

Mothers' Union Newsletter ... January 2020



Dear MU members and friends,

Welcome to the new decade! Although the beginning of 2020, as has the ending of 2019, has been marked by horrendous bushfires. Let us hope that that this does not indicate a terrible future for our country, its people and its wildlife. Like many people I have been mesmerised by the images on the television ... forests burnt black and houses burnt to rubble, people refugees in their own country, animals burnt from their natural habitat... and find myself crying from the sheer horror of it all. Just recently, Zoos Victoria sent a link to a heartening rescue story of koalas and I cried again. If you would like to watch this video of koala rescue click [here](#)

But then there are the images of brave firefighters and ordinary people reaching out to those in need, mountains of donated food, trucks delivering fodder for cattle and stories of courage and generosity from so many in the wider community. These are the stories which give us hope as we watch from our suburban lounge chairs as Australia burns. You will remember that last year we supported a Mothers' Union project in Gippsland to provide respite for families suffering from drought, by donating money towards family camps. So, on behalf of our MU group, I emailed Jenny MacRobb, then MU Diocesan president of Gippsland, asking how we might help and assuring her of our prayers. Her reply indicates that so far members are surviving but we will hear more from her and the new MU Gippsland president, at our March meeting. There will be things we can do, but not yet. Meanwhile please consider supporting Anglicare which already has a network of support working in Gippsland.

The international Mothers' Union theme for 2020... building hope and confidence... is highly appropriate for us at this time. During our meetings this year, we will explore this theme through our speakers, prayers and projects. Please think of ideas or actions which might help us develop our understanding of this theme. Two biblical quotes to get you thinking...

"I will never leave you; I will never abandon you." Hebrews 13:5

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

Attached is our program for the first half of 2020. Please note the dates in your diary or on your fridge or wherever you keep your memory. There are a few dates where we will need volunteers too.

love and peace, Irene

Dates for your diary

Tuesdays in Lent ...

Our first meeting for 2020 is on Shrove Tuesday February 25th beginning with Eucharist in the Chapel @ 1-30 pm, followed by meeting and then **Pancakes** for afternoon tea. Norma and Nora have offered to make these.

On the following four Tuesdays the parish is offering a Lenten program on different ways of praying from 6pm-8-30pm. Please consider putting your name down to attend some or all of these sessions. Check the brochure with the Pew sheet. As prayer is one of the main focuses of Mothers' Union life, this will be refresh or inspire you. Dinner included \$10 per night.

Reserve Saturday August 29th for our next Martha & Mary Conference. All women in the parish will be invited and each one can bring a friend. More details to follow.

If women wrote the Christmas story... an article by journalist Julia Baird appeared in The Age newspaper on Christmas Eve so you may have missed it. In this article, she questions the absence of women in the Nativity story, apart from Mary. She has done her research and I spent an interesting time following up her references. Imagine if the three Magi, were in fact three wise women? "Three Wise Women would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, swept the stable, made a casserole and brought practical gifts." Less myrrh, perhaps, than lanolin, cabbage leaves, cotton wraps for the baby and myriad snacks! Interesting? Even in Biblical times there would have been a traditional midwife or helper to be at the birth. Who was this unnamed woman? A copy of this alternative narrative of the Nativity is attached. Sometimes it is useful to look at scripture to see who is missing or who is specifically mentioned, since we are not there to see with our own eyes.

Australia Day January 26th This is the time of year we need to think carefully about what it means to be "Australian". For the indigenous people and their descendants, celebrating this date which recognises the arrival of the first British Fleet, is sometimes very painful. It marks a time when their dispossession of the land began. I think this point was well made by Rev Glen Loughrey when MU visited the Wominjeka Garden last year. For other people it is a celebration of the beginning of a new colony in Sydney, now a nation. More recent migrants and refugees may feel excluded from some of this history or embrace the land but not its history. Please consider this prayer

A Thanksgiving for Australia (APBA p 218-9)

God of holy dreaming, Great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth. You spoke and the gumtree grew. In the vast desert and dense forest, and cities at the water's edge, creation sings your praise. Your presence endures as the rock at the heart of our Land.

When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones: the convicts, the hunted, and the dispossessed. The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew and bathed it in glorious hope. In Jesus we have been reconciled to you, to each other and to your whole creation.

Lead us on Great Spirit, as we gather from the four corners of the earth; enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and shame of the past into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ. AMEN