

SWANSEA AND BRECON MU NEWS

Issue 360

March 2021



THE EDITOR: This issue is smaller issue than usual as I have not received any articles, which is understandable in these times.

We have just held the **MU Wave of Prayer**. This time, I just lit one big candle, and placed shiny pebbles around it - one for each link – and it was very effective and special.

Mothering Sunday will soon be with us and MU has provided us with the *Together at Home: Resources and Prayer Pack*.

Would you like to write an article, for the next issue, describing your experience of one of these events. Whether you have been on your own or participated virtually through Zoom or FaceBook, it will be interesting to read.

Kay

Items for the next issue
to be sent to
warrington.k@sky.com
by 22 March 2021
Maximum of 350 words

FROM THE PRESIDENT

THOUGHTS FROM SALLY FREEDMAN



Hello again! We are beginning to feel that life does still go on outside our homes, when we see the increasing signs of spring – not least waking up in daylight! We are also boosted by the cautious talk of being able to begin to plan for a more ‘normal’ life, with the vaccine showing it’s ability to keep us safer. I do hope that you are all keeping well and safe and looking forward to brighter days.

It seems appropriate that we should be in the season of Lent with all that that entails – quiet calm and taking time to assess what our spiritual life is like and how we shall celebrate the coming of Easter. In the same way in our daily life, we are preparing to meet the challenges of the next few months as we re-acustom ourselves to the thought of being able to go out and about and meet and greet our friends and families with hugs and embraces. What joy that will be! Mothering Sunday is coming up, so maybe we can begin with a celebration of Mothers and Families suitable for the current times.

I do hope you all managed to join in our days of Wave of Prayer – I heard of all sorts of plans from Zoom to quiet prayers within our own homes and I look forward to hearing how you all got on. I did enjoy hearing our Diocese included in the Midday Prayers on Facebook and felt proud that we were actively representing MU Worldwide! Bless you all.

It is too early to plan anything for the future but, God willing, we should all be able to start thinking of meeting up in person sometime in the Autumn even if only for a cup of tea and a chat! Do look after yourselves and keep well and safe for the last few laps of this extraordinary year we have lived through.

God bless you all,

Sally

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

REVD JULIE WAGSTAFF

Hello again, I hope this finds you and yours well and looking forward to spring, to coming out of lockdown and of course to Easter! As I write this we're in the second week of Lent and still not certain whether church buildings will be permitted to open to celebrate on Easter Sunday, but whatever happens, we are an Easter people and alleluia is our song!

This doesn't mean we will always feel joyful, there has been much to lament over during the past year, indeed for some it may have been very dark indeed and it will be some time before they feel joyful again. As we continue to keep them in our prayers though, I do hope that you are able to enjoy the signs of spring as they slowly emerge and look forward to reuniting with family and friends, catching up on hugs and cuddles. Whenever it is that we are able to worship and enjoy meaningful fellowship in our church buildings again, we can be very grateful for the efforts that have been made to enable us to enjoy being church in different ways. Many have bravely learned new skills to be part of Zoom and Teams meetings: YouTube has enabled MU members from all over the world to join together in midday prayer and zoom and streamed services have meant that those who are housebound have been able to join in worship from their homes. I think we have learnt a lot about what really matters. We can be very thankful that the MU is poised to move into the future in such a positive way and for the work of everyone who has made that possible.

Meeting together and planning ways of growing and reaching out to help and encourage others, can't be far away, so in the words of *Mary Sumner* 'Lord, let [us] touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life [we] touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the words we speak, the prayer [we] breathe, or the life [we] live. Amen.

Every blessing

Julie

MIDDAY PRAYERS

Rebuilding Hope & Confidence - FASTING AND FEASTING IN LENT

Monday: Hope

Fast from discouragements; feast on hope. *W.A. Ward, 1921-1994*

In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul and gladly feast on the blessings of God.

Hope in the One who has endured all things that we might know freedom.
Hope in the One who has given us his Spirit that we might have power.
Hope in the One who has loved us beyond death that we might have life.
Hope in the One who prepares a place for us
that we might share eternity with him.

For hope that endures, we thank you Lord. © *John Birch*

Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. *Romans 5:5 (NRSV)*

Tuesday: Prayer

Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that undergirds.
W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul and gladly feast on the blessings of God.

With faith and hope we bring our prayers to God; we draw near to him with joy.

Let us be swift to approach our Lord. His ear is open to our prayers. His mercy draws us close; his grace is all we need. May we cherish these times: precious moments with God to pour out our hearts and listen for his reply.

With joy and praise we bring our prayers to God; we draw near to him with faith. Amen

The Lord is close to everyone who prays to him, to all who truly pray to him.
Psalms 145:18 (NCV)

Wednesday: Truth

Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal truth. *W.A. Ward, 1921-1994*

In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul and gladly feast on the blessings of God.

When we are troubled by life's concerns we seek the Lord for answers; to deliver us from our fears. As we taste and see that the Lord is good we are blessed by his protection and provision for our needs. As we gaze upon our Saviour and embrace the truth of his eternal love, may our lives reflect the glory of Christ.

For earth and sky will pass away but the word of God endures forever.

Amen *Based on Psalm 34*

His loving kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord is everlasting. Praise the Lord! *Psalm 117:2 (NASB 1995)*

Thursday: Forgiveness

Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness. *W.A. Ward, 1921-1994*

In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul and gladly feast on the blessings of God.

Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Luke 23:34

Loving Saviour, your words to me of total forgiveness stop my appetite for bitterness over others' hurtful words and deeds, and drive me to prayer.

The glory of your compassion overshadows my craving for justice and drives me to worship.

Loving Saviour forgive me when I deny others that which you freely bestow. How can I not forgive when I have received such mercy? Amen

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. *Ephesians 4:32*

Friday: Gratitude

Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude. *W.A. Ward, 1921-1994*

In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul and gladly feast on the blessings of God.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His love is everlasting and extends to all creation.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! Bringing wholeness, and peace beyond understanding.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His arms open wide welcoming home the prodigals.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His promises are sure. His kingdom shall last forever. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! ©John Birch

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. *Colossians 3:15*

Saturday: Promises

Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire. *W.A. Ward, 1921-1994*

In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul and gladly feast on the blessings of God.

Gracious God, we praise you for your promises: for your steadfast love which is ever new yet unchanging through the ages. When we founder in our weakness, your steadfast promises inspire us a rock upon which we depend. You keep your unfailing word to a thousand generations. Your mercies never cease.

How gracious is our God We feast on your promises with thankful hearts.

I know the plans I have for you, promises the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. *Jeremiah 29:11*

MIDDAY PRAYERS

WAVE OF PRAYER

WE PRAY FOR MOTHERS' UNION WORLDWIDE:

1 Mothers Union worldwide

2 – 4

Yei in South Sudan; Luweero in Uganda; On the Lake in Nigeria; Grafton in Australia; Armagh in All Ireland and South Kerala in India

5 – 7

Bujumbura in Burundi; Maseno South in Kenya; Ihiala in Nigeria; Cameroon; Calgary in Canada and Ysabel in Solomon Islands

8 Mothers' Union worldwide

9 – 11

Awerial in South Sudan; Mityana in Uganda; Uyo and Ajayi Crowther in Nigeria; Rupert's Land in Canada and Patna in India.

12 – 14

Port Elizabeth in South Africa; West Ankole in Uganda; Nomadic Mission and Ekiti-Kwara in Nigeria; Worcester in England and the Episcopal Church of the Philippines

15 Mothers' Union worldwide

16– 18

Kajo-Keji in South Sudan; Tarime in Tanzania; Dutse and Akoko-Edo in Nigeria and Canterbury in England

19– 21

Antisiranana in Madagascar; Buoga in Uganda; Yola & Oke-Ogun in Nigeria; Algoma in Canada and Jabalpur in India

22 Mothers' Union worldwide

23– 25

Rokon in South Sudan; Kampala in Uganda; Kaduna in Nigeria; Koforidua in Ghana; Brisbane in Australia and Peru

26-28

Central Zambia in Zambia; Southern Highlands in Tanzania; Obaru and Badagry in Nigeria; Bermuda and Chandigarh in India

29 Mothers' Union worldwide

30-31

Toamasina in Madagascar; Mukono in Uganda; Ikwerre & Ife East in Nigeria; Down and Dromore in All Ireland and Delhi in India

FINAL BLESSING

As we feast on the blessings of God may we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen



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A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

MARCH REFLECTION

JENNY BARTON - ZONAL TRUSTEE, WALES



My Dear Friends, Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Saviour. Here we are in March and Spring is just around the corner, even in the middle of Lent, there is hope in the air. A time to look forward as we follow our Lord walking with Him through the dark days, travelling towards the light of Easter. One of the things I really look forward to during Lent is walking the Stations of the Cross. Usually, I do this in my church, this year I have been following from home on YouTube as my Parish Priest leads us once again on that familiar journey. I do hope some of you will have the opportunity to take part in some Lenten activity which is uplifting and leads you into the marvellous light which will shine on Easter Day.

After such a wet and cold winter, I am looking forward to being able to spend time once again in my garden, I love the feel of the soil on my hands and the warmth of the sun on my back, as I plant seeds which will grow and become food which I can not only enjoy eating but sharing with family and friends. Family is the most precious thing we have in life, whether siblings, children, grandchildren or the family of the Church and Mothers' Union. During March, we celebrate Mothering Sunday and this year we are asked to give 'Gifts of Togetherness'. This is such a good way give thanks for our Mothers by enabling families from around the world to grow in confidence. If you are able please consider a gift from the Mothering Sunday booklet. Gifts start at just £7 and they will make a difference to peoples lives. We have spent so much time apart from our families but I pray that we will soon be able to once again share in that special kind of love that being with those we care about brings. So, I wish you all a blessed Lent, Holy Week and the joy of Easter Celebration.

Love & Prayers

Jenny

Father, we thank you that you have created us into families, so that we may live, play, work, rejoice and grieve together. Above all, we thank you that we are able to be members of your family and mothers in your church. We thank you for our Christian family throughout the world. We pray that our hearts may be united in prayer so that we are able to share one another's burdens, rejoice in one another's blessings and strengthen one another in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Doris Decker, Ghana (The Prayers we Breath)

MAKING THE MOST

JUDY THOMAS - GOWERTON BRANCH

Make the most of every day
For time was never meant to stay
We pass through life with chances few
What does it mean to me and you?

Do we see night instead of day
or darkest cloud in sunshine ray
Look for the joy in simplest things
Let heart be lifted when the blackbird sings

Countryside - where peace and calm
is given by God as healing balm
Gaze into heaven as you stand on a hill
And find the true meaning of "Peace be still"

For the moment of time is a precious gift
We can use it for malice or healing the rift
Make the most of the hours on this and each day
Before golden chances just fade away

Do not let anger or bitterness reign
As the dawn breaks over a new day again
It is not that easy - I hear you say
To see the blue sky when life is so grey

I know my dear friend for I have been there
But I looked through the darkness and found the sun there
We can then make the most of the day we survive
By thanking our Maker that we are alive.

(Taken from "All kinds of Everything"- a collection of poems by Judy)