

April 2023



***He is not here .., for He is risen ... as He said* ... Hallelujah!**

My Dear Friends,

It is Easter once again and I am delighted to greet you and your loved ones with warm Christian love. This is a very significant season for us all, as it is a celebration of special encounters with the risen Christ; special moments of experiencing the joy of his living presence and peace; and the confidence and sure hope of things to come. I believe this is even more significant and profound for us as Christians and members especially when coming out of the wilderness journey of Lent, through the pain and suffering on Good Friday, and finally into the marvellous light of Easter.

As I meditate on all these things and more while sitting in my garden, I am overcome by the beauty of the Easter lilies, the sound of the wind in the trees, and the hype of activity as the birds skilfully weave their nests. It is as though Easter brings the blessed assurance of hope and peace even in my garden, and the essence of life continues around me. I am grateful that I can enjoy this awesome moment in God’s presence, so very different to the everyday hustle and bustle that will soon return when the holiday season is over.

I am now in my 5th year as your Worldwide President, and I value and appreciate your prayers which give me so much strength and courage to lead this global movement on the journey of transformation. You have become so much a part of my life now and I think of you often, wondering if you are taking time out to have a nice cup of tea or sip of lemonade. Whatever you are doing, I pray that God’s Grace will continue to abound in your life always.

Similarly, my thoughts are with our members who are not having such an enjoyable time this Easter. They may be alone, missing a loved one, or maybe hungry or mistreated in some way. Whatever the situation, please be assured that Easter is a reminder that Jesus is alive and in him we have hope. I am so far away that I cannot reach forward to give you a big hug, but I am forever close to you in spirit, sending many virtual hugs and encouraging you to embrace new life in Jesus Christ, where all things are possible if you choose to believe.

The many stories of hope and transformation that continue to inspire us are evidence that wherever there is hardship or a feeling of disappointment, the risen Christ visits us, breathing new life in us. Whatever the circumstance, he comes to us with the fresh promise of hope. Even as he walks through our wilderness experience, he is with us to the end, and he rejoices with us in victory.

For nearly 150 years, Mothers’ Union members have chosen and continue to choose to give hope to so many around the world. It is a sacrifice for many who believe it is their calling, for others it is a ministry to embrace as Christ’s hands and feet, and yet others a chance to share the bountiful gifts and resources he has bestowed on them. This is all good and righteous, and when coupled with a life dedicated to prayer and intercession, there is no stopping God from opening-up endless opportunities for ministry in Mothers’ Union.

As members of great faith, deeply supported by your ongoing prayers, we are committed to seizing these opportunities to transform the lives of the hardest-to-reach families and communities. We are a strong and determined global family that will not stop until we live in a world free of violence, poverty, and injustice, a world where everyone can thrive. Our Christian faith and love for God’s people will not allow us to live in peace until every individual and family is on a new path, nourished by streams of living water to flourish.

After 36 years of rolling up my sleeves and walking hand-in-hand with Mothers’ Union sisters around the world, I am certain that hope has no limits, no borders, and it does not depend on our thoughts and actions. Hope is the gift that we are given by the resurrected Christ, and it appears when we least expect it, always at the appointed time by God’s Grace.

Despite the challenges of Climate Change, Conflict and Poverty, our generous gifts of love and your faithful prayers will continue to transform the lives of the most vulnerable in our communities: helping children to stay in school to gain an education; giving a mother much needed relief for hardship and poverty – a chance to feel the satisfaction of feeding and clothing her children; and enabling communities to respond with resilience in times of disaster.

Recently I received a letter from a kind gentleman called John whose wife Cathy was a faithful member for 60 years. She held various offices in her Diocese, frequently attending meetings and conferences at Mary Sumner House. In her last years, she managed to struggle along to Branch meetings almost to the end of her life – deeply saddened by the decline in membership of a movement she loved so well. John’s letter reminds me of how precious Mothers’ Union is in the life of a member, and the impact it creates when others walk the Mothers’ Union journey with us. Although Cathy now soars with the angels, the treasured memories of her dedication to Mothers’ Union continue to comfort John in loneliness.

Can I ask you to join me in prayer using John’s words, that members will continue to be whole-heartedly committed to this life-changing movement that Cathy loved and respected?

Would it be too much to also ask you to join me in prayer for an increased, active, and engaged membership that is adaptive and open-minded, with a willingness to re-imagine Mothers’ Union in ways that are sustainable and relevant to 21st century life?

Over 2,000 years ago the story of Easter changed the course of history. It is my fervent prayer that in this same strength, this season of transformation will be blessed so that Mothers’ Union can thrive as we uphold the Mary Sumner story of kindness, courage and compassion, welcoming people from all walks of life to join us.

May our hands reach out and offer whatever help is needed, to whoever needs it, whenever it is needed, with the expectation of the same hope that Mary Magdalene experienced that glorious Easter morn. She found an empty tomb, the angel appeared to her and calmed her fears, then she encountered the risen Christ. In this, we have hope that Jesus Christ is alive, he is risen, and because of this, we are confident in the expectation of what is to come.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13.

**Our Easter Prayer**

**Christ is risen, Alleluia!**

**Lord Jesus Christ, in dying you conquered death and rose again in glory.**

**Through your great love and abiding grace, we will one day be with you in your heavenly kingdom.**

**Lord, we pray that we may make each day of our earthly life worthy of your great sacrifice on the cross.**

**Thank you that we can find a sanctuary in your love because you have chosen to love us just as we are, with all our faults and failings and that, if we truly repent, you will forgive our sins. Amen. (Margaret Devlin, Diocese of Newcastle, UK)**

As we look forward to God’s plan for Mothers’ Union in 2023 with our theme Transformation-NOW, the Worldwide Board of Trustees and Staff at Mary Sumner House join me in thanking you for your generous love and prayers that mean so much to us. We wish you, your family, and friends a happy and blessed Easter.

May the spirit of peace and hope be yours today and always for *He is risen, He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

With my love and prayers as always,



Sheran Harper, A.A.

Mothers’ Union Worldwide President.