MIA MIA

SUMMER 2026/2027 Joy

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Philippians 4:4



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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.

PURPOSE

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

AIM

Our **aim** is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life.

OUR 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.

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MIA MIA

PRONOUNCED: MIGH-UH-MIGH-UH

Mia Mia is an Aboriginal word for a temporary hut or shelter, more commonly used to refer to a home.

Mia Mia is a quarterly magazine of Anglican Mothers' Union Australia.

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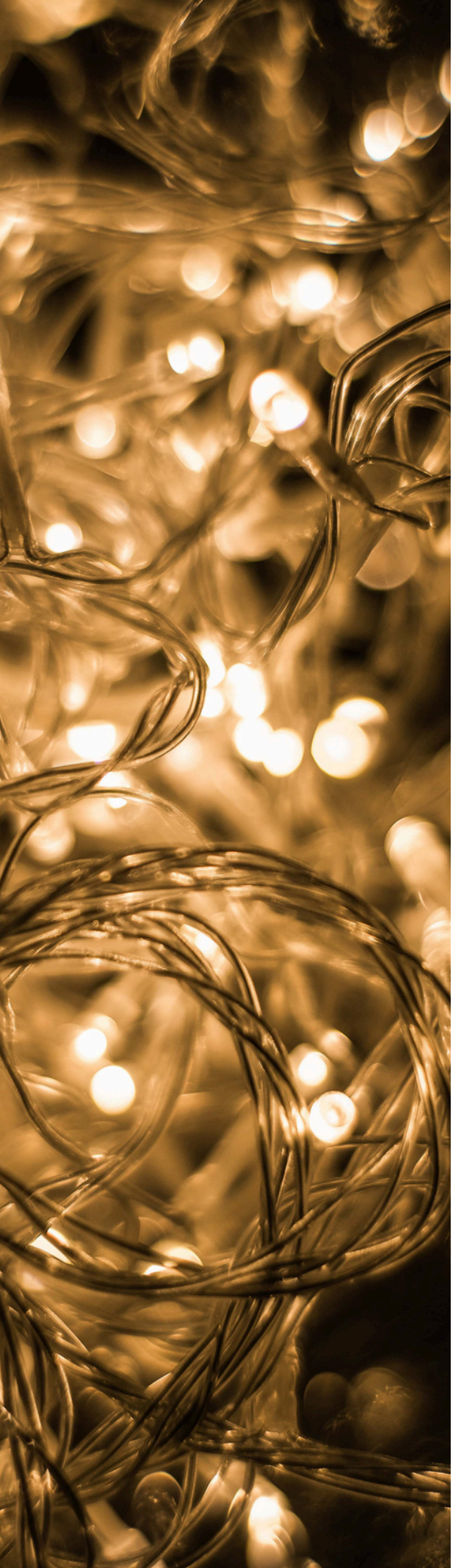
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HAVE YOUR SAY IN MIA MIA

Contributions and insights are welcome. Please send all correspondence to the editor.

Publication in Mia Mia is at the editor's discretion.



welcoming SUMMER

As Summer chases away the final chills of Autumn, we celebrate the end of a year and prepare to welcome a new one. Like every year before, the past 12 months have had their challenges, but through it all the Lord remains steadfast.

Whether its a good or bad day, a positive or negative interaction, health or sickness, celebration or sorrow, happiness ebbs and flows. Sometimes the many hardships of life can cloud our minds and make it seem impossible to be happy. Happiness is temporary, it fluctuates depending on circumstance, but joy, the joy that we find in the Lord, is permanent. Joy cannot be taken from us. That is not to say that we will never experience sorrow or deep sadness, but I do believe that as Christians, our joy remains through the hard times because our joy is found in the Lord.

In the Southern Hemisphere, the coming of Summer indicates the start of a season of celebration. Working in a school, there is a buzz to this time of year with the end of exams, formals, graduations, end of year parties and farewells. Excitement builds as we get closer and closer to the holidays. When the Christmas season arrives, we celebrate the greatest gift of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. As one we come together across the world to rejoice in the birth of Jesus and the joy we have found in Him through salvation. This celebration does not end when the Christmas tree is packed away, if anything it is made more beautiful in the light of a new year. In welcoming a new year we have so much hope thinking of what the coming months will bring, and I find that this sentiment is echoed through our hope in the Lord and the new life we find through accepting the Lord as our Saviour. When we give our hearts to the Lord, there is so much joy we have in knowing that we have been gifted eternal life with Him.

Whilst Summer is filled with celebrations, it can also be cruel to our brothers and sisters in regional areas and we pray that the weather is kind to those whose livelihood is often impacted in the warmer months. I pray that we all approach the new year with renewed strength, courage, grace, and faith. May God guide you and bless you in 2027.

BETHANY MILLS
EDITOR

Joy to the World



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ROBIN RAY

If you ask a group of people to tell you what joy looks like, I'm sure you would hear a myriad of answers depending on their time of life and their current circumstances. Recently for me, joy was about being with a friend in her sun drenched kitchen with windows on three sides looking out over the valley, and the prospect of later in the day, traveling on the fast train through our amazing Australian countryside. Usually the business of life causes me to fly over this land rather than having the time to appreciate the unfolding gift of creation experienced at ground level.

Another joy that could be described as ground level was the Mothers' Union Worldwide Council. Participating in this meeting in person over a few days rather than the usual late night zoom meeting for a few hours was a wonderful experience. There is something rather special about being with others, having the opportunities for incidental conversation and time to get to know each other. It was a privilege for me to represent Australia, to talk about how we interpret and apply the Affiliation Agreement, the document that enables us to be an active participant in Mothers' Union worldwide. Each Province who had met its obligations and signed the agreement for this triennium was awarded with their Affiliation certificate. (See photo) It was a great time of coming together and celebrating especially considering the difficulties and challenges that some provinces face on a daily basis. I wonder if here in Australia, we really appreciate our lives, or if we take our relationships for granted. Where is the joy in everyday life?

As we once again prepare ourselves for the Christmas season, let's reclaim the joy and the expectation that should be integral to a Christian understanding of Christmas. What does joy look like as you battle the Christmas crowds, struggle to find a parking spot, rack your brain over gifts, or manage the dynamics of Christmas gatherings? Have we lost the real essence, the joy of Advent and Christmas in the consumerism of modern society?

Cont.

As a counter measure to the possible loss of joy, it may be helpful to reflect on the joy expressed by biblical characters in the passages surrounding the advent of both John the Baptist and Jesus' earthly life, as recorded in Luke's gospel. The angel who visited Zachariah and Elizabeth announced 'you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth' (1:14). Later, Mary and her cousin Elizabeth shared the joys of pregnancy together. Elizabeth exclaimed '…at the sound of your greeting…the baby in my womb leaped for joy (1:44).' In the Magnificat, Mary rejoices in God her saviour' (1:47). Additionally, the joy of the shepherds can be extrapolated from verses that describe the haste of their journey to the manger (2:16) and their return 'glorifying and praising God'. Such humble people experienced the joy of this momentous occasion, the new life in the form of the baby Jesus. I often wonder what would have changed for the shepherds as a result of their encounter with the angels and the holy family. Did this new life bringing new possibilities?

I leave you with two questions to ponder.
In what ways might you retain the joy of Christ through the waiting days of Advent and into a worshipful celebration of Jesus' birth?
What new possibilities might arise from your reflection on the gift of Jesus this Christmas?

May the blessings of the Christ child enrich you and your family through this Christmas season and into the New Year.

ROBIN RAY
PRESIDENT





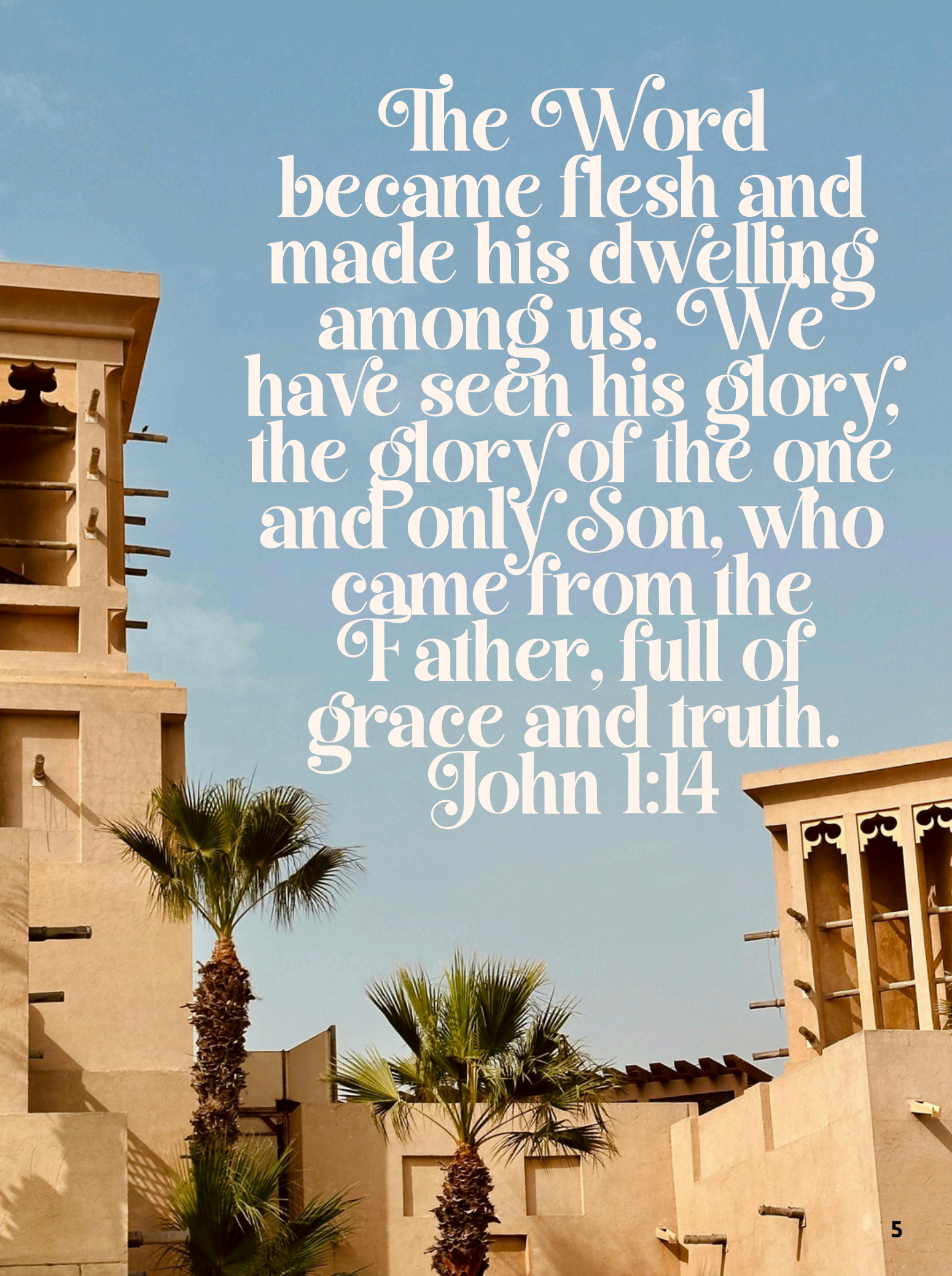

The Word
became flesh and
made his dwelling
among us. We
have seen his glory,
the glory of the one
and only Son, who
came from the
Father, full of
grace and truth.
John 1:14


PHOTO PROVIDED BY WINONA

Meet Winona

WHO IS IN YOUR FAMILY?

My name is Winona and I'm married to my wonderful husband, Matt. Our little girl, Hazel, is 1.5 years old and growing up quickly.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT BEING A MUM?

There are so many things that I love about being a mum. Here are some of the things that, every time they happen, make my heart sing for joy:
Hazel's little arms going around my neck when I give her a hug.
Seeing Hazel's face light up and her uncontainable joy when I appear to pick her up from creche.
When Hazel experiences something for the first time and then turns around with a big smile on her face to see if I'm aware of how good this new thing is.

WHAT DO YOU FIND HARD ABOUT BEING A MUM?

There is an overwhelming amount of information about parenting around us, particularly once the internet knows you have become a parent. I have found it so hard to filter everything coming at me and not feel guilty about decisions I've made because there are always people saying that my particular decision is going to damage my kids for life.

HOW DOES BEING A CHRISTIAN HELP YOU AS A MUM?

I am so thankful for my God who has made me, knows me (and Hazel), and speaks to me. I have been learning that God's Word is sufficient for equipping me to lovingly raise my girl. That I need to listen to him first and pray that by His Spirit I will make parenting decisions that honour God and care for my family. I know that our world is broken and that my decisions will impact Hazel, for good and bad. But I can trust that God will care for my kid, and He will work in her life to grow her and shape her for His glory and her good.

PRAYER FOR FAMILIES IN OUR CHURCHES

We pray for the families of this church and for the children and young people growing up in our fellowship;
We pray you will help our children and young people to grasp the beauty and comfort of your Word and be disillusioned with the world's attractions.
Help the children's and young people's ministries of our church to be excellent.
We pray for those who were brought up to know about you in past years by faithful parents but who do not now acknowledge you as adults.
Bring them back to you.
Help them to remember the things they were taught.
Bring to their mind Scripture.
Show them their need for repentance and to put their hope in you.
In Jesus name, Amen.

Parenting Page

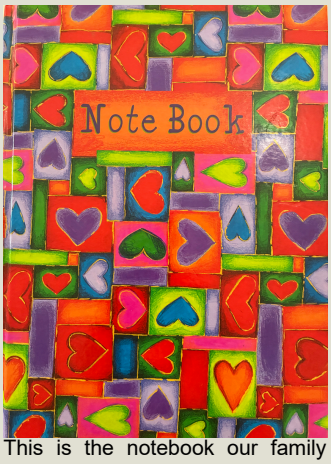
WONDERING HOW TO CELEBRATE NEW YEAR IN A MEANINGFUL WAY WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

Organise a family time in late December/early January where you ask each family member to:

- reflect on the past year and state two things they are thankful for;
- anticipate the year ahead and mention two things they are thinking about for the coming year.

Record what each person says in a journal or hardcover notebook. The following year, read out what everybody said last year, and then record everybody's reflections and anticipations again.

This is a lovely family record of perspectives and preoccupations and you can keep updating it as long as the children are at home or longer if they want to.



This is the notebook our family uses to record our new year reflections each year

PODCAST RECOMMENDATION

The 'Parent Hope Podcast' is produced by Dr Jenny Brown of the Family Systems Institute in conversation with different experts. Many topics including a significant focus on how to deal with anxiety in parents about parenting as well as children's anxiety.



MOTHERS UNION SYDNEY SEMINAR 2027



Access past seminars/recordings of speakers on parenting and family life from the MU Sydney February seminar livestreams
Go to the Mothers Union Sydney website and scroll to the bottom of the Home page and click on the button 'Listen to our past Christian seminars here' that takes you to the list of previous talks.

COLLATED BY ELIZABETH PARKER,
VICE PRESIDENT MU (SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY PARENTING)
VICEPRESIDENTPARENTING@MUAUSTRALIA.ORG.AU

CHOOSING JOY

When we think of Christmas, we often think of joy. We see it in family gatherings, children's excitement, shared meals and treasured traditions.

Yet for many people, Christmas can also be a difficult time. Some face their first Christmas without a loved one. Others experience loneliness, financial pressure, family conflict or uncertainty about the future.

Perhaps that is why joy is such an important Christmas theme.

Joy is not about pretending everything is perfect or ignoring life's challenges. Rather, it is choosing to notice the good, celebrating acts of kindness, and creating opportunities for others to feel valued and included.

Through our Social Issues and Action work, we regularly see both the struggles and the strengths within our communities. We meet people facing significant challenges who continue to show remarkable resilience, generosity and hope. We see neighbours supporting one another, communities rallying around families in need, and volunteers quietly making a difference without seeking recognition.

These actions may seem small, but they are powerful. They remind people they are seen, valued and not forgotten.

Research consistently shows that connection and belonging are essential to wellbeing. A friendly conversation, an invitation to join an activity, a phone call, a visit, or a simple act of kindness can have a lasting impact. Often, the greatest gift we can offer is our time and attention.

As Mothers' Union members, we are uniquely placed to bring joy into the lives of others. Not because we can solve every problem, but because we can help build communities where people feel welcomed, supported and respected.

This Christmas, perhaps joy can be found not only in what we receive, but also in what we give. We can reach out to someone who may be alone, offer practical support where it is needed, choose words that encourage rather than criticise, and make space for those who may feel excluded or forgotten.

Joy grows when it is shared.

As we celebrate Christmas and look towards a new year, let us seek opportunities to bring hope, kindness and connection wherever we are. The simplest acts can mean more than we realise and may have a lasting impact on someone's life.

May this Christmas be filled with moments of joy, both given and received, and may we continue to build communities where everyone is welcomed, valued and given the opportunity to flourish.

KRISTI DAY
SOCIAL ISSUES AND ACTION COORDINATOR



BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS

"*Joy is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away,*
Joy is something if you give it away, it comes right back to you.
It's just like a magic penny, hold on tight and you won't get any,
Lend it, spend it, give it away, and it comes right back to you"

Have you sung these words, or a similar version at Brownies, Girl Guides, or at Sunday School? There are several versions around, a selection of which can be found on YouTube these days. They all give us the same message. Whether it be love, hope, joy or peace, it is in giving that we receive.

We do not always know the personal circumstances of everyone we encounter. We may not know if they are or have been in a situation of adversity. What we can do, irrespective of circumstance, is share some joy with them. If the person is facing a time of adversity, whether through family and domestic violence, or other circumstance, receiving the gift of some joy, freely given, can be a powerful way to be uplifted and supported.

It may be just a smile or a small act of kindness. Giving someone your full attention when you are in their presence may be the one positive interaction they receive that day. Expressing thanks to someone may be the one time someone lets them know that what they do and say is appreciated and has value. Lending a hand, even in a small way, may be the one time that someone feels cared for.

Are you a person who can:

- Sit with someone, or walk alongside them
- Listen to someone's story
- Share a part of your own life journey when appropriate
- Give a compliment
- Celebrate others' successes
- Write a thank you note
- Volunteer
- Host a gathering, big or small

If so, you are a person who can share joy with others.

Sharing joy does not need to be big or grand in its nature. I am reminded once again of the quote engraved on the back of The Cross of Wales, King Charles' coronation cross. It is a quote that I have used in the past to encourage members in my own diocese and it was used during our Worldwide Gathering in Durban by one of the speakers: Etched in Welsh, when translated the words read: "Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things."

Remember, from little things, big things grow. By spreading just a little bit of joy, the effect you have may be the catalyst to something beyond all measure. You have the power to make a difference, to brighten someone's day. Let not your power be wasted, let not this day go by without you being able to offer some joy to others.

Sheela Raja, in concluding her article *Welcoming Joy in times of Uncertainty and Stress* says that, for a person who is facing a time of adveristy: "Finding joy during hard times isn't about pretending everything's OK. It's about allowing small, meaningful moments of light to exist right alongside your pain. Joy is a gentle reminder of your strength, your humanity, and your ability to keep going. Whether it's a quiet comfort or a sudden burst of laughter, joy is always there—sometimes hidden, sometimes fleeting, but always worth welcoming".

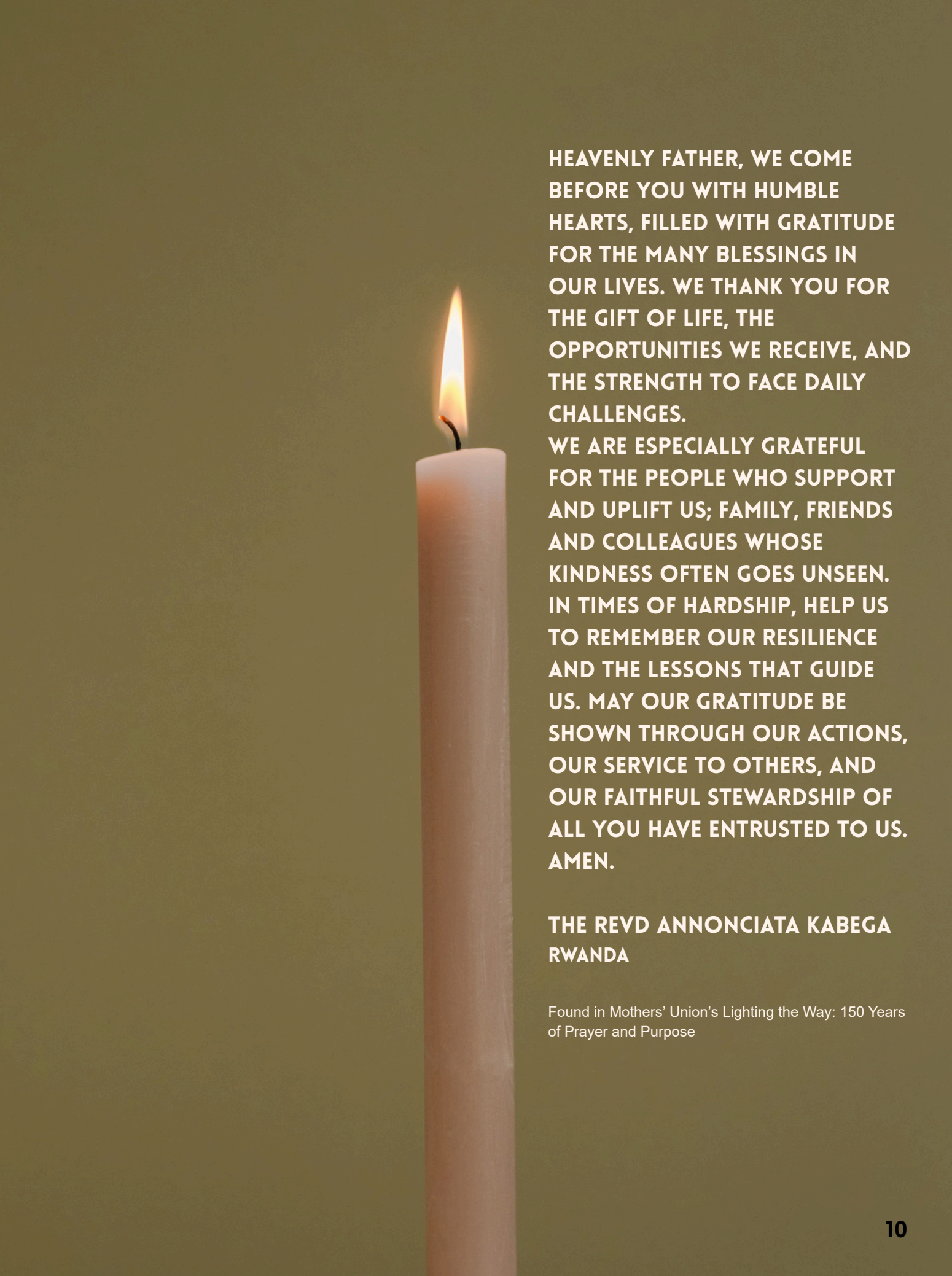
May you be the reason someone finds joy, and may that joy come right back to you.

Blessings

WENDY MABEY

VICE PRESIDENT (DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE)





HEAVENLY FATHER, WE COME BEFORE YOU WITH HUMBLE HEARTS, FILLED WITH GRATITUDE FOR THE MANY BLESSINGS IN OUR LIVES. WE THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE, THE OPPORTUNITIES WE RECEIVE, AND THE STRENGTH TO FACE DAILY CHALLENGES.

WE ARE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL FOR THE PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT AND UPLIFT US; FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES WHOSE KINDNESS OFTEN GOES UNSEEN. IN TIMES OF HARDSHIP, HELP US TO REMEMBER OUR RESILIENCE AND THE LESSONS THAT GUIDE US. MAY OUR GRATITUDE BE SHOWN THROUGH OUR ACTIONS, OUR SERVICE TO OTHERS, AND OUR FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP OF ALL YOU HAVE ENTRUSTED TO US. AMEN.

THE REVD ANNONCIATA KABEGA
RWANDA

Found in Mothers' Union's Lighting the Way: 150 Years of Prayer and Purpose

“I FEEL GREAT JOY”

On a Mothers Union website there is a quote about Making a Global Impact: “Each year over 4 million members around the world touch the lives of more than 750, 000 people”. Kathleen Snow, Worldwide President of Mothers Union in her keynote address at the Durban Conference said, “ We have heard much about listening and walking alongside each other and in our communities, and that is what has made a difference to our communities”. Across the world, Mothers Union has stayed connected by prayer, service, speaking up and standing alongside families and communities.

I’d like to focus on a story as told by Francine from Bisoro Commune in Central Burundi. She is 46 years old, married with 6 children. She described her life as miserable, with no peace in her heart or in her family life. Living in extreme poverty, she had no clothes to go to church and no soap to wash herself. Her house was made of straw and had a roof that leaked which she worried would fall in on them. She was afraid to approach others and felt shame for her circumstances.

She heard from her neighbours of a Mothers Union program that would improve her living situation and decided to join “even if I looked dirty”. The program was a Literacy and Numeracy Circle. In the Circle she learned how to increase her relationship with God, to pray for herself, her children and others, how to manage household activities and how to save money to start a business to earn an income to help her family.

Francine now manages the harvest and understands how to save for her family. She has soap to wash her clothes, and enjoys getting dressed and meeting her friends at church. She has learned how to communicate with her husband, and they have built a new house with tiles on the roof. She has been able to buy a goat to help with family food and finances.

She says, “This program has made me very glad. I feel a great joy…thank you for supporting Mothers Union…this program has made a big difference to my life.”



HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=OIKVSJBQRQQ&T=1S

DIANE THOMSON
OVERSEAS AND NORTHERN OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Joy to the World!

‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, that will be for all the people’ (Luke 2:10). These are the words of the angel to the shepherds when Jesus was born. Christmas is a time for joy.

But not for everyone. There are people who have divided families and who cannot get the family together for the Christmas turkey and pudding. How many mothers are sad? And then we think of people who have died and can no longer be with us. Even when Christmas is great fun, is that the same as joy? Is fun as good as joy? How do we think about joy?

We were once privileged to have a young lady called Joy to live with us for a couple of years. To have her there was both Joy by name and joy by experience! It was a joy to have her with us.

And that reminds me about how joy actually appears.

You see, someone may say to you, ‘Be happy!’, and it is all very well for them to say it, but you can’t switch-on happiness as if it were a light. All the more so when your happiness is elevated to joy. You can’t just be joyful by decision or by trying.

There has to be a reason for joy. It is a spontaneous reaction to something or someone outside of ourselves. I wonder when you have experienced joy. I think it’s like seeing an Australian athlete winning gold at the Olympics; it’s like seeing a child of yours graduate from University; it’s like hearing that an operation has been a complete success; it’s like the bridegroom seeing the bride walking down the aisle.

Do we experience joy as followers of Jesus? Where is the joy? What about the message of the angel? How does that fit? The Bible is filled with talk about, and invitations to experience, joy. Of course it also speaks powerfully to those who suffer pain, sadness and anxiety. But joy abounds. We are even told to rejoice always (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

You may well ask, how can we obey such a command if, as you say, joy is a reaction? The answer is that we must fix our eyes on what will fill us with joy. What the Bible means by the words to ‘rejoice always’ is to rejoice in our Lord and Saviour. And that is what happens. We look at him and we are ‘surprised by joy’.

It is as we gaze at the Lord revealed in the scriptures that we are swept into joy at his glory, his majesty, his goodness, and especially his love. What we know when we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus is that we are loved, and this love will never waver, never falter, never cease, never grow cold. How do we know? Because it was love that brought him into this world as a baby, love that led to Good Friday and Easter Day. It is a love which we experience as prayers are answered, as sins are forgiven, as hope rises in our hearts.

And that leads to one more thing. The picture we often have of heaven is of a rather boring eternal concert. Or, as one lady told me, its going to be like going out and having endless cups of coffee. But the truth is so different. We will indeed spontaneously sing his praises, with hearts full of joy at what we know and when we see that eternal life is all about God’s glory and his love, and when we enter the future he has prepared for us, when we go Home, we will be overwhelmed with delight, happiness and joy as we serve him in his new creation.

No wonder Christmas is all about joy. Let us sing together with all our hearts as we join the angel in declaring the truth about the coming of Jesus:

Joy to the world!

CHRISTINE JENSEN
PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY COORDINATOR



Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:8-9



Joy to the world!
The Lord is come.
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room.

Isaac Watts 1674-1748

Joy to the World is a beloved Christmas carol that lifts our voices to heaven and opens our hearts to God. As I reflected on its words that are so familiar, I wondered about their origin, and discovered an interesting history.

What I learned is that Joy to the World is a poem based on Psalm 98:4-9 and was not originally intended as a Christmas carol. Rather than focusing on Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, it celebrates Christ's coming as King and looks towards his reign over all creation. In 1719, Isaac Watts published the words in his collection The Psalms of David: Imitated in the Language of the New Testament. He gave the poem the title 'The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom'.

More than a century passed before the tune for Joy to the World was arranged by Lowell Mason, who used elements and musical themes from George Frideric Handel's works. Mason named the tune Antioch.

In *Together in Song*, 'Joy to the World' is followed by 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'. Both hymns proclaim the wonder of Christ's coming and invite us to respond with joy and praise.

As we sing the words of this beloved hymn this Christmas, let us pause to reflect on what they mean for us. How do we prepare to receive our king? How do we make room in our hearts for Jesus? These are important questions not only during the Christmas Season, but every day of the year.

I wonder what traditions are that help you to prepare to receive our King. Perhaps Advent helps you hear the Christian story anew. Perhaps you decorate your home, church or community spaces, prepare for family celebrations, or volunteer at a community Christmas lunch. Whatever our preparations, it is important not to lose sight of Jesus, the one we celebrate and prepare to receive.

Making room for Jesus does not necessarily require grand gestures. It may begin with taking time to pray, offering a listening ear to someone who is lonely, encouraging a family facing difficulties, or showing kindness to someone who feels forgotten. It might be as simple as giving away a smile to someone we pass by. Through these simple acts of love, we can reflect the joy of Christ to those around us.

As members of Mothers Union, we are called to put our faith into action, supporting families, nurturing relationships, and sharing God's love in our communities. Each act of compassion becomes an opportunity to make Christ known and to help bring His hope and peace into the world.

The invitation of Joy to the World is not confined to Christmas Day. As we welcome Him into our hearts, may His joy shape our words, guide our actions and strengthen our service to others.

May we not only sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come," but live in such a way that others may discover that joy through us. May joy be the gift you give and the gift you receive this Christmas and every day of the year!

May the blessings of that first Christmas be yours this Christmas, and may the joy of Christ remain with you throughout the year.

REVEREND NICOLE
NATIONAL AND NEWCASTLE CHAPLAIN

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SHARING THE JOY

'concerning my dear mother – she was the angel of the house - She gave herself up in heart and life to the service of Jesus Christ, and her teaching and example made a lasting impression upon her husband and children'. **Mary Sumner**

Our parish responded to the call to be involved in Joy26+ initiatives within our diocese with a program launched in mid-August this year with the following invitation from our deacon, Rev Michelle:

"As part of Sharing the Joy, we are inviting parishioners to share something of their journey with Jesus. At the back of the church you will find a display board, together with cards on which you may write your testimony—anonymously, if you wish.

The card includes three simple questions:

• Who first told you about Jesus?

• What did they say or do?

• What difference has faith in Jesus made in your life?

When you have written your response, you are welcome to place it on the board for others to read. The board and all contributions will be kept under regular pastoral review.

Our hope is that, as we share our stories, we will reflect more deeply on our own journey with Christ, encourage one another in faith, and help others see the ways God touches and transforms our lives."

The testimony cards state that the "project supports to diocesan Joy26 strategy by helping people share the hope and joy of Jesus Christ through proclamation. It offers a practical and easy way to encourage Gospel conversation through personal witness and sharing in faith."

The testimonies are there in the church for all to read and each week one Rev Michelle selects one to be shared through our weekly bulletin. This special project will end during the third week of Advent, when we will celebrate Joy in our parish with the viewing of a video of some of the testimonies.

Of the testimonies shared to date, overwhelmingly the answer to the first question 'Who first told you about Jesus?' has been 'My Mum'. There have been a few Sunday School teachers mentioned, a teacher, a best friend, a grandmother. Some responses identified parents and home, but without a doubt the biggest influence on the lives of our parishioners in their early journey to faith was their mother.

Here is just one parishioner's responses:

Who first told you about Jesus?

My mum. I was 3.

What did they say or do?

She told me about God and how he made everything. The trees, the flowers and me. She said "some people believe in Him and some people don't "

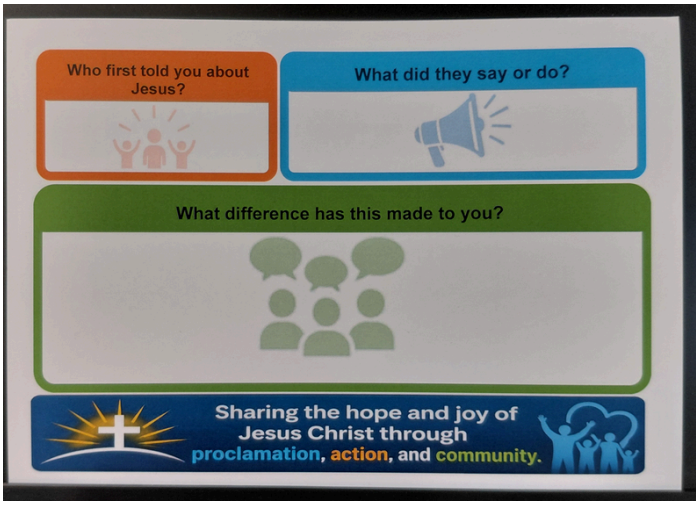
What difference has this made to you?

When mum told me about God, I remembered Him. I thought "oh yeah, I know Him." I was confused as to why some people wouldn't believe in Him. Remembering this, even as a young child, has brought me a lot of comfort over the years. No matter what has happened or what mistakes I've made, it has remained true.

Mary Sumner believed in the motto 'be yourself whatever you would have your child be' and she forever valued the time spent with her own mother learning to know and love God.

May we all share the joy of Jesus Christ through proclamation and action with the children who are in our lives.

WENDY MABEY



BROTHER, SISTER, LET ME SERVE YOU
A FRANCISCAN REFLECTION ON HUMILITY, AND THE JOY IT BRINGS, FOR CHRISTMAS

Fr Daniel Hobbs tssf

Christmas has a way of returning us to the essentials. Beneath the carols and the wrapping paper sits an extraordinary claim: that God chose to be born as a baby, in poverty, among animals, to a young, unmarried mother far from home. For the followers of St Francis of Assisi, this is not a charming detail of the Christmas story. It's the whole thing!

The spiritual vision of Francis rests on two theological claims. Firstly, the humility of the incarnation. Secondly, the love of the passion. Eight hundred years on, these two convictions remain the beating heart of Franciscan theology, spirituality and practice. Between them, they hold the whole shape of the Christian life: God born low, and God dying low, both for love of us. And, as this edition of Mia Mia is themed around joy, it seems worth saying at the outset where that joy actually comes from: not from good circumstances, but from the humility of the incarnation itself.

The first ever biography of Francis was written by a fellow friar who knew him and had lived and ministered alongside him, Thomas of Celano. In The Life of St Francis, written in 1229, Thomas recalled that Francis "used to recall with regular meditation the word of Christ and recollect His deeds with the most attentive perception. Indeed, so thoroughly did the humility of the incarnation and the love of the passion occupy his memory that he scarcely wanted to think of anything else."

Thomas' book, still readily available today, is structured in two parts that mirror those same two themes: Book One centres on the humility of the incarnation; Book Two recounts the love of the passion, and how Francis sought to live that love out in his daily life of prayer and service. This Christmas, it's the first of those themes that we might sit with most closely, because Advent and Christmas are really nothing other than that mystery, told and retold: the humility of God, made flesh.

The Humility of the Incarnation

There are literally thousands of books written on the incarnation of God in Christ, in every language and culture you can think of. In the life of the Western Church, first Roman Catholic and then, from the sixteenth century, various expressions of Protestantism, these books have tended to explore Jesus by focusing on his divinity, his sovereignty, his power, majesty and magnificence. This Christology - study of Christ - deliberately emphasises the greatness and glory of Jesus. It stresses the role of the Resurrection, the Ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Through this particular lens, we come to a particular understanding of the purpose of Jesus: this Jesus is exalted, raised up, held on high. Think of the hymn To God Be The Glory.

Cont.

For Francis, it's not the Resurrection that offers this lens, but rather the incarnation. The Resurrection is, of course, an integral and indispensable moment in the Christ event, but for Francis it's not the primary focus. For Francis, the incarnation - and specifically the humility of the incarnation - is what best sums up the purpose of Jesus. This Jesus is brother, neighbour, beside us in the trenches. Think of the hymn Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You.

It is for this reason that Francis created the first Christmas Nativity, in 1223. In Franciscan theology, Christmas is the beating heart of God, because at Christmas we celebrate the incarnation, the birth of God in Jesus. This is the seminal moment in the whole Christ event.

What did that first Christmas actually look like? How did it play out? The Scriptures reveal that Jesus was born in a stable, cradled in a feed trough, surrounded by animals and their mess, to young parents with no possessions or wealth, who were themselves refugees fleeing persecution: alone, hungry, homeless and stateless.

How might one explain that moment, when God, the creator of the entire universe, voluntarily becomes an infant child in the most vulnerable of circumstances? Why would God do that? For Francis, the answer is humility. In that very first Nativity, Francis celebrated the humility of God, the poverty of God, the homelessness of God: the humility of the incarnation. This makes God in Jesus deeply human, relatable and accessible, and it means that the Christian life is, at heart, a deeply human experience lived in relationship with God.

This, too, is why the Virgin Mary is so reverenced by Franciscans. Mary is the Mother of Jesus, an unwed teenager, of no social standing in her time, who sought no personal glory in her election as the Mother of Christ, and who, at the end, stood at the foot of the Cross.

The maternity ward into which Jesus was born was no place for a newborn. Nor were his first visitors reflective of a King, a Lord, of God. He was not visited by knights or kings or the Emperor, nor even by any Jewish leader or official group, but by shepherds and magi. Most Jewish people of the time despised or looked down on shepherds; they represented nobody of importance. And the Gospel tells us the magi were not even Jewish; they were known as goyim, pagans or foreigners. God was born in Bethlehem with absolutely no official recognition of the pregnancy or the birth.



Why did God humble God's self to be with us? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). "And this is eternal life," the Gospel of John continues, "that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

The Gospel of John reaches for the inexhaustible depth and breadth, width and height of God's love - a love that precedes even our beginning: "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

Cont.

God breathed God's own Spirit into us. God breathed God's Spirit into the earth itself, to bring it into living being. Genesis 1, "God created and it was good," comes before Genesis 3, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Love came first. Then humans made a choice. This is why Franciscans hold that creation is "the first Bible": because creation came before Scripture, and because creation reveals the holiness of God just as surely as the sacred stories of Scripture do.

Hence all creation, from the very beginning, is animated earth: animated, living, by the Holy Spirit, imbued with and revealing, by its very existence, the indwelling, eternal love of God. Creator becomes creature. Brother Sun, Sister Moon; Brother Wind, Sister Fire; Brother Leper, Sister Widow. All things, simply by being, reveal something of the indwelling holiness of God: all people, all faiths, all cultures, the whole earth.

The Church, and all who seek to imitate Christ, are at their best when they reflect this same humility: when they travel lightly, love divinely, and serve without exception.

The Joy That Follows

Franciscans have long spoken of three qualities, three "notes," that mark a life shaped by this vision: humility, love and joy. They are formalised today in the Rule of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis, the worldwide community of vowed, non-monastic Franciscans of which I am a Professed Tertiary. But they are not three separate achievements, to be worked at one after another. They rise out of each other. Humility comes first, because it is the ground of everything else: we have nothing, and are nothing, that we have not received as sheer gift, most of all in the gift of Christ's own poverty at Bethlehem. Love follows, because once we know ourselves loved without condition, we are set free to love others the same way, expecting nothing back. And joy comes third, not as decoration on top of the other two, but as their fruit, and their proof.

This is not the joy of good circumstances. It is not the same thing as cheerfulness, and it is not dependent on a year having gone well. The joy that Francis knew, and that the Society of St Francis still seeks to live and profess, is a joy that has already reckoned honestly with weakness, sickness, disappointment and grief, and has found God present in the middle of all of it regardless. It is the joy of someone who has nothing left to protect, because they have already given everything away. That is precisely the joy of the manger: a God who has emptied himself of every possession, every comfort, every claim to status and safety, and who is, in that very emptying, somehow more joyful, not less.

This is why the humility of the incarnation does not lead to a subdued, apologetic Christianity, forever protesting how unworthy we are. Quite the opposite. It leads to an enormous and enduring joy: a joy available in hardship as much as in comfort, precisely because it was never dependent on comfort to begin with.

Cont.

It is, perhaps, no accident that a magazine for Christian mothers, carers and households should choose joy as its theme this Christmas. The home, like the manger, is one of those ordinary, unglamorous, humble places where God's joy tends to hide out, waiting to be noticed.

For Francis, this is only half of the mystery. The humility of the incarnation finds its full and costly expression in the love of the passion — the Cross of Christ — where that same self-emptying love is poured out completely, to the very end. That is a reflection for another season, closer to Easter. But at Christmas, it is enough to sit with the first half of the story: that God, needing nothing, chose need; that God, owning everything, chose to own nothing; that God, robed in glory, chose the rags of a stable.

Perhaps that is part of why Mia Mia is such a fitting name for this magazine. A mia mia, the traditional shelter built by Aboriginal peoples across this land - simple, temporary, made from whatever was close at hand - is not so very different from the stable at Bethlehem. God did not wait for a palace to be built. God was content with a shelter, and with whoever happened to be standing nearby. If our own homes, however ordinary, however full or however quiet this Christmas, can become places where that same love is sheltered and grown, then we are doing exactly what Francis asked of us: being brother and sister to the God who first became brother and sister to us.

This Christmas may your homes be that kind of shelter. Wishing you and your loved ones a Christmas full of humility, full of love, and, following on from both, full of deep joy.

Fr Daniel Hobbs tssf

Fr Dan is an Anglican Priest and Professed Franciscan. A member of Mothers Union since 2017 (Cleveland Branch), Fr Dan has served in the East Redland and Manly parishes and is presently a biocational priest serving in both an ordained ministry (St John's Cathedral and St Peter's Wynnum) in the Brisbane Diocese and a secular role as Partner and Associate Director at Brisbane government and media relations firm The SAS Group where he heads up SAS Impact, a division of the business specialising in social impact in the care economy.

MOTHERS' UNION 150TH ANNIVERSARY WORLDWIDE GATHERING









PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SUE MILWRIGHT

PROMOTIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Attending the Worldwide Gathering, celebrating 150 years of MU, was outstanding in so many ways. What took me by surprise most was the overwhelming emotion I felt when we all sang together! I had never felt the Holy Spirit so fiercely and strongly, weaving amongst us, bonding us together.

Arriving home and falling straight into Synod the next day left me feeling that my feet had not touched the ground. Being in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, that first night for the service before Synod commenced, being one of all the voices singing out strongly, I felt the bond of the Holy Spirit once more.

In the space of 2 weeks, I had two totally different experiences connected by one act, the power of worshipping our Lord, binding us together, no matter where we are, what we do.

"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Psalm 100:1–2

The trip over to, and back from, the conference presented many natural opportunities to speak of MU. Conversations easily started as we waited in queues, or when we were having coffee. Fellow travellers would ask "where are you going?", "what will you be doing?". We were, in those brief minutes, able to engage people and 'show the face of MU', not just with words, but with our enthusiasm, and witnessing our faith.

Whilst I tend to view Church as a 'captive audience', when promoting MU, I am often surprised about the different 'spin' that can be put on Mothers Union's aims and mission/ministry. On one hand it feels more of a challenge talking to people that I feel should already be open, and know about MU, on the other I am spurred on more passionately to 'raise the face' of MU.

Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, promoting MU starts with being visible, starting conversations with people, being enthusiastic about our beliefs and mission.

Wear your MU badges, read MU material on public transport, have a short 'spiel' of MU ready when someone asks who MU is/what we do. We never know where the seed falls. A word, an action may be all it takes for someone to reach out, ask for more information.

God is Good, All the Time.

KAREN HAYDEN
PROMOTIONS COMMUNICATIONS CO-ORDINATOR



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KAREN HAYDEN

REFLECTIONS ON WORLDWIDE GATHERING

In late September, 16 MU Australia members boarded international flights from Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane to fly to Durban, South Africa for the Worldwide Gathering. Two thousand members of MU from across the world met to celebrate, experience and learn. The members from various African communities certainly brought rousing singing and colourful uniforms, often different ones each day (we Australians just changed the colour of our two shirts).
The theme of the Gathering was 'Lightning the way for future generations'.

Every day the Gathering included some type of worship with liturgy in English and a variety of African languages. This challenged those of us who are monolingual to gain some appreciation for non English speakers or those for whom English is perhaps their 3rd or 4th language. Sometimes I think we take our universal use of English as a right, not fully appreciating the challenges that language can create.





PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SUE MILWRIGHT

DAY 1

In her opening keynote address, the Worldwide President, Kathleen Snow called us to rise and shine, to let God's glory shine in us, to recognize God's faithfulness and look ahead with hope. She said that our mission is still as vital today as it was 150 years ago: responding to the needs of families and communities as society changes around them.

Kathleen took me back to childhood when she adopted the song 'Rise and shine and give God the glory glory' complete with actions. This was her go to song any time she was on stage and a fun way to get everyone going.

Over the course of 3 days various guest speakers and discussion panels inwardly nurtured us to explore and equip our MU ministry with families.
The focus of the first day was Gathering the worldwide family. The Bishop of Natal urged us not to retreat into religious havens, but to go out into the darkness of society. To recognize that all are made in the image of God, our job is to change lives without discrimination.

DAY 2

The focus was the next generation: flourishing faith for the future. We heard from two young African MU leaders who talked about the need to be mentored, and being included from the beginning of their membership as well as offering some useful strategies.
Bishop Diseko urged us to never give up, pointing out that God's timing is always perfect, but we should be ready to respond. He described MU members as prayer warriors.
Two panel sessions followed - first on what the family looks like now from a variety perspectives. The second panel discussed raising children of faith - How do we nurture the next generation spiritually when culture pulls every other way? I was asked to present the current research as my contribution to this session.
Panel sessions were followed by time for reflection and questions.

DAY 3

Living out the faith: empowering communities and families. Bishop Dibo from Cameroon emphasized MU's role as the hands and feet of Christ, needing to stand strong.

The keynote address delivered by Bishop Dr Vicentia Kgabe was inspirational. In her vibrant style she spoke about the church as an agent for justice. '...hands that are folded in prayer must...be unfolded for service. Knees on which we pray must...straighten so we can stand for justice.' Bishop Vicentia described four stages of intervention. The first is charity. Charity is about giving or supplying something to meet a need. Providing food for the hungry is charity. Justice asks why are these people in need of feeding and what can we do about their hunger/poverty? Justice should be followed by Transformation, effecting change, asking what does that change looks like?

Alongside charity, justice and transformation, is Discipleship. Evangelism and justice must go hand in hand. Jesus taught the faith, but he also over turned the tables, was not afraid to challenge the scribes and Pharisees and respected women. Discipleship calls for holy disturbance - not disturbance for its own sake but to bring about change.

Panels on Day 3 addressed first the family in crisis: presentations and discussion included the worldwide problems of domestic abuse, addiction/poverty, hidden suffering. The next panel - families under pressure, addressed displacement, migration, climate change, fragmentation. All quite challenging topics in their own right.

Towards the end of day 3 we were handed commitment cards where we were asked to take time to pray and commit to actions we would take as a result of the internal nurturing experienced over the three days.

DAY 4 CELEBRATING GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP: ONE WORLD IN CHRIST.

The final keynote delivered by Kathleen Snow was titled 'The future belongs to the faithful - Hope, Courage and MU's next 150 years.

Closing Eucharist 'Go light the way' was celebrated by The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally in Mothers Union vestments given by the Diocese of Johannesburg. The Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town, and 8 other diocesan bishops attended. The Archbishop took Luke 10:23 Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, as her text, challenging us to rest in the experience of the Gathering, but open our eyes to the needs around us and what God might do in the future. 'To what purpose will the Holy Spirit lead us? Take courage and act, build on the work of this movement, shaped by God and the Holy Spirit.'

When reflecting on the outcomes of the Worldwide Gathering and its value for us here in Australia, our thinking was broadened and we took away much to apply to our theme for this triennium - 'Encouraging families through faith in action'. Engaging more deeply with these family focused topics equipped delegates with ways to be outwardly focused taking MU's ministry forward and enabling MU to continue to evolve to meet changing need- we are a movement. To quote Jeremiah God gives us a future with hope. Remember MU members are prayer warriors, prayer is the basis of all we do. So, if we are to 'Light the way for future generations', what needs to happen to reshape or expand the ministry of MU in your diocese?

ROBIN RAY

DURBAN 150 YEAR CELEBRATION

What a wonderful celebration we had. Joining with nearly 2000 other members to celebrate that great milestone of 150 years of Mothers Union.

The whole time it was noisy, colourful and delightful. We were entertained by the African ladies who never missed an opportunity to sing and to dance. We had incredible guest speakers and wonderful worship.

We were advised to arise, shine, get up and glow, going out in hope for the next 150 years. Mothers Union is a way of life and a movement not an organisation. The church responds to people in need, but MU is practical Christianity. We must cause a holy disturbance in the future. We must continue to look after people in need but must ask why it keeps happening, we must ask what has to change so the same problem doesn't happen tomorrow and the next day. We must keep on empowering women, which makes for thriving safe families and communities who can move out of hardship and free from gender based violence and injustice.

We need a future built on God's faithfulness, built on courage and openness and a future that belongs to everyone. Mothers Union started with prayer and will continue in prayer.

We care for the widows, orphans, and foreigners but we must also care for the earth and prepare for disasters. We must light the way for generations to come.

We were so privileged that the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally came and celebrated at our final Eucharist, and she said that she gives thanks to the Holy Spirit that has transformed all of us. That we have the courage to step out in faith to do what we all do. Where is God calling us – where will the spirit lead us in the future?

I know that we all had a wonderful time and were incredibly grateful for the experience and fellowship that we enjoyed during the few days that we were there.

SUE MILWRIGHT
SECRETARY



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SUE MILWRIGHT



WORLDWIDE GATHERING

6 Days in Durban, 4 Days at our Worldwide Gathering marking 150 years of Mothers Union. 2000 people from 45 countries. 17 Australians, 4 others from our zone.

We sang, we danced, we worshipped, we shared fellowship and experiences, and we listened. We listened to an Archbishop, several bishops, our Worldwide President, and to members from around the world who shared their experiences, their knowledge and their thoughts.

The theme of the gathering was 'Lighting the way for generations to come'. We acknowledged the history of our movement, and it was emphasised that we are a movement, not an organisation. We gave thanks for the vision and the dedication of Mary Sumner. But we did not dwell in the past. Our focus was on our lived experience in the here and now and on the future – what we can be.

The panel discussions on our first full day gave us the opportunity to listen to voices of young members, to hear a conversation about what a family looks like now, and the challenges of raising children of faith. It was interesting to note that rather than blood families, those we are born into, people are finding their place and spending their time in chosen families.

A second set of panel discussions on the following day focused on the crises in our homes with domestic abuse, poverty, addictions and the hidden suffering inside family life all being discussed. A panel on 'Families Under Pressure' explored the impact of climate change, migration, displacement and the fragmentation of family life across the globe.

The Archbishop we listened to was the Most Reverend Sarah Mallully, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who celebrated our final Eucharist. I was blessed to be one of those close enough to line the processional path at the beginning of the service and at the end, and to take communion from the Archbishop. It was a surprisingly moving experience to be able to do so.

We also listened to the Bishop of Natal and the Bishop of Cameroon when they led daily worship services. We were given a keynote address from The Right Rev Dr. Vincentia Kgabe, Bishop of Pretoria who spoke on 'The church as an agent of Justice, From Charity to Transformation'.

On the Thursday of our gathering a number of women, many African, wore black as a part of the 'Thursdays in Black' campaign. I, and many others, learnt about it for the first time at our gathering in Durban. 'Thursdays in Black' grew out of the Worldwide Council of Churches' Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), in which stories of rape as a weapon of war, gender injustice, abuse and violence, became much more visible. It has been taken up by many of the national council of churches in nations around the world and is endorsed by churches here in Australia. The campaign is simple but profound:

Wear black on Thursdays.

Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence.

Show your respect for those who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence.

Encourage others to join you.

There is much to be shared from the Gathering. I hope over time that those of us who were present are able to have the opportunity to do so.

Blessings,

WENDY MABEY

VICE PRESIDENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)



CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF MOTHERS' UNION IN DURBAN

I was delighted and truly blessed to have the opportunity to travel to Durban, South Africa, for the Mothers' Union's 150th anniversary celebrations.

One of the things that struck me most was how many of the challenges faced by people in other countries are similar to those we experience in Australia. While our circumstances may differ, particularly in regions affected by conflict and instability, the concerns surrounding families, parenting, and building strong communities are shared across the world.

The celebration was filled with fellowship, worship, learning, and encouragement. Delegates gathered from many countries to discuss issues such as parenting in today's changing world, gender-based violence, and strengthening family life through faith and practical support.

My favourite part of the event was experiencing the vibrant African singing and dancing. The energy, joy, and enthusiasm were infectious, and it was impossible not to be moved by the spirit of celebration. I was also fascinated by the colourful and distinctive Mothers' Union uniforms worn by members from different countries, each reflecting their unique culture and identity.

A highlight for me was hearing The Rt Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe speak. Her passion, enthusiasm, and insights into the role of women within the Anglican Church were both encouraging and inspiring. She challenged and motivated those present to continue serving with faith, courage, and hope.

I returned home grateful for the opportunity, inspired by the global Mothers' Union family, and reminded that together we can make a positive difference in the lives of women, children, and families.

KRISTI DAY



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KRISTI DAY

150TH WORLDWIDE GATHERING IN DURBAN SOUTH AFRICA

Each time I am asked to reflect on my experience of the 150th Worldwide Gathering of Mothers' Union in Durban, South Africa, I feel inspired and encouraged all over again.

One of the questions I am asked most often is, "What was the best part?" It is such a difficult question to answer because the whole experience was so extraordinary, and there are so many special moments that I find it impossible to choose just one.

From the moment I connected in Singapore with some of the other Australian delegates, I began to experience the wonderful sense of connection that is such a special part of Mothers' Union. When we arrived in Johannesburg we were recognised as Mothers' Union members. While waiting for our connecting flights, we spent time with ladies from the Diocese of Johannesburg, whose joyful singing continued even as they moved to another departure gate!

That same joy, expressed through singing and movement, was very much part of our arrival at the International Convention Centre in Durban. Each day we were warmly welcomed and throughout the day we were immersed in the rich culture and hospitality of South Africa.

Watching a man creating sand sculptures for Mothers' Union on the beach was a truly memorable experience. His creativity and attention to detail, ensuring that the Mothers' Union logo was accurately represented, were wonderful to witness. As he worked, we had the opportunity to talk with him about Mothers' Union and the breadth of our ministry to families across the world. It was a special moment of sharing, as our presence on the beach became an opportunity to tell the story of Mothers' Union and the difference we seek to make in the lives of families and communities worldwide.

There were also the special opportunities to meet our Worldwide President, Kathleen Snow, to see the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, preside at Communion during our closing service, and to spend precious time with our fellow Australian delegates. Meeting people from all around the world, each bringing their own stories, experiences and perspectives, was a wonderful reminder of the breadth and diversity of our worldwide fellowship.

Perhaps, when I think about it, my favourite memory is not one particular moment, but the overwhelming sense of belonging to something much bigger than me. The gathering reinforced for me that Mothers' Union is a worldwide family, connected through faith, prayer, fellowship and a shared desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

I returned home feeling encouraged and inspired, deeply grateful to have been part of such a significant celebration. The friendships, shared experiences and renewed sense of purpose will stay with me, reminding me that wherever we are in the world, we belong to a family united in faith and service.

Blessings
REVEREND NICOLE
NEWCASTLE AND AUSTRALIAN CHAPLAIN





PHOTOS PROVIDED BY REV NICOLE



Around the Dioceses

FROM BENDIGO TO BUNBURY – A GIFT

Our Mothers' Union meeting in spring held an event that we did not expect. A complete surprise. It became a special moment for us all.

We had been celebrating all that God had done through us over the year. He is faithful indeed. Our Diocesan President, Jennifer, had been to the MU International Conference in Durban to celebrate 150 years of Mothers' Union around the world. Jennifer encouraged and inspired us as she shared news from around the world of God's mission through Mothers' Union. Her stories and conversations brought a whole new perspective to our work. Jennifer reminded us of God's faithfulness to his children especially in Africa where poverty is so entrenched in many communities.

During our fellowship lunch, one member, Rachael Brain shared a little of how God was calling her and Bishop Matt to serve in the Diocese of Bunbury. We thanked Rachael and Bishop Matt for their support of the mission of Mothers' Union in Bendigo diocese. We shall miss them both. We give God our very best and so give Bunbury Diocese our very best gift of the Brain family.

REVD. PETER DYKE. DIOCESAN TREASURER



Photo by Leonie Strauch and supplied by Peter Dyke. Stunning red roses are from Jenny's garden.

From left to right
Jennifer Devlin, Diocesan President; Jenny Rainsford, Diocesan Vice-President; Rachael Brain; Peter Dyke, Diocesan Treasurer and Revd. Hannah Gregory, Diocesan Chaplain.



BATEAU BAY AND THE ENTRANCE

Members of the combined Bateau Bay and The Entrance branches recently invited fellow parishioners to a Winter Warmer Lunch, where we would be joined by two very special individuals who spoke on the heartbreaking issues surrounding 'Family and Domestic Violence.'

Our gathering, as always, began with prayers and worship, before member Marilyn Derbyshire invited our first speaker, a woman who is both a victim and a survivor of domestic abuse, to share with us her very own very confronting as well as courageous account of surviving many years of abuse.

Thank God for those who are willing to share their stories and whose faith has been a safe harbour through terrible times.

Our second speaker, one of the managers of Coast Shelter in our Community, whose organisation deals with many victims; spoke to us about the women and children who flee violent relationships and homes, and those her organisation accommodates before resettling them into a safer environment.

Thank God for those who are willing to share their stories and whose faith has been a safe harbour through terrible times as well as those whose work is to help others and to make the community a better place.

After the meeting, and with much to discuss, as well as give thanks for, members and visitors shared a delicious lunch provided by many.

Members are very grateful to our speakers for coming along, to those who attended and especially to Marilyn, firstly for suggesting we tackle what can be a very difficult subject, and the wonderful way she organised the entire day.

REV'D KATHY DUNSTAN

*Names of our generous speakers are not included for privacy reasons.

CLOTHING GIVEAWAY

The Mackay and District Mothers' Union Branch recently partnered with the Faith in Action Op Shop to host a free clothing giveaway for members of our local community.

The idea was simple. The Op Shop had a large quantity of excellent-quality clothing that had not sold and was surplus to current needs. Rather than seeing these items go to landfill, we worked together to give them a second life and place them into the hands of people who could use them.

While the event was not as busy as we had hoped, due in part to limited promotion and a particularly busy weekend across the district, it was still a wonderful example of community collaboration, stewardship, and generosity in action.

The day highlighted the importance of working together to care for both people and our environment. Every item of clothing shared represented an opportunity to reduce waste while helping others access quality clothing at no cost.

We are already looking forward to building on this year's experience and hope to make the giveaway an even bigger success next year.

A heartfelt thank you goes to the dedicated volunteers from the Faith in Action Op Shop and the members of Mothers' Union whose time, energy, and enthusiasm made the event possible. Their willingness to serve others is a wonderful reminder that even small acts of kindness can make a meaningful difference in our community.

Together, we are helping create a more caring, sustainable, and connected Mackay.

KRISTI DAY





PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KRISTI DAY

THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2026 MEETING

by Faye Rowe, Elizabeth Pratten and Peter Pratten (AM)

Morning Prayer was held in the Church Hall and led by Judith Nichols. Rachel Lowry read the Epistle from Colossians 4:7–18, which Paul wrote while imprisoned and awaiting execution. Judith reflected that Paul was entrusting specific tasks to each of his companions; Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nympha and Archippus, so that the ministry of Christ would continue and grow even in his absence. She encouraged us to follow their example of faithful, shared service. This was a very inspiring message.

Paul also directed that the letter be read in the church of the Laodiceans, and that the Colossians in turn read the letter coming from Laodicea, so that the churches might mutually encourage one another and keep the gospel circulating among them.

After the service we enjoyed morning tea and fellowship, including a special Happy Birthday rendition for Deierdre Nicholson. We did not proceed with our planned workshop, “Telling Your Faith Story”, because President Faye Rowe invited Elizabeth Pratten to give an overview of her meeting with Anastacia Msosa, President of the Mothers’ Union in Mozambique and Angola. The account was so enthralling that time simply ran out.

On Monday 28th September 2026 a dinner was arranged for the Archbishop of Mozambique and Angola, Vicente Msosa, and his wife Anastacia. They were making a one-night stopover in Perth on their way home after visiting the Sydney Diocese, sponsored by Anglican Aid.
Sixty evangelical Anglicans heard of the desperate need for more trained pastors to shepherd the large numbers of people turning to Christ in Mozambique and Angola. Archbishop Vicente serves more than one million Anglicans across the two countries. God’s love is being shown in practical ways through Anglican Aid, which provides clean water wells and sanitary toilets in these extremely poor former Portuguese territories. The great challenge remains widespread illiteracy, so Bible audio devices are widely used.

The Archbishop described how the gospel is shared: Christian aid workers first build simple shelters and toilets. Trucks then move into the settlement playing Christian music to draw a crowd; the gospel is proclaimed and people are invited to Bible study. From among the committed converts, ten are chosen to share the message with twelve others. As the numbers grow to around one hundred believers in an area, a simple church structure is built, with one pastor serving approximately forty churches.

Cont.





PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FAYE ROWE

This echoes the pattern we heard in the Colossians reading: God's word advances as people go forward and tell others. In Mozambique, when someone becomes interested in the gospel they are asked to bring ten others to the next Bible study; those ten then invite others, and the circle of believers expands.

Anastacia, as President of the Anglican Mothers' Union in Mozambique and Angola, carries an enormously important responsibility in alleviating suffering amid high illiteracy and very high maternal and infant mortality. Pastors' wives are trained in primary care and in the objectives of the Mothers' Union. We were deeply struck by the women's plight: girls as young as fourteen are regarded as marriageable (though most children are born outside wedlock), many women die in childbirth, and the infant mortality rate remains very high. Daily life for the women often involves digging holes to collect muddy water, then waiting for it to settle so the clearer water can be used for drinking.

What must also be noted is the remarkable bravery of these believers. In turning to Christianity, they face pressure from a large Muslim presence in the north and from active tribalism spilling over from Congo and neighbouring countries. Their lives are at risk daily as they lead people who live in abject poverty.

A further encouraging update has since come from Canon Tim Swan, Director of Anglican Aid. The key need now identified in Mozambique is for a Bible college, particularly as the government looks to crack down on churches run by unqualified pastors. Conversations are already under way with churches and individuals interested in supporting such a project. Michael Charles from the Anglican Aid team is working with Archbishop Vicente on this venture, and Michael Charles and Judith Calf plan to visit Mozambique in February. We look forward to further news as this develops.

All practical help is best channelled through Sydney-based Anglican Aid.

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"Tell Archippus: 'See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." Colossians 4:17

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the faithful companions, Paul named in Colossians, each given a part to play so that the gospel would continue. We pray for Archbishop Vicente, Anastacia and all the pastors, pastors' wives and Mothers' Union members in Mozambique and Angola. Strengthen them as they share your word, care for the vulnerable, and show your love in practical ways. Bless the plans for a Bible college, protect all who serve amid danger, and prosper the work of Anglican Aid. Help us to support them with our prayers and gifts, that many more may come to know Christ and stand firm in Him. Amen.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY FAYE ROWE

FINDING JOY AROUND THE BREAKFAST TABLE

When people hear about our Saturday Morning Breakfast at Holy Trinity Parish Hall, they often think it is simply about providing a meal. While a hot breakfast is certainly appreciated, those who gather each week know that something much more important is being shared.

Each Saturday morning, volunteers welcome up to 40 guests for bacon and eggs, toast, cereal, yoghurt, fresh fruit, tea, coffee and juice. For many, however, the greatest gift is not the food but the opportunity to be known, valued and welcomed.

As members of Mothers' Union, we are called to demonstrate God's love in practical ways, supporting families and communities and upholding the dignity of every person. The breakfast ministry provides a wonderful opportunity to put that calling into action. Around the tables, friendships are formed, stories are shared, and people discover that they belong.

There is great joy in witnessing the transformation that takes place over time. Many people first arrive quietly, uncertain and often carrying the weight of difficult circumstances. Weeks and months later, they walk through the doors smiling, greeting friends, and looking forward to the fellowship that awaits them. We have celebrated people securing accommodation, reconnecting with family, finding meaningful employment, and taking positive steps towards a brighter future.

We are grateful for the support of CASA, whose staff help connect people with accommodation and support services, and for the generosity of Hungry Jack's and many parishioners and local businesses who make the breakfasts possible.

The greatest joy is seeing Christ's love lived out around a breakfast table. What began as a meal has become a community, a place of hope, friendship and belonging where everyone is welcomed and valued.

KRISTI DAY





OUR FATHER,
WE THANK YOU FOR LIFE, AND FOR OUR WORK AS MOTHERS' UNION WORLDWIDE, THIS PAST 150 YEARS OF OUR EXISTENCE. YOU HAVE SHOWN US SO MUCH LOVE AND MERCY IN ALL WE DO.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO WORK WITHIN US, THAT WHEREVER WE FIND OURSELVES, YOUR LOVE AND MERCY WILL BE KNOWN THROUGH US. GIVE US BOLDNESS TO SPEAK AND STAND FOR WHAT IS RIGHT, TO SEEK JUSTICE AND EQUALITY FOR ALL.

WE PRAY FOR LAWMAKERS AND THOSE IN AUTHORITY; GIVE THEM WISDOM FOR SOUND JUDGEMENT, EMPATHY, TO SEEK FAIRNESS AND DIGNITY FOR ALL.

HEAL THE BROKEN HEARTED AND LET YOUR PEACE BE WITH US ALL NOW AND ALWAYS.

AMEN.

FELICIA YEBOAH ASUAMAH
DIOCESE OF SUNYANI, GHANA
FOUND IN MOTHERS' UNION'S LIGHTING THE WAY: 150 YEARS OF PRAYER AND PURPOSE

Recipes

CONTRIBUTED BY ROBYN LEWIS

LOW FAT FRUIT CAKE

1 kg mixed dried fruit
3 cups orange juice
3 cups SR flour
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1teaspoon mixed spice

Soak the fruit in orange juice overnight.
Next day, preheat the oven 180 degrees.
Mix flour, cinnamon and mixed spice into fruit mixture.
Pour into a 22cm cake tin.
Bake for 1 hour .
Reduce heat to 160 degrees and continue cooking for 30 minutes.
Cool completely and then slice, Enjoy!

SO WHETHER YOU EAT OR DRINK OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31



CARAMEL FINGERS

4 ounces butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 egg
11/2 cups SR flour
3/4 cup chopped dates
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat the oven 180 degrees
Melt butter and brown sugar in a saucepan and stir over low heat.
Allow to cool slightly, Add sifted flour, beaten egg, dates and vanilla,
Spread in a lined slab tin, Bake for 30-35 minutes. Cool completely in the tin.
Cut into fingers, Enjoy!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE OF MIA MIA!

2026 WAS A WONDERFUL YEAR SPENT CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF MOTHERS' UNION. AS WE BEGIN ANOTHER YEAR, LET US NOT LOSE OUR STRIDE AND LET US CONTINUE TO SERVE THE LORD THROUGH OUR MINISTRY.

MAY YOU HAVE A BLESSED SUMMER AND CONTINUE TO STAY CONNECTED WITH ONE ANOTHER EVEN THROUGH THE BUSY PERIODS. MAY WE CONTINUE TO GROW IN THE SPIRIT AND SHOW OTHERS THE LOVE AND GRACE THAT THE LORD HAS SHOWN US.

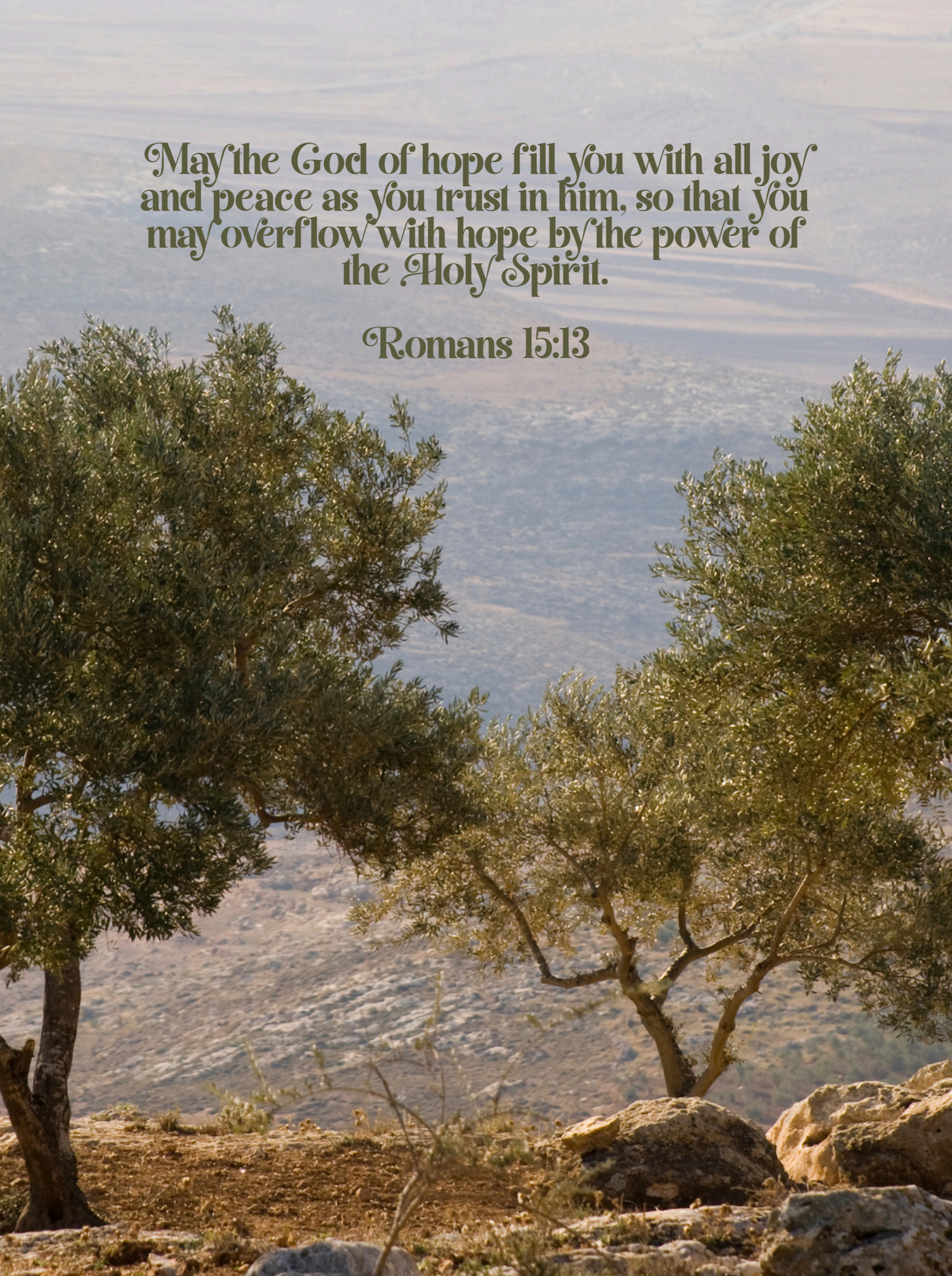
IF YOU HAVE PICKED UP MIA MIA FOR THE FIRST TIME AND YOU ARE JUST DISCOVERING MOTHERS UNION BUT WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE PLEASE CONTACT US VIA THE AMUA WEBSITE OR EMAIL (CONTACT@MUAUSTRALIA.ORG.AU) AND WE WOULD LOVE TO CONNECT YOU WITH YOUR LOCAL BRANCH.

ANYONE IS WELCOME TO CONTRIBUTE TO MIA MIA.

I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU, WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN A MEMBER FOR 60 YEARS, OR IF YOU HAVE JUST BEEN INTRODUCED TO MOTHERS UNION FOR THE FIRST TIME, TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE, A STORY, A POEM, A PRAYER, OR EVEN A RECIPE TO BE FEATURED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!




May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13