

Lady Day 2024: 25 March

"Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'"
- Luke 1: 38 (NRSV)

When Mary shares her joy at being trusted by God to bear Jesus in her very body and to bring him to birth, she does so in a way we can all share and be a part of. Her joyful expression and appreciation of a God who trusts her, accepts her offering, her 'Yes' signals to all of us that each of us too are wanted and needed as part of God's plan. God gladly takes the ordinariness of our lives and our very selves. God then blesses what we give and through grace works in us, and our lives, something extraordinary.

When we say 'Yes' to God, we are lifted up in and through our relationship with God, not kept in our place. God empowers us to be the people God always intended us to be when God made us. In Christ we are redeemed and transformed. The old labels of loser and winner, success and failure, powerful and insignificant no longer apply or have any validity. We are, as the people of God, called to be the friends of God. We are called to be those who know they belong, because we are known by name and loved generously. We are seen clearly and valued immensely by God who empowers and lifts us up. With this knowledge comes a gracious invitation to us as the friends of God to be those who nurture others, especially to see those who are ignored and neglected by society. We are to pay attention to the world in the same loving way God pays attention to us.

I wonder how many of us are aware that Mothers' Union's observance of Lady Day is actually part of our constitution? (That is, as a recommendation rather than an edict!)

In fact Lady Day - the Feast of the Annunciation - has been a significant day for Mothers' Union since 1897.

Fast forward to today and we find that across the 83 counties where Mothers' Union is represented, Lady Day is celebrated in many and varied ways.

Lady Day - the Feast of the Annunciation - has been a significant day of prayer, intercession and thanksgiving for Mothers' Union since 1897.

It is a good occasion to invite your whole church to celebrate with you as you give thanks for MU work of transformation in families and communities. You may wish to display examples of MU projects and initiatives at a local, national and international level, and information on how to become involved in Mothers' Union. You may also wish to provide refreshments after the service.

The Lady Day services on the MU website could be used or adapted using some of the material below.

Faithful God,
you chose Mary, full of grace, to be the mother of our
Sovereign and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Now fill us with your
grace, that with her, we may understand your ways, rejoice
in your salvation, and embrace your will;
through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and
forever. Amen
<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>

Most High God, for you nothing is impossible.
Through a poor young woman in a small town
you gave birth to your realm of endless glory. By
your Holy Spirit, fill us with new life and hope
and overshadow us with your power and grace
so that we, like Mary, might be your servants,
bearing witness to the promise of your Word;
through Jesus Christ, who is coming to reign.
<https://www.pcusa.org/>

Our hearts praise you, O Lord, our
spirits rejoice in God our saviour, for
you have remembered us, your
humble servants. Mighty God, we
celebrate the great things you have
done for us— your name is holy!
From one generation to another you have shown
mercy on those who honour you. You have
stretched out your mighty arm, scattering the
conceited, confusing their schemes. You bring
down tyrants and lift up the lowly; you fill the
hungry with good things, but send the rich away
empty. You have kept your promises to us; you
have come to our help; you will show your people
your love for ever; our hearts praise you, O Lord.
Amen
©Michael Perry

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;
Our souls magnify the Lord;
With our mouths we proclaim God's faithfulness to all generations Our
spirits rejoice in God our saviour.
We declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
His mercy is to those who fear him from generation to
generation. Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. He
has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich
away empty.
You are God and the Rock of our salvation.
© R. Victor Klassen

Gracious God, you have done so much for us
And we so little in return
You ask for humility
And we are often a proud people
You ask for willingness
And we are often a stubborn people
You ask for repentance
And we are often a deaf people
You ask for service
And we are often a busy people
Gracious God, you want the best for us
Teach us obedience
Grant us forgiveness
That we, like Mary
Might be your willing servants. Amen.
© John Birch

When you come to us with
gentle whisper or mighty wind,
and ask what seems
impossible to human minds, as
you did to Mary, may our
response not be to hesitate,
make excuses or run away, but
to echo instead those trusting
and beautiful words, "I am the
Lord's servant:
may your word be fulfilled in me"
For Mary's faithfulness
and her life of service
we thank you, Lord.
© John Birch

God, who are the Most High Lord of all,
you have a surprising preference for
people who are small and humble and
who expect everything from you.

You chose Mary, the unassuming virgin from Nazareth,
to become the mother of your Son Jesus. Through
your Holy Spirit make us aware of the poverty of our
hearts, that we may be open to you and welcome you,
be ready, like Mary, to serve you and your plans, and
expect everything from you. Come to us and give
yourself to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgies Alive, Models of Celebration

For the faithfulness of
your servant Mary we
give you thanks. For
saints of every age
who, when called,
have simply obeyed –
whether shepherd or
scholar, faced by
opposition or praise,
Asked to give from
their riches or poverty
– we give you thanks.

In your eyes all are blessed.
May we count ourselves
among that number, willing to
hear your call. Our lives
dedicated in service to our
Saviour and King. Amen