**General Meeting 2018**

**Bishop Andrew Proud Homily (Closing worship)**

**The Road to Emmaus - Luke 24: 13-32**

I am such a lucky man!

Not only do I have a lovely wife and family.

But I have - literally - just got back from a flying, three day work trip to a place I love - on the border between Ethiopia and South Sudan with Archbishop Josiah, General Secretary of the Anglican Communion Office. Where - of course – we met the Mothers’ Union! Who - without a Bishop, for over a year now, and with more than 300,000 **new** refugees arriving in this last year, and the huge pressures that puts on land - resources – and relationships -are stepping out in faith – to welcome refugee strangers raise their own children empower other women, and - evangelise their husbands!

I think that is a massive encouragement to us – and - *quite* a challenge - as we step out in faith from our Annual Meeting -into the future God has planned for us as Mothers’ Union.

And The Emmaus road story is an obvious place to turn - for wisdom as we do that.

And so - here’s Cleopas and his wife - Mary leaving Jerusalem, and heading back home. It’s a road they must have walked, often but that day - numb, confused, anxious, and feeling deeply let down, they fall in step with a stranger who walks the road with them.

I would guess many of us here have been in their shoes.

Times in our lives when Everything has been turned upside down

Nothing hoped for happened

And all seemed to have been for nothing.

When you’re in a place like that, of *course*, you **do** just want to be back home, to be surrounded by what you know.

And that’s what Cleopas and Mary thought they were going back to. Back to what they knew. To the one place they would feel safe. Just like Peter - actually, deciding to go back to fishing at the end of John’s gospel.

*We’re* about to go home - all of us. Fired up, renewed in our commitment - and looking to a future we can’t imagine yet.

When Peter went back to fishing and Mary and Cleopas headed for home down that oh, so familiar road - That’s where they found Him! The risen Lord and understood, perhaps for the first time, that although pretty much everything **looked** the same - on the outside everything had *changed* - from the inside. Home - would never be what it was, ever again. In fact, home would turn out to be a stopping off point – a real gift from God - the place where thy met the risen Lord and were shaped by divine wisdom before it was ever a haven of rest.

You know, I doubt they stayed in Emmaus for long. No longer than the disciples stayed in the upper room, or Peter stayed on the rooftop in Joppa, or Paul stayed in Straight Street, in Damascus.

How can you sit still when you’ve met the risen Lord?

No, they were on the move because God is always on the move, and - we are the fruit of that same movement.

We are - on the move again. We have to be. Because we are God’s people - and we are always swept up in the outward flow of His love.

On the surface, nothing’s changed. We’re still Mothers’ Union. There’s no mistaking that. And what a Mothers’ Union! Far from collapsing by the roadside, as some had predicted – maybe even hoped. We, Mothers’ Union are very much alive and setting out now on our own Emmaus road.

It is a little scary, but we’re ready - ready for where it will take us. But we know we shall meet Him on the way.

And as we go, we also know our hearts will burn within us as we hear the story of His love -written in the hearts of those we meet.

You and me, we all have parts to play in this great, unfolding drama – because it is God’s story; the great drama of salvation - as, through us, God reaches out and scoops up the broken-hearted, the anxious, the fearful, the stranger and the suffering, to take them to Himself and transform all life - which is His heart for the world.

It isn’t our story alone; or just a British story or even an Anglican story - It is a global story. And as a family within a story with a global reach, God has a purpose for us the Mothers’ Union. I really believe that.

So, as we go home today, let’s keep praying - let’s keep loving and trusting as we step out Together. And May He fill us with joy as we bring peace and healing and life to all we meet.

Amen