

# MIAmia

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ANGLICAN  
MOTHERS UNION  
AUSTRALIA



*The LORD is like a father to his children,  
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*

PSALM 103:13

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**Vision:** Our vision is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

**Mission:** Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life.

The PURPOSE of Mothers' Union is to be especially concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and Christian family life.

Its AIM is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life.

Its FIVE OBJECTS are:

1. To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding.
2. To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church.
3. To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service.
4. To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children.
5. To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

# MIAmia

A quarterly magazine of  
Anglican Mothers Union Australia.  
Mia Mia is an Aboriginal word for 'home'.

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## Have your say in Mia Mia

Suggestions, comments, contributions  
and insights are welcome.

Please send all correspondence  
to the editor.

Publication in *Mia Mia*  
is at the editor's discretion.

**Theme for next issue:**

Using our gifts

**Deadline for next issue:**

7 July 2023

## Meet our contributors



**Greg Anderson** has been the Bishop of the Northern Territory since late 2014. He has been married to Annette for nearly thirty-five years, and they have four adult children and nearly four grandchildren. Greg's recently deceased mother was a devoted member of MU Australia, having been part of Dundas branch (linked with St Peter's Curdridge in south England) for many decades. Greg has read *Mia Mia* all his life. Greg and Annette had previous experience of the Territory as CMS missionaries for twelve years, working at Nungalinga College, Darwin (where Annette now teaches) and for the Diocese of the NT. A key feature of the Territory Anglican church is the cultural mix, with nearly half of the parishes being remote Aboriginal communities, where church life is carried out in languages other than English. Greg and Annette are both also very involved in the musical life of Darwin.



**Heather Little** was born Sydney in 1943. She was educated with an aboriginal tribe in southern NSW, then Nowra High School. From there she studied medicine at the University of Sydney and graduated MB BS (Hons) in 1966. For most of her career Heather was in private General Practice. Heather lives at Palm Beach and attends Burleigh Heads Anglican Church, where she is the secretary of Gold Coast South branch of MU.

Heather has three adult children and five grandchildren. Now retired, her hobbies are quilting, embroidery and croquet. A few years ago she co-authored two published books. *Rahab – a woman for her time* is her first attempt at writing fiction, although she has several more stories in the pipeline.



**Valsa Mathew** migrated to Australia, from Kerala, India, in the 70's with her husband Dr Kuruvilla Mathew and her three children. She worked in India as an electrical engineer for 13 years. After coming to Australia, she opted to be a full-time mother caring for the family. She

worships at St Andrews Anglican Church, Riverton – Shelley in Perth, and is a member of the Mothers Union there. Valsa is also a *tearfund* representative and mission secretary to the parish. At home she manages a productive vegetable garden with fruit trees, both tropical and local, as well as a mini chicken coop, with egg-laying chooks. Sharing fruit and vegetables and fresh eggs to friends and neighbours is her pleasure. Valsa delights in the Word of God, taking time in morning devotions that leads to her writing short poems on various themes, which is her way of expressing and sharing faith.



**Joan Maude** is a member of MU in Adelaide. She and Michael, her husband of 61 years, have 5 adult children, 16 grand-children and 4 great-grand-children. Michael's work took them to a number of places around Australia, and in 'retirement' they served the church as

volunteers in the diocese of North West Australia.

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# The Editor writes

**H**ow do you like to spend the winter? Taking brisk walks outdoors in the cold, crisp air? Basking on a northern beach? Snuggling by a warm fire with a mug of hot chocolate and a good book? However you like to spend it, winter is often an opportunity to slow down and take a breath after the hectic months between November and April. This issue of *Mia Mia* invites us to do just that. The theme, 'faithfulness', especially God's faithfulness to us, invites us to *read, mark, learn and inwardly digest* some of the wonderful facets of God's character. In his study of the Prodigal Son, Bishop Greg Anderson reflects on God's faithfulness, patience and kindness and our Hymn Workout takes a look at God our Shepherd as expressed in a hymn based on Psalm 23. Karen Hayden, Joan Maude, Eleanor Higgins and Ailsa Gill share stories of God's faithfulness and our regular contributors remind us of the great privilege we enjoy as Christians, and members of Mothers Union, to serve God faithfully.

I hope you enjoy praying through the Lord's Prayer using the ideas from the Mary Sumner House series, *Praying with purpose*. I am also very excited to be able include versions of this, our 'family prayer', in some of the languages spoken by our First Nations peoples, and more-recently arrived brothers and sisters whose first language is not English. (For these I am indebted to a number of people who helped me in my research). As you read each one, why not pause to thank God that the gospel has spread throughout the world and that the Bible is available in many languages? You might also pray for the different people-groups represented.



Some have fled war and trauma and are seeking to establish themselves and their families in a very different context in Australia. Some feel left out and misunderstood by mainstream society. All are seeking to live as faithful 'limbs' in the body of Christ and to bring up their children and grandchildren to know and love Jesus. (Hint: might this be an activity for a meeting?).

Contributions from you, members and friends of Mothers Union, round out this issue. It's always encouraging to learn what groups are doing to promote the Aim and Objectives of AMUA. Several of our members share their poems, and in a first, we have a short story in which Heather Little imagines what might have been Rahab's experience of God's faithfulness.

I hope that this winter, far from being cold and dreary, is a time of rest and refreshment for you, and that you enjoy the 'slow food for the soul' in the pages of this issue of *Mia Mia*.

## Christine



### Matthew (Mathayo) 6:9-13 in Dinka, Bor

**9** Yen yaka loŋ wuola; Awadan to nhial,  
Rinku aabike ya rieü.

**10** Cok ceŋdu cok bo.  
Ye piöndu cok loi piny nom ne cit piny nhial.

**11** Ye wo miöc ne yekole buk ya cam.

**12** Ye wo puol ne kanykuo,  
ci man ye wo kanykuo pal koc.

**13** Duöne wo cok ye them, ku ye wo luok ne kerac:  
ceŋ ee kedu, rier ee kedu, nuöm ee kedu athæe.

Amen.





## The President writes...

**F**aithfulness – what a wonderful topic to focus on through the winter when you may have more time to be out of the cold, enjoying the warmth of the indoors!

Thinking about faithfulness brings to mind an example of Christian faithfulness which occurred when I was a first-year student nurse working in the aged care facility attached to my training hospital. While looking after an elderly lady, Mrs B, who had spinal injuries and was encased in plaster, I noticed her prayer book and bible open on her bedside. We began talking about faith matters while I provided care (we were certainly not allowed time to idly chat with patients, nurses always had to be busy). Mrs B shared ways in which she had lived out her faith during her life, as well as encouraging me in my faith. One day, with some indignation, she recounted how yesterday, a visitor from her church had commiserated with her about her current state of immobility and how this was preventing her from doing God's work. Mrs B exclaimed, 'I can still pray for others and God's work in the world!' Such an amazing faithful lady amidst the difficulties of her current condition.

According to my Oxford Dictionary, faithfulness is associated with being loyal, trustworthy and constant, showing faith as believers in a religion<sup>1</sup>. Despite her limitations, Mrs B certainly exhibited these qualities. As Christians and MU members we are called to be faithful to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ as found in the gospel.

Our five objectives pledge us to action embedded in faithfulness to the gospel. The objectives begin with a direct reference to Christ's teaching and from that, the actions to which MU members are committed. When we hear of people receiving MU badges for 25, 50 or 60 years, or scrolls for other significant years of membership, these milestones give us an opportunity to pause

and reflect on the recipient's faithfulness to the objectives of Mothers Union.

However, while prolonged years of faithful service in a particular position in the wider church are applauded, there should be an expectation that the person in that position works to pass on their skills and knowledge to others. This would mean that new people with new ideas can be included and mentored into positions, rather than a particular position begin continually held by one person.

I wonder if faithful service in MU can become too inward looking, less willing to be more flexible, such as changing meeting times to accommodate the needs of the working generations, those that come after us and are currently missing from our membership. MU in Australia is at a crossroads. As an organisation committed to Jesus' teaching, we either become more outward looking, or we die out with the current generation.

While we have been and continue to be faithful members of MU, are we authentic to generations of potential MU members? What can we do differently to share our journey of faithfulness with others? I leave you with these few thoughts to ponder personally and to discuss in your branches.

**Robin Ray**

1. Fowler, H., Fowler, F., & Thompson, D. (1995). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.







# Faithfulness... a relationship essential

The members' faithfulness to our organisation is evident when Mothers' Union comes up in conversation. I'm blessed to hear long-time members' stories of years gone by, their involvement and the contributions they, or sometimes their mothers or grandmothers, have made. The local members' memories of their centenary celebrations at Holy Trinity, Mackay, are shared with pride and joy and are among those conversations and stories which enticed me to learn more about Mothers' Union and, eventually, to get involved and become a member myself.

After attending only a few local meetings, I travelled to Townsville to the North Queensland Conference in 2019. It quickly became apparent that the faithfulness members have to Mothers Union was not unique to my home town. Not long after arriving at the conference I was surrounded by members from different branches, communities, cultures and backgrounds. The room was full of faith, dedication and loyalty to Mothers' Union. And the support, friendship and love the members shared with each other was enlightening to see, and this gave me hope that faithfulness is still alive in the world today.

As I travelled the five-hour journey home, I imagined how my parenthood journey would have been different if faithfulness were more present every day. How good would it be if every sport training day, dance practice and school pick-up were filled with the same vibe as that MU Conference?

Many news stories have the potential to desensitise us from the pressing problems in our society. Our families are exposed to 24-hour news stories about celebrities or community and business leaders that program or condition us to believe that unfaithfulness is somewhat normal and acceptable in today's society.

The number of families of fulltime working parents is increasing. This is decreasing the time parents are spending with their children. Society is also spending more time preoccupied with mobile phones and other devices. Considering these two factors, it is no wonder that we see children misbehaving while their parent or caregiver is preoccupied. I can't help thinking that children

today are not feeling the devotion their parents or caregivers have for them. I wonder how great an effect this is having on their children's mental health, behaviour, educational outcomes and also to the increase of youth crime.

The modern world has opened up new challenges for families and relationships which the generations before us didn't have. For example, the increased use of on-line dating applications has opened up another level of trust and loyalty which hinders families. The temptation to meet someone outside the family or marriage proves to be easy and convenient in today's society. According to the latest study by GlobalWebIndex, 30% of on-line dating users are married, while another 12% are in a relationship. Now, one would like to think that all parties involved are aware of the situation, but it's difficult to believe that this would always be the case.

Faithfulness is the foundation of healthy family relationships. We need to support and encourage families to remain focused on these foundations and to remind them that their children are learning from their actions and attitudes. Parents need to have open, age-appropriate conversations when their children are exposed to news stories, or scenarios, which normalise the absence of faithfulness. Many of us fear for the future of the younger generation, who appear to have no faith in the Christian religion.

Please pray for every family to be filled with faithfulness, loyalty, dedication and devotion to each other. And I encourage all MU members to continue to share our faith with those they meet every day.

**Kristi Day**



Photo credit: National Cancer Institute on Unsplash



## Faith is belief, assurance of God's word and all that he has done. Faithfulness is living in accord with that truth

Let me share with you the story of a modern-day woman of faith. She farms with her husband in a small rural community 273km from Perth in Western Australia. As a child, there were three churches in her home town: Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian. Priests lived in the town, there were regular services, Sunday Schools and scripture at primary school each week. The Anglican church ladies held an annual bazaar in which the whole town became involved, irrespective of which church they each attended on Sunday.

The three buildings still stand. The Catholic church has long been sold and is used for private purposes. The Presbyterian (later Uniting) church was declared unsafe many years ago and sits vacant on its street corner. The Anglican church stands also on its street corner, ready for services but without a congregation. The only use the church has seen in recent years has been for an occasional funeral, and even these are mostly held in Perth as this is where the majority of family members are.

Unable to access worship within her own community it would be so easy for her to let her faith go. And yet she does not. Each week she travels 25 minutes to a neighbouring town to attend an interdenominational Bible study with a small group of women who also have no other regular access to a faith community. For this woman, and the three or four others that she gathers with, the Bible study is her church, her worshipping community. Where others have fallen away, she has maintained her faithfulness, living out her belief in the assurances of God's word.

So too in our Bible (and indeed in the stories of our Christian tradition) there are women who have demonstrated their faithfulness at times when others have fallen away. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion, a group of women demonstrated their faithfulness at the foot of the cross. When even the disciples fell away, these women did not. They lived out their belief in the assurance of God's word and accompanied Jesus, standing as close as they were allowed:

*'Many of the women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him' (Matthew 27.55 NRSV)*

It was two of these women who were the first to learn of Jesus' resurrection at the empty tomb. Matthew tells us that they were charged with three things – to not be afraid; to look into the empty tomb where he had been laid, and to share the good news that Jesus had risen and would see them in Galilee with those who had fallen away.. That we are here today as Christians is testament to these women who were steadfast in their faithfulness and accepted the charge given them.

As members of Mothers Union, we too have been given a charge: to live out the aim and objectives of our organisation, not just at our meetings and gatherings, but in our daily lives; to take as an example the steadfast faithfulness of the Marys and the other women in the Bible, and to continue to follow the example set by the steadfast faithfulness of our Mary (Sumner), the founder of Mothers' Union.

In her foreword to the 1950 edition of 'Mary Sumner, Her Life and Times', Mrs Fisher (then Central President of the Mothers' Union) described the message in the book as one of

*Christian obedience, faith, patience, courage and devotion.*

*Obedience to the Heavenly vision and call.*

*Faith and Patience-through nearly forty years of united prayer and waiting.*

*Courage-in overcoming her own initial shyness and other people's prejudice against women speaking publicly.*

*And devotion through the long years of her life, to the great cause which God had committed her.*

Let us, as modern people of faith, live in Christian obedience, patience, courage and devotion.

**Wendy Mabey**







# The Lord is good



Photo credit: Conger Design on Pixabay

***For the Lord is good;  
His loving kindness is everlasting  
and His faithfulness to all generations.***  
Psalm 100:5

We are assured of God's steadfast love and faithfulness in numerous Bible verses. We experience this in our daily lives. Saint Augustine taught that God's love is personal. God loves each one of us as if we were the only one. Even when we don't value ourselves — He still values each and every person. How do we react to that faithfulness? Do we serve God faithfully?

Looking at conditions in our society makes us realise there is a great need to share this wonderful faithfulness with others. We cannot rest easy in our beds while people, including children, are homeless, people do not have enough to eat, people live in poverty and despair. We cannot turn a blind eye to exploitation of children and vulnerable people. We cannot condone violence in any form.

Much has been said about an increase in youth crime in my particular area. Young people are stealing cars in broad daylight, smashing property and assaulting elderly and vulnerable disabled people. I hear comments like, 'The police aren't doing their job,' and 'They should lock them all up,' and 'Why isn't the government doing something about this?' When I mention an increase in youth homelessness, I am met with calls to 'Send the little pests home to their parents,' or 'Put them in the Army,' and sometimes other rather dire proposals.

Do these comments help? I don't know how you feel, but it makes me sad that we cannot find solutions instead of criticism. There is need for more social and low-cost housing. There is need for youth support services and workers, just as there is a need for greater support for the elderly and all vulnerable members of our society. There is need now, more than ever, to speak out and to contact leaders and politicians to call for action.

There is a need for prayer.

You may ask yourself, 'How will that help?' You may feel it's all too much. There have been times when I've almost given up. God will provide you with courage and hope. One of the biggest lessons I have learned is to depend on God to give me confidence. When you are in need of encouragement, don't give up, and know that you are not alone. He will give you the strength you need.

**Susan Skowronski**



## ***Matthew (Methyu) 6:9-13 in Kriol***

**9** "Wen yu prei, yu garra tok lagijat. 'Dedi langa hebin, yu neim im brabli haibala, en melabat nomo wandim enibodi garra yusum yu neim nogudbalawei.

**10** Melabat wandim yu garra kaman en jidan bos langa melabat, en melabat wandim ola pipul iya langa ebri kantri garra irrim yu wed en teiknodis langa yu seimwei laik olabat dum deya langa hebin.

**11** Melabat askim yu blanga gibit melabat daga blanga dagat tudei.

**12** Melabat larramgo fri detlot pipul hu dumbat nogudbala ting langa melabat, en melabat askim yu blanga larramgo melabat fri du.

**13** Melabat askim yu nomo blanga larram enijing testimbat melabat brabli adbalawei, en yu nomo larram Seitin deigidawei melabat brom yu.'







# The fruit of the Spirit is ...faithfulness

Do you have favourite stories about Jesus from the gospels? I love the description of him reaching out to touch the leper in pity (Mark 1:41). Or his gentle words to the woman taken in adultery 'then neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more' (John 9:11). Or his words to the dying thief, 'Today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:43). Or his words of compassion and hope to the widow of Nain at the death of her only son, 'Do not weep', before he raised the young man from death (Luke 7:13).

The Spirit of Jesus is in the heart of every Christian, teaching us to have his character. These are not really things you can make rules about. They are the qualities of being a Christian. Take faithfulness. When we know God he gives us his wonderful promises and we know that we can trust him entirely because he is faithful. He keeps his promises, he will not abandon us or forget us. He never lets us down or tells lies.

There are moments which all of us experience (I have quite a few myself) when we feel so desperate, weak and vulnerable and we begin to doubt. All we can do is package up our anxieties, and, remembering the words of Jesus himself, bring them to him. He said, 'Come to me all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls' (Matthew 11:28-29). These are such precious, comforting words.

Photo credit: Charlotte Coneybeer on Unsplash



We take our sins to him and he forgives them; we take our hurts to him and he heals them; we take our fears to him and he gives us strength to go on.

Our Lord is faithful.

That is why faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit. It needs to be a constant part of your life and mine. We often forget that, especially when we take God for granted.

Just think of the opposite for a minute. I guess we have all known faithless people or people who have succumbed to faithlessness. It may be in business; it may be in marriage; it may be among neighbours. But whatever the situation, when someone fails to keep their promises, it can be so hurtful and disappointing. It changes the way we live our lives. Promises help us to bring order out of the chaos of our world. When promises are broken, disorder breaks in and we become unsure of where we stand. We become cynical and distrustful.

Why are people faithless? Some people think only of themselves, and they don't like admitting they made mistakes and have to apologise. We need to recognise that being faithful to your word and being faithful in relationships can be very costly. It requires a confidence in God to live faithfully. It can be very humbling.

Faithfulness is the bedrock of relationships. As Christians we need to be known for our faithfulness. We need to be trustworthy, like Jesus. There are times when it seems too hard.

Confronting his death, the Lord Jesus showed his faithfulness to his Father, and his faithfulness to those whom he had come to save. In the Easter story we read how Jesus, while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, said, 'not my will but your will be done'. That shows the faithfulness of the Son of God. That faithfulness, that keeping of his word, was the very basis of our salvation.

At the same time, we see faithlessness at work as well. We see Judas betraying his friend and Lord; we see the disciples fleeing and Peter denying the Lord, after they had promised to stand by him.

There are times when we are like that, when we let God down and we might even pretend he can't see us and his word doesn't matter. But if God counts for anything in our lives, we realise we need to ask for his forgiveness. We aren't perfect, are we?

That is why two of my favourite verses run like this: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 8-9).

Thank God for his faithfulness. May his Holy Spirit make us faithful too!

**Christine Jensen**



**Matthew (မဒဲ) 6:9-13 in Karen, Sgaw**

**၉** မသးဒ်န့ဒီးဘိထုကဖပ်တၢ်ဒ်အံၤ, အိၣ်  
လၢမူခိၣ် ပပၢ်ဧၤ, မနမၤဘၣ်တၢ်ဟံစီဆ့အီၤ  
တက့ၢ်. နဘီ နမုၢ်န့ၣ်မအဟဲတက့ၢ်.

**၁၀** ဒ်လၢမူခိၣ်အသိးန့ၣ် မတၢ်မၤ အသးလၢ  
ဟီၣ်ခိၣ်ချၢစ့ၢ်ကီး ဖဲဒ်နသးတက့ၢ်.

**၁၁** ကိၣ် လၢတနံၤအဂီၢ်တနံၤအဂီၢ်န့ၣ် ဟ့ၣ်  
လီၤလၢ်ပုၤလၢမုၢ် မဆါတနံၤအံၤတက့ၢ်.

**၁၂** ပျၢ်လၢ်ပကမၢ်ဒ်ပပျၢ်ကွံၣ်ပုၤ ဂၤအကမၢ်  
အိၣ်ဒီးပုၤအသိးန့ၣ်တက့ၢ်.

**၁၃** သုတဒုးလဲၤ န့ၣ်ပုၤဆူတၢ်လုပစီအပူၤတ  
ဂ့ၤ. မ့မ့ၢ်ထုးထီၣ်ကွံၣ်ပုၤ လၢတၢ်အါတၢ်သီအ  
ပူၤတက့ၢ်.



## The word

Word is communication,  
Word is expression,  
Word is description,  
Word is life in action.

Word of God is revelation,  
Word of God raised the Creation,  
Word of God is our Salvation,  
Word of God is Christ in action.

Word of God took human flesh,  
Born as a baby in Bethlehem,  
Walked on Earth full of grace,  
Healed the sick and raised the dead.

'Love God and love each other,  
He has taught us and he lived it,  
'Love your enemies and care for them,  
Forgiving each other and praying for them'.

He didn't come to judge  
He came only to save,  
Paying the debt we couldn't pay,  
Bearing the pain we couldn't bear.

Death on the cross and the resurrection  
Opened a new way, a new year  
'The year of the Lord's favour',  
To belong to God and to his favour.

God has spoken, the Word was spoken,  
A life was lived out setting us free,  
Death is conquered, new life begun,  
Bringing peace on Earth and goodwill to all.

Valsa Mathew



# God the Father: faithful, patient and kind

The parable of the Prodigal (spendthrift) Son, found in Luke 15:11-32, must be one of the most famous in the Bible, and for good reason. The story of a son who makes a mockery of his father's honour and then reaches rock bottom as a consequence of his reckless behaviour, and of a father who can not only accept and forgive the returning son, but actually celebrate his crestfallen homecoming, touches our hearts. People have suggested that a better title might be The Two Sons, because the reason Jesus tells the story is expressed in the contrast between the welcoming response of the father, and the older son's bitter resentment of the father's graciousness. Jesus tells the story because he has been getting complaints that he is welcoming the wrong kind of people – his point in telling the story is that the complainants are like the older son. Jesus' own ministry is like the waiting father, and of course there should be rejoicing, not complaints, when people repent and receive restoration.

The parable dramatises Jesus' own ministry, but of course it paints a picture also of God our own heavenly Father. It was the Father, after all, who sent Jesus into the world for the exact purpose of providing a way back for the wanderers and worse – which we all were! Jesus embodies and brings about the plan of God that is rooted in God's kindness and patience. And the story implies a call to us to follow our Father's example in welcoming back those who have had their own rock-bottom experience, who have sold the family silver, who have treated with contempt what they should have held dear.

A quick read-over of a familiar parable, however, can hide some important parts of the story, that highlight further the generosity of God in Christ that the story depicts. Three come to my mind:



Photo credit: Jeff Jacobs on Pixabay

- When the father divides the property between his sons, and the prodigal squanders it, it is gone for good. When the son is restored, the property isn't. The cost of losing that share of the property remains. When God acts in Jesus to provide forgiveness for us, there is genuine cost – God does not just 'magic away' our sin, it is carried by the saviour. It would not be just for God to treat good and evil, respect and dishonouring, as though they were equal. But God bears that cost personally.
- When the father first sees the returning son, he is still just a speck in the distance – perhaps you would hardly notice if you weren't already searching the horizon. And at that point the father leaves the homestead himself and runs to meet his son – perhaps he has no honour left to lose after what has happened, but to run is not what a respected man of his community would do. The joy of receiving back his son surpasses society's sneers. Reconciliation trumps respectability. A different god might not want to compromise his position, but our God knows all about humility and hostile opinions.
- When the returning son practises his homecoming speech, he plans his own kind of restitution – 'I'm no longer worthy to be called your son, treat me like a



hired servant'. This would at least have left him with a better deal than starving at the pig farm and given him some degree of place and position. But his father's welcome takes the words out of his mouth – the son recognises that there is no deal to be made, but only forgiveness and reconciliation to be accepted. The father's kindness is absolute.

What a wonderful welcome we have received, and what a wonderful welcome we can extend, as we take hold of and share God's saving work in Jesus!

For further reflection or sharing with others:

- Do you have a story to share that resonates with the experience of either the younger brother or the older brother? How did that story end (if it has)?
- Where do you see God's honour being threatened as the Good News is spread out?
- In what ways can our interaction with God slip into the 'deal-making' of 'make me like one of your hired servants'?
- Is there a cost that you feel you have borne by being an ambassador of the welcoming work of God in Christ?
- Spend some time with God revelling in the joy of his forgiveness and acceptance!

**Rt Rev'd Dr. Greg Anderson**



## 'I will not forsake you'

When things get too crazy, when they overwhelm to the point of despair  
It is good to remember that God...  
...IS ALWAYS WITH US

That He will never be unfaithful...He will never leave us...AND that's something to hang on to!!!

I just need to trust Him...trust Him to be there...trust Him to bring me safely through...to the other side  
Trust Him that when He says His power is enough for me...that 'His strength is made perfect in my weakness'...that through Him...

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE  
And that I need nothing more than His presence in my life...  
TRUST HIM THAT HE LOVES ME!!!

When I don't understand why things are the way they are... CAN TRUST HIM BECAUSE HE loves me...EVEN ME!!!

No matter how many times I fall  
I will not give up!!  
God is with me AND He WILL NEVER give up on me...there is nothing I cannot handle...for He will hold me.  
He will catch me.  
I can live in confidence AND NOT FEAR!  
I am safe and secure in the knowing...  
MY GOD IS THERE!!!

I can step out and meet the day, EVERY DAY, whatever it brings...  
FOR HE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME.  
HE WILL NEVER FORSAKE ME.

Gwen Wright

# Rahab – woman for her time

*Market Day, Jericho in South Canaan  
circa 1406 BC.*

The day is hot. I must hurry to seek a quiet, cool place to display my wares. At last, I find a shady area near a grove of sycamore trees, away from the jostling buyers and sellers. There are stalls for grain, olives, sweet wines, fresh figs and dried goat meat as well as fresh flax leaves, soft timber and woven fabrics.

The shouts of sellers fill my ears, but I do not shout. I spread my wares – small pouches of flax containing fine dried salt – on a stool. From the nearby sea I carry bags of coarse salt, refine it by rubbing a handful between two stones, then pack this into the flax bags. Each pouch is tied with a red cord made from goat's hair and sheep's wool. My only buyers are women who know how to use the salt to prevent conception. For me it is essential. As a temple prostitute I must not conceive.

My customers are few until three women approach, browsing, then they hesitantly point to my pouches.

They are dressed alike in dull, worn clothing and appear tired, as if they had walked a long way, with few places to rest. They spoke together in a tongue I could not understand, but the oldest of the three women spoke to me in Aramaic, of which I can understand some words. She passed me a coin and I gave her a bag. Then she spoke to one of the younger women, 'Go, Orpah, take this and return home, and may God be with you.' I turn to her, she smiles and whispers, 'Jericho is to be destroyed; we have seen the army on our travels.' I have heard the warning from the spies who visited me. I learnt about the One True God. The two women turn and leave by the gate which takes them to the north, through the valley and towards the city on the mountain. It is now noon; the sun heats the stone pavement and I return to the coolness of my house and a cup of sweet wine.

The next day fear strikes us. The sound of tramping feet, the smell of thick dust, while the buildings vibrate. Each day for 5 more days. We

cannot leave as the gatekeepers have closed us in. Fear gives way to dread. On the 7th day the feet beat incessantly. Suddenly there is a blast of high-pitched notes from a chorus of trumpets, and a terrible roar, followed by the crash of falling rubble. The walls are shattered. I wait. The spies return, taking all my family over the rubble. A man takes my arm and stops my fall. We run, and keep running, until we fall exhausted by a cool stream. We are safe, as the spies had promised. The man who held me returns. His name is Salmon. We pass through the valley, coming to a small village outside the walled city on the mountain.

*Some time later, in Bethlehem*

I have borne a son. 'He is to be called "Boaz"', said my husband, Salmon.

*Time passes.*

My son has now become a man; a farmer. He is prosperous and cares for me, now a widow. One night he does not return home. In the morning, when he returns, he is tired, but elated. 'The harvest is over, so my workers and I celebrated. Wine flowed. Then the woman who gleaned the grain came to my bedroll and lay at my feet.'

'Who is this woman?' I ask. 'Her name is Ruth. She is from Moab; her mother-in-law was married to my cousin'.

*Time passes.*

My eyesight is failing, but I can now hold my grandson, Obed, in my arms.

**Heather Little**



# A new home for Manly Anglicans reflects the faithfulness of God

As a proactive response to our ministry context and for the benefit of the whole Manly community, St Paul's Manly congregation voluntarily opted to sell the site of our current church to enable the expansion of Manly State School and to relocate the parish to the Chapel at Lota House within the E.M. Tooth Memorial Home, just 900 metres down the road. Anglicans have gathered in Manly for over 130 years. During that time we have worshipped in four different locations, reflecting our willingness to adapt to the needs of our wider community. The chapel at Lota House will serve as our fifth place of worship.

The faithfulness of God has been shown to us many times over the past three years as the Principal of Manly State School and Fr Daniel worked collaboratively to navigate the sale of the property and to proceed to settlement. We have demonstrated that anything is possible when positive outcomes for the community remain the focus.

Education Queensland's plans for the site not only offer much-needed space for learning and play, but also include the refurbishment of the church as a Student Performance Centre. Here again we see new life emerging for our sacred space, where the next generation will learn, play and grow. This is our shared legacy of love for our wider Manly community and God's faithfulness at work.



Mothers Union and our craft group, 'Tatters and Chatters', have been meeting at Lota House for the past nine months and have welcomed a number of the residents to our service and meetings. God's faithfulness has shown us the path to develop an innovative model of faith community centred on intergenerational community development. The final Sunday service was held at St Paul's on Palm Sunday this year. The congregation then walked to the new chapel in a symbolic representation of Jesus' walk into Jerusalem. Easter Day marked our new beginning in Lota House.

We do not live in the past, but the past very much lives in us. All that St Paul's represents, all that has been offered by those who have come before us, all that God has called us to be continues in the hearts and prayers of the current community. We have been comforted by the faithfulness of God throughout this, at times, very difficult journey.

**Ailsa Gill**





Photo credit: Aaron Burden on Unsplash

## God's faithfulness in 'Ordinary Time'

The first half of the church year is quite busy. We move from Advent to Christmas, from Christmas to Lent, Lent to Easter and Easter to Pentecost! These seasons are filled with exciting services and constantly changing colours. By comparison, 'Ordinary Time' can seem kind of average and well, ordinary. But the term 'ordinary' comes from the fact that these weeks are numbered or ordered. When we follow Jesus our lives are anything but ordinary! And so this is a season for reflecting on God's faithfulness and what it means to be a Christian. It is a time for exercising the muscles of our faith and of building each other up. Here are some ideas for making ordinary time an extraordinary experience with the young people you come into contact with.

### Nibbles

The colour for Ordinary time is Green, reflecting life, growth and hope. Living in Australia, though, means that we enter Ordinary time in winter which might seem like a contradiction. But while many trees have lost their leaves, there are still signs of life around us. Go for a walk with your young person and see what you can spot. Praise God who brings life and sustains life, who is faithful through every season.

At church, take a look around and spot together all the signs of God's faithfulness and the church's witness over the years. What stories do the plaques and people tell? How do they lead us to praise God?

### Bites

Prayer is vital to sustaining our faith. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples is perhaps the most well-known prayer in

the whole world. Take time to learn it together by heart as a family. Share with the children and teens in your life how you first learnt the Lord's prayer and what it's meant to you through the years. Read Matthew 6:5-15 and discuss what else Jesus said about prayer. Write each line of the Lord's prayer on a strip of paper and then use them to make a paper chain. See how long you can make the chain by adding a prayer each time you meet together.

### Chomps

The bible is packed full of stories about God's faithfulness through the generations. Choose a wall in your home or church and through the season of ordinary time, slowly fill it with drawings and details of the key Old and New Testament figures to whom God was faithful. Get creative. Make them silly or serious. If drawing is an obstacle, find an old kids' bible and cut out the pictures to make a collage. Add key words and scripture verses to highlight that person's story and character. Organise the posters into a timeline, demonstrating God's faithfulness through the years. Or into a family tree, reminding us



of how we are all connected through our faith in God. Add in pictures of your own family members and of other key Christian figures who have helped point you back to Christ.

**Rev. Suzannah Daniels**



Photo credit: Annie Spratt on Unsplash.jpg

# Following God's nudges to leadership

I am now 4 months into my appointment as Diocesan President for Mothers Union, Melbourne Diocese. Being asked to consider the role took me unawares, but, looking back, as often happens with life's 'signposts', I can see where God has nudged me along, to where I am today.

Coming from a Christian upbringing (my mother and grandmother taught me parables and hymns, the Christian way of life), and going to Sunday School a couple of times with my neighbours, it wasn't until I was 15, when I was asked by my new set of school friends if I would like to be a Sunday School teacher, that I 'officially' joined a church. After a while, I thought I had better start attending services, to learn more about what I am teaching these young people! So started my 'formal' faith journey in 1978, becoming more and more involved in my church life as the years passed.

It was 2001, in notices at the end of one of our services, that the Vicar announced that our Mothers Union branch was holding a meeting. Unsure of their future, and whether they would be able to continue, they were inviting people to come along to their next meeting. I looked at my husband and said, 'Oh no, I have to go along; we can't just let them finish up without doing anything.' Up to that point I had only been aware of Mothers Union as a name, and that my husband Martin's mother, Eira Hayden, had been an MU stalwart for over 50 years, both in England, and when they came out to Australia, in 1958. I went along, got involved, and our branch continued for another 10 years! When we did finally close, I continued paying my subscription, but did not join another branch, as by that time, I was very involved with Vestry, supporting my Vicar, doing all the other things life brings your way, and felt I just didn't have time to be involved in anything else.

At the start of 2020, just before Covid hit, and being Parish Secretary at the time, I opened a card from the MU branch of a neighbouring parish. They were inviting any ladies interested in coming along to attend one of their meetings, and I felt God nudging me, telling me it was time to get back involved again.

I reconnected with MU members I knew, met new members, and was asked, and after considerable prayer (I had so many things I was doing) accepted the position of Southern Region co-ordinator, which meant I then attended Executive meetings. It was during this time I was asked to consider the DP appointment. So here I am now, not without a few trepidations, but with a strong sense that this is where I should be.

At the moment, I am going to as many branches and events as I am able to, getting to know members, and what their branches are doing. As I am visiting, I see how important communication between our branches, and the passing on of information is. I believe that through communication comes a strong connection between us, and from that connection comes a sense of belonging, of being part of the world-wide Mothers Union movement.

I look forward to this new journey in my faith. I have much to learn, and much I want to do in assisting



the promotion of MU, in furthering Mary Sumner's vision, and looking for new directions we need to take to ensure MU remains a vibrant part of our Christian faith.

**Karen Hayden**



## **Matthew 6:9-13 in the Plain English Version**

'God, our father, you live in heaven.

We want everyone to respect you.

We want you to be everyone's boss.

We want everyone in the world to do what you want, just like everyone in heaven does what you want.

Please give us the food that we need each day.

Please don't punish us for the bad things that we did, just like we don't do payback to the people that did bad things to us.

Don't let anything push us to do bad things.

And keep us safe from the devil, the boss over the bad spirits.'





# God's hedge

As Christians, throughout our life our primary aim, and our desire for the lives of those entrusted to us, is to be faithful to the Lord, our God. We are to be faithful and 'full of faith'.

As members of Mothers Union aiming to fulfil our mission of 'Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life', come with me to the time around 600-700 BC, which is after the children of Israel had divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and before God banished them into the exile under captivity to the Babylonians.

Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah, prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (from the Southern Kingdom) and Jeroboam, who ruled over the Northern Kingdom. In obedience to God's instructions, he married Gomer, a prostitute, knowing that she would betray his trust. He even gave his children names that reflected this betrayal and failure to maintain the bond of faithfulness.

If we fail the Lord with unfaithfulness in our service and obedience to Him, or if we have loved ones that are not following the Lord in their life, the full story of Hosea traces the cycle of repentance, redemption and restoration. However, I want to concentrate on just one part of one verse that can easily be missed or read past quickly.

As we read, I encourage you to look beyond this book as just being about faithfulness in marriage or the unfaithfulness of Gomer. It was a living example of Israel's unfaithfulness in their living and worship of God, leading to the idolatrous worship of other gods and their subsequent living contrary to God's holy ways.

Hosea 2:6 states *'Therefore I [God] will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.'* (NIV) The New King James version uses the phrase *'Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths.'*

You would have seen many images of the crown of thorns which was placed on Jesus' head during his journey to the cross. In this desert area, one species of acacia has very long, thin and sharp

thorns, which are leaves adapted to the harsh climate. Shepherds used this thorny bush as a temporary corral to provide shelter for their flocks, which served a two-fold purpose. It kept the sheep in each night and stopped them wandering, but it also kept out preying, carnivorous animals, such as the lion and bear, for they would never attempt to jump through such a hedge.

Hosea mentions the 'hedge of thorns' as God's loving protection. It also serves a two-fold purpose, and it is a prayer we can pray for our loved ones who may need this protection. It protects those within from the 'roaring lion looking for someone to devour' (1 Peter 5:8) but it also offers protection for those within from straying; *'I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.'* (Hosea 2:6).



As you pray for your loved ones, friends' loved ones or yourself, take great encouragement that you can ask the Lord to 'hedge their way with thorns' to maintain their important faith walk.<sup>1</sup>

**John Cronshaw**

<sup>1</sup> See (2 Thessalonians 2:16)





# Hymn Workout: The Kindness of the Father

**Reading:** Psalm 23

The God of love my shepherd is,  
And he that doth me feed;  
While he is mine and I am his,  
What can I want or need?

1 John 4: 16, Is. 40:11

Song 6:3  
Ps.23:1, Ps.34:10

He leads me to the tender grass,  
Where I both feed and rest;  
Then to the streams that gently pass:  
In both I have the best.

Ps.23:2

Or if I stray, he doth convert,  
And bring my mind in frame,  
And all this not for my desert,  
But for his holy name.

Ps. 23:3

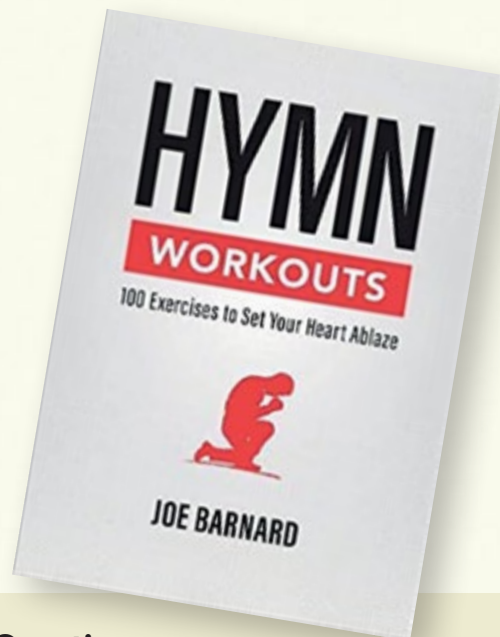
Yea, in death's shady black abode  
Well may I walk, not fear;  
For thou art with me, and thy rod  
To guide, thy staff to bear.

Ps. 23:4

Surely thy sweet and wondrous love  
Shall measure all my days;  
And, as it never shall remove,  
So neither shall my praise.

Isa. 54:10  
Ps. 34:1

GEORGE HERBERT



## Reflection Questions

1. How does a picture of a gentle and kind shepherd help us to reimagine the fatherhood of God?
2. What difference does it make that God's love is motivated by 'his holy name' rather than 'my desert' (ie, what I deserve) (v. 3)?
3. This hymn speaks of God providing us with 'the best'. What does this mean? How can having what is 'best' be different from what we want?

Taken from *Hymn Workouts*, © Joe Barnard, 2022, Christian Focus, Ross-Shire. Used by permission



# Building faith at Garaworra Transitional Housing

My husband Derek and I have been visiting Garaworra Housing, which is an Anglicare Transitional Housing Project, for three and a half years now. People live here who are transitioning from remote communities to live in Darwin. Anglicare provides social workers who support these families, but there is a need for activities that develop life skills and enhance family life and faith in an urban setting. There is a community room in the centre of the property, which I was able to use last year to present a sewing and cooking program over one term at the request of the women.

During the cooking one day one of the women asked me if we could pray and have a devotion each time. Of course, I obliged. Many of the women have come from mission communities and are looking for spiritual encouragement. While we were waiting for the food to cook, there was time for them to talk about their families, people who had died in their remote communities, and things that troubled them in their families. Then we prayed together about these things.

Before Christmas, the women asked that we have a celebration 'about Jesus' So together we planned an event for all the residents, utilising some of the MU Northern Outreach grant money to do some cooking and decorate the community space.



On the day, there were readings in language, a nativity play, where we had a real baby, and songs of worship in different languages. The food they had prepared was served after the service. One Christian woman said 'We must keep this going' meaning the worship and fellowship.

**Rosemary Snibson**

CMS Urban worker in Darwin



## **Luke 11:2-4 in Anindilyakwa**

'Ningkungwanyungwa,' yiki-yaminama,  
'yirru-mamurikajina yirruwa yiki-  
yengbini-yada eningaba-wiya nungkwa-  
langwa-langwa ningkenimikirra, mena  
akwurdukwurda-baba akina ekirra nungkwa-  
langwa. Umba bungkawadina-langwa  
yirruwa-manja nungkuwa.

3 Akwa yiku-kwuna aninga yirraja  
mababurna-langwa mamawura.

4 Akwa yirrumini-yakuwabijina  
awurruwurrariya amurndakibina yirri-  
yama-mulangwa, mena yirrajukwaba  
yirramini-yakuwabijinama awurruwurrariya  
wurrukwa-langwa warnumamalya  
amurndakibina yirrabumini-ngekburakama  
wurrakina. Akwa yirri-ngbudirrkina  
awurrariya-langwa yirruwa,'





# Thy Kingdom Come: Using the Lord's Prayer



*During 'Thy Kingdom Come' we pray for many to experience the love of Christ. Try using the Lord's Prayer to pray for practical ways to share his love with others. You may like to invite friends in your church or local churches to join you in prayer for your community.*

**Pray each of the stanzas as divided below, pausing to reflect on the words before praying and sharing as indicated.**

## **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

Begin by using prayer and Bible verses to bring praise and worship to God, our holy, heavenly Father.



## **your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Share news, hopes and vision for your local community and any specific practical examples of the love of Christ happening in your area.

## **Give us today our daily bread.**

Bring before God ongoing and new prayer needs for your churches and community.

## **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

Admit the need for God's forgiveness for our own shortcomings as a precursor to showing any forgiveness needed e.g. for any who have been a source of harm or damage in the community; or those who may be obstructing change for good.



## **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

Pray for perseverance when initial enthusiasm for change wanes; or opposition is proving to be difficult; when answers to prayer seem slow....

## **For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen**

Finish with praise and an acknowledgement of God's power and majesty etc...

Adapted from [www.mothersunion.org/resources](http://www.mothersunion.org/resources) Used by permission



## Three Ingredient Scones

### INGREDIENTS

- 3½ cups self-raising flour
- 1 cup thickened cream
- 1 cup lemonade (or soda water. If using soda water add 2 tbs sugar)

### METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 200° C (180° fan-forced). Line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Combine ingredients in a bowl and mix with a knife until almost all flour is incorporated.
3. Turn onto floured surface and knead gently 2 or 3 times. Gently pat into a disc approx. 2.5 cm thick.
4. Cut into rounds using a medium-sized scone cutter. (Take care not to twist the cutter and dip cutter into flour between each use).
5. Gently place each scone onto prepared tray, using a metal spatula or knife to help lift. Avoid touching the sides, and place scones close to each other to assist them to rise.
6. Bake until golden brown, approx. 15 mins.
7. Cool on wire rack. Cover with a clean tea-towel to prevent the tops from drying out.
8. Serve with lashings of jam and whipped cream
9. Dried fruit (about ½-¾ cup) can be added to the mix before baking if you wish.



Photo credit: Alexandra Kasper on Unsplash

## Variation: Pumpkin Scones

### INGREDIENTS

- 3-3½ cups self-raising flour
- Large pinch salt
- 1 cup (approx. 300 g) steamed, mashed Kent pumpkin, well-drained and chilled
- ½ cup cream
- ½ cup lemonade (or soda water plus 2 tbs sugar)
- 1 tbs milk
- 1 tsp mixed spice (optional)
- Butter and cinnamon sugar to serve

**METHOD** as for Three Ingredient Scones



## Apricot Fruit Cake

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 small tin (405 mls) apricot nectar
- 2 cups self-raising flour
- 300 grams mixed fruit

### METHOD

1. Soak fruit in juice for 15 mins.
2. Add flour and fruit and mix all until combined.
3. Place in a baking-paper-lined loaf tin and bake for approx. 30-35 mins @ 180°. Cool in tin for approx. 10 mins before turning onto a wire rack to cool completely.

**Helen Krynen**

Perth



# Seize the Day!

## Mothers Union Sydney seminar 2023

Attending the Mothers Union Sydney Seminar is one of my favourite ways to start the year. I've always found it a fantastic mix of both challenge and encouragement that gets me into the right headspace for the year ahead, and this year was no exception. The topic being tackled in 2023 was *Seize the Day: Work and rest in the light of eternity*. It was clearly a subject that interested a wide range of people, with the Cathedral full of women from every life-stage, and with many more joining through the livestream. In all around 900 people registered from all over Australia.

The first speaker was Ruth Schroeter, who took us through Psalm 90. She encouraged us to consider the eternal nature of God and his being our dwelling place and home. We then looked at the problem of our own mortality, and the wisdom of praying like Moses that we would learn to number our days and live as finite beings in light of our eternal God. I was particularly challenged by Ruth to consider how to make our days count, not by our busy striving but in knowing that only God can make our efforts meaningful.

The second talk was given by Paul and Cathy Grimmond on *Days Well Spent*. They thoughtfully reflected on the mixed messages our world can give us about work. Paul very ably gave an overview of the biblical story of work and rest by looking at how God works and rests and works, at how he made work good and that we were made to work and rest in his image. The Fall brought sin that ruins everything, but can be overcome in Christ. Paul's insight into what we consider work



contrasted with what the New Testament means when it speaks of work was very helpful. Chiefly, the work of the Christian is belief in Jesus (John 6:29), and the 'good works' he has prepared for us to do that bring us joy and him glory. In this sense work is not just our job, but all of our life as we work as his disciples in this world, seeking to do good to others as Christ has done good to us rather than to attain status, success or the fulfilling our personal dreams. This will involve both paid and unpaid work. Cathy then encouraged us to take joy in the good works God has given us to do, knowing that the way we work bring glory to Jesus. What a rebuke to the grumpy manner in which I sometimes set about the things I have been given to do!

Another highlight of the seminar this year was hearing from author Jodie McIver about her new book, *Bringing Forth Life: God's purposes in pregnancy and birth*. Jodie is a theologically trained midwife and mother and her book is about where those three aspects of her life collide. It is a great resource for the church as it takes a look at the physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of the process of becoming a mother<sup>1</sup>.

The last speaker this year was author, single mother and full-time worker, Ruth Baker, speaking on *Parenting for The Days to Come*. With humour and graciousness she shared her experience and wisdom in parenting when you don't have much time. She encouraged us to take up the



<sup>1</sup> Available from The Wandering Bookseller and Koorong



responsibility of training up our children in the way they should go and discussed what we should aim to be teaching our kids. Ruth had a mountain of practical wisdom on what it might look like in day-to-day life to be disciplining our children by keeping some big principles in mind. Her encouragement that it's not about being successful but faithful was a great way to finish a wonderful conference.

No review of the Mothers Union Seminar would be complete without a mention of the wonderful members from the Southern Highlands who work so hard to provide morning tea for hundreds of attendees each year. The chocolate tart is a showstopper! Thanks again to Mothers Union for providing this conference for free each year. You can watch all the talks at your leisure on the MU Sydney website.

**Jocelyn Loane**



## Publication news

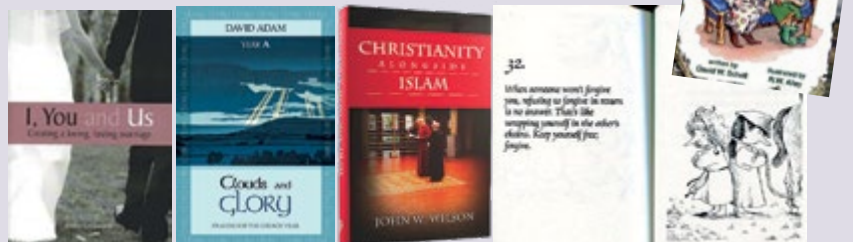
Are you looking for a special card to let someone know that you're thinking of them? Or perhaps an Australia-themed gift for an overseas visitor? Or a book to strengthen your faith, help a couple grow their marriage or comfort a grieving friend? Look no further than your Mothers Union Publication convenor, who can also supply children's Bibles and MU literature and badged items. The warehouse is downsizing soon, so you may even find a bargain! Here's a sample of what's available. Make an offer before they go!

**Rob Kennedy**



**Children's Bibles** postage plus donation  
**52 Things to pray for your kids** \$5 plus postage  
**Time out books** \$2 plus postage  
**Elf (self) help books** \$3 plus postage  
**My season of gratefulness** \$2 plus postage  
**Hello God** \$2 plus postage

Email the Convener at:  
<https://www.muaustralia.org.au/publication>





# Reflections on God's faithfulness

Sitting under a eucalypt with a view of water rippling in the breeze – birds flitting by – no one else nearby – a wonderful environment in which to contemplate God's faithfulness. With nature all around I see God's creation in all its wonder, its intrigue, its detail, according to the season.

As I reflect on my life so far, I am humbled beyond words by how my great God has shown His faithfulness since I first took breath. All the different circumstance of life (one could write a book!) – all the ups and downs – all the 'stuff ups' – all the joys and celebrations – the life-threatening situations – accidents – heart attacks – illnesses – as well as the difficult relationships that come and go. My Heavenly Father has been faithful in every detail of my life.

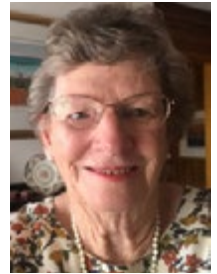
However, it's not a faithfulness that relates to when everything seems to be going my way and perhaps making life easier for me; it's greater and deeper than that. It is the essence of who our Heavenly Father is – His abundant grace and mercy to me and to each one of us who comes to Him and who know His love, grace and forgiveness.

Without doubt your life has presented challenges, as has mine. Are you able to look beyond the circumstances? Our circumstances are all very different – we are different people with different personalities who see different circumstances as challenges and difficulties, but do we always see beyond and see the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father in our lives? It's not that 'my circumstances are worse than theirs', it is that God is faithful in ALL circumstances. 'Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8). His faithfulness, shown in His great love for us in that He sent His one and only Son to die on the cross for me and for you and then to rise again, never changes. He knows every detail in our lives. He cares, and we can bring those details to Him in prayer. The answers may not always be what we think is good at the time. From my experience, it is when I come to the Lord in prayer and ask Him



to lift my eyes beyond myself and look to Him that I can deal with issues 'one day at a time' by relying on Him to 'Give me this day my daily bread' (spiritual sustenance).

My prayer is that as you reflect on God's faithfulness in your life, as I have (many times), that you will see His love, His grace and His mercy and the gift of eternal life that He has given us despite our undeserving sinfulness.



**Joan Maude**

It was August 1973, and my husband and I, together with our three children, aged 11, 8, and 5, were driving to Wilpena Pound in South Australia, towing our van, planning to rendezvous with long-time friends from Perth. We had stopped for a lunch break at Gilgandra on the Newell Highway, when once more on the road, only 15 minutes from Gilgandra, we were approaching a crest when, to our shock, a car appeared over the hill on our side of the road. My husband only had time to steer the car to the left before the oncoming car sideswiped our car and ran into the caravan, smashing it to pieces. Amazingly, we five suffered no physical injuries.

It was almost dark when the police allowed us to retrieve what was salvageable from the wreckage. Occupants of the nearby farm house, who had come to help, offered to accommodate us for the night, for which we were very thankful. It was during this long, sleepless night that I

first encountered the hand of God. Suddenly, I became so very aware of a presence beside me, and a feeling of peace descended over me.

As daylight dawned, I wondered why we had all been spared. What did the future hold for each of us, that we were all saved? We were an ordinary farming family with no aspirations to be anything other than to nurture our soil, stock and ourselves.

As the years have passed, I have witnessed first-hand, God at work through other people and events, to secure, guide, and comfort me and my family as we travel life's road.

I am forever thankful for my faith in our faithful God.

**Eleanor Higgins**

Toowoomba



### Matthew 6:9-13 in Wubuy

9 Numburru-yambina, anijijung numburru-yamana.

‘Nurri-nyinyung Baba, nu-ngu-burraa anaarrwar.

Nirri-manngulg-gana nugawi ana-muwaj.

10 Ngunu-ngaynbandii ba-buunggawa-mana.

Ngunu-ngaynbandii baanbina nugawi-waj ana-lhal-

lhangu-rruj, nguynju nungganbina

wuguuguni anaarrwar.

11 Numbiiyii nurri-wuy ana-marrya

nurru-ngaynbandii ana-yimbaj.

12 Numbaagajij-garruyn anaaladi-wala nurru-wanbini-

yinyung, nguynju narraagajij-garruna warruburru

anaaladi-wala wurru-wanbina nurri-wuy.

13 Yagi numba-rawu anaangadajung. Numba-

milimilidhii anaaladi-wala.’ ”



## Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness,  
O God my Father;  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not,  
Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

### Chorus

*Great is Thy faithfulness!*  
*Great is Thy faithfulness!*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see.*  
*All I have needed thy hand hath provided;*  
*Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter and  
springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in  
their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

### Chorus

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
Thine own dear presence to  
cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright  
hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine,  
with ten thousand beside!

### Chorus

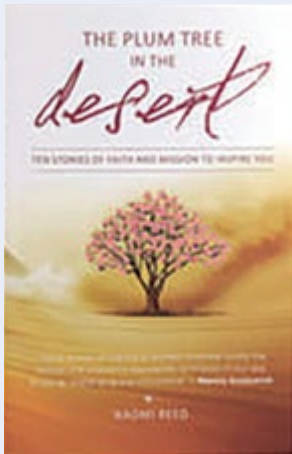
Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923,  
Public Domain



Photo credit: Keisha on Unsplash

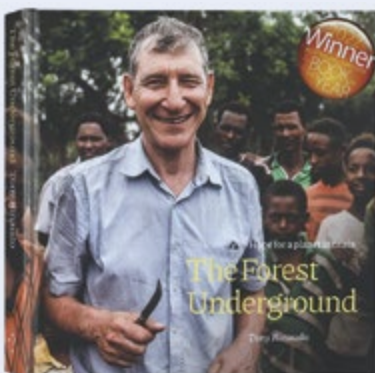
# From my bookshelf

If we ever need reminding that God is faithful, then missionary biographies are a great place to go. I have many on my bookshelf, and have chosen two from my collection to recommend.



As the subtitle of *The Plum Tree in the Desert*, by Naomi Reed, tells us, this is a collection of 'Ten stories of faith and mission to inspire you.' The people behind these stories have all served God cross-culturally under the umbrella of Interserve<sup>1</sup>, and all have weathered many challenges to their faith

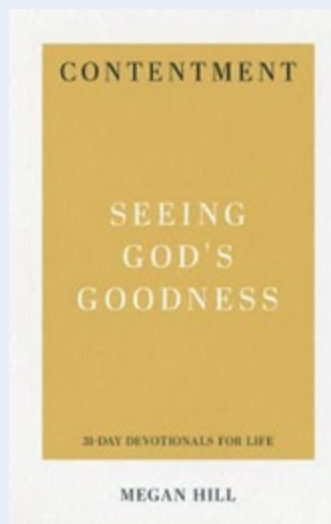
and work. However, each one has seen God at work in and through them. As Naomi says in her introduction, 'Every [Interserve] partner wrote about the goodness of God and what it meant to persevere, to trust him and to keep going even when life became really hard.' (Page 3) Written in Naomi's characteristic 'story-teller' style, this book is easy to read – the chapters are short, and the text is clear – but it is not light-weight. I found my faith and trust in God's faithfulness was both challenged and strengthened. It is a book to keep and re-read many times.



*The Forest Underground* has the distinction of having been named Australian Christian Book of the Year (2022). Beautifully illustrated with photographs of the author, Tony Rinaudo's, work

and friends, this book tells the story of one man's journey of faith and how this led him to rediscover a way of farming in desert regions which has had spectacular results. Beginning with his childhood

in Myrtleford, Victoria, and culminating in his role as spokesman and advocate for FMNR (Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration), Tony tells the story of how God enlarged his faith, called him and his wife, Liz, to missionary service in Niger and, after many frustrating and difficult years trying to replant deforested areas, to recognise the value of coppicing, rather than removing, trees on villagers' farmland. In a world grappling to find answers to climate-change, Tony's work continues to offer a workable solution. As ABC broadcaster, Philip Adams, said, 'As a committed atheist to a committed Christian, I would have to say these results are rather marvellous, wouldn't you?'. And as Tony himself says, '[God does] care...does answer prayer and...does use very ordinary people to do extraordinary things. He is a God who has replaced despair, brokenness and tragedy with hope – and hope through, of all things, trees!' This is a great book to read and then to share with others, even sceptics!



The third book on my list is not a missionary biography, but a workbook. Written by Megan Hill, *Contentment – Seeing God's Goodness* consists of 31 brief devotionals and reflection questions on the value of contentment, contentment by looking to Christ, cultivating a right

understanding of my circumstances, cultivating right desires, cultivating a thankful heart and pursuing contentment in specific circumstances. Suitable for personal or group use, this is a practical book which will help the reader to reflect on the goodness of God, and so to ward off discontentment with their lot in life, which can so quickly become discontentment with God or, if left unchecked, unbelief.

All of these books can be found at [koorong.com](http://koorong.com)

Christine Brain

<sup>1</sup> 'Interserve is a community of ordinary Christians putting faith into action... among the most marginalised peoples of the Arab world, Asia and Australia.' See [interserve.org.au](http://interserve.org.au)





# Over the Fence

Ours was not a unique story. Police, teachers, medical personnel, bank managers and clergy alike – all understood that choosing to accept rural postings meant choosing to accept the dwelling provided. My observation was that often these vocational homes existed in a loose cluster, which had decided benefits. Rogue neighbour's sternum-pulsing rave parties would cease at 10:30pm as abruptly as if someone had bisected the speakers with a chain-saw. Children, scarred for life by a past experience of being sent off to start the school year on the wrong day could wait until they saw their teacher's car depart, and then pack their lunchboxes with complete confidence.

Our first 'ministry house' was a delight. Painted white and standing high up on the hill overlooking town, this house had a sweet architectural feature, a curved wall that it presented proudly to the street, communicating the truth that this home knew itself to actually be a castle.

Its white picket fence and lavender hedge, its blue checked curtains and generous windows combined to give it a sunny disposition, and we loved it from the start. The departing ministry family and our new parishioners had clearly sent a highly-trained SWAT team in before our arrival. The whole place smelt of sunshine and welcome. The generous backyard was lawned, with a broad swathe of cement through the middle that would see a generation of church kids learn to use pedals. Having emerged from 3 years of close communal living and shared clotheslines, it took me a full 6 months to take a more expansive approach to hanging out the washing. The day finally came when I daringly pegged four *Bob the Builder* t-shirts out with entire oceans between them, one in each of the four quadrants of the Hill's Hoist.

This house also had a strength. At night the curved bedroom wall became more fortress than feature. Not for the first time, or even the second, two revellers ejected from their drinking stalls had staggered up the hill, and then finding themselves incapable of proceeding further had paused outside our bedroom, breathing heavily. Using the white picket fence as a prop, they loudly resumed the debate that had precipitated their aforementioned ousting.

'Wait for it, they'll be on to their mothers next.' Stirred from sleep, my husband made a correct prediction. The volume rose to a crescendo, each man making bold and unprintable assertions about the other's nearest maternal kin. The voices ceased abruptly. I dared a peek between the almost-closed blinds. The two men, recognising that a mutual line had been crossed by the utterance of such appalling things about their mums, called an agreeable ceasefire. Having forged life-long bonds of friendship through common insult, each man slung his arm around the other's swaying shoulders, and they made their way up the dark street.

And the house on the hill stood firm.

*'But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.'* Joshua 24:15

**Virginia Grice**



Photo credit: Eric Ljung on Unsplash

# Around the dioceses

## ARMIDALE

### Inverell

A morning tea fund-raiser was held at the home of Madge Roberts on Saturday April 1, where Madge displayed her beautiful quilts and other handiwork. We also had a display of the gifts we give to mothers and new babies born at the Inverell hospital, plus Comfort Packs we supply for those who present to the hospital's Emergency Department. The morning raised \$320 for AMUA funds.

This is one of the ways we support the vision of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships.

### Penny Harvey



## BALLARAT

A wonderful and enlightening Quiet Day was held in the beautiful surrounds of St. Mark's Anglican Benedictine Abbey in Camperdown on February 25. Each year the Ballarat Diocesan Mothers Union organises this day, held on the Saturday after Ash Wednesday and open to everyone. The day was led by the Rev. Anne McKenna, who chose 'Silence' as her theme.

With appropriate displays, Anne spoke over three sessions.

- STRUGGLE – Exploring what intrudes on our silence; the noise around us and the noise within us.
- SOURCE – How do we source silence? Stillness, nature and God's word. 'Be still and know that I am God'; take a walk and observe creation. Silence has its own language, the language of God and the language of love.
- SURPRISE – Silence is more than stillness. When we find silence, we find not emptiness, but fullness; a place of joy and wonder, a universal connection between all people; the connection of universal love.

From all this came questions: What are the obstacles to finding silence? What are the doubts and fears you see in silence? What is the silence you see in the beauty around you? What is the truth you see in silence?

### Denise Lay



L to R Kate Edgar, Jill Gale (DP) Heather Block

## BRISBANE

### Chinchilla

Members and friends celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of MU in Chinchilla on September 21, 2022. We were joined by our President, Jenny Bullock, who presented Val Madsen with her 40-year award and gave us a lovely message to ponder as we move forward.

We received some lovely greetings, including some from past presidents who no longer live in Chinchilla. Our main joy was the completion of our History Book, compiled by Glenda Irwin, who had spent months researching and compiling this lovely book. Mrs Bonnie Reid, our first president, and Mrs Betty Hicks, had kept precise historical facts, articles and photographs. During this time our Parish has been most helpful attending our functions and supporting our Retiring Collections. We have now added our 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations to the record of our activities.

Although we are a much older and depleted group these days, we intend to display our book to encourage us to carry on our many prayerful, giving and friendship efforts and to promote AMUA as a very credible organisation, still doing mighty Christian work in Australia and overseas.

### Sylvia Johnston





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## GRAFTON

Mothers Union members and friends in Grafton Diocese came together at our Cathedral on Saturday March 25 for a time of celebration and worship and to hear from our Australian President, Dr Robin Ray.

We were welcomed with a friendly cuppa at the door of the cathedral before our service, which was led by our Bishop, the Rt Rev'd Dr Murray Harvey, assisted by our Diocesan Chaplain, the Rev'd Canon Camellia Flanagan. Members of Mothers Union read the lessons and led the intercessions, choosing prayers which included the bringing forward of a small token of flowers to signify the different ages of women who have been, and are, members of Mothers Union.

Robin spoke to us a little about her own childhood and then what she would like us to do and be as we transform ourselves and reach out to transform those around us and the environments in which we live. She reminded us that, although there is much to do, it always starts in the smallest way with 'little acts of kindness', and, of course, prayer, and that no one should ever feel left out or unable to participate.

### Gae Shorten



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## MELBOURNE

I've always loved attending the Lady Day Service at St Paul's Cathedral. This year, March 26, was extra special to me as it was my commissioning as Melbourne Diocesan President, along with Executive members, Anne Kennedy as MU



Melbourne Chaplain, Joy Freier as Associate President, Halish Jobby as Treasurer, and Margaret Goode as Overseas and Northern Outreach and Links Secretary.

The day before, Saturday 25th, I was delighted to be invited to introduce myself at the Zimbabwean Mothers Union group of Hoppers Crossing Lady Day Conference, an annual 3-day event. Their theme was 'Dancing in the Rain', with special guest speaker, Mrs T Togara. Other topics covered were healthy and respectful relationships, legal and social knowledge, and good housekeeping and organisation. It was a joyous and happy day, enabling me to witness the strong and caring community these women have, supporting each other in prayer, in practical ways and being their best for their families.



St. Paul's Ringwood Lady Day Service on March 23 again enabled me to introduce myself and speak about how I see the Diocesan President's role. It was lovely to share afternoon tea afterwards, enabling me, and my husband Martin, to meet



members from other MU groups as well as Ringwood. To top off my celebration of Lady Day, Margaret Dunbar, with her 'travelling suitcase' of MU wares, and I, travelled by train to Corio, Geelong on Saturday April 1 to join their lovely celebration. Again, I was invited to speak and introduce myself, share lunch and wonderful fellowship afterwards.

Attending these Lady Day Services enabled me to connect and share with members in regions that may otherwise be difficult to visit regularly. Communication and sharing are so important to us all because we can easily become insular, remaining within our own circle. I encourage others to reach out and join other events if you are able. It widens our circle of connection, and it's wonderful to see the Holy Spirit working around us.

**Karen Hayden**

## **NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA**

Members in Geraldton have had a busy start to the year. On Friday February 24, they joined (by Zoom) about 900 other women Australia-wide for the annual MU Seminar. The program, which explored work and rest in the light of eternity, was packed full of encouragement from the Bible and practical suggestions relating to the theme, *Seize the Day*.



On Saturday March 25, 30 women from the cathedral of Holy Cross and St George's church, Bluff Point, MU members and visitors alike, gathered at St George's to celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation (Lady Day). The service was based on the Service of Praise and Thanksgiving in the MU Worship and Prayer book and was led by Diocesan President, Jenny Jamieson. We joyfully sang four songs, accompanied by Jocelyn Ross on piano; Marilyn Forrest, our Treasurer and Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator led us in prayer

and St George's minister, Ven Paul Spackman, celebrated Holy Communion.

Elizabeth Parker, wife of our new Bishop and long-term MU member, was our thought-provoking speaker on the topic, 'Responding to the call', drawing from two Scripture passages: Luke 1:26-38 and 2 Peter 1: 3-11.

Each part of the service gratefully recognised Mary's willing response to God's huge, life-changing and history-changing call on her life. We were each encouraged to consider our response to God when he calls us to do something different or difficult.

After a delicious lunch (prepared and served by our MU member 'caterers' in St George's beautifully decorated hall) we were treated to a talk by Melinda Spackman, inspiring us with her joy in the Lord and examples of how He moves when we are willing to speak up and share God's love with whoever He brings across our path.

There were many comments of pleasure about the day, aptly summed up by our Past President, Gladys Sutton, 'Lady Day was a great event, with a well-run service, lunch and fellowship plus a good lesson from Melinda – most enjoyable.'

The Carnarvon branch, small in number but big in heart, also celebrated Lady Day with a service of Midday Prayers. Their speaker, Rector's Warden James Williams, gave a wonderful talk and insight into 'The Angel Gabriel'. This was followed by light refreshments and discussion. President Margaret Moore commented, 'a very lovely and inspiring time together'.

**Jenny Jamieson**



## THE MURRAY

Lady Day has been a significant day for Mothers' Union since 1897 and this year it was celebrated by MU members in the Diocese of The Murray at Christ Church, Strathalbyn, on Monday March 27.

After a wet journey, which included some road detours, a group of dedicated members and friends arrived from Mt Barker, Southern Vales, Southern Suburbs and Strathalbyn in time for a welcome cuppa before our Eucharist Service. This was taken by our AMUA Chaplain, Fr Daniel Irvine, who travelled from Murray Bridge to share with us. Some lovely hymns, a thought-provoking message by Fr Daniel about the interpretation of 'Sacrifice' and readings and prayers delivered by members made for a special time.

Following the service we moved to the hall for Midday Prayers and grace before eating our BYO lunch. Our Guest Speaker, Liz Hampel, from Mount Barker branch, then spoke about her corneal implant. Liz's demonstration, aided by a model of an eye, was enlightening to all and her explanation of the work of the cornea was also new information for most of those in attendance. She was ably supported by Margaret Philpott, also from Mount Barker, who had worked for the Eye Bank. Questions were forthcoming but with travelling constraints there was only time for a few. Liz will be answering more questions whenever we meet!

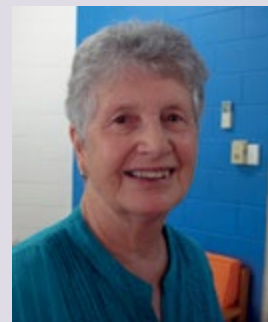
### Helen Cook



## THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Members of MU, and other friends, gathered recently at Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin for the funeral of Rev Canon Patricia Aitken Williams. Pat was a founding member of the Mothers Union branch in the Northern Territory and served for many years as Chaplain and Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator. She showed loving care and interest in the women who attended MU meetings.

Pat had been a reliable and strong influence in contributing to the Northern Territory Diocese for decades. Her contribution to the NT Anglican community has been immeasurable and she will be sadly missed. Having lived in the Northern Territory for many years, she was known and loved as a nurse and chaplain at the Royal Darwin Hospital.



Pat was a good friend to many, including those who visited the prison, where she held communion services on a monthly basis. The prisoners loved her kind presence and prayerful ministry. She was also highly appreciated in several nursing homes that she visited for services and pastoral care.

Pat was active until her last breath. She was a remarkable woman who served her Lord faithfully to the end. She died peacefully in the knowledge of her Lord who sustained her in everything she did.



### Matthew 6:9-13 in Kunwinjku

'Ngabba nawu ngadberre, yihni kore heaven, ngarridi yiwarrudj kore kunngey ke, bu ngundidjalngeyburlume munguyh nawu bininj rowk.

10 Ngarridjare bu ngudda Kanmarnewohnnan munguyh. Kaluk ngarridjare kamkurduyimerran kore ngudda yidjare, yiman kore heaven, dja mak kondah kurore.

11 Dja mak kanwo manme ngadberre bu bolkkime munguyh.

12 Dja mak yibengmidjda ngadberre kunwarre, yiman bu ngad ngarrbenbengmidjdan bedberre birribuyika bininj nawu ngandimarnekurduyimeng kunwarre.

13 Mak kanbidyikarmen ngadberre, ba kunwarre minj ngarrikurduyime, dja mak kannahna warridj wardi ngandjurrkkan ngadberre nawu namarnde duninh.' "







**GREAT**

IS THY

*faithfulness*