

SUNDAY 27-31 DECEMBER 2020

Rejoice and reflect

Now in Christ's flock let love be surely placed:
 Now from Christ's flock let concord hate expel:
 Now of Christ's flock let love be so embraced,
 As we in Christ, and Christ in us may dwell.
 Christ is the author of all unity,

From whence proceedeth all felicity.
 O sing unto this glittering glorious King:
 O praise his name let every living thing:
 Let heart and voice like bells of silver ring
 The comfort that this Christmas day did bring.
 Let lute and harp, with sound of sweet delight
 The joys of Christ's birth on this day recite.

'A Carol for Christmas Day' by Francis Kindlemarsh (fl. c. 1570) verses 3-4

*But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.
 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had
 heard and seen, as it had been told them. Luke 2:19-20*



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SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2020

Bear each other's burdens

He ain't heavy, he my brother'. St Paul urges us to respond with
 sibling love to another's tribulation. We are all brothers and sisters of
 the one heavenly Father. There is no room in Christian life for
 abandoning those less fortunate than ourselves; in fact, Christ
 exhorts us to pick up the load that may cause us pain. But we will be
 changed, liberated by the experience.

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

In Zone A, the education of children is top priority. A lack of
 finances causes many students to drop out of school. MU's support
 'eases the burden in their family and also gives the children moral
 support ... and better access to jobs' - and fulfils the law of Christ

SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 2020

captivity

The precautions put in place to curb the spread of the deadly
 coronavirus pandemic have given many of us an experience of
 captivity. For some there have been opportunities for creativity and
 reaching out to neighbours and those less fortunate. For others
 resentment, frustration and fear are uppermost. When we are captive
 to such negative impulses we close the door to our inner resources
 and, most importantly, to God.

*Seek O seek the Lord, while he is near. Trust him, speak to him in
 prayer and he will hear. TiS 464*

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who
 dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with
 shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has
 done great things for them." Psalm 126:1-2*

For those living in the captivity of loneliness, a member in the
 diocese of Derry and Raphoe, All Ireland, began a Widows'
 Friendship Group. She ran monthly meetings in her own home until
 the age of 90. Then her ministry was taken up by Cathedral House.
 Now transport, refreshments and helpers support those who are
 lonely.

SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER 2020

deprivation

Hope must surely be the ultimate deprivation: no hope for the future, no assurance of love, friendship, or fulfilling relationships and no resurrection hope. Life in these circumstances breeds mindless shopping at best and destruction of others' lives at worst. St Paul wrote that *'by hope were we saved'*, and so, if saved, let us bring to mind's eye and heart's care all those deprived of hope. May we rise to any opportunity to provide help and hope.

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbour, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it", when you have it with you.

Proverbs 3: 27-28

Female prisoners in Durham were lacking direction and hope. The local Mothers' Union were approached by the prison warden and members set up a MU branch there. With backing from the prison chaplain, they meet monthly and have gathered 15 new members. Their unconditional love and concern have given the women hope for the future.

SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER 2020

Celebrating the people of God

The world is bright with the joyous saints / Who love to do Jesus' will/ You can meet them in school, or in lanes or at sea,/ in church or in trains, or in shops, or at tea/ for the saints of God are just folk like me,/ And I mean to be one too.

This hymn by Lesbia Scott is available in an absolutely delightful edition illustrated by Judith Gwyn Brown.

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God. Moorehouse Publishing 1991. Includes music.

[God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1: 4-6

The MU saints in the diocese of Glasgow and Galloway collaborated with Women's Aid and the Field Study Centre in providing a 48-hour country trip for seven single-mum families affected by domestic violence.



SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 2020

nativity

From virgin's womb this Christmas day did spring
The precious seed that only saved man:
This day let man rejoice and sweetly sing
Since on this day salvation first began.
This day did Christ man's soul from death remove,
With glorious saints to dwell in heav'n above.

This day to man came pledge of perfect peace:
This day to man came love and unity:
This day man's grief began for to cease,
This day did man receive a remedy
For each offence and ev'ry deadly sin
That he, with guilty heart, has wandered in.

'A Carol for Christmas Day' by Francis Kindlemarsh (fl. C. 1570) Verses 1-2

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2: 6-7

SUNDAY 6 DECEMBER 2020

proclamation

O Living Word,
proceeding from the mouth of God,
penetrating to the ends of the earth,
come and pierce us,
with the sword of truth.

Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 1. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Isaiah 52: 7

Improving communication and leadership development are priorities for members in the province of York, UK. May their voices and actions proclaim the Good News of Jesus' love for all.

SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER 2020

journeying

O Adonai
Ruler of ancient Israel, appearing to Moses
in the flame of the burning bush,
carving in him on Sinai the words of the living law,
come, etch your holy way even into the lines of our faces.

Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 3. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isaiah 9:2

The life's journey of an 8 year-old girl in Eastern Cape South Africa was changed by the ministry (the holy way) of MU and the local municipality. Sibabalwe's prosthetic leg brought her smiles, hope for the future and playtime with school friends.

For these two days they were in peace and safety, practiced outdoor skills and had fun with new friends. We can celebrate the saintly witness which left them all feeling stronger and with a positive outlook for their future.

SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2020

International issues

He's got the whole world in his hands. This notion of theological genius is expounded in the Hebrew scriptures and was confirmed by the inclusive ministry of Jesus Christ. His hands reached out to heal and embrace any who came to him. His voice called out to the dispossessed, the outcasts from his own society and culture. May we also have a **wide** vision of our Christian responsibility.

He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Isaiah 2:4

The central opening of *Families Worldwide* has a map of the world flagging 4 million members around the world. The majority of countries once belonged to the British Empire. Out of God's great mercy the colonial past has been (in part) reborn under the tender care and encouragement of Mothers' Union and its foundation in prayer.

SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2020

memories

'Count your blessings': do you remember to? Are you, perhaps, dealing with memories you would rather forget? Sometimes these memories do need to be faced. Perhaps you can see now that the criticism was kindly meant; perhaps being overlooked for one position opened another way. Reflecting on the past can bring us to understand ourselves and forgive others. Count on it.

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds.

Psalm 77:11-12

In Wales, having studied MULO, members are looking at what they have been doing for a long time in a new way. Despite facing the challenge of lack of transport and the need for leadership training, projects involving in the local community are having a profound impact on people in hospital or prison or the homeless. Blessed memories for the future.

SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2020

Power of prayer

What is the power in prayer? It surely isn't force given so that we can make others do what we want (even supposing our intentions are honourable, even altruistic). The writer of the Letter to the Philippians associates it with the Peace of God. Perhaps it is rather that trust (don't worry) and thanksgiving (counting blessings) bring us into the state of Peace, which is Prayer. Being in a prayerful peace is power that we need to give, to forgive, and indeed, to love the unlovable.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let

your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4: 6-7

In the diocese of Canterbury UK, the impact of MULO has awakened members to trust in God and to engage with church membership so that both are involved in local initiatives. Helping outfit a girl starting secondary school has had an impact on her whole family. Everyone was enriched by the power of prayer. Praise the Lord!

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2020

Gender Justice

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." - Genesis 1.27

In the Anglican Communion we are committed to ensuring that our churches become a living witness to our belief that women and men are equally made in the image of God.

Within the Communion and beyond, we recognise that the empowerment of women and men to live and work in just relationship requires a transformation among individuals and in all our communities. ***Statement and Bible verse copied from the Anglican Communion Website.***

For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. Luke 8: 17



Perhaps the greatest impact of the recent work of MU in Ireland has been raising awareness of gender-based violence. This has been achieved by helping the needy, elderly, prisoners and their families and all types of vulnerable people. Members hold annual services and events to support the 16 Days of Activism. May God bless their endeavours.

SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2020

Season of advent

O Wisdom

dwelling in the womb of God,
generating and nurturing the earth,
through the nights of darkness,
come and cherish in us
the seed of wisdom.

Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 2. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. Isaiah 9: 7

Nurturing has had a great impact on those receiving support from members in Scotland. Released prisons no longer need to use paper to dry themselves. Members collected cloth towels to meet this pressing need and the recipients felt cherished indeed.