

**Thursday Prayer**

**19<sup>th</sup> January at 10.30am at Ely Cathedral and on Zoom  
Hazel Williams speaking on Transformation Now**

**Topic: Hazel Williams. Thursday Prayer Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaeGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

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## **TRANSFORMATION NOW**

As we begin this service let us start with a prayer for the New Year. Together we say:

**ALL Loving Lord please walk with us through this year.  
Direct our paths as we campaign for a better world.  
Help us to be dependent on you in all our plans  
that justice and peace may flourish.  
Amen**

This week is also the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated in many churches. The prayer they have for the first day, which was yesterday could have been written specially for the Mothers' Union.

*You made us, God, in your own image,  
and then became one of us, proud of those you have made.  
Make us proud of being part of that worldwide family,  
and eager to discover and celebrate your image  
in every person, every culture, every nation  
that we are privileged to encounter.*

Let us now say together our prayer for the theme for this month.

**Generous God, we affirm your power to bless all cultures and transform communities.**

**Abundant God, you have provided all the resources to transform communities and create a sustainable future.**

**Compassionate God, enable your people to see your provision that their sense of worth and quality of life may flourish.**

**Gracious God, transform the mindsets of the vulnerable from powerless dependency to the freedom of self-sufficiency.**

**Generous God, we are blessed by your constant provision. Help us to use your resources well and enable others to do the same.**

**Amen**

Our short bible reading is from Romans 12:2

<sup>2</sup> Don't change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but let God change you inside with a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to understand and accept what God wants for you. You will be able to know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.

Amen

## **REFLECTION**

If you can remember back to January 2022, you may have realised that the theme then was Transformation and in 2023 the theme is Transformation Now. It is so important to the Mothers' Union that they decided it should continue over two years. When I did the January service last year, I concentrated on what was happening in this country but this time I am going to think more about Worldwide Mothers' Union.

There are many more members across the world than there are in Britain and Ireland, and membership is growing much faster than in this country, where sadly it is declining. In fact the new branches that *have* been formed in Britain and Ireland have predominately been started by women who have moved here from Africa. Across the world there is a great need for many of the things we take for granted. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are needed just as much now, for women in most of Africa and the Pacific islands, as they have ever been. This gives women the tools to gain information including how to protect the environment or give them knowledge of new varieties of crops more suited to the climate as it is now, leading to better nutrition for their families and in some cases the formation of new businesses. Mothers' Union, because it trains local people, is able to help communities help themselves. This is a very different angle to that of the past when we (in Britain and Ireland) decided what was best for those being trained. It is much more of an inclusive process than it ever was before.

During Covid we in Britain were not the only ones to learn to use Zoom. It enabled Dorothy in Papua New Guinea to be part of the MU Capacity Building training and win a gold award for the project on parenting for child development awareness. I certainly remember a time, a number of years ago, when I took part in Parenting training in Ely Diocese and learned so much. If Dorothy's story sounds familiar it probably means you have read the centre pages of the Autumn Connected magazine and know of all the other initiatives and needs in Papua New Guinea. Only a few of dozens of projects, across the world, initiated by local people.

In many parts of the world, often because of war, women are the sole providers for themselves and their families. Setting up of training circles for local women and being part of financial savings groups that identify business opportunities and grow existing ventures gives the opportunity for them to support their families, often giving access to education.

The common denominator of all of the projects happening both here and worldwide is the opportunity to meet together to learn and discuss. I attended the Re-imagining Conference in Liverpool last year and there was so much enthusiasm to revitalise the MU. Our concentration was not just on the many projects happening across our communities but also on how we move forward into the future and survive as a vibrant organisation. Good links with the Diocese, clergy and like-minded partners, to deliver support to those in need are essential.

It will only happen if members feel it is important enough to put effort in to it too. In 2026 we should be celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our unique organisation. Let us hope we are still able to support local communities both here and worldwide and as Paul says in the verse from Romans '*to know what is good and pleasing to Him and what is perfect*'.

Our hymn for today's service will be well known to you all and Mike Banyard will be leading us. Do join in at home if you are on Zoom, even though we cannot hear you, which may be good or bad news depending on your singing.

### **All my hope on God is founded**

All my hope on God is founded;  
he doth still my trust renew,  
me through change and chance he guideth  
only good and only true.  
God unknown,  
he alone  
calls my heart to be his own.

God's great goodness aye endureth,  
deep his wisdom, passing thought:  
splendour, light and life attend him,  
beauty springeth out of naught.  
Evermore  
from his store  
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver  
bounteous gifts on us bestow;  
his desire our soul delighteth,  
pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand  
at his hand;  
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal  
sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising  
for the gift of Christ, his Son.  
Christ doth call  
one and all;  
ye who follow shall not fall.

Let us all pray together for our worldwide organisation using the Thursday Prayer:

**ALL: 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.**

In our intercessions. We pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; and all who work in Mary Sumner House;
- The President and Trustees in the Diocese of Ely and the Task Group Leaders in: Faith in Action, Praying our Faith, Finance & Administration, and Communications;
- Our Province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President, and Julia Jamieson our Zonal Trustee.
- Our Worldwide Links:  
Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnager in India;  
Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore

In our wave of prayer for today we pray especially for

- St Mark the Evangelist in South Africa;
- Butare in Rwanda;
- Okigwe-South in Nigeria;
- Gambia;
- British Columbia in Canada and
- Rajasthan in India

We also pray for:

- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.
- Our local parishes, our families, and our friends, and give thanks for our many blessings.
- Anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.

Short Silence.

Let us join together in the Mothers' Union prayer we know so well.

All **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**

**The Grace**

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

*Everyone is welcome to come to the Almonry afterwards for refreshments if they wish.*