



WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020

Tranquillity

Think of something tranquil – make sure that it is real, not an image or something static. A lamppost or a photo of a tree has some essence of tranquillity because it doesn't suggest dissent or trouble. But tranquillity needs to be set against the realities of life. Consider a pond or perhaps a sleeping child; both are tranquil, but both have the potential to cause uproar! We do, we can be angry or rude, unsettled but the Peace of Christ passes all understanding because it lives with, makes a friend of, our human self so we can, like Our Lord, sail, even sleep on a cushion, while the storms rage.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27

The storm of pandemic has ripped through the lives of many members throughout the world. Many have found tranquillity in isolation from their frenetic lifestyles and are then able to spend time with God.

SUNDAY 5 JULY 2020

Hope and confidence

There is an illusion that confidence is akin to certainty. Surely with God nothing is certain as he waits on his people to be faithful. The FID in the centre of conFIDence is FAITH. HOPE seems to be what grounds us, settles us – 'A sure and steadfast anchor for the soul'. There are no answers to what will happen next BUT faithfulness keeps the light on at the end of the tunnel and hope helps put one foot after another.

...through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain... Hebrews 6: 18-19

The members in Zone A have decided that one area to centre their work on is Education for Children. There are practical outcomes to anticipate: better access to jobs, for example, but HOPE gives the glimpse of a better future and ConFIDence/faithfulness sustains the courage needed.

Prepared by Rev'd Lesley McLean
Co-ordinator Prayer and Spirituality Department

Scripture quotations are from *Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version*©1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Published by Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee. All rights Reserved.

SUNDAY 12 JULY 2020

Heart for worship

Attendance at Worship has been problematic at best and devastating for millions this year. We are nothing if we don't worship – something: consider the agonies of the sporting communities. But we are more than spectators, we are there at worship, ourselves and souls and bodies adoring the One who creates all things, the One who lives still as our brother and the One who sustains us with Holy Fire. We can adore, love and praise in isolation also, with our whole heart, because we belong to the mystical Body of Christ

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;

I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you;

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:1-2

Another area of concern and action for Zone A is the Livelihood of Women. This is important in rural cultures where the needs of children are sometimes not addressed by the fathers. Members discerned that women with income could give priority to the needs of their families. Let us give thanks to Lord with our whole heart for this wisdom.

SUNDAY 19 JULY 2020

Building resilient lives

Resilience bends, resists, lies down, won't lie down. It is a complex art and requires some measure of maturity and may even be a gift of personality. It comes to some and not others. One doesn't need to have been at the Battle of the Somme to know whether you have or not. Jesus said, 'Take up your Cross and follow me'. Your Cross may be staying at home or not getting that prize job and still feeling worthwhile. We grow resilient Christians by ourselves being cheerful, faithful, hopeful and loving no matter who we may think doesn't deserve it. Let us regard (as the ancient Hebrews did) wealth in terms of the necessities of life earned by the strength of your body through the generosity of God. Just having wealth and not the gratitude may indeed lessen your resilience/power.

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today. Deuteronomy 8:18

Survivors of gender-based violence have indeed learnt resilience. Support of survivors is another area of work in Zone A. We give thanks for the members who bring Christ's love to those suffering in silence, bearing social stigma and in need of shelter. May their resilience bring survivors peace.

SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2020

Peace and safety

Australians have communal memory of Cyclone Tracy in 1974. We 'remember' the bushfires of 1983 which coincided with the Church's liturgical Ash Wednesday. The darkness of night bring fear and danger to many whether they live in well-lit streets or drive on deserted outback roads. Peace and safety can never be guaranteed. Not only are the vagaries of weather and animals to be considered but also the terror created by human wickedness. 'O God, the maker of peace and lover of concord', give us peace in our hearts and gratitude when we dwell in safety.

I will both lie down and sleep in peace;

for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety. Psalm 4:8

Communities in Madagascar live with the havoc of cyclones, flooding every year and now more frequent droughts. MU and diocesan leaders are addressing environmental preservation with a special grass which preserves the soil in the rainy season. Trees are then planted which will fertilise the soil, store water and form windbreaks during cyclones. Peace and safety come together with prayer, teaching in resilience.

SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2020

Respect for the elderly

Intergenerational living is healthy for everyone. The granddaughter who brings her toddler to visit demonstrates her respect for the elders just by her presence and so engender that respect in her children. The grandfather who shares his love of cars and even allows the young ones drive his treasure teaches generosity and trust and also earns respect and love. Let us who are elderly respect and accept ourselves: may we pray for tolerance with our bodies and be grateful for the pauses, give thanks for long life and the hindsight it gives and grow in love and nearness to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

even to your old age I am he, even when you turn grey I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear;

I will carry and will save. Isaiah 46:4

Mothers' Union in the UK and Europe is demonstrating its respect for members young and old. It is encouraging members to see a wider role than just organising a branch meeting with a speaker. This involves personal growth and faith-based growth. We are never too old to grow in faith and hope and love as *with joyful trust we move towards our Father's home above*. Hymn by James McAuley.

SUNDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2020**Learning and sharing**

At a church barbeque (with yummy food) a child, not accustomed to being there, asked whether they have to pay. 'It is a gift for you' was the reply. At an after-school Kid's Club an eager boy reached out for yet another (ordinary, boring) biscuit. A leader slapped his hand and snapped that he'd had enough (in the days before safe practices). With every look and act we are (good or bad) witnesses to God's generous love. If we get the opportunity to expound that theologically, so much the better. But all of us are witnesses and we all teach what God means to us, whether generous or punishing.

You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; ² and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. 2 Timothy 2: 1-2

In Uganda grass-thatched houses present multiple problems - destruction by fire, loss of possessions, limited opportunity for trade. Mothers' Union members of a village grouped together and in fellowship pooled money and rotated it to benefit one family at a time. Three iron-roofed houses have been built, gardening shared with fellowship has boosted skills and food yield. Thanks be to God.

SUNDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2020**Fruitfulness**

Human life is varied and unpredictable. The sweet, adorable child becomes a tyrant as an adult. Those whom we taught about Jesus don't care anymore. What went wrong? Yet it is God alone who works great marvels and our fruitfulness is not ours to count. We pray that God will send down the healthful spirit of his grace and pour down the continual dew of his blessing. We may glimpse the fruit of our labours in Christ and are thankful.

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. John 15: 4-5

In the Province of Eastern Cape, South. Africa, MU responded to the Department of Education news of an 8 year old girl needing a prosthetic leg. Local members worked with the municipality to provide her family with proper shelter. A parish now donates groceries monthly. State and local government, parish and MU members: all working together to bring to fruition God's love.

SUNDAY 26 JULY 2020**Living by God's Word**

For Christians God's Word is Jesus, Our Lord and his word was LOVE. Living by Love is challenging to put it mildly! St Paul wrote about the imperative to Love. The passage in 1 Corinthians is the reading of choice at weddings and the temptation here is be soft and gooey about Love. Jesus expected his disciples to make hard decisions, difficult choices dependent on their love for him and his Father and all God's children. He expects that of us, the followers of His Way, his Truth, His Life.

But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4: 4

Climate Change is a given in many countries, especially those in Zone A. Members have chosen that as their fourth area of work. Love of God's creation and Christians' responsibility for its care is part of the education for members and the younger generation. They are also encouraging the planting of trees and minimizing the use of plastics as acts of LOVE.

SUNDAY 2 AUGUST 2020**Rest for body and soul**

There's nothing quite so freeing as floating in the sea or a swimming pool, weightless, suspended in waters of rest. Our bodies regularly need to recuperate from stress and strain. So too our souls for they are an integral part of who we are and need care and attention. Souls are, after all, doing vitally important work; sorting out our life choices, connecting with the Source and Creator of our being. They too suffer from Love fatigue and need rest and re-creation. A dose of aimless wandering, contemplating a child, or listening to sacred music is REST indeed.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; = waters of rest. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long. Psalm 23, 1-2, 6

Change of living habits also bring rest. In Myanmar, mothers at the MU Parenting program learnt to be more patient and caring towards their children. This has produced a rest from friction for the whole family: children work better at school and husband/wife relationships have improved. The still waters of Rest bring calm. Thanks be to God.

SUNDAY 9 AUGUST 2020

Mothers' Union family

What a privilege it is to belong to a World-wide family whose mission is to bring Love and Peace to men, women and children wherever they may be. The Mothers' Union family is a microcosm of the unity between all of creation. At the halfway point in time from Christ on earth to now, St Francis spoke of Brother Sun, Sister Moon. The intensity of his spiritual awareness can be overwhelming. Let us summon some measure of that feeling of family for other MU members so we may truly regard them as our brothers and sisters.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 2 Thessalonians 1: 2-3

A community of other faiths joined the parenting program in Myanmar. Members were prepared to welcome other believers, opening their hearts and minds to welcome all of God's children. Change came about when faith and love increased.

SUNDAY 16 AUGUST 2020

Seasons of life

Despairing about your failing capacity for work? Remember the years when you couldn't grow up fast enough? The young are not satisfied with youth, the aged are not satisfied with aging. The common denominator is wanting to be other than you are. Contemplate the gifts that are in you and with you in whatever season of life you are. An elder may pause with impunity and have time and opportunity to pray, to read, to see the stars, to enjoy children without all the work. That's a great GIFT from God who has wonderfully made us.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

Psalm 139: 13, 16

In the season of her energy and strength, a mother in Myanmar has attended a micro saving group and then managed to build a house for herself. She now runs a catering business at home, thankful to MU for the program. Let us thank God for the attention MU pays to people's needs no matter what season of life they are in.

SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2020

Ethical matters

Our Church has lost the confidence of the wider community. Scandals, infighting, power struggles all provide food for censure. Of course, this is nothing new. Human beings of whatever caste will ethically disintegrate when society does. One of the earliest New Testament texts, Paul's letter to the Corinthians addresses exactly this issue. He says that they, the Christians in Corinth, need to be seen to be truthful and honest and loving because if they are not, they, and what they stand for, will have no credibility.

for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. 2 Corinthians 8: 21

St Paul would be proud of the members in the diocese of Northern Argentina, in Zone B. From mainly indigenous communities, despite poverty and some conflict, they are very faithful and resourceful. There is also growth in urban areas, for which we give thanks to God.

SUNDAY 30 AUGUST 2020

New chapters

In the Australian Spring our thoughts begin to stir after the slowing and cosiness of winter. The young members of the family are finishing school, going into apprenticeships or university, starting a new chapter in their lives. The older members of the family remember their own experiences but look forward to what life will hold for them now. Each new chapter of life brings its blessings and its trials. When we learn from them, when our Christian faith witnesses to our love and kindness, those around us, the children and the children's children can glimpse a WAY of LIFE with which to face each new chapters of theirs.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Psalm 121: 7-8

In Zone C, a participant in MULO was unsure of her ability to 'facilitate a workshop'. When she returned to her parish in PNG, she supervised her local group to host a dinner. They wore their MU uniforms, were asked what MU was all about and suddenly 'Linda' moved into a new chapter in her life. She learned that she could speak out in the community. Now she has the confidence to run workshops. Alleluia!