



(Registered Charity No.251394)



Thursday Prayer – January 2026

Zoom <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85209298628?pwd=VDTrciGq12BVz8luyEa34M6BRLZDIK.1>
Meeting ID: 852 0929 8628 Passcode 080127

150 years of Mothers' Union: Celebrations – JOIN US and JOIN IN.

Good Morning, and welcome to Ely Cathedral today, whether you are here, or joining us on zoom. A very Happy New Year to you all: in this very special anniversary year for Mothers' Union.

We begin with the Prayer for the Month from our Prayer Diary, praying together-
God of every moment, we pause with wonder at the journey behind us, the grace that carries us, the beauty we didn't expect.

With grateful hearts, we look ahead, trusting that the same love will guide our steps. Open our eyes to possibility, our hearts to purpose, and our lives to Your unfolding story.

May we walk forward in faith, rooted in gratitude and filled with awe at what is still to come. Amen.

Our Reading today is from Jeremiah 29:11

“I alone know my purpose for you” says the Lord, “wellbeing and not misfortune, and a long line of descendants after you”.

Reflection

The Refection for January in our Prayer Diary says -

“As we begin this new year, we are full of wonder and gratitude! Mary Sumner had a vision of women supporting each other in their faith and families. The ripples have gone out over the years – to over 4 million members in 84 countries, changing families and communities. One woman in one parish began it all.

One small boy had a picnic – but in the hands of Jesus, it fed a multitude, with 12 baskets of leftovers – nothing was wasted!

In His hands every small offering of service and prayer from each of us is used and multiplied, and nothing is wasted.”

If Mary Sumner had been able to look forward, I'm sure she would not have envisaged how her idea has spread around the world. How well the words from Jeremiah apply to her, and we are among her long line of descendants.

January is named after Janus the 2 headed Roman God, looking both backward and forward, to the past and to the future. So, as we look forward to celebrating 150 Years, we also look back on what has been achieved by members during the last 150 years, around the world, and especially here in Ely Diocese. In recent years we may not have been as “hands –on” as members in other countries, who lead Literacy or Health or Agricultural Self Sufficiency programmes; for instance. . One notable exception is our valiant team who lead the Relationship Courses at Little Hey Prison.

Most of our support is through collecting or making goods for those who live locally and have met with adversity; whether they are care leavers in a hostel, abused and seeking refuge, homeless/living on the streets, or in need of knitted comforts. The data for 2025 shows that there have been a minimum of 1, 610 items donated - it's not absolutely accurate as some recordings are for “a bag of toiletries”, and the data doesn't include items branches give directly, but you can see the difference we make.

Fundraising for projects, the vouchers at Christmas, and Afia Holidays are also ways that we support. We are all playing our part in reaching out as Christ's hands across the world.

Now as we look forward, we wonder just how can we continue this vital support that is increasingly so needed? There is no easy way to put this – **We Must Increase Our Membership** - here in Ely Diocese, in Canterbury Province and in the Britain and All Ireland zone.

Maybe membership will not be as we understand it – times change. Most of us are, or were, branch members, but so often possible members have said to me “I can't be a member, I work” or “I childmind that day” etc. We must emphasise that one can be a member without attending meetings. Our annual subs are what keeps the organisation running, supporting members and the projects around the world. Of course, membership does entitle you to attend meetings/ gatherings/ conferences etc. anywhere, if you wish. We can and must increase membership to keep our vital work going. We cannot be responsible for letting our wonderful organisation die, or just slip quietly away.

No one is saying that it will be easy, however with prayer, determination and effort – quite possibly feeling “out of our comfort zone” - we will survive!

So, now we look forward to 2026 and our celebrations. 5 Cluster gatherings around the diocese; a cathedral service on August 7th, the Picture and Prose Anthology and the 150 Challenge to branches and individuals – have you planned yours yet? And hopefully a Bishops Garden Party to enjoy and hopefully meet the new Bishop, we wait for a date to be confirmed. Nearby here, in the Almonry Garden, we are hoping to install a bird bath with a commemorative plaque. Opportunities to enjoy fellowship together, inspire one another; and for others to “Join Us and Join In” during our 150th Anniversary year.

Let us pray together -

Almighty God, we give thanks for the 150 years of Mothers' Union, for the faithful ministry of Mary Sumner and all members, and for the many blessings that You have given to families and communities around the world.
We Glorify Your name now and for evermore. Amen

Hymn

1. Hills of the north, rejoice,
river and mountain-spring,
hark to the advent voice;
valley and lowland, sing.
Christ comes in righteousness and love,
he brings salvation from above.

2. Isles of the southern seas,
sing to the listening earth;
carry on every breeze,
hope of the world's new birth:
in Christ shall all be made anew,
his word is sure, his promise true.

3. Lands of the east, arise!
he is your brightest morn;
greet him with joyous eyes,
praise shall his path adorn,
the God whom you have longed to know
in Christ draws near, and calls you now.

4. Shores of the utmost west,
lands of the setting sun,
welcome the heavenly guest,
in whom the dawn has come:
he brings a never-ending light,
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

5. Shout as you journey home;
songs be in every mouth!
Lo, from the north they come,
from east and west and south.
in Jesus all shall find their rest,
in him the longing earth be blessed.

*Editors of English Praise.
Based on C E Oakley (1832-65)*

Our intercessions

Let us pray- In our intercessions we are asked to pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Kathleen Snow, our Worldwide President;
- Chief Executive; Beverley Jullien, and all who work in Mary Sumner House;
- Our province of Canterbury and Comfort Fearon, our Provincial President.
- Our Diocesan Trustees; and for new members to Join Us and Join In.
- Our Worldwide Links:-Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnagar in India, Plus Diocese to Diocese with Kigali & Vellore

We pray for all members in Ely diocese, and particularly any who are suffering, or in need of our prayers, at this time. (*time here to add one's own prayers*)

**Lord In Your Mercy
Hear Our Prayer.**

Let us pray together 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

And 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 – Let us share together

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.