**General Meeting 2018**

**Lynne Tembey Address (Morning)**

I have for a long time appreciated these wonderful, encouraging, inspirational words from the letter to the Ephesians Chapter 6, verses 10&18 verses but more especially during these past six years…..

*“Be strong, in the Lord, and in his mighty power. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people”.*

Six amazing years! And on every step of my journey, at every stage, I have had the strong and firm belief that God has been with me, planting seeds, encouraging and guiding, placing the need for change on my heart, giving me strength for each new challenge.

Importantly to offering everything to God in prayer for his guidance and his blessing for the people I serve and the office I hold.

I have not fulfilled this role on my own, loving family, fellow members of the Worldwide Board have walked the journey with me. Initially Reg and for the past three years, Bev and the staff at Mary Sumner House have willingly offered the professional support required on this wonderful journey so that our organisation might flourish and grow.

Three years ago the Worldwide Board and I began updating our Constitution, a journey that the Worldwide Mothers’ Union leadership also embarked on, and once again we were ably supported by staff at Mary Sumner House.

And in April this year, it was a relief and a great joy when Her Majesty’s Privy Council agreed our Constitution. I thank God and each of you, Mothers’ Union leaders Worldwide and staff for the energy, support, diligence and sheer hard work. I especially thank God for his guidance and his direction for our organisation, enabling us to have a Constitution fit for purpose for the future.

And within our new Constitution, as you are aware, different areas of work were also looked at. For the past twenty two years Unit Committees have been an integral part of our organisation. I pay tribute, thank God and each and every member who has been part of these Unit Committees over the years. Mothers’ Union owes a great deal of gratitude to the phenomenal amount of work which has been achieved through these different Units over the years.

There have been so many resources produced over the years by these different Units. Fundraising & Communication spearheaded our latest...

Dear Lord…is beautifully and sensitively compiled from members around the world. A must and a fantastic resource for every member…and every bookshelf! Copies are on sale during lunchtime in the marketplace.

In May this year, we held the final Committees Conference. The time spent together was an uplifting time as well as energy packed. Each Unit worked really hard to provide material for future development and growth of Mothers’ Union so helping us move our work forward. The work of Units of course will continue until the end of 2018. I believe that these Units have left a wonderful legacy for the future of our organisation so that it will continue to develop, strengthen and grow.

So how will talent be developed in the future? How will specific areas, relevant to the work and witness of Mothers’ Union be addressed?

Members will be encouraged to engage in “Communities of Interest”, engaging with specific interests, sharing their skills and expertise with others across Britain & Ireland. This will also enable future talent to be identified. By exchanging ideas, dioceses and Mary Sumner House will have a greater opportunity to engage with a greater number of members than is currently possible.

I hope that many – if not all of you – have heard about MULOA…Mothers’ Union Listening, Observing, Acting. This is an initiative which encourages me greatly. Conversations taking place in every part of the Mothers’ Union world. What it means to be a member of this vibrant, life changing organisation…what is important…what makes us different…how can we make a difference…and where is God in all of this…

Some Provinces, like the West Indies are a little further on the journey than others. Valerie West, President from Trinidad & Tobago is with us today. I am certain that she would be willing to share some of their experiences with you….and Bev I know is going to expand on MULOA in her presentation too.

I believe passionately in the saying “From little acorns, big trees grow”…how I look forward to seeing the outcomes of MULOA in the years ahead.

I have been privileged and greatly humbled to enjoy so many firsts. In 2017 Mothers’ Union’s Thy kingdom Come Global Moment in Hull was one such first. The service, streamed live, enabled members as far as Australia, New Zealand, many parts of Africa, the Caribbean, Asia as well as England, Ireland Scotland and Wales to join in fellowship.

A prayer initiative of Archbishops Welby and Sentamu, encouraging individuals and church communities to especially pray between Ascension and Pentecost for friends and family to come to faith…as Archbishop Justin says…”there’s no limit to the Kingdom of God, so let’s pray – Thy Kingdom Come”.

Following on from the 2017 General Meeting in Edinburgh and the positive support from those present…”that Mothers’ Union should focus on the ministry of Reconciliation”.

At our November meeting the Worldwide Board discussed and agreed that Mothers’ Union should apply to become a member of the ministry of Reconciliation through the Community of the Cross of Nails.

It was a great joy in May this year to attend the second Thy Kingdom Come Service in Coventry Cathedral, a place where the work of Reconciliation has been going on since the Second World War. We saw our Cross of Nails blessed as part of that service. And in November this year, it will be a great joy to receive our own Mothers’ Union Cross within a service in the Chapel of our home, Mary Sumner House.

A recurring question and concern for many members is how can Mothers’ Union engage better with clergy? In this past triennium two meetings for Chaplains have been held. The first a day meeting at Mary Sumner House, the second an overnight residential. I thank our Central Chaplain, Bishop Andrew Proud for his wonderful, powerful input and the support he has given. Both of these meetings were inspirational.

Our Diocesan Chaplains are excellent channels to communicate a positive message to fellow clergy about what Mothers’ Union is doing, what initiatives we are involved in which bring lasting change to lives and communities, how parishes might engage and how together we can proclaim the Kingdom of God.

I was delighted, when following a conversation I had with Dr Jane Williams, assistant Dean and Lecturer at St. Mellitus College, that she agreed she, ordinands and colleagues would be happy to help Mothers’ Union produce a Eucharist Liturgy for Mothering Sunday 2018. Importantly, a liturgy which would be sympathetic to the many aspects around the day, one which might be painful or difficult for some. I am pleased to say that they have agreed once again to help and there will be a Eucharistic Liturgy for 2019 and hopefully for 2020. This will be such a wonderful resource for Mothers’ Union to be able to offer the wider Church.

I hope that you join me now as I look back briefly at the places, people, opportunities, voyages of discovery, celebrations and stories which have touched my heart and my life during my time as your Worldwide President. The privilege and joy of meeting….Archbishops, Bishops, country dignitaries, First Ladies, great crowds of members…the singing and dancing, bands playing, flowers presented, the and all the pictures!

The role of Worldwide President has been a truly amazing experience. I see the role as bringing the whole Mothers’ Union family together…when I visit worldwide, members want to know what is happening in Britain & Ireland...when visiting Britain & Ireland members want to know about the worldwide family. What a joy and privilege to have had such opportunities.

My journey as Worldwide President began in 2013. My first visit worldwide was Kenya. Seeing and hearing first-hand about Church & Community Mobilisation CCM. Finding out how, through this exciting initiative lives are transformed and whole communities energised. In the words of one lady, “Before CCM I was ready to meet my Lord. Since CCM each night I ask the Lord to spare me, I have so much to do and share”

Barbados – I had the opportunity to celebrate with members here 100 years of faithfulness and by planting commemorative trees, we were reminded of the importance of strong roots and blossoming branches just like our membership of Mothers’ Union

Madagascar is the 10th poorest country in the world. A country which has suffered many tropical storms and cyclones rendering communities helpless. Hearing about the struggles and how these have been overcome. Members leading on health awareness programmes within communities, speaking out about Gender Based Violence. I visited an orphanage supported by Church and Mothers’ Union members, seeing the interaction was truly inspirational.

January 2014 I visited Myanmar, attending the first Provincial Conference for many years because of conflict. 800 people were anticipated, almost 1,400 attended. Asking a member “in the difficult times of conflict, how have you coped”and being reminded “With God on my side, I cannot fail” – such amazing, wonderful faith, a lesson to us all.

New Zealand & Tonga – admitting into membership the Princess of Tonga – on the airfield no less – and hearing the pleasure this brought to her Mother and her words “about time my daughter”.

In 2015 attending the Canadian Conference, experiencing the vast distances, understanding better the isolation faced by members

DR Congo – being emotionally drained hearing so many heart-breaking stories about Gender Based Violence – seeing the physical scars which are left, hearing about the scars which remain in hearts and minds

South Sudan – Reverend Rebecca, displaced from home and family. Yet offering true hospitality and unconditional love, washing my feet and hearing the words “just as Jesus did. If I cannot do this, I cannot be called a servant of the Lord”. I cannot read the bible passage without thinking about and weeping for the people of South Sudan and their plight

In 2016 Zambia & Zimbabwe – my visit coinciding with the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. Suddenly hearing the words of the priest leading the evening “if the mother of the Mothers’ Union doesn’t dance, her children will not be fed”. So dance I had to!

Rwanda – possibly understanding for the first time – the real atrocities of genocide and seeing how hard Mothers’ Union members are working to bring reconciliation into communities.

Sri Lanka – being moved hearing about the ministry at the hospital gate. Members reaching out, offering refreshment, a kind word, a listening ear. Meeting the young family whose daughter had been badly scalded, hearing how members were helping them come to terms with their feelings of guilt and shame about their child.

2017 USA -attending the second National Conference, hearing about how members are working in partnership with other agencies like a teenage pregnancy centre, hoping to bring change and wholeness into the lives of others.

Australia – celebrating 125 years of faithfulness, learning about the diversity and vastness of this great land. After hearing about the work and witness of the worldwide membership, I had the joy of admitting Kate, a young woman from the far Northern territory into membership.

2018…Burundi – seeing the Financial & Education, Credit and Savings Programmes in action. An initiative I have known since its very early planning days in 1998. Hearing from one of the facilitators “I could not read or write, Mothers’ Union enabled me to become literate and numerate. I underwent training and am now able to give something back. I now encourage others to learn being literate and numerate is so life changing. I thank God and Mothers’ Union for this wonderful opportunity”

I’ve also had the privilege to visit all the dioceses in Britain and Ireland this triennium!

In the meantime, an aeroplane? Why? On Wednesday I fly to Tanzania & Uganda to attend Provincial Conferences, Festival Services, see and hear about the work and visit members in remote areas. I would value your prayers. I hope that I may also take your greetings with me.

I have been doubly blessed – not only to visit around the world, I have also had the great joy of visiting around the corner too! Britain & Ireland visits have encouraged, inspired, uplifted and made me feel so privileged and blessed to be part of this movement of people, doing God’s work.

Whether this has been work in: prisons, refuges, holding centres, hospitals, visiting the elderly and vulnerable, supporting refugees or those affected by domestic abuse. I believe that we are the golden thread within communities.

Visiting a school in a diocese in Wales. Children were so excited, they had been told that they were going to meet a very important person - the President. And to hear one little voice “Well where is he? Obama? You said we were going to meet the President!” Poor little mite, how disappointing for him!

In 2016 it was a great joy spending time together in Winchester. Thanking God for inspiring Mary Sumner with the vision of an organisation to support strong and healthy relationships.

In 2017, I had a wonderful time, enjoying 13 Decades of Love with members in Ireland as together we gave thanks for 130 years, such devotion and commitment was heart-warming to experience. The Big Sing in the Concert Hall in Dublin with over 1,000 members and friends present was an inspiration. Thanking God for his abundant blessings and faithfulness.

Since joining Mothers’ Union as a young wife and mother in 1979, I have been greatly inspired by the work members have been able to achieve, on relatively small budgets. Over the years the generosity of members and friends have enabled our work to continue and to grow. Members like each of you.

I wonder if you, like me, have considered helping Mothers’ Union initiatives continue to flourish and grow after your earthly life has finished. It would be truly amazing if you would consider it…and like me…offer that gift of love. You will find a flier in your pack for more information.

Recently, I came across a saying by that famous person - anonymous –

*“Take time to love and be loved, it is a God given privilege.*

*Take time to laugh, it is music to the soul.*

*Take time to give, it is too short a day to be selfish.*

*Take time to work, it is the price of success.*

*Take time to do charitable deeds, it is the key to heaven”*

This saying could be said about so many people, so many situations, and so many amazing God given opportunities I have been blessed to enjoy as your Worldwide President over these past six years. My joy is that I have had the privilege of meeting so many amazing people. I have been truly humbled as I have celebrated with fellow members in places I never dreamed I would visit. Beautiful sounding names, places we pray for daily in our Wave of Prayer.

Our God is a God of surprise, Mothers’ Union enables what others might feel impossible. And I truly thank you for each and every opportunity.

2018 is election year. Many roles are being voted upon…from officials in branches through to Worldwide Board and Worldwide President. Please prayerfully take time to ask God to guide you as you make your choices.

These words from the Acts of the Apostles have inspired, encouraged and fed me greatly, especially in these past six years. I offer them to you to inspire and feed each of you*….“My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned by the Lord Jesus the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful Grace of God”*

And thinking of God’s compassion and our Saviour’s love for us I offer you these words …*“God’s love is as expansive as the open arms of Christ on the cross”…because that’s how much we are loved by God.*

My hope is that as Christians, and as fellow members of this worldwide, amazing family, we can celebrate our diversity and be an integral part of its unity. I pray that we can each live out in confidence and in faith the mission and ministry to which we have been called. Wherever we live in God’s world, my hope and my prayer is that we may serve God and his Church through our membership of Mothers’ Union each and every day of our lives.

So dear friends, I offer you my final words of encouragement.

Please enjoy your membership and every opportunity if affords you, just as I have done. Embrace all that it enables. Importantly, grow firm and strong in your faith, in love, union and unity with one another, growing always closer to God. And never be surprised at what He enables and achieves through you.

I know with all my heart that you and I have each been called by name and the Lord has made you and me his own. I encourage you to simply “trust and obey”.

Rejoice, be thankful and follow his calling.

You will never know where the Lord will lead you – or what pathway he might open up and take you down, importantly keep your hand in his on every step of your journey, each and every day. God bless you.