



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER 2017

APPRECIATING THE ELDERLY

'The old grey mare she ain't what she used to be'. While this little ditty is very disrespectful, it is, none the less, truthful. Elderly people, as a general rule, do not function as they did when they were in their teens or forties. Nevertheless, the life of years is to be appreciated; with wisdom and hindsight the grandmother can dip into her store for advice is asked. The elderly have time and patience to listen to the prattling enthusiasms of youngsters. And if you honour them, how much more, in awe and trembling, do you stand before your Lord and Maker.

*You shall rise up before the aged and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God. I am the Lord.
Leviticus 19: 32 NRSV*

There are few elderly people in Rwanda. Life expectancy is 58 years. The dependent, young and old are 82% of the population. A key work of Mothers' Union is Transformational Savings and Credits. One aim is economic empowerment of women and families. Bible studies and weekly meetings can help families thrive. The First Lady, at the 50th anniversary of Mothers' Union in Rwanda, said that it 'plays an integral role in building, supporting and stabilising communities'. We pray for the local projects and local community development coordinators.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 8 OCTOBER 2017

Hope for the captive

Incarceration rates for women in Australia are high. Their children suffer. Relationships are damaged, sometimes beyond compare. We give thanks for all those who visit and those who pray, for chaplains and rehabilitation programs. Jesus, the hope of the world, enter the hearts and minds of captives and their guards so that chains of despair and cruelty may fall away and hearts be free.

I was in prison and you visited me. 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 25:36b, 40b.

Women in Ethiopia are captive to political tensions but also are bound by not being able to read. Amid the struggle and an influx of refugees from South Sudan (60,000/month) Mothers' Union literacy program is a 'miracle'. Free from the captivity of being illiterate Elizabeth said, "I feel like somebody now, I feel comfortable in my own skin and I feel capable". Thank you, loving God, for the bravery and skill of the teachers and the learners.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2017

Overcoming poverty

God of justice, you set your face against poverty. Help us to discern the very real poverty of those without adequate food, clothing and shelter and to look honestly at our own poverty of spirit when we fail in generosity, when we judge others too harshly, and when we turn away from being your means of love and grace to the poor.

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the needy, and executes justice for the poor. Psalm 140: 12

About 120 Mothers' Union members in Guinea were the 'hands and feet on the ground' during the Ebola epidemic and they continue disaster work, supporting survivors after a fire which left families without food or clothing. At their annual Conference, Anglican women from ten dioceses in Brazil shared their stories of support for abused women, the young and immigrants, of art therapy for the elderly and a health project. Members work in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to maintain the cause of the needy.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2017

Good government

Good government, like good food, may mean quite different things according to one's culture, taste or physical condition. Jesus' taught his followers about God's mercy and love of human kind and their mutual responsibility to each other. Let us pray that God grants governments and leaders wisdom, justice and loving kindness. These three are qualities which belong to God and are a tall order indeed; yet each member of church and state and Mothers' Union may pray that their very selves be imbued with these treasures for the world's sake, and that when acted upon God's kingdom will come.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another. Zechariah 7:9

Support for women in prison is the key area of work for Mothers' Union in Scotland. They are supporting the introduction of legislation to alleviate the suffering and hardship brought about by both abuse/violence and prison sentencing. Let us thank God for this life-giving attention to the plight of others.

In some dioceses changes are being made to the governance of MU so that members are working in teams and titles have gone. Traditional leadership roles have given way to a more mutual governance.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2017

God's People

'We are the Body of Christ. His Spirit is with us.' These words, the Greeting of Peace, from the Holy Communion service, come from Paul's Letter to the Romans. St Paul uses the parts of a human body and the gifts that some have, such as teacher, to try to explain the mystical oneness that baptism in Jesus Christ bestows on his followers. As the whole people of God we are never alone, never without ancestors, or mothers in the faith. Through the ages we have brothers such as Chad and Wilfrid and, in the ages to come, the whole company of heaven. That's enough to set the pulses racing and energise any faint heart.

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the run that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1

Freedom for young girls is a major goal for Mothers' Union members in Mozambique. But cultural attitudes towards the elderly are changing as members encourage care and respect of the elderly too. The notion that young girls and the elderly are God's people is changing cultural attitudes. 'There's now an awareness that in education, marriage and basic human rights there should be gender equality.' Prayer is central to members life and we join with them. Amen.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2017

Ethical challenges

Lord Jesus Christ, in a world that thinks globally and in large numbers, help us to remember that human beings, animals and plants, the very earth and seas are affected by our investments, purchases and research. For child workers, slaves, prison workers, those trapped in a cycle of depravity, Loving God, hear our prayer. Give us wisdom and discernment to face honestly each choice, comment, attitude that reflects our ethical stance. May we have true and disinterested judgement.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good, acceptable and perfect. Romans 12: 2

Mothers' Union Canada observes the White Ribbon Campaign each year to raise awareness of gender violence. Statistics show that every six days a woman is murdered in Canada by her husband or intimate partner. Branch members hold a silent vigil on 30 November to draw attention to this. In 2016 they were joined by politicians, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and people from surrounding churches. Thanks be to God for their witness.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2017

Remembrance

The centenary of bloody battles during WW1 has been marked by newspaper articles, films, books and TV news. We each have our own remembrance of loved ones; a grandmother we wished we had taken more care of, a child not born, a child died, a friend we haven't visited, a mother-in-law not wholly forgiven. Remembrance is to be there in that moment, no matter the years that have passed, and bring that person to mind, to speak lovingly, to hold them in your love and commend them to God. Lay your life on the line, in Jesus' name.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15: 12-13

In Trinidad and Tobago Mothers' Union is alive and well! Projects successfully carried out this year are: 1. Grief and bereavement seminars. 2. Prison support. 3. Baby hampers for teen mothers. 4. Walk-a-thon Fundraiser. 5. Public witness with other church organisations. We rejoice with our sisters and thank God for their care and love in their communities.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2017

Discipleship

Sydney Carter's 'Lord of the Dance' has remained a favourite for congregational singing. Discipleship is like a dance. As disciples/dancers we move to a routine. There is the routine of our communal Sunday worship, Mothers' Union meetings, family gatherings. Each one has its own 'step' which we learn and knowing it, we follow or lead. Sometimes it's a 'quickstep' and we get puffed out or left out completely, sometimes we get our toes trodden on or take a tumble. The most important step to remember is the Lord's 'step'- Love God and your neighbour as yourself.

Jesus said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me'. Luke 9:23

The people of Iraq have a sad, slow movement in their discipleship/dance with decades of conflict and daily terrorism. Yet even in the ashes of their country the Anglican presence in Baghdad continues to thrive. Mothers' Union helps displaced families and poor families as well as orphans and widows. What a wonderful dance they perform when daily spiritual meetings are attended by 100 women, who then learn the dance of prayer and bible reading. 'I am the dance and I still go on'.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2017

Championing justice

We thank God for people throughout history who were bold in campaigning for better conditions for all in society. One of my heroes is William Wilberforce who fought tirelessly to abolish slavery in the United Kingdom. Out of his love of all creation and his deep sense of God as creator he also championed the cause of animals and established the RSPCA.

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. Proverbs 31: 8-9

We give thanks for the Mothers' Union in Sri Lanka. Membership is increasing and with that the spiritual education of members is a priority. Concern for others has prompted members to support orphan girls with their education and by giving advice on personal cleanliness and how to protect themselves. Prayer cells and visiting make members champions of justice for the needy.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER 2017

Advent

'Lo He comes with clouds descending' (TiS 273). With these words Charles Wesley bids us gasp in expectation, searching, longing for the wonder and glory of Christ's coming, when 'God appears on earth to reign'. We hold our breath at the enormity of God's gift to us. The Church in its wisdom sets aside a time of waiting, of preparation before Christmas so we can, like wise maidens, fill the lamps of our spiritual life.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. Isaiah 9:2b

Mothers' Union in Namibia works with each diocese and prayer is central to its activities. High on their agenda are gender-based violence, baby dumping and human trafficking as well as addiction, poverty and unemployment. Let us thank God for members' commitment to running groups and acting as local counsellors.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER 2017

Proclamation and expectation

Ring bells, ring, ring, ring. Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing. Jesus comes, Jesus comes: we will make him welcome (TiS 283). The weeks of Advent are pointing to ONE person, our Lord Jesus Christ. Like bells and choirs we proclaim His Coming singing along with your carols CDs as we make our preparations. We make our preparations more simple, our shopping less frenetic; so with more solid joys, we prayerfully contemplate making the Christ Child welcome.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'. Isaiah 52: 7

Loving God, we pray your blessing on the work of Mothers' Union in Vanuatu as they assist in the island's recovery from a mighty cyclone. With a special prayer day each month, they are empowered for community outreach. A training workshop was held on HIV-AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and information on Mothers' Union's objectives, badge and uniform.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER 2017

Mystery and wonder

Jesus, my shepherd, brother, friend, my prophet, priest and king, my lord, my life, my way, my end, accept the praise I bring. John Newton, author of *Amazing Grace* expresses so well the mystery and wonder of an authentic experience of the holy. May we be content to be lost in the mystery of our faith, to be, with Charles Wesley, lost in wonder, love and praise.

Without any doubt the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16

In South Korea Mothers' Union operates as a minority but tackles big tasks such as visiting the sick and elderly and accompanying hospital chaplains. Their choir shares their faith and enriches life in prisons, mental hospitals and remote rural area. Regular Bible study and training members to be stronger has led them to produce resource materials to teach teenagers about the faith. A key focus has been support for women priests. May our prayers and God's love be upon them.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
- SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER 2017

Christmas

'Joy to the world! The Lord is come'. With gladness we greet this holy day and hear the familiar words of Scripture. We prepare our hearts to give him room, to receive our King in Word and Sacrament. We sing his praises and all this on behalf of those who cannot, who dare not, who know not the truth and grace with which He rules the world.

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

Two hundred Mothers' Union members are spread across the Diocese of Europe. Let us pray for them as they respond to the needy by supporting food banks and women's refuges in Malta, for example. We thank God for the development of Mothers' Union in Antwerp.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA
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New Year

'The north wind is tossing the leaves, the red dust is over the town, the sparrows are under the eaves and the grass in the paddock is brown, as we lift up our voices and sing to the Christ-child our heavenly King'. The opening lines of William James' Australian carol bring us to earth in the heat of summer, they keep alive our continuing joy during the twelve days of Christmas and the renewal of our sacred and secular lives.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

We pray for our members in Sierra Leone that the New Year will bring great blessing for them in their fellowship together and their service in God's world. Members are passionate about keeping girls in school, and supporting women and girls wanting to access education. Mothers' Union see the detriment effects of illiteracy of 46% of women aged 15-24 on personal and family life and the country as a whole.