

Dear Mothers' Union members and friends,

This year, which we all want to forget, has almost ended but we still have the great joy to come of celebrating Christmas. Hopefully, you will have had the opportunity to decorate your front door or house or see houses in your neighbourhood decorated with flashing lights. You no doubt have noticed that commercial Christmas arrived in shopping centres at the beginning of Advent! In my neighbourhood is this lovely door, the home of a Mother's Union member. Whose door do you think it is? (my apologies to the owner for my secret camera visit).



Did you know that the celebration of Christmas was once forbidden in England? No services of worship, no decorations or feasting, no carols ...no celebration of the birth of Jesus. Even, the word *Christmass* was banned because it included the Popish word *mass*! Between 1644 & 1659, under the influence of the Puritans, most celebrations of feast days and festivals were purged from the Church calendar, on the grounds that they were not mentioned in scripture or were of heathen origin. By 1647, it was illegal to observe Christmas as either as a religious or secular holiday. So churches were closed but pub doors were open! As you can imagine this was not a popular decision. Riots and civil disobedience followed, soldiers patrolled the streets and there are records which indicate that people secretly celebrated in their homes. However Christmas did not become a legal celebration, until the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 when Charles 2nd. was welcomed back to the throne of his martyred father.

So decorating our doors is a sign to the community that we are celebrating Christmas as a Christian festival... with worship, gatherings of family and friends, carols and good food... thankfully and legally!
Blessing to you all this Christmas of 2020, irene

Dates for your 2021 Diary

Mothers' Union will gather for its first meeting on **TUESDAY February 23rd**. for our commencement Eucharist in the Church at 1-30pm (face-to-face and not by ZOOM). Ven Dianne will be the celebrant. We will gather afterwards in the Parish Centre to discuss our program for the year. Celia Gant will introduce our Prayer partners for the year. Please bring a very small plate to share for afternoon tea.

Friday March 5th. (TBA) World Day of Prayer at St. Stephen's & St. Mary's Parish.

Meeting dates for the year will be the fourth Monday of each month at 1-30pm-3-30pm in the Parish Centre.

Music to enrich your day

Each of these computer links leads to a YouTube website. Click on the underlined text to hear the music. This is a live link. Sometimes adverts appear before the show. You can get rid of these by clicking on "SKIP ADS" in the lower right-hand side of your screen.

1 Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Virtual Choir singing "Handel's Messiah" orchestra recorded at St. Paul's Cathedral. <https://youtu.be/TGeKWWoL9Xg>

2 Virtual Choir From 50 countries affected by Corona Virus sing one song ...Amazing Grace
<https://youtu.be/TGeKWWoL9Xg>

3 Community Choirs from Mersey-side UK singing "You raise me up" <https://youtu.be/d48vRYXe-DA>

Remember to keep Christmas Green this Year

Experts report up to 50% increase in household waste at Christmas during the Festive Season

Food: create a food plan to reduce waste, be imaginative with your leftovers and compost them if you can't face any more ham or turkey.

Gifts: recycle wrapping paper (most can be ironed to look better) and gift bags (an old Christmas card or ribbon can cover the brand name if necessary) Oddments of ribbon, paper tape or string is better than sticky tape.

Recycle: unwanted gifts via a charity shop. Buy good second-hand books and other items at charity shops and antique markets. **Your efforts are a gift to our planet!**
Thanks to Marg Taylor for these ideas.



A meditation for day 28 of Advent (Christmas Eve)

By Michael McGirr.

God who holds the ladder for us,
help us rise above ourselves.
We are told that Santa lands on the roof and
comes down the chimney.
But this is not your style.
We wait for you to come to us from a high place
When all the time you are by our sides,
asking why we are looking up there.
On Christmas Eve we hear the long genealogy from
Matthew's Gospel.
Generations of names, many of them not much more
than that.
The list includes four extra ordinary women who broke
from convention.
The whole collection is a kind of ladder-
A reminder that you work within our story, little by little,
rung by rung,
to create something new and surprising,
Which we are more likely to discover at our feet
than through a hole above our heads.
The angel told the shepherds to head down the hill.
May we do the same and encounter your earthly
love this Christmas. AMEN



CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Attached is a Christmas Quiz, prepared by the Anglican Youth Organisation (NZ).

Page one has two quizzes, a trivia quiz related to secular Christmas. The second quiz is a Christmas Gospel Quiz (multiple choice). Be careful it is not as easy as it seems!

Page two provides the answers ... try not to cheat! Having a Bible close at hand should end the disagreements. GOOD LUCK!

Page three is the sheet you could give to your family and friends to write their answers on.

Thank you for 2020

Despite all the restriction due to the Covid 19, we have much to be thankful for...

Not least of which is our engagement with new technologies such as ZOOM, You Tube, Facetime and for some of us, email and the internet. What a generation of learning we have covered. You have almost caught up to your grandchildren.

We have learned to care and watch over our family friends in a more deliberate manner. Thank you to Ven Dianne and Rev Greg for their phone calls and emails. and to all MU members who rang their prayer partners or sent cards. This is how we nurture our community.

We have also all benefitted from the care of medical staff who in their care of the sick, have saved many lives. Thankfully our community has been spared most of the pain and fear connected with this virus.

Walking the neighbourhood and working in our gardens has made us healthier. But of course some of us have added to our weight due to baking experiments and comfort eating. Well lockdown did have few pleasures.

Staying at home has allowed some of us to save money, due to less use of petrol, train fares, impulse shopping and dining out. People have also shown great generosity in giving to charitable causes such as our Parish Christmas appeal and our MU New Guinea project.

A special thank you to Marg Taylor and Elizabeth Woods who have helped with the distribution of the 27 MU *Mia Mia* we received and our monthly Newsletter. Thank you for the feedback from Mothers' Union members on our Newsletters and email updates.

Thank God for the gift of Christmas ... the birth of Jesus who changed the world much more than any Corona Virus could ever do! Christmas Blessing to you all.

