

THE BRIDGE

linking members, mission and events

WHY DO WE RUN OUR FEBRUARY SEMINAR?

This is a report from someone who attended the 2018 Seminar.

I Fear, I Feel, I Hope.

LIVING FOR GOD IN A STRESS FILLED WORLD

On Friday 23 February 2018, 600 women (and a couple of men) filled St Andrew's Cathedral for the annual Mothers' Union conference. In the past few years the conference has been held in the Chapter House but due to the large number of women attending, the conference relocated to the cathedral.

The day began with a welcome from Wendy Mayer, Diocesan President of MU Sydney, who introduced the Dean of the Cathedral - Kanishka Raffel. Kanishka spoke on the theme of *Contentment* from Psalm 16 explaining that true contentment comes from four things:

1. Contentment in relationship with God and knowing Him
2. Contentment in God's provision
3. Contentment in God's direction for our lives – that is, His instructions in the Scriptures
4. Contentment in God's resurrection – that is, the certain hope that our future is secure and guaranteed

As Dean Raffel said "The theme of Psalm 16 is that we find contentment when we take refuge in God." Certainly for many women I spoke to, Psalm 16 was a highlight for the day.

The bible talk was followed by the first talk from the keynote speaker Dr Jenny Brown who, while drawing on her expertise in Psychology, began by setting her material in a Biblical context. She argued that stress is a symptom of the fallen world and is part of the groaning that is experienced this side of Christ's return.



Dr Brown then carefully explained the difference between anxiety and stress and spelt out the physical aspects of the stress response. Stress exists in our environment and comes from our choices. Sometimes stress is real and sometimes it is imagined or exaggerated. Sometimes the distortions of worry



can lead to some debilitating symptoms. However, ultimately God speaks into this reality of our fallen world with the words of Philippians 4:6, "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Following Dr Brown's first talk was a delicious morning tea which was generously provided by volunteers from Mothers' Union including a number of women from the Southern Highlands who had travelled up early on Friday morning with homemade treats worthy of any high tea establishment.

Jenny Brown's first talk set the groundwork for her second address looking at some practical aspects of relationships within the family and the church. Here Dr Brown showed that as anxiety increases then relationships reflect that increasing intensity in different ways.

Her key point was that "stress impacts the whole family and that if you can manage your own anxious responses it can have a positive impact on the whole family." Dr Brown gave some helpful steps in dealing with symptoms of stress for parents, within marriages and within the family of God.

Her final point was to remind the attendees that God's Spirit was doing a work of regeneration in all God's people. As a result we should aim for responsible, wise, disciplined efforts of dependence on God in ourselves and then to pray for that in others (rather than trying to "fix them").



A lunch of sandwiches or salad was served after the final talk so that those that needed to get away to pick up children from school could do so. Others were able to continue in fellowship over lunch.

Throughout the conference a number of books were recommended including:

- Jenny Brown's own *Growing yourself up: How to bring your best to all of life's relationships*
- Paul E. Miller's *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*
- Edward T. Welch's *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love*
- A couple of devotional books by Nancy Guthrie on death and suffering: *Be Still, My Soul* and *O Love that Will Not Let Me Go: Facing Death with Courageous Confidence in God*

The attendees were also made aware of the variety of ministries that MU is involved in including *Families Equip* a parenting course, the MU Shop located in Town Hall arcade, serving tea and coffee at the children's court and many other projects.



The conference was so popular that Mothers' Union is planning to run another conference on a similar topic in Fairy Meadow later in the year. Check out the MU Sydney website (www.musydney.org.au) for further details. *by Victoria Colgan*

2018 Diary Dates

May

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| 11 | Wollongong Seminar
Fairy Meadow Anglican | 10:00am to 12:30pm |
| 16 | Southern Highlands Area Day
Moss Vale | 10:00am |

June

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| 1 | Market Day Stall
Town Hall Arcade | 7:30am to 2:30pm |
| 6 | Parramatta Area Day
Toongabbie | 10:00am |

July

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| 10 | St George/Sutherland Area Day
Caringbah | 10:00am |
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August

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| 1 | Inner West Area Day
Enfield | 10:00am |
| 31 | Council Meeting
Venue to be advised | 10:00am to 12:30pm |

September

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| 11 | Upper North Shore/Ryde Area Day
Pennant Hills | 10:00am |
| 18 | Liverpool Area Day | 10:00am |

November

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| 23 | Advent Service
St Philip's York Street, Sydney | 10:30am |
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December

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| 7 | Market Day Stall
Town Hall Arcade | 7:30am to 2:30pm |
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