

ELY DIOCESAN MOTHERS' UNION

Thursday Prayer September 16, 2021.

The Gift of Harvest led by Catherina Griffiths

To join the meeting, follow this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87298227811>

(Meeting ID: 872 9822 7811 - please note no password is needed.)

By Telephone ring: 0203 051 2874 - then follow the instructions given.

Zoom will be open from 10.45am to enable us to chat or sort out any tech issues. Please contact Hazel if you have any queries.

Good morning everyone and a warm welcome to our September Thursday prayer. Our theme is The Gift of Harvest.

We will start with **The Thursday Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Our reading is taken from **Genesis chapter 1 verses 24 to 27 and verses 29 to 31.**

God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their various kinds: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals, all according to their various kinds". So it was; God made wild animals, cattle, and every creeping thing, all according to their various kinds; and he saw that it was good. Then God said, "let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness, to have dominion over the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, all wild animals on land and everything that creeps on earth".

God also said, "Throughout the earth I give you all plants that bear seed, and every tree that bears fruit with seed; they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, every living creature" So it was: and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We will now join together to sing the hymn: **For the Fruits of His Creation.** In this hymn, we thank God for the material blessings He has given us, declare our intention to follow God's will in the generous use of those blessings, and then thank Him for the spiritual blessings He bestows upon us.

For the fruits of his creation,
thanks be to God.
gifts bestowed on every nation,
thanks be to God.
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safekeeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done.
In the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done.
In our worldwide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

Fred Pratt Green.

Tune: East Acklam. Dr Francis Jackson

Reflection on the Gift of Harvest

I have deliberately included this hymn here because it reflects a lot what we think about at harvest time (as well as being one of my favourite harvest hymns - not least because my husband's uncle wrote the tune). In the Genesis reading that we have just heard, God created the earth with every living thing and saw that it was good. After that he provided plants with seeds to grow, and trees with fruit. In fact, he provided every creature with food to eat. In this part of the world, we are fortunate in that although we are experiencing climate change, most of the time we can rely on our changing seasons and have the resources to grow food and sustain ourselves. However, as we have often seen in the media, this cannot be said for everywhere in the world. It must be devastating when farmers have spent a lot of time and energy in ploughing, sowing and tending their crops – often by hand without the benefit of large machinery, to find that it is lost due to extreme weather conditions – rain/ floods washing the crop and precious soil away, or the converse – lack of water drying up the earth and anything trying to grow in it; or even pests such as locusts eating the crop. Last year we heard about some countries, where people had resorted to eating the seed set aside to sow for the next crop because their harvest had been devastated. There was nothing left to plant the next year. There seems to be plenty of food in the world but for some reason it has become badly distributed.

In my experience it is those that have little who want to share what they do have. I have visited Kenya 4 times to stay with my Kenyan friends. Each time I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the people. There has never been enough time to take up all the invitations to homes for a meal, and even though I have taken small gifts of pens and paper for schools and other small gifts, I have been given gifts of food from their own larders. One man, who apologised that he couldn't cook a meal for us as his wife was ill, gave us a chicken to take back (it was live but once we got back to our billet it soon became our evening meal.) On my second visit, my husband had spent time tuning the village church piano and I had taken gifts into the schools. On our penultimate day my handbag was stolen at a funeral. There was very little money in it, but it did contain our passports. Suddenly we were on the receiving end of help and support. Local people went out into the fields until it got dark, looking for my bag in case it had been thrown away. Several people from the church came round to pray with us and give us comfort. Next morning at first light they were out looking again. Later in the day we were returning from a visit to a school, when a group of MU ladies stopped the car. They had heard of our plight and had made a collection for us. We were both so moved by this. Later that day when we were refused to board our flight home without passports, a relative of my friend, gave us food and accommodation in Nairobi and another relative drove us around the city the next day, to sort out a flight home with temporary passports issued by the High Commission. I will always be grateful for the kindness and generosity of these people.

Although that story hasn't got a lot to do with harvest, in a way it has. It shows us the importance of sharing what we have with those who haven't. This is what a lot of the work

MU is about. We may be knitting (sharing our talents) for some of our projects; we may be running a Family Tent (offering our time to help families at shows); we may be providing items needed at the local refuges or supporting the chaplaincy team at the prison. In all of this we are sharing something. As a global organisation we could be sharing this worldwide, with people we may never meet or have contact with.

Last year, when MSH put out an urgent appeal for funds, we as a diocese were able to share some of our resources to support them, as we realised that without our support from MSH, we would probably cease to be a global organisation.

As Finance and Administration Co-ordinator I am always grateful to those who contribute towards the cost of keeping our diocesan MU working. Without regular payments from subscriptions, we would not be able to function. We are also grateful to those who contribute financially to specific projects, and without a generous bequest a few years ago, we probably would not have been able to support the work of Sue Squires Dutton in Wisbech. We have much to be thankful for.

Our prayer for today: Lord of the harvest we celebrate your goodness. We bless your holy name Gracious God. The signs of your kingdom are growing but the workers to gather are few. Send us out to do your will in the harvest fields of life. May those who sow and those who reap rejoice in an abundant harvest of goodness and grace. Give us strength to carry on throughout the changing seasons, knowing that we will reap blessings both now and for eternity. Lord of the harvest, we celebrate your goodness. We bless your holy name. Amen.

Intercessions

Dear Lord we pray for your blessings upon the worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Chief Executive Bev Julien, the task group leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner House. For our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson our provincial president.

We pray for our own diocese of Ely and our Mothers' Union members. Guide Hazel Williams our diocesan president, the trustees, our archdeaconry vice presidents and officeholders as they plan and prepare for future events, initiatives and projects.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union throughout the world, and especially for our link dioceses - Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India; and our diocesan links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India

We pray especially this month for the Finance and Administration team, for Derek Tye our treasurer, and Kristy Leach our Safeguarding Officer. We give thanks for the work of Ros Wright, Secretary, keeping everyone informed.

We pray Lord that you will encourage all who work for and support the work of MU and all our members.

Dear God, we offer to you our families, friends and those we know who have particular needs at this time. We pray for members in hospital, and for those recently bereaved. We pray for all affected by Covid and especially those who are apprehensive about returning to normal life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord we pray for those around the world who have little harvest to reap because of the failure of their crops. We ask that what they lack will be supplied by others who have plenty. Help them to discern the best seeds to sow for a better harvest in future. We pray too for those affected by natural disasters recently, the earthquake in Haiti, the hurricane in USA, floods in several parts of Europe. We pray in particular for refugees especially those who have had to leave their homes in Afghanistan, and for their friends and families left behind. May You keep them safe Lord.

We will say the **Lord's Prayer** together.

A verse from a prayerbook I made as a child:

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do; any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again. Amen

Let us pray the **Mothers' Union prayer** together.

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your spirit may we be united in prayer and worship and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And we close with the Grace, which we will say together.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.