

A Service for Lady Day

Welcome

Welcome to our Mothers' Union Lady Day Service. The obedience and faith of Mary is a wonderful example to us as we reach out in service to families and communities. It is this that we gather to celebrate, give thanks for and be inspired by, as we seek to follow God in whichever way he calls.

Call to worship

I will sing of the Lord's great love for ever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.

Psalm 89:1

We gather to glorify the Lord
with open hearts and voices.

We gather to rejoice in God our Saviour
who has done great things for us.

Holy is his name. **Amen**

Opening hymn

Confession

Lord, you call us to lives of obedience and faith
as the example of Mary portrays.

**Forgive us when we close our ears to your voice
and surrender to doubt and fear.**

Lord, you call us to lives of acceptance and praise
as the example of Mary displays.

**Forgive us when we refuse the narrow path
and protest in selfishness.**

God of mercy and grace
forgive our faults and weaknesses.

**Transform us into people
of obedience and faith. Amen**

Exploring the Word

When does an ordinary life
Become extraordinary
A mundane day
Become revolutionary
A moment in time
Change history?
When God enters in
Forgives sin
Allows us to
Begin again
When we repeat
Those words of Mary
'May it be to me
As you say'
John Birch

Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.'

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered.

"May it be to me as you have said."

Luke 1: 30-33; 35-38

Talk/ Reflection

Commissioning/ Rededication of Mothers' Union membership

Lord, you have been our dwelling-place
throughout all generations.
May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us –
yes, establish the work of our hands.
Psalm 90:1, 17

Faithful God,
we rededicate and reaffirm ourselves to your
purposes for Mothers' Union; for your praise and glory. **Amen**

As members of Mothers' Union:

We pray that we will continue to be a people
who honour and worship your name.

Lord, may it be done according to your goodness and grace.

We pray that we will continue to be a people
who seek and follow your will.

Lord, may it be done according to your goodness and grace.

We pray that we will continue to be a people
who reach out to the world with your love.

Lord, may it be done according to your goodness and grace.

God of all generations,

we rededicate and reaffirm ourselves to your service.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Lord, may it be done according to your goodness and grace. 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

Hymn

Thanksgiving and intercessions

As we are inspired by the obedience and faith of Mary, so we also remember the obedience and faith of our founder, Mary Sumner, who, in her day, followed the calling of God upon her life. We pray that we, too, will be willing to follow God in obedience and faith, with thanksgiving and praise.

Lord God, you choose the very least

And raise us up to greatness

For nothing is impossible with God

You take the weak, the poor and blind

And raise us out of darkness

For nothing is impossible with God

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:
His love endures forever.

Teach us obedience, Lord
In every part of our lives
Ears to hear your word
Hands to do your work
Feet to walk your path
A heart for all your people
A mouth to shout your praise
A childlike faith
Humility
Confidence
That says
To the possible
And the impossible

I am the Lord's servant
May it be to me as you have said. Amen
John Birch

Symbolic Offering

During a time of silent prayer individuals may place blue and white fragrant flowers in vases as a symbolic offering of their obedience and faith.

We offer up these flowers
as symbols of our obedience and faith.
May we be anointed by the fragrance of Christ
for a life lived in service and worship to God. **Amen**

Hymn

Final Blessing

O Lord Jesus Christ
give us, we pray,
the graces of Mary;
faith, patience,
ready obedience,
thankfulness
and courage. **Amen**

Go into the world
to glorify the Lord,
and rejoice in your Saviour,
through your obedience and faith;
through the witness of your lives. **Amen**

Notes for a service for Lady Day

Lady Day - the Feast of the Annunciation - has been a significant day of prayer, intercession and thanksgiving for Mothers' Union since 1897. It is a good occasion to invite your whole church to celebrate with you as you give thanks for another year of Mothers' Union service to families and communities. You may wish to display examples of Mothers' Union projects and initiatives at a local, national and international level, including your link dioceses; and information on how to become involved in Mothers' Union. You may also wish to provide refreshments after the service.

Please use and adapt this service to suit your particular setting.

Suggested hymns and songs:

Tell out my soul
Hope of our calling
This, this is the God we adore
From heaven you came, helpless babe
Brother sister let me serve you
Jesus is king and I will extol Him
When I feel the touch of your hand upon my life
Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
God is working his purpose out

Confession

This alternative confession may be used if wished.

In Mary we see obedience and faith:
**Forgive us when we close our ears to your voice
and surrender to doubt and fear.**

In Mary we hear acceptance and praise:
**Forgive us when we refuse the narrow path
and protest in selfishness.**

God of mercy and grace
forgive our faults and weaknesses.
**Transform us into people
of obedience and faith. Amen**

Exploring the Word

This may be shared between two or three readers.

Material for a talk or reflection

Although the idea to celebrate Lady Day was first suggested to the Mothers' Union in 1895 at the annual committee of presidents and agreed to by Central Council in 1897 it took some time to be adopted across the membership. Holy Communion was the central feature of the day. At a Central Council meeting in 1902 the president of St David's plaintively asked how to surmount the difficulty of obtaining due observance of the day. In the same year however, it was reported that the day was celebrated as far afield as Armagh, Antananarivo and Sydney. In the 1909 annual report it was declared that in the past year the *Feast of the Annunciation* had almost universally been recognised as a great day of *intercession and thanksgiving*. Of equal significance was that 'many bishops' had held special services in their cathedrals to mark the day.

Some ways in which Mothers' Union relates to the story of the annunciation:

Parenthood – we look to provide Christian care for families worldwide and this includes initiatives to support and encourage the role of parents and carers. We have parenting projects and outreach, policy and faith work that empowers women and men through parenting and in work.

Faith – through our fellowship together and our faith resources we nurture faith and relationship with God, our prayer life and willingness to follow God, as Mary was willing to obey his call.

Vocation and service– the annunciation was about listening and responding to God; the result of which had potential eternal consequences for all, in every aspect of life. As Mothers' Union we look to care for people's physical, social and spiritual needs.

Vision – Mary's faith and obedience affected all generations throughout the world. The faith and obedience of our founder, Mary Sumner, has led to Mothers' Union sharing the love of Mary's son, Jesus Christ for generations, throughout the world.

Across the 83 countries where Mothers' Union is represented Lady Day is celebrated with special services, often including the commissioning of new members. This reflection could include examples from across the world. If you have any information from your link dioceses as to how they celebrate Lady Day this could also be shared as part of the reflection.

Examples:

In Rwanda for Lady Day they took as their theme *You are the salt of the world Matthew 5:13*. Different dioceses including Kibungo, Kigali, and Shyogwe organised large evangelical conferences on this theme.

In the diocese of Central Zimbabwe at their Lady Day celebrations they strategically set apart time for thanksgiving where branches submit their funds in joy. In the rural areas, where their churches are kilometres apart, they make it a three day event because they really long to be with one another in spirit and in love.

Umzimbuvu in South Africa enrol new members during the service as a sign of their growth. They use the Wave of Prayer as part of their service

Miyana in Mexico have used Lady Day to hold events in their parishes to discuss marriage issues e.g. being faithful. Men were told to help their wives and be supportive in every family affair. In this way members are helping to achieve our objective to promote and support married life.

In West Ankole in Uganda Lady Day is celebrated in all churches with songs, dance and drama, Bible reading and games!

In Mandalay in Myanmar their events for Lady Day have included a quiz about Mary and a competition about the Mothers' Union prayer.

Commissioning or rededication of Mothers' Union membership

If you have new members to be commissioned as part of the service then you can add the wording here. It can be found at <http://www.mothersunion.org/content/branch-services>

This can also be used as a reaffirmation of membership should a more formal commitment be wanted than the wording in the Lady Day service.

Thanksgiving and intercessions

You may wish to include your own thanksgiving and intercessions here.

Symbolic Offering

You may like to include a symbolic action as part of your prayers. White and blue, preferably fragrant, flowers could be available for people to come forward and place in a vase or vases as they offer themselves in obedience and faith to God. Quiet music may be played in the background during this part of the service. If large numbers are expected at the service then it may be more practical to have a few people to bring the flowers on behalf of the congregation.

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