

The Magazine of the Diocese of Ballarat

No. 54 NOVEMBER 2025

DIARY DATES

ANNUAL EVENT - 16 Days of Activism

25th November-10th December

We encourage every Church in the Diocese to acknowledge these 16 days to either hold a special service or to include the prayers which have been sent to you. Theme and associated Prayers will be sent to Clergy and Branches once received from our national executive.

LADY DAY - 25th March 2026 – Ballarat Cathedral



As we approach the 150-year anniversary of our founding, we will celebrate Mary Sumner's legacy knowing that she supports the work we continue to do to transform the lives of women, families, and communities around the globe.

MOTHERS' UNION MEMBERS WHO HAVE ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE

We thank you, Lord, for those members who came before us, remembering them with love and thankfulness for their contribution.
May perpetual light shine upon them.

THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Greetings

Am now in Canberra having just been to Sydney for our Council Meeting at St. Joseph's Baulkham Hills. What a wonderful uplifting time of fellowship and learning.

On Monday night we were welcomed by our Australian President. Dr. Robin Ray. We were then joined by our world-wide President (via zoom) who formally opened our meeting, challenging us to choose joy in all we do.

On Tuesday and Wednesday morning our Chaplain Rev. Nicole Baldwin from Newcastle Diocese took us on a journey with Mary and Martha, both having a role in our journey.

To be inwardly nurtured as Mary as she sat at the feet of our Lord and to be outwardly focused as Martha with her many tasks. To be still and to pray like Mary, to act like Martha, to let both be in us.

All departmental and Diocesan reports were presented during the 3 days. I have copies of these if anyone would like to read them. What a diverse country we live in.

Australian and Diocesan funds were distributed to areas of Drought (Willochra) Food (Queensland) and Bushfires (Ballarat).

Our Zone C Trustees spoke to us about Taking Love Beyond the Walls, encouraging us to be the youth of today, what decisions would be made if we were them?

We spent time discussing parenting programs, children are the soil of our future.

Thursday morning, we spent some time reflecting on our time together and asking ourselves how do we go forward? What are our priorities and options?

My observations: - Much was achieved during our meeting times, thank you Robin and your team. However, the invisible threads of fellowship and encouragement are sweet treasures. Tea breaks and meal times shared with fellow members was a time of listening to personal story sharing, encouraging and being encouraged to go forward in faith.

Wisdom comes from the Bible.

Let us model our faith in love.

Blessings Jillian.



Australian Council 2025

Taken from website.

FROM OUR CHAPLAIN FR. DAVID OULTON

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Of all the homilies that I try to piece together, the ones that seek to address the issue of Domestic violence are some of the most challenging. For one thing it's such a heinous crime. What on earth does one say?

And for another it should be mind blitheringly obvious as to where mother church sits on this issue. I really shouldn't have to say anything at all. Further, I long for the day when there is no more domestic violence, there is no more work to do and I won't have to try to put sensible words together about such an atrocious issue.

But a few things, which sadly need saying again and then a reflection about where I think the problem might begin.

I want to start by being crystal, shiny, sparkly clear that domestic violence against another person in any form is sin. It is sin because it fails to treat that person as someone worthy of love. Quite the opposite in fact. It treats the person as an object to be used.

Or put another way, violence is evil, violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, violence is unworthy of us. We are better than this... aren't we? Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings.

Men and women are both born with the same imprint of a loving God. One is neither superior or inferior to the other; they are both made in the image of God. Neither has power or authority over the other and neither has reason to lord it over them.

The numbers are not good for the confronting topic of domestic violence. About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner violence according to the National Coalition against Domestic violence. <https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/domestic-violence-statistics>

So, the odds are that you actually know someone who has been affected, or you may have survived domestic violence yourself.

These numbers are real people, with real lives, hopes, dreams, aspirations and potential. Their lives matter. They matter. These people will always

matter. They are important and they are loved. They bring to this world things no one else could. The tears and grief of those left behind is authentic and if we were at one of the understandable rallies that are called, the angst would be almost holdable.

Sadly, some abused people carry the heavy and unnecessary burden of thinking that the Church's teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship. They may hesitate to seek a separation or divorce. They may fear that they cannot re-marry in Church. Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. The abuser has already broken the marriage covenant through his or her abusive behavior. Abused persons who have divorced can in time, if they wish, remarry. In these cases, it can be argued that the marriage is pretty much over the moment abuse happens. Where a spouse and children are experiencing violence and abuse, "separation becomes inevitable" and even "morally necessary" for their safety.

How do we begin to shift our understanding so that this scourge is obliterated from our society and I will never have to preach about this again? I think it begins with the word Respect. We get to the point of respect when we learn to look upon everyone (without any exception) as 'another self'; The first but significant step is to look upon our own selves as something beautiful, something exquisite and something lovely. When we KNOW that we are a creature of God, a child of God. When we know that as a person, we can shine forth the lovely light of Christ then we will have begun... When we begin to see ourselves as God sees us... then we will have begun. The next step is to see everyone else as God sees them. When we do this, when we look upon our neighbour as another 'me' then we will have come some way into conquering this evil.

These 16 days of activism should be a time to refocus and remember our own attitudes, words, thinking and actions, towards ourselves and others. When we understand that as a church and as individuals that we are complicit when we are silent... then we will have begun...

When we hear and respond to those in need then we will have begun.

When survivors understand and accept that they're just that — they're glorious survivors, they are not victims. Then we will have begun.

When clergy and lay people become educated in the tactics and red flags of abuse then we will have begun.

As individuals and as church, we can and should be God's messengers of love, liberation and peace, for everyone, especially those enduring the torment of domestic violence. Let us be sensitive but strong in our response and let us be compassionate but firm in our resolve to bring God's liberating grace to victims of domestic violence everywhere.

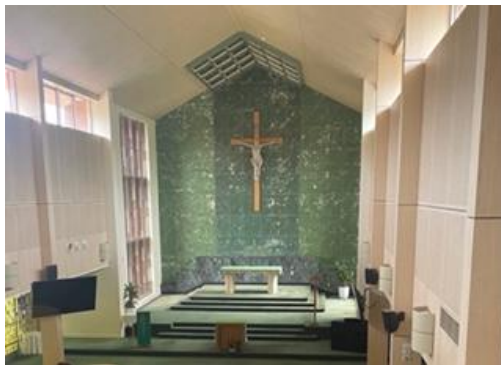
And for those who have died we pray for you, light candles for you and carry forward your legacy. So let us smile more, be kinder, create a safe and caring environment for our children and be resilient and fierce.

We can do this ... We need to do this. We must begin.

(Tune: Abide with me)

In shadows deep, where voices mourn and cry, We gather here, where silent sorrows lie, Through broken hearts and spirits torn by fear We hold each other close, for God is near.

Shared with permission: Fr. David's FB site 24/11/2024



St. Joseph's Chapel Baulkham Hills (Jill Gale)

VISIT OF AUSTRALIAN PRESIDENT

We were privileged to welcome Dr. Robin Ray, Australian President and her husband Bishop Bill to Ballarat and Hamilton in late May. Their visit was both uplifting and energizing, reminding us of our place within the broader MU fellowship.

Dr. Ray's message *Inwardly Nurturing so we may be Outwardly Focused* resonated deeply encouraging us to strengthen our spiritual foundations as we engage with the world around us.



MARY SUMNER DAY 2025

Hamilton Mothers' Union members were delighted to welcome our Diocesan President, Jill Gale, to our Mary Sumner Day celebrations on the 9th August. Afternoon tea was followed by the monthly meeting and then we attended the Saturday night service lead by Fr David with a special Mary Sumner focus.



Mary Sumner 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.

ANNUAL MEETING 2025

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARER POSITIONS

YOUR NEW DIOCESAN EXECUTIVE

NEXTRIENNIUM 2026 – 2028

Bishop Garry commends us and what we do; saying Mothers' Union maybe perceived differently but it is a powerhouse of prayer. Our prayers can't be under estimated. MU requires everyone to know what we do. Referenced situations where women and girls overseas have been given opportunities, especially where we are that Power House. The MU is a badge of honour. It is not fragmented but part of God's Kingdom and Mothers' Union will always be necessary.

NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

DIOCESAN PRESIDENT - Mrs. Felicity Lowrey

SECRETARY - Diocesan President appointment – to be announced

TREASURER – Jillian Gale

OVERSEAS & NORTHERN OUTREACH - Tanya Baker

PRAYER & SPIRITUALLY - Shirley Gregory

PROMOTION & COMUNICATIONS - Denise Lay

PUBLICICATIONS – Kate Edgar

SOCIAL ISSUES & ACTIONS – Elizabeth Schroeter

DIOCESAN CHAPLAIN – Fr. David Oulton

A Christmas Prayer

by *Robert Louis Stevenson*

O God, our loving Father, help us
Rightly to remember the birth of Jesus,
That we may share in the song of the
Angels, the gladness of the shepherds
And the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the
Door of love all over the world.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
That Christ brings, and teach us
To be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy
To be thy children and the Christmas
Evening bring us to our beds with
Grateful thoughts, forgiving, and
Forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Submitted by Jill Gale

A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER - You've gotta love YouTube and the Crowdies, right?! I was watching the song 'Don't dream it's over' 'live' at the Sydney opera house on that YouTube thing. The music was sweet, the crowd were really getting into it and just for a few moments, even now, years later in my study, the world was as it should be. It was perfect. And as I watched, caught up in the delicious magic of the moment, there was a big part of me that was praying 'Please God don't let it end. Not now. Not ever. This is just so good, so perfect, so right. It should last forever. Don't dream it's over.' But the song did of course. The moment never lasts, the perfection that we enjoy dissipates, evaporates and we are left craving more, but oh so blessed that we have touched the face of God and He has exalted and danced deep within us. I wondered too about the shepherds that night and the heavenly music that came upon them without having the geeky stuff that we enjoy. Was it not possible, that having seen the heavens opened, that their prayer was simply that this also would never end? And then down to the manger to gaze upon the Master himself. Don't dream it's over. But it did of course. Back to the freezing fields and a inky black night where nothing had changed, yet everything had changed and things could never be the same again. Maybe with a few slurps of a warming beverage they too might have sung. ... 'Hey now, hey now, don't dream it's over' at the top of their voices and somewhere, somehow in the middle of the night their prayer was answered. Because it was not over at all. In fact, it was just beginning. Now while we didn't sing any Crowded House at our Carol service nor will be singing any of the 'Crowdies' at Midnight mass we will be celebrating the fact that the story of our salvation has really begun for us.



Shared with permission - Fr. David Oulton FB site

THE COMMUNION FOREST



Ps 96 v 12 "Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord"

A global initiative to safeguard creation which has seen our Diocesan Mothers' Union members participate at Branch and Parish levels including helping with planting trees and giving a small native to newly baptised or on other occasions.

Did you know both the Old and New Testaments mention 36 types of trees.

It won't be long before we come into Advent and then the Christmas season.

How many of our homes will have a fresh green pine tree. Often, we can be quite choosy when looking for "just the right one".

The pine tree holds a deep spiritual meaning in the Bible, symbolizing growth and beauty amongst us as believers. They represent Christians who embody usefulness and kindness.

Pine trees, with their evergreen nature, can also be seen as symbols of enduring life, resilience, and God's constant presence. Sometimes even interpreted and associated with strength, endurance and divine blessings.

As Mothers' Union members maybe, we can use symbols to strengthen us as we enter into a new year and triennium.

Editor

EDITORS PAGE

AUSTRALIAN CHRISTMAS CAROLS

A very special part of Advent and Christmas is the singing of much-loved Carols and songs as they tell the stories of the Christmastide.

Many of our Churches hold the beautiful service of "Nine Lessons and Carols" which sees months of practice and preparation undertaken by our choirs. It tells of the birth of Jesus through nine scripture readings interspersed with Carols. There are also some lovely Australian Christmas carols which echo the season, with the touch of the bush and outback. Personally, I enjoy these.

One famous songwriter was Willam Garnet James, who was born in Ballarat in August 1892. He became a world-renowned pianist and composer, he also wrote 15 Australian Christmas Carols in 3 sets, which you often hear sung across Carol services. There have been other Australian themed songs and carols written which I'm sure are quite familiar to you. There are those which are light hearted while others are more depictive of the Christmas story.

Some written by WGJ: The North Wind Is Tossing the Leaves, The Three Drovers, Carol of the Birds, The Silver Stars are in the Sky and Christmas Bush for His Adorning and Orana Orana.



Image: Freepak

WORLDWIDE/AUSTRALIA MOTHERS' UNION

At the start of a new triennium 2026-2028

Join Us and Join In! - MU is changing lives!

Worldwide President Kathleen Snow of Canada, is a member at Christ Church Cathedral in Fredericton N.B. being the 2nd president to come from outside the UK.

AUSTRALIA: More information will follow.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Bless us, Lord, this Christmas, with quietness of mind;
Teach us to be patient And always to be kind;
Give us reassurance When everything goes wrong,
So, our faith remains unfaltering,
Our hope and courage strong—
And show us that in quietness
We can feel Your presence near,
Filling us with joy and peace,
All seasons of the year.

Helen Steiner Rice.

From Jill Gale

SOCIAL MEDIA & PROMOTION

A great way to learn and interact with other members is either joining or having a look at our Mothers' Union websites.

Anglican Mothers Union Australia www.muaustralia.org.au also provides resources and ideas.

Mothers' Union Australia is a public Facebook site with 1K followers

MU Australia – is a smaller closed Facebook site with 190+ members from across Australia and overseas, including past Worldwide Presidents.

Diocesan level – Mothers Union “Thought of the Week” is published weekly in dNews.

Branch level: Promote meetings/social gatherings in your Pew Sheets/newsletter inviting others to come along as visitors, including men. Don't throw out your Mia Mia, pass it on to someone else or place in your Church for others to take and read. Take to past members residing in Aged Care facilities.

Members: Please wear your badge to Church.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO NEXT EDITION OF TENT - MAY 2026
photos of your MU or Church events welcomed.

Messages for The Tent can be sent online via
newsletter@muaustralia.org.au

CURRENT WORKING EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT

Jill Gale

SECRETARY/TENT EDITOR

Denise Lay

TREASURER Jill Gale

OVERSEAS & NORTHERN OUTREACH

PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY

Shirley Gregory

PROMOTION & COMMUNICATIONS

Denise Lay

PUBLICATIONS/MIA MIA/PUBLICATION DISTRIBUTION

Kate Edgar

SOCIAL ISSUES AND ACTION

CHAPLAIN

Father David Oulton

BALLRAT DEANERY CONTACT

Jan Theobald