 **Mothers’ Union online Diocesan Festival Service**

**May 12th 2021**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Welcome to our Mothers’ Union Festival Service. We gather to ask the guidance of God as we seek to make a difference in our world. We gather to affirm our commitment to respond to the needs we have seen and heard; neither running ahead nor lagging behind but always in step with God. We acknowledge and lament loss of all kinds over the past months. We thank God for his steadfast love, assurance and hope.

The Lord is good

**Our refuge and deliverer.**

He cares for those who hope in him

**We draw near to him in faith.**

God of hope, we come into your presence this day with confidence that you will meet us here.

Where there is sadness, bring joy;

where there is tiredness bring refreshment;

where there is despair, bring a renewed sense of hope.

Let this gathering be a sanctuary, a safe haven for us, a home for holy words, songs and prayers as we devote ourselves to you.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

*Carol Penner* [*www.leadinginworship.com*](http://www.leadinginworship.com)*.*

**HYMN 21**

**The Lord’s my shepherd I’ll not want,**

**he makes me down to lie**

**in pastures green; he leadeth me**

**the quiet waters by.**

**My soul he doth restore again**

**and me to walk doth make**

**within the paths of righteousness,**

**e’en for his own name’s sake.**

**Yea, though I walk in deaths dark vale,**

**yet will I fear none ill;**

**for thou art with me, and thy rod**

**and staff me comfort still.**

**My table thou hast furnished**

**in presence of my foes;**

**my head thou dost with oil anoint,**

**and my cup overflows.**

**Goodness and mercy all my life**

**shall surely follow me;**

**and in God’s house forever more**

**my dwelling-place shall be.**

**William Whittingham (1524-79) altd old Scottish metrical version of Psalm 23.**

Ever-present God you walk with us through good times and bad, mountain top and valley deep, your footsteps our guide, your hands our support.

Ever-present God, you are close to us when life is smooth or rough, in wholeness and brokenness, your healing our hope, your touch our desire.

**Ever-present God, bring comfort and peace and the warmth of your presence, and we shall fear nothing, for you are with us always. Amen.**

*John Birch*

**Penitence**

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him. Let us now turn to our merciful and loving God and confess those times when we have failed to delight in God and in those created in the image and likeness of God.

Merciful and loving God: when we are ungrateful**,**

**remind us of your grace.**

When we fail to see,

**open our eyes.**

When we are harsh,

**gentle our spirit**.

When we are apathetic,

**keep us mindful of those who suffer.**

When we demean ourselves,

**remind us that we are made in your image.**

When we lose all hope,

**Let us hear the words of the angel at the empty tomb; that we be not afraid.**

So shape us, and turn us around,

**that we may live with your blessing, grace and light.**

May our loving God bless you with forgiveness and grace, that you may walk the path of life in step with God. **Amen**

**Old Testament Reading Lamentations 3:20-26**

My soul continually thinks of it
    and is bowed down within me.
**21**But this I call to mind,
    and therefore I have hope:

**22**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
    his mercies never come to an end;
**23**they are new every morning;
    great is your faithfulness.
**24**“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
    “therefore I will hope in him.”

**25**The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
    to the soul that seeks him.
**26**It is good that one should wait quietly
    for the salvation of the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**New Testament** R**eading** John 10:11-18

**11**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12**The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. **13**The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. **14**I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15**just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. **16**I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17**For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. **18**No one takes[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26489a)] it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection**

**Hymn 2**

**Faithful one, so unchanging;**

**ageless one, you’re my rock of peace**

**Lord of all, I depend on you,**

**I call out to you, again and again,**

**I call out to you again and again.**

**You are my rock in times of trouble,**

**you lift me up when I fall down;**

**all through the storm your love is the anchor,**

**my hope is in you alone.** *Brian Doerkson (b. 1965)*

**Intercessions**

Let us now bring our prayers before the God taking time to lament that which we have lost.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.’ Matthew 5:4.

**May God in our grieving, be our comfort. In times of sorrow give us peace**.

We take time to remember: ‘he heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds, healing their pain and comforting their sorrow.’ Ps 147:3.

**May God in our remembering be our companion.**

**In times of sadness may he share our loss**.

We take time to be assured: ‘the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.’ Deut 33:27

**May God in our uncertainty, be our shelter. In times of unease may he keep us secure.**

We take time to hope: ‘may your unfailing love be with us, Lord even as we put our hope in you.’ Psalm 33:22.

**May God in his Mercy, lighten our spirit.**

**As we look to the future may he give us hope. Amen.**

Our world has changed yet you remain the same. The storms threaten yet you speak peace. We mourn our losses you wipe away every tear. We take comfort that ‘Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes in the morning.’

**Loving Lord, who wipes away every tear from our eye, draw us near to mourn the loss of that which is dear to us.**

**In the midst of sorrow be our comfort,**

**In the place of sadness be our hope.**

**When disappointments weigh us down, open our eyes to see your creative ways; new plans for life, new instances of grace. Amen.**

O God our Heavenly Father, our strength and peace and joy; bless all who are Indoor Members. Give them your grace according to their needs.  Help them to know and love and trust you more, to pray better and always to do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

As members of the Mothers’ Union worldwide, we pray for Christ’s blessing upon all we do as we pray together:

**Loving Lord**

**We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.**

**We pray for families around the world.**

**Bless the work of the Mothers’ Union
as we seek to share your love
through the encouragement, strengthening
and support of marriage and family life.**

**Empowered by your Spirit,
may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service**

**reach out as your hands across the world.**

**In Jesus’ name.  Amen**

**HYMN 517**

**Brother, sister let me serve you,**

**let me be as Christ to you;**

**pray that I may have the grace to**

**let you be my servant too.**

**We are pilgrims on a journey**

**and companions on the road;**

**we are here to help each other**

**walk the mile and bear the load.**

**I will hold the Christ-light for you**

**in the night-time of your fear;**

**I will hold my hand out to you,**

**speak the peace you long to hear.**

**I will weep when you are weeping;**

**when you laugh I’ll laugh with you;**

**I will share your joy and sorrow**

**till we’ve seen this journey through.**

**When we sing to God in heaven**

**we shall find such harmony,**

**born of all we’ve known together**

**of Christs love and agony.**

**Won’t you let me be your servant,**

**let me be as Christ to you;**

**pray that I may have the grace to**

**let you be my servant too.**

 **Richard Gillard( b. 1953)**

**Concluding prayer.**

We pray for renewed vision to see a path of life emerging through the wilderness of former hopes and dreams. We pray for clear vision: to see a stream of grace flowing through the wasteland of loss and disappointments.

**God of all hopefulness inspire us with fresh revelation of your plans for our lives and our world. Instil in us a sense of adventure to embrace what lies ahead with anticipation and hope. Amen.**

We praise you our merciful God, for your steadfast love which upholds us through every circumstance of life.

In the midst of the storm **You give us your peace.**

In the warmth of the sun **You give us your joy.**

In the sight of the rainbow **You give us hope. Amen.**

**Dismissal**

Remember all God has done. Rejoice in all he is doing. Receive all he shall yet do. Put your hand in his, the God of past, present and future, and walk with him wherever he may lead, knowing he will walk with you, this day and always; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**in the name of Christ. Amen**.

*Resources used in this service were provided by Mothers Union Ireland*