Epiphany 2027: Reflection and Activity Pack

Lighting the way for generations to come

How to Use This Pack

- **In a Branch Meeting:** Place a lit candle in the centre of the table to represent the star of Bethlehem and our 150-year heritage. Share the opening prayer, read the scripture aloud, discuss the questions in pairs or as a group, try some or all the creative activities, and use the suggested hymns and worship songs to frame your time together. This approach could be adapted for an online meeting.
- **At Home:** Set aside some time in a quiet space and light a candle. Read the Bible passage slowly, pray the opening prayer, reflect on one or two questions, listen to, or read the lyrics of the suggested songs, and try the creative activities.

Opening Prayer & Gathering Music

Loving God,
As the star shone in the darkness to guide the wise men to Bethlehem,
we thank you for your light that has guided the Mothers' Union for over one hundred and fifty years.
We praise you for the generations of faithful members who came before us,
whose prayers, courage, and care have lit the way for family life across the world.
As we reflect on your Word today, open our eyes to see where you are leading us next.
Fill our hearts with your warmth, so that we may shine with your love
and light the way for generations to come.
Through Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.
Amen.

Music: As with Gladness Men of Old (William Chatterton Dix) / Shine, Jesus, Shine (Lord, the Light of Your Love is Shining) (Graham Kendrick)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:1–12

Read the passage aloud or quietly to yourself, noticing any words or images that stand out. Try reading two or three different versions e.g. NRSV, NIV, The Message, and notice if different words or images stand out.

Reflective Questions & Music Prompts

1. Looking Back with Gratitude

- **The star that guided us.** The Magi followed a star that had been awaited for generations. Looking back on our 150th anniversary celebrations, what stories or moments reminded you of how God has been lighting the way for the Mothers' Union over the past century and a half?
- **Passing the torch.** Faith and service are handed down through quiet, faithful examples. Who were the people who 'lit the way' for you and inspired your commitment to Mothers' Union and supporting family life?

Music: Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer (William Williams) / Goodness of God (Jenn Johnson / Bethel Music)

2. Shining in the Darkness

- **Standing up against fear and control.** When King Herod heard of Jesus's birth, he reacted with fear, secrecy, and violence, threatening the safety of young children. Through our Domestic Abuse programme and RISE UP campaign (RISE UP is an acronym for Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray), members work to raise awareness and support survivors. How can you / your branch help shine a light of safety, hope, and practical support for people experiencing abuse in your community?
- **Seeing those hidden in plain sight.** The Magi noticed a star that others missed, leading them to a humble home. Through our Modern Slavery programme and FREE campaign (FREE stands for Find, Respond, Empower, End), we are called to spot the signs of exploitation that often hide in plain sight. How can you / your branch stay alert, informed, and prayerful for people living on the margins who are vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation?

Music: O Little Town of Bethlehem (Phillips Brooks) / Christ Be Our Light (Longing for Light) (Bernadette Farrell)

3. Bringing Joy and Connection

- **Offering respite and joy.** When the Magi saw that the star had stopped, they were 'overwhelmed with joy' and brought precious gifts to bless the Holy Family. Through Away From It All (AFIA), members fund holidays and day trips that bring joy and breathing space to families facing hardship. How can you / your branch offer

moments of joy, rest, and renewal to struggling parents and carers in your community this year?

- **Bridging the gap for separated families.** The Magi travelled far across borders to bring warmth, gifts, and fellowship to Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Through our Prisons Work, members offer a friendly, non-judgmental presence in visitor centres, run parenting courses, and provide baby packs and books to keep family bonds alive. How can you / your branch pray for and practically support prisoners and their families who are navigating the pain of separation this year?

Music: *Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You (The Servant Song)* (Richard Gillard) / *Build Your Kingdom Here* (Rend Collective).

4. Lighting the Way for Generations to Come

- **Walking a new path.** After encountering Christ, the Magi returned home by another route, changed by what they had witnessed. As we step into this new chapter beyond our 150th anniversary, what fresh ways of praying, campaigning, or welcoming younger families might God be calling your / your branch to explore?
- **Leaving a lasting glow.** A star guides travellers long after they first spot it on the horizon. Thinking of our national programmes, global programmes, and local outreach, what kind of legacy do you / your branch hope to leave for the next generation of Mothers' Union members and the families we serve?

Music: Be Thou My Vision (Ancient Irish Hymn) / Way Maker (Sinach).

Closing Prayer & Sending Out Music

Lord Jesus Christ,
You are the light that no darkness can overcome.
Just as the Magi returned home by a different way,
send us out from this time of reflection renewed in purpose and hope.
Bless our homes, our branches, and our communities.
Give us wisdom to nurture the young, compassion to walk alongside those who struggle, and courage to stand up for safety, freedom, and family life.
May our lives reflect your grace, lighting the way for generations to come.
Amen.

Music: We Three Kings of Orient Are (John Henry Hopkins Jr.) / The Blessing (Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes & Elevation Worship)

Creative Table Activities

1. Star-Words for the Year Ahead

- **What you need:** Pre-cut paper or card stars (in gold, silver, or blue) and pens.
- **Branch Activity:** Write a single guiding word on the back of each star before the meeting (e.g., *Hope, Welcome, Courage, Patience, Joy, Listen, Nurture*). Place them face down around a central candle. Invite each member to choose a star blindly, trusting that God will use that word to guide their prayers and service in 2027. Members can share why their word resonates with them and place the star in their Bible or prayer diary at home.
- **At Home:** Cut out a paper star, choose a word that reflects how you hope to "light the way" for others this year, and place it somewhere visible, such as on a windowsill or fridge, as a daily prompt to pray for families.

2. Lighting the Path of Generations

- **What you need:** A long strip of blue or dark purple paper (representing the night sky) laid down the middle of the table, battery-operated tea lights, and small gold star stickers.
- **Branch Activity:** As members share stories from the 150th anniversary or name people who inspired their Mothers' Union membership, invite them to place a gold star on the paper sky to honour the past. Next, ask members to place a lit tea light along the path to represent their prayers and hopes for younger generations, watching the table gradually fill with light.
- **At Home:** Place a single candle or tea light on a dark cloth or coaster. As you light it, name aloud or write down the names of family members, godchildren, or young people in your parish whom you are holding in prayer for the year ahead.

3. The Three Treasure Chests

- **What you need:** Three small boxes, baskets, or bowls labelled Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh, plus slips of paper and pens.
- **Branch Activity:** Connect the Magi's gifts to your branch's support for the national programmes, global programmes, and local mission in 2027. Invite members to write ideas on slips of paper and drop them into the matching box:

- **Gold (Practical Support & Generosity):** Ideas for fundraising or donating towards AFIA breaks, Prisons Work baby packs, any of our global programmes, or local family projects.
- **Frankincense (Prayer & Worship):** Prayers for prisoners' families, survivors of abuse, and people trapped in modern slavery. Prayers for the local work happening in your Wave of Prayer link dioceses.
- **Myrrh (Care, Advocacy & Healing):** Ways to raise awareness for RISE UP (Domestic Abuse) and FREE (Modern Slavery) or comfort people experiencing bereavement and hardship.
- Read a few slips from each box as part of your closing prayers.

- **At Home:** Take three small envelopes or slips of paper and write down one practical act of generosity (Gold), one situation, national programme, or global programme to pray for (Frankincense), and one person who needs comfort or a phone call (Myrrh) this month.

4. 'Going Home Another Way' Footprint Cards

- **What you need:** Card cut into simple footprint shapes (or stepping stones) and pens.
- **Branch Activity:** Reflecting on how the Magi returned home by a different route after meeting Jesus, give each member a footprint card. Ask them to write or draw one small, new step they or the branch could take in 2027 to share the Mothers' Union story. Lay the footprints in a path leading away from the central candle toward the door of the meeting room.
- **At Home:** Trace around your shoe or draw a stepping stone in your journal or bible. Inside it, write one fresh habit of prayer, hospitality, or community service you feel called to step into this year.

