



Early this year I was visiting a friend who had been going through a difficult time. She was smiling on the day I visited and, although not an MU member, wanted to show me the 'MU Blessing Box' she had been given. I didn't know anything about Blessing Boxes so I started investigating.



I discovered that MU members in the dioceses of Bunbury WA and North West Australia have been helping people in need since the 1990s, through a ministry of encouragement called 'Joy Boxes' or 'Blessing Baskets'. These were adopted by a Sydney branch and called 'Blessing Boxes'.

The names may differ, but the intention and method are the same. Seven small gifts are individually wrapped and an encouragement card is attached to each of them. Then the seven small gifts are placed in a larger container, and another card is attached, explaining that the enclosed gifts should be opened, one per day over a week.

Bunbury's Joy Boxes use wrapped and decorated boxes).

The Blessing Baskets of NW Australia use a simple calico bag as the outer container with a basket embroidered on the outside.

A description of the purpose is taken from instructions on how to make them: *'... a Joy Box / Blessing Basket can be taken to someone who is grieving, sick, lonely, depressed, or struggling; or to someone you long to share your faith with. It could be used as your 'ice-breaker'. Each small gift is intended to encourage or direct recipients to positive actions with an appropriate Bible text wrapped inside each parcel. A helpful quote is placed in the bottom of each bag and a prayer is added when all the gifts are in place.'*

The gifts can be purchased or handmade. Suitable gifts are items such as fridge magnets, candles, needle and pin holders, cakes of soap, envelopes with stamp and pen, handkerchiefs, bookmarks, lavender sachets, or brooches. Availability, imagination, and talent provide the needed gifts.

Having found out about this wonderful ministry, I wanted to make it as easy as possible

for people in other MU Australia Dioceses to use this idea. So instructions on how to make these Joy Boxes or Blessing Baskets are here on the MU website.

As well as the instructions, you will find sheets of cards you can download and print to use with the individual gifts. There are also pictures of some of the finished boxes, ready for distribution by Bunbury Diocese. Pictures and patterns for some suitable gifts which can be handmade have also been provided by MU NW Australia.

I hope you're as encouraged as I am by this MU program which is a very practical way we can bring comfort to people 'whose family life has met with adversity', in line with MU's fifth object.

Wendy Mayer
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*This is a
"JOY BOX"
from the members of
Mother's Union,
All Saint's Church,
Collie.
"Open one little
parcel each day
for a week,
and know that you
are thought of and
in our prayers."*

