

MONDAY 1 JULY 2019

Time to Rejoice

I wonder if the Philippians (see scripture below) were a disheartened lot that they needed to be told to remember the Good News of Jesus Christ. And told again and again. Certainly if we allow ourselves to be bombarded by the Bad News we will have to be reminded, again and again. Rejoicing isn't just bells and whistles, parties or even putting on a brave face when your heart is broken. Rejoicing is a growing act. It leads to a deep and inner conviction that the Love of God in Jesus is real and for all.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Philippians 4:4

Mothers' Union members in Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland are rejoicing in Lord judging by the flood of positive response and enthusiastic support to MULO. On national television in Lesotho the Bad News was shifted aside for a presentation on MULO.

Let us all rejoice in this Good News.



SUNDAY 7 JULY 2019

FAITH in action



With each page of *Families Worldwide* we read of Faith in Action and rejoice. Our own action begins by wearing our hearts on our sleeves. Do we smile with true Christian loving? - when we sit next to the smelly homeless person at the bus stop? - or speak to the worker at the car wash who obviously has a different faith tradition from ours?

With every smile our hearts grow in faith, with every dollar or fifty given the generous heart beats wildly at the possibilities unfolding for God's work with the unfriendly and ungrateful.

For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. Ephesians 2:10

In Rwanda Mothers' Union members have been rolling out their Village Savings and Loans Association programme across the whole country. The members' faith is enriched by worship and study. Their actions witness the love of God to all. May we hold them in prayer and offer them generous assistance.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

SUNDAY 14 JULY 2019

Transformation

What a wonderfully encouraging and pastoral leader St Paul was. He was just the person to confidently assimilate his own transformation and thereby be able to express the process of 'unveiling'. It does take much courage to put aside the veil of prejudice, self-protection, fear, silliness, self-pity in order to see the real person who is "I". And to be that person struggling, struggling by degrees, into the image of Christ.

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Mothers' Union members in Sierra Leone are supporting women and children by 'unveiling' the imprisonment of gender-based violence and traditional practices. The transformation is based on supporting their physical, emotional and spiritual development and encouraging all the family to make informed choices about the girls' rights. Sex workers, prisoners and the disabled all benefit from the transforming love.

SUNDAY 21 JULY 2019

Commitment

Commitment is regarded by many as an act to be avoided. It is often regarded with suspicion because someone or some organization wants to get something out of you, to bind you up. You may end up being a sort of slave with no independence. Your sense of self may be damaged, neglected, submerged beneath the demands of... the church, perhaps. Commitment means working together in trust, daring to 'get on' with others, giving way, remembering the common purpose, the *commission*.

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. Psalm 37:5

Our members in Tonga are committed to work with all ages, from the education of young people to the visiting of the elderly. Anglican women have embraced membership of Mothers' Union in order to share the vision and commission of Mary Sumner. Thanks be to God.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

SUNDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2019 – Living in harmony

Harmony is a distant dream if we make it other people's responsibility to be in tune with our ways, beliefs and standards. St Paul, once the haughty Jew, knew that to be a follower of Christ he must bend to embrace those with low intelligence, low status, low esteem, low morals. We do not live in harmony when our criticism comes from within an ivory tower. 'Loving puts us on our knees'. TiS 640 Kneels at the feet of his friends.

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 16-18

Members in Namibia create harmony by caring for vulnerable individuals, easing the stresses of life with personal loving actions. When an elderly man, alone, unable to walk was discovered, members washed his clothes, brought food and water, cleaned his house and even rebuilt parts of it. Then in harmony with local authorities they ensured he would receive continued support. 'Loving puts us on our knees'.

SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2019 [TO OCTOBER 5]

Valuing the elderly

The sentence of Scripture chosen for this week celebrates the world turned upside down by the coming of the Holy Spirit. St Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) quotes from the prophet (Joel 2:28). The joy of Christ's spirit will make old men acted like young ones for surely it is the young who dream and the old who prophesy! May the elderly keep looking forward in joyful anticipation.

'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions,

and your old men shall dream dreams. Acts 2:17

Mothers' Union members in one diocese of USA are partnering with the Health department and focusing on a facility for the elderly living with impairment and disability. These members give value to these lives by putting on worship services and offering general help.

SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2019

Literacy and Learning

The tools of literacy are best acquired in childhood. To be able to read and write opens the wonders of the world – of the media, street signs, and the parables of Jesus, the ultimate teacher if they are lucky. But the world of learning offers a whole other experience. Great poets and writers down the millennia have mapped human experience of love and hate, betrayal, humour and tragedy. As our forbears sought to understand the work of Jesus for their time so Christian theology developed. May your journey of learning give your insight.

*Listen, children, to a father's instruction,
and be attentive, that you may gain insight. Proverbs 4:1*

Mothers' Union in Sudan has a basic focus - to provide the opportunity for everyone to read and write. The members hope that women will start participating in decision-making in their families and the wider community. May they gain insight, peace and faith.

SUNDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2019

Flourishing harvest

For the Western world the harvest comes into the shops and markets with a great flourish. There is SO much, of everything. Few of us grow our own food, there aren't many chooks in back yards or fruiting trees. The abundance has complex affects on water systems, on rivers and seas and what lives in them. Native animals and plants are endangered all over the world. What do we pray for? Do we Christians have a responsibility in the land you have given us? Help us, Lord.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Matthew 9:37-38

Loving God, we hold before you the members in Kenya who have begun self-help programmes in six dioceses. Projects undertaken involve pig and goat rearing, fishing, farming, bee keeping. We pray, dear Lord, for flourishing harvests for the parishes as they work with the challenges and towards empowerment.

SUNDAY 28 JULY 2019

Draw near to god

'Let us pray with confidence the prayer Jesus gave us'. These words introduce the great gift Jesus gave his friends at the Eucharist each Sunday (and at every meeting of Christians), the LORD'S PRAYER. He taught his friends (and we are taught) to pray with intimacy. Jesus taught them to draw near to God. We draw near to God in all states of mind and heart, in all joys and catastrophes. 'The heart of Christian prayer is getting over the idea that God is somewhere a very, very long way off'. Rowan Williams *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist and Prayer*. SPCK 6458 p. 00.

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,²² let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19, 22

MULOA has helped members in Zimbabwe draw near to God and in so doing recognise their personal and corporate capacity for loving action. When a widow's wooden cabin caught fire and she lost everything, members built her a new house. Intimacy with the living God in Jesus brings us nearer to Him and our true selves.

SUNDAY 4 AUGUST 2019

Hands across the world

Thanks be to God for Mary Sumner's extraordinary gift of loving care and organisational ability. With our inheritance, *Families Worldwide*, we connect through prayer with Anglican women and men throughout the world. Take a little time to say the names in 'The Wave of Prayer'. You may even reach out your hand in friendship or blessing, comfort or happiness, bearing burdens we do not know.

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

Vulnerability is a burden so many women and girls suffer. As we reach out to those in Malawi, we pray that, with education and encouragement and the faith of Mothers' Union members across the world, they may be healed of their sorrows and shame, and become self-assured and valued members of their communities.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST 2019 — Across the generations

A saying for grandparents: 'Keep your purse open and your mother shut'. Well, you can do that when you don't have to run a tight ship getting kids off to school everyday etc, etc; but the older generation has a role and that is to be as trusting, generous and non-critical as we can – and we CAN. The verse from *Psalms 145* below is a clarion call to not forget it's up to us to hand on the faith! And as with the saying above, it's to be done by showing OUR love and joy. With praise! With happiness! And with the most essential element of all, Confidence, not counting the cost but knowing it is God alone who works great marvels. *One generation shall laud your works to another,*

and shall declare your mighty acts. Psalm 145:4

The Parenting Programme in Myanmar encourages parents to be confident, while the trainers are confident they are passing on skills across the generations. Everyone parents someone. The loving skills required, the patience, the self-sacrifice, the giving and receiving – they build character in those involved. Let us thank the Lord for his goodness and loving kindness.

SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 2019 — Rest and relaxation

'There no rest for the wicked'. I suspect that might have been meant to imply eternal rest. But perhaps those feeding off the greed of others for pleasure and war aren't bothered about much more than unearthly delights. We can be concerned for those caught up in the stresses of daily living which in the modern age mean driving to childcare and school and work and after school activities. The stressors will vary according to status but almost always are frenetic. Those whose time is captured by entertainment in a myriad of forms suffer debilitating stress rather than relaxation. Perhaps all we can do is to make sure our spiritual feet are up and resting so we will be ready for God's call in the crises that will inevitably occur.

And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. Genesis 2:2

As New Zealand is in the thoughts and prayers of people throughout the world, let us give thanks for the openhearted leaders of politics and faith during and after the shootings in Christchurch. May our Mothers' Union members respond to any in need with the quiet assurance of God's love for all.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST 2019 — Amazing grace!

The New Covenant, made manifest in Jesus Christ, is pure gift with no strings, no Law attached. John Newton, slave trader, making his fortune by peddling human lives, found God's free gift to him, Amazing! Once the gift was perceived, delivered, bestowed on him, he knew what he was. We know the hymn he wrote, Amazing Grace. It is one of the few hymns, one of two or three, that are now common to people. It is sung at weddings and funerals, at Grand Final footy matches and Anzac Day. We need to go deeper to know where we have fallen short, to that place of self-knowledge. Then come up for air, ready to sing, Amazing Grace.

Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23-24

When Mothers' Union members in Ghana reach out to people marginalised by mental health issues, drug problems, and in prison, they are opening the way for amazing grace to invade the senses of those they minister to in Jesus' name. Let us pray for them and those in their care, thanking God in Jesus for his gift of Grace.

SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2019 — New beginnings

The Gospels relate Jesus' life and work, his mighty acts, his suffering, death and resurrection. He opened for us a NEW way. It is the way of reconciliation where we can beg forgiveness; seventy times seven if necessary. An old hymn tells us that 'New every morning is the love our wakening and uprising prove'. Yes we open our eyes, and stand up out of bed, still alive and kicking, still thanking God for recreating us during sleep so that we are ready to love our neighbour, forgive ourselves and start afresh in the glow of God's love.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Women in Zambia welcome the Good News of Jesus' reconciling Love. Forty-three percent have experience gender-based violence; that means half the female population needs a new beginning. In Jesus, they are a new creation and we are all deeply moved that this can be so. Thanks be to God.