



Thursday Prayer 2021

"Rebuilding Hope and Confidence"

Thursday Prayer is held in one of the chapels at Ely Cathedral (usually St Dunstan's) monthly, on the third Thursday unless otherwise stated.

Also at Little St Mary's Church, Trumpington St, Cambridge on 4th Thursday of each month, Both from 10.30-11.00am.

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

See dates opposite.

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 2021

	Ely	Lt St Mary's & St Ives
January	21	28
February	18	25
March	18	25
April	15	22
May	20	27
June	17	24
July	15	22
August	19	26
September	16	23
October	21	28
November	*25	25
December	16	*16 (3 rd Thurs)

- ***Please note this Cathedral date is not 3rd Thurs**

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 Leaders 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: Looking Forward with Hope & Confidence

Reading: Psalm 100:1-5

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we bow down before you and we recognise your power, your reign over everything that has existed and all that will be in the future. We, as women glorify you today because you are the essence of life, you are our understanding, our strength, love and our salvation. We ask that you will pour upon us your richest blessings, and do not let us fall into temptation. Teach us to walk in your way.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour, we ask this. Amen.

February: Lent

Reading: Matthew 4:1, 3&4, 8-11

Prayer: In penitence and sorrow we bring our empty lives to be filled by our merciful Saviour. Lord you drank deeply from the cup of suffering: you tasted death that we may be free of life. So we will partake of the cup of thanksgiving; drink deeply of your provision and be refreshed by your water of life; united as one in the body of Christ. Forgiven and restored we will offer the cup of the water of life; let all taste and see that you are good. Amen.

March: Blessings

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

Prayer: May the calming peace of Jesus gently wash your fears away.

May the power of God's Spirit fill your life with love.

And God's healing grace pour over you with blessings from above.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Lord give us wisdom, knowledge and understanding to hear your voice and walk in your goodness and blessings all the days of our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

April: The Joy of Easter

Reading: Luke 24:13-16, 30-32

Prayer: Christ is risen. Alleluia!

Lord Jesus Christ, in dying you conquered death and rose again in glory. Through your great love and abiding grace, we will one day be with you in your heavenly kingdom. Lord, we pray that we may make each day of our earthly life worthy of your great sacrifice on the cross. Thank you that we can find sanctuary in your love because you have chosen to love us just as we are, with all our faults and failings and that, if we truly repent, you will forgive our sins. Amen.

May: Joining with our Link Dioceses

Reading: Acts 11:19-24

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.

June: Our faith in action in Ely Diocese

Reading: Luke 15:20b-24

Prayer: Lord, we hear your word; let us be doers of your will. Christ our Lord, you saved the world you love through acts of mercy as well as words of life. Your practical deeds of kindness are ours to emulate. Your loving model of servanthood is ours to follow. Heavenly Father, help us to follow your ways to enable our work to flourish. May the love of God be seen in us as we love out our faith through actions. Amen.

July: Praying Our Faith Today

Reading: Philippians 4:6-7

Prayer: O gracious and Holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the spirit of Jesus. Amen.

August: Celebrating the life of Mary Sumner

Reading: Luke 1:46-48

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. Amen.

September: The Gift of Harvest**Reading: Genesis 1:24-27****Prayer:**

Lord of the harvest we celebrate your goodness. We bless your holy name Gracious God. The signs of your kingdom are growing but the workers to gather are few. Send us out to do your will in the harvest fields of life. May those who sow and those who reap rejoice in an abundant harvest of goodness and grace. Give us strength to carry on throughout the changing seasons, knowing that we will reap blessings both now and for eternity. Lord of the harvest, we celebrate your goodness. We bless your holy name. Amen.

October: Praying for World Peace**Reading: Romans 12:16-18****Prayer:**

God of peace and God of reconciliation, we ask for your peace and reconciliation to start with us today, so we may reach out to others with love and compassion. Help the leaders of nations 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.

November: Whitworth House**Reading: Matthew 7:24-27****Prayer:**

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.

December: Advent**Reading: Isaiah 9:6-7****Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ, as we prepare for your coming, we read the words of the prophets written long before your birth, giving us hope and encouragement that all people will be united and the land will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Help us, Lord, to open our hearts and minds to these truths and to gladly receive you, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
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

Introductory prayers

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

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: Looking forward with Hope and Confidence

Heavenly Father, we bow down before you and we recognise your power, your reign over everything that has existed and all that will be in the future. We glorify you today because you are the essence of life, you are our understanding, our strength, love and our salvation. We ask that you will pour upon us your richest blessings, and do not let us fall into temptation. Teach us to walk in your way. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, we ask this. Amen.

Reading: Psalm 100:1-5

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his^[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Reflection

When Helen asked me in late summer if I would do Thursday Prayer in January I was delighted to say yes. Not only because Thursday Prayer, concentrating on prayers and reflections about the work of the Mothers' Union, is always an enjoyable time of fellowship but because I always learn something new from someone who is closer to some particular aspect of our work. Being the first Thursday prayer in the year also gives the opportunity to look forward to all the new things that are planned for the year to come.

Little did I or anyone else know that January 2021 would not quite be the new start we were all hoping for.

2020 was a tough year for everyone. Even those companies who were doing very well economically because of the pandemic still had to work very hard to keep up with the demands of stocking their shops and reaching those in need, not to mention those working in care and the NHS. But you learn something all the time. Who knew that making gin was not far removed from making hand sanitiser?

But many Mothers' Union members and their friends rose to the challenge. Although many members knit constantly I doubt that they thought they would be making face masks as well as scrubs for those on the front line of care. The autumn edition of Families First showed two of our trustees with Catherina at her sewing machine making at least three sets of scrubs every week and Jo doing a 700 mile cycle ride in her conservatory and back garden!

It was also a great change for all of us from our 'normal' life. Staying in the house most of the time, not meeting friends and family and no church or meetings, including MU branch meetings, made for a very different pattern to our days. As always our organisation rose to the challenge in using the telephone (and then Zoom) to keep in touch with church and MU members and support those who needed it.

Although the Diocesan Office at Bishop Woodford House and our MU office has been closed much has continued as normal. We have continued to organise the AFIA holidays (although re-organised until October half-term), the refuges and hostels have received household equipment, bedding and clothing for those in need of it and knitted goods have been distributed to local hospitals and care homes as well as world-wide. Prayer and reflections have continued regularly in the monthly MU newsletter and through phone calls, and Zoom meetings started to help replace the lack of contact that regular branch meetings gave. Communication has also changed using Facebook, u-Tube and a much improved MU website instead of only face to face meetings. I attended a Praying with Purpose Zoom call, run by MSH with 73 members taking part. That would not have happened in a normal year. Midday Prayer is now listened to by hundreds more people across the world now that it is on line and telephone and feels truly worldwide.

So where are we in January 2021? In the UK, as far as the transmission of the disease is concerned, in a worse place than we were last Spring. More people catching Covid, more people in hospital, more people dying. More, it seems, not being so careful and the disease spreading. More people worried about the health of their loved ones or themselves.

Hope is with us though because hundreds of people have worked so hard, across the world, to produce a vaccine to protect us from this illness. To have developed something so life changing within a year is magnificent. To know that everyone over 50 years old will have had it by the summer (and I am sure some reading this will have already had it) and that transmission can be controlled is an outstanding achievement.

Rebuilding Hope and Confidence is the theme this year for the Mothers' Union and how appropriate. Many people will need the help of others to give them confidence and isn't this where prayer, practical help, communication and fellowship are so important. All the things that the Mothers' Union are good at. We must not underestimate the job to be done in the MU this coming year. Some will not join our organisation again as they think of their branch only as monthly meetings and of course there have been none. Some will find it difficult to leave their home after being alone and frightened for so long. Some will just find it all too much to even think about. Our hand of friendship and support, I am sure, will continue to be extended to care for all in need.

Let us pray together

Loving Lord, we pray for your love and compassion to abound as we walk through this challenging season.

We ask for wisdom for all those who bear the load of making tough decisions.

We pray for all those who are suffering with sickness, and all those who are caring for them.

We ask for protection for the elderly and the vulnerable.

We pray for misinformation to be curbed so that fear may take no hold in hearts and minds.

We pray that those in self-isolation may find strength in you while physically alone and that those of us who remain well continue to reach out and support all those in need.

Amen

Intercessions

In our intercession today, we pray:

For the world-wide work of the MU, particularly at this difficult time.

For Sheran Harper, our world-wide president based in Guyana

For our Chief Executive, Beverly Julienne.

For all who work for the MU normally based in Mary Sumner House, including those who have moved on because of redundancy and those new staff who have joined recently.

For all Provincial presidents and Kathryn Anderson in the province of Canterbury.

Let us pray for all members of our Diocese that in these difficult and upsetting times they are able to cope and have found new ways of working and keeping in touch.

An opportunity to offer personal concerns to God, either aloud or in silence;

May God bless all those for whom we pray. Amen.

Our theme for this week in our Prayer Diary is Christian Fellowship and today it says,

‘Lord we ask you to bring us together as one in prayer and praise and to daily lift each other to your throne of grace. May we feel your love helping our fellowship to be a witness to you as we serve you even in difficult times and challenges.

In our Wave of Prayer we pray for –

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

Let us 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

All my hope on God is founded

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.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendor, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the 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.

Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all;
ye who follow shall not fall.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

The Grace

Hazel Williams

Thursday Prayers for February 18th 2021

Theme: Rebuilding Hope and Confidence

Prayer Focus: Lent

Introductory Prayer

Lord God, as Jesus resisted temptation by the devil in the wilderness, help us reflect on his faithfulness to You, his rejection of worldly values and hold these thoughts in our hearts throughout Lent and beyond.

Amen

Prayer for this month:

In penitence and sorrow we bring our empty lives to be filled by our merciful Saviour.

Lord you drank deeply from the cup of suffering: you tasted death that we may have life.

So we will partake of the cup of thanksgiving; drink deeply of your provision and be refreshed by your water of life; united as one in the body of Christ. Forgiven and restored we will offer the cup of the water of life; let all taste and see that you are good.

Amen

Bible Reading: Matthew 4:1, 3&4, 8-11

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Meditation

We all lead busy lives pulled this way and that; with family commitments, appointments, household jobs and, for some, the constraints of employment. So much so, that we may have little time to think about our spiritual self. We are so absorbed in this 'business of life', our spirit, if not completely forgotten, is often neglected. When we do find the time to look at ourselves honestly, we may discover that worldly distractions have gradually eaten away at our good intentions and our better selves have become faded by the cares and self-centred spirit of the world.

Fortunately for us, within our Church year, we are offered periods of reflection where renewed effort can be made to free ourselves from the grip of worldly cares and to once again imitate the example of Christ and reflect it in our lives. The season of Lent invites us to renew our concentration on prayer, fasting and the generosity of giving of our time and/or resources.

Through the discipline of quiet prayer, we can again affirm the sovereignty of God in our lives. In doing this, we surrender our own self-reliance, accepting that we are not the measure of all things. In the practice of fasting, we seek to overcome the power that material things have gained over us; we strive to be servants of the sacred and not merely masters of the material. Finally, we are called to be generous to our neighbours, to give help to others sharing what we have and so surrender our natural tendency to be self-seeking. Prayer which unites us to God, fasting which curbs our endless desires, and generous giving which allows us to actively love our neighbour as ourselves - these are the transforming gifts of Lent.

However, being reacquainted with these gifts is not enough. If we are to truly benefit from our re-awakening, we must make them our bedrock in which we deepen and enrich our faith and, in turn, our relationship with Jesus Christ. As we are, once again, given this opportunity to find God in our lives, let us pray to use it wisely.

Prayer for Lent

God of all wholeness, heal our hearts of all that prevents us responding to our sisters and brothers excluded by poverty and prevented from living a full and healthy life.

This Lent, may we:
implore justice through our prayer,
stand in solidarity through our fasting
and reach out through our giving.

Send your life-giving power to revive the weary,
restore the broken
and renew the face of the earth.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
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**

Intercessions

Lord, we ask your blessing on Beverley Jullien, our chief executive; Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President 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, including those who have moved on due to recent redundancies.

We remember in our prayers, our MU links world wide:

Lusaka in Zambia

Shyogwe in Rwanda

Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria

Karinmager in India

and our diocesan links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India.

Let us have a few moments of quiet prayer for those in need and to offer personal concerns: either aloud or in silence.

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

Hymn - Be Thou my Vision, Oh Lord of my Heart

**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.

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.

Christine Holt

MARCH 18TH 2021 THURSDAY PRAYER - OUR THEME IS BLESSINGS

Reading: Matthew ch5 v 1-12

Welcome to you all I hope and pray this morning that you will all be blessed by this time together wherever you may be, at home, on Zoom, phone or You Tube. May the words spoken and prayers prayed, uplift, encourage and support you in the days ahead. May the pictures evoke a different time and place and bring Gods word alive here with us today.

Let us pray: Be Still and know that I am God....

May the calming peace of Jesus gently wash your fears away. May the power of God's Spirit fill your life with Love. And God's healing grace pour over you, with blessings from above.

Reading....

Jesus gives His Sermon on the Mount....Beatitudes



Thursday Prayer we say together...

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

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 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 pray especially for Cynthia Yin Yin Maw in Myanmar in this time of deep division in her country. She is a Provincial Community Development Coordinator, running courses for Mothers' Union reaching out to those in so much need. She says "We come together to show that religion is not about conflict but about peace." We pray for a new understandings, for voices to be heard and violence to stop.

We say together: **Lord hold them all in the palm of your hand.**

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS ✝ ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL • BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS ✝ ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL •

This is from Ground Zero in New York

We pray for Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia, Shoyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India and our Diocese to Diocese with Kigali and Vellore. We say together: Lord hold them all in the palm of your hand.

We pray for all those MU members working Worldwide in projects to better their communities, for Sheran Harper our Worldwide President, for Bev Jullian our CEO, for Kathryn Anderson our Provincial President, all at Mary Sumner House keeping everything afloat.

We say together: **Lord hold them in the palm of your hand.**

From our Wave of Prayer we pray for Kajo-Keji in South Sudan, Tarime in Tanzania, Dutse & Akoko-Endo in Nigeria and Canterbury in England.

We say together: **Lord hold them all in the palm of your hand.**

We pray for Hazel our President, for all Trustees, for Task Group Leaders in, Faith in Action, Praying Our Faith, Finance & Administration and Communications and for all members in our Diocese supporting each other at this time.

We say together: **Lord hold us all in the palm of your hand.**

Blessings in Abundance my own experience.....

With Love from Soham MU's WhatsApp Group

Whichever way we turn, O God there is your face in the light of the moon and the patterns of the stars, in sacred mountain rifts and ancient groves, in mighty seas and creatures of the deep. Whichever way we turn there is your face in the light of eyes we love, in the tears we have tasted, in weathered countenances, East and west, in the soft skin glow of a child everywhere. Whichever way we turn, O God there is your face, there is your face among us.....by John Philip Newell

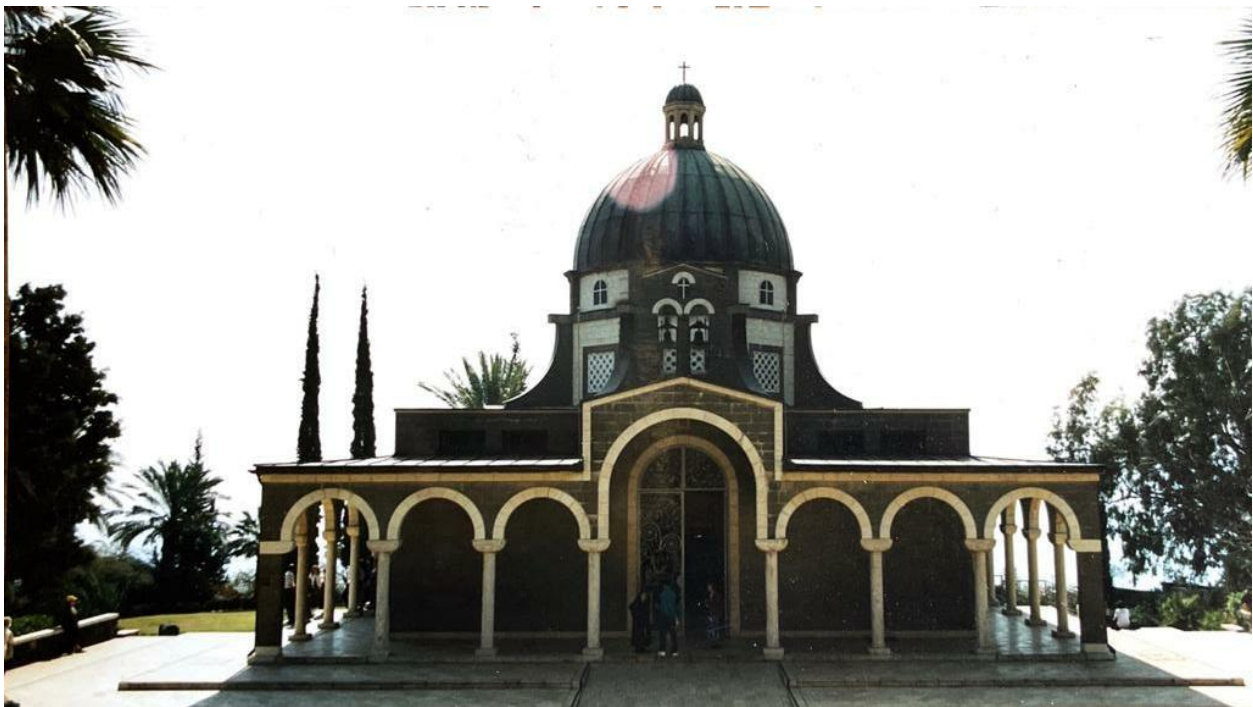
In a time of quiet let's bring to God our own personal prayers.

We say together: **Lord we come in thanks knowing that you hold our loved ones, our concerns, our joys, our fears, our hurts and our future in the palm of your hand. AMEN**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.

We say together: **Lord give us wisdom, knowledge and understanding to hear your voice and walk in your goodness and blessings all the days of our life. AMEN**

Since starting my Daily Blessing Jar last year I've become more and more aware that blessings come in all shapes and sizes and at times you least expect it. Deciding how to prepare for Thursday Prayer has been a case in point. I started with the reading, one of my favourites since I've visited the Holy Land and looked out from behind the Church of the Beatitudes (built in 1937) where the Sea of Galilee gently laps the shoreline at the foot of sloping hills, where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. It's awesome to think you are standing in a place where Jesus stood, it makes the reading come alive before your very eyes. So it took me right back to the Holy Land to the sights, sounds, smell's, food, people and clashes of cultures.



The Church of the Beatitudes

The reading seems so poignant for the times we're in right now, for the emotions of loss, the care shown to others, the tiredness, the concern and continued support through food banks for vulnerable families, the people protesting none violently against man's inhumanity to man and the glimmers of hope with the delivery of vaccines. That message and promise Jesus gave to His followers on the Mount still holds true today, that He would be with us in whatever circumstance. The Bible I read the passage from was my Grandmothers, its inscribed Agnes Manning 1917 with a verse 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. What beautiful words. On flipping through the pages I came across a typical Sunday School Card of a nativity scene and on the back it said 'Love and all good wishes from Lizzie' Sadly I never knew my Grandmother but I do know lots about her, I did however know Aunt Lizzie. Further on I found a piece of writing from my Dad, his thoughts on Psalm 104 tucked in the appropriate page. It's well worth a read, again one of my favourites. There was a card

my mum and dad had sent my other Grandmother who I had known really well and was a huge part of my life, when they were on holiday in Scotland. Lastly two small cards one that said flowers from the Holy Land just a few pressed flower petals were left the rest long gone, but there was a beautifully preserved pressed pansy too. Both my Grandmothers loved flowers and my dad was a gardener, his first job was at Queens College Cambridge where he'd planted trees along the riverbank. The smallest card almost more of a stamp, was of a bird on a branch its colour still vibrant 'He hath made everything beautiful' Eccl 3, 11. How true that is and through picking up my Grandmothers Bible with its gold edged pages all still in pristine condition, but clearly used by her, and my mum and dad, I've taken a walk down memory lane holding onto the golden thread through the tapestry of their life and mine that has been so fashioned by the love they had for Jesus and the love of family. I could say why didn't I use my own tatty Bible with scribbles on dog-eared pages with bits and pieces of paper in it.... all treasures to me but then I would have missed the God moments within my Grandmothers Bible, my blessings through listening to that still small voice.... there is no other way to explain it. It has been a journey of joy and thanks, what blessings each one has left me with. My Bible has my own story within its pagesblessings for others to experience when the time comes..... Recent blessing via the net...I belong to the fan club of Escape to the Chateau a TV programme that follows a couple restoring a French Chateau. It's a great way to connect with people across the world who have many talents that they share. One lady shared a beautiful painting in folk art style, she'd done, of a make believe village and she told us all about this village and what went on in it, how people cared for each other and the planet. There was great conversations between the group about village life that people remembered it was fascinating. I shared that I loved the picture and told her what our Mothers' Union do in Soham now and how our Church hoped to have an Outdoor Market in the Churchyard in May and we would be having a stall. She messaged me back and said how impressed she was with what went on and said she made prints of her pictures and would like to send some to us to raise funds for our projects. She has sent them and they are wonderful what gift and a God moment blessing. We're going to meet up when we're allowed. This is the picture Shelia shared.

Blessings come from our connectedness with our Creator God through prayer, through each other, nature, life experiences, acknowledging His will for our lives and that still small voice speaking to us in the quietness of our hearts. AMEN





PHILIP BAKER'S REFLECTION FOR MARCH

This is Philip's Reflection for March, which would normally have been included in the monthly Newsletter. It is not part of this month's Thursday Prayers but has been added here, as an extra something to think about.

REFLECTION FOR MARCH

This time of year, during Lent and approaching Easter, is full of suggestions for reflection or thoughtful consideration. So, I am going to offer something slightly different this month, more a "thought for the month", in order to avoid creating a "reflection overload"!

Like many of you I have been following the Mothers' Union Prayer Diary with daily prayers for members around the world. I don't know how you have been doing this, or even if there is a "proper" way of doing it, but I have been reciting to myself the prayers in the last three paragraphs of page 5, turning to the appropriate daily page for the wave of prayer specifics, then finishing with the beautiful Mary Sumner Prayer (which never fails to bring an emotional tear to my eye) on the back cover of the booklet.

Every day since I started, something did not seem right to me about the third prayer on page 5: "We pray for all members. May God be with them in every part of their lives, encouraging them and leading them, sheltering and strengthening them so they may work to your praise and glory". Well, I may be slow and you may all have worked this out, but I suddenly realised the other day what it was that troubled me about it; it is all in the third person and so feels impersonal, not involving us directly in the subject. And yet the membership includes us, every one of us, and we all need to play our part, however small that may be, for the aims we so fervently desire to come to fruition. I expect some of you, like me, will have made a contribution towards the recent appeal to provide help and training for our less fortunate members in countries less advanced than ours. I chose to support the establishment of co-operative banking solutions as I remember being really impressed with the simplicity and high yield of such schemes when Susan first came back from Rwanda and told me about them. In such ways we all play a part in improving (or even saving) lives. So, with humility and respect to the authors of the Prayer diary, I suggest we might amend the wording slightly as follows: "We pray for all members. May God be with us in every part of our lives, encouraging us and leading us, sheltering and strengthening us so we may work to your praise and glory."

To me this is a prayer of wider application than just for our sisters (and brothers) who are struggling to cope. It includes us all and becomes a prayer of hope and supplication which we can use at any time, because it asks God for his help, and God always hears our cry. Try it and see if it works for you, it certainly does for me.

Philip Baker

Ely Cathedral. St Mary the Less, Cambridge. All Saints, St Ives.

MOTHERS' UNION PRAYERS

APRIL 15 2021

The Joy of Easter

+

OPENING PRAYERS.

O Lord our Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, we remember before you the late Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, in thankfulness for the blessings which you bestowed on him; for the loyalty and service to our Sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth and to our nation; for his desire to give young people greater opportunities through the award scheme in his name.

Have mercy, we pray, on Elizabeth our Queen and all the Royal family; be gentle with them in their grief, show them the depths of your love and show them a glimpse of heaven; and we pray that you will give us grace that, having these mercies in remembrance, we may with one heart and mind set forward the welfare of this land and Commonwealth, and hasten the coming of your kingdom of peace and goodwill among all people through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Lord, open our eyes to your presence. Lord, open our minds to your grace; open our lips to your praise; open our hearts to your love; open our lives to your healing and be found among us. Amen.

In our prayers today we pray for our Diocese of Ely and the work and ministries of our bishops, Stephen and Dagmar. We pray for all our members, for their lives and witness in our parishes.

Lord hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.

**Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort**

**knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

We offer the work of our diocesan President Hazel Williams and all who hold positions of responsibility at Diocesan, Deanery and Branch levels as we live in this Eastertide. We pray for all committees preparing for the coming year, and for the coming elections for our Office Holders.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

For the Provincial Conference in May as we prepare for the future. For our Provincial President Kathryn and all she does for the Mothers' Union in this Province of Canterbury.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

For the Wisbech Mission Project and all those involved in organising, encouraging, worshipping and working in our church and community schools, communities and churches, where there is need to spread and make known the love of God.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

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Bible Reading: John 20 verses 1 - 18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, * 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflection

Don't you just love the Easter accounts, all different, but all contributing to the total picture. Much running to and fro, some weeping, some apparently trivial asides, one, the Walk to Emmaus, the longest continuous account in the gospels of Jesus and two disciples. And then Thomas doesn't believe the others, and lives with that doubt for a whole week until Jesus appears again to them all and invites Thomas to put his hands in the site of the nails in his hands and his side. And Thomas believes. That early morning, with the disciples fishing on the Sea of Galilee and the "stranger", Jesus, cooking their breakfast. And so much more, so that the writer of John's Gospel adds, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. If everyone of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

Our family was very blessed when I was appointed as Deputy Head of one of the UK Ministry of Defence, Service Children's Schools in Cyprus. It was a very small secondary school of some 220 mixed pupils, with a tiny sixth form of some 6 students, and staff for a full UK National Curriculum. School. The children and staff were in school from 7.30 am to 1.15 pm, including two short breaks and a half hour lunch break, because it was very hot for much of the year and there was no air

conditioning. There were seven service schools in Cyprus, including two secondaries, one where we lived, at Dhekelia near Larnaca, and the other at the HQ in Episkopi. The UK had maintained two sovereign base areas at Cypriot independence in 1960, totalling some 99 square miles. By the time we arrived in January 1985, Cyprus was split in two, with a UN demarcation and a UN Force separating Greek from Turk.

We lived on the Eastern Sovereign Base area, surrounded by Cypriot communities, and on the border with the Turkish sector, our nearest village being Xylotymbou. The school was built on a bluff above the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, and in the far distance, some ninety miles away we could, occasionally, see the snow covered mountains of Troodos. We had Greek and Turkish Cypriot workers at the school and Armenians too, so a very multi-cultural experience for us, our young family and all the students. Cyprus is just eight hours by car ferry from Israel and the Holy Land and we were very blessed with two visits there.

I used to visit the Cypriot Orthodox Church, an independent Greek Orthodox church, in our nearby village. The services were lengthy, and gradually, during Sunday morning, the congregation would build up, the men at the front, women at the back of the church, with much singing and veneration of the icons. It was fascinatingly different. Easter ceremonies were especially delightful, and I soon learned that the greeting during Easter tide was not Good morning, how are you, but “Christos Anesti”, followed by the reply “Allithos Anesti”. Christ is risen, He is risen indeed! Alleluia! I have even managed to teach the children in some of our church schools in the diocese this greeting too.

So Easter is very special as we all know. After the reflective and sombre time of Lent, followed by Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, the day finally dawns and we can celebrate Christ’s rising from the dead. New hope for the world, perhaps even the universe too. We live in this certain knowledge, and become and are an Easter people, filled with this knowledge. It is a fantastic mystery, to be experienced between family, friends and the whole Christian community. When I was in the parishes, we used to meet at dawn on Easter Day, to light the new fire of Easter outside the church, light the Paschal Candle from the fire, and then process into the dark church, gradually lighting it up as all had candles. We would sing and then renew baptismal promises before having breakfast together either in the Vicarage or someone else’s house nearby. By the end of this service of course, the sun had risen and the world was filled with the light of Christ. It was a wonderful, powerful and uplifting start to our Easter celebrations.

I do hope that in spite of lockdown you managed to have a great Easter, and will deepen your own faith in the risen Christ.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

A short time of silence to reflect on. All join together in today's prayer.

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Lord Jesus Christ, in dying you conquered death and rose again in glory. Through your great love and abiding grace, we will one day be with you in your heavenly kingdom. Lord, we pray that we may make each day of our earthly life worthy of your great sacrifice on the cross. Thank you that we can find sanctuary in your love because you have chosen to love us just as we are, with all our faults and failings and that, if we truly repent, you will forgive our sins. Amen.

*

Page 4 Intercessions

The 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 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 world wide 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: Jesus Christ is risen today

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia,
our triumphant holy day; alleluia,
who did once upon the cross; alleluia,
suffer to redeem our loss; alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing; Alleluia,
unto Christ our heavenly king; alleluia,
who endured the cross and grave; alleluia,
sinners to redeem and save: alleluia!

But the pains which he endured; Alleluia,
our salvation have procured; alleluia,
now above the sky he's King; alleluia,
where the angels ever sing: alleluia!

The Grace

Thursday Prayer May 20th 2021 - Joining with our Link Dioceses

Welcome

Opening 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 we praise our God. As the family of God we are united in love.

We glorify our Father with thankful hearts.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

We ask your blessing on Sharon Harper our Worldwide President, on Beverly Jullien our Chief Executive Officer, on Kathryn Anderson our Provincial President and all who work in Mary Sumner House. In our own diocese of Ely we pray for Hazel our President, the trustees and task group leaders, for the Wisbech Project and all those who take part in it. We lift all these members to you and ask for your guidance and encouragement in all their planning. Help us to back them up as loyal members of their teams.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

Reading : Acts 11: 19 -24

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

*By AD 52 The Apostle Thomas, of doubting Thomas fame arrived on the coast of Kerala, the southern tip of **India** bringing the gospel with him. Our link Diocese Karimnagar is situated about halfway down India.*

Rev Priscilla Reuben leads the group, the full title being *The Women's Fellowship for Christian Service*.

The news from India has been heart wrenching. Karimnagar itself adopted a very firm test and trace system right from the start of the epidemic and it seems to have paid dividends. Priscilla sent this email in April just as the bad news was breaking.

"Greetings to you in the most precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are fine by the grace of God. Needs your prayers because of the situation here.

We do have regular worship service but a little bit restricted on gatherings. Praying for God's protection strength and grace

Love and prayers

Priscilla"



Prayers for India

Father God our hearts go out to India in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low. Comfort those who mourn. Give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick. We lift before you our Diocesan link hospital in Vellore. Equip all nursing staff with the skills necessary to satisfy the needs of their patients. Strengthen them with your Spirit, so that through their work many will be restored to health; We ask that much needed supplies of oxygen, respirators and vaccines will be available to all hospitals.

Lord of love
In your mercy hear us.

Compassionate God

You created all people in your image, making them equal in your sight
We pray for the people who are vulnerable, marginalised and excluded in India
May they know the high position that you give to the lowly and oppressed.

Lord of love
In your mercy hear us.

Loving Lord we ask your protection, strength, and grace on Priscilla and the Women's Fellowship. Help them as they minister to the people around them. May the light of your love shine through all they do. Unite us as family in mutual love and support through the challenges and joys of carrying out your mission on earth.

Lord of love
In your mercy hear us. Amen

Two of our links diocese are in Nigeria

Nigeria comprises more than 250 ethnic groups and over 500 additional indigenous languages. Since the covid lock down there has been a string of deadly attacks on vulnerable people in both towns and villages in the northern areas getting very near Sokoto.. Both male and female students had been kidnapped from their dormitories and a member of staff was killed. The right to freedom of religion or belief continues to be violated regularly amid a general deterioration of security that is impacting the whole of the country. The levels of lawlessness continue to rise also in the central states. Kidnappings and attacks on civilians are commonplace with Christian farming communities becoming increasingly vulnerable, Ika being one.

*In our link diocese of **Sokoto**, **Felicia Omole** is not only the Diocesan President but also the Principle of the Royal Comprehensive College.*

The Mothers' Union works together with the Womens' Guild and the Girls Guild. They work among families to raise the status of women and improve the lives of the children. Their aim is to prevent the girls being sold off for early marriage.



The Diocese of Ika has been hard hit by the Fulani tribesmen who ran roughshod through the area last year.

***Evelynne Expenisi** is the diocesan President who is supported by the “Praying our Faith” officer Awoke Ejedimu. As part of Mother’s Union activities the diocese runs a hostel for girls.*

As recently as 21st April the diocese held a confirmation service with members from the Girls Guild, the Mothers Union women’s guild, fathers union and youths induction service. It was a huge success .They said “Thanks to God Almighty Our Victory is sure.”

You can see the happy faces of the candidates in the photo.



Prayers for Nigeria,

Loving Heavenly Father we feel overwhelmed by the seemingly endless violence in Nigeria. We cry out to you for the people today. Comfort all those who mourn, protect all in danger, strengthen those who live in fear. Fill the land with your justice and bring about a Nigeria that is secure under a just government, where everyone lives in peace and terror does not come near.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

We rejoice that you have put Felicia in such a great position of authority .We pray that with the help of your Holy Spirit Felicia will be able to take maximum advantage in sharing the good news of your love among the young people of Sokoto. Please keep her safe.

Bless the families to whom the Mothers Union minister so that the young girls will be saved from early marriage.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

Despite covid and the Fulani tribesmen your work has continued in Ika. Bless Evelynne and Awoke as they organise the day to day activities of the Mothers’ Union. May the girls’ hostel that they run be beacon of safety and hope. We thank you that the mission of the church has continued during these difficult times. We pray for the confirmation candidates that they will grow in faith love and praise.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

We give you thanks for the Nigerian women whose lives shine as a beacon of hope in the communities in which they serve. Unite us in worship; build us in service as together we seek to share your love. Amen

Lusaka Diocese Zambia

Mildred Hakamangwe was re-elected in November for her second term of office as Diocesan President. Lusaka had a peak of covid about the same time as we did in January and February.

Towards the end on 27th February Ruth Sichizya wrote “ Nothing is closed down per say now but we face mask, sanitize and have temperature taken before we enter banks, shopping malls and public places. The Anglican Bishops have advised all of us above 50yrs to stop going to church as a protective measure! Most congregations in Lusaka city allow under 60s to teenagers to go to services with face masks, social distancing a metre apart, sanitizing, no Eucharist, no handshake and 1hr 30mins service only We in the countryside are also just having services via Facebook.



The MU in my parish meet in small groups in townships in homes for 1hr with social distancing every Thursday, basically it's just prayers and bible study. Am alone here as the other friends with farms near me haven't yet moved completely.

The rains have been good and we have a good crop of maize and soya beans. The maize has grown so high its interfering with the wifi. Emails don't always arrive on time. We have bought 6 goats (5females+1male)

Prayers for Lusaka

Father God we thank you for shared vision
in a world where your love is shown through flourishing relationships.
We lift Mildred Hakamangwe to you as she carries out the responsible task of leading the Mothers Union in Lusaka. Give her the skills that she needs for the task. Fill her daily with your Holy Spirit.

Lord of love
In your mercy hear us.

We thank you for the successful harvest in Lusaka so that people will have enough food.
We thank you for Ruth and the work she does to place orphan children into loving adoptive homes.
Bless all the children. We pray that it won't be long before Mothers Union members will be able to carry out their normal social work among the families of Lusaka.

Lord of love
In your mercy hear us.

As we are united in prayer may God encourage us in heart and unite us in love .Amen.

Claudine Mukawera DP of Shyogwe wrote

Thank you so much for your greeting, here in Rwanda SHYOGWE Diocese we are happy to receive your greetings. Also we are still living the life with pandemic, where the pandemic was very raised in the period of Christmas. After Christmas day from January until today we stay at District, no one can go to another district. But in Kigali our capital of Rwanda living in total lockdown, because there are many people who are contaminated. Also our churches from January until today are closed. We pray in families only. For us internet is a problem but we are hoping that next week the rules will change because the number of infections has decreased. For us the pandemic has caused a rise in early pregnancy for teenagers, where we see in one parish around 30 or 40 girls were pregnant in this time of Covid 19 so for us, it is a big issue, Please pray for us for this. The initial vaccine roll out started on 5th March, to front line health workers, people with disabilities, chronic health conditions and over 65s. The supply was exhausted on 8th April. We await the next assignment, but we thank GOD how continue to protect us in this time. Greet all M.U members in Ely Diocese and wish you all the best from M.U Members Shyogwe Diocese. Thank you and God BLESS YOU. Claudine



We also get news from a branch in a country parish.

Diane Uwizeye is a nurse and branch leader. Both Diane and her husband have had their first vaccine. The branch prepared meals over Christmas and Easter for the patients in hospital.

Diane thanked us for our prayers and wrote "May God bless you, greetings from my family and the Mothers' Union members."



Prayer for Shyogwe

Lord we bring to you our gratitude for the fellowship and prayer support through being linked to the diocese of Shyogwe. We ask your blessing and guidance on Rev. Claudine, Diane and our friends in Kigali as they lead the Mothers' Union forward.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

God of compassion be close to those teenage girls who are pregnant, afraid or in isolation. In their anxiety, be their hope. We pray that their families won't reject them and will have the means to provide for them. We ask that the MU members will have the skills and resources to nurture the families well into the future.

Lord of love

In your mercy hear us.

Lord, would you also greatly bless and protect the vaccination roll out programmes happening across Rwanda. May you multiply their effectiveness in protecting and saving lives? We pray against vaccine inequality and ask that countries would collaborate and serve each other, working together to fight the virus. Lord, help all of us to understand what it means to love our global neighbour as ourselves.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Hymn

1 All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

2 He bids us build each other up;
and gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope,
we hand in hand go on.

3 The gift which he on one bestows
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

4 Even now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentred all, through Jesus' name
In perfect harmony.

5 We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

6 And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what height of rapture shall we know
when round his throne we meet

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 Grace

Thursday Prayers. June 17th 2021. The number for zoom is 849 5365 2866

Welcome to Thursday prayers on this lovely warm June day.

We start by saying the Thursday prayer together.

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in the world wide 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

Teach us, good Lord to serve thee as thou deserves. To give and not to count the cost,

To fight and not to heed the wounds, To toil and not to seek for rest,

To labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will. Amen..

Today we are thinking about the work of the Faith in Action team and in particular working with families.

The reading is taken from St. Luke`s Gospel Chapter 1 beginning to read at verse 20. (and finishing at verse 24)

Before I start I would like to share with you an extract from Beryl`s book. I call it Beryl`s book because this book was handed to all the dads on the Relationship Course at the last session in Littlehey prison way back in March 2020.

Written by an American author, Jim Butcher born 1972. "There`s nothing that makes you more insane than family. Or more happy. Or more exasperated. Or more secure"

In a world of broken relationships, the passage from the bible teaches us a lesson of deep love and hope and I can take the point that there is always hope for reconciliation.

The Lost Son is the last of three parables. In this one, the father represents God and the son, the people on earth who have lived in a way that ignores God`s wishes.

Now why is this son compared to a pig, you may wonder? To be compared to a pig was to be godless. So the listeners of Jesus` parable would readily recognise that the prodigal son had sunk to the lowest depth of morality by feeding pigs raised by a Gentile.

Well the prodigal son was an abuser of grace. Grace is often defined as unmerited or unearned favour. He had a loving father, a good home, provision, a future and an inheritance, you would think he had everything , but he traded it all for pleasures. We are the prodigal son.

As he did every day, the father walked from his home to the small hill where he could look down the road and see for several miles. He always thought and hoped that he would see a familiar figure heading his way. And one dayhe did.

Families! There is a well known saying that you can choose your friends..... but not your family but you know we should know our families, same upbringing? Same genes? Same values instilled from birth? And yet these reasons could well be the reasons why we don`t.

The father in the verses just read, exhibits what all parents feel unconditional love.

And his Brother? Just what you might expect? Jealousy? We don't know the ending of the story. Do they manage to overcome their differences and learn to live and work together in harmony? Or are they at loggerheads for the rest of their lives-----with their father in the middle? I always like a happy ending to stories..... so you know which one I am going for?

Families? Really complex units, and not always as simple as mother, father, and children.

In relationships you would hope that things would run smoothly, any niggling differences ironed out but two people from different families and their relatives have not only to adapt to each other, but to things happening from both sides in their wider families.

If something happens and breakdown of a family occurs and there looks to be no possible solution, then it's possible that, the mother runsand takes the children with her. These desperate women see their chance..... and go. No wonder when they reach a safe place ie the refuge..... their only belongings are the clothes they are wearing.

Now when the Refuge Support worker from one of the refuges is passing ,usually on her way home from work she often collects things from my garage, which have been collected from Mothers` Union members and their friends-all concerned..... and desperate to make a difference to folk in need. Now I like to chat to this lady while we are filling up her car and emptying my garage .She is very guarded in her answers and will only go as far as she wants to, in the conversation, so as not to breach confidentiality. I don't know where she works except that the Refuge is within walking distance of a well- known supermarket, because when I handed over vouchers at Christmas she said `good` because the women can walk there. I learn a little bit more each time I see her.

I know her car is `Tardis` and no matter which things I have lined up for her, if she needs them she will somehow fit them in, cots and a dressing table, being the largest. Before Lockdown they had a storage area on site. During the first lockdown no-one from the refuges was able to move on, nothing from my garage was passed on And I was not collecting. A full stop.

As soon as we were all able..... things got moving again very quickly. That was May, June time and the residents were being re-homed and household items were desperately needed..

Some of the women coming to the refuge take their rooms last thing in the afternoon. They have a bed and a cooker, you can see where our vouchers come in so useful!

One evening late she was obviously on her way home the doorbell rang, and there she stood, the Refuge Support Worker,.. announcing that she had become a grandma!" Grandma" I thought, "You don't look old enough to be a grandma!" And then we laughed as she showed me a picture on her phone of the puppies in her house! She definitely knows how to cheer people along! But you can tell that she is also very sensitive, even though (in her own words she has been likened to an opened box of live frogs!) arms and legs, but perhaps that is her way of dealing with the women and their plight.

There are two refuges which work closely together and what one has and the other hasn't they are able to sort between them. I know at Christmas the vouchers were passed between them when one ran short.

I have only mentioned two of the 5 refuges we support; we have not forgotten the others!

Finally,thankyou to all members and their friends who have given a thought to the needy families and donated items to go to the refuges. To those who have knitted clothes and blankets for the baby banks and given baby equipment and to the sweaters and blankets knitted for Christian Hope international. Your donations are always very much appreciated, and please keep going!

And I shall finish with another extract from Beryls` book. "Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass.....it`s about learning how to dance in the rain" The late Vivien Greene. Wife of Grahame Greene.

Intercessions.

Let us pray.

Today we pray for the world wide work of the Mothers`Union. remembering our links in Lusaka ,Shyogwe, Sokoto and Ikka and Karimnaga and our Diocesan links with Kigali and Vellore.

We pray for Sheran Harper our World wide president, For Beverly Julianne our Chief Executive and for all who work in Mary Sumner House and for our Provincial President Kathryn Anderson.

In Ely we remember Hazel Williams our Diocesan President and our Board of Trustees. And all our members in Ely Diocese.

And in moments of silence, we make our petitions to Almighty God bringing before Him, our own concerns.

Father, we pray for those known only to you, who have no-one to pray for them.

May our prayers be acceptable to Christ who suffered and died for us . Amen

Let us 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.

Lord, we hear your word ,let us be doers of your will. Christ our Lord, you saved the world you love, through acts of mercy as well as words of life. Your practical deeds of kindness are ours to emulate. Your loving model of servanthood is ours to follow. Heavenly Father, help us to follow your ways to enable our work to flourish. May the love of God be seen in us as we live out our faith through actions. Amen.

Dear Lord we pray for all the outcasts of our world,

Those who have been cut off from their families, those who have been rejected by society and lost all hope of return. Those in prison, the homeless and the lonely; bring comfort to them, O Lord, and restore them to the full dignity of their humanity. Let them grow into new life. Amen.

I only know one hymn which is suitable for our Faith in Action service, this morning :- a favourite of mine.....

Please join in singing all verses of “Brother, Sister, let me serve you”.

1. Brother, Sister ,let me serve you

Let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

2. We are pilgrims on a journey,

And companions on the road,
We are here to help each other,
Walk the mile and bear the load.

3. I will hold the Christ-light for you,

In the night –time of your fear,
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.

4. I will weep when you are weeping,

When you laugh, I'll laugh with you,
I will share your joys and sorrow,
Till we've seen this journey, through.

5. When we sing to God in heaven,

We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together,
Of Christ's love and agony.

6. Brother, Sister, Let me serve you,

Let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.

And we finish our service by saying 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,
evermore. Amen.**

ELY DIOCESAN MOTHERS' UNION

Thursday Prayer July 15 2021. Praying our faith today.

Good morning everyone and a warm welcome to our July Thursday prayer. Our theme is praying our faith.

Let us open our hearts to God in praise and joy. With Mary we magnify The Lord and rejoice in God our saviour.

Heavenly Father, we bow down before you and we recognise your power, your reign over everything that has existed and all that will be in the future.

We come together to worship and glorify our God who through Jesus we may call the one almighty father, who has given us life and the promise of eternal life.

Let everything that breathes – praise the Lord. Amen.

Through our praise we become aware of the powerful love of our heavenly Father for us and we bring before him our sins – in our thoughts, our words and our actions, those we have done and those we have neglected to do. Sins committed recently and those which over time have become a burden. May we lay our sins at God's feet and ask for his forgiveness. Loving Lord, thank you for your forgiveness and understanding.

You are our strength, hope and salvation. Teach us to always walk with you on our life's journey. Amen.

God of life we praise and thank you for your unfailing love and infinite mercy. We thank you for the knowledge of your presence in our lives and your many blessings. You are indeed a great provider. Amen

Della

Our reading is taken from Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 4 verses 4 to 7.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ."

Reflection on Praying our Faith today.

As I reflect on my prayer life today my mind goes back to the first prayers I remember saying. I wonder how many of you share similar memories of bedtime prayers usually with my mother and to whom I'm very grateful that she gave me such a firm base to build upon. There was a structure which included the Lord's prayer, saying thank you to God and asking his blessings on family and Friends and ended with a verse asking a blessing on me during the night, which meant a lot as I didn't then and still don't like the dark very much.

During my confirmation classes at our village church led by our Rector I remember being given the ACTS format for the next stage in prayer. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication, (our modern prayers of intercessions) I found this very helpful but I, like many others, continued and still do, to discover and learn more about prayer and its meaning in our lives.

We discover that prayer is communication as when we make a phone call, it is a two-way conversation which involves both speaking and listening to God. During our journey of faith we are

invited by God to be in his presence not just in church or our personal prayer time but that our whole life can be a time spent with God. We need to be tuned in, like the radio to the correct wavelength. We learn to accept that at times it can feel dry, arid or foggy and blurred, but although we can feel lost in the wilderness and prayer is unfathomable it is also awe inspiring beautiful and joyously real. Prayer involves being open, attentive, faithful and often patiently waiting on God's timing. It goes beyond asking in order to obtain particular answers, for God knows our needs before we voice them. It is bringing those for whom we pray to come ever closer to God's love and presence.

We are all very different personalities and there are a variety of types of prayer and we learn that some will appeal to us more than others. Formal prayer and personal prayer are well known. Being sensitive to people's needs or situation and immediately taking them to God in prayer, maybe asking guidance and strength in any action we take, are known as arrow prayers.

For many of us the recent lockdowns have given us the opportunity to experience stillness solitude and silence. It has been a time to listen and to learn that God can speak to us if we allow ourselves the time and space to listen.

As Christians we turn to Jesus and read in the New Testament that during his earthly life Christ prayed in many different ways. From the formality of the temple and synagogue, praying for his friends his enemies and over children. Jesus taught his disciples to pray the prayer we know and still use today as the Lord's Prayer. He prayed silently in the garden of Gethsemane and cried out to his father from the cross. We are told Jesus said that whenever two or three are gathered together in his name he will be there with us.

Stephen Cottrell the Archbishop of York writes:

"We need the transforming power of the gospel to shape and renew us. That is why a regular pattern of prayer and Bible reading is so helpful. It becomes the foundation upon which a Christian life is built."

This reminds me of Mary Sumner and why the Mothers' Union is based on prayer, which may lead or alter the course of our actions. Prayer is indeed the place where God's spirit shows us what we need to see and is the place where we draw nourishment from God to fulfil our lives.

Through prayer we open ourselves and others to the possibility of change and how evident this has been during the past 18 months with the emergence of the use of the Internet and other ways of communicating and taking part together in worship. Changing things through prayer can often feel as if they take a long time in human terms but who would have imagined, pre-Covid, that a live stream zoom service could become such an integral part of so many of our lives.

God's ways are indeed mysterious. Prayer appears at times simple when we talk with God but it is also complex for we are communicating with One who is outside time and eternity.

Praying our faith today in Ely diocese means offering a variety of prayers to the Mothers' Union members and covers a wide range for both individual and branch needs, to be used regularly or on a one off basis. Printed prayer material from our HQ in Mary Sumner house is passed on to you and includes the worldwide prayer diary and midday prayers for daily use and a range of prayer books e.g. Dear Lord and individual prayer cards.

At diocesan level among other things we provide our diocesan prayer diary for daily prayer, the monthly Thursday prayer and this year a Quiet Day in September. We also highlight the need for prayer for our global members with the worldwide links. Closer to home we provide for indoor members, MU liaison with clergy, encourage family worship and provide a time of silent vigil during the 16 days of activism campaign.

Recently I discovered the 10 fingers prayer based on Philippians 4 verse 13. Saint Paul writes:
"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

A short verse but each word corresponds to the fingers of both hands so instead of counting to 10 in times of stress or anger take a deep breath and count off this prayer on your fingers. It really does help.

Wherever you are in your life praying our faith - Keep calm and keep praying.

Heavenly father inspire us, Counsel and comfort us.

Help us to respond with new depths to our loving, in new heights in our praising, new lengths to our serving, new breadths to our praying as we follow in the footsteps of Christ filled with your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our prayer for today.

A gracious and holy father give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the spirit of Jesus. Amen.

We will say the Lord's prayer together.

Intercessions

Angela.

Dear lord we pray for your blessings upon the worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and Sheran Harper our worldwide president. The Chief Executive Bev Julien, the task group leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner house. For our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson our provincial president.

We pray for our own diocese of Ely and our Mothers' Union members. Guide Hazel Williams our diocesan president, the trustees, our archdeaconry vice presidents and officeholders as they plan and prepare for future events initiatives and projects.

Bless the vision for the Mothers' Union throughout the world.

Gill.

Mothers' Union is based on prayer and today our theme is praying our faith so we pray for our praying our faith team and their prayerful work with:

Indoor members organised by Joanna Saunders

Our clergy liaison led by Della Fletcher.

Chaplaincy matters with Reverend Michael Banyard,

Young families and worship encouraged by Angela Jones.

Campaigns particularly the 16 days of activism against domestic violence and gender abuse and

Bye Buy childhood campaign shared with the faith in action group.

Our worldwide links headed by Gill Uttin

Lusaka in Zambia

Shyogwe in Rwanda

Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria

Karimnager in India

Plus our diocese to diocese links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India

We finally pray for the team, and coordinator and those involved in any way with organising, preparing and the practicalities of Thursday prayer, Ely diocesan prayer diary and quiet days.

We pray Lord that you will give us humility, wisdom, confidence, faith and understanding to give all our members support and opportunities to pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Helen.

Dear God we offer to you our families, friends and those we know who have particular needs at this time. Please guide, protect and heal all those we name in our hearts. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray 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.

We will now join together to sing the hymn Be still for the presence of the Lord.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy one, is here;
come bow before him now
With reverence and fear.
In him no sin is found,
We stand on holy ground.
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The holy one is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire
With splendour he is crowned.
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant king of light.
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister his grace.
No work too hard for him
In faith receive from him
Be still for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

And may we close with the Grace, which we will say 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 19th 2021

19th August at 11am and the Zoom link - 837 5926 3332 (no password).

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]

145 years ago 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 Luke 1: 46 - 48 (The Message)

And Mary Said, I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God. God took one look at me, and look what happened - I'm the most fortunate women on earth!

MARY SUMNER

Well, look what did happen, when Mary felt that the mothers in her parish were in need of help and with the encouragement of her husband Mary brought the mothers together to form a support group.

The meetings grew and included women old and young, rich and poor. Others heard about the work and started groups in their own parishes.

In 1876 the Union of Mothers was founded. The movement continued to grow along with Mary's confidence to speak in public. Her dream was for every home to be filled with the light and hope of Jesus, and for the movement to unite many hearts in many lands, nurturing healthy environments for families and children. I wonder what Mary would think if she could see our new Connected magazine?

From 1900 onwards, Mary and members started to advocate on issues of key importance to families and children. Campaigning to stop children collecting alcohol from public houses for their families, and the age of marriage for girls to be raised from 12 to 16.

145 years later, life is very different, there are many groups and activities where families can find support, but there will be some who struggle to find these. During the long months of Covid restrictions many new mothers haven't been able to meet others, or sometimes their own families, as they would have done previously.

I asked my branch members for their thoughts on Mary Sumner.

"I think Mary Sumner would be amazed at the lives mothers have the ability to lead nowadays, and which we take for granted. I think she might think we are lacking in the knowledge of God as example, friend and support."

" Mary would be disappointed by the manners, actions and language of some young people, who are lacking guidance from their families."

"Mary Sumner would be very pleased that we still follow the Mothers' Union Aims and Objectives."

" The Mothers' Union prayer has changed several times in our 145 years, but still follows Mary Sumner's vision."

And Mary and the pandemic.

"When I read what is written about Mary Sumner, I imagine that she would have seen the opportunity in the pandemic. Those such as Sir Tom Moore, I expect that she would have found inspiring, I expect that she would have been clapping for the NHS. However I think she would have been moved into action. We know that through the pandemic, families and individuals have struggled in many different ways. I imagine that her Christian faith would have moved her into seeking out those in needs – serving in foodbanks, ensuring that children got laptops to be able to join in remote education and I have no doubt that she would have been on board with online worship. She was a woman who spoke into the heart of Jesus and then put this into action"

"We have all faced so many emotions during this pandemic with fear, hope, love, care, tiredness and many other things coming into play at different times. We have had to try and model behaviour to help the other. Where we have felt fear, we have tried to find the hope. Where we have come to the end of our rope, we have had to find ways of moving forwards when the usual strategies are not things that we can do.

I think that during this time, people have looked to bolster others, to reach out to those in need and to be generally nicer people. I think Mary Sumer would have been part of this and encouraged others in their lives and to keep going. I think she would have had the welfare of families at the centre of her outreach."

"Over these last 18 months, I think we have learnt something of care for everyone. We know with the vaccine that we are not safe until all are safe. There are many campaigns to raise money for vaccines in other countries and I think she would have backed this and supported this. We saw the huge rise of Covid in India and felt helpless as Covid rushed through the country. I think that Mary Sumner would have been at the forefront of vaccine campaigns. She would have been working to highlight issues such as climate change where the poorest in the world are suffering most. Mary Sumner's vision was bigger than her own back garden and it highlights to us, that our vision should be bigger too."

" Mary Sumner said "A true home should be a light-house, shedding it's quiet beams far and wide" I think Mary Sumner might quite like the song Shine Jesus Shine. We want our Christian faith to be seen in our communities."

Shine Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father's glory.

Blaze Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire.

Flow river flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy.

Send forth your word Lord and let there be light.

When Mary died in August 1921, after a truly remarkable and inspiring life, 4,000 women attended her funeral, which was a service of Thanksgiving. The last memory was one of her, on her feet in the sunlight, praising God.

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

2021 marks 145 years of Mothers' Union. In prayer, we give thanks for the service and inspiration of members across the years and across the world.

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 145 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 give thanks for the technology, of Zoom, that has enabled us to join together for these prayers and for the newsletters produced each month.

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 pause for a few moments to bring before you anyone we know who is in need.

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 your 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

Let's think about Mary's vision and our vision of Mothers' Union as we all sing;

Be Thou my vision, O lord of my heart;
Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thought, in the day and the night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee, and Thou with me Lord;
Thou my Great Father, and I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breast-plate, my sword for the fight;
Be Thou my armour, and be Thou my might.
Thou my soul's shelter, and Thou my high tower:
Raise Thou me Heavenward, O power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, through all my days:
Thou and Thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven when the battle is done,
Grant Heaven's joy to me, bright heaven's sun!
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Let's all say the grace, unmuted.

ELY DIOCESAN MOTHERS' UNION

Thursday Prayer September 16, 2021.

The Gift of Harvest led by Catherina Griffiths

To join the meeting, follow this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87298227811>

(Meeting ID: 872 9822 7811 - please note no password is needed.)

By Telephone ring: 0203 051 2874 - then follow the instructions given.

Zoom will be open from 10.45am to enable us to chat or sort out any tech issues. Please contact Hazel if you have any queries.

Good morning everyone and a warm welcome to our September Thursday prayer. Our theme is The Gift of Harvest.

We will start with **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.

Our reading is taken from **Genesis chapter 1 verses 24 to 27 and verses 29 to 31.**

God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their various kinds: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals, all according to their various kinds". So it was; God made wild animals, cattle, and every creeping thing, all according to their various kinds; and he saw that it was good. Then God said, "let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness, to have dominion over the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, all wild animals on land and everything that creeps on earth".

God also said, "Throughout the earth I give you all plants that bear seed, and every tree that bears fruit with seed; they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, every living creature" So it was: and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We will now join together to sing the hymn: **For the Fruits of His Creation.** In this hymn, we thank God for the material blessings He has given us, declare our intention to follow God's will in the generous use of those blessings, and then thank Him for the spiritual blessings He bestows upon us.

For the fruits of his creation,
thanks be to God.
gifts bestowed on every nation,
thanks be to God.
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safekeeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done.
In the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done.
In our worldwide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

Fred Pratt Green.

Tune: East Acklam. Dr Francis Jackson

Reflection on the Gift of Harvest

I have deliberately included this hymn here because it reflects a lot what we think about at harvest time (as well as being one of my favourite harvest hymns - not least because my husband's uncle wrote the tune). In the Genesis reading that we have just heard, God created the earth with every living thing and saw that it was good. After that he provided plants with seeds to grow, and trees with fruit. In fact, he provided every creature with food to eat. In this part of the world, we are fortunate in that although we are experiencing climate change, most of the time we can rely on our changing seasons and have the resources to grow food and sustain ourselves. However, as we have often seen in the media, this cannot be said for everywhere in the world. It must be devastating when farmers have spent a lot of time and energy in ploughing, sowing and tending their crops – often by hand without the benefit of large machinery, to find that it is lost due to extreme weather conditions – rain/ floods washing the crop and precious soil away, or the converse – lack of water drying up the earth and anything trying to grow in it; or even pests such as locusts eating the crop. Last year we heard about some countries, where people had resorted to eating the seed set aside to sow for the next crop because their harvest had been devastated. There was nothing left to plant the next year. There seems to be plenty of food in the world but for some reason it has become badly distributed.

In my experience it is those that have little who want to share what they do have. I have visited Kenya 4 times to stay with my Kenyan friends. Each time I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the people. There has never been enough time to take up all the invitations to homes for a meal, and even though I have taken small gifts of pens and paper for schools and other small gifts, I have been given gifts of food from their own larders. One man, who apologised that he couldn't cook a meal for us as his wife was ill, gave us a chicken to take back (it was live but once we got back to our billet it soon became our evening meal.) On my second visit, my husband had spent time tuning the village church piano and I had taken gifts into the schools. On our penultimate day my handbag was stolen at a funeral. There was very little money in it, but it did contain our passports. Suddenly we were on the receiving end of help and support. Local people went out into the fields until it got dark, looking for my bag in case it had been thrown away. Several people from the church came round to pray with us and give us comfort. Next morning at first light they were out looking again. Later in the day we were returning from a visit to a school, when a group of MU ladies stopped the car. They had heard of our plight and had made a collection for us. We were both so moved by this. Later that day when we were refused to board our flight home without passports, a relative of my friend, gave us food and accommodation in Nairobi and another relative drove us around the city the next day, to sort out a flight home with temporary passports issued by the High Commission. I will always be grateful for the kindness and generosity of these people.

Although that story hasn't got a lot to do with harvest, in a way it has. It shows us the importance of sharing what we have with those who haven't. This is what a lot of the work

MU is about. We may be knitting (sharing our talents) for some of our projects; we may be running a Family Tent (offering our time to help families at shows); we may be providing items needed at the local refuges or supporting the chaplaincy team at the prison. In all of this we are sharing something. As a global organisation we could be sharing this worldwide, with people we may never meet or have contact with.

Last year, when MSH put out an urgent appeal for funds, we as a diocese were able to share some of our resources to support them, as we realised that without our support from MSH, we would probably cease to be a global organisation.

As Finance and Administration Co-ordinator I am always grateful to those who contribute towards the cost of keeping our diocesan MU working. Without regular payments from subscriptions, we would not be able to function. We are also grateful to those who contribute financially to specific projects, and without a generous bequest a few years ago, we probably would not have been able to support the work of Sue Squires Dutton in Wisbech. We have much to be thankful for.

Our prayer for today: Lord of the harvest we celebrate your goodness. We bless your holy name Gracious God. The signs of your kingdom are growing but the workers to gather are few. Send us out to do your will in the harvest fields of life. May those who sow and those who reap rejoice in an abundant harvest of goodness and grace. Give us strength to carry on throughout the changing seasons, knowing that we will reap blessings both now and for eternity. Lord of the harvest, we celebrate your goodness. We bless your holy name. Amen.

Intercessions

Dear Lord we pray for your blessings upon the worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Chief Executive Bev Julien, the task group leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner House. For our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson our provincial president.

We pray for our own diocese of Ely and our Mothers' Union members. Guide Hazel Williams our diocesan president, the trustees, our archdeaconry vice presidents and officeholders as they plan and prepare for future events, initiatives and projects.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union throughout the world, and especially for our link dioceses - Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; and our diocesan links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India

We pray especially this month for the Finance and Administration team, for Derek Tye our treasurer, and Kristy Leach our Safeguarding Officer. We give thanks for the work of Ros Wright, Secretary, keeping everyone informed.

We pray Lord that you will encourage all who work for and support the work of MU and all our members.

Dear God, we offer to you our families, friends and those we know who have particular needs at this time. We pray for members in hospital, and for those recently bereaved. We pray for all affected by Covid and especially those who are apprehensive about returning to normal life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord we pray for those around the world who have little harvest to reap because of the failure of their crops. We ask that what they lack will be supplied by others who have plenty. Help them to discern the best seeds to sow for a better harvest in future. We pray too for those affected by natural disasters recently, the earthquake in Haiti, the hurricane in USA, floods in several parts of Europe. We pray in particular for refugees especially those who have had to leave their homes in Afghanistan, and for their friends and families left behind. May You keep them safe Lord.

We will say the **Lord's Prayer** together.

A verse from a prayerbook I made as a child:

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do; any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again. Amen

Let us pray 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.

And we close with the Grace, which we will say 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 October 21st 2021

The link to join zoom is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81975691267?pwd=ZS9EU284Y3piZlQ3b2c4c1NXSzk4Zz09>
(Passcode: 336639)

Topic: Ely Diocesan Prayers for Peace

Time: Oct 21, 2021 10:30 AM London

Women and peace Ely Diocese MU Prayers for October 2021

In conflict and war, the effects on women, however brutal, are frequently unrepresented and women's voices ignored in formal peace processes but the role that women play in both building and maintaining peace is vital. Many are members of the Mothers Union. This has recently been recognised by the appointment of Sheran Harper, Worldwide MU President by Archbishop Justin Welby to represent Anglicans on the board of Religions for Peace.

We start our prayers with our Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in the world wide 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

This next prayer comes from: *Mothers Union 'Prayers and Recipes'*

Lord God,
Speak peace to the heart of Your world.
May Your Peace be commended of all the places of the world
where violence, war and injustice abound.

In the midst of all tumult
May Your World find peace and calm which passes all
understanding and which only You can give.

That by peace and justice,
the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
will have room in the hearts of all people.
To the honour and glory of Your name. Amen

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

Bible readings on peace:

While we all know the words from the Sermon on the Mount of 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God', there are some other verses not as often used:

Hebrews 12:14

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

James 3:18

18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Romans 12:17-18

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

These, too, give us direction on why peace is so central to the life of a Christian.

Talk

Women can be powerful drivers of peace. Studies show that when women are included, the chance of a peace agreement lasting at least 15 years increases by 35%.

Evidence indicates that **women** participants in peace processes are usually focused less on the spoils of the war and more on reconciliation, economic development, education and transitional justice – all critical elements of a sustained peace

Women do ground-breaking work for justice, peace and security. Yet, they continue to be side-lined in formal peace processes. As conflict continues to affect every region of the world, urgent action is needed to ensure that women are part of peacebuilding, and their contributions are visible and valued.

Between 1992 and 2018, women were only 13 per cent of negotiators, 3 per cent of mediators and only 4 per cent of signatories in major peace processes.

However, women have played a role in peacemaking throughout history. Eighteen have been honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize. These include some well-known - Malala Yousafzai, Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan but others including Tawakkol Karman of Yemen and Leymah Gbowee of Liberia less so. And we have just learned that one of the recipients of this year's Award is Maria Ressa a very brave journalist from the Philippines.

There have been millions of women whose lives have been committed working for peace, but remain unknown or forgotten. I would like to share with you the stories of two women who have done much to develop peace, but that I only learned about earlier this year.

BETTY BIGOMBE.

UGANDA had been ravaged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and Joseph Koni forcing 80,000 children to become soldiers. As a young government minister BETTY BIGOMBE went unarmed 15 Km into the Northern Uganda bush to meet Koni's deputies. She said "You cannot start trusting your enemies overnight. You need time to build trust and work behind the scenes." After two years she met Koni himself. This led to a lull in fighting in Uganda and initial peace talks. Her courageous initiative and patient perseverance are an example of the goodwill that breaks down the enmity and prepares for mediation.

Betty went on to focus on gender and conflict, disarmament and child soldiers.

DARLENE KEJU

Darlene Keju, was a Marshallese activist. She was born on Ebeye Island in the Marshall Islands group in 1951. The Northern Islands where she grew up were downwind from Bikini and Enewetak atolls where the United States tested 67 nuclear weapons. She witnessed the evacuation of Regalap and Utirik Atolls after they were contaminated by radioactive fallout. Darlene is credited with bringing to the attention of the world the suffering of the Marshall Islanders as a result of the nuclear testing and that many more people were affected than acknowledged by the U.S. government.

When Darlene addressed the Pacific Plenary of the World Council of Churches Assembly, it was reported that *"Her impressive speech tore up the curtain of silence around the nuclear legacy in the Pacific (and) caused a wave that went as far as Europe, where it landed on the fertile ground of the anti-nuclear movement."* Darlene died at the age of 45 from cancer.

While our lives may not bring us into situations like those Darlene and Betty found themselves in, there are times when reacting in a peaceful way is important. Maybe it is in a family situation or in our parish or community.

It is important that we educate our children and grandchildren to also 'practice peace'. I will end with this poem, written by 12 year old Sheila Sakala of Zimbabwe

There is power in forgiveness
If you fail to forgive
You contaminate every relationship in your life
Watch out!
Others can initiate events or behaviour
But it is you who chooses how to react
Acknowledge history
Without being controlled by it
Be committed to resolve
Rather than perpetuate hatred
There is power in commitment to a peaceful world.

We will now have the **Lord's Prayer** followed by 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.

Beauty for brokenness Hope for despair Lord in the suffering This is our prayer Bread for the children Justice Joy Peace Sunrise to sunset Your Kingdom increase <i>Chorus: God of the poor Friend of the weak Give us compassion we pray Melt our cold hearts Let tears fall like rain Come, change our love From a spark to a flame</i> Shelter for fragile lives Cures for their ills Work for the craftsman Trade for their skills Land for the dispossessed Rights for the weak Voices to plead the cause Of those who can't speak <i>Chorus: God of the poor Friend of the weak Give us compassion we pray Melt our cold hearts Let tears fall like rain Come, change our love From a spark to a flame</i>	Refuge from cruel wars Havens from fear Cities for sanctuary Freedoms to share Peace to the killing-fields Scorched earth to green Christ for the bitterness His cross for the pain Chorus Rest for the ravaged earth Oceans and streams Plundered and poisoned Our future, our dreams Lord, end our madness Carelessness, greed Make us content with The things that we need Chorus Lighten our darkness Breathe on this flame Until your justice burns Brightly again Until the nations Learn of Your ways Seek Your salvation And bring You their praise Chorus
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We finish with this prayer and the Grace

Lord God, we thank and praise you for the gifts which you bestow upon your women peacemakers . From your Spirit flows the patience, energy, discernment, intuition, wisdom and vision which are required to do this work well. We ask for a continued strengthening of all these gifts for your women peacemakers in all parts of your world, and that each woman gifted in this way would reflect the glory of your reconciling power back to you. Amen.

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

Sue Claydon

THURSDAY PRAYER 25TH November 2021

Focus: Whitworth House

Let us pray

Lord Jesus, help us to put aside all the cares which separate us from you. Calm our minds and fill us with the knowledge that you are present with us. So enrich our time together that we may grow in fellowship with one another as members of your family. **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.

Lord, you are the God of the poor and the friend of the weak, we pray that you will give us the compassion to help those who face difficulties in life. We come to you today to remember those in our communities who are homeless or abused by loved ones. We pray that they will find peace and comfort in the places they now call home. We pray that the material gifts that are collected for the hostels and refuges in the diocese may help them in realising there is love and goodness in the world today. We give thanks for the work of the staff at Whitworth House who are dedicated to helping these young people and pray that now the funding for Whitworth House is more secure, that all the residents will grow towards a positive hope for their future, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. **Amen.**

God of love, whose compassion never fails, we bring to you the sufferings of all mankind; the needs of the homeless, the cry of the prisoners, the pains of the sick and injured, the sorrow of the bereaved, the helplessness of the aged and weak. Strengthen and relieve them, Father, according to their various needs and your great mercy, for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Let us pray for the work of the Mothers' Union worldwide; for our Worldwide President Sheran Harper, our Chief Executive Beverly Julien and all who work from Mary Sumner House; for all in the Canterbury Province and especially for Provincial President Kathryn Anderson. We give thanks for the support given to us by Marion Pope and those who will lead us in our Trustees Training day

tomorrow so that we may be brought up to date with all the intricacies of being a trustee. We pray for Hazel, our Diocesan President, and give thanks for her leadership and commitment, and for our Vice Presidents and other trustees who give of their time and experience to take the work of the MU in this diocese forward.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

In the Wave of Prayer today we pray especially for the members in the dioceses of

Southern Malawi in Malawi; Northern Uganda in Uganda;
Lafia and Ilaje in Nigeria ; Thoothukudi- Nazareth in India.

We pray too, for all members in our linked dioceses of Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria and Karimnagar in India and for the Ely diocesan links with Vellore and Kigali.

Dear Lord, give each one strength, courage and empowerment in their lives so that your love may shine through their work and prayer carried out daily in your name. Support all those who are working in very difficult circumstances. Guide them in your ways, spreading your love and peace as a beacon throughout the World. We give thanks for their leaders who give inspiration to their members and for their diverse projects which help their local communities and transforms the lives of so many.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

In the diocesan prayer calendar we pray for the Benefice of St Mary the Great with St Michael, Cambridge. We pray for its Clergy: The Revd Canon Adrian Daffern, The Revd David Bagnall, The Revd Andrew Day, The Revd Shirley Holder, The Revd Devin McLachlan, The Revd Jon Sanders and for the life of the church, the parish it serves and for our diocesan members who worship there, that their light may shine forth in their community.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Hymn

**Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown
When thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For thy holy nativity:**

*O come to my heart Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for thee.*

Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,
Proclaiming thy royal degree;
But in lowly birth didst thou come to earth,
And in great humility:

*O come to my heart Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for thee.*

The foxes found rest, and the birds had their nest
In the shade of the cedar tree;
But thy couch was the sod, O thou Son of God,
In the deserts of Galilee:

*O come to my heart Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for thee.*

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word
That should set thy people free;
But with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn
They bore thee to Calvary:

*O come to my heart Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for thee.*

When all heaven shall ring, and her choirs shall sing
At thy coming to victory,
Let thy voice call me home, saying, Yet there is room,
There is room at my side for thee:

*O come to my heart Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for thee.*

Matthew 7: 24-27

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Reflection

In this familiar passage from St. Matthew's gospel we can reflect on the importance of stability. This is central to the work of Whitworth House; to support these young people to look to the future positively and equip them to cope on their own.

This year 11 residents moved on successfully, 4 of whom returned to live with their families. Three more are looking to move on, two of whom are in full time employment and one has just given birth to a baby boy.

So far this year they have received 30 referrals, of which 12 were accepted, 7 found alternative accommodation and the rest are on the waiting list.

With spaces for 15 residents, there are currently 13 young women in the house, of which 5 are in education, sixth form and college. 2 are in full time employment and 1 part time. 2 are seeking employment and working with ourselves and partner agencies to secure apprenticeships or employment opportunities whilst 2 are exploring volunteering opportunities and 1 who has just recently given birth.

After so much uncertainty as to the future of the house the staff are excited to share that they have been successful in tendering for the Young People's Housing Related Support service on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council which will secure funding for 3 years and can be extended for a further 3 years before retendering.

The partnership is a joint venture comprising 5 groups which includes Orwell Housing who run Whitworth House. It consists of a Partnership Board, Operational Team, Staff Network and Young People's Voice to oversee client outcomes, review local policies and procedures and act as a sounding board on the evolution of the service model.

Whitworth House is recognised as the specialist female service within the partnership. The service will continue to work within a gendered, strengths based approach recognising the additional trauma that many of their young people have faced or continue to face. They will also be increasing staffing levels to offer a concierge service outside office hours throughout the night in recognition of increased needs.

They anticipate this new partnership will be a great benefit to many young people in Cambridge as they come together to share experience, expertise and resources to offer a consistent and quality service across the network.

The staff are really excited in going forward with this new contract which begins January 1st 2022, which will increase the staff team considerably and have the support and expertise of other providers within the young futures partnership. It will be a very new and innovative way of working together

which will improve access to services, clearer pathways and prevent homelessness to many young people going forward. Currently they have been operating on reduced support hours due to long term sickness. This has been met by utilising agency workers which has helped support the team.

This year the team has been linking in with Winter Comfort and other organisations, who are going to be delivering a pottery class to the Whitworth House residents. They also offer yoga and women only groups and are working with the staff to tailor potential activities for younger client groups.

The Whitworth Trust supports the residents by providing their broadband connection and responding to specific requests such as money to buy a bicycle to get to college, or help to pay a deposit on a flat and the occasional treat such as a Christmas meal or an outing. The Trust, which was originally the Friends of Whitworth House, also gives financial support to Women's Aid and Cambridge Aid in their support for women, often helping them with money to buy a particular item of furniture. The turnover of residents at the House seems to have been quite high this year and I am pleased to be delivering 6 welcome bags and 5 washing up bowls filled with some basic essentials for those moving on to their own accommodation. Each welcome bag includes socks, panties, a manicure set, brush and combs and essential toiletries costing about £20, so the wonderful collection of items I received from members will be much appreciated.

Let us pray

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another". Loving one another like Christ means caring and respecting each other. In fullness of love, we seek to serve one another, to be uplifting, gracious, supporting and encouraging. May God reveal violence, discrimination and abuse in our communities and help us to understand and speak out against all forms of violence. **Amen.**

Support, Lord, the members of the Mothers' Union preparing for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign which starts today, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10th December, Human rights day. May the witness of them and their supporters keeping a 3 minute silence outside the West End of the Cathedral on Saturday to remember and support 1 in 3 women throughout the world who suffer from physical or mental abuse, be effective in raising awareness to those who pass by. We pray for right and just relations between women and men that together we may transform and overcome violence in all its forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and interdependence. **Amen.**

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**

Lord, we beseech you, by the loneliness of your suffering on the cross, be near to all throughout the world who are suffering from natural or manmade disasters, for those living in or fleeing from war torn areas and for those who are desolate and in pain or sorrow ; and let your presence transform their sorrow into comfort and their loneliness into fellowship with you.

Let us remember in our hearts all those who are in need and those who are dearest to us.....

Loving Lord, may you enfold in your arms and uphold, all in need at this difficult time. **Amen**

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.

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.**

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 Grace.

MOTHERS' UNION THURSDAY PRAYER: 16 DECEMBER 2021 – “ADVENT”.

Zoom Info: Meeting ID: 838 4780 9128 – Passcode: 338053

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

WE BEGIN WITH THE DECEMBER THURSDAY PRAYER.

Lord Jesus Christ, as we prepare for your coming, we read the words of the prophets written long before your birth, giving us hope and encouragement that all people will be united and the land will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Help us, Lord, to open our hearts and minds to these truths and to gladly receive you, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

From MU Prayer Diary for this week “Mystery and Wonder”

Father, in a world that looks for evidence and demands explanations for every fact and assertion, we pray that you will open hearts and minds to explore the wondrous mystery of your plan of salvation and be ready to acclaim you as their Lord. **Amen.**

SONG: LIGHT OF THE WORLD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSKNQECzmuQ&list=PLpT2fV5R8P8XiIPQpv5xuIYknaP7nnRly&index=23>

Verse 1:

Light of the world,
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You.

Chorus:

So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me.

Verse 2:

King of all days, oh, so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly You came to the earth You created
All for love's sake became poor.

Chorus

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.

Chorus (twice)

Tim Hughes (2000)

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### **Reading: Isaiah 9:6-7**

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

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MU DECEMBER MIDDAY PRAYERS: Advent Words of Hope – Names of the Messiah.
Please join in with the words in **Bold**.

ALL: Wonderful Counsellor, our hope is in you.

Give us your wisdom throughout our lives.

Direct our paths in the ways of grace that we may follow you well.

ALL: Mighty God, our strength is in you.

Hold us firm in times of weakness.

Fill us with the power of the Spirit that we may serve you well.

ALL: Everlasting Father, our trust is in you.

Surround us with your steadfast love.

Adopt us into your family that we may abide in you.

ALL: Prince of Peace, our hope is in you.

Quieten our hearts in troubled times.

Assure us of your constant presence that we may have no fear.

ALL: Amen.

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**ADVENT TALK**

I don't know about you, but whenever I hear those words: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace – I can't help but start singing that chorus from Handel's Messiah in my head. I was tempted to use it this morning but thought we wouldn't all be able to reach the high notes!

When I started writing this talk, Advent was only just beginning and now we are half-way through. In our family, Advent was always marked by the purchase of an Advent Calendar. After our sons had flown the nest, I bought an Advent Candle each year – which I tried to light every day – it was nice but wasn't quite the same as the Calendar. When the grandchildren came along, I didn't need much excuse to buy Advent Calendars again.

The perfect Calendar had to have a suitable Nativity Scene, an appropriate picture behind each window – like a star, angel, the Holy Family, shepherds, wise men, some animals, and so on; plus a meaningful scripture verse. I didn't really approve of chocolate Advent Calendars, especially as they often didn't resemble the Nativity Story properly, and had pictures of snow scenes, Christmas trees, snowmen, presents, food, and Father Christmas. A friend from church recently showed me a picture of a suitable religious Advent Calendar but with chocolate – so they do make them now, but I'm still not going to succumb to the daily chocolate treat!

I was very pleased when this year's new Advent Calendar arrived which is 3D so it can stand up on the table in our hallway and is the right height for the grandchildren to see and open the windows. Of course, I have to help them as well! I'm just as excited to see what is behind the windows, even though I know the story.

Are we still excited by Advent and the Christmas Story? The story of Jesus, Light of the World, being born over 2000 years ago in a stable in Bethlehem. Looking forward to celebrating the Good News of Jesus, Saviour of the World. A couple of my favourite verses are: From Luke 2:14 – "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests". And from John 1:4-5, talking about Jesus, – "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it". Do we feel this 'Light' and also the 'Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy', symbolised in the four themes and candles of the Sundays in Advent? The past couple of years may have brought some dark

times for many people but our Christian Hope is rooted in our faith, a firm belief, and not a vague hope. We can't pretend we haven't been affected by recent events, but we can be comforted by the words of Jesus: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid". We can also be comforted by our family, friends and churches, who can be there for us in times of need – offering practical, caring, and spiritual support. I think the Mothers' Union is very good at demonstrating this, as its members reach out to those in need.

Advent literally means 'coming towards'. It's a time of expectation – and of preparation. We look towards our Lord Jesus Christ who is coming towards us, and we make ourselves ready for his appearing. We recall his coming as newborn infant; but we also look towards his coming at the end of all things, as redeemer and judge. We prepare ourselves, then, for the ultimate realities of judgement, for that day when 'the secrets of all hearts will be revealed'.

I like the Season of Advent – even if it can be a hectic time for many in the busyness of all the preparations for the Christmas period. I enjoy singing all the carols and hearing the Bible readings. In a world where so much seems to be unpredictable and changeable, the well-loved memorable words of hymns and scripture lay a good foundation to take us forward on our Christian journey.

I was watching the video of the Service in the Cathedral of the switching on of the Christmas tree lights. The Cathedral lights were dimmed and there was a countdown to the switching on. There was a 'wow' moment as all the lights came on and the beautifully decorated tree was illuminated. Our Advent countdown to Christmas brings us to that 'wow' moment – the sense of awe and wonder as we gaze on the Christ-child. "O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!"  
I hope and pray that everyone has a Blessed Christmas and can enjoy the Festive Season.

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**Let us join together in the MU December Midday Prayers for Thursday:
Advent Words of Hope – Words of Praise. Please join in the words in BOLD.**

MU DECEMBER MIDDAY PRAYERS for Thursday: Advent Words of Hope – Words of Praise.

Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
The Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name. Luke 1:46-47, 49

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;
ALL: Our souls magnify the Lord;

With our mouths we proclaim God's faithfulness to all generations
ALL: Our spirits rejoice in God our saviour.

We declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
ALL: His mercy is to those who fear him from generation to generation.

Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
ALL: He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

You are our God and the Rock of our salvation.
**ALL: We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;
Our souls magnify the Lord. Amen.**
(R. Victor Klassen)

WE PRAY TOGETHER:

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;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and 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 Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore.

WAVE OF PRAYER: 14-16 December

- Fianarantsoa in Madagascar; Central Tanganyika in Tanzania;
Calabar & Igbomina in Nigeria;
Derry & Raphoe in All Ireland and Banks & Torres in Vanuatu.

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.
- Relief from the effects of the coronavirus.
- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.

~~~ PAUSE FOR REFLECTION ~~~

WE SAY TOGETHER:

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.

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.

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This Advent, as we wait for the Hope of the World  
we pray for God's hope to overcome the despair of loss and loneliness.  
God of light and hope, **ALL: Hear our prayer.**

This Advent, as we wait for the Light of the World  
we pray that the love of God would bring light in the lives of our family and friends.  
God of light and hope, **ALL: Hear our prayer.**

This Advent, as we wait for the Hope of the World  
we pray that the love of God would fill us all with sure and certain hope.  
God of light and hope, **ALL: Hear our prayer.**

This Christmas, as we remember that there was no room at the inn,  
we pray for all who are homeless, and those who work to shelter them.  
Wherever the world is in darkness Lord, **ALL: Let there be light.**

This Christmas, as we remember the birth of Jesus in a stable,  
we pray for all who are living in poverty, and those who work to provide for them.  
Wherever the world is in darkness Lord, **ALL: Let there be light.**

This Christmas, as we remember the violence of the search for the Christ child,  
we pray for all who are in danger, and those who work to protect them.  
Wherever the world is in darkness Lord, **ALL: Let there be light.**

This Christmas, as we remember those who journeyed to the stable,  
we pray for all who are seeking you, and those who are leading the way.  
Wherever the world is in darkness Lord, **ALL: Let there be light. Amen.**

## **A CHRISTMAS CREED**

**ALL TOGETHER (please stand if you are able):**

**I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.**

**I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town;  
and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world,  
in towns both large and small.**

**I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room,  
and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.**

**I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never  
understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons  
of hungry hearts.**

**I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible:**

**I believe in the one who by love brought sinners back to purity,  
and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.**

**I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.**

**I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God,**

**born in Bethlehem that night, for me and for the world. *From [www.christmas-day.org](http://www.christmas-day.org)***

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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.**