

A tale of two Marys ...

The Anglican Liturgical Calendar remembers and celebrates the lives of many individuals, but a careful checking of names reveals that only 23 of these are women. Most of them are saints who died hundreds of years ago such as Mary Magdalene, who together with the Blessed Virgin Mary, has a feast day named in her honour. Among the ten unofficial saints are women who founded religious orders, social reformers, those who worked in prison reform, a spiritual writer, a martyr (Elizabeth Skobtsova d. 1945) and Mary Sumner who founded the Mothers' Union in 1876. If the Covid 19 virus had not disrupted all aspects of our society, Mothers' Union would have been hosting a Women's Ministry Conference in our parish at the end of this month. As we were not able to celebrate Mary Sumner Day on August 9th, I thought I might write about two of the Marys in the liturgical calendar and what we can learn from them about ministry.

Mary of Magdala has frequently been portrayed as repentant sinner, often dressed seductively in works of art. Modern theological scholarship has proved that this view of her...promoted by Pope Gregory 1st in 591 CE.



He clearly was no scholar as he combined all the Marys of the Gospels into one, thus creating a negative image of the Magdalene! *Jesus Christ Superstar* is also wrong! Mary was independently wealthy and a faithful

follower, who supported Jesus during the three years of his ministry. We know that faithful Mary Magdalene was a witness to the Crucifixion of Jesus, was present at the empty tomb and out of all the apostles, was the first person to see the resurrected Jesus (John 20:14-18). Her witness to these events is

reported in all of the four gospels. Today she is honoured as the apostle to the apostles because she was sent by Jesus to tell them of his resurrection. Despite many women being active in the Early Church, cultural, attitudes to women's ministry over the centuries have limited their ministry. So too have misreading of the scriptures! Mary Magdalene's devotion and service, and her witness to the resurrected Jesus make her a worthy role model.



On August 9th we celebrate **Mary Sumner**, as the founder of the Mothers' Union in 1876, now the largest Christian women's organisation in the world with 4 million members in

84 countries. Mary Sumner's challenge was to bring together women of different classes, income and education to work together to support marriage and family life. England, of her time, was a nation deeply divided by its class structure, with high levels of poverty, bad health and poor education. In her work as a vicar's wife, she must have recognised the struggles of women to raise their children in difficult times. She invited the women of the parish to meet in her home to discuss raising their children, teaching them the scriptures and improving family life. For its time it was a radical idea because people of different classes did not socialise. But her mothers' meetings evolved into the organisation we now know as Mothers' Union. Times have also changed and women are no longer limited to a ministry of tea and scones. As you know, we support women and families throughout the world via our fundraising. In our parish women hold many leadership roles, not possible in Mary Sumners' time. Read more about these women and their ministry in the following pages.

Love and peace, Irene

Mothers' Union Branch information

From our treasurer Marg Tingate...

Thank you to all those members who have paid their annual membership fee. Only a couple of members have not yet paid. This money does not go to our branch but is paid into the MU office to support the work of MU in Australia including paying salaries for office support, rent etc. In these tight times this money is welcome.

Re Mothers' Union badges...

Does anyone have spare MU badges? We are looking for older type non-map of Australia badges, to go to a new Mothers' Union branch in Papua New Guinea being opened by a priest in the highlands area. This is a very poor place where families live on what they can grow in their gardens and if they have any cash it goes to buy other essentials from the trade store. Maree from the Ormond MU branch is co-ordinating this collection. Please let me know if you have one to spare and we can discuss ways to collect these.

Op Shop in October (5th-9th)....

At this time, it isn't really possible to know whether the Lions Op Shop will be open in October or anything else for that matter! Many of you have been using this enforced hibernation/ stay at home to clear out or tidy or simplify your home. If you have items suitable for donating to the Op Shop, please wrap them and place in a box until we know for sure. Please pack books separately.