September 2014

Walking Humbly with Our God

He has shown you what is good. What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

*Micah 6:8*

September brings with it the sense of a “new start”. Children are back at school; political parties are holding their annual conferences in readiness for the coming parliamentary term; churches are beginning new courses and programmes, and welcoming students who have moved to their area.

The prayer for us is that we may find a new energy and resolve as we look to the term ahead.

There is much for us to engage in: local, national and international social justice issues continue to need our attention; also, the 16 days of activism against gender violence will take place again between 25th November and 10th December. How good it is to remember that God gives us the strength and resources we need; and accompanies us in all we do in his name.

‘Family Test’ for Government policies

Prime Minister David Cameron announced that a ‘family test’ will be applied to all pieces of forthcoming domestic policy from October.

Speaking at the Relationships Alliance Summit in August, David Cameron also announced that health visitors will support the wellbeing of the whole family rather than just the children; and ante-natal class providers will be asked to give relationship advice as part of the preparation for parenthood.

Available on Mothers’ Union’s website at the start of each month at [www.mothersunion.org/content/faith-policy-watch](http://www.mothersunion.org/content/faith-policy-watch)

Contact us at [policy@themothersunion.org](mailto:policy@themothersunion.org)
The Prime Minister also announced that marriage certificates in England and Wales will soon include reference to the mothers of the bride and of the groom, instead of information only about the fathers; bringing marriage certificates into line with Scotland and Northern Ireland. Details of applicants’ mothers are gathered for civil partnership certificates across the UK already. To read the whole speech, please visit http://tinyurl.com/kat7dl6

**Please pray** for family life to be a priority for government and political parties across the United Kingdom and Rep. Ireland.

16 Days of Activism Pack

To help you prepare for and participate in this year’s 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence campaign, **from 25th November to 10th December**, Mothers’ Union has produced a brand new resource pack for members and churches. The pack contains information, resources and ideas for participants to tailor their involvement to their own community, time and passions. With ideas on how to hold a vigil, speak at your church or branch, or contact your political representative, we are sure that there will be something that every member feels able to take part in. Please do also pass on details of the pack to others outside Mothers' Union and your church, as we hope everyone will find something in it they can use, including leaflets on what you can do if you are experiencing domestic violence, or know somebody else that is.

You can download the resource pack from Mothers’ Union’s website, from early September, at [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org); or please contact the Faith & Policy team on 020 7222 5533 or at policy@mothersunion.org or

**Heavenly Father**, move amongst the earth to change attitudes that promote, accept and perpetuate all forms of gender-based violence.

Istanbul Convention on Preventing and combating Violence against Women and Girls comes into force

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Eliminating of Violence against Women came into force on 1st August 2014. The Convention was launched in Istanbul in 2011, and 36 countries have signed the Convention, including the UK; and 14 of those have gone on to ratify the Convention. It has entered into force now that ten signatories have ratified it, eight of which are member states of the Council of Europe.
The Convention obliges States that ratify it to take specific action on all forms of violence against women, including stalking, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation. The Convention is legally binding for those countries that have ratified it, and is enforced by an independent group of experts who measure a country’s progress against the Convention. For more information on the Convention please visit http://tinyurl.com/mo34by9

‘The Wales Women Want’ events, 30th September and 1st October

The Welsh Government and the Women’s Institute in Wales are holding a ‘national conversation’ this autumn to ask women how they want Wales to look for future generations, from 2050 onwards. The interactive events, called ‘The Wales Women Want’, will ask women to reflect on the most important issues in improving their lives and those of their families and communities. Two ‘conversations’ are taking place in:

- **Swansea** on Tuesday 30th September, at Tapestri from 10am – 1pm
- **Llandudno** on Wednesday 1st October, at Venue Cymru from 10am – 1pm.

For more information please visit http://tinyurl.com/otjmlnw

**Please pray** for voices to be heard that will shape a positive future for families in Wales.

Women Bishops

In July, the General Synod of the Church of England voted in a Measure to allow women to become bishops. The decision came eighteen months after the rejection of a Measure proposed in November 2012. It is expected that the law will be changed by the end of 2014 to pave the way for women to become bishops. The Measure will now need to be approved by both Houses of Parliament, before receiving Royal Assent.

Recent statistics from the Church of England suggest that in 2012, one in seven incumbent members of the clergy were female, rising to a proportion of one in seven when taking into account team ministries and priests-in-charge (Archbishop’s Council, 2013).

For more information on the vote and the move towards a change in the law, please read the official press statement from the Church of England at http://tinyurl.com/moovkgy

You can also read our Social Policy Officer's blog article on this change on the Theos website at http://tinyurl.com/pzwnd8j

**Please pray** for all of those starting their training in church ministry this autumn.
Mothers’ Union has signed up in support of the *No More Page Three* campaign. This campaign is calling on The Sun newspaper to stop featuring topless women on page three and is being supported by organisations such as Girlguiding, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Evangelical Alliance and Rape Crisis. Mothers’ Union believes that it is not right to sexually objectify a person or base their value solely on their sexual identity at any age; and we have signed the up as part of our ongoing commitment to challenging sexual objectification, in line with our campaigns such as *Bye Buy Childhood* and work on gender equality.

For more information on the campaign and to sign the petition, go to [http://nomorepage3.org/](http://nomorepage3.org/)

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**Bye Buy Childhood**

Online music videos will carry an age rating from October 2014, as part of a new pilot scheme launched by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), YouTube and Vevo. Online video websites YouTube and Vevo will have all UK-produced music videos rated according to the existing BBFC guidelines.

The changes to the Video Recordings Act that will require all hard copies of music, sporting, religious and educational videos with certain content to be age-rated, will continue progress through UK Parliament after the summer recess.

Mothers’ Union welcomes the move to age-rate music videos, both online and in hard copy, which come as a response to a recommendation in the Bailey Review. For more information on the Bye Buy Childhood campaign, please visit [www.byebuychildhood.org](http://www.byebuychildhood.org)

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**Upcoming Home Office consultation: England and Wales**

Mothers’ Union will be responding to the Home Office consultation, *Strengthening the Law on Domestic Abuse*, which is seeking views on whether the current law on domestic abuse in England and Wales needs to be strengthened in order to offer better protection to victims. The policy team will shortly be sending out a questionnaire to Mothers’ Union members via diocesan post-holders. You can also request a copy of the questionnaire on 020 7222 5533 or from policy@mothersunion.org You can read the full Government consultation at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-law-on-domestic-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-law-on-domestic-abuse)