

**THE MOTHERS' UNION
BELFAST CATHEDRAL BRANCH
JANUARY - EPIPHANY**

Blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Christ ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth to a living hope. 1 Peter 1:3

*Today we pray in the light of Epiphany -
in the light of the opportunities for change which this new year brings...*

Christ for all seasons,
eternal God in whom we trust,
help us to recognise the need for change
that life may have a purpose;
that we may be free to choose;
that we may continue to grow
in our hearts and minds and souls;
that new generations might blossom and flourish,
and as children of God we may shout for joy
with the stars of the morning.
Amen

Adapted from *Changes and Chances* by Ted Burge in *Lord of All, Hear our Prayer*
(Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1999)

Today we pray in the light of the Epiphany story, which reminds us that Christ's birth brought political change.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him... Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Matthew 2 :1-3, 7-12

Address

Today we pray for the National Health Service and all who serve in it and are served by it. (The speaker at the branch meeting was a member of the Cathedral Community who worked in the NHS).

Remember those with the responsibility of allocating funds within the National Health Service. Ask God to show them where true priorities lie and how to ensure money and resources are not being wasted and mismanaged.

O God, our Healer; we lift to You everyone who works in the National Health Service. Please give strength, wisdom, love and protection to each one and draw close to those facing particular problems at this time. Amen.

Silence for personal prayer: Pray about the need to recruit and retain staff for the Health Service; that people of high calibre and clear vocation will be enabled to follow worthwhile careers in their field of healthcare.

Lord, we lift to You patients who are awaiting treatment in hospital, at a local clinic or at home. Pour Your healing and peace into all who, in their anxiety, turn to You and grant wisdom and discernment to those treating them. Amen.

Silence for personal prayer: Pray for those responsible for the upkeep and management of hospital wards; that they would be effective in controlling infection and that, as staff, they would feel valued. Pray for patients to be in an environment that helps give them privacy, comfort, safety and dignity.

Ask God to raise up many more Christian practitioners to serve on the committees of Royal Colleges and other statutory and professional bodies which make important recommendations and decisions about the National health Service.

Pray for those from the Cathedral who work in any way with the NHS either directly or collegially:

Today we pray in light of the complexities and complications which change can bring. We offer everything to God in praise.

Glory be to God for dappled things –
for skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
for rose-moles in all stipple upon trout that swim;
fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
landscape-plotted and pieced – fold, fallow and plough;
and all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
with swift, slow; sweet, sour; dazzle, dim;
he fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
praise him.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

**God help us
if our world should grow dark;
and there is no way of seeing or knowing.
Grant us courage and trust
to touch and be touched**

**to find our way onwards
by feeling.
Amen**

Michael Leunig in *Seeing Christ in Others*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan
(Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2002)

We pray in light of the opportunities for change which this new year brings.

Blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Christ ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth to a living hope. 1 Peter 1:3

**God of all that is,
of all that has been,
of all that is new,
and of all that will be,
we stand in admiration
before the burgeoning life
of this new year.
May the Holy Spirit
pour us into new life
so that in response to our needs,
our inclinations which say 'maybe' might be
opened up into shouts which cry 'willingly'.
Amen**

Adapted from *Spring* by Ted Burge in *Lord of All, Hear our Prayer*
(Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1999)

God of movement, enable us to make changes for the sake of development through the work of the Mothers' Union worldwide.

Today we pray for the people and the work of:

Insert from The Wave of Prayer

A moment of silence is kept.

Make waves of change within us, God of all, that we might move with you and in the breath of love, freshly responding to the deepest needs. **Amen**

Gathered together again, God of all, we make our prayers today. Keep us watchful for changes in tides and times, and make us flexible enough to hear new answers. **Amen**

**God of movement, God of change,
nudge us, prompt us, mould us, shape us,
exchange our fear for the love of risk,
that we may follow Christ, the Shepherds and the Magi
into the passing of a threshold.
Amen**

Loving Lord

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray 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

The Blessing