

SUNDAY 3 OCTOBER 2021

Discipleship

Study is an inward Spiritual Discipline which Richard Foster explains will bring us to ‘*think*’ as Paul exhorts the readers of Philemon (4:8) and Romans 12:2. Study, Foster explains, ‘is a specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction’. p. 79. His book, *Celebration of Discipline*, has marked its 20th anniversary with a new edition so a new generation of disciples may learn to be transformed through the renewal of the mind.

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” John 8: 31-31

Adult literacy is a key focus of Mothers’ Union in the Solomon Islands. With literacy comes the tools to think and reflect on discipleship. We thank God for the skills of teachers, the eagerness of those who learn and the deepening of faith of all members.

SUNDAY 10 OCTOBER 2021

Freedom and captivity

‘Simplicity is freedom. Duplicity is bondage. Simplicity brings joy and balance. Duplicity brings anxiety and fear’. (Foster, p.99) When we think only of Freedom and Captivity in terms of physical imprisonment (lockdown), we are limiting not just our world view but also our heavenly view. Foster points to the Sermon on the Mount to remind us to ‘seek God’s Kingdom first’, then assess our values. Do we have a joyful unconcern for possessions: an inward spirit of trust? Are we captivated by advertising? Are we oppressed by fear and anger?

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. Luke 4:18

Working alongside Manchester Diocese MU, members from the Diocese of Leeds have sent outdoor toys and games for when newly arrived refugee Afghan children have time to play. Recently, they were asked by their contact for warm coats for the children ready for when they leave quarantine and move on again.

Prepared by The Rev’d Lesley McLean
Co-ordinator Prayer and Spirituality Department

Scripture quotations are from *Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version*©1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Published by Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee. All rights Reserved.



SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER 2021

Poverty and Hardship

Shame, blame, scorn: few who suffer poverty and hardship can hope for any dignity or sense of self-worth. Perhaps our light may rise when we buy *The Big Issue*. However, Christians give of themselves not to feel better but out of Love. And with an awareness cultivated by the Discipline of Simplicity their willingness to support and encourage the disadvantaged will be energised and focussed.

if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. Isaiah 58:10

Early in August, before the Taliban took over in Kabul, members in Leeds discovered help was needed for quarantining Afghan families in hotels. A Manchester hotel manager who is the son of an MU member living in the Huddersfield Episcopal Area, became a contact for the Diocese of Leeds in their efforts to assist refugees.

SUNDAY 24 OCTOBER 2021

Inspiration

Spirit/Breath/Ruah - The very word is an **inspiration**, breath gives life, without breath we **expire**.

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
while harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
equip your church to spread the light.

O Heart of Christ, once broken for us,
'tis there we find our strength and rest;
our broken, contrite hearts now solace,
and let your waiting church be blest.

322 AHB; 409 TiS. Public domain

(We are) remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:3

Mothers' Union Manchester endeavours to provide support for families who have met with adversity and encourage flourishing relationships through our numerous projects. Our aim is to enable and empower in order to enrich lives.

A noble lesson here is us taught,
To set all worldly riches at naught,
But pray we that we may be thither brought,
Where riches is everlastingly.

I pray you, be merry and sing with me

In worship of Christ's Nativity. 16th century Balliol College, Oxford MS 354

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." Matthew 1:22-23

SUNDAY 26-31 DECEMBER 2021

Christmastide

I sing the birth was born tonight,
The Author both of life and light:
The angels so did sound it;
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

The Son of God, th'eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,
And freed the world from danger,
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Lord which heav'n and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no "No,"
Both wills were in one stature;
And, as that wisdom hath decreed,
The Word was now made flesh indeed,
And took on Him our nature.

What comfort by Him do we win,
Who made Himself the price of sin,
To make us heirs of glory!
To see this Babe, all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence--
Can man forget this story? Ben Jonson 1572-1637

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER 2021

Mystery and Wonder

O Lion
 Regal in Courage,
 crushing our blighted bones
 and hardened hearts,
 come with one bound and roar,
 awaken us, your stillborn whelps,
 to new and vigorous life.

Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 7. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

As we prepare for Christmas festivities, we offer prayers for the people of Madagascar where the economy suffered greatly due to environmental issues and poor agricultural practices while illiteracy is also an important issue. The average fertility rate per woman was greater than 6 and in September 2021 the country was in famine and donors are trying to help people also hit by climate change, pandemic and bad governance.

SUNDAY 19 DECEMBER 2021

God With Us

Into this world, this day did come
 Jesu Christ, both God and man,
 Lord and Servant in one person,
 Born of the blessed virgin Mary.
*I pray you, be merry and sing with me
 In worship of Christ's Nativity.*

He that was rich, without any need,
 Appeared in this world in right poor weed,
 To make us that were poor indeed,
 Rich without any need, truly.
*I pray you, be merry and sing with me
 In worship of Christ's Nativity.*

A stable was His chamber; a cratch was His bed;
 He had not a pillow to lay under His head
 With maiden's milk that babe was fed,
 In poor clothes was lapped the Lord Almighty.
*I pray you, be merry and sing with me
 In worship of Christ's Nativity.*



SUNDAY 31 OCTOBER 2021

God's holy people

It is often helpful to read the gospels with the intention of noting just how many people of different race and culture Jesus encountered – and engaged with – that is the really mind-blowing thing. With Roman occupation there were plenty of foreigners cashing in – collecting taxes for example. The early Christian community was a hotch potch of races, religions and cultures as Christianity spread. The Jews thought THEY were God's holy people. Christians claimed their motley bunch were too! Let's work on our Holy Calling with generous hearts, ready to embrace the sinner and the tax collector.

who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. 2 Timothy 1:9

Let us pray for God's holy people in the diocese of Riverina, for Lyn Middleton, diocesan president and Australian secretary; for Ethel Rafferty, treasurer; Marie Gunn O&NO; Dorothy Marks P&S; Iris Herrman Social Issues; Heather Whittaker Mia Mia distributor; Marcia Ashworth, publ'ns and Sue-Ellen Chilvers chaplain.

SUNDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2021

Remember and Reflect

Richard Foster sees Reflection as a final step in the discipline of Study. 'Although comprehension defines what we are studying, reflection defines the *significance* of what we are studying. To reflect, to ruminate, on the events of our time leads us to the inner reality of those events. Reflection brings us to see things from God's perspective. In reflection we come to understand not only our subject matter, but ourselves.' *Celebration of Discipline* Rev. Ed. 1989. P.82

Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things. 2 Timothy 2:7-8

Rwandan refugee, Marie-Lyse became engrossed in conversation over the shared importance of prayer at a Mothers' Union stall in Norwich. In sharing reflections she felt welcomed into the community. "They didn't see me as a stranger, they saw me as somebody who has come here to add on to the work that they are doing in terms of working with families". Thank God for discussion and friendliness, shared compassion and purpose.

SUNDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2021

Faithfulness

God is faithful! We are reassured in psalm and gospel: ‘in faith the lame walk and lepers cleansed. It is not that there healing is a reward for accepting the claims of Jesus. To walk *is* the lame man’s act of faith’ (*A Theological Word Book of the Bible* p. 76). How often, in the face of our fears (that the church will die, that it’s no longer relevant, gives us no status or security) do we forget to trust, to hope, to walk in the light of Christ and in so doing are faithless ourselves and so aid the downward precipitation of a faithful church? Nevertheless, God is faithful throughout all generations an until the end of the ages.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. Deuteronomy 7:9

Whatever our views may be on the institution of the monarchy, the Queen’s dedication and commitment is truly impressive. The Queen’s steadfastness in carrying out this role through so many years is quite simply remarkable. She provides a focal point for national pride as a symbol of both family and Christian values.

SUNDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2021

Championing Gender Justice

The Church in Wales has passed a Bill that will allow same-sex couples to have their civil partnership or marriage blessed in church. The Bill proposes a service of blessing to be used experimentally for five years.

“While recognising that the bill is controversial, [the bishops] describe it as a step on the way towards repentance of a history in the church which has demonised and persecuted gay and lesbian people, forcing them into fear, dishonesty and sometimes even hypocrisy, and which has precluded them from living publicly and honestly lives of committed partnership.”
Church Times 27 Aug 2021.

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Proverbs 31:8

Violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights abuses in Australia and around the world. One in three Australian women will experience violence in an intimate relationship, and one in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. Additionally, domestic violence is the biggest cause of homelessness for Australian women. *Susan Skowronski, Social Issues and Action Coordinator.*

SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2021

Season of Advent

O Tree of Jesse
and flower of Jesse’s Stem,
lifted high as a sign to all the peoples,
before whom even the powerful
are struck dumb,
come and save us, and delay no more.

Jim Cotter ‘Cries of Advent’ No 4. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11: 1-2

This week we pray for Anglicans in Sri Lanka – 4% of the population – and particularly those in the diocese of Colombo where there are 121 churches and 10 schools. Roshina Mendis is MU president and Zone A Trustee. We thank God for her focussed and practical ministry.

SUNDAY 5 DECEMBER 2021

Preparation and Expectation

O Bright Sun
of Justice, Judge of all the world,
seeking to straighten what is crooked
and put right what is wrong,
come with dread power and stark mercy
to our reluctant hearts. Jim Cotter ‘Cries of Advent’ No 6. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

A voice cries out, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Isaiah 40:3

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” Isaiah 40: 5

Namibia is the second least densely populated country in the world and home to exotica such as the Kalahari Desert and cheetahs. Mothers’ Union is a vibrant organisation with 2500 members carrying out a wide range of activities to support family life and meet the needs within their community. May they prosper with God’s blessing.