**Worldwide President Address**

**Sheran Harper speech –20th October**

My Dear Members and Friends! It is wonderful to be here with you and with all the birds in my garden adding their bit to this address. I am joining you all the way from the Diocese of Guyana. For those of you who have not met me before, I am Sheran Harper your Worldwide President.

I’d like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the fantastic job you are doing in Britain & Ireland throughout this pandemic. Despite the uncertainty of it all, you have approached each day with courage and kindness and you have been true to your calling as members. Every day I read of your exciting work and I am deeply moved by the way you express love in a time of fear! Connection in a time of isolation! And hope in a time of despair! The Worldwide Board of Trustees value and appreciate you and your work, above and beyond all you can ever imagine.

In Guyana, we are affected just as you are. The challenges are so many, ranging from loss of jobs to an increase in domestic abuse! In addition, I think of the mothers who are trying so hard to put food on the table every day. I know many of you have been helping in food banks. Recently Archbishop Justin Wellby and Bishop Paul Butler lobbied the Government to fund schools to meet the basic needs of children, and for it to be extended to free school meals and holiday meal provision, and I welcome this call.

I too have had my share challenges in this pandemic. In March my entire life changed course overnight! I went from a life of lively social activities, serving in the Church, and a full Worldwide President 2020 Diary, to extremes of lockdown with curfews, and being classified high risk due to asthma, so I have only been out 5 times since March.

Very early I realized that in order to ride the waves and survive the storm, and at the same time fulfil my purpose as your Worldwide President, I had to put aside the pity party and get cracking. I started to think differently and see this time as God’s time of shaping and pruning where necessary, sometimes a painful experience of change, but I am content because I believe that God is preparing us and Mothers’ Union for a new season of growth and purposeful activity.

I think what I miss most of all in 2020 **is not able to fulfil the part of** my ambassadorial role of visiting Provinces in person, meeting Members, visiting their projects, encouraging and inspiring them, sharing a meal together and giving them that special MU hug.

But that’s okay! Because we are all in the same boat and I have found new ways to stay connected and today is a fine example of staying connected. Here I am sitting among you and enjoying fellowship in true Mothers’ Union style.

So what has given me hope and confidence throughout the lockdown? My secret is simple, it is knowing that Jesus is in the boat with me, He is in the Mothers’ Union boat with all of us!

In St Mark’s Gospel, we read of ***“Jesus Calming the Storm”*** - a very familiar Bible story which has given me 3 reasons to have inner peace, hope and confidence, and these are:

1. I can trust God’s Word!
2. I have confidence in God’s Presence!
3. I believe in God’s amazing Power!
4. **Trusting in His Word**

Looking first at trusting God’s word.

If we think back to the Bible story, the disciples were fearful when the storm arose, and quite rightly so because they could have perished. Maybe, they forgot to trust in Jesus’ words that he had been teaching them that day. In this current Coronavirus storm we should remind ourselves of God’s word, the psalmist talks about, ‘***Hiding God’s Word in our Hearts***,’ so can I ask, What Bible verse are you hiding in your heart to sustain you?

May we pray, *Loving God, speak to us today through your word. Give us courage to face the storm and the confidence to give others hope through their storms. Amen.*

1. **Trusting in His Presence**

Secondly, trusting in God’s Presence.

The storm was raging and the disciples said, *‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?’* After all they were seasoned fisherman, and they knew a bad storm when they saw one, and what is Jesus doing? Jesus is sleeping! They probably were thinking if only he knew the gravity of this situation he would wake up and help them.

My friends! Jesus knows it all! We have the assurance that Jesus never sleeps because Psalm 121 reminds us that, *‘He who watches over Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps!*’

We pause and pray, *Loving* *Lord we trust in your presence today and acknowledge that you are with us always, even to the end of time. Amen.*

1. **Trusting in His Power**

And finally trusting in His power.

So the storm is rising, Jesus is sleeping …. His disciples wake him up! He jumps into action and literally commands the sea to, *‘Be Still!’* Jesus commands peace and the chaos is transformed into calm in an instant.

We remember there were other boats around and what Jesus did also affected those in the other boats too. As Mothers’ Union Members, we have a special blessing, it is God’s beautiful gift of Peace. This is the time for us to carry His Peace from our boat to the other boats around us.

We pause and pray, *Faithful God, there is still so much we can do, help us to be the carrier of your peace and hope to everyone. Amen.*

In closing, I wish you God’s blessings as you go forward in hope and confidence; seizing every opportunity to extend God’s gifts of peace, hope and confidence to those around.

With my love and prayers as always. Keep safe! Bye for now!