



Notes to accompany the hymn, 'Holy and gracious God, we bring'

I have known several Mothers' Union branches quite well in my time as an Anglican, and I have come to love many Mothers' Union members dearly, and be thankful for their praying, and their caring, and the way their membership of MU has helped them to be faithful and effective church members and leaders. I have been especially thankful for the way so many MU women have welcomed me, and prayed for me, a young, single, ordained woman with my own struggle to be faithful within the Australian Anglican church. It is from this common purpose, this common ground, that we have explored together, that I write this hymn for your 1992 celebration.

The hymn is a song of thanksgiving for blessing already received, and a prayer of re-dedication to vocation yet to be completely filled. It is a hymn for turning points and historical milestones. At such times, we need to remember how much we have already received from God. We need to look around us at the people who have been our companions, supporters, and sparring partners along the way; to say "thank you" to God for them, to say "thank you" to them for their presence alongside us. And, fortified by the sense of community we have found, we find ourselves able to look beyond our relatively safe community once again, and to see the immense needs of the world still to be met. Then we offer once again to do our bit to meet those needs. We will do it, not in our own strength or wisdom, but in God's strength that fills us, if we're not too proud to ask for it, and in god's wisdom that guides us, if we're not too busy to listen to it.

I chose a tune suitable for unison singing, because one of my strong memories is of the cathedral full of women's voices singing at the annual MU Lady Day service. 'Lift high the cross' you sang, as the seemingly endless stream of cross-topped banners from all round the diocese was carried in. That was an important moment in my sense of belonging with you, all of us as apostles of the good news of Jesus. I hope you may sing this hymn to the building up of your own faith, and to the proclamation of that faith in words and in ways that today's and tomorrow's women will gladly receive.

Elizabeth L. Smith