# Mothers’ Union

# Mary Sumner Day Resource Pack 2020



# May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,

# so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

# *Romans 15:13*

# Introduction

# *“In praying 'Thy Kingdom Come' we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of communities."*

# Archbishop Justin Welby

9th August 2020 marks Mary Sumner, a day in which we remember our founder and her vision for our movement. This year, Mary Sumner Day falls on a Sunday and in the midst of a global pandemic and so we understand that the day may look very different for our members.

We have produced this pack of resources and suggestions for how you may want to celebrate and acknowledge the day this year – please remember that this are all suggestions, it is completely up to you whether you use all the suggestions, just a few or none at all!

We wish you and your members a blessed Mary Sumner Day, however it may look.

*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses …to the ends of the earth. When he had said this…he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight…Then they returned to Jerusalem … and were constantly devoting themselves to prayer… When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... and that day about three thousand persons were added."*

Acts 1, 2

# Online Services

We are delighted that the following services will be taking place online and will be available on both our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/MothersUnion>) and You Tube Channels.

As Mary Sumner Day falls on a Sunday this year we have provided two online services – one in early morning and one in the evening so you are still able to attend your local Parish service should you want to.

**Mary Sumner Day Morning Prayer - 8:30am (BST)**

**Mary Sumner Evening Compline – 9:00pm (BST)**

Service sheets for both events will be available on the Mothers’ Union website.

# Mary Sumner Day Church of England Collect

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.

**Mary Sumner Day Member Prayers**

*A selection of prayers, written by members around the world, in honour of Mary Sumner Day*

Gracious God,

On this Mary Sumner Day we give thanks for all the blessings that Mothers’ Union has brought to our members worldwide. We thank you for calling your servant Mary Sumner to be the founder of the Mothers’ Union. We give thanks for all who attended the first meeting in Old Alresford, for their prayers and dedication to up holding family life. We pray that we the members now will continue to follow in their footsteps, enabling and strengthening family life through love and fellowship in Jesus name.

Amen.

*Written by Stella Roberts, Diocesan President of Winchester Diocese, UK*

Lord of all,

We give thanks for the far-reaching vision of our founder, Mary Sumner. We look back with praise and gratitude for her witness and the way she has inspired so many people. Our members worldwide have been beacons of hope for their communities, both with prayer and practical help, bringing joy and reflecting the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray that we will be able to continue her vision, ensuring that the role of Mothers’ Union will flourish and grow as we unite to be helping hands across the world.

Amen

*Daphne Burton, Diocese of Chichester, UK*

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for all the good things you do for us and for building our Mothers’ Union family.

We ask you to keep guiding us and increasing our numbers in all the countries where Mothers’ Union has a presence and those where we are not yet represented.

We ask you to strengthen existing members that they should not tire of serving you

but be empowered so that our presence will be felt and will help our church and communities.

We pray for our Mothers’ Union leadership in all countries and we ask all this through your son Jesus Christ.

Amen

*Priscilla Mphande, Mothers’ Union Malawi (adapted)*

LIVING LORD

You are the light of the world

We light out candles in prayer

As you guide us into the future

We offer our hands to work for all

Our hearts to care for all

Our voices to speak to all

We lay our prayers at your feet

LIVING LORD.

Amen.

*Kathleen Wilson, Diocesan President of Durham Diocese*

Father, guide and give wisdom to our Worldwide President

and all those who hold leadership positions in Mothers’ Union as they plan for the future and sustainability of this great organisation.

Father, we earnestly knock on your door, asking you to send your Holy Spirit into Mothers’ Union;

fill us with your Spirit, re-energise us, re-enthuse us daily as we work in your field.

Father, our vision is of a world where everyone will experience your love and we look to you to make that a reality.

We ask this with hearts full of gratitude, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

*Frida Sakala Kazembe, Lusaka, Zambia*

# Using Mary Sumner Day as a day of prayer and fasting

## In this time of enforced solitude you may want to use Mary Sumner Day as a day to fast, pray and reflect on the vision of Mary Sumner, the progress of the movement across the world and a future for Mothers’ Union, full of hope and purpose.

Fasting is not an end unto itself, but a means of focusing our minds and bodies for a spiritual reason. Whenever you fast, do so for a reason that is mentioned or modelled in the Bible. Here are a few purposes for fasting as mentioned in the bible:

**1. To strengthen prayer (e.g., see Ezra 8:23)**

Numerous incidents in the Old Testament connect fasting to prayer, especially intercessory prayer. Fasting does not change whether God hears our prayers, but it can change our praying. You could take the time to pray for specific members in your branch as well as the worldwide movement of Mothers’ Union as we live out Mary Sumner’s vision.

**2. To seek God’s guidance (e.g., see Judges 20:26)**

As with prayer, fasting to seek God’s guidance isn’t done to change God but to make us more receptive to his guidance. Perhaps you can pray focusing on how your diocese or branch of Mothers’ Union can move forward in 2021 after a difficult year.

**3. To humble oneself before God (e.g., see 1 Kings 21:27 – 29)**

Mary Sumner is often described as humble and a period of fasting for 12 hours or even 8 hours can help us strip back our own shortcomings and distractions – focusing completely on our relationship with God

**4. To express love and worship for God (e.g., see Luke 2:37)**

Please remember the following before you think about fasting;

* You shouldn’t fast if you have medical conditions that would make this dangerous for your help. Check with your GP if you have any concerns whatsoever,
* A fast doesn’t have to last 24 hours, it could be from sunrise to sunset, 12 hours or 8 hours
* You must stay hydrated throughout the day by drinking water or herbal tea.
* If you are not comfortable taking on a fast, and it is completely your own choice, you could instead decide to eat very plain and simple food for the day allowing you to focus on your prayer and reflection for the day
* It’s good to have structure for a day of fasting – specific times to pray, read the Bible and reflect
* Don’t do lots of exercise if you are fasting – you don’t want to waste your lower reserves of energy
* If you are fasting perhaps you could consider donating the price of a meal or food for the day to our emergency appeal so we can continue helping Mothers’ Union to thrive for the next 150 years - <https://support.mothersunion.org/>

# Service Outline for Mary Sumner Day 2020

*This outline may be useful if you are planning an actual or virtual service in your local area. It can be adapted to fit your own situation.*

Welcome to our Service. We gather to celebrate and be inspired by the example of the founder of Mothers’ Union, Mary Sumner, as we look to build hope and confidence in lives that have been affected in these uncertain times.

The plans of the Lord stand firm,

the purposes of his heart through all generations

*Psalm 33:11*

God of history and eternity,

Lord of every generation,

we come to worship with glad and thankful hearts.

**Let us praise his name together. Amen**

**Opening hymn**

**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**

**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.

**New Testament Reading: Philippians 1:3-6; 9-11**

I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until

now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:34-40**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

37 ‘Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?”

40 ‘The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Hymn**

**Homily / Sermon**

*This could include information about your local initiatives and how they have helped people particularly in the current pandemic*

**Mary Sumner’s Personal Prayer**

*Written by her in 1876 and then prayed by her every day for the rest of her life*

All this day, O Lord, let me touch

as many lives as possible for thee;

*Lord, we thank you for the lives touched throughout the years and throughout*

*the world by the members of Mothers’ Union*

and every life I touch do thou

by thy spirit quicken,

*We pray that those whom we serve will experience the reality of your love*

*through our prayers, words and actions.*

whether through the word I speak,

the prayer I breathe

or the life I live. Amen

**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**

**Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession**

*You may like to include prayers for your own local initiatives*

**Loving Lord,**

**We give thanks for the inspiration**

**of our founder, Mary Sumner.**

**We look back with gratitude for her witness,**

**and for all that has been achieved thus far**

**in the name of Mothers’ Union worldwide.**

We give thanks that you have prepared our way

and strengthen us at every stage with hope and resolve.

We pray for all initiatives, large and small,

to transform families and communities.

We give thanks for our members across the globe

as they proclaim your love in challenging times and places.

We pray that our membership will flourish and grow

as stories of our work and achievements are heard.

We give thanks for the far-reaching vision of Mary Sumner

and for all who have continued her work through the years.

**We pray for God’s blessing upon our future.**

**May we continue to enrich family life**

**for future generations. 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**

**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.

The blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain

with you always. Amen.

United in love across the world, go in peace to serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God. Amen**

**Wave of Prayer Poem**

*This poem was written by member Revd Terry Roberts*

**A Wave**

Stretching as far as the eye can see

A blue ocean reflects the heavens

Still and calm it brings peace and tranquillity

The Wind of the Spirit moves over the deep

And waves begin to form

They stretch beyond the horizon

Across all the seas and oceans covering the world

Each wave made of millions of drops in motion.

Our prayers, like each drop in the ocean,

Cover the world;

Driven by the spirit they become waves

Touching the very fabric of God’s creation,

Bringing peace and tranquillity to situations, to conflict,

To our Souls

**The Story of Mary Sumner**

It all started when Mary, married to George, Rector of the Parish of Old Alresford, was passionate about transforming the home-lives of Parish families, by helping the women to support one another in raising their children.

Her husband was very supportive: “just share your heart – God will do the rest.”

She was so nervous at the first meeting of the parish women, that she refused to speak, and asked George to take her place. In those days, it was very unusual for a woman to be a public speaker. However, George encouraged her to speak from the heart and it went so well that she found the courage to speak at future meetings. Her talks were inspired by her faith – it was practical and down to earth – “Remember, Ladies, to be yourselves what you would have your children be”.

After groups with women became well established, she was asked to speak to the men of the Parish. Again, she was apprehensive, but agreed, and helped them to be more aware of what their wives did for them, to show more respect and love.

The meetings grew, and included women - old and young, rich and poor. Others heard about her work, and started groups in their own areas.

In 1876, she founded “the Union of Mothers” – with a membership card and promise: “to be given up, body and soul, to Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism, and that your duty is to train your children for his service”.

In 1885, at a time when it was still unheard of for women to speak to large audiences, Mary Sumner was invited by the Presiding Bishop to speak to a packed church congress session for women in Portsmouth. He anointed her with the authority to speak - he felt that he had no authority to speak to a group of women whose prime concern was to get enough food on the table so that the children would not starve. She overcame her nerves again. “Together, by the Grace of God… we can calm each other when we are afraid; strengthen one another when we are weak; and work together to raise our children to the glory of God. Unity is strength”.

The movement grew further, increasingly with the support of bishops, internationally as well as in England. Some key principles were developed, including:

That the prosperity of a nation springs from the family life in its homes

That family life is the greatest institution in the world for the formation of the character of children

That faith is the foundation of family life

That the tone of family life depends upon the married life of the parents – and ultimately, that example is stronger than precept

As the movement continued to grow, Mary Sumner asked herself what its purpose really was, and what it should strive for. She reflected: “A true home should be a light-house, shedding its quiet beams far and wide” – her dream was for every home to be filled with the light and love of Jesus, and for the movement to unite many hearts in many lands, nurturing healthy environments for little children.

And she was a living example of what she preached. From 1900 onwards, she and the members started to advocate on issues of key importance to families and children – she campaigned to stop children collecting alcohol from public houses for their families, and for the age of marriage for girls to be raised from 12 to 16. She was not afraid to speak up on difficult issues, despite resistance from members of the establishment.

She was also not afraid to act outside the social norms, to do what she believed to be right. At a time when unmarried girls with children were condemned and cast out, she cared for and protected her niece and her illegitimate son.

When she died in August, 1921, 4,000 women attended her funeral, which was a service of Thanksgiving. The last memory was one of her, on her feet in the sunlight, praising God.

She could not have conceived how the seeds which she planted would grow into a movement 4 million strong today, of members in 83 countries putting their faith into action to nurture healthy relationships in families and communities and to fight for social justice.