

Guidelines for Branch Worship.

Prayer is at the heart of everything we do in the Mothers' Union. So it is vital that our branch worship is relevant and reflects our work and our concerns. Here are some ideas to help you plan your branch worship.

Before you begin to plan the worship, think about the theme of the meeting. If you are having a speaker they might like to suggest a Bible reading.

Could you have an object or some pictures to fit the theme and start people thinking.. e.g. A framed wedding photograph, a child's toy, a Bible, a picture of children, old people, couples, MU members overseas. If you are a small group you could have a picture each. You might wish to have a candle to light.

Some do's and don'ts

- **Do** change the wording of prayers from books – using your own words will be prayer from the heart.
- **Do** give time for silence
- **Do** invite members to speak their own thoughts
- **Do** make it relevant: to your meeting, to your projects, to the concerns of the moment
- **Do** have courage – everyone can pray, you don't need a PhD in theology, just say what's in your heart – God has put it there.

- **Don't** cover everything every time; pick and choose
- **Don't** go on too long – 5 minutes for intercessions at most

A Sample Service outline

A warm welcome.

Leader: Let us spend a few moments in quiet as we focus on God's presence.

A few moments of quiet (*perhaps with background music and/or lighting a candle*).

An Opening Prayer

e.g. Holy God,
help us to draw near to you in this time of worship,
Open our hearts to feel your love,
open our minds to know your will
and open our ears to hear your word.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Bible Reading *relevant to your meeting*

A Hymn or song

If you do not have an accompanist most MU members will sing a well-known hymn unaccompanied

Intercessions *See accompanying plan for ideas*

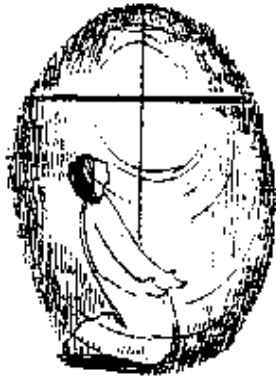
The Mothers' Union Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

The Grace

A Pattern for Intercessions in Branch Worship

Things to think about



Individual Membership:

Thanks for what I receive through my membership
 What I cherish?
 What I contribute to?
 How I am being challenged to change?
 Prayer needs for myself and other members of my branch



Church

Support of families
 Baptisms/weddings/ bereavement
 Worship in church—Mothering Sunday ...
 What we are doing now
 What we look to change



Our branch:

Thanks for our leaders—new leaders—those who have gone before
 Pray for
 Our churches—MU work in them
 Branch projects
 Special links
 Our meeting today—the speaker—the topic

Community



Community projects
 Social Policy concerns
 How are we being called to be involved?

Wider MU



Theme for the year

Within the diocese:

Deanery events/projects/leadership
 Diocesan events/projects/leaders
 AFIA
 Children's hospital
 Parenting
 Personal relationships today
 What's new...?
 Overseas links—Wave of Prayer
 Dem. Rep. of Congo
 Nigeria

Worldwide:

National Projects
 Flexible Families
 International projects
 Literacy and Numeracy
 Work at the UN
 What's new? Can we/should we be involved?

Use the ideas here to help you plan your intercessions. You don't need to cover everything every time but try to include all the areas over three months.
 September 2007

One example of Intercessions using the Pattern for Branch Worship

Individual membership

Let us take a moment to reflect on our own membership of the Mothers' Union, all it means to us and the different things God has called us to do through our membership...

Heavenly Father, thank you that you brought me into the MU, for all the friendship and support I have received. Thank you for what I have learned of your love. Thank you for the opportunities to grow in faith and to serve you. Open my heart and mind to your constant call to continue to serve in new ways. Give me the courage to say yes, knowing that you will always be ahead of me and beside me, in spirit and through my fellow members.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

The Branch

Let us take a moment to give thanks for this branch and all its members:

Heavenly Father, we pray for our branch; for those who lead and serve in each special way, for those who continue to pray even when practical activity is more difficult. We pray for our indoor members (*mentioning any by name*) and those who are sick or in trouble or who have died (*mentioning them also by name*). We also pray for our work, especially ... (*mention any special project*).

And we pray for our meeting today, for our speaker, that we will learn as well as be entertained, and that we will be open to whatever response you would wish us to make.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

The Church(es)

We take a moment to pray for our churches and the presence of the Mothers' Union within them....

Heavenly Father, we pray for(*name the church/es, their clergy..*).

We thank you for the particular ways in which the MU is involved in church life and work.... (*mention any particular ministry e.g. emergency prayer chain, baptism preparation, marriage preparation, bereavement counselling, parenting groups etc*).

Lord, we need help with

Show us new ways in which we can serve our churches.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

The Wider MU

We take a moment to remember before God the work of the wider MU ... (*Mention any particular area of work that the branch is concerned with.e.g. Diocesan projects, raising money for the emergency fund, overseas links, training for Parenting course facilitation, a Social Policy issue, our presence at the United Nations...*).

Heavenly Father, thank you that from such small beginnings, the Mothers' Union has grown to encompass

all the world. We remember our brothers and sisters in far flung places, especially those in greater difficulty and those with whom we have special links We thank you for their prayers for us, as we pray for them.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

The Community

Finally, we take a moment to remember the communities where we live, their special needs and the ways in which God is calling us to serve them *(Mention any particular projects that the branch is undertaking or praying for e.g. knitting for premature babies, running a Mother and Toddler group or parenting group, befriending the elderly, AFIA, local Social Policy issues ...)*

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the places where we live and the people around us, those who support us and those that we can help. Sustain us in the work you have called us to do and open our hearts and minds to new ways in which you are challenging us to step out in faith and love to those in need.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Resources

There are loaded of places to go for prayers. Particular MU prayer resource books are:

United in Prayer and Worship

The Prayers we Breathe

Even Angels Tread Softly – a book of poetry

The Bi-annual Prayer Diary

Woven in Prayer – containing descriptions of our overseas diocese

Wave of Prayer – published in Home and Family

Also, you can download worship resources from the MU national website www.themothersunion.org. These include special resources for the yearly theme and prayers for special events, MU projects and crises around the world.

Also, what about using your newspapers, local and national, and The Door for ideas to what to pray about – and put those ideas into your own words.