

Thursday Prayer

**19th January at 10.30am at Ely Cathedral and on Zoom
Hazel Williams speaking on Transformation Now**

Topic: Hazel Williams. Thursday Prayer Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

Meeting ID: 838 4780 9128

Passcode: 338053

TRANSFORMATION NOW

As we begin this service let us start with a prayer for the New Year. Together we say:

ALL Loving Lord please walk with us through this year.

Direct our paths as we campaign for a better world.

Help us to be dependent on you in all our plans

that justice and peace may flourish.

Amen

This week is also the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated in many churches. The prayer they have for the first day, which was yesterday could have been written specially for the Mothers' Union.

*You made us, God, in your own image,
and then became one of us, proud of those you have made.
Make us proud of being part of that worldwide family,
and eager to discover and celebrate your image
in every person, every culture, every nation
that we are privileged to encounter.*

Let us now say together our prayer for the theme for this month.

Generous God, we affirm your power to bless all cultures and transform communities.

Abundant God, you have provided all the resources to transform communities and create a sustainable future.

Compassionate God, enable your people to see your provision that their sense of worth and quality of life may flourish.

Gracious God, transform the mindsets of the vulnerable from powerless dependency to the freedom of self-sufficiency.

Generous God, we are blessed by your constant provision. Help us to use your resources well and enable others to do the same.

Amen

Our short bible reading is from Romans 12:2

² Don't change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but let God change you inside with a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to understand and accept what God wants for you. You will be able to know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.

Amen

REFLECTION

If you can remember back to January 2022, you may have realised that the theme then was Transformation and in 2023 the theme is Transformation Now. It is so important to the Mothers' Union that they decided it should continue over two years. When I did the January service last year, I concentrated on what was happening in this country but this time I am going to think more about Worldwide Mothers' Union.

There are many more members across the world than there are in Britain and Ireland, and membership is growing much faster than in this country, where sadly it is declining. In fact the new branches that *have* been formed in Britain and Ireland have predominately been started by women who have moved here from Africa. Across the world there is a great need for many of the things we take for granted. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are needed just as much now, for women in most of Africa and the Pacific islands, as they have ever been. This gives women the tools to gain information including how to protect the environment or give them knowledge of new varieties of crops more suited to the climate as it is now, leading to better nutrition for their families and in some cases the formation of new businesses. Mothers' Union, because it trains local people, is able to help communities help themselves. This is a very different angle to that of the past when we (in Britain and Ireland) decided what was best for those being trained. It is much more of an inclusive process than it ever was before.

During Covid we in Britain were not the only ones to learn to use Zoom. It enabled Dorothy in Papua New Guinea to be part of the MU Capacity Building training and win a gold award for the project on parenting for child development awareness. I certainly remember a time, a number of years ago, when I took part in Parenting training in Ely Diocese and learned so much. If Dorothy's story sounds familiar it probably means you have read the centre pages of the Autumn Connected magazine and know of all the other initiatives and needs in Papua New Guinea. Only a few of dozens of projects, across the world, initiated by local people.

In many parts of the world, often because of war, women are the sole providers for themselves and their families. Setting up of training circles for local women and being part of financial savings groups that identify business opportunities and grow existing ventures gives the opportunity for them to support their families, often giving access to education.

The common denominator of all of the projects happening both here and worldwide is the opportunity to meet together to learn and discuss. I attended the Re-imagining Conference in Liverpool last year and there was so much enthusiasm to revitalise the MU. Our concentration was not just on the many projects happening across our communities but also on how we move forward into the future and survive as a vibrant organisation. Good links with the Diocese, clergy and like-minded partners, to deliver support to those in need are essential.

It will only happen if members feel it is important enough to put effort in to it too. In 2026 we should be celebrating the 150th anniversary of our unique organisation. Let us hope we are still able to support local communities both here and worldwide and as Paul says in the verse from Romans '*to know what is good and pleasing to Him and what is perfect*'.

Our hymn for today's service will be well known to you all and Mike Banyard will be leading us. Do join in at home if you are on Zoom, even though we cannot hear you, which may be good or bad news depending on your singing.

All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all;
ye who follow shall not fall.

Let us all pray together for our worldwide organisation using the Thursday Prayer:

ALL: Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In our intercessions. We pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner House;
- The President and Trustees in the Diocese of Ely and the Task Group Leaders in: Faith in Action, Praying our Faith, Finance & Administration, and Communications;
- Our Province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julia Jamieson our Zonal Trustee.
- Our Worldwide Links:
Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India;
Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore

In our wave of prayer for today we pray especially for

- St Mark the Evangelist in South Africa;
- Butare in Rwanda;
- Okigwe-South in Nigeria;
- Gambia;
- British Columbia in Canada and
- Rajasthan in India

We also pray for:

- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.
- Our local parishes, our families, and our friends, and give thanks for our many blessings.
- Anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.

Short Silence.

Let us join together in the Mothers' Union prayer we know so well.

All **Loving Lord,**

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name. Amen

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen

Everyone is welcome to come to the Almonry afterwards for refreshments if they wish.

Thursday Prayers for February 16th 2023

in the Cathedral and on Zoom 10.30am

Zoom details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Prayer Focus: Choose Life

Introductory Prayer

Dear God, we ask for a flourishing community, where neighbours learn to love each other and come to know Jesus. We pray that we can be good stewards of Your love to each one of our neighbours. We ask that our communities may be places where all are welcomed.

Amen

The Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord, We thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We Pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen

Prayer for the month

Generous God, we affirm your power to bless all cultures and transform communities.

Abundant God, you have provided all the resources to transform communities and create a sustainable future.

Compassionate God, enable your people to see your provision that their sense of worth and quality of life may flourish.

Gracious God, transform the mindsets of the vulnerable from powerless dependency to the freedom of self sufficiency.

Generous God, we are blessed by your constant provision. Help us to use your resources well and enable others to do the same.

Amen

Bible Reading 1Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ²I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³for you are still carnal. For where *there are envy,*

strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

Reflection

In Joshua 13:22 we read that Israel crossed the Jordan River from the plains of Moab into the land of Canaan, which was the Promised Land. It was not given for Moses to go with them but he prepared them for their new life, reminding them of the history of Israel's journey through the wilderness and of the 10 Commandments that they were given by God. At the end of this, in Deuteronomy 30:15-20, he gives them a stern warning - that this Law comes with a proviso - a choice of life or death: blessings or curses.

They were to keep all of these commandments and to live according to them. Doing this would bring them life and prosperity, but if they did not listen and followed their own hearts, then they would reap death and adversity.

The Gospel Reading from Matthew 22: 34-40, has Jesus engaging the Ten Commandments and, although Deuteronomy 30 is not referenced, it is possible to see that Jesus' interpretation of these commandments stands on the side of life. When asked by the Pharisees which is the great commandment in the law, Jesus answered 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.' But then Jesus added a second commandment, even though he had been asked only which single commandment was the most important. 'And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

We commonly think of our neighbours as those who live near to us, but Jesus sees the word 'neighbour' as inclusive of the whole world. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:18, we are told to do no wrong to others but in this new law Jesus takes it a step further bringing it into something more. After all, if we just stayed in bed all day then it would not be difficult to keep this command from the Old testament. But now we are commanded to love one another as our very self. This causes us to put ourselves in the situation of our fellow man and so gives rise to an inner need, a desire to be kind and, furthermore, to help those in adversity. It means that this commandment now becomes an active one where we must get up and do something to make things better for all. To reinforce this, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan showing that this extends even to our enemies.

When St Paul writes his first letter to the Corinthians, he tells them that they are not mature enough in their Christianity and that he has not

been able to address them other than as children. They have been quarreling and are jealous of each other in their dealings.

St Paul knows that God loves his creation, so much so, that He feels the pain and the joy they experience at the hands of others. When Jesus says in Matt. 25:35-40 'inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me' He is telling us that if we think that we are obeying the 1st commandment but then go on to be unkind to our neighbour, this is in direct opposition to loving God, because in hurting others, we hurt our God. Thus the two great commandments can now be seen to be intrinsically tied together. You can't have one without the other.

Jesus and his followers, as Jews, are well aware of the requirements of Deuteronomy: therefore, he calls them to act and to obey as a way to choose life.

So, shall we Choose life?

And so help bring the Kingdom of Heaven down to Earth.

Hymn

A new commandment

**I give unto you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you.**

**By this shall all know
That you are My disciples,
If you have love one for another.
By this shall all know
That you are My disciples,
If you have love one for another.**

**You Are my friends if
You do what I command you.
Without my help you can do nothing.
You Are my friends if
You do what I command you.
Without my help you can do nothing**

**True Love is patient,
Nor arrogant, nor boastful.
Love bears all things, love is eternal.**

**True Love is patient,
Nor arrogant, nor boastful.
Love bears all things, love is eternal.**

Intercessions:

We ask for God's blessing on Beverley Jullien, our chief executive; Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President; Julia Jameson, our Zonal Trustee; and, in our own diocese of Ely: Hazel Williams, Diocesan President; the Trustees, the Task Group Leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner House.

We remember in our prayers, our MU links world wide: Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India and our diocesan links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India.

In our Wave of prayer:

We pray for Bentiu in South Sudan; Bunyoro Kitara in Uganda; Okigwe-North & Omu-Aran in Nigeria; Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh in All-Ireland and Krishna-Godavari in India.

As we reflect on the Old Testament story of the Israelites in exile in Egypt, whom Pharaoh forced to make more bricks with less resources, it makes us grateful for our generous God, who provides us with all the tools and materials we need to carry out his work.

We shall now have a few moments of silent prayer to offer personal concerns to God for those in need, remembering also the Ukraine and all those in Turkey and Syria affected by the recent earthquake.

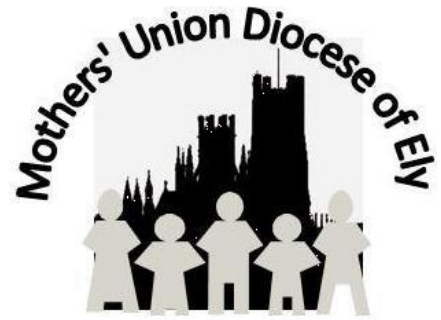
The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Grace

Good Morning, and welcome to our Thursday prayers today, welcome whether here in the Presbytery of Ely Cathedral, or sharing with us at home.



ZOOM connection details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>
ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Our theme today is Celebrating Mothers and we start with the Bible text for today – From Isaiah Chapter 7, Verse 14

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin will conceive, and give birth to a son and will call his name Immanuel “

We say together our prayer for this month-

Dear God, Creator of all things,

We believe there is a purpose in all that you have created through the wisdom and love you have given us.

May we always be in the hearts of mothers so that they may raise your children with love.

Let them overcome all the challenges they face with a kindness like yours as their children grow up.

May they fall asleep at night with a thankful heart for all that you have provided for them. Amen

Reflection

Last month the introductory prayer included this line “We pray that we can be good stewards of Your Love to each one of our neighbours” and in her reflection Chris reminded us that Jesus told us to “Love your neighbour as yourself”.

Today, with Mothering Sunday this coming weekend we are particularly thinking of mothers as our neighbours. The secular world call this Sunday “Mothers Day” and encourage lavish spending on treating mothers. As a mother and grandmother I have enjoyed this spoiling,- but I am well aware that this Sunday will be a difficult day for many, perhaps because they did not have an ideal childhood, are struggling as parents, or have not been able to be mothers themselves. Here in the cathedral it has long been the custom that *every* woman is given a small potted primrose by Junior Church members after receiving communion.

But what is “Mothering”?

To me Mothering is much more than respecting, loving and honouring one’s own Mother. It is what we would nowadays call Good Parenting – the Nurturing of happy, caring and responsible youngsters. This can be, and frequently is, provided not just by Mothers. Many fathers these days take a very active part in parenting, as do grandparents, and anyone in the community who is a good influence on young lives –

childminders, teachers, activity leaders – to name just a few, all contribute towards nurturing and encouraging and supporting good parenting. – they are all Mothering in its broadest sense.

We can all play our part in enabling and encouraging good parenting. Many of us are involved with providing nurturing support for families within our churches, whether it is Messy Church, Mid-week groups, Junior Church or by providing Family Friendly spaces during services, all contribute a nurturing ambience.

A struggling Mum may be miles away from her own family, and have few if any friends who understand what she is going through. We “Grandparent figures” can give a cheery welcome and a listening ear that can mean so much. As M U members we aim to provide Christian Care for families – putting our Faith into Action.

In my Trustee role, I know how much our local projects do to support Mothers and Fathers in Good Parenting, as we help struggling families.

AFIA gives a family the chance to relax together, to strengthen family bonds and make new happy memories.

Every item donated to the Refuges, and Hostels, and our latest supported project “Mary’s Child” makes a difference to a family; making it easier for parents to clothe and feed and, with stressful worries lessened, enjoy their children. Every knitted hat, bottle of shampoo or tin of food can make a difference. Perhaps this Lent we can all contribute one extra thing?

Our Mothers’ Union Mothering Sunday campaign this year asked us to give the *Gift of Perseverance* – these virtual gifts empowering women around the world – often women who are themselves responsible for their own families and children.

This prayer is from the campaign booklet, and as we think of families, around the world, and how we can continue to support Good Parenting/Mothering we will take a moment after each section to bring our own response to God.

In every family there are seasons of joys and challenges

Seasons of laughter and seasons of sadness

Times of unexpected joy and times of unwanted trauma

Circumstances to cherish and circumstances to overcome

Seasons of harmony and seasons of discord

Times of resilience and times of weakness

Moments to look forward with hope and moments to look back with thanksgiving

God in every circumstance and season we bring you our worship and praise. Amen.

God in every circumstance and season we bring you our worship and praise. Amen.

Hymn

All our blessings

Tune: All things bright and beautiful

***All our blessings, all our joys
With thankful hearts we sing
Lord of life and Lord of love
Accept the praise we bring.***

***For parents and for children,
For husbands, wives, and friends,
For those whose care enfolds us
With love that never ends***

***For fellowship and friendship
We both receive and give,
For those who've shared our journey
And taught us how to live***

***For all who've shared our sorrow,
Walked with us in our pain
Who've held our hand through darkness
And showed us light again***

***In sacrifice and service
Your love is clearly shown,
Your outstretched arms embrace us
to bring us safely home***

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Intercessions

We pray for:- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union; for Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner House

For our Diocesan President, Hazel, and Trustees in the Diocese of Ely and the Task Group Leaders For Our Province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julia Jamieson our Zonal Trustee.

For Our Worldwide Links:

Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore

In our wave of prayer we pray today for Kajo-Keji in South Sudan, Tarime in Tanzania, Dutse & Akoko-Edo in Nigeria, and Canterbury in England.

Lord in thy mercy

Hear Our Prayer Amen

Let us say together The Thursday Prayer

**Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen**

And our Mothers' Union Prayer-

**Loving Lord,
We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus name. Amen**

Let us share The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen

Cathedral Prayers. April 20th. 2023 at Ely Cathedral at

10.30 am.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>
ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Focus: Supporting each other in Faith.

Welcome to our service this morning, let us start with a prayer.

Heavenly Father,

Give us the faith to look to Jesus crucified

And risen from the dead.

Faith to see the invisible and do the impossible.

Faith invincible in the face of evil and death.

Faith to pass on the good news of Jesus to the next generation,

Faith to live in sustainable ways to bless the earth you created.

Faith to take up our cross and follow Jesus all our days

until we come to our eternal home.

In Jesus` name. **Amen**

Our reading this morning is from the Gospel according to St. John Chapter 20 verse 29.

Thomas said "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said" Because you have seen me you have found faith. Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith."

The Meditation

There were many other signs which Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples. John has written some so that we may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that through this faith we may possess life by His name.

We are all in different positions with our faith, some still learning, others well and truly knowing what they are doing and all of us going the right way and still learning. We have not seen Jesus visibly, as we see each other, but our faith knows He is there, watching over us, guarding and guiding.

In our village we have a relatively new Pastor at the Baptist church at the crossroads. Boards, outside the church, have been moved and one at the moment says "Come as you are, all shapes and sizes" These are easily seen by drivers who are waiting in the traffic queues. Quite apt for our reflection today?

Well we haven't had the same experiences as Thomas has but we have the same faith, by readings from the Bible, prayers and hymns and sermons and Lent groups, and Quiet Days, which somehow 'grab you' and make you think ---- and Jesus is all part of them.

To start at the beginning, when you are present in a baptism there is a part where everyone can join in and re-affirm their faith and belief in Jesus Christ and saying it together somehow means a lot more than saying it by yourself. Re-affirming the strong belief in the doctrines of our religion and the spiritual conviction. There is complete trust and confidence.

In the Sunday Eucharist we have a chance to affirm our faith by saying the Creed and also in the peace below:

'We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life'

Our own faith is in prayer and the purpose of that is to maintain our relationship with God and allow Him to come into our lives and take control.

One thing about prayer is not to be too disappointed. God will say 'yes' - or 'no', or - you may have to wait.

We learnt much in our confirmation classes , furthering our Knowledge and trust but that is with hindsight, only really appreciated as you get older.

Mothers' Union is founded in prayer and at our meetings it is one of the parts which I look forward to, the togetherness.

I am hoping that we get better at praying the older we get?

The three churches in our village used to have a Holiday Club during the summer holidays aimed for Primary school children. There were adult helpers there from each church and at the end of each morning session we had a quick discussion as to how the morning had gone.

Now at the very end one adult finished by a prayer. The Methodist chosen did well, no notes just said what they wanted to say, the Baptist did exactly the same thing, the Church of England (guess who?) - and was given 24 hours notice - had copied a prayer to read from a prayer book - no initiative? No confidence? Probably true but really none up to that point - and definitely needed that piece of paper?

I often feel that praying comes easily when I see nature evolving - time to thank God for winter going and new life beginning, the sun setting, those wonderful colours, obvious in the fens and a chance to remind grandchildren.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby once said “The Mothers’ Union campaigns excellently. It nurtures wonderfully. But above all and beneath all, it prays - thank God.”

He is right - we do. Everything we undertake in the name of Mothers’ Union, our projects and initiatives, our campaigning for social justice, our care for one another, all are built on a foundation of prayer. And once up and running are supported by an on-going reliance on prayer.

If we are honest, many of us would admit to finding it hard to always know what to pray and to know how to pray. The Bible says ‘pray continually’ or ‘pray and don't give up,’ sometimes this can be seen as an impossibility. But God values every faltering attempt and appreciates all our efforts. And Jesus said “Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith”.

I shall finish with a well-known prayer.

Teach us good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest,

To give and not to count the cost,

To fight and not to heed the wounds,

To toil and not to seek for rest.

To labour and not to ask for any reward,

Save that of knowing that we do Thy will. **Amen**

Intercessions

This morning we will start our prayers with a short period of silence. Time for our own thoughts, and time for those we know who need them. Our families and our friends.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

We ask for God’s blessing on Beverley Julien, our Chief Executive, Sheran Harper our Worldwide President, Kathryn Anderson our Provincial President and Julia Jameson our Zonal Trustee. We pray for Hazel Williams, the Trustees, the Task Group leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner House.

We remember in our prayers our MU links world wide, Lusaka, Shyogwe, Sokoto and Ikka, Karimnager and our Diocesan links with Kigali and Vellore.

Together with confidence we will say The Lords` Prayer.

**Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us .
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory
For ever and ever. Amen.**

We can join in with the Thursday prayer.

**Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of
Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your
love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

We can stand to sing: There is a Redeemer.

**There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God`s own Son.
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.**

***Thank you, O my Father,
For giving us your Son,
And leaving your spirit
Till the work on earth is done.***

**Jesus, my Redeemer,
Name above all names,**

**Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain.**

Thankyou, O my Father.....

**When I stand in glory,
I will see his face.
And there I`ll serve my King for ever,
In that holy place.**

Thankyou, O my Father.....

words and tune (Melody Green).

..... And there is another story to go with this hymn.

We will finish with the grace.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen**

Thursday Prayer for 18th MAY 2023
In Ely Cathedral and on Zoom 10.30am

Anglican Pacifist Fellowship is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: ELY MU

Time: May 18, 2023 open from 10:00 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82753623816?pwd=UnBuS2JVeGVkRXFIZ3Z0OVBWYnBvdz09>

Meeting ID: 827 5362 3816

Passcode: 258882

Prayer Focus: Being a disciple

Introductory Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, that as we grow in faith, so we grow in commitment to those you call us to serve.

We say together The Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord,

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Prayer for the month:

Lord Jesus, we ask for your blessing on those who feel called to your service.

Give them joy as they reflect on your call and are open to share their faith with others.

Give them grace for the work you are asking them to do.

Give them the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

May they know the joy of walking with you as they follow your call.

Amen

Reading: Luke 24 : 44-53

Our Reading is from Luke 24:44-53

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his

name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

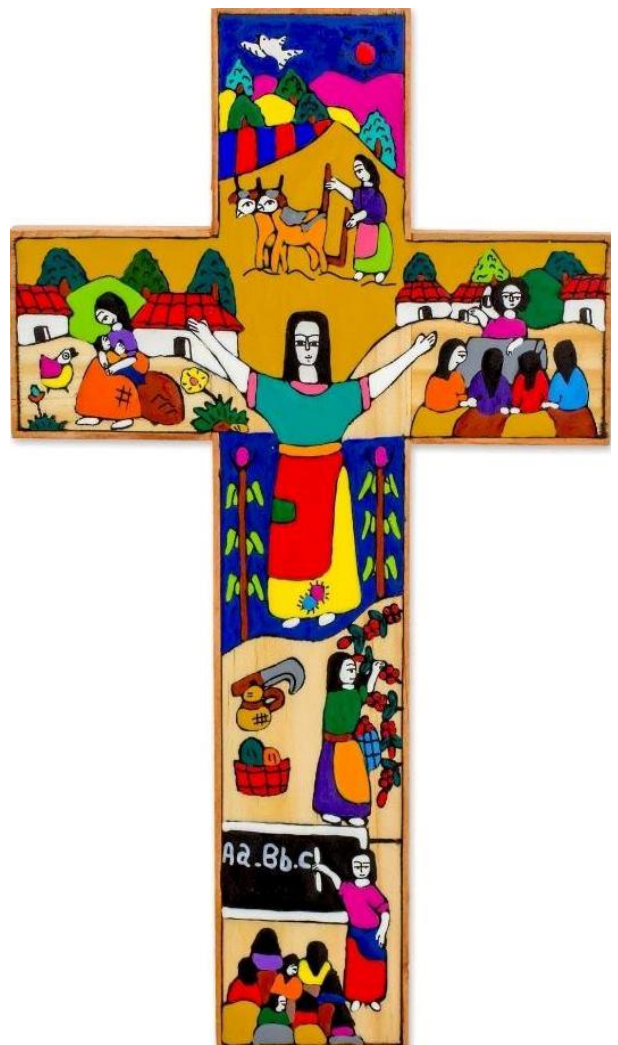
Reflection: Being a disciple

As people arrived each was given a small wooden cross and a pen. Below is an outline of a cross for those at home. During our reflections I would like you to think about what this cross could mean to you.

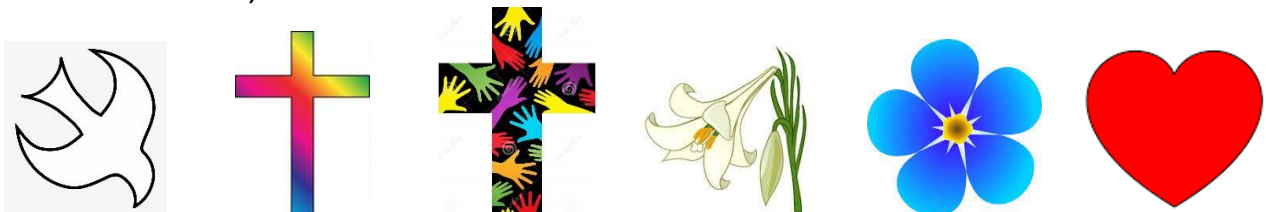
Let me give you an insight into what I mean.

A tradition of personlising crosses grew in El Salvador after the death of a young woman, Maria Gomez. She was an active member of her village church and met with others to think how they could lead faithful Christian lives when there was much injustice in the country, and a huge divide between the rich and poor.

She was a teacher in the nearby town and one day a black van drew up outside her school at home time. She was bundled inside and driven away. Later that day her body was found beside a road outside town. No one knows for sure why she was taken and killed, but there was a lot of persecution of Christians at that time in her country. The people who had loved her wanted her to be remembered for her discipleship and commissioned a picture cross to celebrate her life and faith. You can see an illustration of it.



During our time together I invite you to think how you would decorate your cross with a special meaning for you. You might want to write words or draw patterns, rainbow colours, add a dove or flowers.



Maria was a true disciple, living her life in the way that strengthened others to follow in Christ's footsteps.

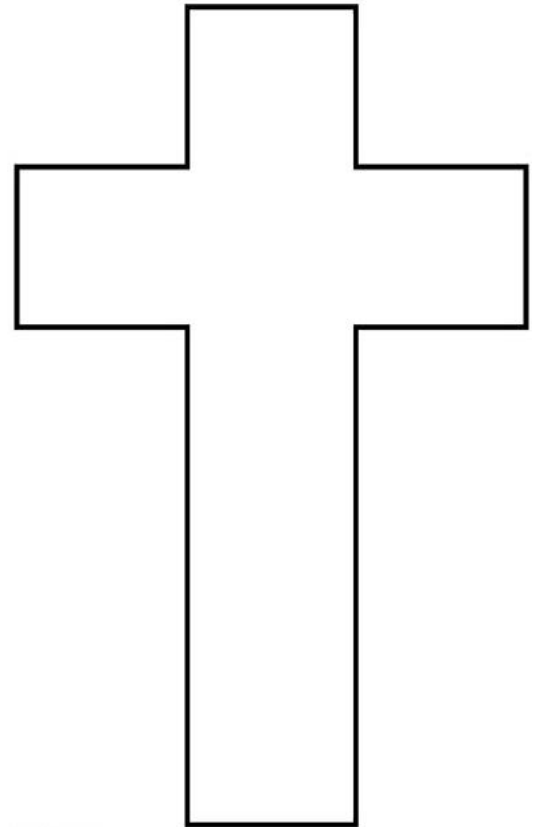
But what does 'being a disciple' mean to each one of us?

The dictionary definition is: one who receives instruction from another; one who adheres to a particular school of philosophy/religious thought; a pupil, a scholar, a follower.

What did Jesus expect of his 'disciples'? He made it clear for them at the Last Supper, recorded by John in chapter 13 of his gospel.

Jesus said:

A new commandment I give unto you,
That you love one another as I have loved you,
By this shall all know that you are My disciples.



Jesus had even spelt it out previously when talking to the crowds one day. He tells them that we all should "love our neighbour as ourselves". When challenged to say who counted as a 'neighbour' Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. Oh how difficult this loving one another can be! And how to spread the message. Well, in our reading we learnt that special help would be sent to his followers. Then after giving that promise, Jesus was taken into heaven.

After he said this,
he was taken up before their very eyes,
and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Acts 1:9

DailyVerses.net

The ascension of Jesus is one of the most significant events recorded in the New Testament. In the Christian tradition, Ascension Day (which happens to be today this year) marks the 40th day of Easter, and was recorded in our reading today.

According to the biblical account of the ascension, Jesus appears to the disciples in His glorified state after rising from the dead. He then encourages His disciples that they will “receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.” He tells them that they must serve as His “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” He says to them: “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples followed His instruction and returned to Jerusalem, where the atmosphere is tense. The authorities were known to still be keen to wipe out all memory of Jesus. The disciples gathered in that upper room of the house in the city. Despite the tensions, they were going to quietly celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost.

Suddenly, the house was filled with a sound from heaven like the roaring, mighty windstorm. Then, what looked like tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and were no longer afraid. This was Jesus’ promised gift. They all felt a need to speak out about Jesus and his wonderful promise of salvation for all.

Outside the streets were filled with visitors from many of the surrounding countries, there to celebrate Pentecost. Seizing the moment Peter stood and spoke to the crowds. Each person could hear what he was saying in their own language! (Read all about it in Acts 2:1-4)

This was the birth of the Christian Church, marked this year on May 28th.

May we feel the coming of His spirit to encourage us all to try to be HIS DISCIPLES.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, we ask for your blessing on those who feel called to your service.

Give them joy as they reflect on your call and are open to share their faith with others.

Give them grace for the work you are asking them to do.

Give them the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

May they know the joy of walking with you as they follow your call. Amen

HYMN

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated Lord, to thee:
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Ev’ry pow’r as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine:
It shall ne no longer mine;
Take my heart: it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love: my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.

Our Intercessions.

We pray for The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union; Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner House;

Also we pray for our President and Trustees in the Diocese of Ely and all the Task Group Leaders.

In our Province of Canterbury we pray for Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julia Jamieson our Zonal Trustee.

We remember and pray for our Worldwide Links:

Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India;

Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore

In our Wave of Prayer for today we pray especially for Grahamstown in Sth Africa, Masasi in Tanzania, Afikpo in Nigeria; Wiawso in Ghana; Chester in England and Northern Argentina.

We join together to say The Thursday Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

I close with the following prayer:

May we serve with the love of Christ and bring comfort that comes from God.

May we share burdens through the power of Christ and bring strength that comes from God.

May we view others through the eyes of Christ and show compassion that comes from God.

May we respond with the forbearance of Christ, and show grace that comes from God.

May our faith in Christ be lived out in commitment to serve our neighbour Amen.

**We end our prayers by saying the
Grace**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy spirit, be
with us all this day, and evermore.
Amen

THURSDAY JUNE 15TH 2023 -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

“SERVING GOD IN PRAYER AND HUMILITY”

Welcome everyone to our Thursday prayers.

Introductory Prayer.

Lord, guide us this day in all that we say and do; Lord in all things make us true. Keep us safe from evil thoughts and deeds aware of other people's needs. May we not wander from the straight and narrow way; may we trust in you Lord every day, Lord in all things, make us true. Amen Rev. Moira Jameson, Province of Scotland

We say together the **Mothers' Union Prayer**

Loving Lord,

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name . Amen

Monthly Prayer

Loving Lord,

We look back with gratitude

On all that has been achieved thus far

In the name of Mothers' Union worldwide.

As we look to the future, we pray that we may always

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God, Amen.

Our Reading Today is taken from: Hosea Chapter 6 vs 3

“Let us acknowledge the Lord;

Let us press on to acknowledge him.

As surely as the sun rises,

He will appear,

He will come to us like the winter rains

Like the spring rains that water the earth,

Israel believed that as surely as seasonal rains fell, reviving the earth, God's favour would return and restore her.

This morning our Reflection is entitled “Serving God in Prayer and Humility.

I think we all know what it means to *Serve*, so this morning let us look at the meaning of ***Prayer*** and ***Humility***.

Prayer is how Christians communicate with God. Christians believe that it is through prayer that God's grace and guidance are given. We think of prayer as two-way communication that gives comfort, as God is listening and sending messages back, and we hear them if we are listening. “Be still and know that I am God ” calls us to take time and pause and reflect. It reminds us that God is still in control no matter what happens in our lives.

These are some of the reasons why Christians pray.

To adore and praise God: Saying sorry and asking for forgiveness: Thanking God with a grateful heart: Asking for help and praying for Others.

Many Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is active when they pray. In the Bible, (Ephesians 6:18) St Paul encourages the early Christians to “pray in the Spirit”. He writes **“Pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests”**.

But there are times when it is difficult to pray. We may go through dry spells when God seems distant and praying is hard, or the opposite when God seems to be in the same room as we pray and He responds in ways far greater than we dared ask or ever would have imagined. By God’s Grace, our prayers can and will have an effect. **“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5 :16)”**

We thank God for the privilege of Prayer and ask for forgiveness for the times when we seem to take it for granted. We are grateful for those times when He answers quickly and positively and if we pray sincerely about everything, we may be lucky and experience God’s peace.

Humility

The Bible defines **Humility** as **“the fear of the Lord”** (Proverbs 22:4) and most people seem to agree that it is also freedom from pride or arrogance, the state of being humble.

The Old Testament use of the Hebrew word “pride” has only a few positive meanings and they all refer to God and His Majesty and excellence. Otherwise, it is used to describe arrogance, insensitivity to the needs of others, conceit, a scoffer or mocker, haughtiness (arrogantly superior), stubbornness and a lack of respect for God. Even a small amount of these characteristics are still prideful. It is thinking higher of ourselves than we ought to. This can be in action or thought.

Pride is all around us – we see it in people who are rich and powerful, and in successful and famous people, but we don’t have to look far to see it in our own lives or those near to us.

Choose to humble yourself before others, “clothe yourself with humility”. No matter how poorly someone treats you, try to consider them better than yourself. Choose forgiveness and self-control over pride and retaliation. This is difficult, but God can help us set aside our prideful instincts and desires.

One of the greatest saints whose story is indeed known but often neglected, is **St Joseph**. He is the silent saint, humble and obedient, a simple carpenter. Perhaps this is why we find him so easy to overlook.

St Joseph did not set out in search of glory and renown, yet he was chosen for a more glorious role than he ever could have imagined. When he met Mary he was looking for a wife, not the Mother of God. He became Mary’s rock and the shield of the Christ Child, a model of fortitude and faith.

Despite the gravity of his duties, St Joseph never assumed an air of self-importance or vanity. He never grew puffed up at this honour and responsibility; he simply responded with holy wonder and perfect obedience.

Even in death St Joseph appears to have retained his humility. He was entrusted with the protection of the Son of God, and yet he is hardly mentioned in Scripture. We do not know of his death except by his absence at the foot of the Cross, when Christ places His Mother Mary under the protection of St John. Tradition indicates that he died before Christ’s public ministry began.

In the Apostle Paul, we see one who had been given a great mission and a great role in the church of Jesus Christ, but Paul never forgot who he was and what he had been. He spoke of himself as the least of the apostles and the least of the saints because he had persecuted the church. At one point, he even referred to himself as the greatest of sinners. He understood that but for the grace of God, he would have suffered the wrath of God. But he did not allow this to immobilize him in a sea of despair. He rejoiced in God's grace and faithfully did what Jesus had called him to do.

Let us pray for **Humility**

Lord God, help us to be humble and gracious, in every interaction patient, loving and kind. We humble ourselves before you Lord, for we are nothing without you.

Amen

Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

In our Intercessions today we pray for –

The Worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and our worldwide president Sheran Harper, our chief executive Bev Julian and all who work in Mary Sumner House. Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President. For our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees and all task group leaders and MU members and all Clergy within the Ely Diocese.

In our Worldwide Links of the Mothers' Union we pray for:- Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; plus diocese to diocese with Kigali and Velore.

Our Wave of Prayer today is for Bukavu in Democratic Republic of Congo, Nyahururu in Kenya; Gboko in Nigeria; Portsmouth in England and New Guinea Islands in Papua New Guinea.

For our many blessings.

And anyone known to us who is ill or unwell. **Pause**

We pray for countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering and dying in wars and conflict.

For the world we live in, that God may open our eyes to recognise the goodness of all creation and help us to do what we can to restore and care for the wonderful gift that we have been given.

And finally Lord, help us to do the work you have appointed to us. To start and to see it through, so that everything we do is to your glory and that you may find it pleasing in your sight. **Amen**

ALL: Lord's Prayer

**Our Father Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen**

“For if you forgive others the wrongs they have done, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done” Matthew 6 vs 14

All Stand for our Hymn “O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness”

**O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness.
Kneel 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 that is true.**

**Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
Of the poor wealth you would count as your 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.**

**O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
Kneel and adore him the Lord is his name.**

**ALL - Lord, our hearts praise you, our souls are glad because you are our Saviour,
because you have remembered us, your servants, because you have shown mercy to
all who honour you. We praise you because of all the great things you have done for
us. Help us to follow the calling you have for us as St Joseph did in his heart and
mind. Amen**

All - The Mary Sumner Prayer

**All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee, and every life I
touch. Do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I
breathe or the life I live. Amen**

All Stand for the Grace –

**May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy
Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen**

Mothers' Union Thursday Prayers, 20 July 2023

Zoom Contact details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

“Understanding God’s Word”

Welcome everyone to our Thursday prayers.

Introductory Prayer.

Lord, speak to us that we may hear your word.

Move among us that we may behold your glory.

Receive our prayers that we may learn to trust you. **Amen**

We say together the Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord, We thank you for your love so freely given to us all

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name . Amen

and the Monthly Prayer

Heavenly Father, give us grace in all relationships.

May hope be stronger than struggle, celebrations more frequent than trials,

may kindness prevail over judgement, equality dissolve oppression,

may love break walls of hate. Amen

Our Reading Today is taken from the gospel of Matthew, chapter 13 vv1-9, 18-23, using the New Living translation

Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. ² A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. ³ He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴ As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹ Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

¹⁸ “Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: ¹⁹ The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. ²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. ²² The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. ²³ The seed

that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

This morning our Reflection is entitled "Understanding God's Word".

I imagine that we all would like to think of ourselves as the good soil on which the good news of God's kingdom falls, to be those who truly hear and understand God's word, and to be those who produce a plentiful harvest from what has been planted in us.

The truth is probably that we have all, at some time, been the footpath, the rocky soil, the weed-filled ground choked by thorns, as well as the good soil. Human life is like that.

Even though our society, environment and lifestyle are far removed from those in which Jesus lived, we remain close enough to the land – through seeing nearby farms, having an allotment, garden, courtyard of pots, window boxes, herbs on the kitchen window sill, or house plants – to be able to connect with the picture Jesus painted with his words. We understand what seed needs to germinate, grow and flourish.

Between the story that Jesus told about the sower, and the explanation that he gave for the parable, are verses we didn't hear today. Those verses focus on Jesus' reply to his disciples' question, 'Why do you always tell stories when you talk to the people?'

Jesus replied that people see what he does, but they don't really see. They hear what he says, but they don't really hear. They hear what he says, but they don't understand. This, he says, fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah, who explains that the hearts of these people are hardened, so their ears can't hear and their eyes can't see and their hearts can't understand – which in turn means that they cannot turn to God and let him heal them.

Those who do see, hear, and understand are blessed to know the hope of God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven; that peace, hope and truth will restore the relationship of the whole of creation with God, bring us to salvation and eternal life. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, nothing and no-one will remain separated from God through sin, rather, by faith, will be reconciled with him and share fellowship with him, as his children and heirs.

And those who do see, hear and understand are not to keep this hope to themselves. Like good soil, they are to nourish the seed and let it spread its growth across the earth. That way, the harvest can be huge, thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as is planted.

So, the sixty-four-dollar question: what makes good soil? What is it that helps us to see, hear and understand God's word?

Jesus knew that the story wasn't easy, he wanted people to think it through, talk about it with each other. Some might have thought that after all the kings, prophets and priests who hadn't succeeded, Jesus was saying that he would be the one to lead them out of oppression. Others might have thought that God was having difficulty with bringing in his kingdom so they'd have to wait even longer for their promised freedom. How would Jesus bring success about?

What they couldn't have missed was Jesus' assurance that God's promise, what they'd been longing for and praying for, was really going to happen. Did they hear the BUT coming? Jesus said that they need to persist, to be resilient, to listen, to figure it out - and keep coming back to hear more, to deepen their understanding.

Just like them, we need to continue to read scripture and think about what God's work is today, here and now in our generation. We need to figure it out and join in with what God's already up to. It's not always easy to understand or to do, but we know what God's already done through Jesus, and he wants to continue that work through us. We need to put in the time, the hard work, and the effort to remove stones from the soil, to uproot weeds and thorns. Only with that determination will we be free to give proper care and thought to hear the word of God, to let it fully take root in our hearts, so that our hearing brings understanding. Then, success will not be for our own sake, but for the kingdom as we in turn bear fruit.

What stories do we have that we can tell?

Where must we be so that we can tell them?

How can we spread the word so that it can do its work in people's hearts and lives, as it has done in ours?

Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

In our Intercessions today we pray for –

The Worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and our worldwide president Sheran Harper, our chief executive Bev Julian and all who work in Mary Sumner House. Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President. For our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees and all task group leaders and MU members and all Clergy within the Ely Diocese.

In our Worldwide Links of the Mothers' Union we pray for:- Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; plus diocese to diocese with Kigali and Velore.

Our Wave of Prayer today is for Gitega in Burundi; Murag'a South and Mbeere in Kenya; Enugu North in Nigeria; Tonga in Diocese of Polynesia and Jaffna in Diocese of Church of South India.

We give thanks for the sacrificial love of Christ with deeply grateful hearts.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy, peace, help and blessings that you give to us each day.

Thank you for this wondrous world filled with all the wonderful gifts you have given to us.

Thank you for our families, friends and the fellowship of your Church.

Help us to be mindful and hold in prayer before you:

those who do not yet know the love of Christ;

those whose lives today will be a struggle to feel joy, find peace, seek or engage with help;

those whose lives do not feel blessed;

those who cannot see beyond the shadows and darkness of unhappiness, hunger, loneliness, isolation, poverty, fear, trauma, oppression, conflict, to see the beauty and wonder of the world you have created for us;

for those who are separated from families and friends;

for those who feel unable or unwelcome to share the fellowship of your church;

and anyone known to us who is ill or unwell, in situations that need our prayers. **Pause**

And we thank you for the most wondrous gift of all – the forgiveness of our sins, bought for us by the love of your most blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

We say together in confidence, The Lord's Prayer

Our Father Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen

Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
Colossians 2:6-7

All Stand for our Hymn: We have a gospel to proclaim

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for men in all the earth;
the gospel of a saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem,
not in a royal house or hall
but in a stable dark and dim:
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his death at Calvary,
hated by those he came to save;
in lonely suffering on the cross
for all he loved, his life he gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for he was free;
he broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified;
he sends his Spirit on his church
to live for him, the lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name him king:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
this gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of your holy word. May it be a lantern to our feet, a light to our paths, and strength to our lives. Take us and use us to love and serve all people in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An Australian Prayer Book

All say The Mary Sumner Prayer together:

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee, and every life I touch. Do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. Amen

May the blessing of God strengthen and encourage us as we go from here to live lives of gratitude and service. Amen

All Stand and say the Grace together:

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen

Mothers' Union Thursday Prayers, 17th August 2023

Topic: Ely Prayers

Time: Aug 17, 2023 10:30 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82861515739?pwd=NU1rNFhmVXZZTTZmVGpXalE1ZDd1dz09>

Meeting ID: 828 6151 5739

Passcode: 278774

Following in Christ's footsteps

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Welcome everyone to our Thursday prayers here in the Cathedral and those joining from home via the internet.

Introductory Prayer.

St Paul writes to the people of Ephesus 'Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's Gift. **Amen**

We say together the Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord,

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name . Amen

and the Monthly Prayer

Your children come to you, loving God, confident of your goodness and mercy.

May the sacrifice of Christ, and his service among us teach us to live as servants to all.

As stewards of your generous gifts, may we bear witness to your goodness in our lives by the good we do as servants of all your children.

Blessed are you, God of all goodness. May our service give you glory as we pray now and always through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Our Reading Today is taken from the First letter of John chapter 2

Reading: 1 John 2: 3-6 – the focus on v6. From the Contemporary English Version

When we obey God, we are sure we know him. But if we claim to know him and don't obey him, we are lying and the truth isn't in our hearts. We truly love God only when we obey him as we should, and then we know we belong to him. **If we say we are his, we must follow the example of Christ.**

Reflection 'Following in the footsteps of Christ'.

A moment to think about what following in Jesus footsteps means to you.

Having been invited to lead this time of prayer and reflection, I too took a moment, several moments, indeed a couple days trying NOT to think about the poem Footsteps. If that thought came to you, try and lay it aside for the next five minutes.

The invitation in the letter is to follow the example of Christ, and to live the same kind of life he lived. And as we try, we are faced with the challenges in fulfilling that example. The writer goes on to remind the reader that there is nothing new here. The commandment to love one another is as old as the book in which Moses wrote about it and God's love for the Hebrew people. The writer is further putting the point that here is another way of looking at what Jesus was teaching. The question asked, is this a new commandment or a fresh way of looking at it and applying it to the new readers' life. Surely isn't that what we are encouraged to do every time we open the Bible or hear a lesson in church. What is God's word saying to me today?

Familiar themes of light and dark are introduced with the latter attracting a violent word hate for one who walks in darkness, stumbling unsure of which direction to go because total darkness is what blindness means. It doesn't have to be that way because the light, the true light is already shining, forcing out the darkness from our lives. Our challenge is found at the beginning of the reading. The writer addressing the hearers as children in the new Revised Standard version is most concerned that you, we, me, may not sin. The word may suggest a choice; the contemporary version demands that you, we, me won't sin. The choice is yours and mine. We know what is right and wrong. Right leads to light; Wrong takes us into the darkness of the abyss.

But all is well. Especially for those on the rocky road in the dark. There is someone to help who is ever present with God the Father and he is Jesus the Son. And through his death and resurrection our sins have been forgiven for all who believe in him. Not just for the community of the new Christian church but as the writer reminds us for the sins of the whole world. The love of God is best expressed through our lives, the way we live, the words we speak, the time we share with family and friends. Following in the footsteps of Jesus will need patience and example. In the beginning of Jesus ministry, he called twelve men from all walks of life to follow him and in the case of the fishermen to make them fishers of men; Inclusively it's now all people and as Jesus prepared to depart the earthly life, those same people were commanded to go out into the world to bring everyone into the faith of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. In the Message Bible it says 'the one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. This is the only way to be sure we are with God. Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived'. Following in the footsteps of Christ can perhaps be thought of in that fresh interpretation - The darkness is passing away and the light is already shining.

Time for prayer

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

In our Intercessions today we pray for –

The Worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and our worldwide president Sheran Harper, our chief executive Bev Julian and all who work in Mary Sumner House. Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President. For our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees and all task group leaders and MU members and all Clergy within the Ely Diocese.

In our Worldwide Links of the Mothers' Union we pray for:- Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; plus diocese to diocese with Kigali and Velore.

Our Wave of Prayer. Kasai in DR Congo; Shyira in Rwanda; Ijumu & Egba West in Nigeria; Liverpool in England and Sambalpur in India.

God our Father, be with us on our pilgrimage of Faith; be a companion for us along our journey, a guide at crossroads, a strength in our weariness and our defence against all our dangers, physical, mental or spiritual. Give us shelter on our travels, shade from the heat and be a light in our darkness.

Open our eyes to see your face in all we meet and open our ears to hear those crying silently in the wilderness. May we please you when we look upon your face on the day of Judgement. **Amen**

Praying in confidence as Jesus taught his disciples to say

Our Father Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen

We are a pilgrim people and our destiny is Heaven, as we travel towards the light of Christ, may we encourage one another through life's rough seas and stone filled paths.

All Stand for our Hymn, please join in at home:

He who would valiant be
'gainst all disaster,
let him in constancy
follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent
to be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
with dismal stories,
do but themselves confound—
his strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
though he with giants fight;
he will make good his right
to be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, Thou dost defend
us with Thy Spirit,
we know we at the end
shall life inherit.
Then, fancies, flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
to be a pilgrim.

Closing Prayers

Go now and know that the Lord walks before you. Let him lead you each day into the quiet place of your heart, where he will speak with you. Know that he loves you and watches over you. Know that he listens to you in gentle understanding. Know that he is always with you leading the way. In hope and trust with the living God. Amen

We close by saying The Mary Sumner Prayer together:

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee, and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. Amen

Seeking God's blessing on our work today

As we step forth from this place, give us the Grace to be authentic witnesses to your love by our lives and proclaim you on our lips with joy. Help us to walk in newness of life with your blessings upon us, this we ask of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

We bid farewell until we meet again in this place or in our homes as we say the **Grace together:**

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen

Thursday Prayer 21st September 2023 at 10.30am

Focus: “Forgiving each other” – *Philip Baker*

Zoom connecting details and link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89729198133?pwd=K1V0Vy83NmoxT2JLRDZPNdDTHpHZz09>

Meeting ID: 897 2919 8133

Passcode: 771395

Welcome to everyone taking part this morning, whether in the Cathedral or joining remotely via Zoom.

Introductory prayers:

We say together - God of forgiveness, we ask for your unfailing love to be with us today, so that we may reach out to others with love and compassion. Help us to seek peace and reconciliation with each other, and unite us as one family of God to your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We pray for members and events in the diocese: For the upcoming Diocesan Autumn Meeting and for the Task Group Leaders reviewing their work during the year; for all those working for the end of modern slavery in all its many forms both here in the UK and around the world. We give thanks for the work of the Branches whatever that might be, some raising money in support of Mothers' Union initiatives, and others working towards a myriad of individual objectives – The Mothers' Union benefits from them all. We give special thanks for our members around the world, all 4 million of us, who share the desire to improve the lives of others, especially through work with families and support of family life. Finally, we give thanks for Mary Sumner, a most special lady without whom our movement would not exist.

The theme for this morning is “Forgiving each other” and the reading is taken from the Gospel of Mark

Reading: Mark 11:25 - “A forgiving spirit required” (NIV)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Reflection:

The reading from Mark is very short, but all the more powerful for it. In spite of its brevity, it contains a great deal for us to consider. Mark gives these words as a quote from the words of Jesus so they are especially worthy of our attention and reflect the words we say whenever we recite the prayer our Saviour taught us, the Lords Prayer: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us”. It can therefore be safely assumed that Forgiving each other is actually a very fundamental requirement of being a Christian. But why? Well, if we do not forgive each other then we are not forgiven for the things we have done which are wrong, be it in thought, word or deed. Without being forgiven, we cannot achieve the state of Grace through which we can receive eternal life with God.

Paul writes to the Ephesians (4:32): “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”. Here Paul cites the example that God gave us where his son, Jesus Christ, was sacrificed for us for the forgiveness of our sins; that we may be in the Grace of our Lord. But there is a catch – we have to forgive others in the same way, or we are breaking the Commandment to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31). And to the Colossians Paul writes this (3:12-15): “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in

perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

There are so many examples in the Bible of the need for us to repent of our own sins whilst also forgiving others. Luke writes in Acts 2:38 “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”” Then Matthew most comprehensively covers the issue in 6:14-15 “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” We can rely on Paul to be direct!

We also know how much better we feel when we cease to feel antagonistic towards someone for some perceived wrong, often not intended. It is as though we can feel a physical effect of God’s Grace settling on our shoulders (well it does for me!). That is not to say that it is always easy; sometimes the hurt from some slight or insult or act can be very hard to turn away from and forgive, to “turn the other cheek”. But nevertheless, that is what we are to do. And not only act forgiving, but be forgiving from our hearts! Furthermore, as Matthew says in 18:21-22 “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” So we have to keep doing it, over and over, and graciously.

What we have seen is a wide variety of biblical writers all giving the same message about forgiveness. We even have God’s words in the Lord’s Prayer urging repentance and forgiveness. There is a common thread that we need to do this in our daily lives and that, if we do, we will experience God’s Peace and, ultimately, eternal life with Him. So let us renew our attempts to live by God’s word, however challenging that may be. Surely the potential rewards are worth the effort?

This may be thought of as giving our lives to God, following His ways and living in harmony and peace with all our neighbours. The words of the traditional hymn “Take my life” express this very well.

Hymn: Take my life Mission Praise 624

**Take my life, and let it be / consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days, / let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

**Take my hands, and let them move / at the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be / swift and beautiful for Thee.**

**Take my voice, and let me sing / always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be / filled with messages from Thee.**

**Take my silver and my gold, / not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use / every power as Thou shalt choose.**

**Take my will, and make it Thine; / it shall be no longer mine:
Take my heart, it is Thine own; / it shall be Thy royal throne.**

**Take my love; my Lord, I pour / at Thy feet its treasure store:
Take myself, and I will be / ever, only, all, for Thee.**

The Mothers' Union Prayer: We say together:

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Mothers' Union Prayer Diary – The following fit our focus perfectly:

The theme of the month is "Peace and Reconciliation"

The theme for the week is "Work of reconciliation"

The prayer for today is: Lord, we pray for peace in our own hearts and lives, particularly in those places where we nurse unresolved issues and resentments. Please heal us and set us free to move forward in wholeness.

The Wave of Prayer for today is for: Rumbek in South Sudan, Soroti in Uganda, Aba Ngwa North & Oyo in Nigeria, Peterborough in England and North Eastern Caribbean & Aruba.

Our Intercessions:

We pray for:

The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;

Our Worldwide President, Sharon Harper;

The Chief Executive, Bev Jullien, and all who work at Mary Sumner House supporting members;

Our Diocesan President, Hazel Williams, and our Trustees and Task Group Leaders;

Our Provincial President, Kathryn Anderson and all members in the Province of Canterbury

Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India;

The Diocese Links: Kigali and Vellore.

And we also pray for:

Our own parishes in the Ely Diocese, our families, and our friends

Anyone known to us who is unwell or in need

Those suffering directly or indirectly from a lack of forgiveness or who find themselves unable to forgive

The many countries around the world experiencing conflict, oppression, natural disasters and anywhere where people live in fear or poverty.

The Mothers' Union Thursday Prayer, we say together:

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers, we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Grace

Thursday Prayer 19 October 2023 at 10.30am

NB for those of you who will be joining on zoom, please have a pen and paper handy to jot something down.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89847170351?pwd=TtSwqNI3P84OFrcurFdtbmOJ3PCz7X.1>

Meeting ID: 898 4717 0351

Passcode: 201420

Focus: Dreams? Or Praying with Hope in a Troubled World? – Sue Claydon

Call to Worship

God of love and peace

We gather in your house

God of every nation

We meet to hear your word

God who welcomes friend and stranger

We meet as one in your presence.

Today finds us in the middle of the Week of Prayer for World Peace. This is the 49th year of this interfaith event. Those of you in the Cathedral will receive a copy of the Prayer Resource and those at home can email wpwp21@yahoo.com to get an electronic copy or to be sent a hard copy.

“Where people are praying for peace the cause of peace is strengthened by their very act of prayer, for they are themselves becoming immersed in the spirit of peace.” wrote George Macleod, founder of the Iona Community. He was one of a number of faith leaders who in 1974 signed A Call to Prayer for World Peace. They wrote “Believing that God is calling us to pray with new purpose and deeper understanding for peace and justice among all people, we invite our fellow believers of all faiths to join in a WEEK OF PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE”.

So today we join our prayers with so many others for peace.

This year the theme of the WPWP is ‘Praying with hope in a troubled world’. When we look at the news and hear of all the terrible things going on in our world, it is easy to lose hope. One of things Christians are charged with is to have hope, and so I encourage you to keep praying for peace in all areas. Because of this our prayers today will take a slightly different approach.

One of the daily topics this year fits well with our MU objective -FAMILIES - *for those in areas of conflict and those who are displaced*.

God, please protect those who have fled their homes, especially children, the elderly, and people who are disabled, as they are among the most vulnerable. We ask in Your name to restore communities, re-unite families and repair this country. **Amen** Venezuelan refugee (World Vision)

The Mothers’ Union Thursday Prayer, we say together:

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers, we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Reading - Isaiah 2:4

He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Reflection and activity

Sixty years ago on the 28 August 1963, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave one of the most iconic speeches of modern times. Its title was 'I have a dream'. He had been using the word 'dream' in many of his speeches to inspire people to work for justice. The most famous line from this speech is *"I have a dream that my children one day will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream."*

He went on to work in many ways to achieve his dream of equality for all. Today many people dream about a better world and those dreams often include peace.

I would like you to think about what your dreams for peace can be.

- a dream for yourself
- a dream for your family/school/community/group
- a dream for the world

Think about what you can do to make these dreams come true.

ACTIVITY

We all seem to have unreachable ideals, but if we don't give up we shall eventually make our dreams come true." Jane Goodall.

Another significant anniversary, and much older, is the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823. The aim was to abolish slavery in the British Empire. This objective was substantially achieved in 1838. There have been various mergers and now it is known as Anti-Slavery International. One of the founders was Thomas Clarkson of Wisbech. It is the oldest human rights organisation in the world and continues to work to bring about peace to those who are caught up in trafficking and other forms of modern slavery.

The tenacity of the men and women who worked to end the Slave Trade is an inspiration to us all. So, when we are 'dreaming of peace' let us remember how hard it was for them.

I would now like to read you the words of a song written by Sue Gilmurray, who lived for many years here in Ely.

The Tide Turns

It used to be normal
To buy and sell people,
To use them as cattle to exploit or to kill,
As long as their skin was
A different colour,
And some even said that this was God's holy will.
And any who spoke against slavery's evils
Was told "You're a fool, that's just the way the world's made."
But some had the vision,
And some had the courage
To work all their lives to see the end of that trade.
And then the tide turned,
A new light dawned in people's mind
As the tide turned,
Although the change seemed slow,

And so the world learned
A lesson for all human kind
As the tide turned,
And freedom could start to grow.

Today it is normal
To justify warfare,
In spite of its evils that are clear to be seen,
To talk as if missiles
Were agents of justice,
And slaughtering thousands could be noble and clean.
The minds of the leaders seem closed to all reason,
The weapons they wield could put the whole world to death.
We talk of a vision
Of peace for our children,
And who is to say that we are wasting our breath?
Because the tide turns,
A new light dawns in people's mind
As the tide turns,
Although the change seems slow,
And so the world learns
A lesson for all humankind
As the tide turns,
And peace can start to grow.

Hymn: Make me a channel of your peace

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there is doubt true faith in You

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

The Mothers' Union Prayer: We say together:

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Prayers

We begin today with a prayer for the 2,500 MU member in the Sudan who have been coping with a war situation since April.

Lord we pray for our Members in Sudan and for all the Sudanese people. Open the eyes and hearts of the warring factions to move them to peace. **We ask this in your name.**

As we pray for our troubled world, we cannot forget the ordinary people of Israel and Palestine. Your 'holy' Land is not holy. Bring to the peace that it desperately needs on all sides and with that peace reconciliation, dear Lord. **We ask this in your name.**

We pray for all who work to promote the aims of the Mothers Union at Communion, Provincial, Diocesan and Branch levels. **We ask this in your name.**

We remember our MU link Dioceses and Kigali and Velore and all who work in them to bring peace and justice to their areas. **We ask this in your name.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

A Blessing

Loving God,

Fill us with your Spirit now.

Help us to be curious about others' stories — listening as often as we speak.

Give us the courage to be present — engaging our whole and unique selves.

Inspire us to reimagine what's possible — finding hope by glimpsing you at work.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Go in peace,

as God's people of peace

May our words and actions

build your peace.

And may we each know your peace

in times of joy and trouble

In the week ahead

The Grace

MOTHERS' UNION THURSDAY PRAYER: 23 NOVEMBER 2023 – “BEING PREPARED”.

ZOOM INFO

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>
(NEW MEETING ID: 838 4780 9128 & NEW PASSCODE: 338053)

Good Morning everyone. And welcome to the November Thursday Prayer which is on the theme of “Being Prepared”.

We begin with a few **prayers** and then we will **sing “Awake, awake, fling off the night”**.

NOVEMBER THURSDAY PRAYER.

WE SAY TOGETHER:

ALL: Loving Lord, we look back with gratitude on all that has been achieved thus far in the name of Mothers' Union Worldwide. We give thanks for our development and project work. We pray for all initiatives, large and small, to transform families and communities.

We give thanks for our influence with governments. We pray that our campaigns for social justice will bring lasting change throughout the world.

We give thanks for our members across the globe. We pray that our membership will flourish and grow as stories of our work and achievements are heard.

As we step into the future, we pray that we may always act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. **Amen.**

From the MU Annual Prayer Diary for November: Gender Justice.

As a worldwide movement, we embrace our mission to champion the cause of gender justice.

May the God of righteousness equip us with all we need to play our part in creating a just and equal society. **Amen.**

This week's theme: “Positive gender roles”

Prayer for today:

Heavenly Father, we ask that young girls growing up will have positive gender role models, who will inspire them to pursue careers and other openings in life. May they experience encouragement and help to achieve their goals for the future. **Amen.**

As we think of all the work Mothers' Union does – bringing hope and light into communities where there are difficulties and darkness – we think ahead to the coming Advent Season, when Jesus came as the light of the world, shining in the darkness and transforming lives.

We respond to this in song with the hymn: **Awake, awake, fling off the night.**

HYMN:

1. Awake, awake: fling off the night!

For God has sent a glorious light;
and we who live in Christ's new day
must works of darkness put away.

2. Awake and rise, with love renewed,
and with the Spirit's power endued.
The light of life in us must glow,
and fruits of truth and goodness show.

3. Let in the light; all sin expose
to Christ, whose life no darkness knows.
Before his cross for guidance kneel;
his light will judge and, judging, heal.

4. Awake, and rise up from the dead,
and Christ his light on you will shed.
Its power will wrong desires destroy,
and your whole nature fill with joy.

5. Then sing for joy, and use each day;
give thanks for everything away.
Lift up your hearts; with one accord
praise God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## After Song:

### Reading: Romans 13: 11-14

11 And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

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## “BEING PREPARED” TALK

As I was thinking about the title for this talk, and how near the date was to the end of November, I realised that we would almost be in the Advent Season. We will be thinking about the coming of Jesus at Christmas and looking ahead to his return. We want to be ready or Be Prepared for when this happens. Either for Christmas or the second coming.

Being Prepared also reminds me of the Guide and Scout Motto: Be Prepared. I looked on their websites where there was a lot of good advice and resources.

Keep calm and be prepared. “Be Prepared” means Guides are ready to deal with anything that might come their way.

In *Scouting for Boys*, Robert Baden-Powell wrote that to Be Prepared means “you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty.”

Upon hearing the Scout motto, someone asked Scouting founder Baden-Powell the inevitable follow-up question. “Prepared for what?” “Why, for any old thing,” he replied.

Perhaps we should also be just as prepared in our Christian Journey. There’s a verse in 1Peter3: “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

Being Prepared for Christmas in our house usually doesn’t start much before the first of December. Every year I think I will write our cards earlier – but every year it’s about 2 days before the last posting date for 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamps. We’re trying to decide when we will see our family over Christmas this year, and organise meals accordingly. Thanks to the provision of nearby supermarkets, I don’t have to prepare so much food, and as we don’t all gather together at the same time round our house, I don’t need so much of it either.

Being Prepared spiritually amidst all the commercialisation of Christmas can often be challenging, when our lives become bombarded with adverts trying to persuade us to buy the latest must-have gadget or enough food to last us into the New Year and beyond.

As Christians and Mothers’ Union Members, our thoughts always turn to others in need. And every year we have a “Wish List” of products or vouchers to shop for, to support the Refuges and Hostels in our Diocese – which we respond to generously. And we might donate to other charities that we personally support, especially at this time of year, when the concept of abundance and need seems to register with us more readily.

The Romans passage encourages us to live upright lives. I don’t think it means going without doing fun and enjoyable things but acknowledging the place of Jesus in our lives. Living in his light and resisting the darkness. Easier said than done maybe with the pressures of modern-day life. We are meant to “put on the armour of light” and “clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ”.

This idea is so well expressed in the passage from Ephesians 6 verses 14 to 17:

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

When we get up in the morning we think about what the weather is like so we know what to wear:  
Is it hot or cold, dry or wet? – and we dress appropriately for our physical needs.

Our spiritual needs are just as important: they will be what helps us through the day.  
Most days I try and start by reading the Ely Diocesan prayer for the day, and other “Thought for the Day” emails that I receive in my email inbox. Depending on the schedule for my day, sometimes it’s only a few minutes, other times it’s longer, and during Advent I like to be a little more focussed on the seasonal theme and read what the Church of England produces for its daily reflections. We all have our own ways of connecting with God’s word each day.

I was looking at some of the worship resources on-line and came across several encouraging texts:

Lord Jesus, light of the world, born in David’s city of Bethlehem, born like him to be a king:  
be born in our hearts at Christmas, be King of our lives today.

People of God: awake! The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face.  
Remember the ways and the works of God. God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. You are God’s children.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people in trouble.  
Give peace in our hearts at Christmas and show all the world God’s love.

People of God: be glad! Your God delights in you, giving you joy for sadness and turning the dark to light. Be strong in hope therefore; for your God comes to save.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for you were very near.  
As Christmas grows closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome you now.

People of God: return! You are called to be God’s own.  
From the mountains announce the good news.  
God comes in justice and peace, to all who follow his ways.  
You are God’s children.  
Lord, make us one in the peace of Christ today and for ever.

I hope and pray that everyone enjoys the coming Advent Season and has a Blessed Christmas.

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The Theme of the MU NOVEMBER MIDDAY PRAYERS is “Transformation of the Mind”.
The Focus for Thursdays is “Transformation of the Heart”.

Please join in the words in **BOLD**.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2.

ALL: Jesus, bearer of reconciliation, we confess that all too often we harbour thoughts which estrange and make us hostile towards one another.

Transform our hearts so that we are filled with the desire
to forgive one another and make peace.

**ALL: Jesus, Saviour and Lord, may the posture of our lives be shaped by listening to you;
the goodness of our lives be shaped by love for you;
and the service of our lives be shaped by a humility like yours.
This we pray in your name. Amen.**

From ©Moira Laidlaw

WE PRAY TOGETHER: THE THURSDAY PRAYER.

ALL: Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our intercessions. We pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; All who work in Mary Sumner House;
- Our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees;
the Task Group Leaders in: Faith in Action, Praying our Faith,
Finance & Administration, and Communications;
- Our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President.
- Our Worldwide Links:
Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnagar in India;
Plus Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore.

WAVE OF PRAYER: 23 - 25 November

- Southern Malawi in Malawi; Northern Uganda in Uganda;
Lafia & Ilaje in Nigeria and Thoothukudi-Nazareth in India.

And in the **Anglican Communion Cycle of Prayer** we remember:
The Diocese of Awgu / Aninri - The Church of Nigeria.

We also pray for:

- Our local parishes, our families, and our friends, and give thanks for our many blessings.
- Anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.
- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.

~~~ *PAUSE FOR REFLECTION* ~~~

**WE SAY TOGETHER: THE MOTHERS' UNION PRAYER.**

**ALL:** Loving Lord, We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name. Amen

**THE LORD'S PRAYER.**

**ALL:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

We conclude with this prayer of commitment as we go forward on our Christian journey:

**ALL:** As Jesus taught us, we commit ourselves to welcome strangers into our midst, to care for the poor, to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to support justice in our community. In the name of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit we pledge ourselves to work and pray for peace: Peace in our homes, Peace in our communities, Peace in our world. Amen.

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We say THE GRACE ALL TOGETHER.

May The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.