

Thursday Prayer

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

Topic: Thursday Prayer Zoom Meeting

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TRANSFORMATION NOW

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let us say together the prayer for the month:

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

REFLECTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In our intercessions. We pray for:

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

In our wave of prayer for today we pray especially for

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

We also pray for:

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

Short Silence.

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

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

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

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

In Jesus' name. Amen

Our hymn for today is:

LORD JESUS CHRIST (LIVING LORD)

Lord Jesus Christ

You have come to us

You are one with us

Mary's Son

Cleansing our souls from all their sin

Pouring Your love and goodness in

Jesus, our love for you we sing

Living Lord

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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