

**Mothers' Union's service outline for Mary Sumner Day 2024:**

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Psalm 146: 1-2

*Welcome*

Today we celebrate Mary Sumner, the founder of Mothers' Union. We celebrate her insight and perceptiveness in seeing what was needed and recognising the means by which the need could be met. Across the globe the 4 million members of Mothers' Union celebrate the life and faith of our founder. We pray for the mission of Mothers' Union as lived in so many countries. Mary Sumner's life showed clearly her belief in the vocation to prayer and the call to social action that flowed from it. These are the foundations on which MU has been built.

*Opening hymn: Hymn of your choosing*

*Opening Prayers:*

God of the past, the present, and the future, we have gathered to celebrate and to rejoice: to give thanks for the life and vision of our founder, Mary Sumner. As we look to the past with thanksgiving, so we affirm our resolve to build upon this heritage as we seek to serve God in our generation, and establish a stable future for those yet to come. Amen.

*Mothers' Union Prayer:*

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life. Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Collect:*

O God, by whose grace your servant Mary Sumner became a burning and shining light in your Church: grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipleship and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*New Testament Reading:*

*Philippians 4:4-9*

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

*Gospel Reading:*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory to you, O Lord.

*Matthew 5:13-14 NIV*

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

*Hymn: hymn of your choosing*

*Homily: Homily suggestion given by Revd Carla Vicêncio Prior*

Do you know the Monty Python sketch, what have the Romans ever done for us? Basically, there's a group of conspirators about to start a revolution to overthrow the Roman Occupation and when talking amongst themselves, they claim that the Romans bled them dry and have given nothing in return... well apart from... well, Ok apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a fresh water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?

What about the Mothers' Union? What have they ever done for the world?! Well, among other things...

- Support to families
- Advocacy against gender-based violence
- Campaigning against child marriage
- Nursery schools
- Orphan care
- Health and sanitation
- HIV/AIDS education and care
- Malaria prevention
- Savings and credit groups
- Sewing projects
- Literacy projects
- Visiting the sick and elderly
- Bereavement counselling

- Prison ministry
- Peace and reconciliation programmes
- Emergency relief programmes
- Bible study

I could go on... The reason I remind you of all this is that it is easy to sometimes lose track of how large (4 million members), and effective, this world-wide (present in 83 countries), women-led organisation, we are part of, is. It is easy to forget, how powerful we are, together. How useful, and how God-inspired. We are literally changing the world. Granted, sometimes we are a little “unassuming” but I want to inspire you...

For MU is called to be salt and light – servants of God in the little things – together helping the Light of Christ to shine world-wide.

*Local projects in your Diocese could be featured / maybe include some visual aids - even a candle and a mirror! Possibly a power point to show some of the ways in which MU has been ‘light’ and ‘salt’ to people in the community.*

*‘There are two ways of shedding light – to be the candle or to be the mirror which reflects it.’*

*Hymn*

*Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession: (local needs can be added)*

God of all generations,  
we praise and thank you for the life and work of Mary Sumner:  
for her concern for women and children,  
her desire to uphold Christian values  
and her commitment to prayer.  
Following her example, we bring our prayers to you...

For Church leaders and administrators... *(A pause for silence)*

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For those entrusted with responsibility for social welfare...

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For families who live where there is war, oppression, injustice and poverty...

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For homes of peace and love, reflecting your love for us all...  
For grace to be able to forgive and be forgiven...

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For wives and husbands,  
that they may grow ever deeper in love for each other and for you...

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For children to grow up to know and love you...

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For families who know the pain of illness of body, mind or spirit...  
and those in the bleakness of bereavement...

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

For Mothers' Union across the world,  
that it may always be faithful in prayer  
and courageous in fulfilling its calling to reflect the light of Christ.

Spirit of the living God  
Hear our prayer

*We end this time of prayer saying together Mary Sumner's personal prayer:*

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;  
and every life I touch do thou by thy spirit quicken,  
whether through the word I speak,  
the prayer I breathe, or the life I live.  
Amen

*Closing Hymn:*

*Final Blessing:*

All praise be to God,  
by whose power one woman's vision became reality  
through the founding of Mothers' Union.

All praise be to God  
who has led us thus far  
and whose Spirit inspires for what lies ahead.

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

*Dismissal*

United in love across the world,  
go in peace to serve the Lord.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

**If the Eucharist is to be celebrated:**

Opening sentence: Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false; they will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation. Psalm 24.4-5

Collect for Mary Sumner Day:

Faithful and loving God, who called Mary Sumner to strive for the renewal of family life: give us the gift of your Holy Spirit, that through word, prayer and deed your family may be strengthened and your people served; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Preface (Prayers A or B or C)

And now we give you thanks  
for the work of your grace in the life of *Mary Sumner*  
and that by the same grace you lead us in the way of holiness,  
setting before us the vision of your glory.

Extended Preface for the Prayer of Thanksgiving  
This extended preface is the authorised one for MSD.

All glory and honour be yours  
always and everywhere,  
mighty Creator,  
ever-living God.  
We give you thanks and praise for your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who by the power of your Spirit  
was born of Mary and lived as one of us.  
By his death on the cross and rising to new life,  
he offered the one true sacrifice for sin  
and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.  
You bless marriage and family life,  
and you call us to be subject to one another  
out of reverence for Christ.  
In this you reveal the mystery  
of the love between Christ and the Church.

Therefore with angels and archangels....

Alternative Extended Preface for the Prayer of Thanksgiving (A or B or E)

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.  
We rejoice in the glorious splendour of your majesty  
for you have given us a share with *Mary Sumner*  
in the inheritance of the saints in light.  
In the darkness of this passing age  
they proclaim the glory of your kingdom.  
Chosen as lights in the world,  
they surround our steps as we journey on  
towards the city of eternal light  
where they sing the everlasting song of triumph.  
In communion with angels and archangels  
and all who have served you on earth  
and worship you now in heaven,  
we raise our voices to proclaim your glory,  
for ever praising you and saying:

Prayer after Communion :

God, the source of all holiness and giver of all good things:  
may we who have shared at this table  
as strangers and pilgrims on earth  
be welcomed with *Mary Sumner* and all your saints  
to the heavenly feast in your kingdom,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

Blessing

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,  
who has transformed those we remember today,  
raise and strengthen you, that you may transform the world;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.