

MIA *mia*

WINTER 2021

ANGLICAN
MOTHERS UNION
AUSTRALIA





President:

Reverend Anne Kennedy
Email: ppmuaustralia@telstra.com

Secretary:

Mrs Lyn Middleton
Email: muaustsecretary@telstra.com

Treasurer:

Mrs. Marilyn Robey
Email: muausttreasurer@telstra.com

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

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

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

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

Its FIVE OBJECTS are:

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

MIAmia

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

Editor:

Christine Brain
Email: miamia@muaustralia.org.au

Printed by:

Snap Printing
18 Neil St, Toowoomba Qld 4350

Graphic Design by:

Cuccovia Design
Email: cuccoviadesign@westnet.com.au

Websites:

www.muaustralia.org.au
UK: www.themothersunion.org

Cover Photo:

Frosty morning in Armidale
Used by permission

Mia Mia Vol 104 No 4 ISSN 1326-7701



Member of the Australasian Religious Press Association

© Copyright: No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission

Have your say in Mia Mia

Suggestions, comments, contributions
and insights are welcome.

Please send all correspondence
to the editor.

Publication in *Mia Mia*
is at the editor's discretion.

Theme for next issue:

Rebuilding hope and confidence.

Deadline for next issue:

9th July 2021

Meet Our Contributors



Rev Ben Boland is an aged-care Gospel advocate and aged-care chaplain. After growing up in the Armidale diocese he studied at Sydney Missionary and Bible College. Ben has served for over a decade as an aged-care chaplain, initially in Sydney,

now in Stanthorpe (Qld). In 2020 he spent time in Melbourne as part of a pandemic response team. As a passionate advocate for Gospel ministry in the aged and dementia-care contexts Ben and his colleague, Dana Gruben, has written *Jesus Loves Me and Joy to the World*, (published by HammondCare), which share the message of Easter and Christmas with people living with moderate to advanced dementia. Ben also serves as an adjunct associate lecturer at St Marks Canberra/CSU (where he has also studied). Ben met his beloved wife, Beth, in Armidale and they were married at Macksville Anglican Church. They have three school-age boys so life is 'enthusiastic'. When Ben has time and energy he enjoys working with his hands (e.g. in woodwork and blacksmithing); his current projects include renovating the house, cider making and some garden/farm work.



Bishop Grant Dibden served in the Army as an officer for 26 years before becoming a Chaplain. He served in that capacity for 15 years prior to his appointment in 2020 as the Anglican Bishop to the Defence Force. Grant grew up in Kariong, NSW, and is passionate

about making disciples, seeing people come to faith and walking alongside them in the messiness of life so that they grow together in their walk with God. He has had a long involvement with the Anglican church in the various places he has served throughout his Army career. Grant is married to Jeanette and they have three sons, three daughters-in-law and several grand-children.



Rev Andrew Howe grew up on a dairy farm in northern Victoria but instead of choosing a life on the land he opted for a life at sea. Andrew has served in the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Navy and has 'walked the beat' as a British Police Constable.

After 35 years in uniform Andrew retired and moved to Bendigo, where he became involved with St. Paul's Cathedral. Andrew was ordained in Bendigo last year as a Pioneer Minister, where he focuses on helping vulnerable and marginalised people on the street. Andrew is married to Vyonne, and they have five adult children who live in three different countries.

Contents

From the Editor's Desk	
Christine Brain	4
From the Publication Department	
Rob Kennedy	4
A Word from Our President	
Rev'd. Anne Kennedy	5
Real fellowship	
Christine Jensen, Vice President.....	6
Supporting the body of Christ in prayer	
Rev'd. Dr. Lesley McLean, Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator	8
A people of prayer	
Jan Livingstone	9
Recipe - Date and Walnut Slice.....	9
Stand up – speak out!	
Susan Skowronski, Social Issues and Action Coordinator	10
Working together to serve others in the community	
Dr. Robin Ray, Overseas and Northern Outreach Coordinator	12
Fellowship – serving and supporting the body of Christ	
Denise Lay, Promotion and Development Coordinator.....	13
Like an ocean wave	14
Obedient service	
Rev'd. Andrew Howe	16
Links in a chain	
John Cronshaw	17
Big day out.....	18
Celebrating members	20
Facets of Fellowship	22
Light at the end of the tunnel – MU Sydney seminar 2021	
Christine Jensen	23
'Supporting and strengthening the body of Christ'... around the Dioceses	24
Supporting and strengthening Defence Force chaplains through prayer	
Rt Rev'd Grant Dibden.....	26
Recipe - Kani Laksa/Chicken Soup.....	27
Mothers Union worldwide Zone C – South Pacific	
Libbie Crossman	28
Over the Fence	
Virginia Grice	29
Older people ... who cares?	
Rev'd Ben Boland	30

From the Publication Department

If you are looking for simple ways to let others know you are thinking of them, why not contact the Publication manager in your diocese?

AMUA Publications stocks attractive sympathy and get-well cards with a scripture message, which are an inexpensive way to show someone you care.

There are also small books of prayers for adults and children available from the Australian Publication Manager, Rob Kennedy, or your diocesan contact.



Welcome to the Winter issue of Mia Mia. After the heat of summer, I really enjoy the opportunity to curl up under a blanket with a good book or to take a walk on a blustery day knowing that a cosy home and a cup of hot chocolate await my return. However, I know that many do not enjoy these comforts, as Susan Skowronski has often reminded us.

In this issue we focus our attention on the ways in which members of AMUA use their time and talents to help alleviate the distress of those who struggle to make ends meet and how they take seriously their responsibility to pray for, and financially support, others beyond their own back yard.

As usual, we have opportunity to read about what's been going on in Mothers Union across Australia. We also hear from Bishop Grant Dibden, who highlights the role of Defence Force chaplains and the importance of our prayers for them and from the Rev Ben Boland, who challenges us to think about how we can minister to those whose frailty means that they must leave their homes and adjust to a life in care.

The word *fellowship* encompasses so much more than just having a chat with friends over a cup of tea, and as 'members of a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service' we can, and do, have opportunities to partner with others in sharing the good news of salvation in Christ and to alleviate distress.

I hope you enjoy reading about the ways in which some of our members live out this commitment, and perhaps find new ways to do so in your part of the world.

Yours in the *fellowship* of Mothers Union,

Christine



A Word from Our President

We are the body of Christ

'We are the body of Christ ... His Spirit is with us'

We say this at every Eucharist, just before we pass the Peace of Christ (Covid-19 safely, of course!). It's a wonderful reminder of just who we are – all part of Christ's body on earth – and each of us uses our special gifts to keep that body functioning well.

We are also part of the MU body – and in MU we also use our special gifts to serve God and support our fellow Christians as we interact with them during our daily lives. By helping to rebuild hope and confidence in those who have lost those basic and precious feelings, we can help them push open a door to a better life. Through encouragement, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life we can help build stable family life in a time when families are under threat from many outside influences.

Of course, what we do spills over our 'MU fence', touching not just fellow Christians, but people of other faiths and people of no faith at all. Our work is not confined to those who come to church on Sunday – our job is to reach out to people in our local community and in the wider world.

The MU Global Framework, encompassing our unique identity and role, focusses on three areas – ending violence, ending poverty and ending injustice

- by empowering women and girls to use their voices to influence positive gender roles
- by decreasing gender – based violence, increasing safety from harmful practices, and improving reconciliation and conflict resolution
- by building up self-reliance skills for life through education and literacy, to enable women and families to enjoy stable livelihoods.

These Global issues are national and local issues for us, too. What can you learn from your Overseas Links? What's happening in your neighbourhood? How can you address these aims in your work through AMUA in your own group?

The qualities defining MU members are being bold and open to change, being non-judgmental, persevering, loving and compassionate, and working for people of all faiths and none, just as Jesus Christ showed us. By serving each other as members of the body of Christ, we build each other up in faith, hope and love. Then in the strength of the Holy Spirit, and through AMUA, we respond to Jesus's Great Commission:

'Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.' (Matthew 28:19-20 CEV)

Anne Kennedy





Real fellowship

While scrolling through Facebook I came across an article in the UK *Guardian* newspaper by a man called John Harris. The title was, 'How do faithless people like me make sense of this past year of Covid?'. Harris ticks the 'no religion' box in the census. But Covid has forced him to ask questions about the meaning of life. He really sees the need for community. He sees that Christians have both these things because of our hope in God's promises and his gift of the church.

Now I agree that our church experience is not always as happy as we would like it to be. It can be boring, it can be irritating, and sometimes it can even be difficult. But I am always encouraged when I read about the church in the New Testament. It also had big problems (eg those described in Acts 5 and 1 Corinthians 5) There has never been a golden age of church!

But whether church is difficult or joyful, God has provided us with the fellowship of our church family for a reason. He knows that we are made for relationship, that we don't like being on our own and that relationships are the most important things in life. And his plan is that what we experience now in a fellowship of believers is a foretaste of the heaven yet to come.

Church is special. The message of the Bible gives us meaning and purpose. We experience the wonders of the grace of God and we worship him, acknowledging that we are not the centre of the



universe, but he is. Do you remember that Jesus said we are called on to worship him in spirit and in truth? (John 4:23). This is a wonderful privilege which blesses us and enriches us, cleansing our sins and lifting our spirits.

Church is special because the Lord Jesus promised to be with us – 'wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20).

Church is special because it is where love rules (see 1 Corinthians 13). We are meant to take the gifts the Lord gives each one of us and use them for the benefit of one another. We are meant to build up the body of Christ.

Let me ask you – what are the sorts of things you love about your church? Here are some of the ways I would answer that question:

First, we are taught the truth in love in our main meetings and in small groups.

Second, we sing God's praises together.

Third, we care for each other, listening, following up and providing when there are special needs, such as the birth of a new baby, sickness or family crises.

Fourth, we pray for each other.

Fifth, we belong to different age groups, have different life-experiences and come from different ethnic groups.

Finally, the church is like an extended family and it brings many of the blessings of a family, often to those who don't have a family of their own. We welcome people in need and make them our own. In my church a homeless man comes each Sunday and lies on the floor at the back. But he is not ignored. People sit on the floor next to him and spend time with him. One man even contacted his family in the UK when he was very ill.

Of course, one of the key things about being church is regular attendance. During the

Pleasures

A confetti shower of autumn leaves,
Or a rustling brown heap to shuffle through;
Bubbles blown under apricot trees,
Fragile crystal spheres of rainbow hue;

Butterflies flitting in silent hiccups;
Terns sky-dancing in endless blue;
Transparent fish that flash and are gone;
The call of a bell-bird, silver and true;

The heart-lift of a blackbird's serenade
His song filled with joy that pricks with tears;
Dew-diamonds sparkling on fine spikey grass,
Tiny perfect shells of a baby's ears;

St Andrew's spider, watchful stillness crucified;
Frost as it sparkles on new-mown lawn;
Acres of salt-bush grey-lichened
with spider webs
Sequined with crystals in the cold light of dawn;

A bird, head cocked to hear a worm crawling;
Cattle floating in a lake of mist;
A silver pathway that threads
through the rockery;
A baby's foot that just begs to be kissed;

Soft velvet of a puppy's ears;
Curling fern frond newly green;
Golden wattle on a dank day of rain;
The tug of wild winds while seagulls keen;

Small gifts of love from Creator God,
Favourite things that give me pleasure,
Free, to all with hearts to hold them.
Memories and joys to hoard and treasure.

Geraldine E. Foster

lockdown, our church met on Zoom. At the end of the service we went into small groups and talked. It was actually quite fun. We met new people and talked to old friends. It also meant that, instead of rising fairly early on a Sunday morning and driving to church, we could simply stay at home and not even dress up!

At first it was tempting to think that this may be the best way to do it from now on. But it was not long before we realised that 'virtual church' was not a substitute for the real experience. We need to be *together* in church. We need to sing *together*. We need to eat and drink *together*. We need to see each other.

It also taught us that when we attend only from time to time we are actually missing out and that our absence affects our church family. We need each other and we need to bless each other. Church is not an optional duty or entertainment.

John Harris was absolutely right. We all hunger for meaning and for fellowship, both now and in the age to come, because that is how God has made us. Where he is sadly wrong is in thinking that we can find other ways to have the same blessing.

God knew what he was doing when he founded the church on the Rock of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christine Jensen

MIA MIA is available on CD

When your eyesight starts to diminish all is not lost!

All articles in the *Mia Mia* magazine are faithfully recorded for your entertainment and enjoyment. All you need is a small CD player and MU news from around Australia will be at your fingertips.

For further information contact your Branch Treasurer.





Supporting the body of Christ in prayer

Jesus said, 'Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.' (Mark 3: 35) The true kindred of Jesus. He says look further than your own clan, select group, congregation. Mark's gospel is unsettling in its directness and immediacy. It's only chapter 3 and already the impression we have of the man Jesus is that he is God and Man; he is recognised by demons and he is upsetting the norms and customs of his religion and society.

So, what is expected of us? How do we, in faith and trust, do the will of God? Or, to put it another way, if we are the Body of Christ and his Spirit is with us, where do we offer support in the light of Jesus's words? If he thrust a spanner in the notions of family of the people of his own day, what spanner would he thrust into the works of our church organisation? Who would he point out as brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers?

The people who hung off Jesus's every word were not the local 'church-goers'. His word was anathema to the 'faithful' because it was so threatening. Was he suggesting that those outside of the church-going set could also be responding to the will of God? Jesus was certainly very critical of those who concentrated on their own piety and of those who ignored the plight of the poor. But most of all it was those who *recognised* him as Son of God who became his followers.

Throughout Christian history, the care of outsiders has been the Church's defining characteristic. Just as Jesus called those flocking to him his brothers and sisters and mother, so he identified prisoners, refugees, all suffering humanity, not just as members of his family but indeed himself.

'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Matthew 25: 37-40.

Supporting the Body of Christ requires us to pray carefully, with consideration and most of all, with open hearts and minds.

Prayer is not telling God what to do. Prayer is an intimate and spiritual connection that has no boundaries except the limitations of our faith. The best imagery I have of prayer is of holding a name, a face, in faith. It is the feeling of being connected, as if the thought has power; that my thought, my heartfelt awareness, joins me with the Body. It seems that together in prayer we are all blessed. We do not need to decide, have an opinion, direct, choose, judge. All we have to do is be there. All we have is our faith in the mystical body of Christ. This surely is Blessed Assurance. 'We are the Body of Christ'

Mothers' Union, in the 21st century, reaches out to people of every race, colour and language. Using the Prayer Diary takes us worldwide, just as our ancestors imagined the breadth of God's love for all creation and which rings out in the *Book of Common Prayer* Collect for Ash Wednesday: 'Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made...'

Let us pray that the strength and power of the Risen Lord will 'create and make in us new and contrite hearts', will lead us to hate nothing God has made and widen our vision of the Body of Christ.

Lesley McLean



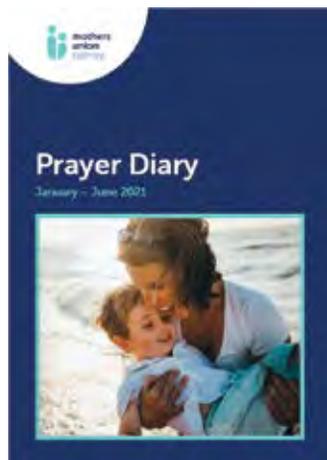
Photo Credit: Yerson Retamal on Pixabay

A people of prayer

As we grow in our faith and understanding and face the vagaries of life, we learn more and more about depending on God for all things. It brings to my mind Proverbs 3: 5-6, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.' I'm continuing to learn that praying expresses my dependence. Yet it takes discipline and guidance and I'm sure we all value all the prayer resources made available to us.

Over the years, in our diocese we have used the prayer resources provided by Mary Sumner House and MU Australia. They have certainly focused our praying on the big picture of MU members and ministries around the world and our own country and we continue to use those resources in our branches.

Some years ago it was suggested that we have a Diocesan Prayer Diary to pray specifically for each of our branches on the particular day they meet. Other MU ministries, Executive members from our diocese and our Australia Council Executive members are included, as is the Wave of



Prayer schedule. Personally, it has been a great encouragement and guide to me. Each day of the year I am specifically praying for members and branches. Each individual branch submits their prayer request, and as a result I feel I'm part of it with them. From the prayer points submitted I know what they will be learning, who the speaker is, what the needs might be in their group and often in their parish. For me, it is a very valuable connection.

The publication itself is attractive and user-friendly. Although putting our Prayer Diary together – designing, printing and distributing – is an enormous task, and comes at a cost, I commend the idea to all our dioceses as we seek to devote ourselves to prayer as MU members.

Jan Livingstone Sydney

Recipe

Date and Walnut Slice

This is a recipe I have had for 49 years and tried it for the first time recently. I make a slice, using *Mia Mia* recipes, every Friday for morning tea after our Friday service. This recipe was particularly popular.

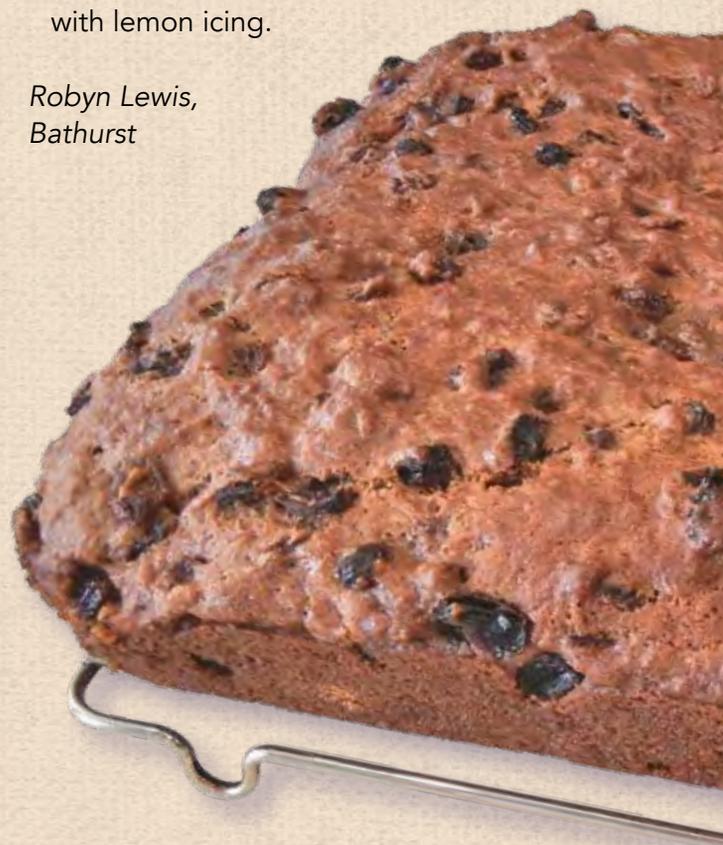
INGREDIENTS

1 cup SR flour
125 gms (4 ozs) butter
1 cup chopped dates
1 tablespoon golden syrup
1 cup walnuts

Method

- Melt butter and syrup. Add to dry ingredients.
- Press into 28cms x18cms lamington tin lined with baking paper.
- Bake in a moderate oven (180°) for 15 minutes.
- While still warm ice with lemon icing.

*Robyn Lewis,
Bathurst*





Stand up – speak out!

Jesus Lord of Life, by the power of your word and through the actions of love, call us to be your disciples. Give us strength to be different, to stand up for justice and peace and be signs of your reconciling love for all.

We pray every day. We ask for strength to be different. We ask God to help us stand up for justice. But do we really do that? What is Justice? What are we standing up for? Justice is hard to define, but conveys a sense of something being morally right and fair, impartial and equitable. Not just obeying laws but doing the right thing.

Do you sometimes wonder if there is any justice in our society? Is it fair and equitable?

According to the OECD definition, one in six children in Australia lives below the poverty line. This has far-reaching effects for over 1.2 million Australian children throughout their entire lives. One in three children from Australia's most disadvantaged communities does not meet one

or more key developmental milestones when they start school. And yet we read:

"However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you." Deuteronomy 15:4

Single parent families, headed overwhelmingly by women, experience the highest poverty rates of any family type in Australia. We hear stories of mothers who, not having enough money for bare necessities, pretend they've eaten dinner while cooking when actually there was not enough food to go round. We hear stories of mothers forced to forego important medication because there isn't enough money to buy it.

In Australia, homelessness can affect people of all ages – men, women, children – and all circumstances, but many of us simply don't see the reality of homelessness in our communities. Living without a home is a reality for some women with young children escaping domestic or family

violence with nowhere safe to go, unable to afford accommodation, turned away from shelters, forced to live in a car.

Federal government ministers have replied to our letters about lack of affordable housing with a shrug. 'Not our problem. State government issue. Full stop.' If you have received a dismissive reply, don't be discouraged. We have the right to expect our local state leaders and our federal government to do whatever is necessary to alleviate the hardships faced by vulnerable people.



Photo Credit: Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash

Are You a Ripple On A Pond?

Are you a Ripple on a Pond?
Do you see what I see?
Can you pray for those who cannot pray?
Will you pray for those who cannot see?

Are you a Ripple on a Pond?
Like a pebble thrown into the middle,
our prayers can go out and around
in a never ending and expanding circle.

Are you a ripple on a pond?
Do you see beyond the horizon?
Will your words or works reach out
in that never ending circle of prayer?

I pray I am a Ripple on a Pond.
My prayers going forth throughout the world,
for those lost souls to be gathered in
and for every one of them to
be cleansed from sin.

Do try to be a Ripple,
even starting with a trickle,
of prayer and praise.
Like a pebble creating waves on a Pond,
may your Prayers go forward even beyond.

So, are you a Ripple on a Pond?
With prayers, reach far beyond
all that you see.
Look and use your spiritual eyes for Jesus.
Do something for Him that
really, really pleases.

Jessie Larman

On Census night in 2016 it was estimated that more than 116,000 people were homeless in Australia. During the pandemic efforts were made to house some of the homeless, but those measures are not ongoing. There is a massive shortage of affordable or social housing and the current crisis-accommodation arrangements are leaving families on the street. In Commonwealth legislation, housing is currently referred to as a 'basic human need'. Federal government policies do affect the cost of housing. All levels of government have a role to play in alleviating homelessness, yet there seems to be little interest in addressing this situation.

Is this fair and just? We all know about it! We cannot look the other way. We cannot pretend we don't know. Good intentions only go so far. We have to be active in our faith in order for it to be truly meaningful. To truly help others, we have to take action in some way.

We read:

'Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.' James 2:14-17

As members of AMUA, we can speak out. These conditions are not acceptable.

Lord give us strength to be different, to stand up for justice and peace and be signs of your reconciling love for all.

Susan Skowronski

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."
Matthew 18:10





Working together to serve others in the community

'Church and community mobilisation (CCM) is the approach that Mothers' Union is adopting in countries to help communities break free from dependency and self-solve issues such as poverty – either financial or educational.'¹

By taking a transforming approach through bible study, praying with purpose and workshops, church groups can become catalysts for change. In several countries Mothers Union members are actively involved in CCM, using the gifts that God has given them to work with others in their communities as agents of change. Areas of potential change are identified through a process which identifies the key things or issues that make people excited about community transformation.

In the **West Indies**, Lena Edmondson is the *Mothers' Union* Regional Parenting Trainer. In a recent Zoom meeting, Lena described how the MU members in her region are working to improve the lives of girls and the health of their communities in conjunction with the 'Days for Girls International' initiative. You may also be aware of 'Days for Girls', perhaps making reusable pads or donating to this cause. In the West Indies, MU members participate in three aspects of the organisation: pad kit production, health education and social enterprise. In a region where menstruation is stigmatised and can keep girls from receiving a useful education, MU members are making pads using high quality cotton and flannelette, enabling the pads to last for 3-4 years. They are also providing menstrual and sexual health education, breaking down traditional barriers and improving access to health services. Additionally, MU works with local leaders to establish sustainable small businesses through the production and selling of menstrual kits. As a result of this CCM work, girls are staying in school for longer and being further educated, leading to improvements in physical, social and economic health for communities.

In the **Solomon Islands** MU members lead bible studies and provide food. Using the CCM approach they are transforming their communities through

teaching prison inmates life-skills such as literacy, and by addressing social issues through parenting programs, as well as working to reduce barriers perpetuated by unhelpful traditional beliefs.

As the largest national women-led organisation, MU is also partnering with national church leaders on an ACT Alliance project to improve community-based outcomes for women in remote communities with respect to gender equity and gender justice. In March Dorothy Bana, the community development coordinator for Solomon Islands, was seconded from MU to be the taskforce coordinator in the Isobel Province for the duration of the project. Eighteen MU members have been recruited to the taskforce and will begin training in mid-April. As the project progresses, MU members will administer activities, facilitate networking and monitoring to assist the project team, as well as develop greater community ownership and accountability for the project within their communities.

The CCM approach and the projects discussed here align well with MULOA outcomes that mobilise MU to be more active in the community. Perhaps AMUA members might consider the CCM approach to listening, observing and acting to see where God is leading them to further transform their own communities.

Robin Ray

<https://www.mothersunion.org/projects/church-and-community-mobilisation>



Women discussing gender equality in the Solomon Islands. Used by permission



Fellowship – serving and supporting the body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:27... Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Recently I listened to an interview with a lady who, being undecided whether or not to do something about a special need in her local community; prayed about it. Her vision to establish a homeless refuge eventually came to fruition.

This lady wondered whether sometimes when we are looking up to God for guidance in our decision making, he has already been looking down on us with the answer! Are we being watched? Is God seeing our potential and calling us through his Son?

One of the most special things we can share is ourselves – our time, talents and energy – in serving and helping others. We are all individuals but, as one in Christ, who looked after the poor and disadvantaged, and through his Spirit, we also become the body of Christ.

I heard a Christian singer once say that our bodies are a vibe to lift the spirit and this should help us to uplift not only ourselves, but also our family, friends and community, whether it be through music or something else. As Christians and members of Mothers Union it is not about us converting people to God. It's about us sharing his love through our actions and setting the example by the way we live our lives in the name of Christ Jesus.

What can you do individually or as a branch and parish to inspire something in your area? Jesus went amongst the people, where he initiated conversations but also listened to discussions and responded. It can be by listening we learn what is needed, and can respond by taking the lead to help establish something in our church or the community. Sharing common interests like gardening, walking, caring for pets, creating through art and craft or even talking about your faith and beliefs all help to bring God into the community. Is there something you have tried to undertake but which failed? Could there be another way of trying it again that perhaps this time will bring a successful outcome?



Photo Credit: Rami al Zayat on Unsplash

We discovered over the past year, especially during our long lockdowns and restrictions, how important interacting through the different forms of social media became to many of us, not only in our personal and working environments but also within our churches. If you haven't already done so, please consider establishing a site either via your parish or as a diocesan group, keep it updated and let everyone know what you celebrating or doing.

Jesus sent us the gift of his Holy Spirit, and through our baptism empowered us to serve, love and live our life in one with him.

Denise Lay

Prayer

Almighty God, we pray for all who are housebound, those in hospitals and for those who have had to settle in care homes in their later lives. We pray for all who suffer from dementia.

Show them with your heavenly grace and grant their carers wisdom and skill. In Jesus' name, Amen

*Adapted from 'Dear Lord...', p.36
© Mothers Union, 2018
Used by permission*

Like an ocean wave

As a wave in the ocean rises and falls unceasingly, Mothers Union members uphold each other in a continuous expression of commitment to each other through our 'wave of prayer'. It runs throughout the year so that the work and members of each and every area in which Mothers' Union is active is prayed for at some point. Sometimes local members gather in a church building, sometimes members sit together around a table, sometimes members pray alone at home to observe the time when their diocese is featured. Sometimes printed resources are used to guide prayer, sometimes PowerPoint slideshows. Sometimes the time of prayer is followed by lunch or a 'cuppa'. Whether prayer is informal or formal, members appreciate this opportunity to reflect on the worldwide nature of Mothers Union and to pray for members in other places.

Sylvia and Tom Spicer from **Katanning**, in the diocese of Bunbury, regularly refer to the Mary Sumner House midday prayers and read them together each evening. Sylvia writes:

'For those of you on Facebook, Mothers Union from Mary Sumner House in London is having members and clergy leading a live Midday Prayers session each day, sometimes from England, sometimes from Wales and Ireland ... I can totally recommend this to you... Tom and I have found this very comforting. One priest the other day said something relevant to the season – "Fast for Lent by Feasting on God".'

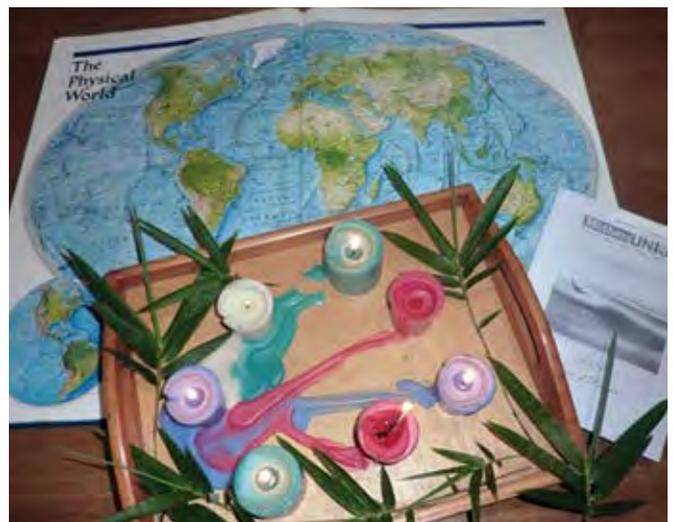
AMUA Members in the **Burnett Deanery** gathered at Christ Church, Childers, on Tuesday 23rd March to celebrate Lady Day. Having missed out on the celebration last year due to COVID, members from Gayndah, Biggenden, Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, and Childers processed with their banners and enjoyed a wonderful time of praise and worship. Following a BYO lunch and fellowship members returned to the church to participate in the Wave of Prayer service.



Jenny Bullock

The members of the **Strathpine AMUA** met around a table to join in the Wave of Prayer at 12.00 noon on March 23rd. 'As we began to extinguish the candles, we noticed that as the candles began to melt the wax had flowed together forming a beautiful array of colours – a symbol, we felt, of all the MU prayers from around the globe coming before our wonderful Father in Heaven as the Mothers Union Wave of Prayer continues.'

Pamela Lynam



St Paul's Ipswich branch celebrated their Wave of Prayer service on March 25th. Diane Thomson said, 'We used the Wave of Prayer booklet that had been prepared with up-to-date information and prayers written for and about our Brisbane Diocesan Links of Koforidua in Ghana, Kaduna in Nigeria, Rokon in South Sudan, Kampala in Uganda and Peru in the Diocese of Southern Cone.

'Afterwards, we had a cup of tea or coffee and tasted foods from favourite recipes of our own branch Link Dioceses – Oatmeal Cookies, a favourite from Canada and Fat Cakes with jam and cream, a favourite recipe from Zimbabwe. During our meeting, our Link Secretary and President gave informative talks on the history of the three of our Link branches in England, Canada and Zimbabwe. Each year we receive cards and letters from England and Canada at Easter and Christmas. Our link with Zimbabwe is more recent as we received an unexpected visit in 2018 from the Chairperson (President) of St David's Mothers Union in Bulawayo. Since then, emails and photos have been exchanged on a regular basis throughout the year, and we feel as if we are part of their Mothers Union family, praying for each other and sending greetings and exchanging information each month. We really value the friendships that we have with all our overseas Link branches.'

In **Grafton**, 2021 saw the reintroduction of group meetings. Gae Shorten writes, 'Since the beginning of 2021 Mothers Union in Grafton diocese has slowly but surely come alive again. Each group has paved its own way to fit with their numbers and individual group desires and needs. This was very evident when we had Wave of Prayer – one small group, being so scattered, observed their allotted time individually. One diocesan member told me she said it alone at the time specified and enjoyed choosing her Bible readings and hymns, even playing one on her piano! My own group, although only small, met in a member's home.'

From **North Queensland**, Vivienne Feltham writes, '...in Townsville we decided to have a Quiet Day to observe the Wave of Prayer. Anne Watkins prepared a PowerPoint for each of the countries we prayed for and each of the participants was given a leaflet which had relevant information to quietly pray over. As you can see we were socially distanced! It was well received and the members felt it was a special time of prayer and fellowship, and that by joining together in this way we could have informed, concentrated prayer for the concerns of those countries, but also celebrate their work and achievements.



Nth Queensland Wave of Prayer

In the Diocese of **The Murray** December 17th to 19th marks the Wave of Prayer for them and their linked dioceses. Jocelyn Williamson explains, 'There is no diocesan service as it is so near to Christmas, but many branches pray for our linked dioceses at their November meeting, using both the service in our MU Worship and Prayer Book, and prayer points sent by Caroline, our Overseas and Northern Outreach coordinator. All members are asked to pray for our linked dioceses at home between 17–19 December. Our link branches are forwarded greetings and also our quarterly newsletter, which we hope makes them feel remembered. Some branches say Midday Prayers during their monthly meeting, and some members say them during their daily quiet time – after all it is always midday somewhere!'

Obedient service

Several weeks prior to Lady Day, Reverend Peter Dyke (Bendigo Diocesan MU Chaplain) asked me if I might like to help with the service and to offer a short reflection after the reading. I was excited by the prospect and then I realised that I actually knew little about the Mothers Union.

To find out more, I turned to that wonderful resource, the internet. Within a few minutes I was totally engrossed in what I was reading 'Mothers' Union... offering "Christian care for families worldwide."' In particular I was drawn to the banner on the *Projects* webpage 'Stopping violence, stopping poverty, stopping injustice.' Three years ago I found myself with an opportunity to help set up and project-coordinate a pilot scheme that enabled Bendigo churches to come together to provide shelter, food and dignity to people experiencing crisis homelessness during the months of winter. Helping vulnerable and marginalised people strikes such a deep chord within me; I also believe this lies at the heart of MU and speaks directly to what Mary, mother of Jesus, teaches us.

The Mothers Union *Social Issues and Action News*, February 2021, highlights social justice and a decent life for all as ongoing areas of concern. The newsletter reminds us that at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 more than 100 political leaders pledged to make the conquest of poverty, full employment and the creation of stable, safe, and just societies their overriding objectives. This newsletter calls upon us to reflect: 'Has this been achieved?'

'Then Mary said, "Here am I. The servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.' (Luke 1:38) I believe that Mary could have said 'No, thank you' to the angel. Mary had free will, as have we and all of God's people. Mary said 'Yes', not because she knew what the future held, but because she knew who held the future.

Mary had resources in what she had learned from the angel Gabriel, and later from Elizabeth

and then Anna and Simeon, but they did not necessarily bring understanding at the time. For all of us, greater understanding often comes later, when we look back. Mary teaches us courage, she teaches us discipline, and she teaches us the fundamental importance of celebration and of rejoicing. She rejoiced in God, not in circumstances.

Mary was entrusted with the most important job of all, that of being a parent, a mother. I wonder what conversations she had with Jesus? Did they talk about the importance of discipline, of listening carefully to God through his elders and his faith tradition? Did she talk to Jesus about Simeon's words, '...and a sword will pierce your own soul too'?

Mary's discipline remained throughout her life as she, experiencing what no parent should, watched her son die. I like to think that God may well have said, 'Thank you Mary. Thank you for your obedience, your courage, your discipline and for your rejoicing heart.'

What does this mean for us here today, friends and members of the Mothers' Union, as we continue to strive for social justice and a decent life for all? As we work towards rebuilding hope and confidence in our broken world? Can we hear the still small voice in our hearts? That voice saying, 'Thank you for all you have done, and still offer in the service of others and in the name of Christ.'?



Andrew Howe

Bendigo

Links in a chain

In today's modern age, you could be forgiven for wondering just what you are supposed to be or do as a woman (or as a man for that matter).

Let me introduce you to Joanna, the wife of Chusa, a member of the upper class and a steward of Herod, Mary Magdalene and Susanna. (Luke 8:1-3;) who were healed of evil spirits and infirmities by Jesus. They became his and the disciples' travelling companions, and met many expenses from their own resources. These women were also at the open tomb to hear the words 'He is not here, but is risen.' (Luke 23:55; 24:10)

In the early days of the church (Acts 6:1-7) there was a conflict between the Greek and the Hebrew believers concerning the daily distribution of food to the widows. With the rapid growth of the church the apostles' time was at a premium, and understanding the need to prioritise the ministry of the word of God a decision was made to select seven men '...known to be full of the spirit and wisdom.' For a menial task – the distribution of bread to the widows in their community – note the criterion: the men chosen should be '*full of the Spirit and wisdom*'. This was their prayer for the wise selection of people to serve through this task. Earlier, in choosing the twelfth disciple to take Judas's place as an apostle, their prayer included 'Lord, you know everyone's heart' (Acts 1:24). This was a reflection of the same choice-criteria over 1000 years earlier when Samuel sought the Lord's help in choosing a new King for Israel – 'The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' (1 Samuel 16:7)

Deborah, the wife of Lappidoh, was one of God's appointed Judges who ruled Israel prior to the establishment of kings. Barak, her military commander, was afraid to face the army of their enemy, Sisera. In seeking Deborah's help he said, 'If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go.' Note Deborah's response:

'I will surely go with you [but] the honour will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman.' I encourage you to read the full account.



The call of God to serve Him is not age-related nor gender-specific.

The ability to serve is one thing, but our channels of service will change over time. Psalm 71 is a great psalm of encouragement to those of us who have more years under our belt than left in front of us. 'For you have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth ... Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me O God, till I declare your power to the next generation.'

We are all links in a chain, witnessing and serving our Lord in whatever community we live and this charge does not end while ever we draw breath. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is a great charge to us all – 'May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.' (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)



John Cronshaw

Big day out

Celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation, also known as 'Lady Day', is an important event in most Mothers Union members' calendars. Getting together with others, whether in large groups or small, was especially joyful this year, since for many (though not all, as Gae Shorten explains) it marked an easing of the restrictions which prevented group gatherings in 2020. So come on a trip around Australia and join in A Big Day Out ...

... in Bendigo

At our service in St. Paul's Cathedral on March 25th there was the presentation of a 60 year scroll to Elay Kunoo, and the admission of a new member, Debbie Softley. We all enjoyed the beautiful singing of our Karen members during the service.

Anne Roberts



Elay Kunoo receiving her 60-year certificate



Rev Peter Dyke and Debbie Softley



Karen members singing



A special homely Lady Day service was held this year on March 25th at **Cranmer** branch, a northern Victorian parish in the Bendigo Diocese, so longest-serving member, Ina Peel, could share her blessings with close friends and other members within

the district, and at the same time receive her 66th pin and certificate. Warm and gracious, Ina's dedication to Christ Jesus's glory was displayed in the teaching of Sunday-school, and in making the simnel cake for Mothering Sunday and palm crosses for Palm Sunday. Ina was a prolific knitter, gifting many items of clothing for small children and babies to the local hospital for distribution to new mums. Until her recent death at the age of 94, Ina continued contributing to the work of MU as she had done this for decades.

Marlene Allen-Starr

... in Bunbury

'Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed' I arrived at Perth Underground train station ready to join with our sisters in Christ from branches in Mandurah, Busselton, Albany, Katanning and Carine/Dun Craig. at the beginning of Bunbury Mother's Union Lady Day Celebration. My ETD: 6.45 am, Perth Underground train station,

ETA: 7.45 am, Mandurah train station, then an hour by car to the regional city of Bunbury, where I received a very warm welcome over a much-needed cuppa.

Over 60 members were present at the service held in the cathedral. Bishop Ian Coutts spoke of the role of 'the Marys' – Mary the mother of Jesus, with her immediate and total response to the Angel Gabriel, 'Here I am – the Lord's hand-maiden, ready to serve, be it unto me just as you said' and Mary Sumner, in whose memory we serve within Mother's Union Worldwide.

Wendy Mabey (Bunbury Diocesan President) presented MU Service Certificates and badges to 12 members for faithful service ranging from 10 to 60 years. Wendy also shared experiences of her many years of loving service within MU, reminding

us all that this is a way of life, more than meetings around the table, more than a church community – all are called to win hearts for Christ. I fully appreciated this opportunity to forge deeper links in loving fellowship, together serving and celebrating our Lord as he has called us.

Bev Cunningham, Perth.

... in Grafton

Our Lady Day celebrations were to be a wonderful occasion when we would come together as MU and also with the clergy of the diocese. The Dean chose the readings and I was asked to write intercessions and read them at the service. But alas, it didn't happen! With continued flooding, and the Clarence River at Grafton so unpredictable, most people watched the service live-streamed from the cathedral. Even though we weren't able to come together we still felt a closeness and joy in celebrating the day.

Whenever I ask members from our different groups what they enjoy about Mothers Union I always seem to hear very similar answers – 'we love to come together, to pray together, enjoy each other's company'. Whether it's at their church meeting room, in someone's home or at a favourite coffee shop, it's wonderful to hear about the joy of coming together.

Gae Shorten

... in North-West Australia

Geraldton branch held their Lady Day service at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on March 23rd, with an attendance of 39. We were pleased to have 3 men with us, including the Acting Dean of the Cathedral, Rev Dr David Seccombe. Members of our branch presented readings and prayers. While Jocelyn read the MU Prayer, I (Gladys) acted out actions, which was well received. Following the service we enjoyed lunch together then heard from our speaker, Jewellann Taylor. It was a joyful day enjoyed by all. Praise God for all His blessings.

Gladys Sutton

... in Perth

This year Perth Diocese enjoyed not one, but two Lady Day Services. The first, on Thursday March

25th took place in St. George's Cathedral in Perth. The Rt Rev'd Jeremy James, tssf, the Perth MU Diocesan Chaplain, officiated, with MU members taking part with readings and the intersessions. The hymns were really popular and were sung to fill the Cathedral with joy.

Despite being unable to have refreshments at the Cathedral (COVID 19 restrictions once again!) it was a beautiful day, and a great deal of fellowship took place in the Cathedral precinct.

The second service took place two days later at Holy Trinity Church, Malaga. This enabled the MU members from Sudan and Zimbabwe, as well as others who have to work during the week, to celebrate Lady Day. Many members who had been to the Thursday service were also present. Bishop Jeremy again officiated, with an interpreter relaying his words so that the newcomers to Australia could understand. This was such a joyous service, with a band and two choirs, some of whom sang beautiful descants and harmonies throughout the hymns, while others clapped and swayed in time with the music. All-in-all it was a joyous occasion and we were all privileged to be there. Everyone is looking forward to Lady Day next year!

Ann Herring



... in Wangaratta

Under COVID-19 restrictions the annual Lady Day celebration service began with the Dean of Trinity Cathedral, the Very Reverend Ken Goodger, Reverend Sue Hall and the Bishop, Right Reverend Clarence Bester, leading the procession down the centre aisle, followed by representatives from around the diocese carrying MU and parish banners.

The Bishop led the Eucharist and Rev Sue Hall preached the sermon. Jan Craig of Corryong was

recognised for her 50 years of service. Although they were unable to be present, Beth Eldridge and Dot Gemmill from Nathalia (60 years and 30 years respectively) were acknowledged for their years of service, as were Lorna Crawford and Joyce Thompson, both from Corryong, (50 years) and Gladys Burgoyne from Seymour (10 years).

The day concluded with a very interesting talk by our guest speaker, the Reverend Catie Inches-Ogden from Mansfield. Catie gave a reflection on her life, covering her early life in Singapore, life with her family and schooling, becoming a teacher, a nurse and ending up as a church minister and army chaplain.

Diane Grant

... in Willochra

The Diocese of Willochra stretches a long way, so when they host a diocesan service like Lady Day there is one AMUA group of 7 members at St Thomas's church, Port Lincoln, who build up the local church body by planning and arranging their own services. Port Lincoln is about 470 kms from Port Pirie, where the cathedral church of Willochra is situated – rather far to go there and back in a day! Here is what their Secretary Nel Taylor says:

I think the best way we at St Thomas's observe 'fellowship – serving and supporting the body of Christ', is by regularly putting on a special service for our main feast days. These services have always been attended by others in our community, as well as members of our church congregation. We have often arranged a celebratory lunch afterwards and invariably we invite guests to morning tea. Our Wave of Prayer service is usually smaller and always involves looking at the map, reading something about the dioceses – up to date news if possible – and often lighting candles and offering special prayers.

Lynette Pole



Celebrating members

St Cuthbert's in Tweed Heads, (Diocese of Grafton), had the joy of presenting sisters, Betty Bell and Gwyneth Clark, with their 60-year membership badges on March 17th, 2021. These amazing women have served not only MU, but also their church communities, for decades. Both are in their 90's and certainly have stories to tell!!!

Betty joined MU branch of the Church of the Transfiguration in Norman Park, Brisbane, on November 16th 1960. The day she took her daughter to enrol in Sunday school was Mothering Sunday and the first person she met was the MU President, who invited her to the next meeting.

Over the years Betty has served as branch secretary, branch president and deanery secretary and president. She also undertook hospital visiting at the Roman Catholic Hospital at Kangaroo Point and helped to take residents from local nursing homes on picnic outings. She assisted with SRE classes at Norman Park State School for 10 years, and taught Sunday school for 9 years. Betty later worked at Coolangatta Court House doing coffee and care, and visited Coolangatta School as part of the Kids Hope project, where she mentored three boys. She also visited Kirra Haven Aged Care facility every Thursday and led a group who sang for the residents. On these occasions she baked pikelets with jam and cream for their afternoon tea!

Younger sister, Gwyn, was admitted to membership at St Peter's, Wynnum, in 1960, and during the next 10 years, much like Betty, served as Secretary and then President. She was also Hospital Visitor Convenor for 12 years from 1964–1972. Over the years Gwyn has served MU in various roles in Toowoomba, Warwick and Coolangatta. In 1976 Gwyn was among the Australian contingent to attend the centenary celebrations of MU in London.

After moving to Toowoomba with her husband Ben in 1974, Gwyn was the MU Delegate to the Diocesan Ecumenical Affairs Committee, the St Luke's Nursing Service, and the Australian Church Women, where she served as Treasurer and became the first Anglican President of this ecumenical body. She served as Secretary to the

World Day of Prayer Queensland Committee and the Queensland Mental Health Federation. Upon her 'retirement' in Coolangatta Gwyn spent 5 years mentoring students and helped with the breakfast programme. She also served at the Court House Coffee and Care for over 20 years.

Betty and Gwyneth are remarkable and amazing women who continue to support and care for all. They are indeed loved by the MU and church community at St Cuthbert's.

Yvonne Turner



St David's Mother Union **Moorabbin**, (Melbourne) members, Joyce McDowell and Esther Robinson, now 98 years old, have been members for the past 35 years. 'In our COVID19 lockdown they continued to support the ideals of MU by knitting tiny beanies for newborn and premature babies. Esther made jams, chutney, and relishes, and having sold them to family, friends and parishioners, made a significant donation to MU projects. Rowena Cook, who is also in her 80s, has been applying her crafts sewing hand-towels,



Joyce McDowell



Esther Robinson



Rowena Cook



Bev Thomas

casserole holders, aprons and shopping bags. Bev Thomas, also in her 80s, has for many years knitted beautiful multi-coloured rugs which have been sent to nursing homes and hospitals. We are immensely proud of them all.'

Marilyn Airey, President

The **Griffith** branch of Mother's Union (diocese of The Riverina) has been saddened by the passing of member and dear friend, Gillian Jackson (9/09/33–12/11/20). A faithful member for approximately 60 years, Gillian was an inspiration to us all. She held executive positions in our branch as well as the Riverina committee. As the Lone Members' Coordinator for the Riverina she enabled all women in the diocese to have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of Mother's Union, regardless of where they lived. She cared for all people – young, old, sick, disabled, all in need – and through prayer and a lot of hard work, did all she could to make a difference to the lives of these people. She was the perfect example of love in action and will be missed, but always remembered.

Joan McKern, President



Facets of Fellowship

As the many facets of a finely cut diamond show the depth and richness of the stone, so the word *fellowship* (koinonia) is used in the New Testament to show the depth and richness of the ways in which followers of Jesus show their love for one another. Here are some examples.

- Our primary fellowship is with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. *And our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).*
- We must be walking in the light if our fellowship with God and each other is to be real. *If we claim to have **fellowship** with Him yet walk in darkness we lie and do not live by the truth (1 John 1:7).*
- Active sharing of our faith in Christ is fellowship together and with others. *I pray that you may be active in **sharing** your faith (Philemon 6).*
- Thankfulness to God for the fellowship in the gospel that we share with fellow believers will transform our churches. *I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your **partnership** in the gospel (Philippians 1:3-4).*
- Being generous to those in need is a vital aspect of fellowship. **Share** with God's people who are in need. *Practice hospitality (Romans 12:13).*
- Giving to our local church is an act of fellowship. *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must **share** all good things with their instructor (Galatians 6:6).*
- We who are rich are commanded to fellowship in sacrificial giving. *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to **share** (1 Timothy 6:18).*
- The salvation in which we fellowship is worth contending for. *Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we **share**, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once and for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3).*
- Giving to missions is an essential demonstration of fellowship. *In the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church **shared** with me*



Photo Credit: Edgar Soto on Unsplash

in the matter of giving and receiving, except you (Philippians 4:15).

- Fellowship in giving material aid to stricken believers in other countries is an essential aspect of our gratitude to God. *Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a **contribution** to the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26).*

Adoration

I bow before the Father,
who made me;

I bow before the Son,
who saved me;

I bow before the Spirit,
who guides me.

In love and adoration...

I give my lips,

I give my heart,

I give my mind,

I give my strength.

I bow and adore Thee

Sacred Three,

The Ever-One

The Trinity.

Author unknown.

Contributed by Noelle Fraser

Light at the end of the tunnel – MU Sydney seminar 2021

February 26th saw the annual seminar running with a new twist – attendees were able to choose to attend St Andrew’s Cathedral in person or to register to watch a Livestream. The change not only made the seminar possible in a Covid-safe way, but also meant that over 600 people, including some from New Zealand, Indonesia, and all around Australia, were able to participate.

Caitlin Orr started the day off with a fantastic talk about hope. She encouraged us to consider understanding hope as trusting that God will keep his promises. This is a certainty for the Christian, a sure and steadfast anchor for our souls. Caitlin then shared some out-workings of this hope in our lives: we have assurance about our eternal future and comfort for when life ends and we also know that life in the here-and-now matters. Hope also enables us to have joy in this life as we look forward to the life to come.

Simon Gilham then shared with us about God’s agenda for our times. This was such a helpful talk as Simon gave a clear and insightful analysis of the culture that we are a part of today. He encouraged us to understand that while things are becoming more difficult for Christians in Australia, this is not unexceptional in the history of God’s people. With opposition come opportunities for the gospel and our own maturing in faith. He pointed us to God’s unchanging agenda through history: to bring all things together under his Son. Simon concluded by reminding us that for the Christian there is light, hope and joy in the darkness of suffering.

As usual, the in-person attendees were treated to the best morning tea in Australia, this time in pre-packaged Covid-safe boxes. It really is such an act of love by the members who bake so proficiently for the seminar each year. The chocolate tart is a yearly highlight for me!

Harriet Connor, the author of *Big Picture Parents: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life*,

gave the final talk, about how we live out our faith in front of our children. Her talk was both Biblically faithful and deeply practical. We richly benefitted from her thoughtfulness and wisdom on how we make our faith visible and seek to pass it on. The morning finished with a question panel.

The MU Sydney Seminar is always such a blessing and a really valuable way to spend a morning at the start of the school year. It was particularly so this year, after the year we all had in 2020. I’m so thankful for this ministry, and for the fact that it is organised every year FOR FREE. What a gift to the church! Did you know you can listen to this and past seminars via their website? Go to musydney.org.au and scroll through the items under the ‘What we do’ tab until you find the seminars.

Christine Jensen



Seminar presenters, Caitlin Orr, Harriet Connor and Jocelyn Loane



Seminar participants

'Supporting and strengthening the body of Christ'... around the Dioceses

Bunbury

Margaret Rennick writes, 'Lynda Howe, the Prayer and Spirituality coordinator, does an excellent job with the *Circle of Prayer*, praying for missionaries, our former Bishop, COVID19, people requiring prayer and countries where there is civil unrest. The Circle of Prayer is done by email and every member can be on the circle should they so wish.'

MU members in Boyup Brook, have created a prayer board for their church. 'We have taken a disused hymn board and use it to display a prayer focus for each week using our MU prayer diary's weekly headings. MU members liked the new format of our prayer diary so much that we wanted to share it better with others. As this is a new initiative, we are drawing attention to it during notice time each week and reading one of the daily thoughts for the coming week. We have also obtained some extra copies of the prayer diary and are encouraging non- members to take one home.'



Boyup Brook Prayer Board

Jan Ritson

Willochra

Lynette Pole writes, 'On my asking around our Diocese, I have found that AMUA members are certainly pulling their weight with participation in local churches and services – celebrating baptisms and special days with cakes and traditional festival foods, assisting with the inclusion of children and families with prayer and 'activity spots', preparing worship settings, helping in op shops, community cafes and gardens, attending nursing homes and those known to be more alone, inviting to fellowship and praying regularly for those in need, wherever they are, giving thanks for those

who take on the challenges and care of others in practical ways and in leadership roles.'

In all three dioceses in **South Australia**, MU actively supports and assists hundreds of South Australians who experience very difficult situations through **The Quickest Warmth Project**. This is a program that provides hundreds of useful, new and near-new, excellent-quality items to any staff of any organisation, program or organisation who need particular things for their clients, who are people experiencing hard times.

Quickest Warmth began with MU members, the Rev'ds Prue O'Donovan and Gail Hardy. Currently 300 or so volunteers from all over SA, a significant number of them MU members, create, purchase or access hundreds of items and some money and gift-card donations to supply staff requests. Every diocesan MU branch and region in South Australia (Adelaide, The Murray and Willochra), contributes regularly to assist the Quickest Warmth Project by doing what they can, whenever they can. A monthly newsletter, put together by 2 MU members, lets supporters know where the contributions went and what is needed when the 'cupboards' are bare.

Once sorted and checked for quality, goods are taken to the Quickest Warmth Space, in Elizabeth. From there goods are packed and delivered to their clients, who include Anglicare, the Department for Child Protection, several Aboriginal support programs, Access4You and other NDIS programs, providers of support programs for domestic violence, homelessness, suicide prevention, mental health, special needs, aged care and disability programs, housing and tenancy programs, schools and emergency relief.

The items contributed include bedding packs, toiletry, kitchen, cleaning, pamper and hair care packs, towels, bathmats, washers, feminine hygiene and incontinence support products, baby bundles for babies from newborn to 12 months and lots of baby items, children's activity packs, school and stationery packs, toys, curtains

and clothing for babies through to adults, and handmade cards and a small birthday gift for every resident in two aged-care facilities.

MU in SA is alive and well. Thank you, MU!

Prue O'Donovan

To find out more about Quickest Warmth, email the Editor at miamia@muaustralia.org.au



Lady Day Pt Lincoln

Rockhampton

At our March meeting, members of the St Paul's Cathedral branch made Prayer Beads. The use of these Prayer Beads encourages contemplative prayer by bringing our whole self – body, mind and spirit – into prayer. The pressure of our fingers on the beads helps to keep our mind from wandering and the rhythm of the prayers leads us into stillness. Some members brought beads from their own collections, and Lynn, who led the session, had brought the string and many different beads and crosses. Choosing our beads was fun, and showed our different personalities and preferences. Most of us managed to make a string, and we intend to make more and offer them to members of the congregation. It was good fellowship making something with our hands, despite the arthritis and varying degrees of eyesight failure – especially if we dropped a tiny bead on the carpet!

One of our members printed off a couple of prayer sequences as a suggestion for using the beads, and we ended the evening with one of them.

The previous Sunday was Mothering Sunday, so, following COVID regulations, one member made, cut and individually packed the pieces of simnel cake, which were then distributed with tongs. St Paul's branch hosted the Diocesan Lady Day Service, celebrated by our Chaplain, Rev'd Rob Stanley, using resources for *Rebuilding with Hope*

and Confidence from Mary Sumner House. We welcomed a new member, awarded one certificate for 10 years' service and two 50-year and one 60-year badges. We also commissioned our Chaplain and Office Bearers, which had been held over from last year. Altogether it was an exciting and inspiring celebration, with great worship, thankfulness, fellowship and friendship.



Palm Sunday followed and as our members make the palm crosses for the parish our branch had a very busy fortnight, enjoying each other's company, honouring our Lord, and serving each other and the parish.

Noelle Frazer

North Queensland

Viv Feltham reports, 'I have discovered that our members love to fellowship while serving others. They like the practical and the connection that comes with thinking of others. In North Queensland, most of our Branches have ways that they serve their communities while maintaining a close fellowship with each other and their God.'

One practical activity is Café Connect, an initiative of our Ingham Branch. Once a month, they set up a café and invite people with dementia and their carers to have time to talk, fellowship and enjoy a cuppa. It has been a very successful program outreaching into the community to a very vulnerable group.'



Supporting and strengthening Defence Force chaplains through prayer

Death and dying are the terrible result of war. And it's often when people are faced with death, their own or that of someone they know well, that they ask the big questions in life. Defence Chaplains live among our soldiers, sailors, airmen and women, sharing the dangers and hardships as they seek to fulfil our mission of proclaiming and witnessing to the gospel of Jesus that all may know the reign of God.

Dealing with death is one of the most challenging things chaplains face. And it's not only when we are at war. Just recently I spoke with a chaplain who had been faced with three deaths amongst the few hundred soldiers in their Unit the week before: one suicide, one car accident and one heart attack. What a week! And that within the first few weeks of joining the Unit. The chaplain provided excellent pastoral support and grief counselling to their work colleagues, families and their wider military family – those who had served with them, or lived with them or been on operations with them. As a result, the chaplain is now a trusted and beloved member of the Unit with deep relationships with many people.

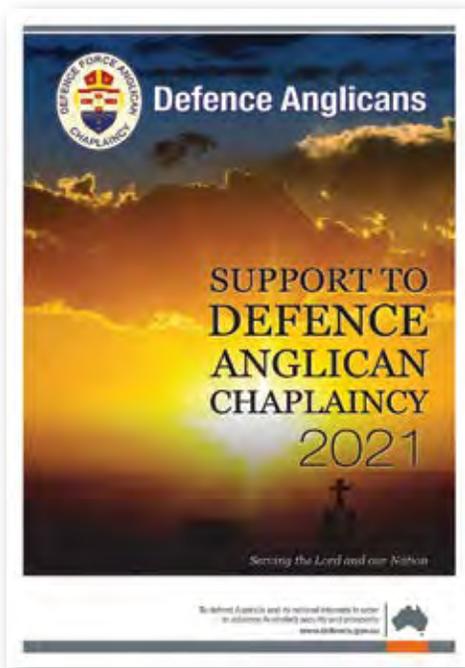
Of course, dealing with death is not an everyday occurrence – thank you Lord! Much of a chaplain's time is spent pastoring people of all faiths and no faith. Chaplains provide a safe, non-judgemental environment for all and bring the truths of Scripture to bear on all manner of practical issues



as an outworking of God's love. Chaplains are safe people who are outside the chain of command. They are used by God to bring forgiveness and peace to troubled souls, reconciliation and calm to broken relationships and stressful situations, and practical support in difficult times.

Part of the empathy that chaplains have flows from their shared experiences, not only in battle but at home and in their everyday work as well. Military life normally means shifting home every few years, often moving interstate with children who not only have new schools, but new education systems to cope with. This was the case for my family – my eldest son had four education systems in the first 5 years of his schooling. When military personnel move, there is often little family support and everything is new. You have to find a new dentist, doctor, hairdresser, mechanic, church and more. Often military personnel are away from home for extended periods, from a few weeks to 6 or occasionally even 12 months, and your family has to cope without you. And military life means that you are subject to military discipline, which is quite strict. For example, the boss can have you sent to military jail if you swear at them!

The shared experience of operational service and peacetime military life, the practical support chaplains provide, and chaplains being safe and confidential builds empathy and trust from the most junior Defence member to the most senior. Under God, trust is the foundation of the influence and effectiveness of a chaplain. As chaplains build a trusting relationship with people, they get to discuss the good news of Jesus with some who would never darken the door of a church in normal circumstances. We have the marvellous privilege and joy of helping people practically, of sitting with them in the dark, and then of sharing the hope that we have within us and that can be theirs too. We can introduce the servicemen and women to the people Jesus mixed with – like the unclean, tax collectors and prostitutes – those who were definitely not in the religious sector



of society but who were loved by God. It is our privilege to talk about the stories that Jesus told that convey God's generosity and grace – a prodigal son who is welcomed home by his father, a vineyard owner paying a full day's wage for an hour's work, a wedding feast that all are invited to. We offer the hope of life eternal where there will be no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain, no more death and where God will dwell with us. What a joy!

Your prayer support for us is vital. Pray for us to:

- draw closer to God, becoming more and more like Him
- be used of God to awaken many to faith
- have courage to stand up for the powerless and broken
- be able to support Defence Force leaders as they make difficult decisions, providing frank and fearless advice as necessary
- care for all affected by the Afghanistan Inquiry, for justice to be done and for those who served in Afghanistan with distinction to be supported.



Grant Dibden
Anglican Bishop to ADF

KINI LAKSA/CHICKEN SOUP

INGREDIENTS

4-5 chicken thigh fillets, 1x red onion, a couple of cloves garlic
1x tin crushed tomatoes, 1 or 1½ cans coconut cream
2x bunches bok choy or pak choy; salt to taste

METHOD

1. Cut the chicken into pieces and fry them lightly without browning; set aside.
2. Slice and dice the onion and garlic; place in large saucepan and sauté gently without browning. Add a little water, if necessary, to stop the onion sticking to the pan.
3. Add tomatoes and gently sauté for 5 minutes, then add the cooked chicken pieces. Add a little water and cook for a few more minutes.
4. Add the coconut cream and cook a further 15 minutes.
5. Prepare the bok choy by washing it and cutting into 2 cm lengths. When the chicken mix has cooked enough add the stalks first, cook a few minutes then add the leaves.
6. Simmer gently for approximately 20 minutes, 'til it tastes good.

Add only enough water through the different stages so that nothing browns or fries hard. After the coconut cream is added, add enough water to make it soupy.

ENJOY!!

Marlene Allen-Starr



Photo Credit:
timolina on Freepik.com

Mothers Union worldwide Zone C – South Pacific

After almost 5½ years as a trustee, and since my role comes to an end in December, it seems a good time for me to reflect on the experience.

I begin by saying that I have loved every minute of it, and I give thanks to God daily for all the wonderful experiences that I have been given as a trustee and the opportunity to meet and become friends with so many people from very different cultures. Travel has always been a delight and I have learnt how best to use the time on long flights.

The Trustee Board is the body that has legal responsibility for the ongoing business of the Worldwide Mothers Union global organisation. At present there are 12 trustees, including the Worldwide President, Sheran Harper, who comes from Guyana in South America. Sheran is the first Worldwide President to be elected from outside Britain and Ireland. Also on the present board are trustees from Kenya, South Africa, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Canada, Australia and there are 5 from Britain and Ireland.

The system of zonal trustees was introduced about 9 years ago and has been slowly re-organised over that time to find the best groupings. Zone C (South Pacific) has been the easiest as we have really been a zone for quite a long time with much interaction between provincial executives.

This zone, for which I have been trustee, covers four provinces of the Worldwide Anglican Communion: Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia; Australia; Papua New Guinea and Melanesia. It has been wonderful to have been invited to visit each of these provinces in my role as a trustee. Each trustee is given a small allowance to enable travel in their zone, which has made it easier for all the zone trustees. It is a pity that the Worldwide President has been unable to visit while I have been a trustee, but she has spent time in Melanesia when she was the parenting trainer. Hopefully, she will be able to visit when international travel is again permitted.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families



Provincial Presidents in Ireland

The task of a trustee has several aspects. The Board meets usually twice a year, most frequently in England, where it is formally registered as a charity. The Board is the legal group responsible for the ongoing business of the global organisation. All of the 84 countries where there are members are responsible for their own governance but are required to conform to global requirements in order to maintain membership. Each trustee liaises with the Provincial Presidents in their zone and, if possible, visits.

Each meeting requires a great amount of reading of reports, and each trustee is usually appointed to at least one sub-committee. At present I chair the Safeguarding Committee. We seek to make sure that every member worldwide, and those they assist, is safe at all times and understands what safeguarding includes.

Since Coronavirus started Mary Sumner House staff have used technology to full advantage, with webinars, resources and meetings all being conducted electronically.



I urge all members to check the Mothers Union website, <https://www.mothersunion.org/> to make use of what has been made available for us.

Libbie Crossman



Over the Fence

When two or three are gathered... anything can happen

We were in the trenches. Up to our exhausted eyeballs in nappies, our Mums' Bible Study Group had been wonderfully blessed with a surge of babies and mighty toddlers. Nonetheless, we resolutely decided to prioritise meeting weekly out of a common determination to meet with other mums, to grow in our understanding of God and to pray together. There was also an underbelly of fear that, should we miss a week or two, there was a reasonable chance that we might actually cease to be able to have any coherent discussion with any other human being except on the obvious topics of Thomas the Tank Engine and Dora the Explorer.

To assist this worthy aim of regularity, and knowing that sickness and toddlerhood go hand in hand, we made some rules regarding Reasons to Stay Away. With a nod to Leviticus, we concentrated on the obvious. Gastroenteritis, fevers, respiratory illnesses and open purulent discharges of any description meant a home day. On the contrary, however, treated lice and covered sores presented no barriers. And that was just for the mothers!

At the conclusion of a particularly satisfying study, we prepared to pray. Our crèche carers, judging each situation with an experienced eye, had allowed certain tired toddlers to be released. These, using ancient homing skills, had then navigated their way back to their mothers with unerring accuracy and speed. In such situations I always kept one eye half-open during prayers, just in case the words 'toddler' and 'glass cabinet' suddenly developed a relationship. Out of the corner of my half-closed eye, I sensed a movement that, on closer inspection, had nothing to do with a human who had experienced fewer than 3 birthdays. A mouse was hauling itself out of our TV cabinet. Using its front legs only, and with its hindquarters dragging behind, its

laborious movements left a trail through the fine layer of dust atop the DVD player. The mouse coughed and a tiny bubble of blood appeared in each nostril. I noted with detached interest that the mouse, too, had one eye closed. The other, mimicking my own, was by now wide open. We faced each other squarely, locked in some sort of monocular non-verbal conversation. 'Murderer,' said the rodent's one accusing eye. All hopes of concentrating on prayers vanished. The mouse turned and clawed its way back up the unit, assumed the repose of imminent death, gave one last agonised gasp and expired, one hind leg draped theatrically over the word Panasonic.

And all the people said 'Amen.'

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20

Virginia Grice



Photo Credit: Unsplash

Older people ... who cares?

We live in a society where ageism is the norm and where value is derived from youth, beauty and one's economic contribution to society. Media presentation of older people is both openly derogatory and with an absence of older people generally – consider the media attention given to domestic violence (a horrific scourge), compared to the attention given to the biggest killer of women in Australia today – dementia.¹ Or the attention paid to youth suicide, the most at-risk group, while there is little attention paid to the second most at-risk group – older men. The recent Aged Care Royal Commission identified the reason aged care *'has been under prolonged stress and has reached crisis point'* and *'does not meet Australians' expectations'* as being because we have treated aged care as a *'lower priority'* and government has responded by *'restraining aged care expenditure'* to the extent that *'funding is insufficient, insecure and subject to the fiscal priorities of the day'*.

As if this were not terrible enough, I believe ageism has corrupted our churches. Consider the following test for your diocese and church: what proportion of resources (leadership, time and finances) is focused on people under 20 compared with that devoted to people over



Photo Credit: Claudia Van Zyl on Unsplash



Photo Credit: Mitch Hodge on Unsplash

80? I agree with the Royal Commission – our treatment of older people should be a source of 'shame'.

Our shame darkens even further when we consider the Biblical teaching about older people:

- Older people, like all people, are of unchangeable value as we are all created by God and in His image.
- It is tough being old (eg Ecc 11)
- We have a particular responsibility to care for older people (eg Ex 20; Eph 6; James 1; Matt 25)

Indeed, the church has historically been the leader in provision of care for older people. The early church was remarkable within its social context for the care provided to older people. Many of Australia's current aged-care providers were started, and many continue to be run, by churches. My prayer is the church will again become the leader in not simply *caring* for older people but *loving* older people physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Perhaps the starting point for this journey is to review two realities:

- 'Spiritual growth is not simply possible in later life, it's likely' (Rev Dr Elizabeth MacKinlay)
- People living with dementia can and do become Christians. (If you want to know more, get *'Coming to Christ in Dementia'* by Rev Mark Wormell). As an aged-care chaplain, I continue to see this happening many times each year.

Let me conclude with a true story:

I met Beth* when she moved into a dementia-specific unit. She had been a teen in London during the Blitz and her dementia meant these memories were now very fresh for her. In fact, she had been moved into the secure unit because

she was struggling with significant agitation because of her now-vivid memories of that time, which manifested itself in behaviours which were disturbing others.

When I first introduced myself, she told me in no uncertain terms she was not religious, and she had no time for God. Over time she slowly started to engage with me and then started attending the weekly dementia church service, primarily because she liked the singing. Then she started not simply attending the regular church service but began actively encouraging other residents to come too. She would repeatedly tell me, 'I never had time for God but now I really like Him, I just don't know why!'

Soon afterward Beth attended a Christianity Explored course that we ran in the facility. We sat around tables, watched the video, I gave a quick summary for older people and we had morning tea, all of which Beth enjoyed greatly. To the best of my knowledge Beth was never able to articulate the core doctrines of Christianity nor did she 'say the sinner's prayer'. Yet I am confident I will see her again in glory, because God in His gracious love and through the Holy Spirit brought her to faith. Yes, she was living with significant cognitive decline, but genuine, living faith in Christ is deeper than cognition.



Ben Boland

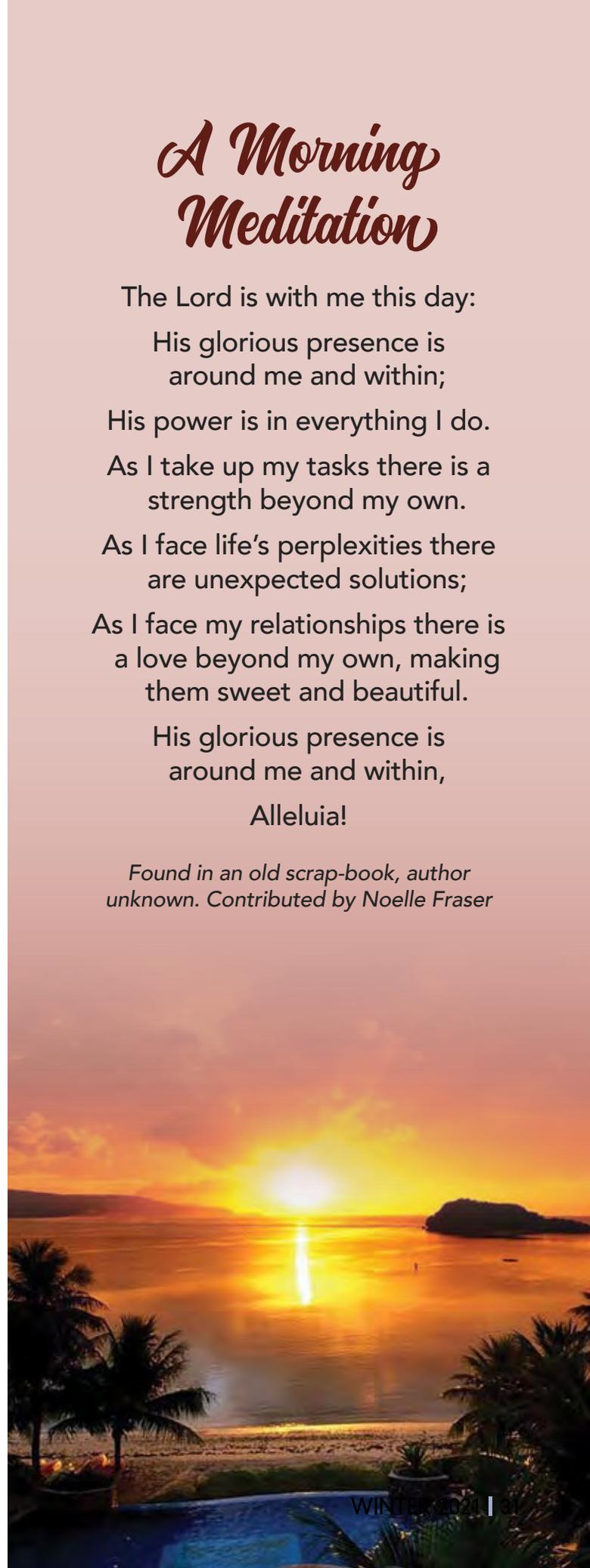
If you are keen to know more, the AMUA website also has some resources to enhance our ministry to older people and people living with dementia.

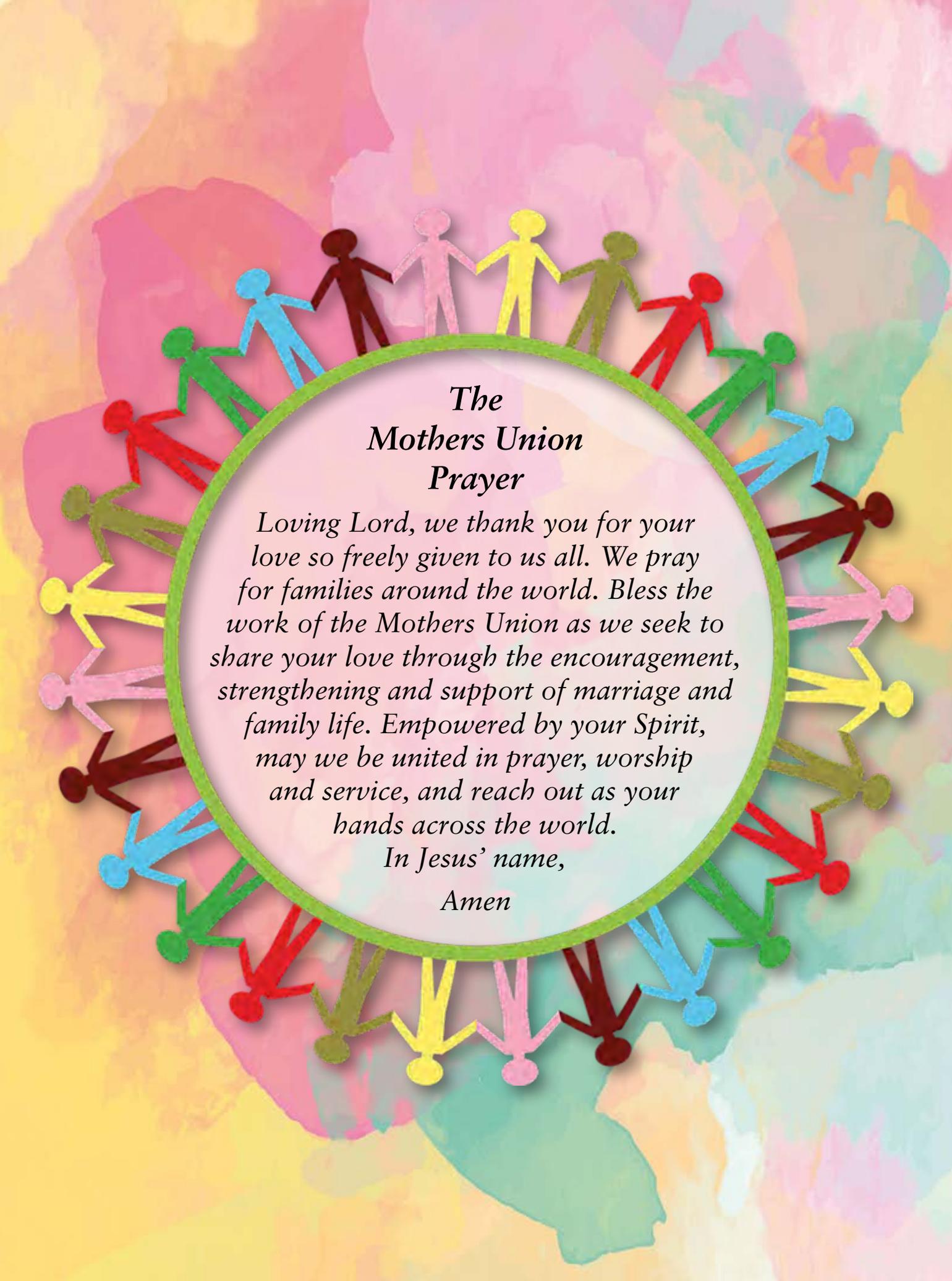
-
1. The biggest killer of men remains cardiovascular disease.

A Morning Meditation

The Lord is with me this day:
His glorious presence is
around me and within;
His power is in everything I do.
As I take up my tasks there is a
strength beyond my own.
As I face life's perplexities there
are unexpected solutions;
As I face my relationships there is
a love beyond my own, making
them sweet and beautiful.
His glorious presence is
around me and within,
Alleluia!

Found in an old scrap-book, author unknown. Contributed by Noelle Fraser



A circular arrangement of colorful paper figures holding hands, surrounding a central text area. The figures are in various colors including red, yellow, green, blue, and brown. The background is a soft, watercolor-like wash of colors.

*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, worship and service, and reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name,

Amen