

MOTHERS' UNION THURSDAY PRAYER: 23 NOVEMBER 2023 – “BEING PREPARED”.

ZOOM INFO

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>
(NEW MEETING ID: 838 4780 9128 & NEW PASSCODE: 338053)

Good Morning everyone. And welcome to the November Thursday Prayer which is on the theme of “Being Prepared”.

We begin with a few **prayers** and then we will **sing “Awake, awake, fling off the night”.**

NOVEMBER THURSDAY PRAYER.

WE SAY TOGETHER:

ALL: Loving Lord, we look back with gratitude on all that has been achieved thus far in the name of Mothers’ Union Worldwide. We give thanks for our development and project work. We pray for all initiatives, large and small, to transform families and communities.

We give thanks for our influence with governments. We pray that our campaigns for social justice will bring lasting change throughout the world.

We give thanks for our members across the globe. We pray that our membership will flourish and grow as stories of our work and achievements are heard.

As we step into the future, we pray that we may always act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Amen.

From the MU Annual Prayer Diary for November: Gender Justice.

As a worldwide movement, we embrace our mission to champion the cause of gender justice.

May the God of righteousness equip us with all we need to play our part in creating a just and equal society. **Amen.**

This week’s theme: “Positive gender roles”

Prayer for today:

Heavenly Father, we ask that young girls growing up will have positive gender role models, who will inspire them to pursue careers and other openings in life. May they experience encouragement and help to achieve their goals for the future. **Amen.**

As we think of all the work Mothers’ Union does – bringing hope and light into communities where there are difficulties and darkness – we think ahead to the coming Advent Season, when Jesus came as the light of the world, shining in the darkness and transforming lives.

We respond to this in song with the hymn: **Awake, awake, fling off the night.**

HYMN:

1. Awake, awake: fling off the night!

For God has sent a glorious light;
and we who live in Christ's new day
must works of darkness put away.

2. Awake and rise, with love renewed,

and with the Spirit's power endued.
The light of life in us must glow,
and fruits of truth and goodness show.

3. Let in the light; all sin expose

to Christ, whose life no darkness knows.
Before his cross for guidance kneel;
his light will judge and, judging, heal.

4. Awake, and rise up from the dead,

and Christ his light on you will shed.
Its power will wrong desires destroy,
and your whole nature fill with joy.

5. Then sing for joy, and use each day;

give thanks for everything away.
Lift up your hearts; with one accord
praise God through Jesus Christ our Lord.



After Song:

Reading: Romans 13: 11-14

11 And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

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**“BEING PREPARED” TALK**

As I was thinking about the title for this talk, and how near the date was to the end of November, I realised that we would almost be in the Advent Season. We will be thinking about the coming of Jesus at Christmas and looking ahead to his return. We want to be ready or Be Prepared for when this happens. Either for Christmas or the second coming.

Being Prepared also reminds me of the Guide and Scout Motto: Be Prepared. I looked on their websites where there was a lot of good advice and resources.

Keep calm and be prepared. “Be Prepared” means Guides are ready to deal with anything that might come their way.

In *Scouting for Boys*, Robert Baden-Powell wrote that to Be Prepared means “you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty.”

Upon hearing the Scout motto, someone asked Scouting founder Baden-Powell the inevitable follow-up question. “Prepared for what?” “Why, for any old thing,” he replied.

Perhaps we should also be just as prepared in our Christian Journey. There’s a verse in 1Peter3: “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

Being Prepared for Christmas in our house usually doesn’t start much before the first of December. Every year I think I will write our cards earlier – but every year it’s about 2 days before the last posting date for 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamps. We’re trying to decide when we will see our family over Christmas this year, and organise meals accordingly. Thanks to the provision of nearby supermarkets, I don’t have to prepare so much food, and as we don’t all gather together at the same time round our house, I don’t need so much of it either.

Being Prepared spiritually amidst all the commercialisation of Christmas can often be challenging, when our lives become bombarded with adverts trying to persuade us to buy the latest must-have gadget or enough food to last us into the New Year and beyond.

As Christians and Mothers’ Union Members, our thoughts always turn to others in need. And every year we have a “Wish List” of products or vouchers to shop for, to support the Refuges and Hostels in our Diocese – which we respond to generously. And we might donate to other charities that we personally support, especially at this time of year, when the concept of abundance and need seems to register with us more readily.

The Romans passage encourages us to live upright lives. I don’t think it means going without doing fun and enjoyable things but acknowledging the place of Jesus in our lives. Living in his light and resisting the darkness. Easier said than done maybe with the pressures of modern-day life. We are meant to “put on the armour of light” and “clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ”.

This idea is so well expressed in the passage from Ephesians 6 verses 14 to 17:

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

When we get up in the morning we think about what the weather is like so we know what to wear: Is it hot or cold, dry or wet? – and we dress appropriately for our physical needs.

Our spiritual needs are just as important: they will be what helps us through the day. Most days I try and start by reading the Ely Diocesan prayer for the day, and other “Thought for the Day” emails that I receive in my email inbox. Depending on the schedule for my day, sometimes it’s only a few minutes, other times it’s longer, and during Advent I like to be a little more focussed on the seasonal theme and read what the Church of England produces for its daily reflections. We all have our own ways of connecting with God’s word each day.

I was looking at some of the worship resources on-line and came across several encouraging texts:

Lord Jesus, light of the world, born in David’s city of Bethlehem, born like him to be a king:  
be born in our hearts at Christmas, be King of our lives today.

People of God: awake! The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face.  
Remember the ways and the works of God. God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. You are God’s children.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people in trouble.  
Give peace in our hearts at Christmas and show all the world God’s love.

People of God: be glad! Your God delights in you, giving you joy for sadness and turning the dark to light. Be strong in hope therefore; for your God comes to save.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for you were very near.  
As Christmas grows closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome you now.

People of God: return! You are called to be God’s own.  
From the mountains announce the good news.  
God comes in justice and peace, to all who follow his ways.  
You are God’s children.  
Lord, make us one in the peace of Christ today and for ever.

I hope and pray that everyone enjoys the coming Advent Season and has a Blessed Christmas.

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The Theme of the MU NOVEMBER MIDDAY PRAYERS is “Transformation of the Mind”.
The Focus for Thursdays is “Transformation of the Heart”.

Please join in the words in **BOLD**.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2.

ALL: Jesus, bearer of reconciliation, we confess that all too often we harbour thoughts which estrange and make us hostile towards one another.

Transform our hearts so that we are filled with the desire to forgive one another and make peace.

**ALL: Jesus, Saviour and Lord, may the posture of our lives be shaped by listening to you;
the goodness of our lives be shaped by love for you;
and the service of our lives be shaped by a humility like yours.
This we pray in your name. Amen.**

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WE PRAY TOGETHER: 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.

Our intercessions. We pray for:

- The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;
- Sheran Harper our Worldwide President;
- Our Chief Executive, Bev Jullien; All who work in Mary Sumner House;
- Our Diocesan President Hazel Williams and Trustees;
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.
- Our Worldwide Links:
Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnagar in India;
Plus Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore.

WAVE OF PRAYER: 23 - 25 November

- Southern Malawi in Malawi; Northern Uganda in Uganda;
Lafia & Ilaje in Nigeria and Thoothukudi-Nazareth in India.

And in the **Anglican Communion Cycle of Prayer** we remember:
The Diocese of Awgu / Aninri - The Church of Nigeria.

We also pray for:

- 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.
- The many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering.

~~~ *PAUSE FOR REFLECTION* ~~~

**WE SAY TOGETHER: THE MOTHERS' UNION PRAYER.**

**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 LORD'S PRAYER.**

**ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;**

**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

We conclude with this prayer of commitment as we go forward on our Christian journey:

**ALL: As Jesus taught us, we commit ourselves to welcome strangers into our midst, to care for the poor, to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to support justice in our community.**

**In the name of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit**

**we pledge ourselves to work and pray for peace:**

**Peace in our homes, Peace in our communities, Peace in our world. Amen.**

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We say THE GRACE ALL 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.