

## **Listen, observe, act – in step with God**

### **Service of Thanksgiving**

#### **Welcome and gathering**

Welcome to our Mothers' Union Service of Thanksgiving. We gather to celebrate the guidance of God in our resolve to make a difference in our world. We gather to affirm our commitment to respond to the needs we have seen and heard; neither running ahead nor lagging behind but always in step with God.

#### **Call to worship**

The Lord makes firm the steps  
of the one who delights in him.  
*Psalm 37:23*

Lord, who makes known to us the path of life,  
we come to worship with thankful hearts.  
**Let us praise his name together. Amen**

#### **Opening hymn**

#### **Prayer of preparation**

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,  
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.  
**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,  
letting go of our security.  
**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus challenges us to listen to the voices  
of those who have nothing to lose.  
**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus points us to a way of self-giving,  
where power and status are overturned.  
**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,  
where despair is transformed  
by the promise of new life.  
**Let us walk his way with joy.**  
*Jan Berry; © Churches Together in Britain and Ireland 2002*

#### **Confession**

**Merciful and loving God:**  
**When we are ungrateful, remind us of your grace.**

**When we are oblivious, open our eyes.  
When we are harsh, gentle our spirit.  
When we are apathetic, show us your suffering children.  
When we demean ourselves, whisper that we are created in your image.  
When we lose all hope, show us the empty tomb.  
So shape us, and turn us around,  
that we will live with blessing and grace and light. Amen**  
*B.M. Neel*

### **Absolution**

May our loving Lord bless us  
with forgiveness and grace  
that we may walk the path of life  
fully in step with God. **Amen**

### **New Testament Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3, 11-12 (NLT)**

Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing. So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. <sup>12</sup> Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honoured because of the way you live, and you will be honoured along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

This is the Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 6:34-43**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. <sup>35</sup> By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late. <sup>36</sup> Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.' <sup>37</sup> But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?' <sup>38</sup> 'How many loaves do you have?' he asked. 'Go and see.' When they found out, they said, 'Five – and two fish.' <sup>39</sup> Then Jesus told them to make all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup> Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup> and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Hymn

**Talk/sharing of stories from Mothers' Union work \***

## Thanksgiving and intercessions

We now bring our prayers to God for the witness and work of Mothers' Union;  
with thanks for his presence with us in all he has called us to do.

**Loving Lord,  
we thank you for the path laid before us  
and that you accompany us on our journey.**

We pray for the flourishing of Mothers' Union  
as we adapt for the needs of this present age  
and entrust ourselves to God to lead us forward.

We pray for open ears, eyes and hearts  
that we may act with insight and integrity  
to make a difference in our world.

Today in our Wave of Prayer we pray for the people and work of: \*  
and for the members in our own link dioceses...

**As we walk into the future with faith  
may our pace be set by our perfect guide;  
neither running ahead nor lagging behind,  
but always in step with God. Amen**

## Symbolic Offering

*\*Symbols of the various Mothers' Union initiatives may be brought to the front  
and attached to a map or representation of your local community and/or a map of  
the world.*

**As members of Mothers' Union worldwide  
we offer up these symbols of our love and service.  
We pray for Christ's blessing on all we do  
as we walk in step with God. Amen**

## Mothers' Union Prayer

**Loving Lord  
We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.  
We pray for families around the world.**

**Bless the work of the Mothers' Union  
as we seek to share your love  
through the encouragement, strengthening  
and support of marriage and family life.  
Empowered by your Spirit,  
may we be united in prayer and worship,  
and in love and service  
reach out as your hands across the world.  
In Jesus' name. Amen**

### **Final Hymn**

### **Final blessing**

Remember all God has done.  
Rejoice in all he is doing.  
Receive all he shall yet do.  
Put your hand in his,  
the God of past, present and future,  
and walk with him wherever he may lead,  
knowing he will walk with you,  
this day and always. **Amen**  
*Prayers for all Seasons 2; © Nick Fawcett 2001*

*We say the Grace together*

### **Notes for Service of Thanksgiving**

**This service can be used for a Festival Service or for other occasions  
and may be adapted as required. You may wish to include the  
Commissioning of Diocesan Officers as part of the service. The updated  
wording for these can be found on the Mothers' Union website.  
If a more informal service is wanted, use whichever elements are  
appropriate to create your act of worship.**

### **Suggestions for hymns and songs**

O Jesus, I have promised  
Tell out my soul  
How good is the God we adore  
Will you come and follow me  
When we walk with the Lord  
Hope of our calling  
Great is thy faithfulness  
Now thank we all our God  
One more step along the world I go  
Lord for the years

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim  
Be thou my vision

### **Talk/sharing of stories from Mothers' Union work**

\*You may like to use the Bible reading of the feeding of the 5000 to focus on Jesus challenging the disciples to answer the needs of the crowd and then using them to play a part in his miracle - including very practical instructions on dividing up the crowd into manageable groups. This can be linked to how he asks us to answer the needs around us at local, national and global level – and is there alongside us to guide and enhance our resources both in practical and miraculous ways!  
If you have stories and examples from your diocese' engagement in the MULO process, including insights from reflecting on God's word together then these would also be good to share along with your thoughts on your way ahead.  
Information on the wider Mother's Union and the MULO process may be found on the website.

### **Commissioning**

If you are including the Commissioning of Diocesan Officers in the service this would fit well before the thanksgiving and intercessions

### **Thanksgiving and intercessions**

\*Include the Wave of Prayer for the day along with your own link dioceses.  
Add prayers for your own local concerns and initiatives here as appropriate  
The Lord's Prayer may be added after the intercessions.

### **Symbolic Offering**

\*You could display a map or representation of your local community and/or a map of the world for symbols of your current and future initiatives to be attached

### **Eucharist**

If the service is to include a Eucharist this can be added after your intercessions, along with the sharing of the Peace.

You could use this form of words for the Peace or choose your own:

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.  
If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.*

<http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/newpatterns/contents/sectionh.aspx>