

Thursday Prayer

**16th January 2025 at 10.30am at Ely Cathedral and on Zoom
Hazel Williams speaking on Joining God where He is Working**

Thursday Prayer Zoom Meeting

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Joining God where He is Working

Let us begin with a prayer for the New Year. Together we say:

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

This prayer is for the month of January from our Prayer Diary

Father, grant us grace to dwell and grow in the knowledge of your love for all people and nations, and in all circumstances. We lift our voice in praise and thanksgiving for the beautiful tapestry of diversity woven into the fabric of unity. In the kaleidoscope of cultures, languages and traditions, we see your boundless creativity and love. Help us to embrace diversity with open hearts, celebrating the gifts each individual brings. Amen.

Reading: Hebrews 10: 24-25

Loving Father, we join in celebration with our worldwide family of God; in one heart, to glorify your name. Together we bring our worship, together we bring our praise. We give thanks for our global family whose lives of faithful action shine as a beacon of hope in the communities they serve. Unite us in worship; build us in service, as together we seek to share your love. Amen

Reflection

In January we also celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, well known to us all, I am sure. Very often unity is seen as working hard to be the same as everyone else. But we are all unique, created that way by our Heavenly Father. We all have different cultures and experiences and approach worship in different ways, but we worship the same God who loves us and died for us on the cross. As we begin a new year, with all that it will bring, let us be united in prayer and worship and step forth together in faith.

Something that crops up quite often, usually from those who do not know me well, is the question "Are you in the WI or Mothers' Union?" Confusion between the two is common. I help them distinguish by explaining, "Mothers' Union is a worldwide organisation with members in 84 countries and we do have members who are not mothers as well as those who are male".

We continue to spend our time 'Joining God where He is Working' in many different ways.

In this country the Away From It All (AFIA) scheme is very familiar. It began over 50 years ago aiding families to have a holiday, something they might not otherwise be able to afford. The chance to enjoy time together with less stress in a different environment can change lives.

The crafting and knitting, loved by many members, has a real ripple effect. As well as the pure enjoyment of doing it, passing items on to those in need in hospitals, care homes and worldwide can make all the difference to their lives.

Many countries have a literacy programme. Sometimes with the help of savings groups and training in starting small businesses both women and men, are given the skills needed, to help support their families. The knock-on effect is that their children are then able to take part in education, breaking a circle of poverty.

The campaigning that takes place across the world Against Gender Based Violence and Modern Slavery can take a very different form depending on where you live. The priorities for the way in which members support young people are not necessarily the same in parts of Africa and India as they are in Britain and Ireland.

We worship and dress in different ways. How many of us have envied the different 'uniforms' worn across the world by MU members. Or been uplifted by the joyful music and singing at their services.

At the Mothers' Union retreat which took place last November we were invited by a group of members of the Reformed Church International (Zimbabwe) to join in with one of their (lively) worship sessions. Very different to our regular worship I suspect, but the same God.

This has all been achieved by organisations like the Mothers' Union working in their own groups, as well as across the world. continuing to raise awareness of the needs within different communities.

The prayer for today in our Prayer Diary is *'May we offer our individual gifts and skills, given to us by God, to work through Mothers' Union towards building the Kingdom of God on earth. Who can you invite to a Mothers' Union activity to experience this movement of faith and justice'*.

The theme for this year is Join Us and Join In. We know that membership of the MU is increasing across the world with 4 million members helping to build a future where everyone can thrive. We know in our own branches the benefits of being a member. Let us encourage others to be part of this great movement. It will not happen unless we play our part.

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

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

Our Intercessions - We pray for:

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

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

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

We pray for our whole Diocese, for our Diocesan vice-presidents, Jean, Debbie and Hazel, for those on the Trustee Board and those leading branches, our deaneries, our chaplains and our members.

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

In the Wave of Prayer today we especially pray for:

The Seychelles; Bukedi in Uganda; Enugu in Nigeria; Birmingham in England and Marathwada in India. Also, for the Mothers' Union Diocese of Ely's worldwide links of Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria and Karimnagar in India and our Diocesan links with Kigali and Vellore

Short Silence.

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

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Our hymn for today is In Christ there is no East or West.

1. In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

2. In Him shall true hearts ev'rywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord
Close-binding all mankind.

3. Join hands then, brothers of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be;
Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.

4. In Christ now meet both east and west,
In Him meet south and north;
All Christly souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

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

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

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

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

The Grace

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