

## Mothers' Union Newsletter

### Dear Mothers' Union members and friends,

Like many of you, I am becoming very tired of the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of the Corona Virus, although as we see daily, it doesn't take much... an accident, bad luck just a careless act, a disregard of other people or an assertion of someone's "rights" ... to spread this infection. Even though I respect the boundaries imposed still I feel quite powerless. This is probably something you also experience. But in truth, I am also becoming bored with the lack of variety in my day and the great empty spaces which were once filled with people. I even miss the traffic! So, recently I have been searching for the meaning of it all.

I have re-read *Year of Wonders* by Geraldine Brooks, a novel about the Plague which in 1666 swept across England. The villagers of Eyam undertook severe voluntary quarantine and witnessed great acts of love and service for those affected, saving several lives and strengthening their community. This story is based upon true events. Reading about the Irish Potato Famine of 1845-49, exposed the unbelievable suffering of ordinary and powerless people, of families driven from their homes to die slowly in fields and lanes, painfully and without hope. We hope there will never be a repeat of the failings of the authorities to support their people.

Media images of the empty streets of Melbourne, reminded me of the opening words of the book of Lamentations... *How lonely sits the city that once was full of people...* (Lam 1:1). The writer is reflecting on the emptiness of Jerusalem after most of its residents were driven into exile in Babylon in 586 BCE. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple had been predicted by many prophets, because the people had turned away from God... from justice, compassion and moral behaviour. This book is an expression of grief which helped the survivors come to terms with the calamity they had suffered. During the 50-60 years of exile, there was a great re-examining of their faith and a rethinking of how their lives should be lived. The people in exile grew closer to God, reviving their faith. One thing they came to understand was that God's mercy and compassion are without limit.

Modern societies such as ours, have moved beyond blaming God for plagues, pandemics, drought and famines, for there is now a greater understanding of the science of such events. But we still recognise in these stories, something of our own situation. We understand that human beings have responsibilities and roles to play in such events. Even if in our case it means staying at home! But we are not powerless because as people of faith we have much to share.... Meanwhile we wait patiently for things to improve both for those ill with this terrible disease, those who care for them and their families and we pray that this too will end. idc.

### MU News ...

At the MU annual General Meeting on September 29<sup>th</sup>, the following people were confirmed as Office Bearers & Committee Members for 2020-2021:

President Irene Donohoue Clyne  
Secretary Joan West  
Treasurer Marg Tingate  
Hospitality Phoebe Wilkinson-North  
Social Justice Marg Taylor  
committee members:  
Corry Leaver & Ros Sahar

Thank you to all those who attended via Zoom and were able to contribute to our discussion on our future plans for Mothers' Union. Some really imaginative and interesting suggestions were made. More news to follow.

Celia Gant, who has chosen not to be on the committee, will take over the Prayer Partners Program.

We will need a need to volunteers to draw up the afternoon tea roster for next year.

Thank you also to Norma Schultz and Elizabeth Woods who are stepping down from their leadership roles after many years of service.

### Our next meeting will be on:

**Monday October 26<sup>th</sup> @ 2pm via Zoom.**

We will have a guest speaker: Celia Gant, Artist.

For those of you who do not know Celia, please read the information she has prepared below.

To add a FUN element to our next Zoom meeting please bring along or describe a **Useless Gadget** you have in your kitchen, or indeed anywhere. You may prefer to bring a Useful Gadget complete with a demonstration. We can all learn a new trick or two, or a way to save time or money.

**About Celia Gant, Artist...** My training was traditional oil painting. During the 1990's my work developed into an impressionist style (influenced by Monet and Van Gogh) and I won many prizes and awards. From 2006 I explored contemporary abstract painting using acrylics. I am a founding member of DARE-diversity an off-shoot of the Waverley Arts Society. At the October meeting of MU I will be showing paintings and sketches completed this year whilst in lockdown.

**Why are we collecting old Mothers' Union Badges?**

Firstly, thank you to Shirley Betts and Jenny Bowers who have kindly donated badges to this informal appeal. All badges carry memories of the women who wore them, but we do not forget that special MU member, if we pass her badge onto a new member of Mothers' Union. In fact, over time the badge acquires new experiences with its new owner!

Maree N'Diaye of the Christ Church Ormond Branch has maintained an informal relationship over many years with Fr. Nicholas Kann and his wife Naomi. Their parish of St Albans, Kwina, together with 23 outstation churches, is located in the Jimi Valley of the New Guinea Highlands. The nearest town is Mt. Hagen, (see map below) many days walk from their parish. Fr. Nicholas does not have a car. Parish priests are not paid by their Diocese, because this is a very poor country. To live they need to work as the local people do, growing their own food and raising pigs. The Church offertory is very low and little cash is collected to support the Church.



Mothers' Union is growing in this area and its members are involved in outreach to the community, take responsibility for ensuring the church building is cleaned and share in the ministry to young people. New members would be delighted to have a badge to wear. **If you have one, put it in an envelope and save it until we meet face to face.**



**Mothers Union is very important to improving the lives of women in Papua New Guinea**, because it brings women together to learn from each other about health, parenting and improving their community. Very few women have attended school to learn to read in their own language. Most would

speak and understand Pidgin, one of the common shared languages in a nation with some 832 spoken languages! Mt. Hagen is in the central highlands of New Guinea. In the 1960s I used to work in New Britain, near the **N** in New Britain on the map.

**2020 MU project**

In this year of the Covid19 pandemic, we have chosen to support **the Mothers' Union Parenting program in PNG**. But as we have been unable to have any fund raisers, our MU committee is suggesting that members may like to make a donation to "kick start" our fund raising. According to Marg. Tingate our treasurer, now that our annual membership subs. have been paid, we have about \$380 in the bank. If you would like to make a donation towards this important project, please send your donation to Marg by one of the following means...

- Send a cheque made out to "St. Stephen's & St. Mary's Mothers Union" to Marg Tingate (her address is on the MU Contacts list)
- Pay the money into the MU bank account at the Westpac Branch at Mt. Waverley. If you do this online, by internet banking, use these details BSB 033-112, Account number 276 504. Please include your Surname and the word DONATION so Marg knows who sent the money.



The needs for education and especially for parenting skills will significantly improve the lives of women in PNG. Please consider helping them.



**A Prayer about you...**

*Christ has no body now but yours.  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world.  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.  
Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes,  
you are his body.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

*St. Theresa of Avila*