

Count Your Blessings

Lent is a time of prayer and contemplation – a time when we re-evaluate our lives, restoring balance by fasting, by giving something up or by praying more for others – a chance to get things in perspective.

Mothers' Union is adopting an innovative process which uses Bible studies to initiate economic, social, spiritual and physical transformation for struggling communities. Acting as catalysts for change right at the parish level, trained Mothers' Union leaders are using the word of God and His promises of provision to inspire whole communities. They see that God has already provided for them, and has given them the skills they need to live – and live well.

This church-based approach is already transforming communities, and has meaning for Christians everywhere. Over the next forty days, we ask you to **Count Your Blessings** by

reading a Bible passage and reflecting on a story which shows how communities have already used the passage to create change. We then ask you to offer a donation and pray for others, remembering that you too are created and resourced by God. Through this journey we hope you will discover how God has equipped you to change your life and those of your community, for the better.

A gift of £20 will help us train more parish-based facilitators to work with communities.

The stories below show how Mothers' Union facilitators change lives through all our programmes, helping people to unlock their potential and bring about life saving change.



Living in Unity

Wednesday 13 February - Ash Wednesday

Elisha and the Jars 2 Kings 4:1-7



Working with their neighbours in the Meru Diocese in Kenya, ten Mothers' Union members transformed their community from one that was fuelled with alcoholism and crime to a safe and prosperous area. Coming together to identify their issues caused by the brewing of alcohol, which was their main source of income, they made a collective decision to ban brewing completely and instead start a dairy production initiative. Working with their neighbours the ten became 1,500, crime rates dropped and the community is now flourishing.

Thursday 14 February

How many jars do you have in your cupboard? Count them and take an empty one to collect money whilst you are counting your blessings this Lent. Start with 5p for each jar.

Friday 15 February

With her neighbours' and God's help, the widow was able to save herself from debt and her sons from slavery. Think about a time you were helped by a neighbour and place 50p in your jar in thanks.

Saturday 16 February

Pray for your neighbours and all the people within your community.

Sunday 17 February

In three weeks it will be Mothering Sunday. Now is the time to start planning so that your church can get involved with Mothers' Union's **Make a Mother's Day**. Visit www.makeamothersday.org or call 020 7222 5533 for your catalogue and church resource pack.



Download a copy of **Count Your Blessings** now at www.themothersunion.org or contact the marketing department on 020 7222 5533.

Nutrition

Monday 18 February

Let the seeds grow Genesis 1:11-13

In Malawi, Mothers' Union members are growing fruit trees – including oranges, tangerines, mangoes, peaches, guavas and avocados – in a small plot of land donated by the church. They grow them to eat and to sell, creating an income to support themselves and their families.

Tuesday 19 February

How many fruit and vegetables do you have in your kitchen?
Give 10p for each variety.

Wednesday 20 February

There is enough food on earth to feed the entire population but it is not evenly distributed. Pray that people around the world will be able to grow the food they need to eat every day.

Thursday 21 February

Try to support your local community by buying locally produced goods.



Volunteering

Friday 22 February

God's People are generous 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Mothers' Union members give their time to many different projects around the world. In the UK alone they run child contact centres, parent & toddler groups and work with families affected by imprisonment. Our work strengthens family life whether through increasing relationship or parenting skills, enabling people to learn the skills to overcome poverty, or providing relief in stressful times.

Saturday 23 February

Give 10p for every hour this week you have given up to help others, or that someone has given to you.

Sunday 24 February

Pray for the Mothers' Union members and volunteers around the world who give their time to help others.

Monday 25 February

Think about the people within your community who give their time freely. Can you offer your time to help others too?



Photography: Millie Waide

Families

Tuesday 26 February

Ruth and Naomi Ruth 1:16-17

Mothers' Union's Family Life Programme encourages a confidence in women that they have not previously had. Learning new skills of health, hygiene and nutrition helps them work with their husbands to provide for their families. Family life becomes a joint endeavour creating an equal partnership and nurturing flourishing family relationships.

Wednesday 27 February

Put 10p in your jar for each of the women in your life who are important to you.

Thursday 28 February

Take time today to contact a family member. Write a letter, pick up the phone or just email them 'Hello'.

Friday 1 March

Women's World Day of Prayer

I was a stranger and you welcomed me. This year, written by the Christian women of France. Join in prayer today with Christian women around the world.



Sharing

Saturday 2 March

The Fellowship of the Believers Acts 2:42-47

In the UK, a widowed Mothers' Union member wanted to reach out to other ladies who, like her, might be feeling lonely. This grew into the Golden Girls Club, an opportunity for people who felt a bit isolated from the community to meet up every week. People go along and feel that they have a club to belong to. The group often visits farm shops, garden centres and restaurants too.

Sunday 3 March

Give 10p for each time this week you have met with a friend for a cup of tea.

Monday 4 March

Take a moment to think about the friends and family you have around you. Pray that people around the world have someone they can turn to for support.

Tuesday 5 March

Are there people in your community who are alone? Reach out to them so they know there is someone they can turn to when they need it.



Working Together

Wednesday 6 March

We have different gifts Romans 12:6-8

In Kenya, a community joined together and mobilised themselves to build a clinic they desperately needed to care for their sick. A retired nurse, also from the community used the skills she had to look after those people who needed her help.

Thursday 7 March

Give 10p for each time you meet with a group of people this week.

Friday 8 March

Pray for people to have the strength to join together to build a better life for themselves.

Saturday 9 March

Get a group together to run a fundraiser for Mothers' Union. An Easter cake bake or afternoon tea perhaps?

Sunday 10 March Mothering Sunday

Take time today to think about your childhood. Think about your mother and all those around the world who are trying to make the world a more caring, safer, happy place for their children. Hold a **Make a Mother's Day** collection in your church.

Preparing for the Future

Monday 11 March

Storing grain in times of abundance Genesis 41:47 - 49

In Burundi, Mothers' Union Literacy & Financial Education facilitators are empowering some of the most marginalised peoples in the world to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills. They are increasing the participation of women and girls in education and employment to make a better life for themselves and the generations to come.

Tuesday 12 March

How many qualifications have you achieved over your lifetime? Give 5p for each one.

Wednesday 13 March

Pray that people all over the world have the opportunity to gain knowledge about themselves, each other and the world we live in.

Thursday 14 March

How can you help others to learn? Why not consider volunteering to read in your local school?



Togetherness

Friday 15 March

One Body With Many Parts 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Mothers' Union members are motivated by the Christian faith but offer hope, dignity and freedom for all regardless of faith, gender, race or nationality.

Saturday 16 March

Count the number of churches in your local area. Give 5p for each one.

Sunday 17 March

Thank God that we live in a country where we can worship freely. Pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.

Monday 18 March

Are there other faith communities within your area? How can you and your church engage with these communities?



Development

Tuesday 19 March

Jesus and the Samaritan woman John 4:1-26

Due to conflict in Burundi, many people had to flee their homes. Displaced on a mountainside in Rwanda, they had to walk 34 km each day to get water to survive. Using their resources, Mothers' Union members built large water butts to collect rainwater close to their camps. Then they extended their hand to rival Hutu and Tutsi tribes and shared their skills so they could build their own butts.

Wednesday 20 March

Saving rainwater is one way Mothers' Union helps families through drought. Count the gutters and drain pipes around the outside of your house. Give 5p for each one.

Thursday 21 March

Pray for people around the world who experience difficulties due to flooding or drought.

Friday 22 March

How can you reduce the amount of water you use? Could you put a water butt in your garden?



Health

Saturday 23 March

Jesus heals a man that was born blind John 9:1-11

In sub-Saharan Africa there are over 14 million HIV/AIDS orphans. Mothers' Union members in South Africa help to support an HIV/AIDS awareness group. They motivate and encourage them and help improve their nutrition by offering vegetables from their gardens, sharing skills so that group members can learn to grow their own and help themselves too.

Sunday 24 March Palm Sunday

Pray for those who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS and the orphans left behind, may they receive love and understanding.

Monday 25 March

Think about the children who have made you smile: your own, your god children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Give 20p for each child.

Tuesday 26 March

A problem shared is a problem halved, if there is someone who needs you to listen, offer your time to talk.



Photography: Layton Thompson

Wednesday 27 March

Count the number of Easter eggs you are going to buy. Give 5p for each and thank God for the opportunity to give good gifts to our loved ones.

Thursday 28 March Maundy Thursday

Take time today to show your love for someone by serving them and putting them first.

Friday 29 March Good Friday

Find a quiet place to sit by yourself and take time to consider Jesus' journey to the cross today.



Photography: Layton Thompson

Saturday 30 March Easter Saturday

Reflect on the journey you have taken through Lent and what you have learnt about the way Mothers' Union members work around the world and how you can use these lessons to make changes in your own life and that of your community.

Sunday 31 March Easter Day

Christ is risen! Alleluia. Thank God for Jesus. Pray for people around the world, that Mothers' Union can reach them and start them on their own journey to achieve economic, social, spiritual and physical transformation within their communities, using the word of God.

Count Your Blessings

Tell us something you have been inspired to do during 'Count Your Blessings' this year.

I have collected money in my jar over Lent and would like to donate this to Mothers' Union.

Jar Money £
Extra Donation £
Total £

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/etc)

First name

Surname

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Please return this form to: Mothers' Union, Freepost LON822 Mary Sumner House 24 Tufon Street LONDON SW1P 377

By adding a stamp you can save Mothers' Union the postage cost

If you do not want to receive further information on Mothers' Union by post, tick here

If you would like to receive information on Mothers' Union by email, tick here

The above information will not affect your membership and/or *Families First* and *Families Worldwide* subscriptions.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Registered Charity No. 240531

MSHT3

Here is my gift of £

I enclose a cheque made payable to 'Mothers' Union'

Or please debit my (tick as appropriate)

Maestro MasterCard Visa Delta card

Card No.

Issue No. (Maestro only)

Start date / Expiry date /

CVC No. (3 digits on the reverse of your card). We do not retain your security code once your donation has been processed

Signature	Date
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Please don't forget to make your gift worth 25% more - at no extra cost to you! *giftaid it*

Please claim back the tax I have paid against all gifts made in the last 4 years and any future gifts I may make to Mothers' Union.

Signature	Date
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By ticking the box, I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or CSCs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand Mothers' Union will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.