

MIAmMia

ANGLICAN
MOTHERS UNION
AUSTRALIA

AUTUMN 2026



I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. Psalm 89:1



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Vision: Our vision is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

Mission: Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life.

The PURPOSE of Mothers' Union is to be especially concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and Christian family life.

Its AIM is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life.

Its FIVE OBJECTIVES are:

1. To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding.
2. To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church.
3. To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service.
4. To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children.
5. To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

MIAmia

A quarterly magazine of
Anglican Mothers' Union Australia.
Mia Mia is an Aboriginal word for 'home'.

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Articles are also available on CD.

Contact your diocesan treasurer or the editor at miamia@muaustralia.org.au for further information.

Have your say in *Mia Mia*

Suggestions, comments, contributions and insights are welcome.

Please send all correspondence to the editor at the following email address:
miamia@muaustralia.org.au

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Mary Of Magdala

Adam and Eve walked in the Garden,
Two with God in the cool of the day,
Unbroken communion
In Paradise Garden,
Hearts at peace,
Sin held at bay.

Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden.
Two hid from God in the cool of the day
Communion shattered,
Barred from the Garden,
Hearts in pain,
The devil to pay.

Daughter of Eve, I had seven devils
Possessing me wholly, body and mind.
Men used and abused me
In Magdala city.
And then, wracked with pain,
I met Someone kind.

Agony seared, my soul struck by lightning,
God in the Flesh ripped them out of my soul.
Screaming, ranting,
They had to obey Him,
The Christ of God,
Making me whole.

Jesus my Lord gave me my freedom.
I'll be His slave the rest of my life.
But Pilate condemned Him!
Whipped bloody and beaten
Condemned to a cross!
O! It cuts like a knife!

Agony burns! The nails strike my heart!
God in the Flesh being ripped in my soul!
Cursing and mocking,
'Come down from the cross now!'
This crushing of God
Is sin, black as coal.

An empty tomb in the early morning.
O who would do such a terrible thing!?
'He's not in the Garden!
O where did you lay Him?'
'Mary.' My heart stops.
'Lord, Master and King!'

'Mary, dear Daughter, run home from the Garden.
I am alive, go and tell every friend!
Communion restored
In Paradise Garden.
Rejoice now together,
World without end.'

Geraldine E. Foster

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From the Editor's desk

As I write this, my final message to *Mia Mia* readers I am very mindful that change is inevitable. Our health, our families, technology ...and the list goes on. I am also mindful that certain things don't change. I still don't like reptiles (even when safely behind glass at the zoo!). I still love a good book. I still love to read stories from MU members which demonstrate that Mothers' Union is still very much alive and serving families in the name of Christ. And, whatever else may change, our loving God does not. As the prophet Jeremiah declared, 'The steadfast love of the Lord *never* ceases; his mercies *never* come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.' (3:22-23, ESV).

With that in mind, and in recognition of Mothers' Union's 150th birthday, a number of the articles in this issue focus on thankfulness – to God first and foremost, and to members of Mothers' Union who have faithfully served him in big and small ways over the years.

I am personally thankful for the privilege of serving as the editor of *Mia Mia* for the past six years. I am thankful to all of you, dear members, for your willingness to send articles and photos; I am thankful for all those who responded to my request to 'write something for *Mia Mia*, please'; I am thankful for the expertise of our graphic designer, Caroline Cuccovia, who has put each issue together so attractively; I am thankful for our printer, Shane Bertolletti's, patience when things have gone awry; I am thankful for the encouragement and support of so many along the way, especially Anne Kennedy, Robin Ray and all the members of Executive. I am also thankful that Bethany Mills has put up her hand to take over the role of *Mia Mia* editor. I know she will do a wonderful job, and I'm equally confident that she will enjoy the support and encouragement of MU members everywhere.

But above all, I am thankful to our gracious God for guiding and helping me at every turn. I pray that He will bless you as you press on as members Anglican Mothers Union Australia, living out the vision of 'bringing about a world where God's love is shown through prayer and loving, respectful and flourishing relationships.'

Christine

Lord, Teach us to Pray

When we feel insignificant and have lost our sense of worth, Lord, teach us to pray:

Our Father in heaven

When we want to withdraw from involvement in life and from You in prayer, Lord, teach us to pray:

Hallowed be Your name

When we think of the future as fixed and impossible to change, Lord, teach us to pray:

Your kingdom come

When we evade life's deep demands by saying they are not our problems or concerns, Lord, teach us to pray:

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

When we are too satisfied and forget that others are hungry, in need, homeless, deprived, Lord, teach us to pray:

Give us today our daily bread

When we allow bitterness and resentment into our lives, Lord, teach us to pray:

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

When we are faced with pressures we think are too much for us, Lord, teach us to pray:

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

When we become self-centred and seek our own satisfaction rather than Your will for us, Lord, teach us to pray:

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

(Source unknown)



The President writes...

How great is it to belong to a movement that has been actively engaged in God's kingdom for 150 years. We are so privileged to be living into the heritage of Mary Sumner, as well as the millions of faithful women who answered God's call to share the faith through care for families down through the years.

This anniversary year is a time for reflecting on, and giving thanks for, those who have formed us in the faith and mentored our Christian and Mothers' Union journey. For me, it would begin with my mother. Who are these people for you? Before reading on, you might like to pause for a few minutes, identify and give thanks for these people in your life.

In the New Testament's occasional letters, Paul often begins by giving thanks for the faith of the people in that community (e.g. Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4). During worship a clergyman once introduced the Peace by asking people to look at those in front, behind and beside them. He then said, 'These people are God's gifts to you, and you are God's gift to them'. What a wonderful reminder of those for whom we should be thankful. We also need to give thanks for our local members of MU and the people in our community, as we grow together and support one another in Christ.

When visiting your dioceses and listening to people's experiences of MU, I often hear stories that reflect thankfulness for the ministry of MU members. I am fortunate to be one of these people, thankful for the Christ-centred love of women in Toowoomba. As a young mother with a baby/young child who did not sleep well at night, these MU members scooped me up and supported me. They understood what it was to be a young mother living away from the usual family supports and made me welcome in the parish and in their groups. They also encouraged others in the faith as they led or assisted with GFS or taught Sunday School.

This 150th anniversary year also brings MU worldwide into clearer focus. Our Worldwide Gathering in Durban, South Africa, will be an excellent opportunity to listen to a range of MU stories from different contexts. It will be a unique

occasion to explore God's call for MU through different lenses and new perspectives, giving thanks for the breadth of ministries in action. The theme for the gathering '*Lighting the way for generations to come*' reminds us of the hope we have in Christ and the message of God through Jeremiah '...welfare not harm, to give a future with hope' (29:11).

As you enjoy celebrating 150 years of MU, I encourage you to take time to be thankful for your life each day. In Australia, to be glad that we live in a free country, that we can make choices about how we live our lives and that we have many opportunities to freely share Christ's love. May we welcome the challenges that come our way, seeing them as occasions for learning more about ourselves and others as we renew our commitment to Christ and the work of MU in Australia and worldwide.

Robin Ray

Who was this man?

Who was this man they crucified
As Mary wept and Martha cried?

This was a man, yes
But Son of God –
Divinity cannot
Be denied.

Who put Him there
Upon that cross?

I did, you did
His life the cost.

Of all the sin
Before, then, now,
That is why one life was lost.

But no, He did not
On the cross stay
He rose, He rose
On Easter day.

The price for our sin
He did pay;
In Him
Eternal life does lay.

Barbara Hyam



What sort of bystander will you be?

Scenario 1

A woman in her early 60s comes into a Family Support office and asks to borrow a book about the steps she will need to go through to separate from her husband. She asks for the book to be placed in an unmarked brown paper bag that she can take to her workplace and put in her locker, to take out and read on her breaks.

Scenario 2

A couple in their 20s come into the back of a church during a morning service. As the service is ending the male physically assaults and verbally abuses the female and then leaves the church.

Do either one of these scenarios seem plausible? Familiar? Unlikely? Far-fetched?

Unfortunately, they are both a part of my lived experience. One, a part of my distant past. The second, much more recent.

What sort of a bystander will you be?

There were a number of bystanders to the second scenario. There were those in the church who were totally unaware of what had happened. Some, as they were leaving the church, saw a distressed woman but did not know the cause. There were those who saw at least a part of the incident and those who did stop and offer immediate comfort. These bystanders, while offering this comfort, sought the attention of the clergy and others who could assist to make them aware of the situation and to hand over care and responsibility.

What sort of a bystander will you be if this were to occur in your church?

I have recently completed the 'Communities that Care' on-line course offered by the Anglican Church of Australia through its '10 Commitments'¹ agency. The aim of this course

is to inform and educate on the reality of the prevalence of domestic violence in our communities, to provide an understanding of the many forms of domestic violence, and to provide tools for being an effective bystander.

Highlighted in the course is the 'bystander effect', which suggests that the more bystanders there are to an incident, the less likely it is that anyone will step forward to offer assistance. Also included in the course is the statement that 'bystander actions send a message of support to the person being targeted and a message of accountability to those who perpetuate abuse' (Sharon Lockwood).

It is my hope that every member of Mothers Union in Australia will have the opportunity to undertake bystander training. 'Communities that Care' is an online course that can be done individually or in a group setting. There are videos to watch, short questionnaires to complete to help us understand the knowledge gained, and the opportunity to either engage in an online forum or a group discussion on topics raised. This course is free and can be self-paced.

I am already aware of one diocese that is planning to present 'Communities that Care' at an upcoming gathering of members. What will you do?

Wendy Mabey



¹ <https://www.tencommitments.org.au/training>



'Give thanks in all circumstances...' Really?

When I was raising my family I felt I was constantly reminding my children to say 'thank you', not just when they received gifts, but even when they were given something as trivial as a glass of water. I felt I was nagging, but it's been interesting to see them as adults raising their own families that what seemed unsuccessful has actually not been forgotten. Our lives are lived in dependence upon one another, in relationships. It is fitting to acknowledge this by the simple 'thank you' words, even to people we do not know.

Of course, as we know, our most important relationship is with our Heavenly Father. Not surprisingly, therefore, we are constantly being encouraged in the Bible to give thanks to the one who has given us so much. For example, when we look at the beauty of the world around us what can we do but repeat Psalm 19:1 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands' or 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.' (Revelation 4:11). It is a great moment to thank him.

But the great gift to us is God's sending his Son into world to save us. Remember John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' I think that was the first Bible verse I learnt off by heart in Sunday School! Without our Heavenly Father's great gift

we wouldn't be his child. How can we ever thank him enough?

However, I am aware that I fail to be as grateful to our Father as I should be. I taught my children better than I have taught myself! Why is this the case? Sometimes we take God for granted or the busyness of life squeezes him out or maybe we just forget. But when we stop to think of all that we owe him, we must ask ourselves, 'How can we forget when we've been given so much?' The wonderful thing is that we can always start again and ask

for God's forgiveness. 'He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1:9). Perhaps it would be a help, given the weakness of our humanity, to deliberately build thankfulness into our lives, as a beginning attribute of our daily prayers for example, or even as we give thanks before our meals.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 urges us to 'Give thanks in all circumstances.' Now when we think about this, it seems really hard or even impossible. A friend of mine has had two knee operations and for some reason the pain is going on and on and she cannot walk. How can she 'give thanks'? There are so many circumstances like this, where thanksgiving just seems impossible.

However, before such difficulties come, there are two things to grasp. The first is this: that 'all things work together for the good of those who love God'. His purpose is that we might be like Jesus. That is our good. He has his reasons which we cannot always see. But this we know: he is in charge of all things and he has our good at heart. And the second thing to remember is the one I have mentioned already: that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to give those

who trust him eternal life. In the end, the cross is the greatest assurance in the world of God's love in all circumstances, and it should fill our hearts with thankfulness, morning, noon and night.



Christine Jensen

New faces on the Australian Executive



Ailsa Gill
Australian Treasurer

I grew up on the Darling Downs in southern Queensland, where church life was central to our family. Mum was the organist and Sunday School teacher, and

Dad served in many roles (including Treasurer.) As a teenager, my social life revolved around Young Anglican Fellowship. At 20 I travelled to New Zealand, where I met my husband, Paul. We have been married for 56 years and have three sons and four grandchildren. Our family is spread across Queensland, Canada and beyond and they bring us great joy and holiday destinations. Paul's banking career took us to many parts of Queensland, including Charleville, Tewantin and Bowen. For me, church involvement and playing squash helped me connect with and enjoy life in the smaller towns.

I became a member of Mothers' Union in Bowen. When we moved back to Brisbane I returned to work, which made attending MU meetings difficult. Once I commenced part-time work I was again able to attend, and before I knew it, I was President of the Manly Branch. It has been a huge learning curve, but the love and support within our group is truly special. I currently serve as an LA and a member of Parish Council and was parish treasurer for many years.

Throughout my life faith has been a steady foundation, guiding how and where I have served. I am grateful for the fellowship, learning and shared growth in faith along the way. In my new role of AMUA Treasurer I hope I can be as efficient and effective as my predecessor and contribute something from my past experiences to the planning and expanding of the membership and work of AMUA.



Bethany Mills
Mia Mia Editor

Dear readers, my name is Bethany Mills and I am the new Editor of *Mia Mia*. *Mia Mia* has been, and will continue to be, a Mothers' Union publication that

helps to keep you up to date with what we, as an organisation, are currently doing to bring honour and glory to the Lord through ministry.

I feel incredibly blessed to be stepping into this new position with Mothers' Union. I have had a long relationship with MU, which began when I was a small child cradled in my mother's arms, as she too began her own relationship with MU. My childhood is filled with memories of sitting in branch meetings surrounded by faithful people who loved the Lord with all their hearts and cared deeply about supporting families. I consider myself to have been raised in Mothers' Union, and for this, I count myself blessed. My life has always been influenced by the objectives of MU and our objectives directly align with my core beliefs.

In this next season of *Mia Mia*, I hope to share my passion with you, and encourage others who may encounter *Mia Mia* for the first time to share in my passion for Mothers' Union and my love for our Lord and Saviour. I kindly ask for your support in prayer as I begin this new role.



Diane Thomson
Overseas and Northern Outreach Coordinator

I am married to Greg (also a MU member) and have three children with families, including five grandchildren.

My hometown is Ipswich; my home church is St Paul's. I have been a member of Mothers' Union since 2013, joining just before retirement from my profession of teaching. I have held a number of positions in Mothers' Union since joining, including the last six years as the Overseas and Northern Outreach and Links coordinator for the Diocese of Southern Queensland.

Growing up with a father in the Air Force my first experience overseas was visiting Penang in Malaysia, where I came across different cultures and religions. My interest was piqued! Over the last 50 years I have visited 12 more countries. The difference between first-world and third-world countries is stark and can be confronting. Sponsoring four children and supporting projects through Christian organisations has shown me what a difference we can make to the lives of others. I love Mothers' Union because of the observable differences it makes when we support

others in our local communities, our nation and the world. Our support through prayer, fund raising and giving as we are able, counts.

When I have free time, I like to catch up with family and friends, read, challenge my brain with puzzles, support paramedics through being a member of our Local Ambulance Committee, and become a 'grey nomad' with my husband as we travel to near and faraway places.



Kären Hayden **Promotion and Communication Coordinator**

From God's first nudge propelling me into MU, I felt a strong sense of being valued

and belonging in my small branch, where I was for 10 years. After a 10 years of being a financial member only I felt another nudge to let me know it was time to come back. Not long after, I 'leap-frogged' into the role of Melbourne Diocesan President, and now I find myself the Promotion and Communication Coordinator for AMUA! My passion is to promote MU to others, within our Church and beyond. I to want to 'lift the face' of MU— to shine as brightly outwardly as it does inwardly and to connect more fully with our churches, clergy and associated organisations.

Discussing the role of Promotions and Communications Coordinator Australia-wide with other Executive members has enthused me to see possibilities with a much broader lens, to look at how, whilst having a focus on our own dioceses, we can be one voice nationally by being **visible, relevant and articulate**.

Our president, Robin, uses the analogy of a train moving down the track, with a caboose in the siding. Wherever we are, we are all members of the one body, Mothers' Union. One part is not greater than the other; we all play a part in the whole, worldwide body of MU.

God is the centre of what we do and who we are. Pray for and nurture our brothers and sisters in the 'caboose'. Pray and support our brothers and sisters on the 'train'. I ask for your prayers, that God will show me the way, and enable me to be visible, relevant and articulate for MU, wherever that may be.



Lindy Driver **Publication manager**

My name is Lindy Driver, and I'm the new Publications Manager for Mothers' Union Australia. I'm in my early seventies, married with two children, and one grandchild. Two years ago I retired from nursing and was excited to spend my spare time doing puzzles, cross stitch, reading, maybe even take up line dancing – all the things I thought I'd have time for in retirement. Now, I reflect on pre-retirement life and say, 'how did I manage the things I was involved in before?'

I worship at St John's Bairnsdale, where I'm on the parish council and passionately serve as the church's Mission Secretary. As well as being involved in a refugee craft group, I am also a member of Bairnsdale Mothers Union (MU), and I'm currently the MU Diocesan President of Gippsland, Victoria. Maybe life isn't slowing down like I anticipated, but it is certainly enriching, exciting, and yes – at times – exhausting, but, when Jesus calls, one should respond.

As the Publications Manager, I aim to be visible and supportive through the provision and prompt delivery of resources. I give thanks to our Lord for the two wonderful friends, who have prayerfully agreed to assist me in ensuring the smooth delivery of product.

Mary Sumner beautifully prayed, '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.' Be assured of my support and prayers as we move forward with motivation to spread the love of Jesus through our passion, love, and work.

Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God, our source of power and inspiration,
give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

AAPB, p.259

MOTHERS UNION

ST GREGORY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Before the sun has fully risen, while the morning's fresh and still,
You gather with such loving hearts, to do the Father's will.

With buttered bread and faithful care, with tea and gentle cheer,
You make a space where every child feels safe and welcome here.

The sandwiches are humble, but the love is never small,
You nourish little bodies – you nourish spirits all.

Your work is more than breakfast, more than meals and tea,
It's planting seeds of kindness for all the world to see.

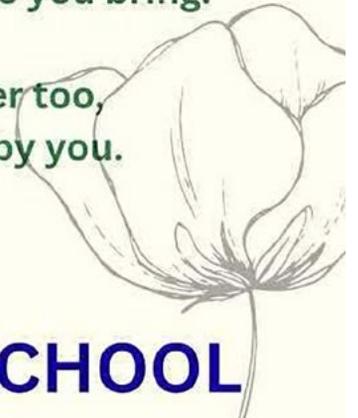
Through hands that serve so humbly, through smiles that light the day,
God's grace flows through your giving in such a quiet way.

May blessings fall upon you for every crust you share,
For every prayer unspoken, for every act of care.

So here's our deepest thank you, from our hearts we sing,
For the mornings made much brighter by the love you bring.

Quinn's Beach is richer, its children stronger too,
Because of all the mornings made better – by you.

**WITH GRATITUDE,
QUINNS BEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL**



Catherine Parr, a godly stepmother

In our series on Christian women in history we've looked at a number of women whose faith in Christ made a difference to them and those in their circle of influence, but not yet focussed on a Queen.¹ In 1543 Catherine Parr became the sixth and last wife of King Henry VIII, Supreme Head of the newly-minted Church of England. By 31, Catherine was already twice widowed, having been married off as a teenager to a 63-year-old Lord! Her second husband, John Neville, had been a loyal supporter of King Henry and had brought Catherine into court circles. Following his death in 1543, and after the king had his fifth wife, Katherine Howard, executed, his eye fell on Catherine Parr, although she was engaged to Thomas Seymour. Henry rapidly sent him as ambassador to Brussels and married Catherine.

By now Henry, father of three children by three different wives, was old, sick and grumpy and basically wanted a carer! He respected Catherine enough to make her Regent, along with his appointed advisers, while he was in France for a few months. Catherine managed this role with wisdom, and was also a loving, involved stepmother for Princesses Mary and Elizabeth and the future king, Edward, as well as guardian for Lady Jane Grey.

It may be hard to believe but Henry's 1543 Act restricted Bible reading to clergy, noblemen and rich merchants, and noblewomen (but only if in private!) It is clear that Catherine read the Bible and other Christian literature, including Augustine (*Mia Mia* Summer 2024.) We know this because she wrote and published her first book *Prayers or Meditations* in 1545. It's like a personal journal, yearning for and opening her mind and heart to the grace of God. She asks Christ to 'make that possible by grace that is...impossible by nature'.

Catherine was beginning to be influenced by some Reformers she had read or met, including her personal chaplain, John Parkhurst, and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Other Reformation influences were a group of Protestant ladies in



court, including brave young Anne Askew, who openly encouraged Bible reading and Reformed understanding. (After three arrests, questioning and torture for her beliefs, Anne refused to give up the names of other Bible-believing noblewomen, including Catherine).

Catherine was studying God's Word and praying with some ladies-in-waiting and growing in her understanding of salvation 'by faith alone in Christ alone', which was frowned upon by Henry VIII and supporters of the pro-Catholic Bishop Stephen Gardiner. She talked with the king about religious ideas as she sought to soothe his frequent pain. Once he publicly grumbled that she, a mere woman, should not presume to teach her husband, the King, Biblical truths! Bishop Gardiner overheard and, using the king's sensitivity to disrespect of his authority, accused Catherine of being a heretic, inducing Henry to sign orders for her arrest. By God's grace, a Protestant sympathiser told Catherine before the arrest could be carried out. She realised the danger, not just for her, but for her ladies, preachers and the future reform of the Church of England. She urgently and humbly apologised to Henry for overstepping the mark. He changed his mind and she was safe, although a thorough search of her rooms would have discovered reforming books, which could have been damning.

1 References

- Severance, D.L., *Feminine Threads: Women in the Tapestry of Christian History*, Scotland, Christian Focus, 2011
Wilson, D., *Mrs Luther and Her Sisters*, Oxford, Lion, 2016
Withrow, B.G., *Katherine Parr: A Guided Tour of the Life and Thought of a Reformation Queen*, New Jersey, USA, P&R Publishing, 2009

Catherine wrote her personal story of coming to understand God's grace and her trust in Christ as Redeemer and Lord. After Henry's death in 1547 she was the first English woman to publish a book under her own name, 'The Lamentation or Complaint of a Sinner'. Full of Biblical references, it shows how much she studied her Bible and applied it to faith and life. Catherine understood that Christ's blood shed on the cross was 'sufficient for to wash me from the filth of my sins.' Rather than trusting her self-righteousness and efforts to be holy, she trusted Jesus and taught 'This is the life everlasting, Lord, that I must believe thee to be the true God, and whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ.' She encouraged her readers to live according to God's Word, in thankfulness for God's grace.

When Henry died, Catherine married Thomas Seymour, but he was another problem husband! Catherine continued in her Biblical faith, until her death in 1548, after a difficult labour bearing her only child.

Reading her writings brings Catherine's faith to life after nearly 500 years. We may never witness to people in high places, face arrest for our faith or write books, but from her we can be encouraged to trust in Christ alone, dwell in God's Word and seek to apply it in family life, however difficult it might be.

Rev'd Marge Mills

Prayer

Lord of all, we give 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

Daphne Burton, Diocese of Chichester, UK
From "Dear Lord...", © Mothers' Union, 2018

Mothers' Union takes action against domestic and gender-based violence

The diocese of **Bendigo** made available an attractive leaflet of very meaningful prayers and readings for use by parishes during the United Nations '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence' campaign.

St. Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo, Mothers' Union

On Tuesday 25th November, a very moving, 'gentle' and simple service, open to the community, was led by the new Anglican Hospital Chaplain, the Rev'd Emily Payne, and assisted by the Mothers Union Chaplain, the Rev'd Hannah Gregory, with about 40 in attendance. It was held for the third consecutive year at St. Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo, and was incorporated within the regular Healing & Wholeness Service led by the Rev'd Roger Rich and his team. Gail, a survivor of DFV, quietly and bravely shared her story including that of her children. One by one, 39 carnations were brought forward by those in the gathering and placed at the 'foot of the cross' as Rev'd Hannah slowly and meaningfully read out the name (or 'known to God') of each woman who had lost her life to DFV this past year. The ages of the 39 ranged from young adult to an 88-year-old.



The Eaglehawk Mothers' Union have had a **metal plaque** made with the Anglican Church's official wording: **'Love Lives in the Light. 1 John 1:5-7. We say 'NO' to family violence'**. It is attached to a bench seat under a large gum tree in the church grounds. It is visible to all who rest on the seat, or walk through the grounds or along the main street pavement.

With the parish council's permission, a large A3 orange laminated poster, supplied by the City of Greater Bendigo Council, has been attached to one of the church's garbage collection bins. It reads,

**'FAMILY VIOLENCE
NOT IN OUR STREET
NOT NOW
NOT EVER'**

'The Orange Door' is an organisation which helps people who are experiencing or using family violence or who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people. The Bendigo branch was contacted by one of the MU members to find out what items the Eaglehawk parish could assist with. Through the generosity of parishioners in supplying the required new items or cash donations for purchasing the same, clothing to the value of \$650 was delivered to 'The Orange Door' during the 16 Days of Activism.

In Cohuna, one of the diocese's rural towns, the campaign against domestic and gender-based violence continues, not just with the service to mark the 16 Days of Activism campaign with special prayers, but throughout the year when they hand out flyers and display posters advising contact details for assistance for the victims. At the MU coffee mornings, which are open for all in the town to attend, they have leaflets available giving contact details and points of reference for those needing assistance. These are placed on each of the tables so that people can take them home and keep them for future reference. The members have also approached those in charge of public spaces offering to supply posters/flyers for display at their premises, (both openly, and perhaps on the back of toilet doors which gives people the opportunity to privately record these phone numbers) thereby giving a wide coverage of the help and advice available for those in need. In the church's intercessions they continue to regularly pray for both the victims and the perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence.

Maryborough, Christ the King Mothers' Union **16 Days of Action... 'Take a walk in my shoes... and share MY story!!'**

This small group of reasonably active members had been wondering what they could do to make a statement or contribution to remind people of the '16 Days of Activism...'. Having recently managed a 'Pop-Up' Op Shop in their church hall, after which some items remained to be sorted and disposed of, the idea hit that they could use some of the shoes in their stock to mount a display outside the church, with a laminated true story attached. MU member, Ronda, researched the factual stories online and so 14 pairs of shoes – various types of women's shoes and also some men's shoes – with a 'lived' experience attached to read and consider, were lined up along the entry path to the church. On the doors of the church were placed two posters. One read, 'Walk a Mile in My Shoes' and the other had the '16 Days' poster, with a few more stories attached. We hope that next year the members can build on this activity, taking a little more time to plan and prepare. Overall, they felt it was a good to be 'having a go'!!

Jenny Rainsford



Willochra

A '16 Days of Activism' vigil was held in **Clare**, led by Rev Louise Lang, on the 25 November. About 35 people attended, including the Hon. Katrine Hildyard, the Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence & Minister for Women. We also had our local member for Frome, the Hon. Penny Pratt and the Hon. Tony Piccolo, the member for Light. Katrine



L to R Karren Billing, Lorraine Reece, Rev Liz Harris, Roz Rowett

Hildyard led the Bible reading for the service and we focused on Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. The local choir led our singing. The Ven. Andrew Lang blessed the purple bench recently painted by the Clare and Gilbert Valley Council. We prayed, we listened, we sang and we committed ourselves to taking action and changing attitudes in our communities. A detailed report was read in Parliament by Hon Tony Piccolo and has been recorded in Hansard.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, as we look back over the 150 years of Mothers' Union we give great thanks for Mary Sumner's vision and the wonderful ministry of Mothers' Union throughout the world.

We pray for Mothers' Union in Australia and in each of our dioceses that we will continue to promote Christ's teaching on marriage and family life and so be a blessing to our nation.

Please give us wisdom and insight as we look to the future. May your name be hallowed and your kingdom come. Amen

Christine Jensen,
AMUA Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator

A smaller gathering was held in **Riverton**, with Rev'd Liz Harris leading the prayer service. A purple bench has been placed in the Memorial Garden at Holy Trinity church, Riverton.

Central Queensland

The dedication of a purple bench at took place at St Paul's Cathedral, Rockhampton, on Sunday 7th December. The short service was performed after the 7.30 am service, with a repeat after the second service. This enabled the parishioners and MU members from both services to participate. We were very grateful to long-time member, Noelle Fraser, who did a great job putting the dedication together.

In Yeppoon, MU members Colleen and Marzley set up our contribution to the 2025 '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence'. Our little bare-branched tree looked so attractive against the Advent banner background. Cut-out leaf shapes were supplied for prayer requests, which were then included in church intercessions at the conclusion of the 16 days.

Jan Robinson



LEAP: A simple, practical way to support our communities

Across Australia, people of all ages continue to face pressures that shape daily life — rising living costs, loneliness, changing family structures, and the quiet struggles many keep to themselves. Mothers' Union has long played a steady role in offering support, connection, and encouragement. As times change, it can help to reflect on the simple ways we can continue caring for those around us, and to be thankful for the opportunities we have to do so.

LEAP — Listen, Empathise, Agree, Partner — is simply a helpful way to remember the kinds of things many of us already try to do. It's not a new idea, just a gentle reminder of how we can respond thoughtfully and kindly as Christians, MU members, and members of our local communities. Each part of LEAP reflects something MU has practised for generations: being present, being prayerful, and being practical.

Listen — Making room for real conversations

Listening is often the first step in helping someone feel valued. Many of us know how much it means when someone takes the time to really hear us. In our communities, listening might be as simple as giving someone space to talk, noticing when a person seems quieter than usual, or checking in with someone who may be carrying more than they show. Listening doesn't require us to have answers — only to be present, patient, and attentive. Sometimes the most meaningful support we offer is simply our willingness to sit with someone in their moment of need.

- When have you felt truly listened to, and what helped you feel safe to share?

Empathise — Showing genuine care

Empathy is about trying to understand how someone might be feeling, even if we haven't

been through the same situation ourselves. It's a gentle way of saying, 'I'm here with you.' Empathy helps us look beyond the surface and remember that everyone has their own story and challenges. It encourages us to pause before responding, to consider what someone might be carrying, and to offer kindness rather than quick solutions. In a world where many feel unseen, empathy is a powerful expression of Christian love.

- What does empathy look like in your everyday interactions?

Agree — Finding shared hopes

Agreeing doesn't mean pretending everything is fine. It simply means finding common ground — shared hopes for safety, stability, dignity, and support. When we focus on what we can agree on, it becomes easier to build trust and move forward together. Agreement helps us shift from 'us and them' thinking to a sense of shared humanity. It reminds us that even in difficult conversations there is often more that unites us than divides us.

- What shared hopes or values help you connect with someone facing a challenge?

Partner — Walking alongside, not taking over

Partnership is where care becomes action. MU has a long history of walking alongside people — offering support without taking control. Partnership might involve connecting someone with local services, offering encouragement,



Photo credit: Sam Hojati on Unsplash

helping a family through a difficult time, or working with community groups. It's about being present and practical, offering help in ways that honour a person's dignity and strengths. True partnership recognises that we don't need to fix everything — we simply need to walk together.

- What does it look like to 'walk alongside' someone in a respectful way?

Why this matters for MU today

People today are looking for connection, understanding, and community. LEAP offers a simple way to think about how we can continue offering those things. It also reminds us of the strengths already present within MU — the steady presence, the willingness to listen, the practical support, and the deep care members have shown for generations. In a changing world, these qualities remain as important as ever.

A gentle invitation

Wherever we serve, approaches like LEAP can help us reflect God's love in the ordinary moments — through listening, compassion, and shared hope. May we be people who listen openly, empathise sincerely, agree on what matters, and partner with



one another to bring hope into the places we live. And may we do so with thankful hearts — grateful for the people God has placed in our lives, and for the opportunities we are given to serve one another.

Kristi Day

Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we meet as members of Mothers' Union, may we know your presence and hear your word. Teach us to know how best to serve you, not just in the needs locally, but in those of the wider world.

Fill us with your Spirit, that we may have the strength to follow your way. We pray with sure hope and assurance. Amen

Beryl Strange, Cardigan Branch, Province of Wales
From "Dear Lord...", © Mothers' Union, 2018

Caught in the moment

Practical theology is a deeply reflective form of theology that asks, 'Am I living out my beliefs?' It can be tempting to make this a grand process of church reform, but in reality, practical theology is more about the everyday. Tish Harrison Warren explains how being baptised into life with the Lord means inviting God into, and finding God within, the 'small moments' of the day.¹ Warren's work invited me to question, 'How do my routine actions reflect my faith?' and 'how can I draw closer to God in the mundanity of life?'

My children are not independent sleepers. My daily life is sometimes hinged on the fact that my husband and I wake multiple times a night to soothe a tired toddler, comfort a confused preschooler and nurse a newborn. On a good night, my partner climbs into bed with the 5-year-old, while the newborn rests against my breast and the 2-year-old appears at some ungodly hour, dishevelled and smelling of sleep, taking my husband's spot in bed and resting his feet against me.

It is an exhausting life. It is sometimes tempting to roll away from our nighttime visitors. Yet, God has gifted us with the care of three of his people in my children, and my role as their mother is to strive every day (and night) to exemplify God's love in my interactions with them. What more could a mother want than for her children to recognise the light of God within her, and for it to lead them to glorify their Father in heaven (1 John:4, 11-12, Matt 5:16). In the still and chaotic hours of the night, I strive to offer grace, by reflecting love, staying present, and allowing *myself* to be formed by the experience.²

Karl Rahner asserts that 'God's call comes to us in the concrete circumstances of our life.'³ Waking through the night to comfort my children is not a distraction from my spiritual

1 Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, (InterVarsity Press, 2016), 17, ProQuest Ebook Central.

2 Natalie Carnes's 'Motherhood: A Confession' as quoted in: McRorie, Christina G, "The Theology, Ethics and Spirituality of Parenting," *Theological Studies* 86, no 1 (2025): 105 – 135, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.csu.edu.au/10.1177/00405639241312328>

3 Karl Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Vocation," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3, trans. Karl-H. Kruger and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967), 89.

life — it is the very space where I encounter God and live out my vocation. Warren explains that to ‘hone the craft of motherhood in small moments when ... weary and frazzled’⁴ is not ‘injecting’ God into her life, but is instead joining God in the work being done through her life.⁵ I strive to frame my role in the same way.

You might think that, with disrupted nights in my household, prioritising daytime rest would be a necessity. However, I rarely allow myself meaningful rest during the day. Each morning, once I have sipped my coffee and tended to the immediate needs of the small people in my house, I find my notepad and a pen and begin to write my list of tasks for the day ahead. This may seem a perfectly sensible and reasonable thing to do. It is, however, much more than just a to-do list. It signifies where I place my worth. It reveals a subtle but deep disconnect between what I profess to believe and how I live. While I believe in a God of grace, who does not measure me by worldly success, I measure my own worth through the eyes of the world.

I fill my day to the brim with insignificant tasks, often foregoing the rest I so deeply need, and putting my trust not in the Lord, but in the world. The to-do list becomes a barrier between me and the rest God invites me into. I become like Martha, ‘worried and upset about many things’, while missing the ‘one thing necessary’ (Luke 10:41–42). I say I trust in God’s provision, but my behaviour says I trust in my own performance. My fixation on productivity reveals a quiet idolatry—placing my trust in societal standards and human approval, rather than in the grace of God.

As Brueggemann maintains, our context demands that we are driven by consumption, production and conformity to the ‘rat race’.⁶ Choosing rest is radical and something that needs to be done purposefully. In foregoing rest and prioritising worldly desires, I also turn away from opportunities to walk with God. The to-do list is not the problem; it is the intention that is hurting me.

Warren claims that every day is a chance to see the good news of Jesus in a new light, ‘How I

spend this ordinary day in Christ is how I will spend my Christian life’.⁷ And so, perhaps with a small hint of disappointment from me, the answer does not lie in binning the to-do list altogether, for the mundanity of life must continue. It is instead in inviting God into the mundanity with me, re-framing my thinking and keeping my values pointed to Christ. In both my strengths and struggles, I am learning to see my days as a sacred liturgy — a place where God meets me, forms me, and calls me.

Marnie Morey

Marnie Morey received the 2025 MU Canberra and Goulburn annual prize for ‘Meritorious Work Promoting Children’s and Family Ministries in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn’ for her essay on family life as part of her studies at St Marks National Theological Centre. In accepting the award Marnie said, ‘I was surprised and honoured to receive the award for my essay on family life....I am humbled to have my reflection recognised by an organisation so committed to supporting families in circumstances much like mine.’



4 Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, 68

5 Ibid. p.69

6 Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. (Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2014), 90.

7 Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, 17

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD

...let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. Psalm 95: 1-4 (NIV)

The Psalmist calls us to give thanks to God in all things. This year I am giving thanks to God as I mark 25 years as a priest in the Anglican Church of Australia. I thank God for His call and for sustaining me over many years.

In my final year at Bible College I was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. This has been a personal challenge. Many Australians suffer from the same disease, and its impact is far reaching. In my case it is robbing me of my vision. I have had to retire earlier than I wished as I can no longer read books or carry out the normal duties of a parish priest.

My call and ministry began a few years before my ordination. I was a High School teacher and was able to witness my faith to others in the school. I led services and preached in my local Anglican church and assisted the minister with baptism preparation for young families. I thank God for His grace that saw the conversion of those families. I felt the gift of His Holy Spirit in the words He gave me as I spoke to them.

God blessed me, and allowed me to minister in a nursing home. He taught me great lessons, and I thank Him for them. On one occasion I was preaching about the God of Love. As I did so, an elderly lady seated in a wheelchair at the front of the congregation began to heckle me, calling out, 'He's not a God of love' every time I said He was. I had no immediate answer, but God's Spirit told me to share a cuppa with her after the service. As I listened to her story I heard her pain and I acknowledged that. She had fallen at home and broken her hip; hence the wheelchair. She lived alone at home because her husband of 60 years had recently died and her children had put her into respite care because they were physically unable to care for her while she had a broken hip. I asked her if a God of Love would have given her a loving



husband for 60 years. Her answer was yes. I asked her if a God of Love would have given her a home to share with her husband and her family. She said yes. I asked her if a God of Love would have blessed her with children who loved her and cared for her. Again, she said yes. By the end of our conversation, she saw that He was indeed a God of Love — a God whom she could thank for the love he had given her through her husband and family. I have always been thankful that the Spirit of God guided me through this conversation. When we trust Him, He leads and directs us for His praise and glory.

Many years later, I broke a bone in my foot which stubbornly refused to heal. God allowed me to continue to serve whilst wearing a cast/ moon boot and, on occasion, using a wheelchair. God taught me that my physical state did not prevent me from sharing the gospel. Today, I resonate with the situation of Bartimaeus sitting on the side of the Jericho Road. He cried out to the Son of David for mercy. Although physically blind, spiritually, he could see the very nature of Jesus. He was a witness and was healed for his faith. Whilst we are not always healed physically, our faith has brought us from death to life through the cross. That is something we can all give thanks for.

That truth has driven me for many years. I want to see others giving thanks to God for their salvation. God has allowed me to see this again and again. I thank Him for calling myself, my dear wife, children and other family members to himself. I thank Him for allowing me to lead friends to Him. I thank Him for

allowing me to lead people on their death bed to Him. I thank Him for allowing me to minister to two Sudanese men who have become ministers of the gospel in the Anglican Church of Australia. As I reflect on my frailty, I see that all of this has been accomplished by God.

Whilst it is encouraging to have others congratulate me on 25 years of ordained ministry with words such as, 'Well done, good and faithful servant', there is only One from whom I long to hear those words from – the One who is both my Lord and Saviour. It is to Him that I give thanks, praise and glory.

I pray that God would bless you with a heart of thankfulness, in all circumstances of life. Amen

Rev'd Rob Healy

Rev'd Rob Healy is the new Prayer and Spirituality Convenor of the Perth MU Executive. He has been married to Kaye, a former Perth Diocesan President and Australian Vice President, for over 40 years. They have three adult children and five grandchildren. Rob and Kaye met as schoolteachers in country WA, where Rob was a high school teacher and Kaye taught primary school. They see God's hand at work in bringing them together and in giving them experiences that enhanced their ministry over the years. Rob heard God's call to ministry while he and Kaye were living in North West Australia. After training at Moore College in Sydney he served in parishes in the Dioceses of North West Australia and Perth and as WA Regional Officer with the Bush Church Aid Society. Whilst serving in the parish of Balcatta/Hamersley, Rob and Kaye also ministered to Sudanese refugees. Together Rob and Kaye served as AMUA's Parenting Programme Coordinators.



Thankfulness always

Many of you will remember the words of the well-loved hymn, *Now thank we all our God*. Perhaps its background is not as well known to you. The writer was Martin Rinkart, one of four pastors in the town of Eilenberg in Saxony during the 30 Years War (1618-1648). To add to his troubles, a series of plagues carried many away, including two of the town's pastors, with another fleeing for his own life. In one year at the height of the plague Martin took 4000 funerals, including that of his wife. We may well ask, 'What kept him going and how could he maintain such joyful thankfulness through those years of sadness?'



The words of the hymn give us the clue. He was committed to the wonderful faithfulness of the Triune God whom he had so obviously embraced and learned to thank in the ordinary days of life. We are taught to *be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thess.5:16-18) Along with all of God's commands this is given for our good. When calamities come to us, be they epidemics, troubles, financial loss, sickness, persecution and loss of friends through death, desertion or divorce to name but a few, we feel as if our world is changing. But in reality, for the believer, nothing eternal has changed. The believer can still say, 'God loves me, my relationship with him has not changed, I am still secure in my salvation through faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit continues to dwell within me.'

Thankfulness to God, as the hymn would have us sing, is for his faithfulness to us in all of life. Thankfulness will keep us from grumbling, discontentment and the seeking of our security



in earthly pleasures or even in God's good, but finite, gifts. Singing this hymn can be counted upon to be one means by which God will help us to thrive, whatever our circumstances.

Peter Brain

Never too old!



Mabel Hibbert, OAM, a Mothers' Union member from **St Peter's Murrumbreena** (Diocese of Melbourne), moved to Mornington last year to be near her family, where she settled well into 'Andrew Kerr Care'. Mabel joins in with all of the activities –

and has made many good friends there. One of the lovely things is that there is a kindergarten on the grounds of the Care Centre. Several days a week in term time some of the residents go down to the Kinder and have a lovely time interacting with the children. They do activities together, like decorating cakes, painting and all sorts of other art work.



There was an elderly concrete bird bath in the garden. One of the care workers showed Mabel and three of her friends how to cover the bird bath with mosaic work. The final piece is a real work of art. Can you see how the mosaic pieces fitted, with the doves, the olives on the olive branch, and the blue sky shining through, bringing joy for the birds, and for all the people who see it too?

When there was a change in the seating arrangements at the meal tables, Mabel suggested that each resident might tell their life story, one person each day. As a result the people at her table really got to know one another. Mabel will be 102 in May. If anyone asks to what she attributes her longevity, she says, 'My family and my faith.'

Geraldine Foster

Ruth Daws is a Diocesan Member who lives in **Renmark** (Diocese of The Murray). She visits lots of local people and always shares AMUA news with them. Shortly before Christmas Ruth took the knitted Holy Family figures to stay at the Aged Care Facility. They spent a day with four people, one of whom was Honor, who had been a faithful member



of the Renmark MU group until she moved into residence. She was SO delighted not only to have them with her, but also to tell staff how she came to have them visit. She is a strong prayer warrior and faith encourager. We praise God for our wonderful MU connection.

Jocelyn Williamson

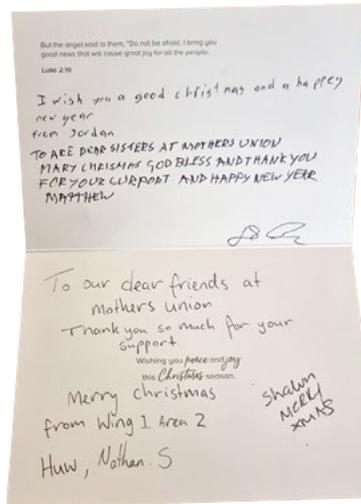
Sending Christmas cards may not be as popular as it once was, but it was a privilege for **Keiraville** (Diocese of Sydney) MU to provide Christmas cards to the inmates of Long Bay Correctional Complex through the ministry of the Anglicare Chaplain, Tim Johnson. MU members were able to provide 100

Christmas cards to those in prison, enabling them to give Christian cards to their families and loved ones at that special time of year. A selection of cards with Bible verses, nativity scenes and Aboriginal art was provided and covered with prayer for the men and their families. What a thrill to receive a card in return with thanks for the cards and our prayer support from the very appreciate inmates. In the season of giving, what a joy it was to be God's means

of blessing those whose 'family life has met with adversity'.

Keiraville MU has eight members, with more than half over the age of eighty, three over ninety. We are excited about how God is still able to use us for His service!

Megan Ryman



Grandparent power!

They say that with great power comes great responsibility... and while Spider Man had his web-slinging skills, we grandparents have something even better: the ability to connect the past to the present and pass on the treasures of faith, family, and love. (And yes, a good batch of scones never hurts either.)

Grandparents are more than just free babysitters and emergency biscuit suppliers. We carry the wisdom of the past, the stories of our family history, and a living memory of traditions that help shape a child's sense of belonging. We're also in a unique position to share the joy of knowing Jesus with the next generation – something the Mothers' Union has been passionate about since Mary Sumner's time.

This ties beautifully with the second of the MU Objectives:

To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church..

But in our busy, modern, world, faith can sometimes slip down the family to-do list. That's where 'Grandparent Power' can shine.



How to Harness Grandparent Power

Firstly, always check with parents before talking to children about Jesus – good relationships with them are key. Once you have the green light, look for natural moments to share faith. Talk about God's love, kindness, and helping others. Pray with your grandchildren – bedtime prayers are perfect. Pop a short prayer on the wall above their bed and make it part of your time together. The dinner table is another golden opportunity. Teach them a grace, or even make up a fun one together. Show them how prayer is simply talking to Jesus, a friend who is always there.

Cards and gifts can be faith-filled too. Christian birthday and Christmas cards, Advent calendars with scripture instead of chocolate, and small presents, like Bible storybooks or Noah's Ark puzzles, can be lasting reminders.

If your grandchildren live nearby, don't just invite them to church – make it happen! Pick them up. Arrive early, help get them ready, pack a snack, and make it a happy adventure. Once there, show them around – point out the various aspects of the church. These early memories can shape a lifetime of faith. For those far away, phone calls and video chats work wonders. You can even practise prayers together over the phone. Follow up with little letters or cards to keep faith conversations alive.

Grandparents may sometimes be the only ones planting the Gospel seeds in young hearts. So let's be intentional, cheerful, and a little bit bold. We might not leap tall buildings in a single bound, but with God's help, we can 'fight the good fight' and pass on a faith that outlasts us—and that's real superpower.

Alice Hare

Photo: © Alice Hare Used by permission

Overseas and Northern Outreach notes

Our Mothers Union 'Wave of Prayer' is a continuous expression of our commitment to each other every day throughout the year. The work and membership of every area where Mothers' Union is active is remembered as we use our Prayer Diary each day with its reflection and prayer followed by the names of each Diocese. Alongside this, each Diocese has been allocated three days to pray specifically for five or six dioceses we call Link Dioceses. In Southern Queensland we are linked to the Dioceses of Rokon in South Sudan, Kampala in Uganda, Kaduna in Nigeria, Koforidua in Ghana and Peru in South America. Our three allocated days are in March and as a table of services is drawn up, it is wonderful to see the Wave of Prayer rippling throughout the three days, at different times throughout the day. The prayers, followed by candle lighting for each diocese, is a special time of remembering their needs before our Heavenly Father.

In our diocese many branches also have links with other Mothers' Union groups around the world, and increasingly, with branches in other parts of Australia. These links are valued as friendships form over the years and in some cases, decades, with the exchange of letters or emails filled with information, ideas for activities, video clips of important occasions, cards sent, recipes exchanged, greetings at Easter and Christmas and requests for prayer. My own branch has links with three branches in other parts of the world, and at present we have a member from one of those branches visiting Australia and joining us in our activities. We are so happy to see and fellowship with her as she joins with us in our work for our community.

Overseas Project

In Australia we are blessed to have a good education system, but this is not so in other areas



of the world. Are you aware of our Target Project in the Solomons, teaching adults literacy in the three islands of Ysabel, Malaita and Guadalcanal?

Many women there cannot read and write, so programs like teaching literacy will boost their self-esteem and enable them to engage more fully with the world around them. Levels of family violence decrease when men and women are equally literate. In Southern Queensland we take up a retiring collection on Mothering Sunday, or Mother's Day, depending what each parish celebrates, to support this Target Project. We put up a poster, announce it in the pew sheet and in church the week before, and are blessed that our congregations put aside a contribution, as they are able, to support this fund.

I remember, when teaching a newly-arrived refugee to Australia, the sense of wonder and happiness when she held a pencil and wrote for the first time. She was then able to help her children with their homework and went on to have gainful employment. I look forward to hearing about the 'sense of wonder' when the women of the Solomons learn to read and write for the first time!



Diane Thomson

Strengthening ties with Pacific Island neighbours

As I walked to a shopping centre with 17 women from the Solomon Islands, I asked Rosemary, a young Mum of four children, 'So, what do you do back home?' 'Oh, I'm just a housewife,' came the reply.

Rosemary was one of a group of 63 MU members from the Solomon Islands who travelled to the Brisbane Diocese to visit Gayndah, Caboolture and Strathpine parishes in November, 2025. They had planned, prepared and practised for their visits with MU members in each of these branches. The theme of their presentations was 'Spreading Our Wings', based on Isaiah 40:31, and spread their wings they most certainly did.

Many of the members had never travelled outside of the Solomon Islands before, so the getting of passports and visas was a huge task, as was their tireless fundraising. The Lord blessed their work with great favour and their plans came to fruition when they landed in Australia and travelled by train and bus to Gayndah for three days, then Caboolture and finally to Strathpine.

In Caboolture they presented dramas based on the issue of domestic violence, since their visit coincided with the '16 Days of Activism...' campaign. For quite a number of these ladies these dramas were very real, reinforcing the need to highlight this awful problem. The other program, which was also carefully thought out and enacted, was based on the Five Objectives of Mothers' Union. The ladies highlighted the importance of living these objects out in our homes and communities.

In Strathpine, John & Jesma O'Hara had been invited to talk on 'Christians in small business.'



This amazing couple began an Op Shop in Nambour many years ago, before Op Shops became a thing. Now they have 10 'Neighbours Aid' Op Shops in South East Queensland, through which they provide school programs for children and small business opportunities for women in Africa and India. John and Jesma's message about the importance of using the seed God has given into our hands struck a chord with many of the women, particularly those who are trying to start up a small business in the Solomon Islands.

What a blessing these women were to our branches. They came well prepared with songs, dancing and blessings for all who came to meet and share with them. The ladies were blown away that our Australian President, Robin Ray, and her husband, Bishop Bill, joined in their day at Strathpine. Brisbane Diocesan President, Jenny Bullock, attended the Caboolture day.

In Gayndah they enjoyed visiting a citrus farm and at Strathpine the Dakabin High School welcomed them to their assembly, where they performed cultural dances and songs. The school then took them on a tour of their working farm. The day finished with a visit to the North Lakes shopping centre. A very tired but happy group of 63 women and their leader, Father Allan, then boarded their plane for home early the next morning.

That conversation with Rosemary about 'just being a housewife' ended with our talking about the aims of Mothers' Union and how looking after our children and homes is the highest calling we can have. As we said farewell we hugged and encouraged each other in our roles as women, particularly as Mothers' Union women!

Pam Lynam
Strathpine MU



Wave of prayer in the Murray

Readings: *Wisdom 1:1–7* | *Psalm 139:6–11* | *Luke 17:1–6*

There is a quiet power in the image of a wave — rising, moving, and breaking upon the shore, only to be followed by another. It is continuous, rhythmic, and unstoppable. The Mothers' Union's 'Wave of Prayer' borrows that image to describe something equally constant and living — the movement of prayer around the world, hour by hour, community by community, heart by heart. It's a beautiful expression of what it means to belong to the body of Christ that stretches far beyond our local circles, and yet finds its meaning in them.

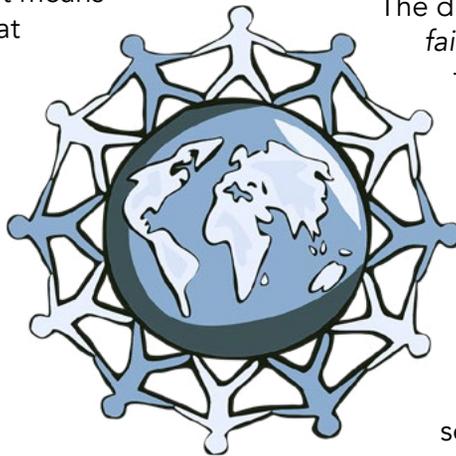
The reading from *Wisdom* invites us into that same movement of the Spirit who 'fills the world' and who is present in all that is holy, true, and life-giving. It opens with a simple command: 'Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth; think of the Lord with sincerity of heart.' The author is not speaking to power in the worldly sense, but to every person who has influence — the quiet rulers of households, communities, and hearts. It's an invitation to align our thinking with God's way of seeing, to become transparent to the divine wisdom that seeks to make all things whole.

For the Mothers' Union, that call to *love righteousness* finds its daily expression in care — for families, for those on the margins, for the flourishing of human relationships. These are the places where God's wisdom dwells. The Spirit that 'fills the world' is not remote or abstract. Every act of compassion, every effort to mend what is broken, every prayer whispered for someone in need is an expression of the Spirit of God at work.

Psalm 139 carries that same assurance. 'Where can I go then from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?' The psalmist isn't expressing fear, but wonder. The presence of God is not a surveillance but a sanctuary. Even in our darkness, says the psalm, 'the night is as bright as the day.'

That is the kind of knowing love that undergirds the life of prayer — especially the continuous prayer we share in our Wave of Prayer service. For wherever our sisters and brothers may be — in joy or hardship, in bustling cities or quiet rural towns — the same Spirit holds them close. Our prayers meet theirs, and the wave continues.

When Jesus speaks in Luke's Gospel about faith the size of a mustard seed, he's not setting a challenge or a measure. He's reassuring his disciples that even the smallest act of trust, the faintest word of forgiveness, the simplest prayer offered in love — is enough. In God's hands, even the tiniest seed can take root and move mountains.



The disciples ask Jesus to *increase their faith* — and perhaps we feel that, too, especially when the world's needs seem overwhelming, or when our own energy feels small. But Jesus redirects their attention. It's not about the quantity of faith, but its orientation — a faith turned outward in love, rooted in prayer, sustained by relationship. That is what allows the mustard seed to grow, and the wave of prayer to keep moving.

So as we join our prayers with those of the worldwide Mothers' Union, we remember that we are part of something vast and holy — a movement of grace that has no borders, a song that never stops. Our prayer does not end with our 'Amen.' It is carried on by others — in villages, towns, and cities we may never see — who, like us, are seeking to live God's wisdom in their homes and communities. In this, the Wave of Prayer becomes not just a pattern of intercession, but a sign of the Kingdom itself: God's love flowing through the world, healing, connecting, and renewing.

May that same Spirit fill us anew — to love righteousness, to delight in mercy, to offer



forgiveness freely, and to trust that even the smallest seed of faith can bear fruit in the world God loves.

Rev'd Daniel Irvine
MU Chaplain,
Diocese of The Murray

Around the Dioceses

ADELAIDE

After a lot of discussion and with great sadness it was decided to close the Belair branch and let our members join other branches or become Lone/Diocesan Members at the end of 2025. We will continue to support the various projects and programs at home and abroad. We have had an active group for many a year, with many of our members serving on the Diocesan and State Executive committees and volunteering in the Mothers' Union office and bookshop in the city. Members contributed to various funds that were used for state, national and international projects.

Joyline Flint

BRISBANE



Bishop Sarah and Rev'd Lucy, along with MU members and others from the congregation, attended the dedication of a Red Bench in the grounds of St Mark's, Buderim on October 12. There are now more than 20 'red benches' in Brisbane diocese, calling attention to the need to be proactive in our efforts to reduce family and domestic violence.

Manly/Wynnum MU had the privilege of welcoming Patrick Dare from Dementia Australia to share his story of diagnosis, adjustment and



creative living with dementia at a Dementia Awareness workshop. 'It was great to welcome over 45 participants into St Peter's Hall, Wynnum, for this important morning of thinking, sharing and learning with Patrick. We truly appreciated his honesty, openness and humour. He encouraged us to have hope and begin a conversation around dementia with those we love.'

Joan Harvey has been welcomed to the **Algester** branch and Shirley Davis and Shirley Newton to **Drayton** branch.



BUNBURY

The end of 2025 saw some big changes in Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Bunbury. We have offered our heartfelt thanks to Wendy Mabey, who has led us so well for the last 6 years, and several other members of the Executive, on their retirement and we have welcomed our new President, Isobelle Shortreed, and other new members of the Executive.

In 2025 we adopted a new banner, beautifully designed and crafted in WA. The faces of the

Christ-child and Virgin Mary are purposely left without features to allow us to see in them the mystery and wonder of the mother and child. The colours of the banner reflect the 6 local Noongar seasons, starting with Birak (December/January) and followed by Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba and Kambarang.

At the annual Country Rally in October, attended by about 60 people, 13 service awards were presented to members, one of whom has been in MU for 66 years! Mothers' Union has been a part of the fabric of our diocese since 1915. We are 110 years young!

Busselton branch members attended several baptisms during 2025 and gave each child a copy of *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well as a card and bunch of flowers to the family and godparents. They are also working on the conversion of an old bench into a Red Bench, which will be part of the 'Domestic Violence – Change the Ending' movement. Several other branches have already installed coloured benches. A Prayer Vigil was held in Busselton during the '16 days' in December.

Dunsborough branch has been hosting a monthly morning tea (appropriately named 'Cuppa on the Verandah') for quite a while now. This is a space where anyone, particularly the isolated and lonely, can come. People are asked to 'bring a friend or neighbour'. MU members bake up treats – sandwiches, slices and scones are sought-after items each month!



Priscilla Broadbent

CANBERRA-GOULBURN

Our joyful Mothers Union in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn held its AGM on September 10 at Holy Cross, Hackett, Anglican Church. We thanked our much-loved Joan Eberlé for her outstanding work as president of our MU for the last 7 years. Joan is now our cherished

secretary. Our Bishop's wife, Monica, is now president.

We also thank our beloved previous secretary, Dorothy Mackenzie, for her diligence and thoroughness in this role. Dorothy is now our correspondence members coordinator. As you can see, there is a place for everyone in our MU.



Image credit: Rev'd Paul Black Used by permission

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

August 9 dawned cold, miserable and raining. My mind turned to those who lived at Yeppoon who would need to travel through roadworks in the dark and rain to attend the MU Mary Sumner Day breakfast. To my amazement they did come- even more than I had imagined.

It had been a case of praying hard, working hard and praying even harder. My mind had been filled with self-doubt and even doubt in God. Had I got it wrong? Was I running ahead of God rather than letting him lead me? Once again God gently reminded me he could, and would, do more than I had imagined.

Not only was the concept of holding a breakfast new, but having participants register and pay using an electronic QR code was also new. Younger people and those who are IT savvy found this more convenient, and the treasurers, with some tutoring, did so as well. We still took cash so that those less IT savvy were able to register and pay via their branch treasurers.

We had booked a local restaurant conference room, which was set up for a buffet breakfast. The tables had MU literature and past issues *Mia Mia*, which attendees were encouraged to take home. The three TV screens scrolled through a slideshow depicting the work of MU in our branches and

internationally. But it wasn't for the food only that about 70 people turned up, even if it was delicious. In reality it was to hear our guest speaker, Virginia Grice, who writes the regular column, 'Over the fence', in *Mia Mia*. She also happens to live locally.



Instead of a formal introduction and talk by Virginia, a 'question and answer' format was used. The five questions focused not only Virginia's writing, but also encompassed the MU objectives, including what she did to be 'inwardly nurtured'. Virginia's answers were insightful, honest and practical, resonating well with all in attendance.

It was a wonderful morning of sharing, learning and fellowship.

Sue Witten



NEWCASTLE

At the 2025 Lady Day service at Christ Church Cathedral Laurel Brook was honoured with Life Membership of Newcastle Diocese Mothers' Union. Bishop Charlie and Dean Katherine shared in the presentation to Laurel by our Chaplain, Rev'd Nicole Baldwin. Laurel was further honoured with a celebratory morning tea at St. Thomas', Cardiff, where many of her friends shared in congratulating her.

Laurel's faith journey began when, aged 12, she played piano for the Sunday School at her local Anglican church in Sydney. At 18 she joined Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), a worldwide organisation within the Anglican Communion that was formed out of concern for the welfare of young women and girls from the country who moved to the cities for work.

Laurel's Newcastle chapter began at St Albans in Warners Bay, where she became the parish's first Sunday School Superintendent. Later she was asked to establish a GFS, which ultimately had more than 50 girls in regular attendance. In December 1981 Laurel joined Mothers' Union. Her involvement at diocesan level began in 1995, when she became the Hospital Visiting Coordinator. Laurel has held a number of positions on Executive, including Diocesan Secretary (2004-2010), Diocesan President (2011-2017), Diocesan Secretary (2020-current) as well as keeping her Branch motivated. Laurel has also served God through music for more than 65 years. She takes on this ministry with much love and willingness and shares this gift with us all in Newcastle Diocese.



Mothers Union Chaplain, Reverend Nicole Baldwin, said, 'Honouring Laurel's commitment to the community is well-deserved. Laurel is a delightful, special, funny, and talented lady, who loves God and God's people. She has offered her gifts over many years, not only to Mothers' Union, but to her parish and wider community. It was a privilege for me to admit her as a Life Member of Mothers Union Diocese of Newcastle. Laurel is a blessing to us all.'

Elizabeth Bissaker

PERTH

MU Perth has celebrated a number of significant events in recent months, including the welcoming of new members at St Lawrence's, Dalkeith, and the official thanking of Carol Rumens (Guildford MU) for her service to MU. Carol has offered dedicated and selfless service in many positions in MU, both on the Perth executive committee and in her branch.



Melville MU, along with other Holy Cross parishioners, recently celebrated a double milestone: 15 years of hosting the Mainly Music



program and also the unveiling of a Purple Bench to raise awareness of domestic and family violence. By celebrating Mainly Music and unveiling the Purple Bench together, Holy Cross Melville highlighted its commitment to families—both nurturing them in times of joy and standing with them through times of challenge.

Quinns-Butler's two MU groups keep very busy, looking for creative ways to fulfill the MU Objectives. During the past year they have made Christmas cards for their Parish Priest and Lay Pastoral Ministers to give out when taking services in the local nursing homes, given a small sealed bag containing two Liquorice Allsorts, to which was attached a colourful card, with an MU sticker and the message '*Jesus loves all sorts!*' to all those who worshiped with them during Christmas services, provided practical items needed by women in a local refuge, made 586 individually-wrapped jam, Vegemite, and cheese sandwiches which were delivered to a local primary school on Monday mornings for children who come to school with no lunch and helped to run the same local primary school's Breakfast Club by making cereal and toast for up to 17 children.



Two weeks before the end of Term 4, Olivia, the chaplain at Quinns Beach Primary School, contacted them seeking help with the provision of Christmas hampers for some of the needy families in her care—15 if possible! The request went out to our members and the parish family. Sheila, who looks after the Parish Pantry ministry, was able to put together the number needed for the school. We will continue with joy to support the school and live out the words of the beautiful poem written by the children under the guidance of Olivia. (See p.10)

THE MURRAY

'The Road to Bethlehem' was a ministers' fraternal initiative for children at the local Carols Night, following the yearly Christmas pageant in **Mt Barker**. A long line of gazebos sheltered activities organised to follow the Annunciation to Mary to the birth of Jesus, hence the name 'The Road to Bethlehem'. Each child was given a shopping bag with which to collect the different activities available along the 'road', from folding and decorating angels (our parish responsibility) to icing arrowroot biscuits and adding a lolly baby to represent the crib and the baby Jesus. It was a great fun ecumenical outreach into the community.



SYDNEY

Epping Branch celebrated 100 years on September 9 at the Northern Region Area Day. Marge Jenkins, who has been a member for over 60 years, cut the cake.



The 15th annual **Seminar** was held on Friday 27 February. Over 1100 people gathered in person at St. Andrew's Cathedral, online or in hubs to hear speakers address the topic, '*The Joy of Enough*'. Look out for a full report in a later issue of *Mia Mia*.





Over the fence

The problem of abundance

Summer had found me keeping company with a herd of dairy cows and life was good.

As a third-year vet student, the notion of 'semester break' was nuanced. All students were required to satisfy several months of unpaid on-farm placements in non-lecture periods. Dairy prac was always going to be a winner for me, with its natural rhythm of a sunrise start and lights-out by 8:30pm. My personal circadian rhythm saw my brain snap into gear fully engaged at the first hint of birdsong – with an equally sudden evening shut-down.

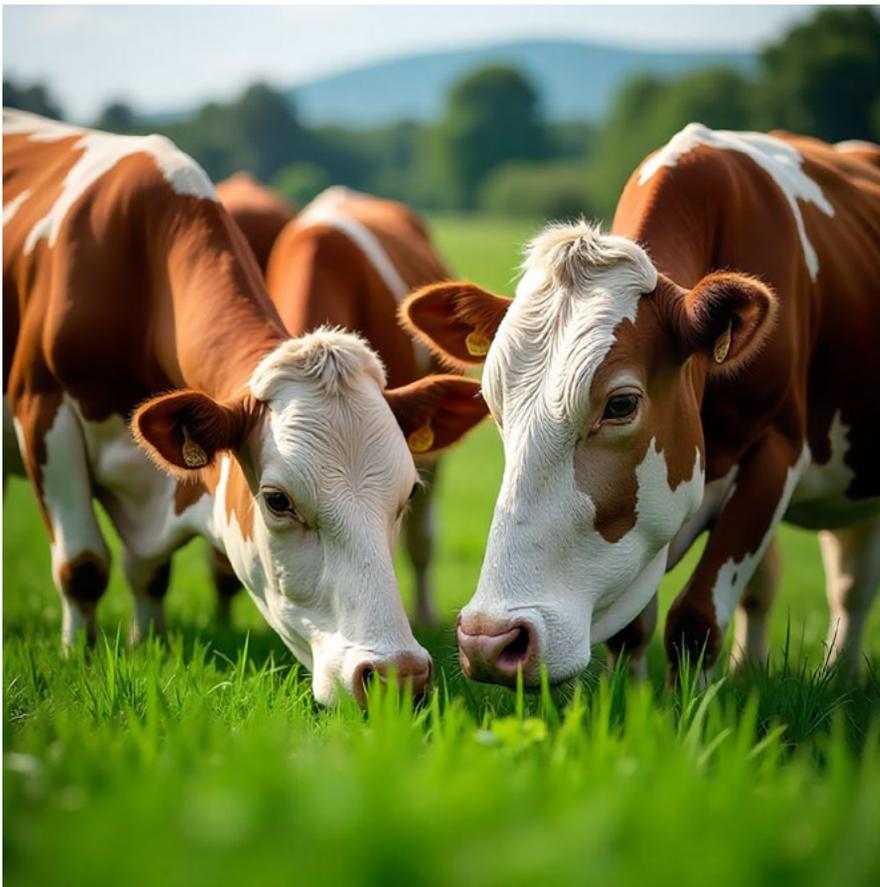
The dairy ran as an inter-generational family business situated on the outer fringe of southwestern Sydney. On clear days a short walk to the highest point on the property afforded an uninterrupted view of the Blue Mountains. Each day had a known, soothing, repetition that everyone, including the cows, enjoyed. The one unprecedented event however, was the rain.

A highly unseasonal low-pressure system had stubbornly parked itself off the east coast of Australia. The daily dose of rain meant that my milking habit now included the addition of an old, over-sized, raincoat that slopped around my gumboots. I happily squelched my way down to the dairy for morning milking, noting the brilliant green of the foot-high kikuyu that was responding joyously to this daily watering.

My 80-year-old host was already in the dairy, expertly priming the milking machines and engaging the stainless-steel collection vat. The exposed lightbulbs of the milking shed cast gentle halos in the morning rain. The sound of ABC Radio National had reached the ears of the herd, who, in true Pavlovian style, were calmly plodding their way towards the warmth and shelter of the shed.

A unique aroma reached me from some distance away. Rising above the smell of contented ruminants came a sweet, yeasty odour. Besides the anticipation of having their engorged udders relieved of some 12 litres of milk, the herd of 120 Ayreshires also knew they would enjoy a glorious 15 minutes of eating Brewer's Grain, a wonderfully nutritious and aromatic by-product of the distillery process.

This morning, however, the smell of the Brewer's Grain was particularly pungent. Through the warm drizzle I could see the roof of the corrugated-iron grain shed. As I rounded the path, a remarkable sight came into view. The ongoing rain event had caused a steady trickle of water to seep under the sides of the shed, making a bee-line for the grain pile. The grain pile had, in turn, swollen enormously and, expanding outwards, had popped the rivets of the shed wall, causing the grain to pour out onto the wet mud. Seeing their favourite food freely



available in such abundance, the head cows had sharply deviated and were leading the entire herd straight towards the overflowing pile. My happy morning daydreams vanished in a flash. I envisaged 120 bloated dairy cows lying on the ground groaning in agony, smelling like XXXX Gold, with ineffectual trochars protruding from their engorged rumens.

I started to run (as best as one can in damp wellies), waving my arms and shouting words of bovine discouragement. The cows correctly judged that I was a useless distance away from their target and picked up their pace. In desperation I straightened my course and plunged directly into the spilled silage. In a decisive act of physics, the swollen grains suctioned onto my gumboots and thus, propelled by momentum, I was forcibly ejected from them. I lay sprawled face-down and bare-footed in the wet hops, enormously surprised. After some moments, I sat up and looked around. My host, a normally restrained and dignified man, was holding his sides, shaking uncontrollably. As I struggled to retrieve my disengaged footwear, I noted that some of the more comedic-minded cows were also enjoying a quiet chortle.

The problem of abundance. That summer had been like none in the district's living memory. A special on-farm meeting had been called on the hitherto-unknown subject of Management of Excessive Summer Feed. Regular methods such as baling or silage were impossible, given the persistent damp. Slashers would be bogged instantly and any harvested feed would spoil before you could say butyric acid. Even the idea of sharing with neighbours was a redundant idea – everyone had more than they needed. The final consensus was that, this year, all that could be done was to be thankful.

Rain-sodden Brewer's Grain busting out the side of a shed is a solid illustration of the problem of abundance. But what then is the solution if, as a church congregation, we find ourselves oversupplied with resources? Are there so many capable musicians in the congregation that names appear on the roster every two months or so or not at all? Are all the positions on parish council filled with others in the wings? Is the

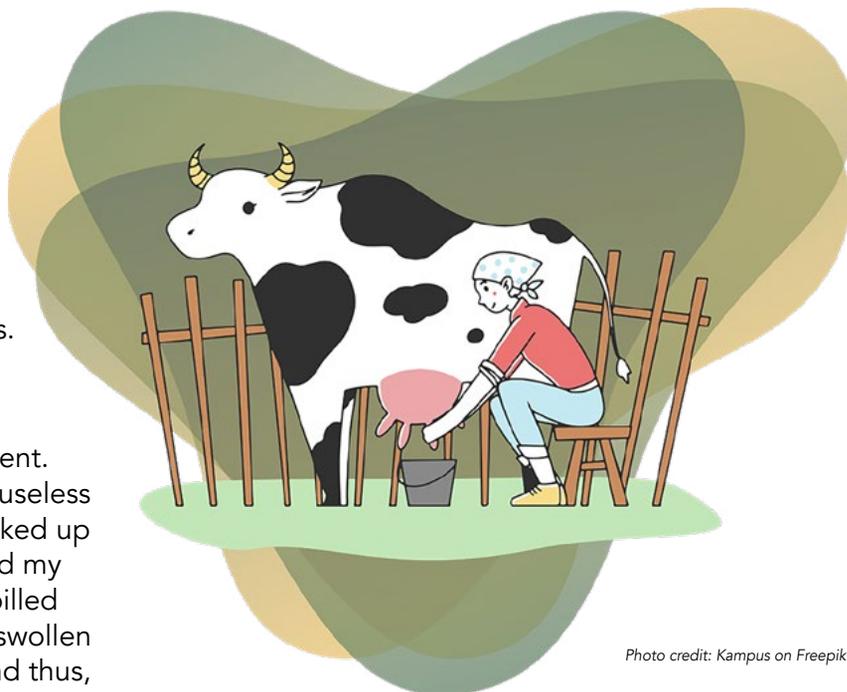


Photo credit: Kampus on Freepik

Sunday School teaching roster overflowing with helpers and a future generation being trained and nurtured? Whilst this may all be evidence of a healthy growing church there is a biblical mandate to move beyond simply being thankful. The flourishing church also has a deep responsibility to her less well-resourced smaller counterpart.

As a thriving coastal commercial centre the Corinthian church was in a position to share their abundant resources with their brothers and sisters who were in dire material need. Having recognised that God had supplied their every need they were then exhorted to use their resources to build up the wider family of God, and in so doing, be enriched themselves as they experienced the joy of being genuinely generous to others. There is a beautiful circularity to generosity. Thankfulness for God's abundant provision leads to acts of generosity that meet the practical needs of others and results in abundant thankfulness to God.

Problem solved.

'You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God...Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!' 2 Corinthians 9:11, 15

Virginia Grice



*Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.*

*O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace,
and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills,
in this world and the next!*

*All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given;
The Son and Him Who reigns
with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God,
whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.*

Martin Rinkart c1636
Translated by Catherine Winkworth

