



ANGLICAN
MOTHERS UNION
AUSTRALIA

ABN 33 099 584 219

Christian Care for Families

January 2024

Dear fellow members of MU Australia

Welcome to another year of opportunities and fellowship as we seek to be both inwardly nurturing and outwardly focused active members of MU. I pray that 2024 will be a year of many blessings amidst few challenges as we seek through our MU work to be God's hands in today's world. This year brings special anticipation and excitement as we look forward to the visit of our Worldwide President Sheran Harper and our Zone C Regional Development Coordinator Jeanette Lawrence in May. I hope you will be able to meet Sheran and Jeanette at one of the locations (see Summer MiaMia).

During our worship time this morning, we read from St Paul's letter to the Colossians Chapter 1. It so aptly described my thoughts about you all as we begin a new year of hope and rejuvenation.

'...for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth the gospel...it has been bearing fruit among yourselves' (Col:3-6).

During my first year in the role of president I was able to visit several dioceses, listen to their stories and workshop ways forward that are possible and practical in each place. From these workshops three key words emerged:

- Visibility
- Articulation
- Relevance

I propose that these three words be used to focus our endeavours to transform MU in 2024. These endeavours do not need to be major undertakings but rather (to quote your VP Parenting Elizabeth Parker), be 'one more good thing' to address each word.

Visibility

As recognised by your Executive last year, MU is largely invisible in our parishes and the community. During the year I discovered some examples where MU appeared in pew bulletins but with little recognition or relevance to the rest of notices. I visited one parish where they were having a celebration of the activities in that parish and although they have an active MU including diocesan office bearers, MU did not appear on any of the posters. I challenge you as I do myself to make sure MU is visible. At the conclusion of one workshop a member said: 'Oh so I can wear my MU shirt on other occasions that are not about MU'. What can you do in your context to increase the visibility of MU?

Articulation

While we participate in and support many projects, few people have any real idea of what MU does beyond having a monthly 'exclusive to MU service' with great morning tea. We need to share the MU message and the work of MU with others. May I suggest you spend a meeting this year developing short informative sentences that describe the real work of MU, thus inwardly nurturing your members with the skills to talk about MU. While fellowship is an important part of belonging to MU, it doesn't tell people much and can sound self-serving. Our Christian concern for families and the ways in which we achieve that will help us to tell a relevant and more engaging stories about MU. Who knows, your description and enthusiasm for MU may encourage others to become members.

Relevance

People in our parishes often see MU as irrelevant to the modern world. While we are expected to be 'in the world but not of the world' the work of MU will be more relevant if we use secular opportunities to put a faith perspective. For example, in the Lectionary for Anglican Church of Australia the fourth Sunday of Lent focuses on Refreshment Sunday - setting aside a time when fasting can be relaxed for the day. Many MU branches still hold to this Sunday as Mothering Sunday despite Mothering Sunday being an old English tradition and the lack of connection with the Lenten liturgy. If MU was prepared to move the celebration of Mothering Sunday to Mothers' Day in May (simnel cake, flowers etc), we could make an important impact on the wider congregation and align the day with an emphasis on mothers especially as May is Domestic and Family Violence Prevention month. We could also negotiate with the clergy to celebrate Fathers' Day in September, strengthening the importance of the fathering role.

There are other examples where MU can be more closely associated with activities in the community. As you consider opportunities to be more outwardly focused, please take some time this year to contemplate how your branch could make a small change in your activities to be more relevant.

I look forward to working with you all in this exciting year as we seek live into the Objectives of MU in more dynamic ways, sharing our Christian faith through our work with families.

May God continue to bless all you do in his name through MU.

Warm regards
Robin