

BUT WHEN
THE FULLNESS
OF TIME
HAD COME,
GOD SENT
HIS SON,
BORN OF A
WOMAN...

GALATIANS 4:4a





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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

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Anglican Mothers' Union Australia.
Mia Mia is an Aboriginal word for 'home'.

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

Have your say in *Mia Mia*

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Meet Our Contributors



The Right Reverend Dr Mark Short is married to Monica and they have two married sons and one grand-daughter. Mark's interests include bushwalking, train travel and reading. Mark began his working life as a Graduate Economist for the Commonwealth Department of Industrial Relations and journalist for the Sydney Morning Herald. After training for ministry at Moore Theological College and the University of Durham, Bishop Mark served in churches in the diocese of Canberra and Goulburn and was National Director, The Bush Church Aid Society. He is currently the Bishop of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn and the recently-elected Primate of Australia.

Dr Monica Short works for Charles Sturt University as a senior lecturer and social science researcher. Monica's other interests include reading, bushwalking, and visiting small country towns.¹ Mark and Monica both became Christians whilst at high school and love being members of Mothers' Union. They continue to be inspired by and in awe of what Jesus is doing around the world.



Rachael Thyer is the mother of three adult children and wife of 33 years to Murray Thornhill. She has previously worked as a secondary teacher, a university

ESL teacher and as an Executive Assistant for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation clinic. Rachael is currently completing postgraduate studies at Trinity Theological College in Perth. She has been a member of St. Lawrence's Anglican church in Dalkeith (Perth) for 13 years.

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¹ For more information about Monica's work, see https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=ldt-4GcAAAAJ&view_op=list_works&sortby=pubdate



From the Editor's desk

As I sit at my desk on what has been a mild, sunny day in spring it's hard to believe that the end of the year is fast approaching. Even if I wanted to push Christmas preparations to the back of my mind, every visit to the shops reminds me that Christmas is just around the corner, everyone is on a tight budget and I'd better start stocking up on Christmas goodies right now if I want to bag a bargain!! Thankfully, the season of Advent gives us an opportunity to slow down, take stock of ourselves and remember that God is neither hurried nor harried, and we don't need to be either. I can (metaphorically at least) put on my headphones, ignore the noise of the world and listen to what God says is important. What a blessing!

In this issue of *Mia Mia* I trust that you will find plenty of ways to do just that. There are the usual encouraging contributions from members of the AMUA Executive, as well as thought-provoking articles on the joy and hope of Advent, the problem of abundance and stepping out boldly in obedience to God's call. I am particularly delighted that our new Primate, Bishop Mark Short, agreed to share something of his faith journey with us and, in an unusual double act, his wife, Monica, encourages us to find hope in Christ – a timely reminder in our troubled times.

You will notice that this issue is a bit bigger than usual. To tide everyone over the summer there are a few 'extras' - some suggestions for activities to do with children at home or church, some ideas to help make the most of the time when MU groups aren't meeting and a series of Bible studies written for us by Christine Jensen, which can be used by individuals or groups during the

summer recess or perhaps in meetings throughout the year. You will also find lots of news about activities and projects which MU members have been busy with. To top off this bumper issue, and just for fun, there are a couple of stories written by the inimitable Susan Skowronski.

Phew! This is definitely an issue to enjoy over not just one, but *several* cups of coffee.

May I leave you with the call to Christian service which is often said at the conclusion of our Sunday gatherings: *Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.* (To which we answer) **In the name of Christ. Amen**

Christine



Photo credit: Sincerely Media on Unsplash



The President writes...

Looking at Christmas through a lens

Recently I have been trawling through old photographs – a process that can find me lost in memories, and sometimes emotional feelings, for long periods of time. Some of the most memorable photographs were taken at Christmas when various family members gathered to share in worship and the festivities of Christmas day.

One Christmas during my adolescent years we had gathered at the family farm as usual, when my brother got a phone call. Cyclone Tracy had devastated Darwin; he had to leave immediately to fly helicopters in the rescue and recovery process. This news certainly changed the whole mood of Christmas for us and for many others, especially the people of Darwin. The hope of the Christmas message was suddenly transformed into hope for survival and prayers for the losses. While attendance at worship would have been impossible for Darwinians, new life through the birth of a baby, especially the Saviour of the world, became a beacon amidst the devastation. When life events change our plans as may happen for some of you this Christmas (as they did for me when my mother died on Christmas Day, 1994), I pray that the words of Jeremiah 29:11 may reassure you and renew your hope: *'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'*

Years later, when living in North Queensland, we experienced the power of cyclones and the

need to be ready for nature's impact on lives and the environment. Being ready is a constant theme for the Christian life, not only as Christmas approaches but, as the parable of the virgins reminds us, (Matthew 25:1-13) at all stages of our Christian journey.

What do you see in this photo?

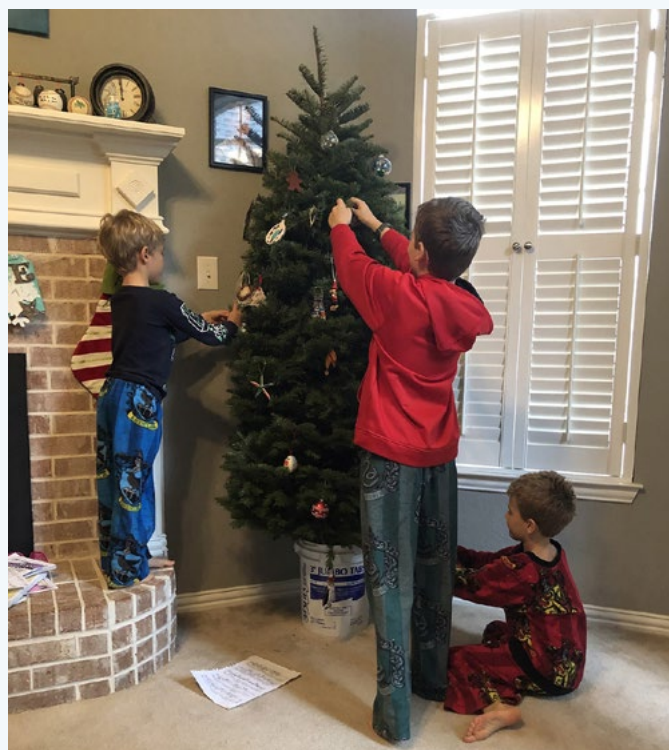


Photo credit: Robin Ray

For me, the words 'preparation' and 'expectation' come to mind. The children are dressing a Christmas tree, sharing the role, working on different parts of the tree to achieve an overall effect– just like a phrase we have heard from our Worldwide President, 'together we are stronger'. In what ways does Christmas time strengthen your family? The children here are adding assorted ornaments. The variety of ornaments brings together Christian and secular elements, emphasising the need for our Christian faith to be shared with the world. Our Christmas tree has always been a branch from a pine tree or a live tree in a pot brought in from the garden each year. The evergreen nature of such trees reminds us of vitality and growth, bringing brightness, especially for people experiencing the shorter days of the



Photo credit: nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/cyclone-tracy



Photo credit: Robin Ray

northern hemisphere. Living Christmas trees also symbolise the need for our faith to continue to grow through the Christmas season and beyond.

Last Christmas we were very fortunate to be able to spend time with our family in the USA, where they combine traditions from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand with some Americanisms. An Advent wreath with candles and real holly, combined with weekly Advent devotions, imbue a sense of living faith in a time of waiting. (We experienced our first Advent wreath with real holly over 40 years ago when my husband studied at Duke University in North Carolina. It was lovely to revisit that memory). As December 24 is the public holiday in USA, all worship services occur on Christmas Eve, late in the afternoon and early evening in the chill of the winter. The joy of the music created by people across the generations at this church uplifted and warmed our hearts in worship.

When I reflect on this photo I am drawn to the centrality of the star on the banner at the back. We know a star pointed the way to the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:2, 10-11). Seeing this star focused my mind on Jesus not just as a baby, but as Emmanuel, God with us. When viewed from the centre of the church, the cross and open Bible on the altar align with the star on the banner, symbolising our need to continually learn from scripture as we follow Jesus every day. (Pic: Christmas worship)

May your memories of Christmas past and present enable you to look through a lens to see the Christmas message of the Christ child anew and refresh you to 'follow the star' to seek and walk with Jesus with vitality and hope.

Robin Ray

Mission Impossible

Linda stood on tip toe and peered intently at the roof. It was difficult to decide on a course of action.

'Go forward very slowly,' she told Frank.
'No! Stop! It's too close.'

She walked around to check the other side.

'Perhaps we could try it at a bit of an angle? Umm... left hand down... slowly...slowly... No! Stop! Stop! Straighten up.'

She bit her lip and scratched her head. This was quite a puzzle. 'Frank, I think you'd better let more air out.'

'Not a good idea,' Frank informed her. 'I'm well below the recommended minimum inflation pressure as it is. If I let any more air out, I'll be running on the rims.'

Linda shook her head and sighed. 'Why didn't you take the caravan out of the shed before you fitted the new air conditioning unit to the roof?'

© Susan Skowronski 2025



Photo credit: Lance Anderson on Unsplash



Fill us with your love

At a recent church service we sang the hymn *Jesu, Jesu, Fill us with your love...* a beautiful hymn which holds so much meaning, written by my missionary Tom Colvin and based on Jesus' lesson on servanthood when He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1-17) and on Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan. I was particularly struck by the line '*all these are neighbours to us and you*'.

Australia, which we like to think of as 'The Lucky Country', grapples with a range of pressing social issues such as systemic wealth inequalities, housing affordability and homelessness, healthcare access, lack of facilities to address mental health, inadequate support for the aged, climate change, and discrimination.

Wealth inequality in Australia has led to a situation where the wealthiest 20% hold 62% of the country's assets, while the poorest 20% struggle to make ends meet. It has been shown that a tax system that favours the wealthy, and reduced funding for public services, has worsened this gap and limits access to quality education, healthcare, and housing.

Housing affordability is at an all-time low, leaving homeownership out of reach for many Australians. The decline in public housing has worsened the crisis, forcing families into precarious rental markets or homelessness.

Climate change is leading to rising sea levels, bushfires, and extreme weather events which disproportionately affect low-income and Indigenous communities, who often live in areas most vulnerable to climate risks. Climate change threatens the livelihoods of these communities, worsening poverty, and increasing health disparities. Although Australia is adopting stronger



Photo credit: Rod Long on Unsplash

climate policies, such as transitioning to renewable energy, this needs to be achieved urgently.

Australia's Indigenous population continues to face disadvantages in areas like healthcare, education, and incarceration. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a life expectancy 8.6 years lower than non-Indigenous Australians, and are 13 times more likely to be incarcerated.

The privatisation of essential services has led to increased costs and reduced quality as profit-driven corporations prioritise shareholders over service provision, leaving Australians with fewer public services at higher prices.

By tackling wealth inequality, housing affordability, healthcare access and more, Australia can move toward a more compassionate political system that helps all citizens. As we remember Jesus' commandment to love one another, let us continue to advocate for solutions to these social issues in order to foster equity and inclusivity and better conditions for Australian families.

Susan Skowronski



Love in action

***'Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washing their feet – master
who acts as a slave to them'***

What a potent example. Jesus, down on his knees, serving his disciples, his followers, humbly doing this for his people – setting an example of what it is to be of service to others.

Back in 2006 I had the privilege of spending a weekend at Happening – a Cursillo based experience for 16 – 25-year-olds. I didn't quite fit the bill on age, but was invited to be a member of team for the second time as 'mum' to the Happeners and staff. My daughter, Renae, (aged 22) was the 'Rector', the team leader. During the weekend she gifted me a little book (6cm x 8cm), entitled *Life's Little book for Mothers*. Several days later as I sat reading it through with my morning cup of tea, I found myself alongside Jesus as he knelt washing those feet – for to be a mum is surely to be a servant leader. Just as Jesus' disciples looked to him for nurturing, for nourishment, for guidance - at times for strength, for deliverance; so, too, my children looked to me for those things during their formative years. I gladly gave, and continue to give, to my children and their families, to the best of my ability.

Let me share with you a saying by Immanuel Kant from my treasured book:

I shall never forget my mother, for it was she who planted and nurtured the first seeds of good within me. She opened my heart to the impressions of nature; she awakened my understanding and extended my horizons, and her precepts exerted an everlasting influence upon the course of my life.

This is what Mary Sumner experienced at the knee of her mother, and it is her mother whom she credits with opening her heart and mind to the love of Christ. In sharing early morning daily Bible readings with her mother, Mary experienced that which she would later promote as the main work of Mothers' Union, that of parents

teaching their children to know God and to understand God's love for them.

As members of Mothers' Union today and into the future we are all called to accept this same challenge – to plant and nurture seeds – to open hearts – to awaken understanding – to extend horizons – to exert an everlasting influence.

Over the past three years, in my role as Overseas and Northern Outreach Coordinator, I have learnt much about the service Mothers' Union members give to their communities around the world. Whether it be parenting programs, literacy circles, public health initiatives, supporting local health centres, speaking on local radio and television about marriage, parenting and relationships, advocacy against gender injustices and gender-based violence, running a fun day for children with additional needs and their families, or visiting women in local correction centres, Mothers Union members are making a difference through their acts of service.

Going back to my little book, in the words of Ella Parsons –

Nothing else will ever make you as happy or as sad, as proud or as tired, as motherhood.

So too: *Nothing else will ever make you as happy or as sad, as proud or as tired, as being of service.*

Wendy Mabey



Photo credit: Getty Images on Unsplash

Boutique beauties

The Pre-Loved Gown Shop has had a beautiful beginning, thanks to the generous hearts of Mothers' Union branches, particularly in Atherton, Cairns and Mossman Port Douglas, and Mackay locals. Through their donated gowns and graciously discounted sales, our community has felt your kindness and support.

While a few finishing touches remain before we reach a true boutique experience, I'm delighted with our progress. Each gown carries a unique story, and together we're building a space where dignity, affordability and beauty come together for those in need. Already we've sold over a dozen gowns, showing the real need in our community and the positive response to this initiative. As donations arrive and sales gain momentum, I'm hopeful about the shop's future – not just in the number of garments, but in the sense of grace and connection it's fostering.

With interest in our 'boutique' growing, we're seeking more pre-loved formal gowns in good condition. If you, your family, friends, or organisation have gowns that could find a new home we would gratefully accept them.

There are many ways you can help: share news of the project within your parish and social circles, organise a formal dress drive locally, or donate gowns you no longer need. Every contribution, no matter how small, helps us continue this work.

To donate, simply send items via Parcel Post 5kg satchel (\$22.85) to: PO Box 234, Mackay QLD 4740. This is a great value option depending on how many dresses you can fit in the satchel.

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a collection, please get in touch. Thank you for being part of this journey—your involvement is truly appreciated and helps make a difference.

The Pre-Loved Gown Shop stands as a source of pride and hope, made possible by the generosity of the Mothers' Union branches and the wider community. Every donation, every effort, strengthens our mission and brings the spirit of local support to life.



Kristi Day



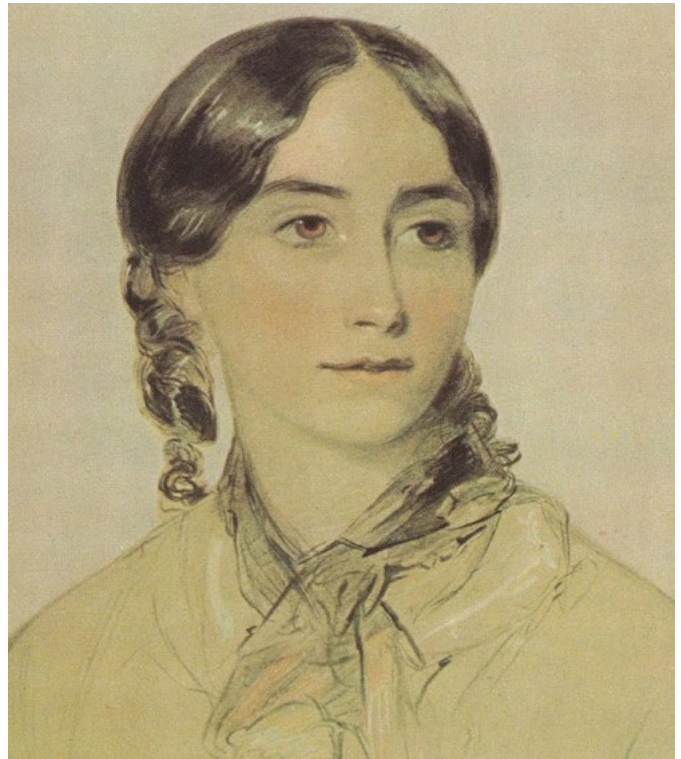
Did Mary Sumner have it easy?

I wonder if, in your heart of hearts, you sometimes think something along these lines, *'It's all well and good to look back to Mary Sumner. Things were different in those days. Nowadays women work and we are facing all kinds of social changes she didn't have to deal with.'*

That's partly true. She did not face issues of same-sex marriage, surrogacy, social media, or the promotion of gender change. However, in the Victorian era in which Mary Sumner lived Great Britain was in a mess, despite its vast empire, huge industrial leaps and wealth. This is reflected in the writings of Charles Dickens, with their tales of organised juvenile crime, violence towards women and the horrors of the poor house. Dickens was not writing fantasy.

The Victorian era was also one of immense social upheaval. The Industrial Revolution meant the displacement of thousands of people from their rural setting to the cramped and unspeakable slums of the industrial cities. Here, marriage was irregular, prostitution was rife, women were obliged to work long hours in factories or in their homes sewing for a pittance. Until Lord Shaftesbury's Factory Act children were subjected to cruel working conditions in mines and factories. Often the only relief came through consumption of cheap, ruinous alcohol.

The Victorian era was quite misogynistic. However, it produced some amazing and courageous Christian women, such as Florence Nightingale,



who single-handedly reorganised nursing in British hospitals, and Josephine Butler, a pretty, dainty member of the aristocracy, who crusaded against laws which enabled police to compel women suspected of being prostitutes to be subjected to invasive examinations to determine whether they had syphilis. She so fiercely attacked the upper classes for their predatory and hypocritical practices that she once had a barn burnt down around her! Josephine adopted the phrase 'God and one woman make a majority'. Mary Sumner can be included in this panoply of brave women who made an immense impact, not only on British society but also abroad.

The Mothers' Union story began when Mary's husband, George, was Rector of the Parish of Old Arlesford. Mary, challenged by the state of family life in the parish, sought a way to assist the women of the parish to raise their children as Christians and generally improve family life. She believed that enabling women to support one another was the way forward.

After gathering a group of parish women together to discuss her ideas, her confidence wavered and she tried to hand over the speaking to George. George encouraged Mary by saying, *'Just share your heart – God will do the rest.'* The response to her talk was so encouraging that she became confident enough to address other such



Photo credit: Public Domain, <https://picryl.com>

gatherings and new groups were established in surrounding parishes.

The meetings were remarkably inclusive in such a class-conscious society. Young and old, rich and poor attended. She warned upper class women against neglecting the Christian education of their children and abandoning them to the care of nannies so that they could engage in frivolous pursuits. Reluctantly she even agreed to address the men of the parish, urging them to understand and respect their wives in the marriage partnership.

Such was the success of this informal movement that in 1876 she founded 'the Union of Mothers' – with a membership card and promise: *to be given up, body and soul, to Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism, and that your duty is to train your children for his service.* In the Victorian era 'union' was not confined to industry. It meant solidarity and commitment to any cause or activity.

With the support of bishops the movement grew locally and internationally. Her vision was for a union of people across the world providing a safe environment for children in homes permeated by the love of Jesus.

Her principles were:

- **That the prosperity of a nation springs from the family life in its homes.**
- **That family life is the greatest institution in the world for the formation of the character of children.**
- **That faith in Christ is the foundation of family life.**
- **That the tone of family life depends upon the married life of the parents – and ultimately, that example is stronger than precept.**

Sadly, these principles have become neglected or ignored.

Mary Sumner had begun by practical, biblical teaching, '*Remember, ladies, to be yourselves, what you would have your children be.*' In the last two decades of her life the Mothers' Union, under her direction, campaigned publicly on many issues relating to marriage and family life. These included the prevention of children from collecting alcohol from pubs on behalf of their parents and in having the age of marriage for girls raised from 12 to 16. Fearlessly she advocated unpopular social issues despite resistance from her own class.

In her private life her standards were no different. Young women who had a child out of wedlock were often driven out of their homes and became social pariahs. Mary Sumner, however, sheltered and cared for her unmarried niece who had given birth to a son.

Mary Sumner died in August, 1921. Her funeral service, one of thanksgiving for her life, was attended by 4,000 women. Her legacy would have been beyond her imagining. It gave rise to one of the greatest missionary movements in the world, with four million members in 83 countries. It is now particularly strong in the global south with ministries of evangelism, literacy, child care and with a strong emphasis, like Mary, on the teaching of the Bible.

As we struggle with decreasing numbers we must ask, 'What do we pick up from the life of Mary Sumner that we could be doing?' and 'What have



we neglected to incorporate in our organisation that was precious to her?' Her vision was '*Winning the families of the nations for Christ.*' Is that ours today?

Judith Nichols



Doing things differently

At the AMUA 2024 NSW Council Meeting the seven Diocesan Presidents decided to try something new for the 2025 State Conference – a totally pre-recorded, 3-hour conference which could be shown online to individuals or to members gathered in hubs across the state. This decision was made in response to the difficulties presented by cost and distance of an in-person conference. As MU Sydney had the experience, staff and connections with professional recording and editors, and with the agreement of the Sydney Executive, Sydney offered to sponsor the event.



The topic, 'Being Inwardly Nurtured to be Outwardly Focused,' was chosen and the speakers, Rev'd Marge Mills, Archdeacon Kara Hartley and Ruth Baker, were engaged. The whole conference was then recorded in one day. It was professionally edited over six months and graphics and music were added.

The diocesan presidents from Armidale, Bathurst, Canberra and Goulburn, Riverina, Newcastle, Grafton and Sydney were asked to submit a self-videoed snippet about their diocese and also to initiate interest and organise and advertise hub venues locally. Members were asked to register.



Questions were written and a conference booklet (online and hard copy) was produced, along with advertising materials. The DPs kept connected with emails, WhatsApp and Zoom meetings and all the preparations were underpinned with prayer.

The response was very positive, with gatherings across the state on a cold and wet July 26, all meeting around God's word for fellowship when distance didn't matter. We were together. The number attending was many more than we could have had in person and the model may well be used, on a different scale, again.



The DPs hope that, by doing something new, members might be encouraged to look again at who is outside the church gate and the opportunities God is giving us to reach families in new ways for these times.

The AMUA 2025 NSW State Conference is available on the Mothers' Union Sydney website musydney.org.au. Just go to the Members page and take a look.

Glenda McSorley

Diocesan President, Sydney

Faith Hope Love Conference 2025

Have you ever been to a conference where, at the end of it, you felt thoroughly wrung out emotionally?

I recently found myself in that situation when I (and Sue-Ellen Chilvers, Diocesan President, Riverina) attended the General Synod Family and Culture Annual Conference, 'Faith, Hope, Love', in Melbourne.

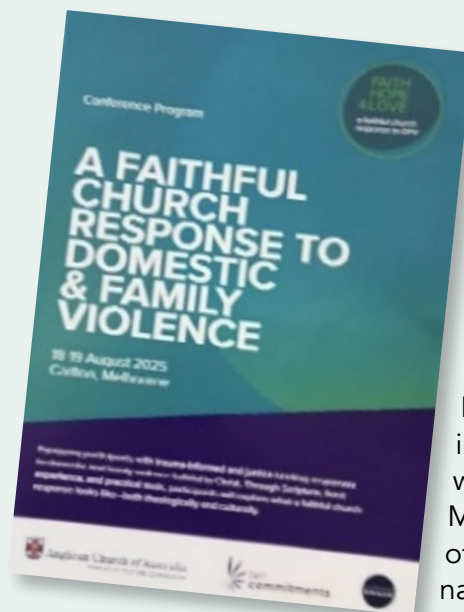
I was greatly saddened by the depravity of the sin that the human condition could sink to. The statistics around family and domestic violence were horrific. I found myself becoming teary when listening to the personal testimonies and saw the bravery of surviving victims and the scars they carried.

So why Faith in the title? Without being established in the Christian faith we are no different from any secular charitable organisation. We were encouraged to look at God's ideal, where domination over other people was not part of His original plan. We looked at such passages as Judges 19 and Genesis 3, where domestic abuse is recorded. God's grief should be our grief. We were encouraged to repent (Ezekiel 34:1-10 and Matthew 25:46, 48), both as individuals and church communities, and to do so with humility; to listen and be challenged by God's intent for right relationship with Him and each other. Justice and forgiveness are intertwined. God sees, God knows, God acts.



What of Hope? The statistics are marginally improving and the response to services at time of crisis is increasing as people, mainly women, are able to step out

and seek help. Intersectoral referrals are more streamlined, workers in the field are better trained, awareness in the community has increased and more voices are saying...



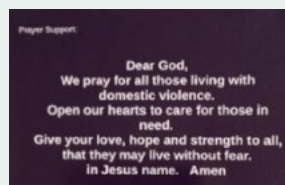
As for Love? It is the motivating factor as to why we reach out. As MU members this is done in many different ways by individuals, branches and dioceses. 'Love in action' includes such simple acts as the provision of pamper packs to victims, the observance of '16 Days of Activism Against Domestic and Family Violence', inviting sector leaders from our wider communities to speak at MU meetings and the placement of red/purple benches, just to name a few. We can always make our voice heard through our parliamentarians and Diocesan Synods.

At this year's conference a short course, 'Faithful Bystanding Practices for Churches – **Communities that care**' – was launched.



The conference is a great way to network and to promote MU. For example, Deacon Louise Lang from Willochra had a display, 'Behind Closed Doors', using the Welsh MU resources.

Yes, I was wrung out but I also went home excited that there are many ways that I, in my small corner, can make a difference – especially in the area of prayer that doesn't just stay on my lips but leads to action. Prayer is a mighty force, for which MU is well known.



Hopefully we will see more MUers at next year's conference.

Sue Witten

*For more information, head to learn.tencommitments.org.au to see if this is something your branches may help your church or diocese initiate.

Go boldly

In May 2025 ladies from the Mount Barker parish gathered at Portee Homestead, near Blanchetown, South Australia, for their yearly Ladies' Weekend Away. The theme for this year was New Horizons.

One of the sessions was entitled 'To go boldly where no woman has gone before'. As you can guess, the talk was about women who have had the courage to step out from what was considered appropriate for women during those times and explore new horizons. We have these women to thank for their bravery and their perseverance in not settling for what was considered acceptable for women at the time. Because of these women the world is so much better, with many of their inventions being used by us every day.

During the session we looked at eleven different women from history who have changed the world for the better. I have included four of these women for you. Can you guess who they are?

1 Who am I?

- I was born on December 10, 1815, the only legitimate child of poet Lord George Gordon Byron. I died on the November 27, 1852 from cervical cancer.
- In my childhood my mother promoted my interest in mathematics and technology, possibly to stop me from following in my father's profligate ways.
- When I was 12 years old I wanted to fly and set about investigating how to do this. I even wrote a book outlining my findings.
- I worked with Charles Babbage, considered to be the 'father of the computer,' on his Analytical Engine, which was considered an early model for modern-day computers. I am credited as being the world's first computer programmer and I have a computer programming language named after me.
- The second Tuesday in October each year has been named after me in recognition of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

2 Who am I?

- I was born on July 15, 1858, in Manchester, England, into a politically active family. I died on June 14, 1928.
- In 1903, after years of waiting for a positive outcome for women's suffrage, I felt it necessary to move to more militant actions and established the Women's Social and Political Union.
- I was arrested and jailed several times because of my militant demonstrations and often went on hunger strikes while imprisoned to show how serious I was.
- On July 2, 1928, shortly after my death, and because of my activities, the Representation of the People Act of 1918 was introduced to give women in Great Britain over 21 years of age the vote.

3 Who am I?

- My real name was Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler, and I was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1914. I died on January 19, 2000.
- I was a famous actress in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, but was also an inventor.
- I married an Austrian arms merchant in August 1933 who was controlling and not happy about my acting career. I managed to flee from my husband in 1937 and eventually moved to America, where I was able to continue my acting career.
- During World War II I partnered with composer, George Antheil, to develop frequency hopping, an invention that would prevent persons from trying to jam signals between torpedoes and ships. This same idea is now used in mobile phones, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth technologies.



4 Who am I?

- I was born on August 21, 1918 and died on February 24, 2020.
- I showed great talent in mathematics from a young age and as a result my parents arranged for me to attend high school at West Virginia State College. I graduated with degrees in mathematics and French.
- I worked as a computer for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Due to the racial segregation laws I was not allowed to use the same restrooms or work or eat with my white colleagues.
- I became vital to the success of the U.S. space program, calculating the trajectory for several space flights. John Glenn even refused to fly unless the calculations were double-checked by me.
- On November 24, 2015 I was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama and cited as being a pioneer for African American women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

How many of these women did you recognise? Whether you managed 0 or 4, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that we recognise that against all odds these women fought courageously and bravely for their beliefs. In our day, as Mothers' Union members, do we fight bravely and courageously for our beliefs? Do we listen to God calling us and bravely answer the call, believing that He will support us in our 'struggle' and provide everything we will need?

These women are inspiring, so let us be inspiring in our time, in God's time.

Cath Evans

Cath is a member of the audio Mia Mia recording team in Mt. Barker.



Answers



1. Ada Lovelace
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ada_Lovelace



2. Emmeline Pankhurst
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmeline_Pankhurst



3. Hedy Lamarr
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hedy_Lamarr



4. Katherine Johnson
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine_Johnson

Making the most of the time

When the days are hot, MU groups are taking a breather and Christmas is done and dusted, it can seem as though the world is on holiday and life can feel a bit flat and even lonely. So why not try something different to make the most of this time?

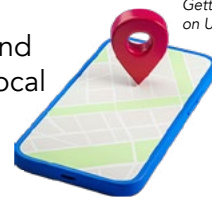
Start a new prayer routine

- Make a pretty bookmark or prayer card (perhaps using cutouts from a Christmas card or two), with names of people in your family, church or neighbourhood to pray for on specific days of the week. Keep it in your Bible or near your favourite chair.
- Sign up to receive information from a new mission agency and use their prayer notes to help you pray regularly for their work.
- Cultivate the habit of praying for people you meet, even casually, in the shopping centre, library, playground, helping in your home.
- Read a book on prayer.
- Start a prayer journal in which you record your prayers and God's answers.
- Start a 'gratitude diary' to ward off feelings of discontentment and grumpiness.
- Make a personal prayer book, by either writing your own ABC prayers (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) or by copying prayers from other sources (e.g. the MU Worship and Prayer Book, A Prayer Book for Australia, An Australian Prayer Book, *Mia Mia*, the MU Prayer Diary, mission/diocesan/parish prayer diaries...) in order to have a resource to turn to when you feel spiritually dry.



- Make cards together, ready for sending during the year to those you know who need encouragement.

- Take a prayer walk (or drive) around your parish. How about making local child-care centres and schools a particular point at which to stop and pray for local families?



- Have a 'colouring' session, colouring scripture verses (either of your own design or purchased from a Christian bookshop) which can then be laminated for clergy and pastoral visitors to give to residents of local aged-care facilities.
- Knit or sew hearts or some other symbol in preparation for a '16 days of Activism...' event.
- Individually, or as a group, gather items to fill backpacks for children starting school without the necessary supplies or toiletry and sanitary supplies for women in refuges or emergency toiletry kits for people unexpectedly admitted to hospital or 'Joy Boxes' so as to be ready for distribution throughout the year.
- Plan for the year ahead. What resources do you have? What resources are available but you haven't used before? What has worked well in the past? What could you do differently? Spend time in prayer, earnestly seeking God's help to make your MU group even more inwardly nurturing and outwardly focused.
- Take some time to gather materials to help your group understand more about the Overseas Project (literacy in the Solomon Islands). Visit your local library or use the internet to find books about this near neighbour and photocopy any interesting pages. Look for artifacts such as clothing, beads or implements from the Solomon Islands. (Ask around the parish, friends and neighbours for help). Gather these items together in a box or folder and use them throughout the year to prompt your group's prayers and giving.

And what about MU?

- If physical meetings aren't possible or practical, agree to 'meet' occasionally by phone with the specific intention of praying for and encouraging each other.
- Meet occasionally for coffee and conversation at a café, park or someone's home.



From my bookshelf

5 Things To Pray for Your Kids

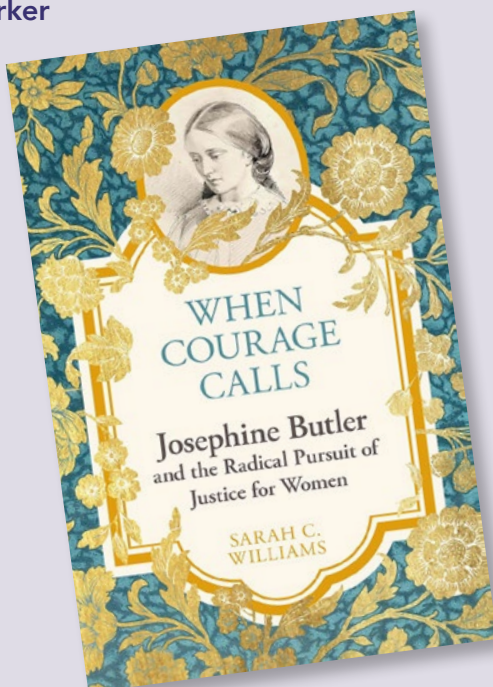
I love this book and use it for about half of every year to guide my prayers for my (now adult) children. The prayers are organised by themes and there are five prayers on each theme to a double-page - just perfect for Monday to Friday prayers. It can easily be adapted to prayers for grandchildren, husbands, and anybody else on your heart and mind!

The book is cheap to buy and simple to use, and makes me pray for the character, spiritual outlook and godly witness of my children. These are things that are easily overlooked as we focus on our children's work and study, their health, relationships and financial precariousness - all worries that easily consume our prayer lives.

I have bought many copies of these books and given them away to my Christian friends to fuel their prayer lives also.

The book can be bought from Christian bookshops for about \$12.

Elizabeth Parker



When Courage Calls – Josephine Butler and the Radical Pursuit of Justice for Women

By Sarah C. Williams Published by Hodder and Stoughton

I stumbled across this book while browsing in my local Christian bookshop, and bought it despite the cost (a hefty \$37.99), intrigued by the title and the publisher's assertion that '*When Courage Calls* presents a fresh and inspiring interpretation of Butler's life – her political activism, her public leadership and her spirituality – the result of which changed the course of history.' Who was this woman? What did she do that was so important? I was not disappointed.

Josephine Butler was a fearless campaigner against the entrenched double standards of Victorian society

which saw women suspected of engaging in prostitution arrested, forcibly subjected to painful and invasive examinations and incarcerated in purpose-built institutions until they were declared 'clean' but which allowed the men who used them to be let off scot-free. Her Christian faith and natural sympathy boiled over into action, which cost her, and her husband, dearly. Nonetheless, God honoured her bravery (and that of the thousands of others who joined her campaign) when the 'Contagious Diseases Acts' of the 1860s were repealed.

This is not a book to read for fun, but it is an important book to read if we want to know more about this remarkable woman and the determination she showed in fighting discriminatory attitudes towards women. Josephine Butler's name has all but disappeared from history, largely because of her Christian faith. As her successors in fighting similar attitudes today, I recommend it to put steel into our backbones and trust in our great God, of whom Josephine herself said, 'God and one woman make a majority'.

Christine Brain

Mothers Union supports north west clergy families

In October clergy families of the Diocese of North West Australia gathered at Camp Wattle Grove in Perth for the DNWA biennial fellow workers' conference. The conference ran for 4½ days and was attended by 78 people ranging in age from 4 months to 85 years. Clergy families drove or flew from Kununurra, Broome, Port Hedland, Newman, Karratha, Exmouth, Carnarvon, Geraldton and Dongara. The camp is biennial because it costs about \$50,000 for travel alone, to which Mothers Union Australia contributed \$17,000 through a distribution from the Northern Outreach Fund.

Camp Wattle Grove is an old-fashioned conference centre with basic facilities in a lovely setting, supported by fantastic caterers who made the meals something to look forward to – essential for a conference! This conference is essential in bringing Anglican ministers and their families from our far-flung Diocese together for teaching, up-skilling and encouragement. It is a family decision for our clergy and their wives and children to live and work in the North-West's remote communities, and so we honour them as a family by bringing them all to this conference.

The morning programme for the adults included singing, encouragement from God's word, discussion groups, input from a Christian psychologist on stress and burn-out and reflections on marriages in the ministry context. The final session was presented by the bishop to the clergy on personal godliness and ministry practice.

There were three streams of activities for the children, including programs for teens, primary-aged and a crèche, staffed by volunteers from local Perth Anglican churches and one of the bishop's sons and his new wife. The afternoons were mostly free time, with the exception of a family trip to a nearby trampoline centre, and late-afternoon electives for the adults on two days. Each evening there was a family activity, including a quiz night, games night, movie night (with date night for parents) and a campfire night.

There were many conversations, prayers, a few tears and much thoughtful reflection over the four days. The bishop and clergy families of the Diocese of North West Australia are very grateful to Mothers' Union Australia for their financial support for this conference, which is essential to our Diocesan ministry and wellbeing. Thank you!

Elizabeth Parker

Vice-President, Mothers' Union Australia



The God who seeks and saves – studies in Luke's Gospel

Several years ago, as I was hanging out the washing, I remembered that I had taken off my engagement ring and put in the pocket of the pants I had just washed. You can imagine how I felt as I searched the pockets and there was no ring. I hurried back to the washing machine and it wasn't there either. We then called the repair man.

I could hardly believe it when he found my ring in one of the drain pipes. The relief and thankfulness were indescribable.

For these Bible Studies I have chosen some stories from Luke's Gospel, stories with a common theme of being lost and found.

Study 1 The lost sheep

- Ask yourself what this story means, how it opens your eyes to the truth about Jesus and what questions the passage raises for you. It may be a good idea to write them down.
- Then, **read on**.

I think we need to notice three things:

- First of all, *why* Jesus told these parables. When we eat with someone it is a sign of fellowship and acceptance. Jesus preached that the kingdom of God, the supreme moment of judgement, was coming. How, then, could he eat with the tax-collectors and sinners, the very people that the Pharisees, the upright moralists of their day, judged and condemned? He did it as a sign that he accepted them.
- Second, Jesus answers with the story of the one lost sheep. Ninety-nine are safe; one is lost and cannot find its way home. It is in peril from wolves and cannot manage on its own. The shepherd could have abandoned the one in favour of the ninety-nine. Instead, he searches until he finds it. Notice the word 'until'. The shepherd would not give up no matter how long it took or what dangers he was in. He went to all lengths.
- Third, notice that the shepherd did not scold the sheep or push it home; he carried it on his shoulders. And notice his joy, a joy he shares with his friends and neighbours. All this, says Jesus, is a picture of the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Their sins are forgiven and they are carried home. They are welcome at his table.

Luke 15:1-7 (NIV)

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.'

REFLECTION

- Who does the shepherd remind you of? Why?
- Who does the sheep remind you of? Why?
- Read verse 7 again. Are you a 'repentant sinner' or a 'righteous person who does not need to repent'? Are there really any righteous or are we more inclined to be self-righteous?

Study 2: The Lost Coin

Remember that Jesus is addressing those who have criticised him for eating with the tax collectors and sinners who had gathered to him seeking forgiveness. Now he uses the story of a lost coin.

Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)

8 'Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? **9** And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin." **10** In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

- Does this parable add anything to the first parable or is it saying the same thing for emphasis?
- **Now read** it again and think of these two things.
- First, the preciousness of the coin. The woman had ten of these coins, why worry if one goes missing? Perhaps it was part of her wedding headdress and thus especially important. In any case, it was worth a lot to this poor woman and when it went missing it caused consternation. Rather than accept its loss she went to every length in order to find it.

I guess we understand. If you lose something, not least something very precious, do you not do all you can to retrieve it? Like the shepherd who searched until he found the sheep, she searches her house, without letting up, until she finds her coin. The lost must be found.

- Second, notice again the joy of finding. 'Now you understand', says Jesus, 'the joy of God and his angels over the repentance of even one sinner.' Repentance means more than remorse or sorrow. It is a turning back to the Lord, asking for forgiveness and making him Lord of our lives. It results in seeking to please him in all things.

REFLECTION

- Who does the woman remind you of? Why?
- Am I truly repentant?

Study 3: The Lost Boys

Jesus' stories now become very personal. They test the idea of repentance, the repentance that brings joy in heaven and restores the sinner's relationship with God.

Have you noticed that I call this parable '**the lost boys**'? I know that it is usually called 'the prodigal son' after the younger of two brothers. Why then have I called it 'the lost boys'?

Read the parable for yourself and see why this may be a better title for it. Remember that the chapter begins with the Pharisees and scribes criticising Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners.

Now read again and notice these three truths:

- First, the wickedness of the younger brother. He is controlled by greed and lust. He is selfish and reckless. It is as bad a picture as you can get and the father has every reason to wash his hands of him. He ends up amongst the pigs, which is what he deserves. Then all he can think of is to return to the one he has so deeply offended.
- Second, the amazing grace of the Father. We can use the word 'grace' here, because grace is love towards those who do not deserve our love. That is why the love of God is so often called the grace of God – He sends his Son to die for those who have rebelled against him.

But do you see how amazing this grace is? Far from stewing in his own righteous anger, the father sees him, and putting all dignity aside, runs to meet him. The son has practiced his words of confession and repentance, but the father embraces him before he can utter them. He then restores him completely to his place in the family, marking his forgiveness with a joyous feast in his honour. This is amazing grace that saved a wretch – like me!

- Third, notice the attitude of the older brother. He is so full of his own goodness that he fails the test of love and speaks, not of 'my brother', but 'this son of yours'. He does not love his brother. Does he love his father?

11 Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them.

13 'Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 'When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." **20** So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 'The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

22 'But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

25 'Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** "Your brother has come", he replied, "and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound." **28** The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

31 "My son", the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

REFLECTION

- Have you noticed that the story has no end? We do not know what the elder brother did. Did he repent? We are not told. However, if we have the 'elder brother syndrome' we, too, are lost and need to repent.
- What do you think? Which brother are you?



Photo credit: Brett Jordan on Unsplash

Study 4: The Lost Pharisee

Once again, we have the contrast between a 'good' man and a 'sinner'. Today the word 'Pharisee' is a term of contempt equivalent to 'hypocrite'. But it was not so in the world of Jesus. The Pharisees were a religious group within Judaism who strove zealously to keep the law of God. If anything, they were admired and respected as outstandingly religious people. That is what makes the parable of Jesus so confronting.

Read the parable for yourself and think how strange the teaching of Jesus must have sounded.

Read it once more and notice these aspects:

- Start with the place of prayer. Both men had come to the temple, the place where people met God. One was a Pharisee. The other was a tax collector, in league with the occupying power and fleecing his fellow Jews of their money to enrich himself. Yet both had come to pray.
- Then notice the nature of the prayers. The Pharisee asks nothing of God. He tells God what a good man he is. No doubt on the scorecard of moral success, he scores very well indeed.

As well, notice that he commends himself to the Lord by comparing himself to the tax collector. There is no doubt in his mind that he is the better person, morally upright and deserving of the Lord's commendation on the day of judgement.

The only good thing about the tax collector was that he knew himself to have nothing to commend him to God. As the hymn says, 'Nothing in my hand I bring'. All he can do

Luke 18: 9-14 (NIV)

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: **10** 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: "God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."

13 'But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

14 'I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'

is plead for mercy, turning to the Lord in repentance.

But his humility before the Lord was the key, and he went home 'justified' – forgiven, cleansed, declared not guilty – through the grace of God. The Lord had brought another lost sheep home.

REFLECTION

- Does it have the ring of truth? What is it saying to us?
- How do I come before God? Do I exalt myself before the Lord, or do I bow before him in repentance and ask for his forgiveness?



Christine Jensen

Prayer

Loving Lord, thank you that you seek the lost and do not rest until you have found them. We thank you for your grace and mercy towards us. We pray for our family members and friends who don't know you and ask that you lead them home to yourself. Amen

Running the race with Jesus – a personal testimony

One of my favourite Bible passages is Hebrews 11. Sometimes described as the 'roll call of faith', it recounts the generations of saints who lived and died trusting that one day all God's promises would be fulfilled.

Then in Chapter 12 verse 1 comes the punchline, 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...'

When I first read this passage I imagined the witnesses seated in the grandstand, cheering us on as we strive towards the tape. However, it's more likely that we are to picture them standing at the finish line, beckoning us to go where they have already been. They witness to the grace of God, the grace which sustains us when we are weary and challenges us when we are distracted.

With that in mind, let me name some of the witnesses who have spurred me on in my Christian pilgrimage. Some of them are still running the race with vigour, while others now enjoy the rest which the Lord Jesus prepares for all His people.

Allan and Lloyd were two teachers at my Anglican High School. In many ways they were polar opposites. One was introverted, the other extroverted. One had very traditional tastes in music, the other had written a Rock Opera and enjoyed debating the 'real' meaning of Bob Dylan's lyrics. What they shared in common was a warm Christian faith that expressed itself in genuine care for the young men they were called to teach and mentor. As a teenager striving to navigate the difference between real Christianity and a vague commitment to hard work and good order they were pivotal in my turning to Christ shortly before my 15th birthday.

Alvin and Jess were long-term members of my first church, St Paul's Wentworthville. When I first got to know them I was 18 and they were in their mid-70s. Having come of age during in the 1920's meant they didn't have the educational



Photo credit: Curated Lifestyle on Unsplash

opportunities I took for granted. Alvin finished his formal schooling at primary school and went to work as an apprentice baker; Jess left the paid workforce after their marriage. By his own account Alvin had been a difficult man, until one day in 1959 God opened his heart as, while kneading the next day's loaves, he listened to Billy Graham preach over the radio about being born again through God's Spirit. Jess and Alvin were people of prayer and hospitality. For a time Alvin and I taught Scripture together. What an odd couple we were – almost six decades between us and both equally terrified at the thought of having to manage a class of boisterous ten-year olds! As a young man wondering about service, they reminded me that ministry is found at the boundary between our inadequacies and God's sufficiency.

My wife Monica and I met our friend *Monica* during our nine years in Wagga Wagga. She was one of the first South Sudanese believers to join our Anglican parish. Like the rest of her compatriots she'd experienced years of turmoil, persecution and displacement before her arrival in regional Australia. Along the way she'd still found time to raise her family and prepare for ordained ministry. She was, and is, a gracious and wise friend who's helped us navigate the joys and challenges of connecting across cultures. Just a couple of months ago we hosted her and a number of other Mothers' Union members as we watched the talks from the NSW State Conference. As we grow into middle age and beyond she inspires us to hold on to the promise that in Christ there is a deep unity that embraces our different experiences and backgrounds.

There are other stories I could tell and names I could mention – friends who’ve cared for me, teachers who’ve stretched me and colleagues who’ve supported me. Behind and beyond them all is Jesus ‘the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ (Hebrews 12:2) How good is God to us – to meet us in flesh in blood, first in the person of His Son, and then through the sisters and brothers who run the race with us!



Rt Rev'd Dr Mark Short

Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia and Bishop of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn

A Glimmer of Hope

Deep inside she can feel it
indistinct but it is there,
she tries to hold onto it
but there is too much noise.

The world intrudes constantly,
there is no escape
except into her inner self.

Deep inside her she can feel it,
a tiny spark flickering,
refusing to be extinguished,
fighting the darkness

H O P E
Mocco Wollert

Hope for the present and the future

In 2024, Tearfund's Global Hope Report disclosed that only 48% of Australians were hopeful about their future, and just 25% were hopeful about our world. Sadly, many of us lack hope and are looking for comfort.

What gives you hope? Do you think that Cinderella will help you get through your difficult times? Is your hope in community? Creation? Our future? Politics? Money? Science? God? Chocolate? Something else?

Music can be comforting. Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers' song 'You Never Walk Alone' has encouraged many for decades:

*When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark
Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
For your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone...*

Edward Mote's song, 'My hope is built on nothing less', is also a hope-generating song:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand*

The Bible is full of honest words reminding us that the hardships we endure will not last forever, bringing comfort and hope. Right now, we are hearing a lot about different wars in our world. The Global Peace Index 2025 reports that there are about 59 conflicts involving 92 countries. This prevalence of war creates fear and a sense of hopelessness. Thankfully, the Bible teaches us how to hope in uncertain times. Isaiah 49:13 says, 'Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into

song, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their suffering’.

Barry Webb, in his book, *The Message of Isaiah*, tells us that this was written around 740 years before Christ, during the Assyrian Empire expansion. This was a crazy time politically, with many wars. Isaiah engaged his conflictual period of history with rich sociological and theological hope-filled ideas. Even the name Isaiah is hope-filled – it means ‘God is salvation’.

We can do similar today. We, too, can think in ways that bring hope, and share Bible passages that encourage us and those around us to keep going despite what is happening in the world. MU work and projects can bring hope. With its over 4 million members in 84 countries MU is an inspiring worldwide community that brings hope to many, including people impacted by stress and depression.

Our Charles Sturt University research into ‘effective recruitment, retention, and wellbeing strategies for rural NGO mental health workers’ has brought to my attention the extent of mental illness in our community. In 2020-2022, 22% of people in Australia had experienced a mental illness.¹ Researchers have also found that more than two

thirds of teachers show moderate to extremely severe symptoms of depression. Mothers’ Union members in Canberra-Goulburn are concerned about the wellbeing of teachers and the flow-on effect this has on children and families. We are going to spread hope within a local school community by giving teachers a beautiful thank-you card, a gift and food. Please pray for this action of hope.

The lived experience of reading the Bible and having faith in Jesus gives hope. This hope differs from hearing a fairy tale, such as Cinderella, or indulging in a treat like chocolate. Bishop Mark’s and my hope is in Jesus’ death, resurrection, and His gift of life everlasting with God. Having hope in Jesus brings many, like us, life, joy and much comfort during difficult times.

May we come together to take up the call by God to create hope for now and into the future in our local communities. After all, hope is a blessing. Hope is worth sharing, praying for and even singing about. Also, may we remember that our

hope is found in Christ, the solid rock on whom we stand. Faith in Christ helps us walk on with hope in our hearts through any wind or rain that could negatively impact our lives.



Dr Monica Short

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/overview/prevalence-and-impact-of-mental-illness>



This is an abridged version of what Dr Monica Short shared at the September Mothers Union service about the topic of ‘hope’.

Standing together

Having been encouraged by Robin, our national president, to see how we might engage with Anglicare WA in their new initiative to share the 'Standing Together' workshop across the Dioceses of Perth and Bunbury, Bunbury MU invited a representative of Anglicare to our Lady Day luncheon at the cathedral to share information on these workshops.

Subsequently, Mothers' Union branches and parishes were encouraged to arrange for a workshop to learn about the signs and drivers of family and domestic violence and how, as community, we can work together to end it.

Rev'd Justine Richmond, of the Parish of Dunsborough, shared the following report on their local workshop:

'Dunsborough MU hosted the Anglicare 'Standing Together' workshop about family and domestic violence on August 14. It was marketed as a community forum, and we invited over 30 community groups from the Dunsborough and Yallingup areas.

We had over 40 people attend, including police officers and city councillors, and had some meaningful conversations around family and domestic violence (FDV). After the one-hour presentation and morning tea, we broke into

groups for an organised conversation to discuss these great questions posed by the attendees:

- ❖ How can we get the message about FDV to younger people, busier people and males?
- ❖ What is the most effective issue to target? Is it the 'small' jokes or should we be targeting larger inappropriate things?
- ❖ How can we stop these behaviours happening behind closed doors?
- ❖ How do you lift someone up when they've hit rock bottom after being exposed to FDV for 20 years or more?
- ❖ How can we volunteer or help at the women's refuge?

There was an overwhelming consensus that the messages of the workshop need to be more widely broadcast – particularly to schools and sporting clubs. We had two formal requests for us to be involved in other community partnerships going forward and many people added their names to the list to be kept informed of future events, information and conversations.

Many thanks to the wonderful MU members who provided the delicious morning tea – it was good to host our guests with such abundant hospitality.





We are also grateful to Morwenna from Anglicare for her informative presentation.'

A number of other parishes have either had, or are planning to have, a workshop in their community. The first was held in the Mandurah parish, hosted by Mothers' Union. A member has shared the following experience of the immediate effect this had for her:

'During May 2025 I was privileged to attend an Anglicare 'Working Together' workshop hosted by the Mandurah branch of the Anglican Mothers' Union. The workshop was very well presented, the material supported by relevant statistics and examples and altogether thought-provoking. I found the whole experience interesting and was glad I had attended, but did not realise how much it had touched me until I attended a social occasion in my retirement village the following evening. While I was enjoying the interaction and waiting for the meal to be served a neighbour arrived who had chosen not to stay to eat but, in his words, was there 'to pick up two meals to take home to the old woman'. His turn of phrase startled me and I wondered why. I quickly realised he was displaying a prime example of characterising his wife in a belittling and demeaning way – a way which the workshop had highlighted to me, that the unthinking, casual turn of phrase can creep into our thoughts and expressions and which can be so hurtful to those we profess to love. I have resolved to be more aware and careful of my own casual conversations.'

Wendy Mabey

A Special Gift

Linda was pleased to see Frank coming out to meet her as she parked in the carport. She did have quite a few things to carry.

'Hello, my love,' Frank greeted her. 'Had a good morning? Many people turn up?'

'Yes. Very good attendance. And interesting speaker,' Linda said. 'Plenty of food, too. I've got some leftover tarts for you.'

'Yum. Those ladies sure know how to put on a spread. Let me carry that bag... umm... that doesn't look like a tart. Nothing edible in here. Where did you get it?'

'There were a few handed in at the bring and buy that didn't get sold.'

'What are you planning to do with it?'

'Absolutely nothing,' Linda told him, laughing.

'Then why did you bother to bring it home with you?'

'Because I thought you might like to take it with you when you take Bouncer for a walk.'

'What? Why would I do that?'

'Well, I know Dolly would love it. And you always walk past her place. Would you mind dropping it off?'

'I'll take it but only if you hide it in a gift box. I'm not walking round the street carrying a choko!'

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Connecting with kids

Photo credit: Aaron Burden on Unsplash

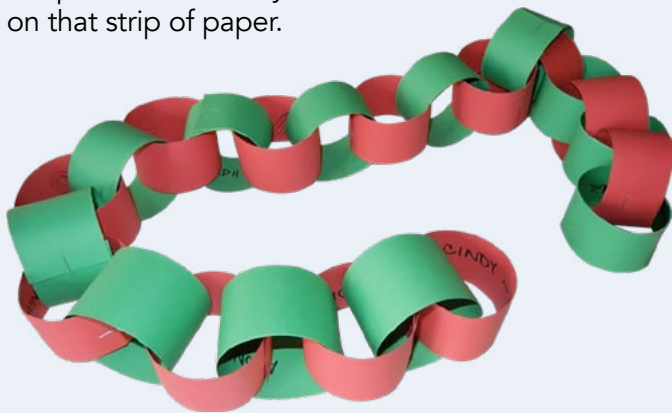
Some ideas for home or church

ESPECIALLY FOR ADVENT

Make a gift of praise for God. Gift wrap a small cardboard box and tie a bright ribbon around it or paste a large square of gift wrap onto backing paper and add ribbons so it looks like a present. Then on small pieces of paper or sticky labels each person can draw or write something they wish to thank God for. Write the following verse on a piece of card and display it by the box.

We thank you, our God, and praise you.
1 Chronicles 29:13

Make a prayer garland by cutting out 24 green and red paper strips. On each strip, write the name of a family (or church) member, friend or ministry. Staple the strips as links into one long garland. Hang the garland as a decoration. Each day during advent, remove one of the paper strips. Pray for the person or ministry whose name is on that strip of paper.



<https://www.mothersunion.org/resources> Used by permission

Check out the Christian Parenting Australia Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ChristianParentingAustralia> Recent posts include a link to Raising Disciples (<https://raisingdisciples.squarespace.com>), a website dedicated to offering resources for parents and ministry workers as they 'Raise Disciples'. Lots of great ideas for Advent and other occasions.

ANYTIME

Go for a walk outside

What can you see if you look up? Can you see any funny shaped clouds? Can you hear any birds? What can you see if you look down? Can you see any tiny creatures? Any footprints? Any interesting flowers or leaves?

Play 'follow the leader'.



Make a banner or wind 'sock'. Take a roll of cardboard. Decorate this and add strips of paper onto the bottom of it. Attach some string to the top. Hold this in the air or hang it from a tree to watch the way the wind blows. Talk about the way the Holy Spirit is at work in us, unseen, but real, just like the wind.

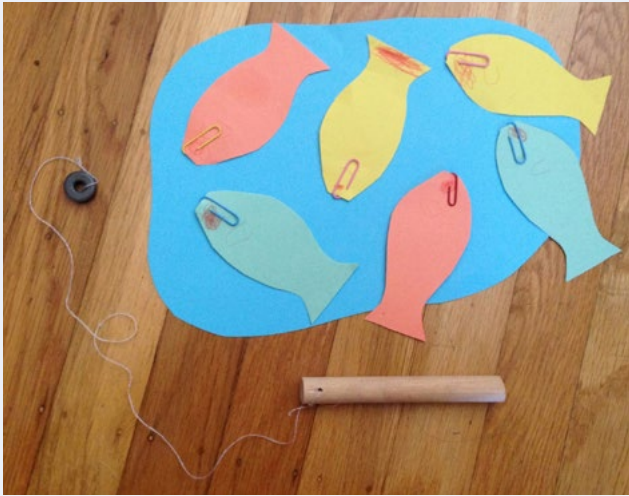
Make puppets from old socks or other recycled materials. Use them to retell a Bible story.



Plant seeds in egg cartons or empty yoghurt pots (with drainage holes).

Make a sand tray and use it to create cities, jungles, moonscapes or whatever takes your fancy. Talk about how God knows every one of us, even though we are more numerous than the grains of sand. Make up a prayer thanking God for His love and care.

Draw and cut out paper fish. Write the name of a person in the group on each fish. Attach metal paper clips to each fish and then go 'fishing'. Pray for the person named as each fish is caught.



(These and other ideas can be found at <https://1277.org.uk>)



**CHILDREN
& MEDIA
AUSTRALIA**

Are you looking for movies to entertain children this summer? **'Know Before You Go'** is a great resource for those who want detailed information about movies for children. The KBYG reviews provide descriptions of the content of movies, highlighting areas which may be of concern to parents. Reviewers with child development expertise review all G and PG movies as soon as possible after their release in Australia. Selected M movies which are likely to appeal to younger audiences are also reviewed. Their database also includes reviews of 'golden oldies' and many new movies now available on streaming services. You can find the reviews at <https://childrenandmedia.org.au/movie-reviews/>

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, 'Come Lord Jesus!'

Amen.

Henri J.M. Nouwen

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What in the world is MU up to in...

THE MURRAY AND WILLOCHRA

At a state council meeting it was decided to donate grocery vouchers to farmers in drought affected areas in South Australia. AMUA Australian Disaster Fund and AMUA in Adelaide Diocese donated funds and other donations were received. We decided on using local supermarkets so that farmers, family and the whole community would benefit. Sounds easy??? How to choose recipients, which areas to focus on, what value for each voucher, how to deliver them – all these questions were considered at length.

Willochra decided to concentrate mostly on the mid-north of SA and The Murray on the Murray Mallee. There are many organisations offering some kind of help, but we decided on a personal approach, together with a note to say who the gift was from. Some of the stories of resilience from those on the land have been a real eye-opener. As members in rural dioceses some of us live on properties ourselves and find that the experience of hardship is often not widely shared. To have to reduce the stock levels, which will take many good years to rebuild, is a common painful story. Green paddocks after late rain are OK for now but may not result in worthwhile pasture to be next year's fodder.

The monetary value itself would not go far, but we hope that the fact that someone cares and is thinking of them is uplifting and gives hope. Although not asked for, a few heartwarming text messages of thanks, such as, 'Your gift of groceries is such kindness. I will never forget your help', 'your emotional and financial gesture helps more than you might realise', 'it's great to know that there are generous and kind people out there' have been received.

As the news of this activity filtered through to members many positive comments were received. The ownership of this form of AMUA outreach giving has been felt far and wide. To help those whose family life has met with adversity has taken on a more personal feeling.

Jocelyn Williamson and Roz Rowett, Presidents

NORTH WEST AUSTRALIA

The Diocese of North West Australia is the largest diocese in Australia, but one of the smallest in numbers of MU members. We have one active branch in Geraldton and one branch, with only four members now, in Carnarvon. During the year we have learned much from visiting speakers and have been able to fulfil our MU Objectives in a variety of ways.



Elizabeth Parker, MU Vice President (Parenting) and wife of our bishop, told us about their trip to Karamoja (Uganda) for the consecration of the new bishop. Elizabeth handed over the baby knitwear we had sent for them, which was much appreciated.



Rev'd Matt Warth, Assistant Minister at St George's Bluff Point, spoke to us regarding his work in Wickham, WA, and the nearby Roebourne Correctional Facility, which houses mainly Indigenous men. It was inspiring to hear his respect for the Aboriginal Christians and of their desire for their people to come to know Jesus.



In response to our MU desire to hold a family event, our ministers organised a Saturday 'Messy Church', at which some of our members assisted. There were craft activities for various ages, a chat with Roger the Dog, and music.



June and December are our Women's Refuge delivery months. In June two speakers from the

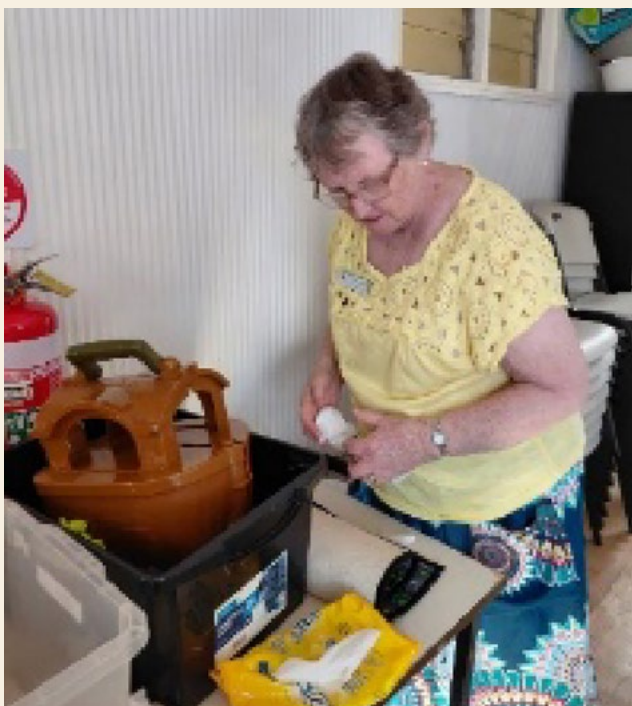
Geraldton Women's Refuge spoke to us and, again, it was wonderful to hear their passion for their work and the women they care for. They were effusive in their thanks to us for welcoming them, hearing about their work and for the bags of toiletries they took away with them.



The Chaplain to the Geraldton Mission to Seafarers, Rev'd Peter Schendzielorz, told us about his work with seafarers – taking supplies aboard ships, driving seafarers to the hospital, the airport in response to an emergency with a child back home in China, the shops or wherever they need to go. He spoke about seafarers' life on board ship: loneliness, angst about their families, separation from their families for months at a time, their appreciation of the MtS and its services. Although Peter rarely sees individual seafarers again, and really meaningful talks with them are rare, he counts it a real joy when they do happen.

St George's Church holds a hymn singing morning once a term and our MU members provide and serve morning tea after the singing. People from one of the retirement homes in Geraldton come in their bus to join us and it is a very happy morning.





In August Wendy Mabey, as ONO Coordinator, and her husband, Ian, joined my husband, Rob, and me for a Mothers' Union promotion trip in our vast diocese. We travelled independently in motor homes and met up at each church on appointed days. I spoke briefly about MU at two services in Broome on Sunday 10. Wendy joined me at two ladies' Bible studies and Totspot.



We also visited Port Hedland, Karratha, Exmouth and Carnarvon.

Our visits were well received and the clergy wives were keen for me to keep them in touch with our activities.

Jenny Jamieson, President

For God so loved the world

We will soon be in the season of Advent – getting ready to celebrate Christmas. Many of our thoughts and activities are future-focused – we are busy doing things today to prepare for 'that day'. Our days are full of preparation, anticipation and hope. We will be getting ourselves, our families, and our homes ready for a special day of celebration and thanksgiving as we remember the gift of God with us – Immanuel, the arrival of the Messiah.

God's preparation for the first Christmas, the day of his incarnation, started with an announcement right at the beginning – back in the garden. The problem of human sin had created a divide that only God could repair...but He was ready with a rescue plan before Adam and Eve even knew the true depths of their predicament.

We read in Genesis 3:13-15

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'

The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this,

'Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'

From the beginning God speaks hope to his lost people – he gives them something to hold on to. And he continues to do this over and over in His Word. Like a series of wonderful Christmas cards God announces the hope of peace to his people through his prophets. Throughout the Old Testament God prepares his people by showing them their need for him as they experience the destructive poison that is sin. But he also speaks of the coming Messiah; the King who will defeat the enemies of his people, usher in the kingdom of God and bring about the restoration of all that has been lost in Eden – victory over sin and restoration of relationship with God.



Photo credit: Annie Spratt on Unsplash

God repeatedly reminds his people that he has not left them alone or forgotten them and he has not abandoned them to their sin. He tells them there is a great gift of rescue coming.

To Abraham in Genesis 22:18 he says

'...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed...'

And through Isaiah (9: 6)

'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

and Isaiah 7:14

'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.'

For people lost in sin and struggling in a fallen world, these are words of real joy and hope. God's messages were, and still are, a reminder to his people that he is with them. And He doesn't just say it once – these 'cards' announcing the hope of salvation are sent many times. God pursues and calls to his people over the centuries, preparing them for the day of salvation. And as we re-read these prophetic words the anticipation and yearning for the promised rescue builds.

The whole point of the season of Advent is to be living in preparation for and anticipation of the arrival of the Messiah – our waiting and preparing has a focal point. This Old Testament longing finally being fulfilled is expressed by Simeon the priest. After all the waiting and hoping through the centuries, finally the day of salvation arrives ...

In Luke 2: 25-32 we read:

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.

When he saw the infant Jesus he prayed,

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

As Christmas Day gets closer we remember the Old Testament prophecies and retell the Christmas story for a reason. We think about these events and the words of Simeon because they remind us that we are celebrating that God's promise for a Messiah has been fulfilled. God's own son – the Messiah Jesus – entered the world as a small and helpless child and he became the Suffering Servant who rescues us. He conquered death, reversing the curse of Eden by bearing the sin of His people in himself.

But before we celebrate, we live through the Advent season of longing and anticipation that is expressed by the prophets because it also echoes our own longing for the return of the King. We anticipate the time when he will finally defeat the enemies of his people, free us from the effects of sin and unveil the fullness of his Kingdom.

Nevertheless, the yearning of Advent is full of hope. Because God has kept his promise to his people in the past, we know that we can trust him for our future. We have a God who has defeated sin and who keeps his word to rescue us. He has not left us or abandoned us and our hope for the future is real because God's promises have been kept in the past. So, we enjoy the anticipation of the Advent season and all the preparation and excitement. We can send cards with messages



filled with real joy and glad tidings and we can celebrate in worship on Christmas day because we have a certain hope and our trust in God for tomorrow is not in vain.

Rachael Thyer

Around the Dioceses

ADELAIDE

After a lot of discussion and with great sadness it has been decided to close the Belair branch and let our members join other branches or become Lone/Diocesan Members at the end of this year. We will go on being Belair MU members and registering as such. We will also remain part of the Worldwide MU Family and continue to support the various projects and programs at home and abroad.

We have had an active group for many a year. A lot of our members served on the Diocesan and State Executive committees. A lot more volunteered in the Mothers' Union office and book shop on Leigh St in the city. All the members contributed to various funds that were used for state, national and international projects. We are currently supporting families in the north of our State who have been affected by the severe drought.

Our members have been an integral part of the Parish and served the community at large in many varied ways. Anyone remember Margaret Pressley, Meg Baker, Jean Fordham? And some current members: Evelyn Scrivens, Iris Downes, Marion McCall and Lois Hall just to name a few.

Joyline Flint

BRISBANE

St Luke's, (Toowoomba) AMUA members were out and about during the Carnival of Flowers, connecting with people within the church and the community, as well as the many visitors. They produced two beautiful floral displays in the church and handed out information to visitors (ably assisted by Archbishop Jeremy Greaves). Members also made and delivered posies of flowers to those in the community who weren't able to join in the fun.

Manly/Wynnum MU had the privilege of welcoming Patrick Dare from Dementia Australia to share his story of living with dementia at the recent Dementia Awareness Workshop we hosted. Patrick shared his real-life story of diagnosis, adjustment and creative living with dementia. 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. We certainly will!!



In July we welcomed new members, Joan Harvey in Algester and Shirley Davis and Shirley Newton in Drayton.



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 beautiful thoroughness with all she did in this role. Dorothy is now our correspondence members coordinator. As you can see, there is a place for everyone in our MU.

We have planned an exciting programme for the remainder of the year and look forward to a visit from AMUA President Robin Ray in November..



Attribution: Rev'd Paul Black Used by permission

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

'Over the Fence' – a morning with a difference for Central Queensland MU.

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 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.

The local restaurant conference room 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 in *Mia Mia*, 'Over the fence'. 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. Thank you, Virginia, along with the hard-working team who helped the success of this event, and to the restaurant who eased the burden of self-catering.



Sue Witten

NEWCASTLE

At this year's 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, on Friday May 2, 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 says, '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 in Perth has celebrated a number of significant events in recent months. Among these were the welcoming of new members at St Lawrence's, Dalkeith, and the thanking of Carol Rumens (Guildford MU), who has held many positions in MU, both on the Perth executive committee and in her branch, for her dedicated and selfless service.





On August 9, members from across Perth joined our hosts, Melville MU, to observe Mary Sumner Day. We began with a soup-and-sandwich lunch, which was followed by an address by Judith Nichols entitled, 'Did Mary Sumner have it easy?' ¹

Melville MU, along with other Holy Cross parishioners, has also celebrated a double milestone: 15 years of hosting the Mainly Music program and 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.

Jan Rose



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.



Prayer

Father, this Advent, we eagerly await Jesus' drawing near to us again. In a world that can feel overcome by the sins of violence, poverty and injustice, we pray that we can be instruments of peace and hope in Your name.
Amen

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¹ See p.10 for Judith's message on Mary Sumner Day.



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 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

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



Photo credit: Annie Spratt on Unsplash

Journeying through Advent

DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
01 Give thanks that the hope of Christ shines as light in the darkness	02 Ask God to give you hope and expectation for your Advent journey	03 Reflect on how the events of this year may affect your attitude to the season	04 Consider your "to do" list this Advent. Is there scope to simplify in any way?	05 Thank God that as we journey to the new-born Christ our risen Lord accompanies us	06 Choose a Bible verse about the nativity and use it as an inspiration for prayer	07 Pray for those whose difficult lives are more heard to bear in this season of good cheer
08 Give thanks for our Prince of Peace, and for our call to be peace-makers in the world	09 Pray for the message of Christmas to be heard amidst the season's commercialisation	10 Thank God for Mary's obedience. Is there something you sense God is asking of you?	11 Pray for areas of the world where there will be no peace this Christmas	12 Choose a favourite carol and use it as an inspiration for prayer	13 How would you explain the meaning of the nativity to someone who had never heard?	14 Pray for refugees spending Christmas away from home and family
15 Give thanks that the love of Christ brings forgiveness and new mercies every day	16 As you write cards or send email greetings pray God's blessing for the recipients	17 Read an account of the nativity in a different Bible version for a fresh insight	18 On your Advent journey pray for all who are seeking Christ for the first time	19 As you taste a seasonal treat give thanks for Christ who came as the bread of life	20 Think of a good memory from a past Christmas and thank God for it	21 Pray for families who struggle to provide necessities and treats for their family
22 Reflect on what may lie ahead in the coming year. Be honest with God about your hopes and concerns	23 Pray for the bereaved and families who will be apart or in conflict this Christmas	24 Pray for the homeless that they will find shelter during this season	25 Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Let earth receive her King! 			