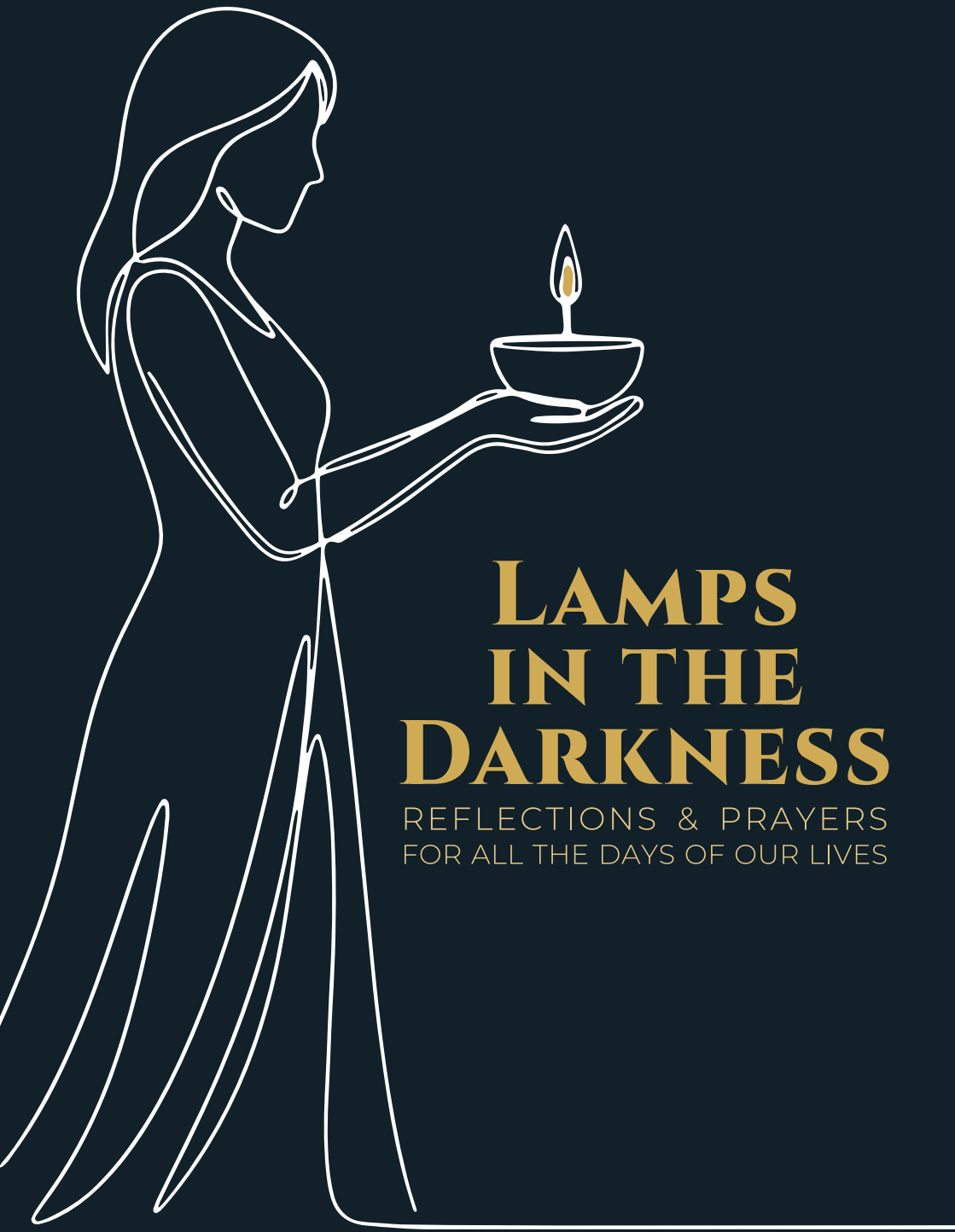


Lamps in the Darkness

REFLECTIONS & PRAYERS
FOR ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

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UN Special Days, Holy Days
& Women's Complicated Lives
in the Midst of War and Conflict

June 2026

Prepared by

The International Anglican Women's Network Steering Group

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For Haifa, Reem, Arda, Suheila, Morgan, Revd Sally, and the women of the Anglican parish of St Paul's, Ashrafiyah, your perseverance and welcome showed us the sacrificial love of God.

And with many thanks to Susan, our beloved friend and member of our Group, for opening to us the heartbreak of God for her land, the strength known in the companionship of Jesus, and the peace and joy of God's Spirit.



50 of the 218 International Special Days recognized by the United Nations

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Introduction

The global experience of women in war has held the attention of the International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN) and our Steering Group over the last two years. One of our members, Susan Barhoum, is a Palestinian Anglican, and we visited Jordan to be together and to focus on hearing stories of the lived experience of women in war.

We are grateful to Susan for the profound conversations we shared with her Palestinian women friends in February 2026. And for what we learnt about sisterhood and finding Jesus there with us.

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, "to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels" in peace processes, and subsequent research has affirmed that women's participation in peace processes is a proven security advantage, limited by gender inequality. Through our own grassroots networks, we know of the peace-making work of women across the Anglican Communion.

Anglican women lead pastorally and strategically in mediating conflicts, supporting displaced families, building interfaith trust, leading trauma healing, and sustaining community resilience. They may not be at peace-negotiating tables, but they are being the hope of the Church in their peace-making presence and leadership in the middle of their communities. Their voices and their stories need to be heard.

Women peacemakers follow in the footsteps of Biblical stories of women as agents of peace, justice, reconciliation, and community builders - women like Abigail, Deborah, Esther, the women at the tomb, and early church women leaders like Priscilla, Phoebe, Euodia, and Syntyche. Scripture affirms women as entrusted with leadership in peace-making that protects communities, restores relationships, and advances God's peace.

In Jordan, we met women of the church at the grassroots - Haifa, Arda, Reem, Morgan, Suheila, and Susan herself - and heard from women in war in Congo and South Sudan. Others of us have experience with women in war in Burma, Ireland, and Mozambique. It is humbling to hear the stories of these peace-making women in and for their communities.

We continue our reflection on women's lived stories with this resource's focus on 50 of the 218 UN International Special Days.

Pamela Cooper-White, a feminist postcolonial theologian, used the metaphor 'complicated' (com-plicatio) for the folded, unfolded, and refolded stories of women's multiple roles, relationships, emotions, identities, and contexts ('Braided Selves': 2011). These reflections on UN Days and Holy Days reveal complicated lives threaded through with faith and hope in the Light of God, and we see how these Days are folded into Susan's own story.

Susan has gently shown us the faith, compassion, strength, grief, and trauma that women in war carry for others through whatever is happening in their personal lives. Susan's husband, Archdeacon Samuel Barhoum, was an Episcopal priest and the President & General Director of Christ Anglican School in Nazareth, in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. He passed away suddenly on October 31, 2024, and is dearly missed by his beloved community, the church, and his family.

Susan writes within the many folds of personal grief, the reality of being a Palestinian Anglican woman, and as a woman in war in her land.

The latest war in Gaza began on October 07, 2023. This conflict has had a regional impact and resulted in more than 170,000 Palestinians, including 20,000 children, suffering traumatic injuries. By February 2024, 2.2 million people in Gaza were experiencing food insecurity at an emergency level.

And in March 2026, the US-Israeli attacks on Iran began, and the whole region has been affected. War, hunger, and deaths continue. And still Susan prays:

Comfort us with Your love, O God
Wrap us up in Your strong embrace
Shelter us from the storm, O Lord
Envelop us in Your tender care
By day, we pour out our heartbreak to You
By night, we give you our racing thoughts
In You, we take refuge
In You, we will not be afraid
For You hold us strong, You hold us safe
Calm our fearful hearts, O God
Still our anxious minds, O Lord
For all our lives are found in You
All our beings are given to You
All our hope begins in You

Just cling. That's all.
No matter how it bears down on you. Just cling.
No matter what mess crashes in on you. Cling.
Through the grief. Cling.
Through the anxiety. Cling.
Through the horror of a story you can't believe is yours. Cling.
He does not move. He doesn't. And we can trust Him.
Even when nothing else makes sense. Just cling.

A mosaic consists of thousands of little stones. When we bring our faces close to the mosaic, we can admire the beauty of each stone. But as we step back from it, we can see that all these little stones reveal to us a beautiful picture, telling a story none of these stones can tell by itself.
That is what our life in community is about. Each of us is like a little stone, but together we reveal the face of God to the world. Nobody can say: "I make God visible." But others who see us together can say, "They make God visible." Community is where humility and glory touch.
March 10, 2026: In this ever-darkening world.. being a light is increasingly important. The darkness awaits... but being a light can hold it at bay.



January

January 06: Epiphany

Epiphany is Greek for "appearance or manifestation." Today, we celebrate God revealing Himself to the world in Jesus. We celebrate the Magi, or Wise Men, who, guided by a star, travelled to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus.
As Eastern Christians, we also celebrate Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River with the heavens opening and a voice proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Tradition is that on Epiphany Eve, the heavens are opened, and Christ passes by blessing us. We greet each other saying, AlDayem Dayem, which means, Always and Forever, commemorating Christ's eternal presence. We wait for you, Lord, and open the doors of our homes and our hearts to you... We wait for you to pass over our land to bless us... We pray that your Holy Spirit will descend upon us... upon our land, and our people, and that peace may prevail...

On this day, we do not merely stand before a past event; rather, we enter into the mystery of an everlasting presence. The Epiphany is Heaven's proclamation that God is no longer distant from human history. Instead, He has become present within it, working, renewing, and performing the impossible. Jesus was baptized to usher humanity into a new hope, the core of which is that God is with us... and Always, Always with us. To be Always, Always with Jesus does not mean the absence of the storm, but rather the presence of strength in the heart of it. It does not mean the path is free of pain, but that pain is no longer the final word.
Whoever remains steadfast with Jesus experiences that hope is not a passing feeling, but a living certainty; and that hope is not passive waiting, but a trust that God is working, even when we do not see Him. For wherever Jesus is present, water turns into wine, fear into peace, weakness into strength, and death into a passage. Miracles are not performed outside of the relationship, but within its depths. In remaining steadfast with Him, in following Him, and in believing that the hand that was immersed in the waters of the Jordan is still capable of touching the wounds of the world and raising it up.

And we pray that we may be filled with unwavering hope, unyielding faith that remaining with Jesus is the greatest miracle, and that everything placed in His hands is transformed into salvation. May we renew our covenant with Him, a steadfastness in His light, and a confidence that, with Him, we are:
Always, Always... in hope. Always, Always... in life.

Susan Barhoum

January 28: International Day of Peaceful Coexistence

Today, we remember all those across our world who live in, or have lived in, conflict with their neighbours, be that in the same country, the same city or town, or in adjacent countries. Across the world, learning to appreciate and acknowledge difference and diversity is essential for living together in harmony and for promoting peace of mind and good mental health.

The Anglican stance on coexistence is one of mutual respect and understanding among different religious groups. Anglicanism emphasises the importance of religious freedom and the role of the church in promoting peace and harmony within society. The Anglican Communion, as a global family of churches, seeks to foster unity and cooperation among its members regardless of their different beliefs, practices, or backgrounds. This is rooted in the teachings of Christ, in his words on love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and in the general biblical principles of love, peace, and unity, which are central to the Christian faith.

In 2025, we remembered the 1700th anniversary of the writing of the Nicene Creed, which emerged from the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, the first gathering of diverse Christian bishops from across the Roman Empire. It was a defining act of mutual understanding and unity for a faith newly emerging from persecution and grappling with identity. The answer, forged through prayer, argument, and no small courage, was clear and emphatic: Jesus Christ is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God... of one Being with the Father". The words mattered then, and they matter still as we endeavour to coexist with each other in a very different world.

Prayer

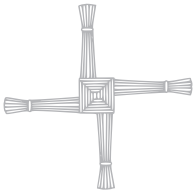
Loving Father, fill our hearts with kindness that sees beyond differences. teach us to listen with patience, speak with respect, and act with compassion towards all we meet. May our world be a place where every soul can live without fear or prejudice. Guide us to choose love over anger, forgiveness over resentment, and hope over despair. Let peace begin within us. Amen.

June Butler



February

February 01: St. Brigid of Ireland



During the IAWN Steering Group meetings in Jordan in February 2026, we shared the remembrance of St. Brigid with the women in war whose stories we heard that week.

St. Brigid is the mother saint of Ireland, an abbess who founded the Abbey of Kildare, where she died in c. 525. Kildare became a major centre of Christianity in Ireland. The name "Kildare" comes from the Irish "Cill Dara," meaning "Church of the Oak," as her abbey was built under a large oak tree. Her feast day is on February 01, and it traditionally involves weaving Brigid's crosses from reeds or straw, as well as other folk customs. This day was originally a pre-Christian festival called Imbolc, marking the beginning of spring, and, since 2023, has been a public holiday in the Republic of Ireland.

Brigid was born c. 450 near Dundalk, Ireland, to a pagan father and a Christian mother who was a slave and was baptised by Saint Patrick, which influenced Brigid's early life. From a young age, Brigid showed great compassion for the poor, often giving away her father's possessions to those in need. This generosity eventually led to her freedom from slavery.

Numerous miracles are attributed to Brigid, including healing the sick and providing food for the hungry. One famous legend tells of her turning bathwater into beer to provide for guests. She is patroness of many things, including poetry, learning, healing, protection, midwives, babies, blacksmithing, livestock, and dairy production. In her honour, a perpetual flame was kept burning at her shrine in Kildare for centuries, tended by the Abbey's priestesses. It symbolised her enduring legacy and the spiritual significance of her life. St. Brigid's desire was for peaceful coexistence, reflected in prayers attributed to her:

> *"Brigid, you were a woman of peace. You brought harmony where there was conflict. You brought light to the darkness. You brought hope to the downcast. May peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world. Inspire us to act justly and to reverence all God has made.*
> *Brigid, you were a voice for the wounded and the weary. Strengthen what is weak within us. Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens. May we grow each day into greater wholeness in mind, body, and spirit. Amen."*

June Butler

February 11: International Day of Women and Girls in Science

On this International Day of Women and Girls in Science, I reflect on the very first command given to humanity - to steward the earth. I believe this is a commission given to all of us, male and female. Therefore, to exclude women and girls from the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is not just a social injustice; it is a theological failure.

As a scientist and a female priest, my analytical mind and ability to simplify scripture for the congregation are my greatest assets. This skill was developed in design labs, and not in seminary. That is why I strongly believe that when a young girl is told science is not for her, we lose a potential engineer or doctor, and we also lose all that she could have been if only she had been allowed to hone her skills.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the women who have studied Your world, and we ask that You bless them and amplify their voices. We pray for the girls who today dream of becoming scientists, asking that you guard their dreams from doubt and dismissal and surround them with positive mentors. Open doors of opportunity for them, Lord, and instil in them the truth that their minds are a gift from You. Amen.

Akua Afori-Boateng



February 20: World Day of Social Justice

Prayer

Holy One, may Your Realm of Love come for the insignificant, unremarkable, overlooked people of the world; for the un-noticed and simply ordinary people; backwater sort of people who will never make an impact. For them

MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME

Holy One, may Your Realm of Love come for those who are lost; who have disappeared or are missing; for the uprooted, exiled, and enslaved; lost-rights sort of people who will seldom be seen or heard. For them

MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME

Holy One, may Your Realm of Love come for the fearful, the terrorised, and the abused people of the world; those who are unjustly imprisoned or entrapped; voiceless people who will hardly dare to seek help. For them

MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME

Holy One, may Your Realm of Love come for the subjugated, silenced, and subdued people of the world; for the lonely, the lacking, the faded, the frightened; shadowy people unable to bring attention to their suffering. For them

MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME

Holy One, may Your Realm of Love come for all persons with disabilities; for the redundant and poorly educated; the timid and unappreciated; struggling people who have to strive for support and respect. For them

MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME

In the dynamic of Your Love, may Your Realm become a reality for them all. Amen.

World Council of Churches, Aotearoa, New Zealand - oikoumene.org

Ash Wednesday - The Beginning of Lent

As the ashes are placed on our foreheads in the shape of the cross, we are reminded that we are dust, and to dust, we shall return. We are reminded of our mortality and how much we need a Savior. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). Death is a time of loss, grief, and sadness. It is also a meaningful time to celebrate life, remember the love shared, and share stories.

But the story doesn't end there. Death is not the end. Out of God's infinite love for humankind and His desire to have a relationship with Him, Jesus comes to earth and takes upon Himself the penalty of sin - death itself. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory... But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Not only does Jesus take our punishment upon Himself, but in His resurrection, our bodies also will one day rise again. (Psalm 116:16) reminds us, "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones."

Ash Wednesday reminds us that death is a part of living with hope - hope that God takes what is broken and repairs it, loving us for who we are, faults and all. Ash Wednesday begins our voyage through Lent to our final destination, Easter Sunday, and the glorious message of hope for the future. Easter offers the promise of resurrection and our ultimate destiny: that we and our loved ones will be resurrected in Christ. His resurrection is our promise, complete with an eternal future of joy. Love has the last word, and God can bring beauty from the ashes.

Susan Barhoum



March



March: Women's History Month

March is our month to celebrate women's achievements throughout history that have often been overlooked in traditional historical narratives and books.

This month shines a spotlight on gender inequality. It grew out of a local Women's History Week started by educators in California in 1978 and was officially expanded in 1987 to a month-long global observance coinciding with International Women's Day. It is still needed.

- History education overwhelmingly focuses on men, despite women playing crucial roles in every major historical development. Critical reflection on how history is recorded is needed.
- Advocates wanted, students, especially girls, to recognize women role models as leaders, innovators, and change-makers.
- The month provides space to highlight women's achievements across race, class, nationality, and fields of work and inspire conversations about representation and inclusion

Gracious Creator,
We thank You for women's strength, wisdom, and compassion, and for all the women who came before us, whose courage opened doors we now walk through. Bless the women among us today who are balancing dreams with responsibilities and the call to make a difference. We pray for the girls who will inherit tomorrow with confidence, dignity, and hope. May we honour the silenced voices, uplift those still unheard, and work together for a world where all women are seen, heard, and free. Give us grateful hearts, lives of purpose, and friendships on the way. Amen.

Helen Van Hoevering

March 08: International Women's Day

Yes, to you, too: you were expelled from some paradise.
Don't worry, you are not alone, and there are still so many to discover.
May this March 08 find us fighting for the conquest of new rights and community spaces where justice, equity, and sorority breathe.
In any case, who's looking for paradise?
We're just looking for spaces where we can live in freedom.
magaenpalabras.blogspot.com

Gabriela Merayo

We pray for every woman who has made the world warmer and more just.
You are the light that never goes out, the strength that never breaks, the mind that cannot be defeated, the spirit that knows no impossibility, the hope that never fades, and the voice that is never silenced.
From the rubble, you build hope, and from the pain, you create life.
To all the resilient and incredible women who carry on despite all the obstacles, pain, and suffering, we celebrate you today and every day.
May this journey continue to inspire generations.
Amen.

Susan Barhoum



Prayers for Lent

As we journey through Lent, may we become more and more aware that the Lord is by our side, attentive to our prayers, and aware of our thoughts, hopes, and desires.

May we be blessed with attentive ears and a responsive heart as He speaks to us. Listen and hear His words of affirmation and encouragement, His words of correction and direction, His words of hope and truth.

May we be blessed with a teachable and receptive spirit so that we might grow in discernment and understanding of the higher-than-our ways of the Lord.

May we not just learn about His life-giving ways, but may we be blessed to know them, desire them, and walk in them with humility, courage, and tenacity.

May His truth light up our path today, leading us into freedom.

We will walk into this day with you, O Christ
For in your wisdom, you understand us
For in your strength, you keep us
For in your love, you shelter us
For in your mercy, you forgive us
For in your patience, you work for us
We will walk into this day, into tomorrow
Even into Eternity with you

Susan Barhoum



March 20: International Day of Happiness

Did you know that an oyster will not produce a pearl unless it has been wounded in some way?

A pearl is actually a healed wound. It forms when an irritant, like a grain of sand or a parasite, enters the oyster's shell. To protect itself, the oyster secretes layers of a smooth, shiny substance called nacre, coating the intruder over time. Layer by layer, this process continues until a beautiful pearl is formed.

In a way, pearls are a product of pain - transforming something unwanted into something valuable. The more pearls an oyster produces, the more precious it becomes.

However, through faith in Jesus Christ, we can find healing and transformation from our own pain and suffering from the "irritants" of life: hardship, loss, betrayal, personal failings, and experiences that can feel like uncomfortable intrusions. God's grace, like the nacre secreted by the oyster, layers over our wounds. God's love and mercy works patiently within us to create something precious: a unique "pearl" of character, resilience, and spiritual beauty, reflecting God's never-ending love for us and His glory and grace.

Susan Barhoum



March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Since the 20th century, the concept of biological race has been considered a cultural invention with no scientific basis. Racism is considered the marginalization and/or oppression of people of colour based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges another race, and perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race or strengthens racial inequalities in education, health care, income, and civil rights. Make the world a better place for you and generations yet to come. Showing that you care about other people's well-being, that you are an ally in promoting inclusion and equity, are some actions we can take towards transformative action. And it all starts with awareness.

James Baldwin wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced". That idea is behind the 'Sacred Ground Race Dialogue' series *(episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground or Sacred Ground - The Episcopal Church)*, which my own church in Lexington, Kentucky, is a part of. Racism is alive the world over, but the historic known and unknown background to current reality was provided by the materials of this dialogue series, developed by Katrina Browne, an Episcopalian white woman, producer/director of the documentary Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North. This prayerful and sensitive series created space for difficult but respectful dialogue on race and racism in our group as we recognized the layers of history that shape the American story and our own. More than one participant was shocked by the history they had not known of Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European American histories. We came to see that our needed 'guiding star' for our journey was a vision of beloved community - where all people are honoured, protected and nurtured as beloved children of God, and where we weep at one another's pain and seek one another's flourishing.

A Prayer for the Future of the Human Race

(The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer, 1979, p.828) (bcponline.org)

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering

March 24: International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims

A Bible Study: Being Good Samaritan Women

Only those who stop to look at another's reality, who come close to someone else's pain, are capable of putting themselves in their place and making that cross their own. Only those who are willing to look into the abyss and allow themselves to be seen by it can act as a Good Samaritan to that neighbour in need.

When we find out that a biological father is capable of raping his own daughter, we know that justice is the answer, but when we learn that after years of silence, justice decides that the punishment will be to donate a few litres of milk to a charitable organization and continue seeing his daughter, we understand that sisterhood and sisterly support are the only paths to take, to support one another and to seek justice rooted in human rights, gender justice, equity, and equality.

The Levite and the priest, enmeshed in law and moralism, passed by the wounded bodies that might stain, leave marks, create 'distance' from the sacred, or delay daily tasks. The person who had time to stop and help was the only one from whom nothing was expected: a foreigner, impure, with seemingly nothing to give, yet made time and became a close neighbour by lingering on the road to heal the wounds of a person.

So-called 'justice' often seems to be in the hands of Levites and priests who have no time to stop and contemplate vulnerabilities, true needs, and violated rights. This is not justice, let alone impartiality; those who cannot look and listen attentively to the victim never will be able to do justice for her. In an unjust and selective society, we are called to live as Samaritans, sharing the pain, helping to carry the crosses that intersect our lives, and walking together with our eyes set forward in the relentless pursuit of a fairer community and a life that is freer and more fulfilling.

[This writing is based on the outrage of the news that after raping his daughter, the sentence was to 'donate milk,' and on the parable of (Luke 10:25-37). The news first appeared in the Sur newspaper.]

Gabriela Merayo

March 25: The Annunciation

Today we celebrate the Annunciation, when Mary said Yes. She felt fear, yet allowed her fears to be calmed by God's promise. She did not fully comprehend, but she had her faith. If she were saying Yes to God, then certainly all would be well. She questioned and discerned and only then freely agreed to God's will. This is what makes her blessed. God could have used her without her consent, but then she would have simply been a human vessel. Instead, she fully cooperated with God and became an active agent in God's plan. It takes courage to say Yes to the unknown. It takes even greater courage to reaffirm that same Yes when the unknowns are replaced with difficult or unexpected realities. Mary said Yes and faced hardships and fears, but she said Yes at the annunciation and continued to say Yes throughout her life. In these times of Yes's too easily retracted, of commitments too easily broken, Mary is a model of faith for us all.

Susan Barhoum



March 25: International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

(also for August 25: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition)

The selling, transporting, and owning of slaves is one of the worst violations of human rights the world has ever experienced. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, up to 17 million human beings were shipped from Central, West, and East Africa to the Americas, with 2.4 million dying en route. Millions died as slaves in the New World. In 1526, the Portuguese made the first slave voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to Brazil, and the British, French, Dutch, and Danes followed, becoming major slave-trading nations.

Enslaved women of African descent had nuanced experiences of slavery. Enslaved women received similar treatment to men on plantations, in mines, and rice fields, but enslaved mothers were also seen as a means of increasing the enslaved population and slaveholders' profit, whether by procreative sexual relations or as wet-nurses for white slaveholders' infants. Two stereotypes formed the so-called 'Jezebel' and 'Mammy' portrayals of black women: 'Jezebel' reflected black women's supposed hypersexuality around attire and African traditions of polygamy, the absolute opposite of Victorian idealizations of womanhood; 'Mammy' was named the expert in domesticity and the superior house-servant with a love for her enslavers' white children, softening the realities of the slavery of house servants to outsiders.

In 1807, Britain passed the first legislation banning the slave trade, and, by 1815, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and Portugal did the same. Five years later, in 1820, the USA made slave trading punishable by the death penalty, officially abolishing slavery in 1865. In 2007, the UN General Assembly designated March 25 as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and unveiled a permanent memorial, the Ark of Return, in 2015.
And we pray:

> *Father, forgive us for the severe abuse inflicted on so many women, men, and children in the transatlantic slave trade. And in remembering and abolishing this trade, may we humbly persevere in ending all abuse of human beings in our world. May Your Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen*

Helen Van Koevering

HOLY WEEK

The week that changed the world continues to change our lives

In the midst of the brokenness, discrimination, destruction, and the countless lives lost to injustice and oppression, the cross of Christ stands as a symbol of hope and redemption. It reminds us that even in the darkest times, God's love prevails. Jesus' death on the cross was not the end of the story, but the beginning of a new chapter, a chapter of hope, forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life.

As we journey with Jesus through Holy Week, may we walk in the way of Christ's suffering and share in His resurrection. May we draw closer to God and discover the transformative power of His love. May we emerge from this week with a renewed sense of hope and a deeper commitment to be Christ's hands and feet in a world that desperately needs His light. "How we walk with the broken speaks louder than how we walk with the great."

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, on those who wait upon His love, to pluck their lives from death, and to feed them in time of famine.
Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. Indeed, our heart rejoices in Him, for in His holy Name we put our trust. Let your loving-kindness, O Lord, be upon us, as we have put our trust in you. (Psalm 33:18-22)

Palm Sunday

Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding a donkey, not a horse. Peace is still His way. Therefore, we wave palms because we await God's deliverance, as we shout Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna means "save us." The Lord responds to the call, and He is present. Hosanna is an expression of hope that is not distant but is here at our door; hope in the enduring presence of a God who walks with us through it all. He is our King who walks in our midst. Let us wave palms and shout out Hosanna today as well. Shout for freedom, justice, peace, and salvation, because our humble king is present among us. He is our salvation in His death and resurrection. He conquered death with death, and with His righteousness, He broke the thorn of sin, and with His presence, He filled every human life with divine meaning.

Maundy Thursday

'Maundy' is a shortened form of mandatum in Latin, which means 'command.' He commanded us to love one another as he has loved us. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34).

Today is a reminder that even in moments of betrayal and hardship, forgiveness and love can conquer all. We celebrate the gift of the love of Jesus, given to us for our nourishment, given to us as an example of selfless love, a love that led him to the cross. We remember the hands that served, the heart that loved, and the Savior who knelt. We are reminded of the true essence of leadership, one that uplifts others, serves without expecting anything in return, and leads with compassion and grace.

In our prayer today, we let our Lord wash our feet, love us unconditionally, and we let Jesus be broken and given for us. We pray that we might be faithful to the commandment of Jesus, that we might love others in the same way that we have been loved. May this sacred day inspire us to become better stewards of faith and service in our communities. Think about what you would do if you knew you only had one day to live. Jesus knew, and He washed feet.

Good Friday

We journey with Jesus to the cross, knowing that we have a God who has experienced suffering and is intimately present in our own suffering, even the profound ache of grief. Jesus experienced the abuse and perversion of justice that so many endured then, and too many suffer today. All too often, the powerful justify their actions and choices while the powerless suffer in silence, their voices unheard, much like the silence left by the absence of those we cherished. The ultimate act of injustice that reveals the brokenness of humanity is also an act of ultimate divine love and solidarity.

The world's suffering and the void left by loss have not vanished, but a new perspective on hardship, injustice, tragedy, and deep sorrow becomes clear. God is in it all with us! He chooses to embody a different way of justice. He identifies with the powerless and takes upon himself the cost of injustice and challenges it, just as he carries the weight of our grief alongside us.

The reality of Good Friday reminds us to honour and grieve the suffering and loss around us, including our own, and work for a better tomorrow, remembering that God is on that journey with us. He has not forsaken us, even in the darkest moments of our mourning!

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds, we are healed." (Isaiah 53: 04-05).

Good Friday puts the cross before us and challenges us not to look away from the world's pain or the emptiness left in our hearts. We do not have to fear. We can have confidence in God's enduring presence, even in the face of death and the lingering ache of absence. Wherever shadow falls, we can seek the face of Jesus, ask for the strength we need to be a sign of hope wherever there is despair, to be a presence of love wherever it is most needed, and to find solace and strength in the midst of our own sorrow. We can sit at the foot of the cross and consider the depths of His sacrifice and love, a love that extends even to embracing our grief. We remember that there is no resurrection without crucifixion, no Easter Sunday without Passion Friday, and no empty tomb without the Cross. Death does not have the final say.

Holy Saturday

His cross stands empty. In stillness, we await. Just as the earth holds the seed before it bursts forth with new life, so too does this silent Saturday hold the promise of resurrection. In the silence, there is hope in the darkness. God's plan is unfolding even when it cannot be seen. Silence is not the end, but the prelude to something extraordinary. This day of waiting can feel like a time of being lost, even abandoned. Yet, the quiet whispers a powerful truth: we are not alone. God is with us, holding us close and showering us with love, even when we struggle to see it. Even in our deepest pain, God remains constant. He is working behind the scenes to bring healing and renewal to our lives. The sealed stone of the tomb symbolizes that nothing can keep Jesus contained. Death is not the end; it's a passage to new life and a reminder of God's triumph over despair. As we wait through this Holy Saturday, hope whispers louder than doubt. Let's hold onto hope. Let's trust that, even in the dark, light will break through. May we find comfort in knowing that God is alive and working, preparing to turn our sorrow into joy.

This Holy Saturday, let's open our hearts to the love and hope that await us. May we be inspired by the hidden hope of this day to continue serving with compassion, dedication, and unwavering faith, knowing that our efforts, like the promise of Easter, hold the power to bring about profound transformation and the dawning of new possibilities for others.

Lord Jesus, we await you. Be risen anew in our hearts as the light of Your Resurrection dawns.

Easter Day

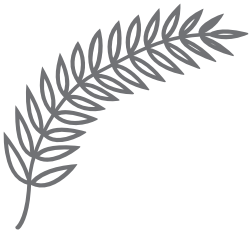
The Earth shook with the news: He is not here; He is Risen! And in that moment, joy replaced despair; hope pushed past fear, life conquered death, not just that day, but for all eternity. The resurrection was not the end of the story, but its beginning. Amidst pain, loss, and despite the darkness of reality, the light of the empty tomb breaks through to tell us: death does not have the last word! Through Christ's resurrection, He has given us a new life, full of hope, secured by grace, for eternity. A promise that love is stronger than hate, that justice will rise, and that peace will prevail. We find comfort in knowing that our loved ones now share in that victory and have passed into the fullness of life, where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4).

The women were there, it was the women who stayed. Despite the risks they faced and the brutality of the Romans, they remained at the foot of the cross; they maintained their presence with compassion and unconditional love. They were faithful and determined, committed to Jesus, even as He faced unimaginable suffering. They faced the reality of death as they tended to Jesus' crucified body with ointment and spices. And now they experience the deep joy of the Resurrection as the first disciples to witness it.

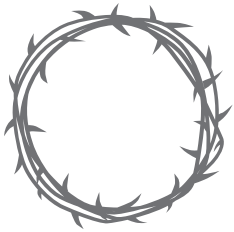
Many times, history and our world views are misshapen and distorted through partial stories, mentioning men without women, victors without victims, dismissing women's voices. Yet those women at the tomb that day were entrusted with the greatest message of all. Life had triumphed over death!

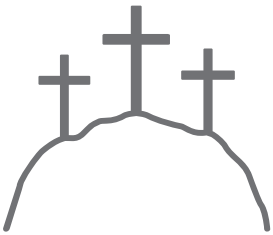
Their presence at Jesus' side powerfully affirms their integral role in the unfolding gospel story. Without the women, we would have no knowledge of the resurrection. They teach us loyalty, faith, and courage to stand up for what is right and true, and to keep good faith through whatever life offers. Just as they did not hesitate to speak, we too are called to proclaim love, justice, and new life in the places where we stand. We are called to embrace the role God has given us and never doubt the value of our voices as we stand with others in their darkest hours, just as they did with Jesus. In their example of resilient hope and resurrection joy, however dark the world may seem, we see the Risen Son of God. And we remember all women who remain steadfast and hopeful in the midst of adversity.

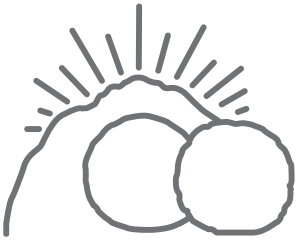
Susan Barhoum











April

April 22: International Mother Earth Day
(also named Earth Day)

This is the day to celebrate the promotion of environmental protection and awareness since 1970. 'Green Anglicans' and others have worked hard to turn this Day into a movement, especially in those lands most affected by climate change. The Mothers' Union has become agents of eco-change in Southern and Eastern Africa. Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan woman, founded the first Green Belt Movement to protect the environment. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her environmental, social, and political activism. Globally, women hold a vital stake in the health of the land. Their hands have shaped and nurtured life on our planet, even though they commonly lack access to and control over the very land they cultivate.

Around the world, land is being degraded daily by drought and desertification, putting food production and the lives of those who depend on the land in jeopardy. Unsustainable farming methods are eroding soil 100 times faster than the natural process can restore it, and up to 40 per cent of our planet's land is now degraded.

When given the chance, women are incredible stewards of our land, using their extensive knowledge and skills to protect and restore degraded land and build resilience to the effects of climate change. Women are powerful agents of change, but due to discriminatory practises on land tenure, lack of credit, unequal pay, and low levels of decision-making, as well as the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, women's participation in land management is often blocked.

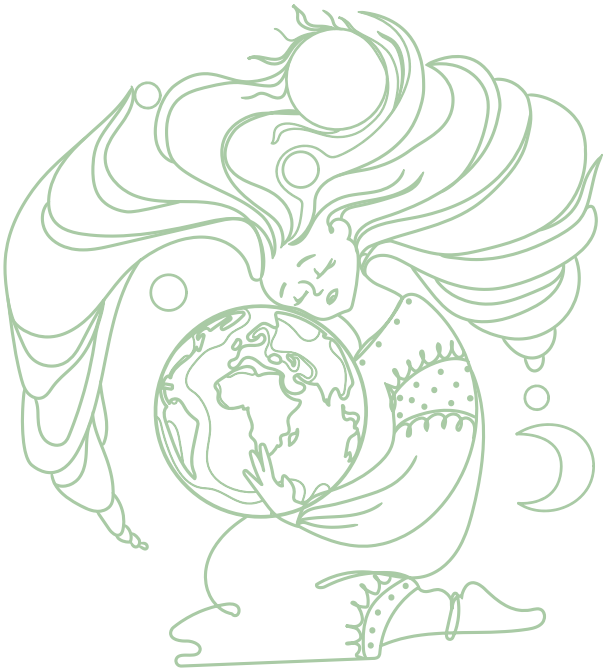


Prayer

Lord, on this special day, we are reminded that we are a part of your creation and that you have given us the responsibility to be good stewards of the earth. We have not been very good stewards. Today, your creation suffers. We have polluted the water and air you provided to sustain us. We have destroyed many of the resources you gave us to nurture us. Our wanton ways have led to the reduction of the needed forests and mountains, and the species you created in your love and wisdom. And the earth is paying the price for our sins. Disease, climate change, droughts, fires, and devastating storms can all be traced back to our recklessness. God, have mercy on us.

Please forgive us. May we never forget that the earth belongs to you and that we have a responsibility to do all we can to preserve and protect your good earth. May we encourage women to fulfil their potential as agents of change, recognizing that in caring for the earth, women and men show our love both for you and others, even for those yet to be born. In the end, we pray with Jesus that your will might be done 'on earth as it is in heaven.' It is in His name we offer this prayer. Amen.

Gabriela Merayo



April 25: World Malaria Day

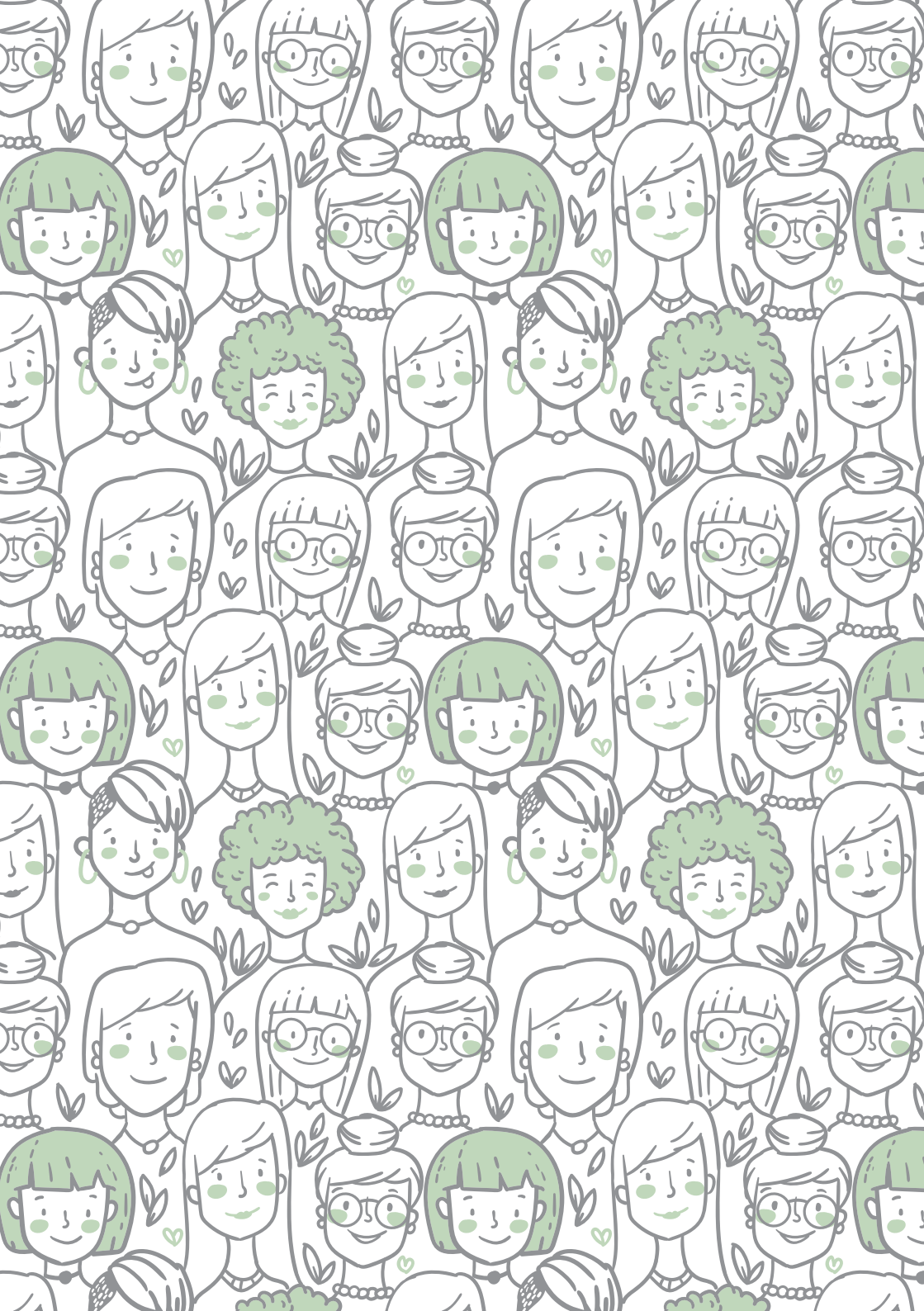
World Malaria Day recognizes global efforts to control malaria. Globally, 3.3 billion people in 106 countries are at risk of malaria. In 2012, malaria caused an estimated 627,000 deaths, mostly among African children. Asia, Latin America, and to a lesser extent the Middle East and parts of Europe are also affected.

Malaria prevalence in maternity is up to 60% of pregnancies in sub-Saharan Africa and 36% globally, posing significant risks to both the mother and the developing fetus. Parasite sequestration in the placenta can cause maternal anemia and increase the risk of mortality both during and after childbirth, contributing to stillbirths and preterm births. Infected placental tissue can impede fetal growth, resulting in low birth weight and affecting the child's growth and cognitive development. Malaria during pregnancy remains a major contributor to perinatal, neonatal, and infant mortality.

Prayer

God of hope and of the future, we pray for all those around the world who today are reminded of the loss of friends and loved ones who succumbed to malaria. We pray for those who suffer from the fever of malaria, and live in constant dread of deadly mosquitoes, that you fill their hearts with hope and reassurance of a malaria-free future. May we continue to work towards a malaria-free world. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering



May

May 15: International Day of Families

On this day, we give our thoughts and prayers to families - especially remembering that they are the backbone of society across the world and, of course, fundamental to our work within the Anglican Communion.

Families can be all shapes and sizes - sociologists define family as "a socially recognised group providing emotional support, economic cooperation and socialisation for its members. Family members may be related by blood, marriage, or adoption, or may include individuals who consider themselves family... the key elements are emotional connection, mutual care, and shared responsibilities."
So, a family unit might be simply a couple living together or a wide, extended, multi-generational family in a single residence or multiple homes.

The Mothers' Union is among other organizations that focus on the well-being of families. It is an Anglican Charity working in 84 countries across the Communion for "Christian Care for Families," particularly families in times of adversity.
They offer practical means, prayer, and training. Information and resources can be found at *mothersunion.org*

The International Anglican Family Network (IAFN) is a Network of the Anglican Communion, and celebrates the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship, and reconciliation. IAFN is an advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care, and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity. The IAFN website is: *https://www.anglicancommunion.org/network/international-anglican-family-network-iafn/*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of family and pray for Your blessings upon all families across our world. May You shower every family with Your love, provision, and grace. Bless each family member with health, happiness, and kindness. May every home be a place of peace, joy, and safety a reflection of Your goodness. We pray for perseverance within families.
Give them strength in times of difficulty. Help them to stand firm in faith and support each other through life's challenges. At all times, may every family find their strength in You, knowing that You are always with them. Amen.

June Butler

May 16: The Day of Living Together in Peace

Peaceful and loving coexistence is forged among equals, among people who know they are interdependent and need each other. It is born from individuals who deeply respect and accept one another and see their differences as opportunities for growth, diversity, and richness.

As women of faith, we hold that there is no peace without justice; therefore, we pray and work for a fairer, more equitable, and inclusive world, where differences are seen as opportunities for more colourful, complex, and beautiful tapestries.

Prayer

Divine Ruah,
Grant us the Grace of Forgiveness to build more fraternal and freer communities. Grant us the Grace of Faith to continue trusting and hoping in the transformative power of the Word.
Grant us the Grace of Love to embrace all our Brothers and Sisters, showing your mercy, your justice, and your peace. Amen.

Gabriela Merayo



May 23: International Day for the Eradication of Fistula Obstetrics

A fistula is an injury that can occur during childbirth and is caused by prolonged labour or obstruction during childbirth. As a result of this injury, women and girls lose control of urine, faeces, or both, which over time leads to chronic medical conditions, depression, social isolation, and a deepening of poverty. Girls are particularly vulnerable to injury because their bodies are not prepared for childbirth. Worldwide, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19.

Fistula has its roots in poverty and gender inequality: child birth before the complete development of the pelvis, as well as malnutrition, short stature, and poor overall health conditions, contribute to obstructed labour.
Fistula is treatable and largely preventable. Up to 95% of fistulas can be closed with expensive repair surgery. Addressing the social factors contributing to fistula, such as child marriage / early union and pregnancy, education of girls, poverty, and lack of women's empowerment, are part of the strategy to end fistula. The persistence of obstetric fistula is a clear violation of the right that all women and girls have to health and well-being.

Prayer

Trinitarian God, Mother of Tenderness and Love, who conceived us in your maternal womb in your image and likeness, grant us the grace to care for the lives of those who gestate, to fight for equal opportunities for all, and to end child marriage. Amen.

Gabriela Merayo



May 28: International Day of Action for Women's Health

"Pregnant to Give Birth" is a documentary series about women who went from being patients of the health system to being treated like criminals.
This work was done by 17 journalists from the Federal Network of Feminist Journalists and Communicators of Argentina. It was made possible thanks to the support of the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) as part of its Reproductive Rights, Health and Justice in the Americas initiative.

You can now listen to the first episode, "Waiting for Freedom," featuring the stories of Paola and Maria, who were detained after experiencing obstetric complications.
https://presasporparir.com

The World Health Organization (WHO) agrees that women's health is a cornerstone of equitable and resilient societies. Social, economic, and environmental factors intersect with biological differences to shape women's health outcomes, so that sexual and reproductive health, maternal care, noncommunicable diseases, mental health, and ageing are central to any discussion about women's limited access to healthcare services, unequal working conditions, and economic disparities. Women's ability to maintain good health intensifies vulnerability for women, especially in marginalised communities.

Violence against women threatens women's health and well-being worldwide. Globally, 01:04 women (and, in Europe, 01:03 women) experience physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, most often from an intimate partner. WHO has recommended minimum health care service policies for post-rape care, but stronger health-sector leadership to support survivors is vitally needed around the world.

Lord, hear our cry!

Gabriela Merayo

June

June 03: World Bicycle Day

Cycling is a practical, sustainable, popular way to get around. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, World Bicycle Day celebrates the bicycle's role in promoting sustainable transportation, enhancing health and well-being, and supporting a greener future. Cycling networks have been developed around the world, and many cities, such as Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Strasbourg, and Antwerp, are famous for their cycling-friendly designs.

Yet, to many people in the world, bicycles are a crucial means of transport, especially for carrying loads in rural areas, and a range of barriers remain in low-income communities where bicycles remain costly. Studies have shown that bicycle use can improve health, the economy, and gender dynamics. A 2024 report by 'Village Bicycle Project' in Ghana and Malawi showed women in a household can be more independent if they can afford their own transport, so the low cost of bike ownership supports women's opportunities for education and employment. However, household dynamics influence who can own and use the bicycle, and the majority of non-users are women who have never been taught to ride.

Women like Silvia, the Mother's Union Coordinator, who oversees MU groups across a 180 km radius around Lake Malawi. She took buses, hitched, or walked. She agreed with visitors that she could use a bicycle, and then the gifted bicycle was used by her eldest son most days of the week for family needs. Silvia didn't know how to ride a bike, but her son did. Life in rural communities is more complicated than we might imagine!

Prayer

God, help us to open our hearts and minds to the extreme differences that exist in our world, take time to find the right questions, listen to the real and known struggles, and seek to be the change our world truly needs. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering

June 12: World Day Against Child Labour

Despite progress, child labour continues to affect 138 million children worldwide. To accelerate progress, UNICEF and IOIT urge governments to:

- Invest in social protection systems, especially for vulnerable households, including universal benefits per child, so families do not resort to child labour.
- Strengthen child protective systems to identify, prevent, and respond to at-risk children, especially those facing the worst forms of child labour.
- Provide universal access to quality education, especially in rural and crisis-hit areas, so that every child can learn.
- Ensure decent work for adults and young people, including workers' right to organize and defend their interests.
- Enforce laws and corporate responsibility to end exploitation and protect children across all supply chains.

And you, do you know what you can do to change this reality?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you let the little ones come to you, and you said that the kingdom of God belongs to those who are like them. Teach us to take care of them and keep them from labour, neglect, and exploitation, so we have a world of smiles and games for them, with them, and for them. Amen.

Gabriela Merayo

Let Children Play, Not Work

June 15: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

The Bible emphasizes the importance of honouring and respecting the elderly, highlighting their wisdom and the dignity that comes with age. We have the examples of Sarah's hope and resilience, and of Jethro's wise counsel to Moses. (Proverbs 16:31): "Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life." This highlights that aging can be associated with wisdom and honour, encouraging respect for those who have lived faithfully.

However, there are also verses which express the vulnerability of aging and the need for support and care from others: (Psalm 71:9): "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone."

Elder abuse is on the rise globally. It is defined as a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. This constitutes a violation of human rights and includes physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse; financial and material abuse; abandonment or neglect, loss of dignity and respect, with consequential serious harm.

The UN provides horrifying statistics on elder abuse worldwide:

- Around 01 in 06 people 60 years and older experienced some form of abuse in community settings during the past year. Specific figures are 15% in Australia, 16% in the USA, and up to 20% in the UK.
- Rates of abuse of older people are higher in institutions such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities.
- Abuse of older people can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences.
- Abuse of the elderly is predicted to increase as many countries are experiencing rapidly ageing populations. It is worth noting that the global population aged 60 and over will more than double, from 900 million in 2015 to about 2 billion in 2050.

Our churches are at the heart of our communities - may we raise awareness of elder abuse in the midst of our communities, and bring it to the forefront of our community outreach and action.

Prayer

Compassionate and Loving God, we lift before You the elderly who suffer in silence, those whose dignity has been wounded by cruelty or neglect.
Protect them and let them feel the warmth of Your presence in their darkest hours. Grant them courage to speak, wisdom to find safe and caring hands, and the assurance that they are deeply valued and loved.
Soften the hearts of those who harm and awaken in them the call to repentance and change. Surround the vulnerable with advocates, friends, and communities who will stand for justice and show kindness.
Let healing flow into their bodies, minds, and spirits, and we ask that You be their refuge, their strength, and their everlasting comfort. Amen.

June Butler



June 18: International Day to Counter Hate Speech

In July 2021, the UN General Assembly expressed concern about "the exponential spread and proliferation of hate speech" worldwide and adopted a resolution to "promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and tolerance to counteract it."
The resolution recognizes the need to put an end to discriminatory and xenophobic rhetoric and calls on all relevant actors, including States, to step up their efforts to address this phenomenon in accordance with international human rights law.

Until a few years ago, hate speech was manipulated by social media as a way to discipline and position the audience in one political arena or another.
Today, hate speech surfaces freely thanks to social networks, where it is easy to censor the word 'rape', but it is not easy to dismiss accounts that attack women, 'haters', and those who do dirty politics under pseudonyms.

Now, what happens when those hate speeches are born from politicians who run countries? What consequences do they leave on our societies? Who can stop these people?

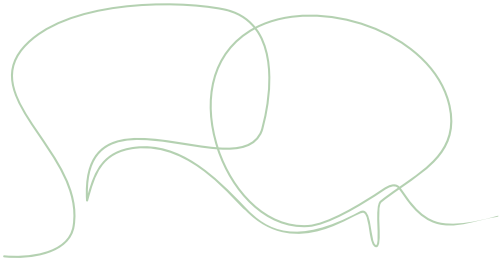
As Christian women and men, we are called to reach out to all people and to reach out from love. To fight for more just, equal, and equitable relations is a duty of each of us.

'There is no ethnicity, no religion, no gender for those who are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28)

Prayer

O God, may the words of our mouths and the thoughts of all our hearts be pleasing to You. Amen.

Gabriela Merayo



June 19: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Conflict-related sexual violence is a war crime, a crime against humanity, and a constituent act of genocide under international law, posing threats to individual and collective security and hindering lasting peace.

Motivated by political, military, or economic objectives to control territory or resources, Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV) is frequently and deliberately used to target civilians, inflicting long-term trauma and humiliation, fracturing families and the social fabric, triggering displacement, and fuelling armed actors' activities. Such violence is also used as a tactic of violent extremism and terrorism.

Rita Segato says: We are facing a femigenocide, which is "the result of the indefinite war scenario that uses the meaning of the wounded woman's body and interprets it as victory."

> *Let us pray together that the bodies of women and girls may finally be autonomous and free and may enjoy the dignified and abundant life of God's Kingdom.*

Gabriela Merayo



June 20: World Refugee Day

This World Refugee Day is a vigorous call to action and empathy at a time of global uncertainty. With record numbers of people forcibly displaced and humanitarian aid under threat, this year's theme, "Solidarity with Refugees," urges us to go beyond words and take meaningful actions to support those who are forced to flee.

Refugees do not seek charity, but rather opportunities: a way to rebuild their lives, contribute to their communities, and live with dignity. And your community, what is it doing for refugees?

Prayer

God of Shalom, in the beginning, you breathed wholeness into chaos and called every person 'very good'. Yes, we have drawn lines in the sand that separate us from those displaced, those fleeing war, persecution, and disaster. Be the constant refuge and loving hope for those facing uncertainty and comfort for those who grieve what they've lost. May your Church be a welcoming, compassionate presence, offering solidarity. And may we learn to see your face in the other always. Amen.

Gabriela Merayo

June 23: International Widows Day

Millions of widows of all ages throughout the world not only move through their own experiences of grief, loss, or trauma after the death of a spouse but also face severe struggles with injustices like economic insecurity, discrimination, and stigmatization due to traditional cultural and social practices. They may face economic dispossession by inheritance denial, property grabbing by in-laws and eviction, violence, and physical, mental, and sexual abuse; social ostracization as blamed for their husbands' deaths, even accused of witchcraft in some cultures that victimize widows with harmful traditional practices, isolation, abandonment, forced migration, neglect, and abject poverty.

This UN Day is focused on raising awareness about widows' social, economic, and legal discrimination, to advocate for the rights of widows, and empower them with access to healthcare, education, and legal protection.

The Book of Ruth in the Bible reveals the plight of widows and the insecurity of Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. (1 Kings 17) mentions the starving widow of Zarephath who trusts God and feeds Elijah. God commands His people to protect, defend, support, and seek justice for the widows:

(Psalm 146:9): "The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow..."

(Proverbs 15:25): "The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but he protects the property of widows."

(Deuteronomy 10:18): "He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice..."

(1 Timothy 5:3) "Honor the widows who are truly in need."

(Luke 2:36-38) mentions Anna, a devout Jewish widow and prophetess who spent her life worshipping at the Temple in Jerusalem through fasting and prayer and recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah.

God calls us to respect the dignity of all the vulnerable. Today, we hear the call to include widows in God's care.

Prayer

Father, we pray for the widows amongst us. We thank you for the reminder of lives well lived, of persistence and strength, of need and comfort. May we find ways today to lift up the lives of widows as your Word requires of us. Amen.

Moumita Biswas

July

July 12: International Day of Hope

Called to Hope

'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is the tree of life' (Proverbs 13:12)

Having hope and being hopeful in today's world can seem a naive state of being. We see wars erupt, women's rights jeopardised or blatantly reversed in some countries (Afghanistan), conflict related sexual violence continuing unabated, domestic abuse continuing and little justice for the survivors and victims of the violence, and on a more basic level, the lack of priority and funding given to achieve equality. So how do we remain hopeful to achieve gender equality and justice when we consistently see the erosion of rights and the prevalence of violence against women and girls remain steady or get worse?

Hope is a Discipline. We can easily become downhearted, as the Bible states, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick', yet there is hope even in that sentence. It is an acknowledgement that we are emotionally impacted when what we long for is not realised. When we long to see wars cease, violence against women and girls ended, survivors of abuse comforted, cared for and heard, for justice to be realised.
Hope is not only an emotion but it is a choice. A choice to trust in God, do our part in bringing equality about, and advocate for ourselves and others.

Hope Produces Action. Hope is not an empty value that stays in the clouds; we bring our hopes to bear by working to make them a reality. Bit by bit, piece by piece, in line with God's values and justice.
We can't do this on our own. We need to share our hope with others so we can work together to make it a reality. Sharing a vision of a different future where all women and girls can live in safety and not fear, where there are no wars, and the funding is spent on supporting survivors, renewing the planet, and trauma counselling. What part will you play in making this hope a reality?
What is your hope today?

Prayer

May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in God, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13). Amen.

Mandy Marshall

Many cultures place great weight on the last words of someone before death. John's gospel records Jesus' last words to his disciples in the Farewell Discourses of chapters 15-17. He reminded them of his commandment to love one another, of the Spirit of truth, and of being his witnesses, of his peace that will overcome the suffering world, and of loving one another and sharing his love of the Father and his prayers for those who know him. And much more to encourage peace, joy, and hope. In John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

The early Church discovered Jesus' words to be true, as we read in Romans 15:13: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Hebrews 11:1 speaks of hope more succinctly: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Women's lived experience in helpless situations reveal the power of God's hope in action. When a storm had taken the roof off a rural African church and several houses, a journalist visited. She visited a tiny roofless house in the village. A woman lived there with three young children, her husband having abandoned them to chronic poverty. After the storm, they had nothing. The journalist listened to the woman's story, through translation, and then asked, "Where is God for you in this situation?" The woman simply replied, "In your visit." Hope was recognized in being able to tell her story to a stranger.

On our IAWN visit to Amman, Jordan, we spoke to several Palestinian women about life in the present West Bank and Gaza. We heard of families of 'the disappeared', the fear and trauma of mothers and children, the disappointment of international inaction. A group of women had written an appeal to the international community and the church, and hope returned when a visiting Archbishop, without a word, simply cried. Presence and tears, telling and hearing the stories of the hurting and helpless, are ways of sharing God's hope in the world.

Lord, may we be peace-makers and hope-bringers today. Amen.

For more stories of hope, see our 2022 newsletter: *https://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/468131/IAWN-Newsletter_Hope_0422.pdf*

Helen Van Koevering

July 18: Nelson Mandela Day

"Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression"- Nelson Mandela. His message remains universal.

Lord, we give you thanks for Nelson Mandela, Madiba. Death is not the final victory. Nothing can silence the voice of Nelson Mandela - not Robben Island, not death. His words are eternal. His voice will echo throughout time. Lord, we give you thanks for Madiba. Let us have an ounce of his courage. Let us have an ounce of his faith. Encourage those women and men in South Africa and across the world who remember him. Let the work of Nelson Mandela continue in us. Lord, we give you thanks for Madiba. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering

July 25: International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent

This UN Day represents a landmark moment.

For too long, the experiences of women of African descent have sat on the sidelines of global conversations. This day is a powerful call to move beyond generalities. It is an invitation to address structural barriers directly and, most importantly, to celebrate often unrecorded contributions of African women and girls across the globe.

Recognizing that systemic gaps in healthcare, economic access, and leadership still exist is the vital first step toward restitution. However, recognition must be followed by policies that are as resilient and enduring as the women they seek to serve.

As we look to the future, my hope is that this day remains more than a symbol. For the girls in Accra through to Harlem, let us build a world where heritage is a source of power, not a target of prejudice. As African women, we must remain steadfast in our pursuit of clear data, actionable justice, and a seat at every table where our futures are being decided.

#July25 #WomenOfAfricanDescent #GlobalLeadership #EqualityInAction

Akua Afori-Boateng

July 30: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

Millions of lives are affected by human trafficking. The harsh reality is that most victims of trafficking are women and girls. Many are deceived, abused, and trapped in systems that profit from their vulnerability. They are often targeted simply because they are poor, unprotected, or lack equal opportunities. This is not just a crime, it's a deep injustice fuelled by gender inequality and injustice.

Speaking of gender justice means more than treating people equally. It means breaking down the systems that make some people more at risk than others. It means listening to survivors, protecting the vulnerable, and making sure dignity and freedom are not limited by gender, poverty, or place of birth.

On the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, we stand in solidarity with survivors and commit to challenging the systems and attitudes that allow trafficking to persist.

As people of faith and compassion, we can't look away. We are called to speak up, to act, and to pray.

Let us Pray:

God of justice and mercy, we lift up every person who has been trafficked, those still trapped, and those who've found freedom. We pray especially for women and girls who face violence and exploitation simply because of their gender. Bring healing to the broken, hope to the lost, and courage to those working to end this evil. Help is to walk in love, speak with boldness, and act with compassion until all are free. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Heidin Kunoo

July 30: International Day of Friendship

We celebrate not just the joy of companionship but also the power of friendship as a tool for justice and inclusion.

Friendship is like a garden. A garden filled with different colours, different scents, different flowers, each one beautiful in its own way. Some are bold, others gentle. Some bloom quickly; others take time. Yet each has a place. Each brings its own fragrance, its own shape, its own gift. In God's garden of friendship, diversity is not something to be feared, but cherished.

As followers of Christ, we are called to build friendships that reflect the love of Jesus-friendships rooted in justice, humility, and peace. The Gospel invites us to see and honour each person as made in God's image, especially those marginalised by gender, race, class, and ability.

True friendship, shaped by the cross, does not stay silent in the face of injustice. It listens to those who are unheard. It creates space for healing and dignity. It works for peace, not just the absence of conflict, but the presence of fairness, safety, and shared flourishing.

In a world that often divides, let us nurture a garden of friendship that brings together the overlooked and the powerful, the loud and the quiet, the different and the familiar. Because in Christ, we are one body and every part matters.

Prayer

Loving God, thank You for the gift of friendship. Teach us to be friends like Jesus, welcoming, just, and full of mercy. Help us to plant seeds of kindness and grow gardens of peace, where every voice is valued, every person honoured, and where Your justice takes root and blooms. Make our friendships a reflection of Your kingdom, rich in colour, strong in love, and wide enough for all. In the name of Christ. Amen.

Heidin Kunoo

August

August 06: Feast of the Transfiguration

God reveals Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah in the Transfiguration. The voice from Heaven proclaims Jesus as the Beloved Son, urging us to listen to him.

The transfiguration is about seeing in a new way. The disciples see Jesus in a new way. They understand the presence of God in an amazing experience. Everything now looks different.

In the midst of our complex world, we are invited to be free enough to see things in a new way. In the midst of war and violence, we are invited to see the presence of God and God's invitation to peace. In the midst of poverty and injustice, we are invited to hear God's invitation to respect the dignity of every human person and the need for justice and peace for all. Every day, in countless and seemingly small ways, God breaks into our world and our daily lives. Each time somebody shows care and concern for us is a moment when God reaches out to us.

The transfiguration encourages and challenges us in our daily lives. Let us open our hearts so that we may hear Jesus speaking to us as we are called to become the Living Stones, Lamps shining in a dark place. Do not be afraid. He is with us.

Susan Barhoum

August 09: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Today, we recognise the history, cultures, and deep wisdom of Indigenous peoples across the world. It is a day to listen to their stories, honour their resilience, and reflect on the injustices they have endured - many of which continue to this day.

As Christians, we affirm that God created every person with love and that He never desires any race, nation, or people group to be lost, ignored, or forgotten. Every culture carries the fingerprints of the Creator, and every person is made in His image, full of dignity, purpose, and worth.

For people of faith, this day is not only about recognition; it is also a call to repentance, reconciliation, and justice.

The Gospel calls us to love our neighbours, to seek truth, and to stand alongside the oppressed. Indigenous communities have long faced the wounds of colonisation, land theft, cultural erasure, and exclusion: often at the hands of systems, including Christian institutions, that failed to reflect Christ's love.

But Jesus came to bring restoration to heal what has been broken and to restore what has been taken. As followers of Christ, we are called to be peacemakers, truth-tellers, and bridge-builders, honouring the dignity and sacredness of every culture and every person made in God's image.

Therefore, let our love restore what has been broken. Let our spirit move us toward true reconciliation. And let our Church rise in humility, walking beside those long overlooked - never above.

Heidin Kunoo



August 12: International Youth Day

Today, we give thanks to God for the gift of young people - their strength, creativity, and leadership in shaping a better world. Scripture reminds us: "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are change-makers today, bringing light, hope, and fresh vision into our communities. Yet far too many face barriers to opportunity, dignity, and voice, especially young women and girls, who continue to experience gender injustice, limited education, and discrimination.

We believe every young person has equal value and purpose, with unique gifts to offer the world. Our communities must be places where all youth, regardless of gender or age, are heard, empowered, protected, and equipped to lead with courage and compassion.

Let us work together for a future where gender and age are never barriers to opportunity, and where every young person can flourish in dignity, justice, and joy.

Heidin Kunoo

August 22: International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief

Today, we remember all who have suffered or lost their lives due to violence, persecution, or discrimination based on their faith or belief. This day is not only about remembrance - it is also a call to justice. Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and when these rights are denied, human dignity is deeply wounded.

As we honour the victims, we are reminded of our responsibility to stand against hatred, protect the vulnerable, and pursue justice for those silenced by violence. True peace cannot exist without justice, and true justice is rooted in respect for human dignity and freedom.

Justice calls us to treat all beliefs with equal respect. Inclusivity must not favour some and forget others. True peace is only possible when every voice, every faith, and every person is valued.

Let us commit ourselves to building communities of respect, compassion, and solidarity, where no one is targeted for their beliefs and where every person can live in freedom, equality, and peace.

Prayer

God of compassion, we bring before You the victims of violence and persecution. We pray for comfort for the grieving, healing for the wounded, and strength for all who long for peace. Teach us to reject hatred, to embrace respect, and to stand in solidarity with the oppressed. May Your love guide us to build a world where every person can live free from fear. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Heidin Kunoo

September

September 14: Holy Cross Day

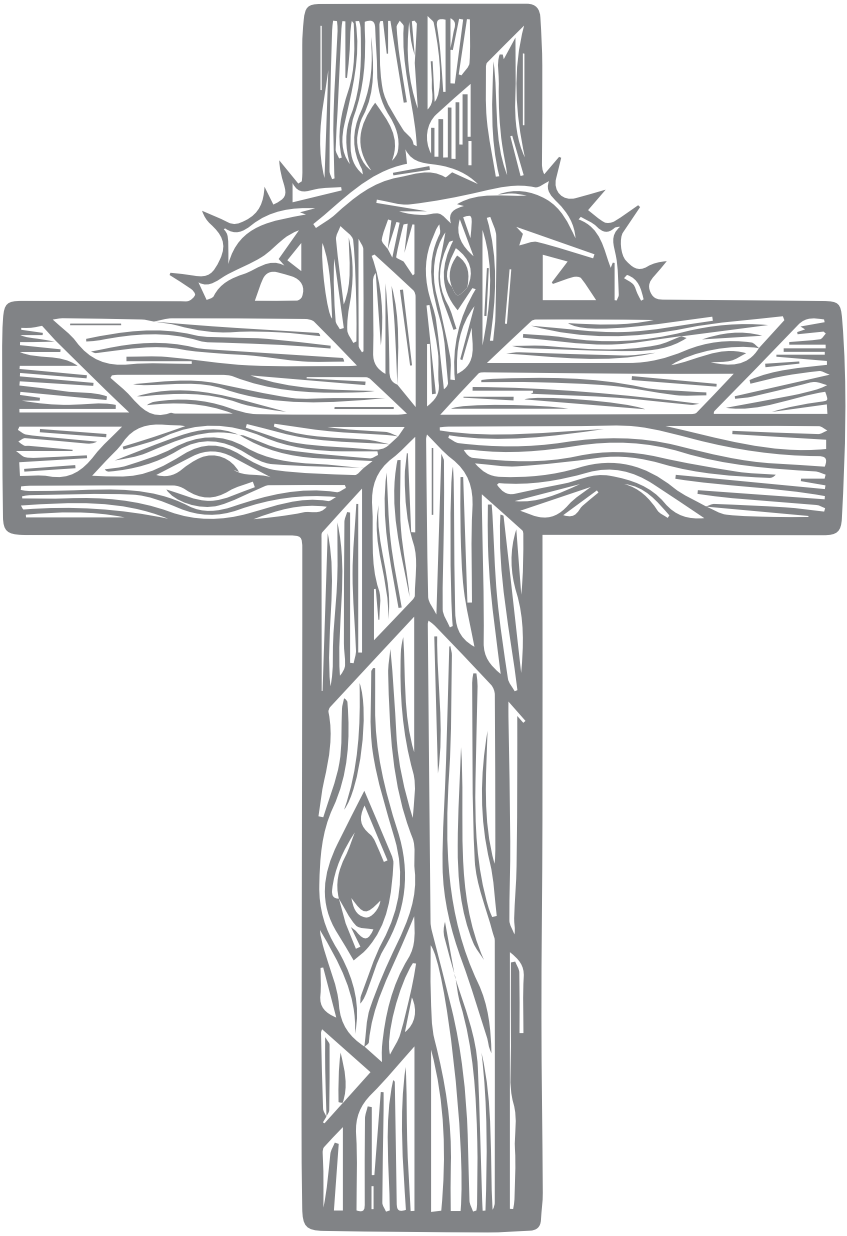
The Cross was an instrument of shameful death, a place of real suffering and brokenness, but it became a symbol of God's great redemption and the means of life and peace.

The Cross is the symbol of life, and we are the children of life, so let the Cross of the Lord be a sign of hope for us in our world that has been dominated by despair. With the Cross, we are reminded not only of the victory of Jesus over sin, but also of the love of Christ for us. It is a reminder that the Cross is the path of life after death, of joy through sorrow, of healing through suffering. We ask Jesus for help to bear our crosses out of love for Him.

On the tree of the Cross, pain turns into love, death into life, and disappointment into hope.

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise You, because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

Susan Barhoum



September 21: International Day of Peace
(World Peace Day)

Today is a Day to promote global harmony among nations, a 24-hour global ceasefire, non-violence, sustainable peace and development, the safeguarding of human rights, and the reduction of inequality. Different countries implement advocacy initiatives, awareness-raising, and peace-building educational programs that highlight the impact of war on communities and inspire present and future generations to be ambassadors of non-violence in local and global work.

Promoting justice and peace is a Biblical mandate. The Sermon on the Mount reveals Jesus' command to create peace: "Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9). (Psalm 34:14) encourages us to "turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

Churches influence peace-building and conflict prevention in their communities, address local and global tensions / conflicts, advocate for justice, facilitate reconciliation, promote peace education, and support victims of conflict. The Anglican Communion actively promotes the IDP through its agencies, commissions, and networks, such as IAWN, and the World Council of Churches (WCC) has initiated a global ecumenical observance of IDP to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families, communities, and societies.

Women peace-makers have read about women peace-makers in the Bible. Women like Abigail in (1 Samuel 25). Abigail, through her quick, wise peace-making intervention, action, and dialogue with David, could prevent the consequences of her husband Nabal's folly and conflict with David. She prevented revenge, massacre, bloodshed, and destruction of her household and loved ones. In today's context, there are many 'Abigails' striving for peace globally. For example:
In Sri Lanka, Anglican women have been actively involved in post-war reconciliation, working to help people overcome the trauma of conflict and fostering and healing communities severely affected by long-term violence.
In South Sudan, Mothers' Union members have been actively involved in reconciliation efforts, working across ethnic divides to foster peace in areas heavily impacted by civil conflict. They support displaced families and provide trauma counselling and encouraging dialogue rather than revenge.
In Uganda, Mothers' Union members have promoted national unity and emotional healing for citizens affected by conflict and post-election trauma, and have acted as intermediaries in conflicts ranging from family disputes to inter-communal cattle rustling.

However, women's contributions as peace-makers and their potential to bring about transformation are not always recognized, nor are they given adequate space to contribute. Studies reveal that women can support durable peace solutions and collective reconciliation, and that peace agreements with the active participation of women are more likely to be sustainable and effective. Let's give women space to participate fully in sustainable peace!

Prayer of Peace

(adapted from the Prayer of Francis of Assisi)

Lord, make us an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us bring love. Where there is offence, let us bring pardon. Where there is discord, let us bring union. Where there is error, let us bring truth. Where there is doubt, let us bring faith. Where there is despair, let us bring hope. Where there is darkness, let us bring your light. Where there is sadness, let us bring joy. Amen.

Moumita Biswas

October

October
Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic violence has historically been recognized as one of the most insidious, prevalent, and under-reported human rights violations globally, often thriving behind closed doors due to social stigma, shame, and patriarchal structures that normalize or trivialize abuse as a "private family matter." The World Health Organization (WHO) reveals that globally, about 01 in 03 women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

According to the United Nations, domestic abuse, also called "domestic violence" or "intimate partner violence," can be defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. This abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person, and include behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse constitutes a systematic violation of human rights that disproportionately impacts women. In many countries, marital rape is not even recognized as a crime. Children who witness domestic violence are also at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems. WHO recognizes domestic violence is also a major public health problem, and this month offers an opportunity to raise awareness, share information, and support victims, empower survivors by educating the public on the signs and impact of abuse, engage in advocacy for destigmatization, and prevent the normalization of domestic violence.

The Old Testament recounts many 'texts of terror' as stories of domestic violence. Genesis 34 reveals the story of the rape of Dinah by Shechem; (2 Samuel 13) narrates the story of Tamar, the daughter of King David, who was raped by her own half-brother, Amnon, and King David remained silent; in (Judges 19), a Levite's concubine faces fatal domestic and sexual violence. The Bible reveals that God abhors violence and always has a preferential option for the vulnerable and oppressed. Using power to oppress others is condemned (Ecclesiastes 4:1), and causing trouble and ruin in the household is condemned (Proverbs 11:29).
(John 10:10) refers to 'life in abundance' for all, and (Psalm 34:18) assures us all that "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

Our Anglican churches are rising to the challenge worldwide, encouraged by IAWN, to observe this month, to 'break the silence' in the pulpit, offers toolkits to train leaders, support survivors, and advocate for awareness to combat domestic violence *(see IAWN's website for materials, resources, and ideas: anglicancommunion.org).*

The Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) has produced a toolkit, 'Ten Commitments', to improve domestic violence preventative work. In the Raiwind Diocese of the Church of Pakistan, survivors are empowered as agents of change through creative methods such as poster drawing, story-sharing, and re-reading the Bible from a gender-justice perspective. In the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Bishop of Butere, Rose Okeno, has emerged as a significant leader in combating domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV). There is hope in action for gender justice!

Prayer

God, in any way we can, inspire, empower, encourage, and envision us to pray and act for the global end of domestic violence. Be with us, we pray. Amen.

Moumita Biswas



October 01: International Day of Older Persons

Today, we remember all those across our world who are growing old, and we think about the many challenges they face, physically and mentally, as they come to terms with not being as active or alert as in earlier years. They may also have difficulty accepting that they are now dependent on others for aspects of their everyday life. Every older person should be afforded the dignity of choice, and they should be encouraged to seek advice from the many bodies that support the lives and interests of those who are entering their "golden years." One such body in Northern Ireland is Age NI, which has full-time staff who provide a range of direct services to older persons and their families, and offer advice on benefits, housing, care, security, and financial matters. They also encourage all older persons to remain active in body and mind and provide relevant programmes in which they can participate. Of course, women in the Anglican Communion work with the elderly in multiple ways, both through formal ministries like the Mothers' Union and as volunteers in their local congregations. The lives of older Anglican laywomen have been the subject of research; a study by Sonya Day highlighted how a generation of active, older women was the "backbone" of their churches, performing much of the unpaid work in parishes.

The Anglican Health and Community Network supports Anglicans working in healthcare and community wellness. For women serving the elderly, the network shares best practices and resources, especially concerning health, nutrition, and other factors important to aging adults. One example of resources from the Episcopal Church: *https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/1_aging_is_changing*.

We must never forget that older persons have given so much to others, within families, workplaces, churches, and communities during earlier times, and they must be supported and continue to be loved as they age.

Prayer

God of all peoples, we ask you for good health, comfort, dignity, and peace for all older persons; keep them safe from harm, both physical and emotional. We thank you for the wisdom and support they have brought to those around them over the years; for the legacy they have left through their families and communities. We would ask you to give them the strength and patience to accept the challenges of growing older, and that they may know your continued presence and companionship. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

June Butler

October 10: World Mental Health Day

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." Audre Lorde

Talking about mental health and 'well-being' has become a fairly common area of discussion globally. If you have access to them, there are multiple podcasts, Facebook communities, TV programmes, and more. There is much that is good about this, of course, as it has long been a stigmatised area of life, for women especially, who have been misrepresented, misunderstood, misdiagnosed, and generally missed over millennia. The Global Mental Health Action Network *(gmhan.org)* reports in 2026 that globally, mental ill health disproportionately affects women, noting vulnerabilities across all ages but especially among young women and those in the perimenopause period.

All women share the experience of patriarchy. However, the Maya Centre notes that black women are 'doubly minoritised' and defines four ways that race as well as gender affects their mental health: inequity over reproductive health; increased domestic violence; higher levels of mental ill health due to misogyny; and greater levels of poverty.

There are many powerful writings by women about their experiences, which can act as a strengthening and empowering tool. Zimbabwean, Tsitsi Dangarembga, has written powerfully about the mental health of black women facing both patriarchy and the legacies of colonialism. 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' written nearly 150 years ago by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, depicts the powerful journey of a woman's mental health decline caused by her controlling husband. Nearly 100 years ago, anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston wrote that black women were the 'mules of the world' while she created inspiring and resilient heroines. And it has been nearly 50 years since Maya Angelou wrote her famous poem: 'And still I rise', which continues to be an anthem for women. It demonstrates the spirit, beauty, and strength of a woman against all efforts to suppress her, a battle many women face daily.

Prayer

Father, you desire all to walk in health and well-being; may we work to loosen the chains of mental health on women and support each other with liberating encouragement and hope. May women struggling with mental health be encouraged by solidarity with Mary, the mother of Jesus, who knew what it was to experience persecution, forced migration, conflict, discrimination, poverty, fear, loss, and grief. Amen.

Rachel Parry

October 11: International Day of the Girl Child

Shaped through consultations with girls' organizations, UN partners, and girls themselves, the 2025 International Day of the Girl theme was 'The girl I am, the change I lead: Girls on the frontlines of crisis.'

In many places around the world, girls are being seen stepping up to meet today's biggest challenges on the environment, demanding an end to violence and reimagining their futures. Girls like Malala Yousafzai and Nadia Murad have received Nobel Prizes for their activism. Halima Aden and Rima Sultana Rimu are encouraged by UNICEF in their activism, and Greta Thunberg is famous as a climate activist. Girls are asking to be seen for who they are and the solutions their leadership brings.

Yet, most often, girls' voices go unheard, their actions ignored, their needs and rights pushed aside. Again, it's amongst the estimated 692 million of the chronically poorest of our world that change is needed - for girls caught up in war-time trauma, lacking education, childhood marriage, poor health systems, and 30 million girls that have continued to face female genital mutilation (FGM) since 2016. In rural Africa, it is still common to see girls as young as five years old carrying their siblings in cloths on their backs, 'babysitting' during what could be school or playtime. Older girls would be carrying water on their heads for household members, cooking, selling produce in the local market, or on street corners. Of the approximately 86 million members of the global Anglican Communion, the 'average Anglican' is today seen as a young sub-Saharan African woman who has grown up in chronic poverty, and grassroots churches see the needs of their girls. That is why the Mothers' Unions of dioceses in Malawi and northern Mozambique have grown networks of St Agne's groups for girls from 6 to 16 years of age in congregations, where girls' voices are heard, their participation and emerging leadership supported, and the church remains a sign of hope. The International Day of the Girl on October 10 is a rallying cry to focus on all girls everywhere, seek to listen to their voices, and bring the hope of transformation.

Prayer

Father God, today we bring the needs of the girls of our world to You. You know their value and worth, and You love each one. May we listen, learn, hear, cherish, support, and welcome girls' voices. May they all find encouragement in our belief that they are the emerging generation of leaders; may our eyes be open to the needs of the girls around us; and may they find hope to faithfully step forward. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering

October 15: International Day for Rural Women

The International Day of Rural Women honours the critical, yet often overlooked, role of rural women (including indigenous women) in both paid and unpaid labour in agriculture, their leadership in environmental stewardship, sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, food security, and the eradication of rural poverty with rural development. The day was first celebrated in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and officially recognized by the UN in 2008. Gender equity, poverty reduction, and empowerment for local decision-makers are urgently needed.

Research by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) found that 70% of the world's food is produced by small-scale farmers and peasants. In 2023, 62% of employment in Africa was in agrifood systems, that is, 290 million people. In sub-Saharan Africa, 76% of working women are in agrifood systems. This does not include those millions who work in household farming activities beyond their work as teachers, shopkeepers, and other paid employment. This could mean that around 87% of Africa's population depends on agrifood systems.

Women like Saria, an accountant, who also keeps her own 'machamba' (field). Women like Gloria and Rosa, who leave their families in October to prepare their machambas for next year's food crops. Maria was concerned one year around planting time, because militia had been seen on the roads, and she was fearful of going to her machamba to plant. Family food security the following year would be affected if she did not go. A fire had destroyed a large part of the forestry company's seedling beds one year, and the paid employment was mostly of women.
The women who had given up their machambas for this paid employment faced great vulnerability. And the devastation and severity of the annual rains and floods due to climate change (and plastic in the ocean and rivers) brought death, loss of land, machambas, and hope for next year's food supply.

> *So, we pray for women who are vital to food security and deeply affected by climate change, seasonal rainfall, and the needs of their families. May good programs strengthen their resilience and health, their decision-making, and sense of hope for the future. May these women farmers recognize the hand and presence of God as Lord of the harvest, protector of families and children, and may they know peace. Amen.*

Helen Van Koevering

October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The first of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) is to end poverty. While one of the benefits of globalization over the past 30 years has been the reduction in absolute poverty rates worldwide, poverty is often still simply measured in terms of income levels. Yet poverty is multifaceted and reflects more than a deficiency of income and productive resources. It encompasses economic, social, cultural, and political elements and is inherently interwoven with a lack of fundamental human rights. According to the UN, its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, inequality, social discrimination and exclusion, deprivation, inadequate access to education and basic services, as well as lack of participation in decision-making. To make progress towards poverty reduction, we need to consider ways to mobilize more investors and businesses to adopt this goal.

Globally, about 10% of women live below the international poverty line. Rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are much higher, at 30% of women living in poverty and in conflict zones where women are disproportionately affected (UN Women, 2024). In the USA in 2024, poverty rates were 10% of all adult women, with 17.8% for Black women, 15.2% for Latinas, and 19.4% for Native American women.

Globally, women are more likely to experience poverty due to a global gender pay gap of an average of 34%, limited access to resources so that women's work (especially for elderly and disabled women) predominates in informal economies, and single motherhood. The households of single mothers include about 50% of households in Northern Mozambique (UNHCR, 2025) and about 22% of US households (Women in America report, 2024).

It is clear that a concerted, urgent, and multiple approach by multiple partners is needed to eradicate poverty, especially when viewed through the lens of women and their families' lives.

Prayer

Loving Creator, you see the strength, resilience, and dignity in every woman. We lift up those burdened by poverty-those whose dreams are delayed by lack, whose voices are silenced by inequality, and whose potential is hindered by injustice. Bless them with opportunities that open doors, with education that empowers, and with work that honours their worth. Surround them with communities that uplift, policies that protect, resources that restore hope, and all poverty be eradicated for every woman and her family. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering



November

November 18: World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence

Globally, the UN estimates that about 120 million girls under 20 years of age (and possibly 70 million boys under 18) are victims of pervasive sexual misconduct and exploitation, regardless of nation, culture, and societal strata.
This includes experiencing early marriage, FGM, forced sex and sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, both online and offline, and it's also a common situation during armed conflicts.
Data collected by the UN has indicated that perhaps 01 in 20 adult men admit to online sexualised behaviour towards children under 12 years old.
01 in 04 children aged under 5 years live with a mother who is a victim of intimate partner violence, and it is now widely recognized that such experiences in childhood can have a serious effect on the adult life experience of interpersonal violence and a 30 times greater likelihood of attempted suicide.
The situation urgently needs prayerful action and change.

Prayer

Father God, with heavy hearts, we lift up to you all those who have endured the unspeakable pain of sexual abuse. Our souls cry out for their healing, Lord. We pray that the leaders of our nations, communities, and churches will focus their attention on the prevention and protection of all children and seek healing for victims. Mend our brokenness. Restore and heal our sense of security and self-worth. Pour out your divine love upon them, Father, and lead them on a path towards healing and wholeness with strength and courage.
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering



November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

& the first day of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (through to December 10: Human Rights Day)

Prayer

Ever-loving God,
On this day, we honour women and girls by crying out for the elimination of violence against women and girls.
We pray for all who have been harmed by gender-based violence. Bring healing where there is pain, safety where there is fear, and hope where hope has been lost. Give us courage to speak out, to protect the vulnerable, and to work for justice and respect in every community. Strengthen all who support survivors, and guide us to be people of compassion, peace, and dignity. May Your light lead us toward a future where every person is valued and where violence has no place. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.

Heidin Kunoo



Five Ways to Help End Gender-based Violence

Published By IAWN Canada 2025

1. Include prayers for women and others experiencing gender-based violence in the Prayers of the People each Sunday between November 25th and December 10th.

2. Educate yourself about the violence experienced by women and others in your country, province or local community.

3. Connect with a local shelter, women's housing or resource centre. Learn about their needs. Start conversation... who knows what partnerships might develop?

4. Find a vigil for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in your community and attend. Invite others.

5. Support or begin a parish or community gift drive for women and children who may be spending Christmas in a shelter.

A hymn for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

by Rev Lizzi Ann Green, Church of England (printed with permission)

1. God of justice, God of mercy, hear the cries we cannot still;
Violence shatters, silence covers, yet your love is stronger still.
Into fear and into anguish, speak your word of truth today;
Call us into steadfast courage, walk with us the costly way.

2. Christ, who knew the depth of sorrow,
Christ, who bore the wounds of wrong,
Stand with all who face tomorrow, when the nights are dark and long.
Risen Christ, bring resurrection, hope that suffering cannot kill;
With your fierce and tender presence, hold us, heal us, guide our will.

3. Spirit, stir in us compassion, give us strength to work for peace;
till your justice brings us freedom, till the captive finds release.
Take our anger, take our yearning, shape a future just and true;
In our living, in our daring, make the world your kingdom true.

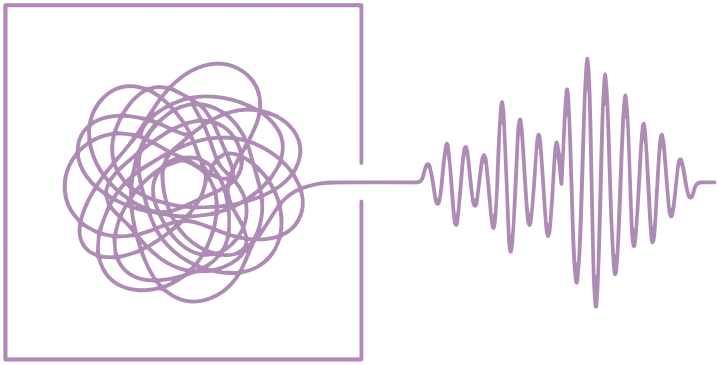
November 30: Breaking the Silence Sunday

Break the Silence Sunday (BTSS) encourages our churches to speak about ending gender violence. Most churchgoers have never heard a sermon on gender-based violence, nor are churches adequately equipped to address domestic abuse.
BTSS can change this with prayerful advocacy and sermons. It is a Sunday when the patriarchy of the Church, in leadership and decision-making, biblical interpretation, and attitudes that underpin the psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, and economic violence suffered by women around the world, in our churches and communities, even whilst we preach the gospel of love, inclusion, preference for the most vulnerable, peace, and abundant life.

Resources for Break the Silence Sunday are found on the IAWN Facebook page and website, as well as the Break the Silence Toolkit published by the Diocese of New York *(dioceseny.org)*

> *O God, Your Son, Jesus Christ anointed the eyes of the blind to open and those silenced to be given voice: may we be empowered by Your Spirit to speak up when we recognize gender-based violence in our world, and work with hope towards its eradication, that all women and men, girls and boys, may flourish in the fullness of life and rejoice to see the unfolding of Your glory in every part of our world; in Jesus' name. Amen.*

IAWN USA



December

First Sunday of Advent: HOPE

Gracious and Loving God, in this Advent season, we open our hearts to the hope You bring a hope that challenges despair, ignites justice, and calls us to courage. In a world fractured by division and suffering, we long for Your healing presence.

Help us to see Your light in unexpected places: in acts of kindness, in the resilience of the oppressed, and in the quiet moments of connection. Teach us to be bearers of hope, not only in word but in action. Inspire us to stand with the marginalized, to care for creation, and to seek peace.

> *May the flame of the first candle of Advent remind us that no darkness can overcome Your love. Let this be a season where we deepen our faith, strengthen our communities, and prepare the way for the Christ who comes to renew all things. In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World, we pray. Amen.*

Susan Barhoum



December 01: World HIV / AIDS Day

Women are disproportionately affected by HIV compared to men, with young women most at risk. In many countries, women experience inequality linked to cultural and social norms, and many experience gender-based violence.

The reality of HIV / AIDS was ever-present in the years 2003-2015, when Rebecca Vander Meulen, a public health activist, and Helen Van Koevering, a priest, worked with the Diocese of Niassa in Northern Mozambique. Colleagues, parishioners, neighbours, and friends were lost to 'that sickness,' even as the situation moved from stigma and lack of treatment to less stigma and access to education around prevention and longer life expectancy.

Rebecca wrote for World AIDS Day 2013 about a woman called Esperança (Hope) who was admitted to the remote health centre of Cobue, Mozambique. Because of the Anglican Diocese of Niassa's comprehensive 'Salt, Light, Health' community health project and many 'Life Team' activists who work in the Cobue region, Cobue offered better health services than most communities of its size. She was very poorly, covered in infected ulcers, unable to sit up or walk. Her primary caregivers were a local doctor, a traditional midwife, and her mother. Esperança's immune system had been decimated by HIV since she was first diagnosed in 2008, and her ARV medications were no longer working.

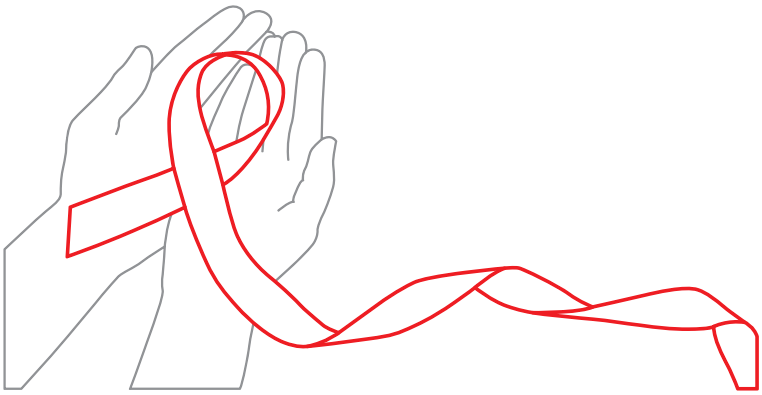
A team of dedicated people connected to high places obtained authorisation from the national Ministry of Health for Esperança to begin a new ARV regimen. Within days, Esperança's increasing mobility and healing sores proved that these new ARVs were effectively halting HIV's reproduction within her body. Esperança was discharged from the hospital only a month after she'd arrived. She arrived home to a surprised celebration: friends, neighbours, the Mothers' Union from her church in Mala. Esperança had clung to hope with a courage to live beyond the facts. She had received second-line ARVs, her family had received teaching about HIV from Salt, Light, Health, and Life Team activists, her primary caregiver (her mother) hadn't given up, and activists around the world who lobbied for lower ARV prices, and the PEPFAR funds through USAID that made her medication available. But the obligatory prerequisite to all of that was Esperanca's own deep hope. Only a well-practiced hoper could have hoped as she did.

And another story from Helen's diary:
The wife of a colleague is HIV positive. Her husband's unfaithfulness led to this, but there is no talk of blame - the reality is harsh enough. Beyond talk is needed reconciliation. The infection in her mouth was too sore to eat, drink, talk, or receive Eucharist. Her husband was gently holding her to help her sit up and lean on him. And I read today's gospel reading: "I am the bread of life... For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." I glanced up at my friend because she had taken my hand - her face was simply shining with God's grace. God's life given for us, at our weakest, for heaven to touch earth - the Kingdom's offer of beauty for ashes, living hope.

Prayer

Lord of Advent, you are Hope, and you bring hope. Thank you for bringing hope to hopeless situations. May we, too, learn from these two women to hope and be living examples of grace. And may there be unity found in the challenge of HIV/AIDS around our world, showing that we truly care about transforming lives. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering



December 05: International Volunteer Day

A global celebration is held each year to honour the countless individuals who give their time, skills, and hearts in service to others. It is a day to recognise the quiet heroes whose dedication strengthens communities, uplifts the vulnerable, and reflects the very heart of compassion.

UN Volunteers' global report of 2023 found that 58% of women and 42% of men participate in voluntary roles. This proportion holds for most higher-income countries, except Japan, where the percentage of male volunteers is higher than that of women. In the life of the church, volunteers are the foundation of almost every ministry, the backbone of the church in many parts of the world. They welcome people at the door, teach children, prepare meals, lead worship, care for the elderly, organise events, clean, visit the sick, and offer pastoral support. Their dedication allows churches to grow spiritually and practically. Through their willingness to serve, the church becomes a place of belonging, warmth, and faith in action.

Where I minister, The Mission to Seafarers also depends greatly on volunteers. Seafarers spend long months away from their families, often in challenging conditions. Volunteers visit ships, offer transport, assist at the mission centre, provide guidance, listen to stories, and pray with those who seek comfort. Their presence brings encouragement and dignity to men and women who often feel forgotten. Because of volunteers, this ministry can reach more ships and support more seafarers with God's love and compassion.

Volunteers help God's work flourish. Their service, offered with humility, patience, and joy, reflects the heart of Christ. They show that the Gospel is not only preached in words but lived out through acts of love. Where volunteers step forward, God's ministries grow, and communities are transformed.

Today, we thank every volunteer who serves faithfully and quietly. Your labour is seen by God, valued by many, and vital to the mission of the church.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the volunteers who offer their time, gifts, and hearts in service. Strengthen and bless them. May their work continue to reflect Your love and build Your Kingdom. Inspire more people to serve with compassion and humility, following the example of Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Heidin Kunoo

December 09: International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime

This Day is a vital reminder of the world's commitment to stop the horrors of genocide, and encourages global cooperation to ensure that such atrocities are prevented. It is a day to honour past victims and highlight the need for vigilance against future victims. This day calls out discrimination, xenophobia, hostility, and intervention to prevent systematic violence and protect vulnerable populations. This day urges global leaders to uphold human rights and strengthen legal frameworks for genocide prevention and targeted violence.

But why December 09?
In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention on December 09, and then in 2015, the UN General Assembly established Genocide Prevention Day to emphasize educating people about the causes and warning signs of genocide and taking proactive measures. And on the tenth anniversary of that Day, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution to accelerate work on the prevention of genocide. This full-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly provides a critical platform for Member States, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders to engage in a dialogue on the prevention and punishment of genocide, and to reflect on their own commitments. The need to invest in genocide prevention, as envisaged by the Genocide Convention drafters of 1948, remains as relevant as ever.

In the IAWN Steering Group conversations in Jordan earlier this year, disappointment with international action over "the living hell of Gaza" was real. Women asked that another day be sanctified as a memorial to the suffering communities and families of genocide in Gaza: October 08, the day violence with genocidal outcomes began in 2023. Women, carrying the trauma of their families and communities, are, as we heard, 'teaching the world what steadfast love looks like' in their daily lives. And so, must we learn that, in solidarity and in our God-given choices in line with God's justice, we respond with that same Love.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Helen Van Koevering

December 10: Human Rights Day

Women's Bodies: A Bible Study by Gabriela Merayo, Argentina

Violence against women and girls includes seeing how the bodies of women and girls or wives and daughters have been used to protect the bodies and lives of men, to their detriment. That's what happened to Sarah, Abram's wife (Gen 12:10-20; Gen 20:01-18), and Lot's daughters (Gen 19:01-02, 04-08), amongst many other Biblical stories.

Abram uses Sarah's body to protect himself and enrich himself. On two occasions, Abram asks Sarah to pretend to be his sister: first in front of Pharaoh when he arrived in Egypt, and then in front of King Abimelech in the Negev.
Why? Because apparently, Sarah was very pretty and Abram feared that, if they knew about his marriage, they would kill him to keep his wife. So, he lied directly about their relationship, saying she was his sister, and, with that, he opened the way for both the Pharaoh and the king to take her as a wife, which ultimately happened. That is, Abram, the patriarch, let other men take his wife in order to have a good life in those lands where he passed. To marry a woman, a tribute had to be paid to the family, so not only did he stay alive, but he also became increasingly rich thanks to his wife. True, the biblical texts are clear that neither the Pharaoh nor the king suspected that they were married, and that when they found out, the former threw them out of his lands and the latter offered them land to live on, but both gave Abram cattle and slaves, and Abimelech also gave him money. That is, in both cases, the woman was outraged by living as a concubine, being part of the Pharaoh and king's harem, while her husband lived peacefully, surrounded by property. Meanwhile, when they discovered the lie and expelled them from the place, it was he who was given more property, since women could not manage property or land.

Lot uses his daughters' bodies to protect others and uphold the law. Lot (Abraham's nephew) meets two strangers in the town square. He knows very well that his people do not look kindly on 'strangers,' they stalk them, they exercise violence against them, while the law orders that they be given asylum, that they be protected. Therefore, as a good man of God, he invites these men to his house to spend the night there and continue their journey the next day. The men of the city gather at the doors of Lot's house, asking Lot to hand over these visitors for sexual relations. Lot refuses, insisting that he must protect his visitors, and he offers them his two young, virgin daughters instead.

In both situations, women's bodies are used to save other people who seem to be "more important" than they are, at least for the law and for the God from whom that law emanated. Their bodies were not cared for by the law, but the bodies of known or unknown men, husbands, fathers, or strangers were. Women and girls were not protected by the law or by themselves, their own family; they were the property of their father first and then their husband, and could be given as gifts or sold as slaves.

These texts were written in the 6th century BC, cultures and the vision of the human being have changed, though not uniformly throughout the world. We only achieved universal human rights in 1948, even if they aren't yet universally embraced. We have made progress in the legal protection of the rights of women and girls in different countries, but we are far from ensuring that they are absolutely protected by their cultures and by their own families. Their bodies continue to be used for economic gain through child and adult prostitution, slave labour, organ sales, and human trafficking (as prevalent as worldwide arms sales and drug trafficking).

Their bodies continue to be violated and abused during migration, exchanged for a little food in asylum applications, and used as trophies in wars.

Their bodies continue to be domesticated with certain clothes or sizes, and they continue to be silenced with blows or burns by violent possessors.

Their bodies continue to be isolated because they emanate blood and 'impurity'. Their bodies as girls continue to be mutilated so that they do not know pleasure, used in public to generate pity and sell more, or traded with older men to obtain money and possessions.

Jesus does everything that the law prohibits: he speaks to women in public (John 4:7), allows them to touch him (Mark 5:27), caress him (Mark 14:3), call him (John 20:16), touch and resurrect him (Mark 5:41). Jesus put human life before the law, taught by His example to denounce the situations of injustice that violate, use, subjugate, sell, exploit and kill women's bodies. It is urgent to proclaim that God created the human being in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:27), and that each body is a temple of his Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), that in Christ we are all one (Galatians 3:26-28) regardless of our ethnicity, religion, gender or social condition and that all bodies are necessary to form His Body, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Without bodies, without some bodies, there is no Church, there is not a body of God.

Let us make the abundant life that Jesus promised us (John 10:10) reach more and more people, so that we can make visible the Kingdom of God among us and the God of the Kingdom for all people. Amen.



Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE

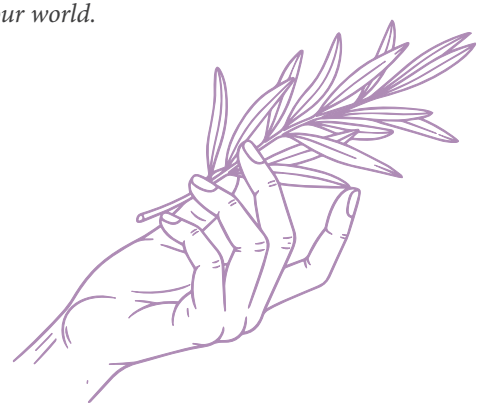
When we light the Peace Candle, also known as the Bethlehem Candle, we are reminded of the long and challenging journey Mary and Joseph took to reach Bethlehem, where Jesus would be born. They faced significant difficulties and uncertainties on their journey, challenges that would be far greater if they were to make the same journey today.

Christ's birth in a humble setting, to displaced parents living under occupation in first-century Palestine, has dramatically shaped our lives. This truth requires us to examine how we are connected to one another, and especially to those living in the Land of the Holy One. Just as John the Baptist called in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord," we are called to prepare the way today, so that the Prince of Peace may be reborn in our homes and daily lives. We must actively work for this peace, raising our voices against injustice, especially for those whose voices are not heard, and particularly now. The peace promised by God arrives in a world that is politically oppressive, socially divided, and materially harsh. That contrast is the very point.

The message is simple but not comfortable: If you want peace, you must walk toward Bethlehem even when the road is inconvenient, uncertain, or unfair.
The birth of Christ and his presence among us - as one of us - gives us reason to live in hope: that light will shatter the darkness, that we can be liberated from our fears and prejudices, and that we are never alone or abandoned.

May we open our hearts to receive the peace that only Jesus can give. Peace which surpasses all understanding. Peace that surpasses pain. Peace that is found in His presence. Therefore, we pray that God will instil in us the courage to dismantle the barriers around us, so that the peace proclaimed by the angels may be realized in our world.

Susan Barhoum



Third Sunday of Advent: JOY

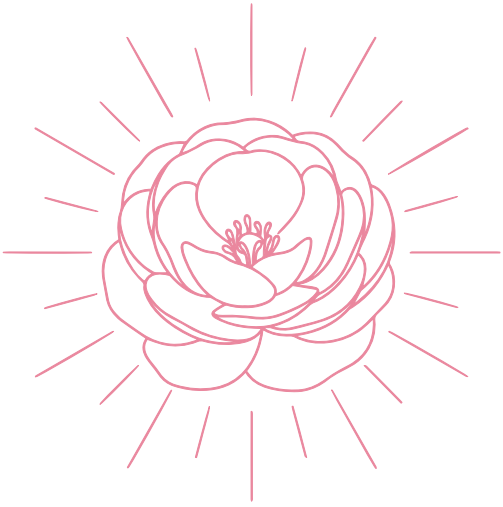
Today is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is the Latin word meaning "Rejoice." Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I say, Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4).

Today, we light the pink candle, the candle of JOY. Gaudete Sunday marks a significant shift in the mood of the Advent season. While Advent is generally a time of solemn, penitential preparation and waiting, this Sunday serves as a joyful pause, signifying that Christmas is close at hand.

We might ask ourselves: how can we rejoice when we are living in such difficult circumstances? We rejoice because God is with us. He is Emmanuel, present in the very midst of the brokenness, injustice, and sinfulness of our world. We do not have to wait until the messiness is gone or even all the sinfulness removed; we can rejoice now, for Emmanuel is with us, here, now. Therefore, we feel joy as we approach the birth of our Saviour and remember the awesome beauty of what happened in Bethlehem.

This joy comes from our living faith in a living God who loves us. We await His coming not with fear, but with tremendous joy, knowing and believing that Christ is breaking the darkness and suffering all around us. We also pray that God's love will become more visible, healing all wounds and overcoming all injustices. With faith, we can say, Come, Emmanuel, come more fully among us, until every tear is wiped away and joy is complete.

Susan Barhoum



December 14: International Day Against Colonialism in All Its Forms and Manifestations

More than 60 years after the adoption of resolution 1514 (XV), colonialism in its various forms continues to exist, undermining the principles of the UN Charter and affecting social, cultural, and economic development. The eradication of colonialism remains a key priority for the United Nations, particularly under the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2021-2030).

During the 2025-2027 triennium of the Episcopal Church, the Task Force on the Anglican Communion and Countering the Colonial Mindset was created. Its mandate includes, but is not limited to, researching and highlighting historic and present realities of the colonial mindset in our common life, and establishing educational materials for dioceses, churches, and mission partners to use in their work and ministry. Mike Angell, a member of the Task Force, wrote this recently:

"The first work of decolonizing is a work of imagining: new ways of being together, new ways of seeing ourselves and others. The project of decolonizing asks us to examine relationships. How have we inherited the power structures of colonial history? How do we continue to exercise power over people of other cultures, languages, abilities, sexualities, and gender expressions? How are these power relationships written into our prayers, our architecture, our psyche?"

At the 2009 General Convention, the Episcopal Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and urged the Church to focus on lamenting the historical violence, genocide, and colonial greed committed in the name of faith, while seeking reconciliation, justice, and healing for Indigenous communities. They urge repentance for the theological justification of superiority, aiming to dismantle systemic racism and restore respect for stolen lands.

"God of justice, we repent for the times your Church has failed to stand against immoral actions and the Doctrine of Discovery. We pray for the strength to right our wrongs, to confront the racism that divides us, and to support the dignity of Indigenous peoples. Guide us in the challenging work of reconciliation and the dismantling of these oppressive systems."

Martha Gardner

Member of IAWN Episcopal Church USA

All libraries, bookstores, and my own shelves hold books of ideas, experiences, histories, and practices of colonialism. Places of higher education, seminaries, news outlets and online courses have all opened our minds to the reality of colonial thought where others have spoken for the margins, that we live in a world determined by power and privilege, that a world of unequal 'others' exists and where independence many times means independence, and where empire has turned from formal to informal as power is consciously or unconsciously controlled.

For the last several decades, postcolonial sociological, political, and theological thought has named the struggle to change the world for the disempowered and marginalised in new ways. Postcolonialism represents a hoped-for future not yet achieved and calls for the dignity and respect of all people, cultural respect and tolerance for differences, care for all creation, and a reorientation towards the perspectives of wisdom, identification of needs, equality, and voices previously lost in translation or unheard. Women's storytelling weaves a diversity of experience that, when heard, connects the need for change with the reality that women are already part of a quilt of mature peacemaking, change-bringing parts in their communities.

Yet the struggle for change remains real for millions. The new thoughts have not reached the margins, intergenerationally, or sufficiently. Luisa, a catechist in northern Mozambique, was the first of many to show me the 'forearm rub', the gesture that says 'we' (African women) can't be and do 'you'. The centuries-long damage of colonialism is more than skin deep.

Prayers

Father of all creation, Father of every woman, man, and child, heal our wounded relationships. Open our eyes to your love that means respect for all your image-bearers and care for all creation. Open our hearts to the deep work of forgiveness for complicity and a new understanding that is needed. May we know the trust and the friendships that change us so we may be part of the change our world needs. Amen.

Helen Van Koevering

A Prayer from Ghana

Heavenly Father, we come before You today acknowledging the complex history of our land. As we reflect on the era of colonialism that sought to reshape our identity, we thank You for being the true Source of our strength. And we thank You that our capacity to rise is rooted in Your grace.
Lord, on this day, we pray for the healing of the soil of our nation. We ask that You restore the parts of our heritage that have been diminished and help us to integrate our faith with our authentic African selves. Grant us the discernment to move from a past of dependence toward a future where we are mature, independent followers of Your will. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Akua Ofori-Boateng

A Prayer from A New Zealand Prayer Book

He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa (anglicanprayerbook.nz)

We have wounded your love. O God, heal us.
We stumble in the darkness. Light of the world, transfigure us.
We forget that we are your home. Spirit of God, dwell in us.
Eternal Spirit, living God, in whom we live and move and have our being,
All that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you,
To the very secret of our hearts and all that rises to trouble us.
Living flame burn into us; Cleansing wind, blow through us;
Fountain of water, well up within us,
that we may love and praise in deed and in truth. Amen

An Affirmation of Faith from the Brazilian Livro de Oracao

(justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Brazil/LOC2021.epub)

We believe in God. We believe in the force of poor people, in the audacity of poets, in the boldness of prophets, in the inspiration of artists.
We believe in Jesus. We believe in the humility to serve, in the courage to change, in the joy of celebration, in the respect of differences, in bread for every table, in comfort for every sadness.
We believe in the Spirit. We believe in hope to begin again, in the beauty of solidarity, in justice for every oppression, in compassion in the face of pain, in love, the human-divine gift. Amen.

December 18: International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day was established by the United Nations to recognise the contributions, rights, and dignity of migrants. Behind global statistics are real stories of courage, sacrifice, and resilience. Through the experiences of women, migration becomes not just a movement across borders, but a deeply personal journey of survival and transformation.

For many women, migration begins with necessity. Some leave to support children and aging parents; others flee conflict, poverty, or violence, or seek education and opportunity. The decision often means painful separation from loved ones and stepping into uncertainty with determination and hope.

Women face distinct challenges shaped by gender. They are at greater risk of exploitation, trafficking, and discrimination, and often work in undervalued sectors such as domestic work, caregiving, or informal labour. Even skilled professionals may struggle to have their qualifications recognised. Alongside financial pressure, many carry emotional burdens, supporting families from afar, missing milestones, and enduring loneliness in unfamiliar cultures.

Yet migration can also foster empowerment. Earning an income, gaining education, and engaging in new communities can strengthen women's independence and confidence. Migrant women are not only survivors; they are leaders, innovators, and bridge-builders.

International Migrants Day calls us to see migrants as whole human beings. Honouring their dignity requires fair labour protections, safe migration pathways, and safeguards against violence and discrimination. Above all, it requires listening to their voices. When migrants are given the chance to thrive, families flourish, communities grow stronger, and the world moves closer to justice and compassion.

Prayer

Gracious God, we remember women and men who journey far from home in search of safety, opportunity, and dignity. Strengthen them in moments of fear and loneliness. Protect them from harm and injustice. Bless the work of their hands and the love in their hearts. May they find welcome in new lands, courage in uncertainty, and hope that does not fade. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Heidin Kunoo

December 20: International Human Solidarity Day & Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE

As we light the Advent Candle of Love, we reflect on God's profound love for all creation, all humanity. International Human Solidarity Day is held on December 20 as the world celebrates unconditional Love born in a humble manger in Bethlehem, the love of Jesus. This is a love that shows up in our ordinary lives, meeting us exactly where we are, in solidarity with all our suffering and joys, tears and dreams.

God's love is neither distant nor conditional; it is present, personal, and for everyone. Christmas is more than a season; it is found in the love we share with family, the compassion we extend to strangers, the inclusion of being held in God's loving embrace, and the joy we find in giving. It is a call to love as Jesus loved us: fully, freely, and without reservation.

Whether this season feels joyful, heavy, or somewhere in between, remember that love is already reaching for you. Let us spread love in all we do, making the world a little brighter, one heart at a time. May we live as a reminder of the warmth and comfort love brings to our homes, and may these last days before Christmas be filled with grace, kindness, and hope as we prepare our hearts for the life and work of Christmas.

Susan Barhoum



Christmas Eve

The day we gather on the threshold of a sacred mystery. Christmas Eve is more than just a date on the calendar; it is a bridge between the world as it is and the world as it could be. This hymn reminds us that the true miracle of Christmas isn't found in distant history or elaborate decorations, but in the quiet transformation of the human heart. It teaches us that "Christmas" is not a destination we reach, but a state of being we inhabit whenever we choose compassion over indifference and peace over pride. As we listen to these words, let us reflect on how hope is born every time we reach out a hand to a neighbour or find the strength to forgive.

Refrain:
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5whiXsw_FY)

On the night of Christmas, hatred is erased
On the night of Christmas, the earth blossoms
On the night of Christmas, war is buried
On the night of Christmas, love is born

When we offer a glass of water to a thirsty person, we are in Christmas
When we clothe a naked person with a gown of love, we are in Christmas
When we wipe away the tears from weeping eyes, we are in Christmas
When we fill hearts with hope, we are in Christmas

When I kiss a friend without deceit, I am in Christmas
When the spirit of revenge dies within me, I am in Christmas
When hardness is gone from my heart, I am in Christmas
When my soul melts in the being of God, I am in Christmas

Susan Barhoum



Christmas Day

No matter how hard this year has been, Christmas remains the enduring promise that God is with us. He is the Light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. This Holy Season reminds us that hope is born in the midst of hardship, joy springs forth in the heart of despair, and peace wages on even when surrounded by war.

Today, we gaze upon a profound mystery:
Today, He cries in His mother's arms like any child, yet it is His voice that wakes the world.
Today, He is unable to walk, yet He is the one who directs all of creation.
Today, He does not utter a word, yet He is the Word...
Today, He rests in the wood of the manger, waiting to rest on the wood of the Cross.

In this moment, God enters our world, and nothing changes, except everything changes. He became human, with all our strengths and weaknesses, limitations and powers, so that he might clothe all creation with the presence of the divine. Through Him, light dawns even in the deepest gloom.

May Christ be born once more, not just for a day, but every day into our world and within our hearts. Let us cry out with great joy: Christ is born... Alleluia!

Susan Barhoum



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FROM DIVERSE ANGLICAN WOMEN.
FRUIT OF OUR SHARED SPIRITUAL JOURNEY,
IT OFFERS LAMPS OF HOPE & GRACE.

MAY IT BRING LIGHT TO YOUR DAYS

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