

# MIAmia

SPRING 2025

ANGLICAN  
MOTHERS UNION  
AUSTRALIA

*Great is  
the Lord, and  
greatly to be  
praised*

Psalm 145:3a







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

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

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

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

Its FIVE OBJECTIVES are:

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

# MIAmia

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

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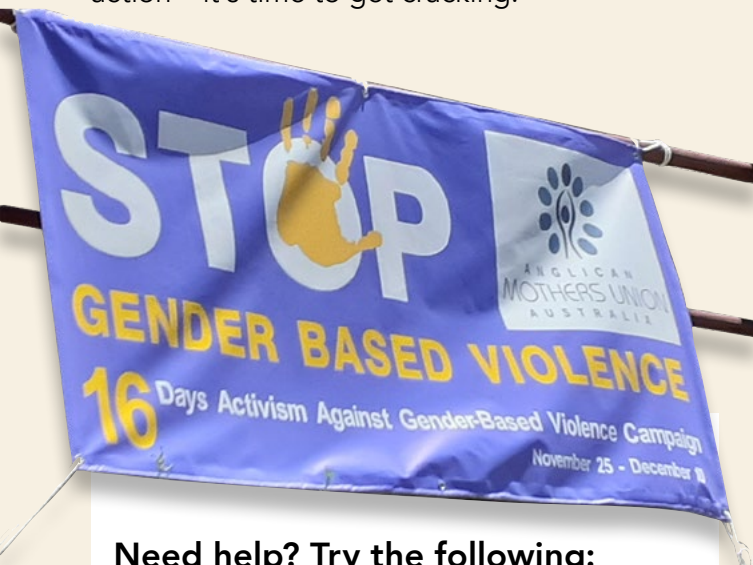
Photo credit: Jon Tyson on Unsplash

## No Time to Waste

**Are you planning to join the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence' campaign (November 25 to December 10) in 2025?**

The clock is ticking, and early planning is important if you want to make an impact in your parish or wider community.

Whatever you plan to do – hold a vigil or a special service, mount a display, arrange for a visit from a speaker on the issue of family and domestic violence, collect items for a local women's refuge or collaborate with other groups to call churches and communities to action – it's time to get cracking.



### Need help? Try the following:

- The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia 'Ten Commitments' website, <https://www.tencommitments.org.au>
- AMUA's Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator ([prayer@muaustralia.org.au](mailto:prayer@muaustralia.org.au))
- *Mia Mia* Spring 2024

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## From the Editor's desk

As the days lengthen and gardens begin to flourish once again after the cold and darkness of winter I find myself marvelling at God's creativity and care for us. As I thought about this my mind went to Jesus' words in Matthew 7:30-33 '...if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.'

However, although I know this, it's easy to allow the busyness and bumps of life to get me off-track, so I was delighted when Rev'd Dr Charles Sherlock agreed to my request to write about the place *worship* has in the life of every Christian. As members of Mothers' Union we affirm that we are a 'fellowship of Christians united in prayer, *worship* and service'. I hope you are as encouraged as I have been to join him in reflecting on the idea that 'Christian worship is...a lifestyle. A lifestyle of respect for God...' and that 'Godly worship in church **shapes and empowers** godly lifestyles, personal and communal.' May his words encourage you, too, as individuals and in your church and MU groups.

As always, I have enjoyed reading the reports of MU activity from branches and dioceses. In this issue the spotlight has been turned on several dioceses in South Australia and Western Australia. It is clear that MU members are keen to engage with their communities by seeking to connect with those whose 'lives have met with adversity', celebrating the heritage we share as Mary Sumner's successors and encouraging one another as disciples of Christ in our times of prayer and worship.

I hope you enjoy reading the poems, prayers, reflections and words of encouragement from our Executive members and other contributors in this issue of *Mia Mia* and may you know God's richest blessing as you serve Him in MU and beyond.

**Christine**



## The President writes...

### United across the world in worship

When I reflect on being united in worship, my thoughts go back to my earliest memories of going to church and worshipping with my family. My mother would load us into the family car and my father would drive into the local town via a couple of other farms, where we picked up a few more children. It is amazing how many you can fit in a car, sitting forward and back across a bench seat, of course, before the advent of seat belts! As a small child I loved the Trinity hymn that begins '*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, early in the morning our songs shall rise to thee...*' Family members recall how I used to walk around the backyard at home singing, no doubt my childlike version of that hymn. It was a joy to sing it again as we celebrated Trinity Sunday with Anglicans worldwide. I was reminded of the words of Psalm 86:9, '*All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name*'. For me, music and singing are essential to glorifying God in worship.

Singing unites us in worship, as we raise our voices in praise. I especially give thanks for the opportunities I have had to worship with other cultures and in other countries. One of the things I miss most from our time in



Kate Cowley, a Torres Strait Islander, ready with her drum to accompany worship.

Photo credit: Robin Ray



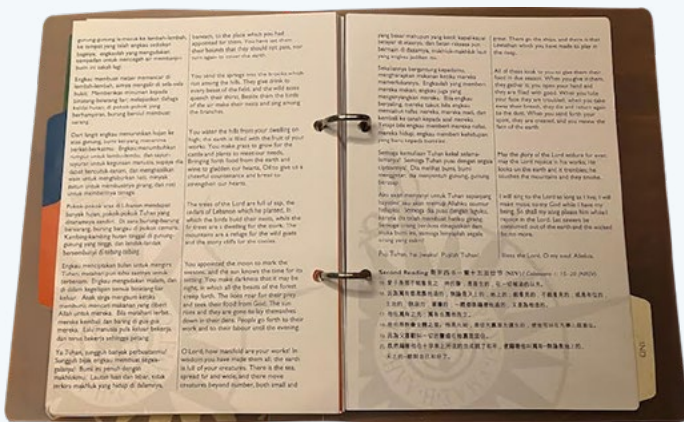


Photo credit: Robin Ray

North Queensland is worshipping with Torres Strait Islander peoples. The beat of the drum and the thrum of guitars, as well as the enthusiastic singing, is so uplifting. I was privileged to again experience this type of energetic and engaging worship last year when I was in Popondetta. Joining in the various worship services with students and their families at Modawa Institute, including when they sang and worshipped in language, was balm to my soul, quite a 'mountain top experience'.

Throughout my life I have had other opportunities to be united in worship across the world, regardless of language. While at a conference in Berlin I attended a Lutheran church not far from my suburban hotel. Despite my negligible German, I could follow the intonation of the prayers and the general flow of the service, which gave me a strong sense of engaging in worship. Also, during the Lambeth Conference in 2008 our day began with bishops and spouses worshipping together in services led by different countries each day. When the service was in a language other than English, the printed service book included a translation along with the language and audio translation through headphones, which was also available. Regardless of which language group was leading worship, we all said the Lord's Prayer in our own language; an amazingly spiritual experience. Worshipping at other places and times, such as in All Saints' Cathedral in Nairobi, St George's in Jerusalem and Westminster Abbey in London, have enabled me to appreciate how diversity in worship enriches and unites us.

Every month when provincial presidents of the worldwide Mothers' Union are encouraged to join each other on the global call, we spend time in worship, Bible study and prayer for each other and the concerns of MU and our communities. Worship in that context unites us as we work for the coming of God's kingdom in our broken world. Praying the Lord's Prayer in our many languages over Zoom doesn't quite capture the same feeling as an in-person experience, because of the network latency lag, so I look forward to when we will be united in prayer, worship and service in-person in Durban as part of the Worldwide Gathering in October next year. In the meantime, the words of this hymn bring together our responsibilities as we worship and the love and assurance of prayers answered, equipping us to reach out and share God's love for all.

**Robin Ray**

*Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,  
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness  
bring and adore him: the Lord is his name.*

*Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,  
high on his heart he will bear it for you,  
comfort your sorrows, and answer your  
prayerfulness,  
guiding your steps in the way best for you.*

*Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness  
of the poor wealth you would reckon to own:  
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness,  
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.*

*These, though we bring them in trembling and  
fearfulness,  
he will accept for the name that is dear,  
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,  
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.*

*Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,  
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,  
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.*

*John S. B. Monsell, Public Domain*



# Every little bit counts

***Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.*** Isaiah 58:10-14

I sometimes reminisce about my droving experience. Sometime after I moved to the city my father told me he was organising a droving trip to relocate cattle from South East Queensland to Northern New South Wales. I put my hand up and applied for annual leave, longing to be back in the bush. Great memories. Days in the saddle, nights around a campfire beneath brilliant stars. The sounds of wildlife and scent of the bush.

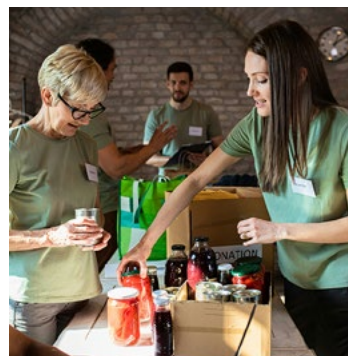
It's easy to forget the hardships... the heat and dust, the ever-present flies. You forget the exhaustion. The nights when you eat cold baked beans straight from the tin and fall asleep with your boots on. Cattle don't know the rules, and are apt to wander off in the wrong direction, especially when being driven along an unfenced stock route through a working cattle station. We were constantly performing a head count to make sure we hadn't lost any, or worse still, picked up a few.

When the relief crew arrived, I was more than ready to return to the city, back to my well-equipped kitchen, my warm shower, and my soft clean bed.

As I write this, I am following reports of another droving trip, The Great Charity Cattle Drive. This involves volunteers droving 2000 head of donated cattle from Longreach to Roma in Queensland, covering 775 kilometres over 87 days to raise funds to provide protein meals to the homeless and the disadvantaged and to create awareness of food insecurity in Australia. Events along the way will provide opportunities for fun and fellowship with locals and tourists.

While I am not suggesting that you buy a saddle, get astride a horse and wander along behind a mob of cattle in Western Queensland, I do urge you to support any initiatives in your local area which provide assistance to those in need. Do you have a community kitchen? A food bank? A parish pantry? People are doing it tough and every bit counts.

**Susan Skowronski**



Foodbank Getty Images on Unsplash







# The worldwide fellowship



## It's a miracle!

By this I mean the fact that you can find Christians in virtually every country on earth. Jesus left his disciples with specific instructions to go into all the world and preach the gospel. But he also left them with an impossible story to tell. They had to preach that there was only one God, who created all things and ruled over all things at a time when most people in the world believed in a multiplicity of gods.

They also had to preach that Jesus is the Son of God and that he was crucified and then rose from the dead. The idea that people were being summoned to worship a crucified man was ludicrous. And the resurrection was not much better. People believed in life after death, but they saw life after death as an escape from the body. Why on earth would anyone want a new body when the old one lets us down so badly?

And yet, this strange, unattractive message made its way into all the world, until today it is the

religious belief of more people than any other religion. The cross of Christ is everywhere. Look at what the Lord has done!

When you have contact with Christians from other parts of the world, you soon become aware of cultural differences and church differences also. But, as the Bible teaches us, we should aim to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3).

This call is addressed firstly to our membership of the local church. As Paul knew, and as we all know, we are still sinful people and the unity of the church, local or global, is often threatened by such things as quarrels, envy and false teaching. Nonetheless, we are still called to love each other.

One of the most wonderful experiences we can have as Christians is to encounter our fellow believers from all around the world and to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit. We are drawn to each other and express the love and

care that the Apostle talks about. After all, true believers trust in the same crucified and risen Lord and are forgiven by God's grace in Jesus.

The worldwide Mothers Union is a wonderful testimony to the blessing of God through his Son and his Spirit. I have met members of MU from many different countries. The experience has always stayed with me. To think of its small origins in an English parish with Mary Sumner, and then to compare it with now, with such a multitude of members in so many places, is again to think, 'Look at what the Lord has done!'

Furthermore, the purpose of MU 'to uphold Christ's teachings on marriage and family life' has never been more important. We live in a world, especially in the West, where family life is terribly endangered and children are increasingly being deprived of the two parents, mother and father, that they need. It is so important, therefore, to maintain the unity of MU around this purpose. We need to pray for each other (and the Wave of Prayer is a truly wonderful habit), care for each other and encourage each other, locally, but also globally. Prayer is a fundamental expression of love.

Another matter which should concern us is the way in which the world has changed. It is so much more difficult now for younger mothers to join MU because of the way in which society is so different. For example, many mothers are now working for a living, and their work life is very demanding. When we think of belonging to a church and a small bible study group, it is really hard for them to add MU to the list of things to be part of.

And yet a loving fellowship of mothers is so helpful. So, as we think about maintaining our fellowship, it is also worth thinking about how we can best serve the modern generation of mothers as they fulfil one of the most important tasks in all the world, raising children.

That is something to pray about and to act on.

**Christine Jensen**

## Worship: a Christlike lifestyle

'Worship' today is a religious word, what people do in church. This is not untrue, though the Bible mentions religion just once (James 1.26-27). 'Worship' there has two main aspects: to bow down, and to serve. A bit like being in court: when you enter or leave, bowing your head expresses your commitment to respect and serve the law.

To 'worship the Lord' means showing our profound respect to God, on whom we depend for all we are, and to serve God's purposes. Each Christian is 'the child of God', born anew by God's Spirit. Why? So we can live out of deep respect for God, as the Lord Jesus did – delightfully, beautifully and fully.

Such respect instinctively begins with praise for God's sheer goodness/Godness, gratitude for God's love, humility before God's grandeur, and sorrow for our disrespect and tainted service. This is the 'worship' we offer in church – but not only there.

Christian worship is thus a *lifestyle*. A lifestyle of respect for God who loved us into existence, for Christ who loved us to death, for the Spirit who inbreathes us night and day. A lifestyle of serving the mission of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### Worship: the biblical lifestyle

How then does what we do in church relate to this lifestyle?

Consider the Bible story of God's people. Having rescued them from oppression the Lord **gathered** them at Sinai to **hear** God's word (Exod 19.1-20.17; cf Deut 5.1-22; 6.1-9). To sustain this relationship ('covenant'), God gave them three-dimensional **prayers** of dedication, thanksgiving, humility and well-being ('sacrifices': Exod 20.18-26; 23.14-19), and an annual cleansing of past wrongs (Lev 16.29-30). These gifts would aid them in **living out** their relationship with God in fair relations with one another other (Exod 21.1-22.27; 23.1-9) and with the earth (Exod 23.10).

All this was to make them 'a people consecrated to the Lord' (Exod 23.31). Tragically, they had failed already (Exodus 16-17; Deut 1.19-45), and would do so again; self-centred lifestyles are false worship, which has consequences. Even so, God's patience and mercy multiplied, sending prophets



to announce a 'new covenant' (Jer 31.31-34), inaugurated by the costly suffering of the 'servant of God' (Is 42.1-8; 49.1-7; 50.4-9; 52.13-53.12).

This story undergirds the New Testament/ covenant. The Lord Jesus, as God's obedient servant (Matt 12.17-21; Acts 8.26-35) empowers us to become 'God's own people' (1 Pet 2.9, echoing Exod 19.6). Jesus called people to **gather** around him as disciples, to **listen** to his teaching, and to follow his example of **prayer** and holy living. Interpreting his life-giving death, he told them to '**do this** for my remembrance', and **sent** them to all nations, 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt 28.18-20).

### The pattern of Christian worship

This 'gather / listen / pray / do / go' structure is reflected in the shape of Christian services. It begins with God's call, attends to God's word, responds in prayer and action (notably in Holy Communion) and sends us out to live a lifestyle of respect for God's ways. It is no fluke that this 'shape' lies behind the Sunday services in *APBA*:

- Gathering in God's Name
- The Ministry of the Word
- The Ministry of Prayer / Prayers of the People
- Doing (whether Holy Communion or otherwise: cf *APBA* page 24 #16)
- The Sending out of God's people.

Each part can be enlivened by well-chosen hymns, and leading that respects God's holy delight in our human foibles. Confession of sin, both personal and social, is included lest we forget the distortion of God's goodness in which we tragically engage.

Such a shape offers a framework that both respects the pattern of God's ways, and yet is flexible. At a baptism, for example, the 'gathering' can include introducing the candidate and their

sponsors, while the 'doing' (the baptising) will be a natural focus. But the prayers could be short, and the sermon crafted with visitors in mind. And the 'sending' will encourage a Christian lifestyle, especially when it leads into good hospitality!

### Christian worship as a lifestyle

Godly worship in church shapes and empowers godly lifestyles, personal and communal. Yes, going Sunday by Sunday is repetitive. Yes, the various parts of the service can become familiar. Yes, there are spiritual dangers in just 'going through the motions' – though regular participation in church is actually most dangerous to sinful living!

Thank God for services in which each part is prayerfully prepared. Be grateful for the opportunity to listen *together* to the scriptures, and how they engage with our lives. The range and relevance of the prayers helps us traverse God's ways beyond those in church. And listening to one another's cares and delights over a cuppa begins the transition to a lifestyle of respectful loving service of God, neighbour and community.

Godly rituals undergird healthy Christian living. Time-honoured ones include brief prayer on waking and last thing at night, 'grace' before meals, committing travel to God, regular household prayers. The church year and personal anniversaries give opportunity to celebrate God's care and love. Heart-known words help take church into daily life – and don't forget music! Familiar songs evoke deep resonances to inspire a lifestyle of godly respect seen in your home, work and wider life.

What is true worship? A lifestyle of respect and service: above all, respect for the costly love of God in Christ, and taking our part in God's mission 'unto our life's end'.

**Charles Sherlock**



The Revd Dr Charles Sherlock, AM, taught Theology and Liturgy for four decades, chiefly at Ridley College Melbourne. He was a member of the Liturgical Commission that brought *A Prayer Book for Australia* to the 1995 General Synod. His commentary on it is published as *Australian Anglicans Worship performing APBA* (Broughton, 2020). Married to his co-theologian, the Revd Dr Peta Sherlock, he enjoys Meccano, reading, Trentham's Men's Shed and community life, and playing 5-string banjo at the local Farmers' Market.

## Coffee, chat and cheer

Twenty years ago I arrived in a new town and joined a church which had recently launched a mothers' group. I had four children, including a new baby, and I was eager for friendship and fellowship with others at my stage of life. The instigator of the group had herself been blessed by a mothers' group in another town. Since her youngest child had recently started school, she decided to start a group for the benefit of other women who were still surviving the pre-school years.

It was a wonderful group. We met fortnightly in the back of the church, while our children played in the hall, supervised by two generous older women. We always started with coffee and cake, and then our conversations ranged over the issues we faced in bringing up our children and working out our relationships at this stage of life. The discussion was grounded in a Christian perspective of marriage and parenting, but you didn't need to be a Christian to be a member of

the group. We were allowed to touch on matters to do with our own marriages, but not to 'bag' our husbands. And what was said in the group was intended to stay in the group. A number of non-Christian women joined us because they found the openness, the discussion about 'real' issues, and the lack of keeping up appearances, refreshing!

I wasn't a member of Mothers' Union then, as there was no branch close by, but in retrospect I have always thought that this mothers' group embodied the aims and objects of MU and that Mary Sumner would have approved!

Over the years, in other towns and churches, I have often wanted to be part of a mothers' group again, and possibly even to found one. Many churches had playgroups, but this was not the same thing – the focus in these groups was the children rather than the care of the mothers and with opportunity for discussion about life matters. When my children were teenagers I often thought how helpful a 'Teenagers' parenting group' would have been to discuss issues and pray for one another.





Last year, finally, I started a mothers' group at our local church. It was launched following parenting seminars presented by James and Simone Boswell, of 'Cyberparenting' fame. At the end of each of the seminars we advertised that a parenting discussion group would be starting up shortly if people were interested in putting their names down for further information. Most of the people who put their names down were women, and we launched a monthly Tuesday morning Mums' group.

We provide morning tea for the Mums and for the accompanying children, who play at the other end of the hall with toys that I bring in each week, supervised by a young woman paid to help. After our cuppa, the mums have an opportunity to share highlights or lowlights of the past week in parenting, followed by a discussion on a topic that I have prepared and advertised ahead of time. We finish with prayer for one another.

So far, our topics of discussion have been:

- It starts with us - as you would have your children be, so must you also be ...
- Raising my children – whose job is it?
- Character in our children
- Family routines
- Family traditions & celebrating Christmas
- Managing disagreements with your partner about parenting practice
- Celebrating Easter & talking about death with children
- How we view ourselves as mothers
- How to encourage our kids to own their faith & stand out

There are 10 women, including one grandmother, in the group and we have some profound conversations, which often include laughter and some tears. A few of the women have invited friends along from other contexts. The women who come are very open about their lives with their children and we learn

from one another's issues and concerns. We are still gaining momentum but it is such a worthwhile ministry to be part of.



**Elizabeth Parker**  
AMUA Vice-President (Parenting)

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## Campfire

Huddled by the campfire,  
cocooned in our little world of firelight  
wrapped in darkness  
intense and mysterious  
a world apart.  
A possum on an overhanging branch  
a thousand twinkling stars above  
the hoot of an owl unseen  
remind us we are free  
to dream  
to leave reality behind  
enjoy a moment  
when we are not ruled by  
the chaos of our everyday life.

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Photo credit: Wen Meinberg on Unsplash



# Christiana Blomfield: A committed Christian mother

Having written several articles about Christian mothers through history, this time I want to write about one much closer to home, in fact in my own parish of Denham Court, NSW – Christiana Jane (Brooks) Blomfield (1902-1852).

Christiana's father, Richard Brooks, was an adventurer and ship's captain involved in sea trade across the world, including transporting convicts to Australia. He brought his wife Christiana Eliza, their son and five daughters to Sydney in 1814. He built a cottage and later a substantial home at Denham Court, prospered in business and became a magistrate.

In 1820 the Brooks' 18-year-old daughter, Christiana, married Captain Thomas Blomfield. Settling near Maitland in the Hunter Valley, thanks to her father's wedding gift of 60 cattle, she became one of the region's earliest wealthy settler women. The family lived there for the next 15 years and had 10 sons and 2 daughters. Christiana was involved in the Church of England, befriending and supporting the local catechist and his wife. Christiana brought up her own 12 children, and after her sister died young, she fostered her 3 children too. She employed a convict to teach them but focused on their spiritual education herself. She wrote of the children:

'They come to me for an hour of a morning, when they read a portion of the Scripture, which I explain to the best of my ability, and I encourage them to make remarks on what they read. This



*Photos supplied by author*





hour is considered quite a recreation, and I endeavour to make it a pleasure to them.'

Christiana obviously considered bringing her children up in God's Word vitally important. She regularly read the Bible herself and noted what she was learning and seeking to apply as a Christian. Her great desire was to serve God. She wrote to her sister-in-law that what interfered with this aim was to find herself 'constantly...thinking of worldly affairs and occupied with selfish feelings. I know you will say, then why do you not pray for God's Holy Spirit to assist you.' Christiana wrote that she 'earnestly' did so '...but still I find I do not overcome evil passions as I ought. I will study the Bible...and ask for assistance from the Almighty to do His will.'

Christiana faced the regular trials of life in rural Australia: droughts, fires and floods, learning to honour God through them. She wrote, 'We must recollect that we do not come into the World expecting perfect happiness. We have a great many blessings, more than we deserve, and I hope we are sensible to the mercies of the Almighty.'

Her father planned to build a small family chapel at Denham Court, however he was gored by a bull and died in 1833. Christiana Eliza, his widow, died only a couple of years later. Her body was interred with her husband, but she also left instructions that the cost of erecting the chapel was to be paid for from her estate. So it was her daughter, that busy, writing, caring mother, Christiana Blomfield, who actually followed through on her parents' wishes. She donated 10 acres of land to the diocese and between the locals, the family, the diocese and the government, Denham Court parish was formally begun. Christiana and Thomas Blomfield oversaw

the chapel's construction of 80,000 stone bricks. Completed in 1838, it was used by many locals as well as the Brooks family. According to a much later article in the Sydney Morning Herald, 'Mrs Blomfield, of Denham Court was regarded as a "ministering angel" in all cases of poverty, affliction or sickness in the neighbourhood of Campbell- town'.

Christiana continued to write encouragingly to friends in England and in Maitland, including Rachel, the catechist's widow, whose daughter Mary eventually married the Blomfields' son John. John wanted to become a minister and his mother supported him in this, giving advice and encouragement. She said she placed all her children 'under God's guidance and protection and my prayers in every way for (them) are answered'. Another of the Blomfields married Reverend Tyrell, demonstrating their strong connections with clergy families. Christiana died aged only 50 and her tombstone in the Denham Court Anglican graveyard states plainly that she placed her faith and hope in Christ alone. It says, 'A sinner saved by the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.'

Christiana understood the gospel of the Lord Jesus and brought up her children in Bible reading and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Jesus as His disciples. Her life and writings demonstrate her real faith, accepting God as Sovereign, desiring to serve and obey Him, aware of her own unworthiness, calling on



the Holy Spirit as Helper and depending utterly on the mercy of God for salvation. Christiana, living up to her name, is a great local example of a Christian mother.

**Marge Mills**<sup>1</sup>

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# Solomon Islands revisited

I joined MU in Solomon Islands in 1991, while teaching at the Anglican boarding school, Selwyn College, at Maravovo on the island of Guadalcanal, about 50 km northwest of Guadalcanal. Since then I have regularly visited the country, including a year in 2004 working with the Anglican Sisters of the church, who were, with the other Anglican religious orders, working to set up the Christian Care Centre, a refuge for women and children. That year I was a member of the MU branch at St Barnabas' Cathedral, Honiara.

My regular visits were interrupted by Covid in 2020, and I finally had the opportunity to return in February this year. My usual accommodation in Honiara has been St Agnes' Mothers' Union Transit House, in a central part of the CBD, which offers self-contained, air-conditioned accommodation and shared kitchen facilities. I was delighted to see, when I arrived, that they have significantly improved the entrance stairs, making it easier to access the office and ground floor rooms!

St Agnes' is also the site of the MU Provincial Office, and while there I had the chance to catch up with old friends and also meet new executive members elected last year and to discuss their programmes with them. I am delighted to report



*St Barnabas Cathedral MU members*



that there are many highly qualified younger women in the country who are stepping into leadership roles, including the new President, Sandra Rollands, from Ysabel Diocese, and Vice President Deborah Bora Kole, who is a former student of mine, and has a Master's degree from Monash University in Women's Studies. Deborah works for the United Nations and lives in Guadalcanal Diocese.

Provincial MU purchased a minibus in 2023, which has greatly enhanced their ability to offer programmes in the Dioceses of Central Melanesia and Guadalcanal. Some of their most important programmes include Adult Literacy and Positive Parenting, and they are working towards the production of literacy materials which reflect the goals of the Positive Parenting programme. This has become very important with the increase in reported incidents of child abuse coming from all over the country. Positive Parenting and Literacy programmes are also run by MU members in all dioceses, sometimes with the support of other NGOs, such as World Vision.

Other programmes run by various dioceses include the sewing of apparel, building and repairing rest houses, running kindergartens, women's refuge centres, hospital visiting (including providing food for patients), rehabilitation and positive parenting with jail inmates, supporting the Christian Care Centres on Guadalcanal and Malaita and the Deaf School on Guadalcanal and livelihood, disaster resilience and life skills programmes.

As the biggest women's organisation in the country, MU's work and influence is far-reaching and very important, as its membership reaches right down to village level and across the entire country.

**Helen Newton**



*Helen with Solomon Islands Executive members*



*Provincial President, Sandra Rollands*

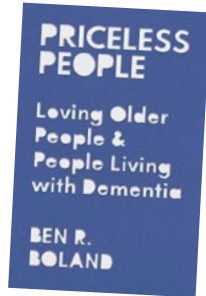
# From My Bookshelf

As any aspiring author knows, getting a book into print is no easy task. However, two of our regular contributors have had the honour of seeing the fruit of their hard work appear on bookstore shelves in recent days.



**Rev'd Ben Boland** has worked as a chaplain in aged care for over 15 years. Ben's research and experience in this field has deservedly attracted worldwide attention. Regular readers of *Mia* will remember the series of

articles which he wrote for *Mia* in 2021-22. Further work in this space has led to the recent publication of his new book, 'Priceless People'. In this very useful book Ben looks at topics such as what scripture has to say about growing older, how to show Christian love to people living with dementia, steps to take in developing a multisensory ministry to people living with dementia, ministry with the silent and much more. This very easy-to-read and practical book deserves to be read and reread by everyone who has a desire to continue to serve our brothers and sisters who can no longer physically share in our wider congregational life due to the debilitating effects of old age or dementia. Published by Christian Focus, *Priceless People* is available through the publisher, Christian bookstores and Amazon.



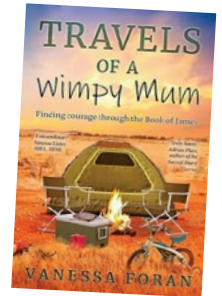
**Rt Rev'd Dr Peter Brain** has been in Christian ministry since 1975 and has a deep love for Jesus, the scriptures, people, and as an Anglican, the liturgies of the church. *Our Rich Liturgical Heritage* is a selection of articles in which

all of these threads are drawn together so as to enhance our worship and strengthen our faith. To quote the publisher, 'The book provides bite-size contemplations that can encourage believers to explore not only their own beliefs but also the basis of commonality



within their Christian community. Whether you are an individual looking for personal meditative material or a study group seeking ideas for discussion, these reflections will undergird and expand your knowledge and understanding of the background and biblical sources of Anglican liturgy.' *Our Rich Liturgical Heritage* is available from the publisher, Broughton Books, and Koorong.

Another Australian writer to have a book published recently is **Vanessa Foran**. Jenny Rainsford (MU Bendigo) shares her thoughts on 'Travels of a Wimpy Mum'.



'...in her first book, 'Travels of a Wimpy Mum', Vanessa Foran, using pseudonyms, shares her experiences and those of her husband and three children in a frank, chatty style to which the everyday mum/parent/reader could relate.

Jane (Vanessa) and her family toured outback Australia over about 14 weeks, sometimes experiencing fairly rough conditions, challenges and unexpected situations, and meeting fascinating people. Overall they discover a greater appreciation of the awe and wonder of God's creation. Jane discovers her need to rely on God in a fresh way. She is drawn to the book of James as she struggles with her own uncertainties, and inadequacies, and there finds a wealth of guidance and reassurance. There is much humour sprinkled throughout the book. There is also a greater understanding and appreciation of her husband and her children, especially of their youngest, who lives with autism. With their permission, Vanessa is able to include the perspectives of her two girls in their own diary entries.

In the words of another author, Cecily Paterson, this book is about 'family and faith, marriage and mental health, adventure and honesty'. In a lovely addition to the book for those who wish to explore the Scriptures and their faith further, Vanessa has added discussion questions for book clubs or Bible study groups.

A 'must read'!

Published by 598 Press. Available as ISBN E-Book and Paperback and through major Christian booksellers (Koorong), also through Amazon.



# New project coming soon in North Queensland!

The Mackay and District Branch is excited to announce the launch of a Pre-Loved Formal Gown Shop in the historic Holy Trinity Parish Hall. We have been truly blessed with the opportunity to utilize the beautiful stage area of this landmark building in the heart of the Mackay CBD.

This initiative is in partnership with the Mackay Anglican Cluster's new ministry centre, Faith in Action – Coffee & Op Shop (FIA). FIA is designed to be a welcoming space where people can enjoy a cuppa and browse a variety of donated goods at affordable prices.

## Our Purpose

At a time when the cost of living continues to challenge families, our goal is to provide reasonably priced formal gowns to the community. We hope to create a space that allows young women to browse and try on beautiful, donated dresses in an elegant and uplifting environment, rather than feeling like they are in a second-hand store.



Proceeds from the gown sales will be reinvested into local MU projects and will also contribute to the maintenance and preservation of the magnificent heritage building that will house the store. This initiative will be a vital community resource – offering support to families facing adversity and also promoting the mission of Mothers Union. By fostering dignity, confidence and hope it strengthens the bonds of care and compassion within our community.

## How You Can Help

We are seeking donations of pre-loved formal gowns in good condition. If you, your family, friends, or organisation have gowns that are no longer needed we would accept them with gratitude. We invite branches, parishes, families and friends to support this project by:

- Spreading the word within your parish and social circles.
- Holding a formal dress drive in your local area.
- Donating gowns that are no longer needed but could bless another young woman.

### How to Send Your Donations:

Donations can be sent via Parcel Post 5kg satchel (\$22.85) to: PO Box 234, Mackay QLD 4740 This option provides great value depending on the size and number of dresses that fit into a package.

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a collection, please feel free to reach out. Thank you for being part of this journey—your support is truly a blessing.

**Kristi Day**

# The value of reflection

In the busyness of life, daily responsibilities can easily overshadow moments for quiet reflection. Yet, as members of the Mothers' Union, we are encouraged to seek God's guidance, allowing His voice to shape our faith and commitment to serving others.

True listening is an intentional act, one that draws on prayer, scripture and thoughtful reflection. Amid countless distractions, setting aside time for this practice requires both discipline and devotion. The core mission of the Mothers' Union – nurturing strong relationships, promoting peace, and supporting communities – naturally aligns with attentive listening, as God's guidance equips us to serve with compassion and purpose.

Prayer becomes more meaningful when we view it not only as an opportunity to present our needs, but also to be receptive. In moments of stillness, God offers direction and reassurance, strengthening our bond with Him. The objectives of the Mothers' Union – uniting Christians in prayer, worship and service – are deepened when

we listen in prayer, allowing our actions to reflect His will.

Scripture, too, is a vital means through which God speaks. The Bible offers wisdom and encouragement, urging us to embrace Christ's teachings and deepen our understanding of faith. Approaching scripture with openness enables us to discern God's guidance toward love, justice, and reconciliation.

Listening to God leads us to action. When we are attentive, we become more sensitive to the needs around us, responding in kindness – whether supporting a struggling parent, working for social justice, or fostering peace. Through these acts, we embody God's presence and love in our communities.

Ultimately, attentive listening brings peace, clarity, and purpose. We become more aware of God's presence, letting His wisdom influence our choices. This practice supports the Mothers' Union vision of a world flourishing through both prayer and action, helping to build communities grounded in faith, love, and service.

**Kristi Day**



Photo credit: Alexandra Fuller on Unsplash



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

## ... IN THE MURRAY

The Anglican Diocese of The Murray is located in the south-eastern region of South Australia. Founded in 1970 as part of the Province of South Australia, it takes in the Fleurieu Peninsula, the Riverland, Adelaide Hills, Murraylands and the southern suburbs of Adelaide. The cathedral church of the diocese is the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Murray Bridge.

### Mothers' Union in The Murray

In recent times, we in The Murray, together with most of South Australia, have been experiencing



*Murray Bridge Lone members*



*Partial Audio Mia Mia recording team*



*Mt Barker angels*

drought conditions. At the recent State meeting there was a fairly lengthy discussion on the plight of farmers, particularly in Willochra diocese, and how MU can give some assistance. It was decided that it would be best to give families vouchers which could be used at their local stores, thereby benefitting both the individuals and the township. We applied for a grant of \$2000 from AMUA Disaster Relief Fund to help, and were delighted to hear that AC has granted \$2000 to both The Murray and Willochra Dioceses. Adelaide diocese has also donated \$2500 to each of these dioceses.

Mount Barker members have taken on the responsibility of recording each issue of *Mia Mia*, which they really enjoy. They love the challenge of presenting the material so that people with low vision can access it. They also enjoy making angels, each with a message, to attach to the





Rev'd Carol

rectory fence each Christmas for passers-by to take home. Last year all 120 angels were taken.

### Prayer and Worship

The Southern Suburbs branch hosted our November diocesan council meeting at St Aidan's Aberfoyle Park, starting with the Wave of Prayer. Our chaplain, Fr Daniel, incorporated the Wave of Prayer into the Communion service. At the beginning of the service, six candles were lit, one for each of our linked dioceses, and six members read out the prayer points for each diocese. This is the first time we have celebrated the Wave of Prayer as a diocese. As our dates are 17-19 December, branches are encouraged to observe the Wave of Prayer at their November meeting, as well as individually on 17-19 December.

One member, Rev'd Carol Cornwall, is an Anglicare Chaplain, and she ministers to elderly people with a weekly service at a residential care home. She also leads our branch quiet day every Lent using material from the AMUA and/or the Mothers' Union UK website.

**Caroline Earl**

## ... IN WILLOCHRA

The diocese covers a vast area – over 80% of South Australia from the desert to the sea, with farming, mining and steelworks industries the main areas for employment.

Although the AMUA members are ageing and less able to gather together, Lady Day and Mary Sumner day are diocesan events that enable members to gather together and are a highlight of our year. The '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence' is promoted, and two prayer services were held in 2024 in the Diocese to raise awareness and offer support for those experiencing family and domestic violence. We endeavour to keep the work of AMUA before the wider diocesan family through promotion at the annual Diocesan Synod. *Mia Mia* magazines and the Diocesan President's newsletters are also made available at each church in the diocese.

Members and branches raise funds and provide goods for Anglicare/Quickest Warmth and for the Diocesan bursary which supports Indigenous students with their education. The Mission to Seafarers, The Diocese of Mandalay in Myanmar and AMUA projects are also supported.



Willochra 16 days display





*Willochra 16 days*

### **Mothers' Union in the community**

At the local level, branches still reach out into the community through nursing home visiting, involvement with local worship, Op-shops, school breakfast club, Mainly Music, community café and individual support and prayer. Each year the World Day of Prayer brings together members celebrating with other congregations.

Drought has been experienced in many areas of the diocese in recent years and, as a gesture of support, funds were requested (and received) from the AMUA Disaster Fund to help farming families in need.

**Roz Rowett**



*Willochra welcomes new member, Karen, at synod*



## ...IN BUNBURY

The Diocese of Bunbury encompasses the southwest of Western Australia, with members living in urban areas, in small rural communities and in tourist hotspots – on farms, in towns, in lifestyle and retirement villages, amongst tall timber forests and surrounded by ocean.

While most of our members are able to attend regular branch meetings, we do have a small number of Lone members and a couple of members who take part in our MU by Zoom meetings. Branch gatherings are as diverse as the landscapes that embrace their members – from small get-togethers for prayer, worship and fellowship, to larger branch gatherings for programmed activities, to more formal meetings. Quiet Days, guest speakers, displays on Mothers' Day of mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers and other important mother figures, Hope25 quilts, joy bags, craft times, support for the Angel Tree project of Prison Fellowship WA, baptism and wedding gifts and anniversary cards, prayer partners, simnel cake and flower sprays, 'Cuppa on the Verandah' and Christmas Baskets are just some of our branch activities.



*One of two Hope25 quilts made by Busselton branch, presented to parishioners on Pentecost Sunday.*

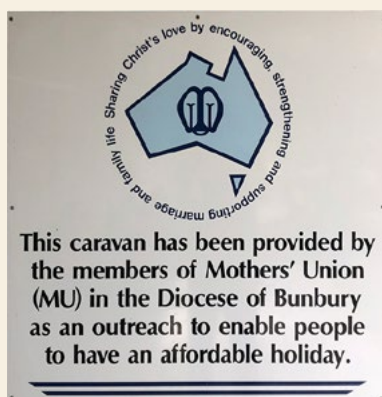


*Lady Day in Albany*



Combined gatherings of branches for special outings and activities, involvement of parishioners in branch-hosted workshops and prayer days, promotion of the '16 Days of Activism', celebrating Mary Sumner Day in parish services and being engaged in the activities of their parish, along with the many activities above, are just some of the ways branches share the joy of Mothers' Union.

Lady Day, Friendship Day and Country Rally/AGM are our three Diocesan get-togethers each year. Lady Day has, for the past two years, been celebrated in both Albany on our south coast and in Bunbury at our Cathedral. This has provided more opportunity for members no longer able to travel vast distances to be able to attend a service closer to home. Friendship Day has been held for the past five years and has provided a more informal opportunity for members to meet together for a morning of learning through an interactive workshop and an afternoon of sharing what is happening in our branches and our diocese. The location for Friendship Day is different each year but it is always in a small inland parish, not necessarily one with a Mothers' Union branch. The Country Rally also changes location each year, being hosted by one of our larger branches, usually coastal in location. Both Lady Day and the Country Rally/AGM commence with a Eucharist and are followed by a luncheon with a guest speaker.



For many years Mothers' Union has maintained a caravan at our diocesan campsite in Busselton. A pop top van, purchased second-hand in 2013, served our purposes well, with branches sponsoring families

for a week-long holiday and the van being available to members of the community at other times. An inspection in 2024 showed that our van was no longer fit for purpose for us so, after much searching, we purchased a newer model, still secondhand but of solid roof construction. Each school holiday period (other than July when the campsite is closed) our executive reserves a week or two for booking by branches or by

the executive through its Family Holiday Fund. Sponsorship has been provided to grandparents who are carers for their grandchildren, women and children who have left domestic and family violence circumstances, families affected by cancer and families who have not had the income to afford a holiday using their own resources or who have faced other life challenges. Our families come from our parishes and from referrals from school chaplains or local support agencies.

**Wendy Mabey**

### ...IN PERTH

There are 23 branches of Mothers' Union in Perth diocese – 18 metropolitan, one country, three Sudanese and one Zimbabwean. Of the metropolitan area branches, all but one meet during the day. One parish has two groups, one of which meets at night to cater for members who work. We have an Executive Committee of 17 who meet no less than 10 times a year. Our year commences in January with a retreat for prayer and planning. The executive has a Leadership Training Day for current and prospective branch leaders. Our chaplain produces Bible Studies based on our annual theme. Our very active



*Jan Rose at East Victoria Park*

President endeavours to visit each branch throughout the year to encourage members and answer questions they may have about MU matters.

The metro area is divided into two areas, North and South, each with a President, who is a member of the Diocesan Executive. They contact each of the branches by phone prior to the monthly executive meeting and then report on what each branch is doing. Our Vice President keeps in contact with the country branch and we pray for them during the year, such as harvest time. The Sudanese Priest, Rev'd Frida Lemi, reports each month on what they are doing in their branches. The wider Diocesan Council meets three times a year, with the last one in October being the Annual General Meeting. We usually have an invited speaker at each of these.

As a Diocese we celebrate Lady Day (sometimes having two gatherings to cater for members who work) and Mary Sumner Day. This is sometimes celebrated as a Diocese and sometimes each branch celebrates in their own area. Different



*Zimbabwean conference*

branches host all these events so travel is spread around. The MU in Perth has taken a lead in organizing two services for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, and a member of our executive is on the Diocesan Social Responsibilities Commission.

Three branches which have only small numbers meet together once a quarter to hear from an invited speaker. Throughout the rest of the year they gather as 'fellowship meetings'.



*Perth Retreat*





*Melville Mini Fair*

The Sudanese members visit homes of young families and parishioners – important when extended family is not at hand. The Zimbabwean group participates in diocesan activities, and also keeps in touch with other Zimbabwean groups all over Australia and New Zealand. In March our President and Secretary joined them at their national gathering in Perth and met many of the visitors.

Branches do many things, including knitting baby clothes for premature babies, making 'joy bags' or those experiencing hard times, assisting with Kids' Music programs, giving Bibles and cards to babies being baptized, providing toiletries for women's refuges and cards and postage stamps for residents in men's and women's refuges. Several branches have annual events, such as a 'beetle' afternoon, 'soup and sandwich' lunches, a high tea, a mini-fair and an art show, with proceeds from all events going to support AMUA projects.

In 2023 we celebrated our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary by producing a booklet, with contributions from members, celebrating the importance of Mothers' Union in their lives and sharing memories of MU activities over the years. The original MU Perth banner, made in 1934, has been restored and framed and is hanging in St George's Cathedral.

**Lois McGrath**

## Full Moon

Billabong shimmering in the moonlight  
 paperbarks rustle  
 she-oaks whisper  
 a gentle breeze carries  
 sweet perfume of boronias  
 tang of lemon scented gum  
 Away to the North  
 a lone dingo calls  
 distant, long and sorrowful howl  
 Answered...  
 in the scrub nearby...  
 Too close for comfort!  
 I turn away  
 return to camp.

© Susan Skowronski 2023



Photo caption: Javardh on Unsplash



# Around the Dioceses

## BENDIGO

'Call the Midwife!' This is what the Eaglehawk MU branch did...but it wasn't a medical emergency! Rather, retired midwife, Marion Richardson, was their guest speaker. She was one of those 'cycling midwives' in London who visited the women in their homes. Years later she answered an advertisement in a UK paper to come to Cohuna Hospital, where she subsequently worked for many years. She is still remembered fondly by many of the Cohuna population. (Cohuna is part of the Bendigo Diocese.)

Eaglehawk members were also fascinated, at another meeting, to meet Vanessa Foran and to hear of her travels and valuable experiences as a struggling Christian parent when she shared from her recent book, 'Travels of a Wimpy Mum'. More recently another most interesting afternoon was spent at St. Clement's Huntly, just north of Bendigo, viewing their 'Hope Community Playgroup', which commenced in the church in January, and also the church's community garden project. MU members also received information about Landcare in the area. The Diocesan MU has given a generous grant to assist the playgroup.

**Jenny Rainsford**



*Some of the play equipment set up in readiness for the very active little people*



## BRISBANE

On May 9 several St Andrew's, Indooroopilly, Mothers' Union members received long service awards. Our Diocesan President, Jenny Bullock, kindly did the presentations, with visitors from other branches present to support those whose long service was recognised and to hear our speaker, Senior Sergeant Debbie Phillips, speaking on Elder Abuse. It was truly a fabulous meeting with lots of visitors and plenty of activity.



L-R Marjorie Gough, 50 years, Jan Hurwood, 40 years, Barbara Marshall, 10 years, Jenny Tippet, 25 years, June Lobegeiger, 60 years, Elaine Baldock, 60 years, Helen Zappala 10 years, Seated: Alison Arkell 60 years

## Helen Zappala

### AMUA St John's Cathedral Extends Hope to Children in Foster Care

In a moving display of compassion and community spirit, members of the Anglican Mothers Union Australia (AMUA) from St John's Cathedral Brisbane journeyed to Yatala to deliver six suitcases brimming with new clothing, toys and toiletries for children entering foster care across Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Living into being 'outwardly focused', these carefully chosen donations – gathered over

months at each AMUA meeting – include fresh pyjamas, toiletries, and clothing to suit a wide range of ages and needs. The generosity poured out by AMUA members, the St John's Cathedral parish, and their extended circle of friends, has been nothing short of inspiring.

Each year, more than 46,000 children in Australia find themselves in 'out of home' care. AMUA St John's recognised the deep need in their own community and responded with love and action. Our aim is simple yet profound: to ensure that

every child entering care knows they are seen, valued, and above all, loved.

Every child matters. Every suitcase delivered is a step closer to wrapping them in God's love.

As one member shared, 'We hope that each suitcase becomes a message of dignity, comfort, and hope for the children who receive them.'

'May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.' Psalm 33:22

**Debra Franks**



## PERTH

On Palm Sunday at St Edmund's Church, Wembley, there was a very special morning tea to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of long-serving member, Gloria Lygne. A Life Member of Mothers' Union, Gloria has attended St Paul's Woodlands/Wembley Downs MU branch. Gloria was the MU choir organist and director, playing for Lady Day services and MU Area Festivals. King Charles' good wishes were on display, along with copies of the 'Kalgoorlie Miner' newspaper from the day Gloria was born.

**St Lawrence's Dalkeith** Mothers' Union was privileged to watch a video from the recent MU Sydney Conference, 'Standing Firm and Standing Out'. Engaging speaker, Anna Brotherson, urged us to 'Shine like stars in a secular world'. She spoke about the difficulties of living as a Christian in difficult times. She likened it to a tough bush hike, at first exhilarating, but later becoming exhausting, with unexpected obstacles and a changing environment presenting challenges right to the end. She reminded us that in our Christian journey, as with a tough hike, it's easy to become

worn out downhearted and resentful. However, St Paul in his letter to the Philippians exhorts us to stand firm. (Phil 2:12-18).

Anna emphasized three reasons to continue our journey with Jesus:

1. This humble path is alive with the power of God, healing and transforming our lives.
2. The humble sacrificial path of Jesus gives Christians a distinctive beauty. Popular opinion and the media denigrate service, but we are designed to serve God and our fellow humans, shining like stars in a dark world.
3. This path brings joyful, fruitful fellowship with the saints on earth and for all eternity.

We highly recommend the video presentations from the Sydney MU conference, which are available at [www.musydney.org.au/christian-seminars](http://www.musydney.org.au/christian-seminars)

**Jane Shepherd**

## SYDNEY

A beautiful Saturday afternoon in May saw nearly 100 ladies gather at St John's Moss Vale, for a wonderful high tea, raising money for our MU project in South Africa. As a fundraiser it was extremely successful, raising over \$2750 from ticket sales and donations. As an outreach event, it attracted many ladies who were not MU members. Everyone appreciated the opportunity to hear Luanne Mills, our area president, speak on MU's work overseas and the Intsika project as well as Carolyn Miller, our guest speaker.

Carolyn spoke of her passion for writing Christian fiction and for encouraging others in the ways God leads them to connect with their community.



*Gloria Lygne and Ruth Spilsbury*



*Moss Vale high tea*





*High tea*

She reminded us of the power of words to build up or tear down, and how she seeks in her writing to create a sense of hope for her readers.

Ladies from all four MU branches in our area (Camden, Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale) attended this event. Fabulous food, engaging speakers and encouraging conversations made a great recipe for a successful fundraiser and a memorable afternoon. Our Moss Vale MU group greatly appreciated the contributions and support from our neighbouring MU groups.

**Kay Weaver**

## **WANGARATTA**

### **Nagambie Mothers' Day Morning Melodies**

Nagambie's Kelvingrove Village hosted a successful Morning Melodies on May 9, when those who attended were treated to a great morning of song by local singer, Noel Pearson, who was joined by his audience in singing along to his popular songs.

The organisers appreciated the support of the Village management and locals as well as all the generous donations given by Kelvingrove Village residents, MU members, locals from Seymour and Nagambie who attended, and those who could not be there but who supported the morning financially by their donations towards the two worthy causes. The proceeds raised on the morning were shared equally between the Seymour Salvation Army for their Red Shield Appeal and the branch of the local Mothers' Union (MU) for their literacy project for women in the Solomon Islands.

Winter blues were forgotten when some of the Diocese of Wangaratta Mothers' Union Lone



*Celebrating a successful Morning Melodies in Nagambie were Enid Simpson of the Seymour Salvation Army Corps, singer Noel Pearson and Marlene Brew, of the Central Goulburn Mothers' Union.*



*Rutherglen lunch*



*Seymour lunch*

members gathered together on Friday, June 20 for lunch in Rutherglen. The five members, Lesley Baker, Ruth Little, Kris Reif, Cate Rankin and Robyn Aulmann were delighted to get together and share some of their news. A gathering was also enjoyed by MU members of the Central Goulburn parish branch who met with friends to enjoy a lunch at the Seymour Club on Tuesday, June 24.

**Diane Grant**



# Over the fence

## Costly

Easter was in 10 days and no amount of procrastination was going to make the Easter eggs buy themselves.

I set aside a dedicated Woolworths run for the sole purpose of purchasing Easter treats for our household. As a shopper who becomes overwhelmed by choice, being presented with a large number of near-identical options frequently results in a sudden bout of headache-inducing Purchasing Paralysis which sees me heading home empty-handed, needing to down two Nurofen tablets with a chaser of Panadol.

This had been clearly demonstrated many years ago when, as a brand-new mum, I had received the unwelcome news that, due to bone density concerns, transitioning to formula-feeding would be best, and to do it sooner rather than later. My doctor reassured me that our hefty 6-month-old would receive all he needed to continue to flourish and that I simply needed to close my ears to aggressive 'natural feeding' advocates who might inadvertently or otherwise shame a mum in my position. Fighting back tears of disappointment, I stood before the vast array of tins of formula arranged with military precision on the supermarket shelves. This was my definition of a nightmare shopping situation. There appeared to be a near-infinite choice. Some products claimed to coat my baby's developing myelin fibres and enhance left-to-right cerebral hemisphere connections, almost guaranteeing a musical Savant in the family. Other tins declared

themselves to be direct enhancers of my newborn's intestinal microbiome, which somehow would help him decipher calculus in the future. Still others linked their powdery constituents to putting my son's motor skills so far ahead of the pack that we may as well book our tickets to the Olympics in 16 years' time. Confronted with such an impossible task, I took a deep breath and chose a brightly-coloured tin displaying a sweet drawing of a baby elephant playing with blocks.

As expected, Easter had supplied overwhelming array of eggs. Now older and wiser, I surveyed the display and mentally discarded unsuitable options. This included all eggs supporting NRL teams, and also (perhaps more controversially) the Easter Bilby on the basis of cocoa-laden woke-ism. This still left a healthy remnant of cheerfully packaged options.

I arrived at the checkout totally satisfied with my basketful of eggs. The checkout assistant wore a friendly demeanour and an equally disarming pair of pink and white rabbit ears. She swiftly scanned each item, then, glancing at my digitised total, said conversationally 'Aren't Easter eggs so costly this year?' I felt a stab of alarm that had nothing to do with the modest total (\$37.98). Would this unguarded comment result in a disciplinary check from a superior? Could one actively alert a customer that their employer's prices were unconscionably inflated?

I paused and gave her comment consideration. Costly. Perhaps compared with previous years, eggs were a little more expensive. But from my point of view, my Easter shopping experience had cost me a small epoch of time and an equally small monetary total. In real terms they had cost me so little as to be negligible. Her comment required a response. I thanked her for my purchases and added 'The price is fine – celebrating Easter is important to our family.'

As I drove home I thought about this small interaction that had renewed focus on the most costly event in world history: Jesus' death on the cross to bring salvation to a rebellious world. The price Jesus paid is immeasurable, incalculable, unimaginable – our Bibles draw on terms from the commercial sector – words such as redeem, debt,





bought, purchased. The magnitude of our rebellion required satisfaction on a divine scale that is beyond our comprehension. Proper reflection leads us to a place of humility and life-long thankful worship that God would love us enough to give His own Son in our place.

Hit with the enormity of these thoughts, I suppressed the urge to do a U-turn, rush back to Woolworths and buy the entire aisle of Easter eggs, in the hope that this would bear witness to my thankfulness for that first Easter. Clearly, however, this would be completely misplaced, but it led to the more considered question: how *do* we respond to the death of Jesus? Whilst not diminishing for one minute the significant sacrifices that many Christians make as they live out a life of genuine faith, can anything we offer be considered an appropriate expression of thanks compared to what He endured for our sake?

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of the complete sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and the utter redundancy of any sacrifices we might offer to God. (Hebrews 10). No fiscal donation to our local church (or bulk Easter egg purchase) will ever be enough. Instead, God asks for something so much greater and in some ways, less tangible. As we recognise our condition of complete spiritual poverty outside of the death of Jesus, God asks us to love Him with all our heart and soul and mind – in simple terms, to worship Him.

The apostle Paul puts flesh on this mandate in his letter to the believers in Rome: 'Therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God: this is your spiritual worship.' (Romans 12:1) – true for our sandal-clad Roman brothers and sisters; true for us – in whatever setting we find ourselves. May we delight in being obedient to this calling, as we live our lives each day in the light of the costly death of the Lord Jesus.

'You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.' Psalm 51:16-17a.

**Virginia Grice**

## Prayers



O God, in whose image  
we are all made,  
Give us hope that through  
the work of our hands  
And with Jesus as our model  
We may glorify you now and always.  
Amen

*Beverley Berwick, Platinum Prayers,  
© Mothers' Union, 2022 p. 15*



Grant us Lord, we beseech you, the  
spirit to think and do always such  
things as are right, that we, who  
cannot do anything that is good  
without you, may by you be enabled  
to live according to your will; through  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

*(A Prayer Book for Australia)*



Almighty God, we ask that you will  
give us a vision of your holiness so  
that we come into your presence  
with awe and wonder. Fill us with a  
reverence for your great glory that  
we may worship and adore you,  
our Lord and life-giver. Amen

*© A Worship and Prayer Book for  
MU Australia, 2009, p. 96*

# Psalm 145

- <sup>1</sup> I will exalt you, my God the King;  
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- <sup>2</sup> Every day I will praise you  
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- <sup>3</sup> Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;  
his greatness no one can fathom.
- <sup>4</sup> One generation commends your works to another;  
they tell of your mighty acts.
- <sup>5</sup> They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty—  
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- <sup>6</sup> They tell of the power of your awesome works—  
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- <sup>7</sup> They celebrate your abundant goodness  
and joyfully sing of your righteousness...
- <sup>21...</sup> My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.  
Let every creature praise his holy name  
for ever and ever.

