



22nd July 2010

Dear Friends,

The year is half over already. I am sure it has been busy and full for all of you. Holding together in balance the many different parts of our lives always requires wise decisions and understanding. I have recently been reading Joan Chittister's book *The Breath of the Soul*. She reflects on the quality of consistency as the thing that changes "simple regularity to the level of relationship". All relationships require nurturing. It is so easy to become distracted with events and busyness. The spiritual life "anchors" us in the daily presence of God, giving direction to our life.

I hope all of you are keeping well, especially with the winter upon us. Even in Rockhampton we are having a little bit of cold! Nothing compared to what you live through in the south I know!

One of the privileges of being the wife of a bishop is that I am frequently present at the service of confirmation. Recently I was at an adult confirmation in one of our country centres. It was very lively worship and then after the service we all sat out under the trees at long tables and ate lunch together. All shared in the cooking, serving and cleaning up afterwards. It reminds me of feasting, Italian style and speaks of warm family times, laughter and shared memories. Family mealtimes are so important for conversations shared, catching up with the events of the day and really relating to one another. There is something very kingdom of God about all sitting around the one table to share food.

I am not sure if like me you are watchers of "Master Chef". It has become enormously popular and not only with those who love cooking. I was talking to one young mother recently and she said "as a family we can all sit down and watch it together". I hadn't thought of it in that way. Looking for the times of shared family experience are so important. Children grow up with that model of family and very often carry it into their own family life.

There is something wonderful about watching your own children become parents. I know I came to understand my own parents more when I became a parent myself. As an adult I would think "So that is how Mum and Dad felt when happened". And so it goes on to the next generation. We are all part of a family, whether as daughter or son or mother or grandmother.

Treasuring family times is vital in a world which applauds the individualistic. Families take many different shapes – the traditional nuclear family of mum, dad and the children, single parent families, families where there are no children, the family of your parish or diocese. Valuing these relationships and spending time to nurture them is what we are about as Christians.

Peace and blessing, *Bronwyn*

Australia Council

The Australia Council meeting is approaching quite quickly and all the necessary preparations are being put into place. The theme this year is "Journeying together". MU across the different dioceses in Australia has great variety, large in numbers in some dioceses, much smaller in others, city dioceses and country dioceses. Reading *Mia Mia* gives us a clear picture of this. Our presentations at AC bring the separate stories of our life and work in MU to our time together. One of the great gifts of belonging to MU worldwide is that it links us into an organisation much bigger than the local. This knowledge in turn encourages us in our work locally.

Quite a few of the positions on the executive will change this time as terms of office come to an end. Please pray for the guidance of God for nominations to these positions. The second prayer on Page 63 of *A Worship and Prayer Book for MU Australia* is a good one for this time. We pray for those who are relinquishing positions and for those too who are taking up new roles. I feel we are at a crossroads in MU Australia as we face all of these changes. What we stand for does not change but the world around us certainly does at a great rate. Working out how we can offer service and meet needs is the way we will continue in an authentic way in today's world. No matter how small we are, there are ways. How we make the right connections and continue to be a force for mission and service is what we have to think hard about.

The chief form of service we have to offer as Christians is to reflect the love of Christ in all our work and relationships.

History Book

Many of you will by now have read Dr Cordelia Moyses's book *A History of the Mothers' Union: women, Anglicanism and globalisation, 1876-2008*. It has been thoroughly researched and is a most fascinating look at our story not simply in a "blow by blow" account of historical events but analysing these events and our organisation in the context of the times.

I am finding it marvellous reading and enormously encouraging as I learn about how MU has genuinely wrestled over the years with rapid changes. It gives me great hope for our inherent ability to continue to work hard at these issues. I do recommend it.

[PS Libbie recommended an excellent book ordering website which I now use a great deal. It offers very competitive prices, and free postage. Books generally arrive in about a week to 10 days. It is a UK website.] www.bookdepository.co.uk

Change in leaflet format

You will all have received my communication (either by direct email to you or email to your DP), regarding receiving the leaflet in email format. I described what I see as the advantages of this format. As I stated in the email I believe it is the way ahead for the department. Thinking at a diocesan level it would mean that you are able to send it to the different branches in email form so that each branch can print their own leaflets. Of course it really requires only one person (the Prayer & Spirituality coordinator or a person she designates as the email contact) to have email access as this person can simply have the leaflets printed off and distributed in the usual way. The system allows you to do it all in whatever way you wish. All around costs in both time and money are reduced significantly. In conversation with Denis, our MU Australia Treasurer, there is definitely a need to look at the administration costs in the department. This is one way of approaching that situation.

Reports

There are still quite a few annual reports I have not received. I would be grateful to receive these as soon as possible please.

Speaking engagements

In May Libbie Crossman and I travelled to Western Australia to do a joint presentation in Perth and Bunbury dioceses. It was our first time as a double act operating as the Faith and Action unit comprised of the two departments of Social responsibility and Prayer and Spirituality. The issues of “Oversexualisation of children” and “Cyberbullying” had been chosen by the dioceses there and proved to be very topical. We were overwhelmed at the warmth and generosity of the hospitality in those two dioceses. Libbie and I found it very stimulating to work together and we would really like to build on this beginning as we continue the work of the unit. I am looking forward to speaking at the Grafton diocesan conference in August. I really do enjoy these visits and the opportunity to meet women from so many different walks of life.

Personal

We were all saddened at the death of Marian Kitchin, Prayer & Spirituality Coordinator from Tasmania diocese. The small MU branch that Marion belonged to misses her very keenly. I am impressed by the practical method of support for this branch that has been put in place by the Tasmanian MU.

Books

Learning to let go – making the transition into residential care. A new book available through the MU warehouse.

I'm Still here: a breakthrough approach to understanding someone living with Alzheimer's

by John Zeisel.

The author shows how it's possible to connect with those living with Alzheimer's by engaging with abilities that don't diminish over time, such as understanding music, art, facial expressions, touch and the deep need we all have for to care for others. (I heard the author interviewed on ABC Radio National and it was most interesting.)

Prayers

✚ I include the prayer I have written for AC on the “Journeying together” theme.

Prayer for MU Australia - Australia Council 2010

Everliving God you go before us on all our journeys, preparing the way. We give thanks that you will encounter us as we travel through these days together. Give us the grace to listen to one another, to celebrate our successes with joy, and our disappointments with strength. Give us wisdom and courage in decision-making. As we face new and unknown journeys ahead help us to put our hands in yours in all that we do, for to trust in you is the path of faith. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

✚ All of those taking up or relinquishing positions on AC

✚ The recovery efforts following the environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico

✚ Our political leaders in the lead up to the Federal election