragement to carry on, they were not alone, they were in a group. These were, remember, very early days, unity was the only thing they had to support their belief. And how important that still is. How much more can be achieved by a large number of people all saying the same thing than the same people speaking as individuals. In those early days they clung together for safety; these days we work together to create greater impact. We feed from each other and, working together, we grow our faith as we understand God’s word more through talking with and observing each other. So, although the church is now better organised and has spread throughout the world, the need for unity as shown by the early Christians in 60 AD is in no way lessened. *Amen*

Hymn: Bind us Together, Lord

**Chorus: Bind us together, Lord, bind us together / with cords that cannot be broken;
 Bind us together, Lord, bind us together / O bind us together with love.**

**There is only one God, there is only one King,
there is only one body – that is why we sing:**

Chorus

**Made for the glory of God, purchased by His precious Son.
Born with the right to be clean, for Jesus the victory has won.**

Chorus

**You are the family of God, you are the promise divine,
You are God’s chosen desire, you are the glorious new wine.**

Chorus

The Mothers' Union Prayer: We say together:

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

Mothers' Union Prayer Diary

The theme of the month is "Abundant life" We pray: We celebrate abundant life with full and thankful hearts. We give thanks for the imprint of heaven which enhances our life in the here and now. May our appreciation of all we enjoy bring praise to our bountiful God. Amen

The theme for the week is "Walking with God" Today we pray: For everyone who is housebound or who cannot physically walk, that they would know that they can still walk with God in a special way. May they know the joy of leaning on Him for strength and comfort today.

The Wave of Prayer for today is for: Kindu in DR Congo; Mount Kenya West in Kenya; Egbu in Nigeria; Te Pihopatanga O Aotearoa in New Zealand; Cork, Cloyne & Ross in All Ireland and Eastern Himalayas in India.

Our Intercessions:

We pray for:

The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;

Our Worldwide President, Sharon Harper;

The Chief Executive, Bev Jullien, and all who work at Mary Sumner House supporting members;

Our Diocesan President, Hazel Williams, and our Trustees and Task Group Leaders;

Our Provincial President, Kathryn Anderson and all members in the Province of Canterbury

Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India;

The Diocese Links: Kigali and Vellore.

And we also pray for:

Our own parishes in the Ely Diocese, our families, and our friends

Anyone known to us who is unwell or in need

Any who are finding it difficult to feel the love and support of the Christian Community, worldwide

The many countries around the world experiencing conflict, oppression, natural disasters and anywhere where people live in fear or poverty.

The Mothers' Union Thursday Prayer, we say together:

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers, we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

God of forgiveness, we ask for your unfailing love to be with us today, so that we may reach out to others with love and compassion. Help us to seek peace and reconciliation with each other, and unite us as one family of God to your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Grace

Thursday Prayers May 16th 2024

THURSDAY PRAYER in the Cathedral and on Zoom 10.30am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Welcome everyone to our Thursday prayers.

Our Reflection today is “**Service with Love**”

We say together -

Lord guide us this day in all that we say and do, Lord in all things make us true: Keep us safe from evil thoughts and deeds, aware of other peoples’ needs. May we not wander from the straight and narrow way , may we trust in you Lord every day. Lord in all things, make us true. Amen. Rev. Moira Jameson, Province Scotland.

Prayer

Lord, let us serve your world with love as we mirror the example of Christ. Help us to love unconditionally. To refrain from needless expectations: to be generous in acceptance: to be selfless in support: as Christ has loved and forgiven us. Gracious Lord, show us the way to serve one another with love. May we place the needs of our neighbours above our own as we mirror the example of Christ. Amen

Our Monthly Prayer is

**Our Lord and Heavenly King,
Fill our lives with the presence of Christ,
Strengthen our faith to trust in You
And set our hearts to pursue your ways
That we may work in partnership
To build your Kingdom on earth. Amen**

Our Reading today is taken from 1 John 5: 1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God; to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the World? Only he who believes that Jesus is the son of God. This is the son that came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.

Prayer

Lord let us serve your world with love as we mirror the example of Christ: Help us to love unconditionally. To refrain from needless expectation; to be generous in acceptance, to be selfless in support, as Christ has loved and forgiven us. Gracious Lord, show us the way to serve one another with love. May we place the needs of our neighbours above our own as we mirror the example of Christ. Amen

“**Service with Love**” is our prayer focus this morning. Carrying out Service is a powerful way to open the heart and fulfil the soul. Those who give service know how much joy is received from giving to others. There are many forms of service and we each need to find the way that works best for us. There is no right way. We can serve by helping one person. by being a Big Brother or Big Sister to a disadvantaged child or we can be of service by helping whole groups, such as raising funds for environmental projects. We can offer our time by building houses for the poor either here or in Africa for instance, I bet we all know of some young person working abroad during the holidays, volunteering by helping to build a medical centre, or school. My granddaughter’s boyfriend is doing just that this year in Fiji during his University holidays. He did it last year too so he must have found it fulfilling.

Your Service may be in being a loving parent to your family, helping a friend in need or being a loving mate who supports the other in many little ways. Offering Service is a matter of discovering your passion and then giving your time and love.

You might have a special interest such as protecting the environment, stopping child abuse, helping the homeless or caring for the dying. Service through your creativity like making beautiful drawings, ceramics, or quilts. I have made many quilts for my large family over the years. Some are for hospitals or as charitable gifts also for my many grandchildren and heritage quilts as wedding gifts for my children. On the label I always put “made with love”, I think in future I might add “and patience”!

Tuning into your feelings of what brings you joy will lead you towards knowing how you want to be of service to others.

Don’t forget, even if you get paid for your time no one can pay you for the love you put into it. Love is always a gift that comes through you.

In fact, anything you offer that expresses your love is Service, your time, your creativity, your encouragement or your warm smile. When your heart is open to others, service can be a way of life.

Through Service we are given the opportunity to practice our lovingness and expand beyond what we think are our limits. **It is a Powerful way to open the Heart and Fulfil the Soul.**

And as St Peter says in the New Testament, 1 Peter, verses 4-10

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully “.

Today's Prayer

We pray that the world may know Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace,
That the day may come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ
is Lord, we pray. Thy Kingdom come Amen.

We say together The Lord's Prayer

Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,

Thy Kingdom come thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

**As we forgive those that trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver
us from Evil,**

For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

We pray together:

**Lord, let us serve your world with love as we mirror the examples of Christ; Help us to
love unconditionally. To refrain from needless expectations; to be generous in
acceptance, to be selfless in support, as Christ has loved and forgiven us. Gracious
Lord, show us the way to serve one another with love. May we place the needs of our
neighbours above our own as we mirror the example of Christ. Amen**

Hymn

Rejoice, the Lord is King,
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.

*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice again I say, rejoice.*

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,
The God of truth and love;
When he had purged our stains
He took his seat above:

Lift up your heart,

His Kingdom cannot fail;
He rules o'er earth and heaven;
The keys of death and hell
Are to our Jesus given:

Lift up your heart,.....

He sits at God's right hand
Till all his foes submit,
And bow to his command,
And fall beneath his feet:

Lift up your heart,.....

Intercessions We pray for the Worldwide work of the Mothers' Union, for Sheran Harper
our Worldwide President; our Chief Executive Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner
House.

For our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and the Trustees in the Diocese of Ely and the Task Group Leaders. For our Province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julie Jamieson our Zonal Trustee. All Branch Leaders and Branch Members in the Diocese of Ely.

For our Worldwide Links: Lusaka In Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali and Vellore.

In our **Wave of Prayer** today we pray for Maridi in South Sudan, Kirinyaga in Kenya, Zaki-Biam and Ijesa North-East in Nigeria and Waikato and Taranki in New Zealand.

For our many blessings.

And anyone known to us who is ill or unwell.....

We pray for families around the world where there are troubles and where people are suffering and dying in war and conflict.

For the World we live in that God may open our eyes to recognise the goodness of all creation and help us to do what we can to restore and care for the wonderful gift that we have been given.

And finally Lord, help us to do the work you have appointed to us. To start, and to see it through, so that everything we do is to your glory and that you may find it pleasing in your sight.

Lord in Your Mercy Hear our Prayer Amen

Let us say together The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

And our 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 love and service, reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus name. Amen

And we finish with The Grace

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen

Thursday Prayers 20th June 2024

Ely Cathedral

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaGkyMUdwWlHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Welcome to everyone joining us today. Whether you are worshipping in Ely Cathedral, joining us on Zoom, or from a long way away.

Wherever we are it is good that we are together in our worship.

I am Maureen and it is my turn and privilege to lead us today.

Our theme for today is "Trusting in Christ".

If we can start our service by saying together 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.

The reading is from the Gospel according to St. Mark Chapter 4. Verses 26-34.(NIV)

²⁶ He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." ³⁰ Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade." ³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

.....

Reading these verses it is all about growing, could we liken it to our church life? Seeds being planted in the ground, flourishing and bearing fruit. Farmers

will be able to tell us more about crops, but the idea of us learning and growing with Jesus is there.-Small beginnings, in the hope that they will grow and flourish, over time. So where have the seeds of our church life come from? Did we start with our parents taking us to church and becoming part of Sunday worship? Did our friends encourage us?

I have a reflection to tell, by kind permission of Father Gary Evans from the Parish Church, St. Ives, Ely Diocese. Close your eyes to help you imagine the story, told at an Advent service 2023. I keep reading it, it makes you think, even though we are all at different stages in our prayers.

Reflection

My teenage years were spent on Merseyside, if we wanted to attend the Youth Club on a Sunday evening, going to Evensong, before the getting together in the church hall, was a must! That journey led my sister and I and our Youth Club family into confirmation.-----small beginnings, leading to greater things—flourishing?

The older you become, the more you hope to learn about our Saviour. Yes, you pray, ask him questions, you hope there will be answers. Yes there may be answers, not always what you were hoping for, and not always immediately. In one parish I belonged to we had a church warden, who would pass you by, say “hello” and continue her conversation with Jesus, mainly about simple things-----and listening to her, I began to pray more, in an ordinary way-----but not aloud!

As individuals , we have heard God`s call to be here today, to listen to God speaking to us through Scripture, prayers and all we experience together and by each other. As we pray we need to think. Sometimes we pray and disengage our brains, waiting for God to land the solution on our lap. We need to wait for Jesus to answer but also to be on the look-out for how God might be communicating the answer to us. He uses our intellect. Think prayerfully through a situation, think about the words and what they mean. Think how you feel when you hear them.

Can we join together in Prayer:

Lord direct our thoughts and teach us to pray. Light up our hearts to worship you, in Spirit and in truth. Amen.

God of heaven, You send the gospel to the ends of the earth and your messengers to every nation. Send your Holy Spirit to transform us by the good news of everlasting life in Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Open our ears Lord and teach us to listen to you and to recognise your voice.
Amen.**

Please stand for our hymn.

**Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
You are one with us, Mary`s Son.
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,
Pouring your love and goodness in,
Jesus, our love for you we sing,
Living Lord.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day
Teach us how to pray, Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance, Lord of you.
Into our lives your power breaks through,
Living Lord.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
Born as one of us, Mary`s Son.
Led out to die on Calvary,
Risen from death to set us free,
Living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you,
Live my life for you, son of God.
All your commands I know are true,
Your many gifts will make me new,
Into my life your power breaks through,
Living Lord.**

Let us pray together.

**Dear God, please be with me this day. I`m not sure what I need to do. It
sometimes feels so difficult. Help me to see your will in my life.**

**Open our ears Lord and teach us to listen to you and to recognise your voice,
amid everything that surrounds us.**

Intercessions.

Before we start, let us have a few moments of silence.

For June 20th in the prayer diary:

We link hands in fellowship with our family across the world. Together may we be inspired with faith for the present and envisioned for the future. May god unite us in worship; build us in service, as together we seek to share his love.

And we pray for Rejaf in South Sudan, Military Episcopate in Kenya. Doko and Owo in Nigeria, Chelmsford in England and Jamaica & Cayman Islands.

We pray for the worldwide work of the Mothers` Union:

Our Worldwide President, Sheran Harper.

All who work in Mary Sumner House.

Our Worldwide links in Lusaka, Shyogwe , Sokoto and Ikka, and Karimnager.

And our Diocese links : Kigali and Vellore.

Lord, we remember

Our Diocesan President, Trustees and Task Group Leaders and the Province of Canterbury.

We pray for our own parishes, our families and friends.

All who are unwell and in need of our prayers.

The countries around the world who are suffering, with conflict, oppression and anywhere where there are people living in fear or poverty.

Together we can say the Thursday prayer.

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And together we pray

Loving Father, our faith is in you. We trust our plans for a future where we will thrive in showing love to those we seek to share. Saviour Christ our faith is in you: we trust in your plans for a future where we will be filled with power and guided in every truth. We place our future in your hands. May we continue to enrich family life for future generations. Amen.

We shall finish with

The Grace.

Mothers' Union Thursday Prayers !8th July 2024.

“Going Forward in God’s Plan.”

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Welcome to the Mothers' Union July Thursday Prayers which has the theme “ going forward in God’s plan”

We begin with a **prayer** and then we will sing our **hymn. Please join in the words in BOLD.**

July’s Thursday Prayer

Lord mighty and righteous, our hope and our inheritance, we give you thanks for all the spiritual blessings you have for us, your people. In Christ you gave us new hope. By His grace you redeemed us and adopted us. You accepted us as heirs and co-heirs of your kingdom. And that is the hope we live by in faith. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

HYMN – God our hope

**1. All my hope on God is founded;
He doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he
guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, He alone,
Calls my heart to be his own.**

**2. God’s great goodness aye
endureth,
Deep his wisdom, passing thought:
Splendour, light, and life attend him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore, from his store
New-born worlds arise and adore.**

**3. Daily doth th’ Almighty giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
His desire our soul delighteth,
Pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
Joy doth wait on his command.**

**4. Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gifts of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
Ye who follow shall not fall.**

Reading : The epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3-14.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ , who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4. According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:

5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6. To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace:

8. Wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence:

9. Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself:

10. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all the things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him:

11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the council of His own will:

12. That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

Reflection: Trusting in God's Plan

When facing change, it can be difficult to let go of the familiar and step into the unknown. Doubts and uncertainties arise, making it challenging to trust in what lies ahead. However, as I reflect on my own journey, I have come to realize the transformative power of trusting in God's plan. He has a purpose for every change we encounter, and when we have faith in His guidance, He leads us towards a future filled with hope and fulfillment.

Trusting in God's plan requires us to surrender our own desires and lean on His wisdom. When we place our confidence in God, He orchestrates circumstances in ways that we cannot anticipate. Even when we cannot fully comprehend the reasons behind the changes we face, we can have faith that God is working all things together for our good.

Trusting in God's plan does not mean that we will never encounter difficulties or hardships. In fact, it is often through these challenges that we experience the most growth. When we embrace change with faith, we open ourselves up to the transformative work that God wants to do within us. We discover strength we never knew we had and develop a deeper intimacy with our Heavenly Father. Remember, His plans are always for our ultimate good, and He promises to be with us every step of the way.

When we face changes, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and lose sight of God's presence. However, we must hold onto His promises and trust that He is leading us towards renewal. As it is written in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This verse serves as a reminder that God's plans for us are good, even if we don't understand them in the moment. It gives us hope and reassurance that He is guiding us towards a bright and fulfilling future.

In times of change, it is important to remember that God's promise of guidance and renewal is not dependent on our circumstances. He remains faithful and steadfast, even when everything around us is shifting.

When faced with change, it is essential that we let go of the past and embrace the new opportunities that lie ahead. Letting go of the past means releasing the grip of regret, shame, and disappointment. It means forgiving ourselves and others for past mistakes, failures, and hurts.

Seeking God's guidance is crucial during times of change. Through prayer, we can surrender our fears and uncertainties to Him, trusting that He will lead us in the right direction. His Word provides wisdom and comfort, reminding us of His faithfulness throughout history. It also helps to talk to others who can offer guidance and support as we navigate the changes in our lives.

Embracing change with faith also means letting go of one's desires and surrendering to God's perfect will. It requires each of us to release control and trust in His timing and direction. As I endeavour to do so, I am reminded of Proverbs 3:5-6, which says, "Trust in

the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” When I relinquish my own plans and trust in God’s guidance, He aligns my steps with his divine purpose.

Embracing change with faith is not always easy. It requires courage, persistence, and a willingness to step into the unknown. But as we choose to trust in God’s plan and promises, we are rewarded with growth and transformation. Through change, God moulds our character, strengthens our faith, and unveils new opportunities for His glory. In the midst of every season of change, we can find comfort in the words of Isaiah 41:10, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” With these promises in our heart, we can be empowered to embrace change with unwavering faith.

Let us join together in prayers from the MU Prayer Diary for this month – the theme is “Transformation of Relationships”

All: As we share our lives together, we pray to reflect the perfect relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit; perfectly loving, perfectly equal, united in total harmony. For then we will see true transformation as we value each other above ourselves. Amen

Gracious God, make known to us your plans for peace and wellbeing; to bring lasting transformation. Lord, we pray for lives to be transformed into ones of self-respect and sufficiency through effective use of your resources. We pray for families to be transformed into strong and loving households as they explore your ways for relationship. We pray for communities to be transformed into ones of resilience and prosperity through trust and cooperation. Gracious God, guide us in your plans for peace and wellbeing; to transform lives for good. **Amen**

ALL : Heavenly Father , you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer . Take our prayers we humbly ask , fill them with love and power , and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom , through Jesus Christ our Lord . Amen.

IN OUR INTERSESSIONS We pray for

- The worldwide work of the Mothers’ Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; All who work in Mary Sumner House;
- Our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees; the Task Group Leaders in: Faith in Action, Praying our Faith, Finance & Administration, and Communications;
- Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President.
- Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore.

In the **WAVE OF PRAYER:** Lord, we pray for Mothers’ Union worldwide

- 16-18 July: Lake Malawi in Malawi; Byumba in Rwanda; Jalingo in Nigeria; St Edmundsbury & Ipswich in England and Lucknow in India

We also pray :

- For the King and the Royal family, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, all those in government, and all MPs.
 - For our local parishes, our families, and our friends, and give thanks for our many blessings.
- For anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.
- For all in Local Government, in the Health Service, Emergency Services, and Transport and Travel Industry; those in Education, especially remembering children and young people.
- For the many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.

Reflective prayer

God be in my head , and in my understanding;

God be in my eyes, and in my looking;

God be in my mouth , and in my speaking;

God be in my heart, and in my thinking;

God be at mine end, and at my departing. **Amen**

WE SAY TOGETHER THE MOTHERS' UNION PRAYER.

ALL: 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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

ALL: Our Father,

WE SAY THE GRACE TOGETHER

May The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ , the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all , now and evermore . Amen .

ELY DIOCESAN MOTHERS' UNION

THURSDAY PRAYER

AUGUST 15th 2024

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Welcome everyone to our August Thursday Prayer, focusing on Mary Sumner.

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!' [Isaiah 6.8]

Mary Sumner heard this voice, today we celebrate her achievements and thank God for her vision that became Mothers' Union.

Let's all say Mary Sumner's personal prayer.

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen

BIBLE READING Philippians 1 3-6, 9-11

³I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

⁹And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

MARY SUMNER , BEFORE MOTHERS' UNION

We know about Mary Sumner establishing Mothers' Union, but you may know little of her early life. "George and Mary Sumner, Their life and times" a book written by Joyce Coombs, gives quite a detailed insight into their family history.

George Henry Sumner was born on July 3rd, 1824. George's father, Bishop Charles Sumner, was a prominent figure at the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837. The Bible on which she took the coronation oath was afterwards presented to Bishop Charles.

George was educated at Eton, then later Oxford.

After leaving Oxford in 1845, George embarked on the "Grand Tour". His cousin, Mrs Wilson and her daughters, had taken a house in Rome for the winter. A Mrs Heywood was doing the same with her daughters. The two mothers called on each other. At a new year's ball George was introduced to Miss Margaret and Miss Mary Heywood.

Mary Elizabeth Heywood was born on December 31st, 1828, the youngest of three children. The three Heywood children spent an idyllic childhood in the green rolling countryside of Herefordshire and each had their own ponies. The children were educated at home, Mary's brother Tom later went to Eton. The days of girls school had not yet arrived. Every year the family went abroad, Mary kept a journal of the places visited and became fluent in French, German and Italian. Mrs Heywood took the two girls to Rome to complete their musical education, perfect their Italian and enjoy the Opera, Mary had ambitions to become an Opera singer, attend concerts and balls. It was at one of these balls that Mary met George.

On July 26th, 1848, George Henry Sumner married Mary Elizabeth Heywood. George's father, the Bishop of Winchester, married them and as the young couple left the church the bells pealed out as they walked on a pathway of scented petals.

The first years of married life was spent at Crawley Hampshire, where George was curate, having been ordained in 1849. They then moved to Farnham so that George could act as chaplain to his father. In 1851 George and Mary moved to Old Alresford Place where they lived until 1885. During that time Mary Sumner's experiences and observations of motherhood and family life led to the founding of Mothers' Union. Mary Sumner conceived the idea of an organization for women, something more than a mothers meeting. It was to bring together all mothers, the rich, talented and elegant, the poor and uninstructed and illiterate. Simple cards, with rules and advice, were given out to those attending the first meeting. Members signed the card and a register was kept. Hence the name arose of enrolling member.

In the early days an organization leaflet gave advice on meetings which happened to include the following:-

It has been found a good plan to provide a general tea before a meeting for all the married women of the poorer classes, and to invite the mothers of the upper and middle classes to assist with that.

It also advised that the hymn " Hark, my soul, it is the Lord" be generally sung at meetings.

After a few years of just local meetings, word spread, to become the organization we know today. The Mothers' Union was born.

I think she would be amazed at what Mothers' Union has achieved since those early days.

COLLECT FOR MARY SUMNER DAY

Faithful and Loving God, who called Mary Sumner to strive for the renewal of family life; give us the gift of your Holy Spirit, that through word, prayer and deed your family may be strengthened and your people served; through Jesus Christ your son and our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, one God, now and forever. Amen

PRAYER

Lord of all we give you thanks for the far-reaching vision of our founder, Mary Sumner. We look back with praise and gratitude for her witness and the way she has inspired so many people. Our members worldwide have been beacons of hope for their communities, both with prayer and practical help, bringing joy and reflecting the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray that we will be able to continue her vision, ensuring that the role of Mothers' Union will flourish and grow as we unite to be helping hands across the world.

Heavenly Father, we give heartfelt thanks for the years of Mothers Union, for the gathering of women together to be a wave of prayer to take the Love of Christ into their homes and to spread your word to every home. Strengthen and bless all our members around the world as we carry out your mission. Amen

INTERCESSIONS

Lord, we bring before you the work of Mothers' Union, our worldwide president Sheran Harper and all who work at Mary Sumner house. We pray for our diocesan President Hazel and all involved in the activities, work and branches in the Ely diocese.

We pray for the work of Mothers' Union throughout the world and especially our friends in our link countries of Rwanda, Zambia, Nigeria and India.

We give thanks for the people who came to visit our Banner display, we pray that those who knew little about Mothers' Union, before viewing, went away amazed and inspired.

We pause for a few moments to bring before you anyone we know who is in need. We pray today especially for the family of Janet Duffy, who was branch leader of Woodston for many years, and whose funeral takes place today.

Almighty God, we offer these prayers for those who are in need of your mercy; those with broken hearts, broken lives, illness, worry. Bless them with your healing grace, radiate you healing power and fill them with gladness and hope. Amen

The Mothers' Union Prayer (say together)

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. Amen

The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

HYMN

What Hymn other than the Hymn recommended by Mary Sumner herself, could we sing today than; "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord"

Hark, my soul! It is the Lord,
'Tis thy Saviour, hear His word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee –
"Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou Me?"

"Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above;
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.

"I delivered thee when bound,
And when wounded, healed thy
wound;
Sought thee wand'ring, set thee right,
Turned thy darkness into light.

"Thou shalt see My glory soon,
When the work of grace is done,
Partner of My throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou Me?"

"Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.

Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee, and adore,
Oh, for grace to love Thee more!

Let's all say the grace,



Thursday Prayer for 19th September 2024

In Ely Cathedral and on Zoom 10.30am



**LIVING
IN LOVE
& FAITH**

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85209298628?pwd=VDTrciGq12BVz8luyEa34M6BRLZDIK.1>

or if it has to be written in :

Meeting ID: 852 0929 8628

Passcode: 080127 The service starts at 10.30am

Our Focus this month: 'Nurturing Faith'.

Opening Prayer:

Father, we pray for Hazel and all the members in Ely. May your light shine on us, in our lives and the work we do in the Diocese. We pray for all members around the world. Lord be with each one of us in every part of our lives, encouraging us and leading us, sheltering us and nurturing us so we may work to your praise and glory. We reach out as your hands across the world. We thank you Lord. Amen.

Our Reading is 'Mark 8:27-38'

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^[b] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Reflection



The 2024 symbol for
Creationtide

This month is marked as Creationtide in the church calendar, when one of the things we are asked to think about is the nurture of our world. We are all aware of the care and nurture needed to allow seedlings, such as the one in the picture, to grow to maturity. It will need water, food, love and protection. Note the shape of the hands creating a protective heart shape around the tiny plant. Our theme this month is **Nurturing Faith**, but how can we do that? It will be much like the nurturing care needed for that young seedling.

You have each been given a bulb. Hold it in your palm as you listen as a reminder of nurturing something.

In the Bible passage I guess Jesus is “nurturing” his followers, by feeding them with His teaching. He wants first his disciples, then the crowd as a whole, to understand. A tough lesson for most I am sure. How many would be willing to loose their lives for Jesus and the gospel! As it turned out in those early days, not many. But later, after the shock of Jesus’ death, the lessons that he had taught during his life began to be understood, and many were ready to give their lives for the message because of the nurture of the fledgeling church by the early disciples, particularly Paul.



How can we help others to grow their faith?

Encouragement is very important so they don’t feel alone. And patience to answer truthfully when they ask questions.

Many new to faith have not had personal experience in praying and may have all sorts of hang-ups about what they should say in a prayer and the correct posture for prayer. They may have the Victorian vision of a child kneeling beside the bed, saying prayers by rote, or in church kneeling with head bowed to pray. Releasing them from such stereotypes can be very liberating.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with those ideas as long as a person is comfortable, but I remember, probably about 40 years ago, hearing about “kitchen sink” prayers – freedom to talk to God whenever and wherever you are, and whatever you are doing – and just talking to Him!

They may also need encouragement to read the Bible by showing different versions that can speak to an individual – even perhaps using such as a graphic Bible for young teenagers. They are not a totally new idea. My father was in the printing trade and I have copies of the four gospels in pictures that he printed when I was about 10 or 12, 60 or more years ago!

As Mothers' Union members much has been done to show God's love for everyone by putting our "Faith into Action". We reach out through Mother & Toddler groups, in prisons, parenting courses and when we welcome new members into our Branches in this country. The global work that goes on in our name, helping women to reach their true potential with literacy groups, and raising awareness of the damaging effects on society of violence against women through the "Rise Up" campaign, all show the world how we "cherish" all people equally – showing that all are equal in the sight of God.

The Away From It All holiday schemes reach out to families who are struggling with everyday life and who will benefit from doing something together that they usually have never done before.

We tend to the needs of others through our work to support the various "refuges" in practical ways such as providing the basics to make life more liveable for mothers and children escaping dangerous situations in their homes, and providing gift vouchers etc at Christmas for prisoner and refuge families. And there are our many knitting projects that produce items to bring comfort to the elderly, premature babies and teddies for children who have faced difficult circumstances.

We are an organisation founded on prayer and through prayers we ask God to send His promised "water of life" through the Holy Spirit to all those who seek to follow the teaching of Jesus. It won't be easy for them. We would hope that by our actions they will feel safe to ask questions and that the Holy Spirit will also help each one of us in our work.

To close our reflection time, take the bulb you have been given and hold it in your hands like the illustration, creating a heart shape around it, and hold it as we say together the prayer for our Focus this month – Nurturing Faith:

'Our Heavenly King, may we treat those for whom we care as though we were serving Christ. We thank you for the nurturing of faith in families and individuals by Mothers' Union throughout the world. We pray for those with questions of faith; whose lives are dry without God. Make us eager to offer the water of life that many may drink and be refreshed by the Spirit. May we see the image of God in the face of our neighbour and lovingly care for their needs as though we were serving Christ. Amen'

In our hymn today, I translate the words "Tell out" as "shout out" to pass on the message about God.

Hymn

**1. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of His Word;
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.**

**2. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His
name!
Make known His might, the deeds His arm
has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy Name, the Lord, the mighty One.**

**3. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His
might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to
flight;
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.**

**4. Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forevermore!**

We end our time together in prayer.

We pray for the worldwide work of the Mothers' Union; Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner House; Also we pray for our President Hazel, the Trustees in our Diocese and all the Task Group Leaders. In our Province of Canterbury we pray for Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julia Jamieson our Zonal Trustee.

We remember and pray for our Worldwide Links:

Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India;
Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore

In our Wave of Prayer for today we pray especially for Buye in Burundi; Sebei in Uganda; Abakaliki & Ekiti-Oke in Nigeria; Southwell & Nottingham in England and Belize

We say together 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

We say together The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Let us close by saying the Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy spirit, be with us all this day, and evermore.

Amen



Thursday Prayers October 17th 2024

Topic: MU Monthly Prayers

Time: 10:30 Date Thursday, 17 October

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85209298628?pwd=VDTrciGq12BVz8luyEa34M6BRLZDIK.1>

Meeting ID: 852 0929 8628

Passcode: 080127

Praying with hope in a troubled World – Prayers for Peace

This week is the 50th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for World Peace. It started as an Anglican initiative and later we will hear more about it.

The overall theme of WPWP this year is 'Praying with hope in a troubled world'. Fifty years ago, the initiators described the world as one 'in turmoil and increasing violence'. Today that is still true, but we continue to 'pray with hope' for the peace that our world is so lacking. We pray with hope not just for a week but throughout the year.

We shall be reading prayers for the Prayer Resource and for those not able to attend, if you email wpwp2021@yahoo.com we are happy to send you a hard copy.

Opening Prayer

God of peace, come down among us, rain down
your peace on the world.

Make a path for your goodness, fill e'vry heart with
your peace.

Traditional Palestinian Song from 2024 World Day of Prayer

A prayer for the current situation in the Middle East

Two peoples, one land, Three faiths, one root, One
earth, one mother, One sky, one beginning, one
future, one destiny, One broken heart, One God.

We pray to You: Grant us a vision of unity.

May we see the many in the one and the one in the
many.

May you, Life of All the Worlds, Source of All
Amazing Differences help us to see clearly.

Guide us gently and firmly toward each other,
toward peace.

Rabbi Sheila Weinberg – Jewish

We join together in the words of the Mothers Union prayer upholding all our members to the Lords Everlasting Arms, especially those where wars and violence reign.

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

Each year the WPWP awards the Wilson/Hinkes Peace Award to an individual or group who work at grassroots level to promote peace, justice and reconciliation. This year four young women from Afghanistan will receive the Award. This is what one of them wrote:

Let us decide today to be part of this great change.
Let each of us, with love and kindness, play our part
in creating a more peaceful world. Our world, our
home; let us make it more beautiful with peace and
friendship. Tomorrow belongs to those who strive
for peace today. Let us be one of them and build a
world where enduring peace prevails by 2030.
Suraya Mohammadi, 17, Afghanistan

READINGS

Leviticus 19:18: You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD

Matthew 5:43-48

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

REFLECTION: Who is my neighbour? And the Week of Prayer for World Peace

The injunction to 'love your neighbour' is probably one of the best known from Scripture. We have always known that Jesus was not telling us just to love those in our road but all humans. That is easy to say but when he followed it up with 'love your enemies', that presented a dilemma that persists until today.

This rule applies at so many levels. Our personal, community and even national levels all call on us to do this. But it is not easy at any of those levels. In recent years many have spoken about 'them and us' or 'the other'. It is easy when we put labels on individuals or groups to then not see that they too should be loved. Our recent experience of the riots in August showed us how quickly violence and hatred towards the 'other' can flare and have devastating effects.

There is a role for all of us in ensuring that we do not personally take this approach but also to show others, especially our children/grandchildren that loving your neighbour no matter who they are is what Christians should do.

Back in 1974, the world situation was far from ideal. A number of leaders from different faith communities wrote "In the turmoil of a world increasingly dominated by violence and characterised by bewilderment and confusion created by the apparent impotence of man to alleviate suffering caused by injustice except by more recourse to violence, it seems to us that an unprecedented spiritual initiative is urgently required. We therefore wish to commend the idea of the World Week of Prayer for Peace." At the time there were a number of ecumenical things happening but not much interfaith work. This was commented on by the first Chair of the WPWP, then Dean of Westminster Abbey who said 'For there to be world peace it must be prayed for by all the world's faiths.' That has remained the basis of WPWP over the decades.

In the MU we are committed to pray and this comment from Lord George Macleod, founder of the Iona Community, and one of the original signatories adds an extra dimension, "Where people are

praying for peace the cause of peace is strengthened by their very act of prayer, for they are themselves becoming immersed in the spirit of peace.”

Over the last five decades, each year a prayer resource has been produced. Those of you at the Cathedral will get a copy and if anyone else would like an electronic or hard copy just email wpwp2021@yahoo.com

As we partake of our prayers today, we know we are joined by MU members around the world. Some of them are struggling in ways we find hard to understand. As we are ‘Praying with hope in a troubled world’, let us remember all the women and children who are not ‘on’ the front line, but ‘are’ the front line.

We continue with our prayers

Dear God I often want to change others for my own comfort, but this only causes sorrow for another person as well as myself. When I look within my own heart I can see where I need to be more generous, compassionate or tolerant as You are. Inspire me to change myself and become a loving example for many others.

(Brahma Kumaris Prayer)

1 For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord; for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords; To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word, help us rise and pledge our word.	3 All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned; pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan. In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span, may we hallow life's brief span.
2 Lead us forward into freedom; from despair your world release, that, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace. Show us how through care and goodness fear will die and hope increase, fear will die and hope increase.	4 You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind; for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind, that by our response and service earth its destiny may find, earth its destiny may find

Intercessions

We pause for a moment to remember all those close to our hearts who need our prayers for whatever reason.

Lord, we ask your blessings on all in the Mothers’ Union working at Branch, Diocesan, Provincial levels and at Mary Sumner House. Give them clear discernment to be your hands and feet as we reach out to world to bring your care and peace to those most in need.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Remembering all our links around the Anglican Communion, we ask you to strengthen them and bring us closer to our fellow MU members.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for all those who have been displaced from their homes by violence or climate change. Give them courage to maintain their families. We also pray for all the humanitarian workers who often at great personal danger strive to relieve suffering in so many places.

Lord, graciously hear us.

And finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves. Help to be all you want us to be. Give us the strength we need to carry out the work you set before us on so many fronts. Give us wisdom to know what it is each of us is called to do.

Lord, graciously hear us.

And now a special prayer from children in Wales

And from some young people

Dear God,

Please forgive us for all the terrible things that humans have done to each other and the planet. There is so much destruction and pain caused by terrible wars that have gone on forever. We know that animals and the natural environment also suffer when there is war.

Please help us all to be better people and to treat everyone with respect and kindness.

Please encourage our world leaders to look for ways that avoid war and violence

May all the faiths of the world come together in friendship and work for world peace so that we can all feel safe.

Please help us all to work together for a kinder world. Amen

Year 6 Peace Mala Team Catwg Primary School,
Neath, South Wales UK

Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We close today with the Universal Prayer for Peace

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth

Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust

Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace

Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

MOTHERS' UNION THURSDAY PRAYER: 28 NOVEMBER 2024 – “Campaigning for Christ”.

ZOOM INFO

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85209298628?pwd=VDTrciGq12BVz8IuyEa34M6BRLZDIK.1>
(MEETING ID: 852 0929 8628 & PASSCODE: 080127)

Good Morning everyone. And welcome to the November Thursday Prayer which is on the theme of “**Campaigning for Christ**”. We will begin with a few **prayers**, followed by singing the **hymn**.

NOVEMBER THURSDAY PRAYER. WE SAY TOGETHER:

ALL: Righteous God, we embrace our mission to share your love through speaking out for the helpless and campaigning for social justice.

Righteous God, we commit ourselves to campaign for equality and justice for all.

Help us play our part in creating a just and peaceful society for your people on earth.

May hope be stronger than struggle, may celebrations be more frequent than trials, may kindness prevail over judgement, may equality dissolve oppression, may love break walls of hate. Lord, as we go in your name, we celebrate our mission with thankful hearts. Amen.

From the MU Annual Prayer Diary for November: “Women’s equality and empowerment”.

May our championing of women’s equality and empowerment provide women with the means to lift themselves up in their communities; highlighting God’s restoration of human dignity in relationships, based on love and justice, not domination. **Amen.**

This week’s theme: “16 Days of Activism against GBV”.

Lord, we pray that our embodiment of gender equality will understand the place of equity in combatting gender-based violence. Teach us to ensure fairness, equal rights, respect and representation in decision making, and in how we each benefit. **Amen.**

As we think of all the work Mothers’ Union does – bringing hope and light into communities where there are difficulties and darkness – we think ahead to the coming Advent Season, when Jesus came as the light of the world, shining in the darkness and transforming lives.

We now sing the hymn: **Thy hand, O God, has guided.**

HYMN:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Thy hand, O God, has guided
thy flock, from age to age;
the wondrous tale is written,
full clear, on every page;
thy people owned thy goodness,
and we their deeds record;
and both of this bear witness;
one Church, one faith, one Lord. | 3. Thy mercy will not fail us,
nor leave thy work undone;
with thy right hand to help us,
thy victory shall be won;
and then, by all creation,
thy name shall be adored,
and this shall be our anthem:
One Church, one faith, one Lord. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

2. Thy heralds brought glad tidings
to greatest, as to least;
they bade them rise and hasten
to share the great King’s feast;
and this was all their teaching
in every deed and word;
to all alike proclaiming:
One Church, one faith, one Lord.

Edward Plumptre (1821-1891)
Tune: Thornbury – Basil Harwood (1859-1949)



Reading: Psalm 82

- 1 God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgement among the 'gods':
- 2 "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?"
- 3 Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
- 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
- 5 "The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing.
They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- 6 "I said, 'You are 'gods'; you are all sons of the Most High.'
- 7 But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler."
- 8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

"CAMPAIGNING FOR CHRIST" TALK

Verses 3 & 4 have been chosen for November Thursday Prayers but I thought it would be good to see the verses in the context of the whole psalm. I'll re-read the two verses:

3 Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

This Saturday we will be having a Vigil and Banner Witness at Ely Cathedral for the UN 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence and domestic abuse, and the MU Rise Up Campaign, which stands for: Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray. The campaign aims to raise awareness of and call for an end to domestic abuse and gender-based violence in all forms and in all societies in the UK and around the world.

The MU acronym can be expanded as follows about what you should do if someone discloses abuse to you – and more info can be found on the MU's website and other literature.

Respond: Respond to a disclosure of abuse with compassion and calm.

Inform: Inform the person where they can get help. If a person is in immediate danger call 999, otherwise direct them to their county domestic abuse helpline or the National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

Support: Support in a safe manner, listen and believe.

Empower: Empower them to grow and heal.

Unite: Unite the members of Mothers' Union and churches to help end domestic abuse.

Pray: Pray for all affected by domestic abuse.

MU's response could not be more relevant with recent coverage in the media about historical abuse cases.

Bishop Dagmar's pastoral letter included this comment: At times like this, it can be hard to be a committed member of the Church of England. This kind of moral trauma to the church's faithful servants is part of the wickedness of what has happened.

Yet, God has not changed and God's call on us has not changed. When we think of victims and survivors, when we look at the faithfulness of so many in our congregations and communities, we realize they need us to put our hand to the plough, to care and work for a better way. Our only proper response can be a renewed and ever more determined commitment to safeguarding.

So the two verses from Psalm 82 resonate with striking significance:

Defend the weak and the fatherless. Uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

The title of this month's theme is "Campaigning for Christ". When I think of "Campaigning" it brings to mind our country's recent general election, the election of a new leader for the Tory Party, and the election of a new American president. Everyone involved was keen to make sure voters knew about their mission to win.

This term has seen a new MU Campaign called "Empower Her Literacy". Did you know that 480 million women around the world can't read and write? Despite today's incredible technology, it doesn't make sense that millions of people are illiterate. Millions of adults can't register the birth of their child, read a medicine packet, or apply for a job. They are excluded from so much. Illiteracy doesn't make sense!

We all agree that access to education for children is a fundamental human right. Yet millions of women missed out on an education. The UK government's International Women and Girls' Strategy emphasises

the importance of girls' education, but it doesn't address educating women. MU wants to work with the new government to ensure that they prioritise women's education, regardless of their age.

Perhaps our Campaign or Mission can be summed up in Jesus' "Great Commission" in Matthew 28: 16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We can't all be out on the "Campaign Trail" – but we can support churches and charities that are working for the spreading of the Gospel and helping those in need. It's not always easy to share our faith with family, friends, and neighbours – but our simple witnessing by our lives and what we say and do can be a blessing to so many. MU Members support so many causes that are helping the needy (like the Refuges, Hostels, Prisons or AFIA Holidays) – whether through donations of goods and knitting, through financial giving, or practical support – but with the underlying message of God's love. We believe Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. As we sang in the hymn: "thy victory shall be won; thy name shall be adored; this shall be our anthem: One Church, one faith, one Lord."

Last Sunday was "Christ the King" and this Sunday is "Advent Sunday". We have Good News to share about the coming of Jesus, our Saviour and King. Let's try and let people know about our Christmas Services and Events. And share the Light of Christ. I hope and pray that everyone enjoys the coming Advent Season and has a Blessed Christmas.

I would like to end with a prayer attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila, which for me expresses quite well how our "Campaigning for Christ" might be lived out.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Amen.

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**The Theme of the MU NOVEMBER MIDDAY PRAYERS is "Women's equality and empowerment".** The Focus for Thursdays is "Opportunities for empowerment". Please join in the words in **BOLD**.

"Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might." Colossians 1:10-11

**LORD, WE WOULD GROW WITH YOU**

New shoots reaching out, hands stretched upward  
like leaves newly formed, soaking up your light and warmth

**LORD, WE WOULD GROW WITH YOU**

In sunshine and rain, in darkness and light  
in cold days and summer days, from Springtime to Winter

**LORD, WE WOULD GROW WITH YOU**

And bring forth fruit, that is pleasing to you  
fed by your living water, giving sustenance to others  
**LORD, WE WOULD GROW WITH YOU. Amen**

**WE PRAY TOGETHER: THE THURSDAY PRAYER.**

**ALL: Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Our intercessions. We pray for:**

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President, and the new WW President, Kathleen Snow;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; All who work in Mary Sumner House;
- Our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees; the Task Group Leaders in: Faith in Action, Praying our Faith, Finance & Administration, and Communications;
- Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and the new PP Comfort Fearon.
- Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnagar in India; Plus Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore.

**WAVE OF PRAYER: 26 - 28 November**

- Zululand in South Africa; Lodwar in Kenya; Isiala Ngwa South in Nigeria; Accra in Ghana; Bangor in Wales; and Colombo in Sri Lanka.

And in the **Anglican Communion Cycle of Prayer** we remember:  
The Diocese of Kirinyaga - The Anglican Church of Kenya.

**We also pray for:**

- Our local parishes, our families, and our friends, and give thanks for our many blessings.
- Anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.
- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.

~~~ PAUSE FOR REFLECTION ~~~

WE SAY TOGETHER: THE MOTHERS' UNION PRAYER.

ALL: 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

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

We conclude with this prayer of commitment as we go forward on our Christian journey:

ALL: As Jesus taught us, we commit ourselves to welcome strangers into our midst, to care for the poor, to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to support justice in our community. In the name of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit we pledge ourselves to work and pray for peace: Peace in our homes, Peace in our communities, Peace in our world. Amen.

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**We say THE GRACE ALL TOGETHER.**

**May The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.**

## Thursday Prayers 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 Ely Cathedral and on Zoom 10.30am

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85209298628?pwd=VDTrciGq12BVz8luyEa34M6BRLZDIK.1>

Meeting ID: 852 0929 8628

Passcode: 080127

Good morning and welcome to our prayer time today.  
Let us begin by saying The Mothers' Union Prayer together:

**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**

**Reading: Luke 3: 7-18**

<sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup> Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" <sup>11</sup> In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." <sup>12</sup> Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" <sup>13</sup> He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." <sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with <sup>17</sup> the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

### **Reflection**

In this passage John warns the crowd of people around him, not to make the assumption that because they are the descendants of Abraham, they will not escape God's wrath and vengeance. They must repent. He explains to them that they must look outward to those less fortunate, rather than being selfish and self centred. Therefore, they should give to those less fortunate than themselves. They should share their wealth. The tax collectors should take only what was required, rather than making money for themselves on the side. The soldiers should not falsely accuse people in order to receive bribes.

Many of the crowd around John, thought that he might be the Messiah and it is at this time that John makes it very clear that it is not him. His use of the expression “not fit to untie his sandals,” shows how inferior he feels to Jesus, as only a lowly servant would do that task. However, John leaves them and us with the knowledge that the Messiah was close and that he would baptize with the Holy Spirit and cleanse with fire. The use of fire metaphor would have been very significant to the Jewish members of the crowd, because they knew how God used fire to right wrongs. So there is hope that can drive the people to believe that when Jesus comes and baptizes them they can change into a more empathetic people. This is the “Good News” for which they have been waiting. This is a reading informing us of the “Good News “of Jesus’ coming, but in it John informs us unless there is repentance and a change in our ways there will be no benefit from this amazing gift from God.

At this time of the year when we are thinking of the preparations for Christmas we should reflect on the great gift that we have received from God. It is easy to be wound up with shopping and cooking to leave Christ out of Christmas. We should remember John’s lesson that we should share and think of others. In Advent we should focus on how fortunate we are and that we should think of those less fortunate. We are spending money on our friends and families, but we should think beyond this and remember those less fortunate. Much of society seem tied to wealth and possessions.

Last month Debbie referred to the MU Campaign “Empower Her Literacy” an excellent campaign, which if supported will transform so many women across the world. There are many gifts on the Mothers’ Union website and in the catalogue offering gifts not of “things”, but of education and skills. These gifts are beyond possessions they can lead people out of poverty and depression to change their lives. There is a famous Christian Aid quotation, “Give a man a fish and you can feed him for a day. Give a man a net and he can feed himself forever.” Instead of “man” read person or in our case “woman and teach a woman literacy and numeracy and she can improve the lot for her family and her village. It is a fact that in societies where women are educated, the expectation of the people improves, which leads to a positive effect on the whole of that society.

Let us remember Jesus’ teaching “This is the first and great commandment. Love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And the second is love thy neighbour as thyself.” These two commandments if followed are all we need to ensure a fairer world. As Christmas nears, let us take a moment to see how we can alter our behaviour and see a way to look beyond our immediate environment and consider who exactly our neighbour is.

Let us pray

Dear Lord, you sent John to prepare the way for your Son. Enable us to hear your voice above the hubbub and busyness and to rise above it and to be open to your spirit. **Amen**

Lord God, you sent John to baptise for repentance and forgiveness. Give to all people humility to examine their lives with honesty and devotion. Lead us away from deceit in ourselves and others. **Amen**

Lord, we watch and wait for your reign of peace.

We pray for Jerusalem and the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan and all the conflicts around the world.

As the world is in such turmoil, we ask for your help for those who are suffering.

We particularly hold before you the children and young people, who have seen such atrocities. May they reach safety and find the love and support that they need.

May all nations lay aside the ways of darkness and put on the armour of light. **Amen**

We pray for those who are sick, particularly those who are lonely, despairing and struggling to survive in the present economic climate. May they feel the support from our prayers and the knowledge that they are not alone and they are valued. **Amen**

Our heavenly Father, as once again we prepare for Christmas, help us to find time our busy lives for quiet and thought and prayer; that we may reflect upon the wonder of your love and allow the story of the Saviour's birth to penetrate our hearts and minds.

So may our joy be deeper, our worship more real, and our lives worthier of all that you have done for us through the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**We will have a moment of silence to focus on our own prayers.**

We now sing the hymn: **Hark the glad sound.**

1. Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour comes,  
the Saviour promised long;  
let every heart prepare a throne  
and every voice a song.

2. On him the Holy Spirit pours  
the promised sacred fire;  
his power and wisdom, zeal and love  
the anointed Son inspire.

3. He comes the prisoners to release  
in Satan's bondage held;  
the gates of brass before him burst,  
the iron fetters yield.

4. He comes to cleanse the human mind  
from thickest scales of sin,  
and by the entrance of his words  
give light and life within.

5. He comes the broken heart to bind,  
the wounded soul to heal,  
and in his gospel to the poor  
God's riches to reveal.

*(P. Doddridge, 1702-51 Melody from Ravenscroft's Psalter, 1621)*

## **From the MU Annual Prayer Diary for December**

As we journey through Advent we praise God for his Word which leads us to the stable of salvation.

As we draw near to adore the Christ-child, we share in the joy that the risen Lord accompanies us every step of the way. **Amen**

***Our Intercessions*** - We pray for:

The worldwide work of the Mothers Union, our Worldwide President Sheran Harper and the new Worldwide President Kathleen Snow.

The Chief Executive, Bev Jullien and for all those who work at Mary Sumner House, supporting members.

Our province of Canterbury and all the members of the Canterbury Province and our Provincial President, Kathryn Anderson and the new PP Comfort Fearon.

We pray for our whole Diocese, for our Diocesan President, Hazel, for those on the Trustee Board and those leading branches, those working in the Task groups, our deaneries, our chaplains and our members. We pray for events being held in the parishes.

**In the Wave of Prayer:** 10 – 12 December

Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Ely in England and Karimnagar in India.

This Advent may Christ deliver us from distress, despair, trials and fire. He is the fulfilment of our hope. May he restore us from the brokenness and scars caused by our sins as he is the Giver of eternal life full of joy, peace and love. **Amen**

(Mothers' Union Prayer Diary for 12<sup>th</sup> of December)

Let us say together The Mothers' Union Thursday prayer:

**Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers, we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Before we say the Grace, I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year and thank you for your friendship and fellowship throughout the year.

Let us say together **The Grace**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen**