

Building hope and confidence: A Lady Day Celebration

Welcome

Welcome to our Mothers' Union Lady Day Celebration. Our theme for 2020 is "Building hope and confidence". As we build our hope and confidence in God we will be inspired and equipped to build hope and confidence in the lives of others. So we gather to celebrate the example of Mary whose hope and confidence in God was evident throughout her life.

Call to worship

We gather to glorify the Lord
who fills us with hope and confidence.

We gather to rejoice in God our Saviour
whose promises stand firm forever.

Blessed are we who have believed
that the Lord will fulfil his promises to us!
Our souls glorify the Lord
and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. **Amen**

Opening hymn

Confession

Gracious God, you have done so much for us
and we so little in return.

You ask for humility
and we are often a proud people.
You ask for willingness
and we are often a stubborn people.

You ask for repentance
and we are often a deaf people.
You ask for service
and we are often a busy people.

Gracious God, you want the best for us.
Teach us obedience
grant us forgiveness
that we, like Mary
might be your willing servants. Amen

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Exploring the Word – following the thread of hope and confidence which runs through the life of Mary *

In her initial response to the Lord's call upon her life, Mary declared her hope and confidence in the word of God

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

³⁴ 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

³⁵ The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.'

³⁸ 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' *Luke 1:30-38*

The truth of Mary's hope and confidence in the word of God was evident to those who had also encountered the Lord's divine intervention in their life

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!' ⁴⁶ And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. *Luke 1:39-47*

Mary treasured the outworking of God's word and took time to ponder its depths

The shepherds hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ **But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.** *Luke 2:16-19*

Even when God's word through Christ was hard to understand, Mary had the wisdom to treasure it deeply

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.' ⁴⁹ 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'

⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.
But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. *Luke 2:48-52*

Having put her hope in God's word through the years, Mary had the confidence to encourage others to follow his instruction

Jesus' mother, ² and Jesus and his disciples had been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'
⁴ 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'
⁵ His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'
⁷ Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim.
⁸ Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.'
They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink;
but you have saved the best till now.' *John 2:1-6, 7-10*

At the time of Mary's greatest sorrow her hope and confidence in all God had spoken to her through the years kept her faithful to her dying son on the cross and she was blessed once more by the word of the Lord.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' ²⁷ and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'

From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. *John 19:25-27*

As the wonders of Pentecost approached Mary was to be found still following the word of her Lord as she joined in prayer and waited for the gift of the Spirit.

Jesus gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Acts 1:4-5, 14

Throughout her life, Mary continued to put her hope and confidence in the word of God. In doing so, as she experienced the wonder of Pentecost over 30 years on from the Nativity, she may even have said to God, as was spoken of the miraculous wine at Cana, "You have saved the best till now."

Hymn

Thanksgiving and intercessions *

We bring our prayers in hope and confidence; trusting in the truth of our Lord's word that nothing is impossible with God.

For the faithfulness
of your servant Mary
we give you thanks.
For saints of every age
who, when called,
have simply obeyed –
whether shepherd or scholar,
faced by opposition or praise,
Asked to give
from their riches or poverty –
we give you thanks.

In your eyes all are blessed.
May we count ourselves
among that number,
willing to hear your call.
Our lives dedicated in service
to our Saviour and King. Amen
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Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord
We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We thank you for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union
as we seek to share your love
through the encouragement, strengthening
and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit,
may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service
reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name. Amen

Closing hymn

Final Blessing

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,
fill you with hope and confidence
to trust his promises and follow his will;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Notes for the act of worship for Lady Day

Please freely adapt this resource to suit your particular setting. It may be used as a formal service, a more informal act of worship or you may like to use the “Exploring the word” section as the basis for a Quiet Day.

Suggested hymns and songs:

Tell out my soul
Hope of our calling
This, this is the God we adore
From heaven you came, helpless babe
Brother sister let me serve you
Jesus is king and I will extol Him
When I feel the touch of your hand upon my life
Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
God is working his purpose out
Love divine, all loves excelling

Exploring the Word *

This could be shared between different readers, with the words in bold given special emphasis, and one voice reading the reflection between the Bible passages. If used as part of a Quiet Day you could give more time to explore and reflect on each part of Mary's life; maybe adding creative prayer activities to accompany these.

Intercessions *

You may wish to include your own thanksgiving and intercessions here; also the Wave of Prayer for the day, along with your own link dioceses.
You could use one of these response:

*You have given us hope
and hope does not disappoint us*

*We bring our prayers in hope and confidence
for nothing is impossible with God*