

MOTHERING SUNDAY



22ND MARCH 2020

Dear Friends,

We are living through unusual times and it will feel strange not to meet together to worship God on Sunday. We have already circulated service sheets for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, and I hope that you have found these useful in helping you worship God during the week. The service sheets contain readings for Sunday.

I would like to invite you to join together to say the Morning Prayer service at 9.30am on Sunday. I will be saying it in church so please join in with me at that time in your own home.

I have added below the Gospel reading for Mothering Sunday. Sally-Anne has prepared some prayers, and these are also set out below. I have included a reflection on our reading and on the situation we find ourselves in. Please include these as part of your worship on Sunday and join in at 9.30am if you are able.

A National Day of Prayer and Action has been announced by the presidents of Churches Together in England, regarding the Coronavirus epidemic, for this Sunday 22nd March.

In an excerpt from a joint letter issued today, they wrote:

"At such a time as this, when so many are fearful and there is great uncertainty, we are reminded of our dependence on our loving Heavenly Father and the future that he holds. Therefore, at 7pm this Sunday, light a candle in the windows of your homes

1

as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer."

Wherever you are in the world, we invite you to join with us in prayer to see an end to the Coronavirus pandemic.

You might like to say the Evening Prayer service at 7pm on Sunday, knowing that you will be joining in with a wave of prayer that is going round the whole of our country at that time.

On Sunday morning the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby is to lead a national broadcast as the Church of England responds to the challenge of becoming a "different sort of church" in the face of the coronavirus crisis. The service, including prayers, hymns and a short sermon, will be broadcast online by the Church of England and broadcast on BBC Radio 4's Sunday Worship at 8.10am and at 8.00am 39 local BBC radio stations this Sunday as congregations across the country find new ways of sharing worship together after public church services were put on hold.

Morning Prayer

Bible Reading: Luke 2: 25-35

The baby Jesus is presented in the temple

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

2

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Reflection

In the midst of all the current uncertainty and with all the worries about the future, our family has been blessed with the arrival of a new baby girl to my niece and her husband in Germany. We are rejoicing but are still concerned about the world she has entered. My niece and all the family will do the best we can to make sure she is kept safe from all harm. In our Bible reading we hear that wonderful story of Mary and Joseph coming to the temple eight days after the birth of Jesus to give thanks to God for his safe arrival. The holy family also lived in difficult times as their country was under Roman occupation and they would soon have

to leave and find safety in Egypt from King Herod's wrath. Mary must have been delighted by what Simeon said about her baby but also puzzled, worried and frightened by his final words. Like all mothers she would have been attentive to the needs of this, her first born child, but she must have had concerns for him throughout his whole life.

Today we all are puzzled, worried and frightened by the situation we are facing, with the coronavirus threatening our way of life and indeed our very lives. We are concerned for ourselves, our families, our friends, our jobs and our society as a whole. We are seeing the results of panic buying in the television news and are beginning to hear of the deaths of large numbers of people. Our way of life is changing, and we are facing great uncertainties. But we need to turn to our faith for reassurance and the certainty of God's love. One commentator recently said:

"surely as Christians we ought to be a people of certainty? A people who know that we are held in the arms of God? A people who can shine brightly as the shadow of fear descends?"

The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans reminding them that nothing can separate us from the love of God, and I would like you to take that message to your heart today and in the weeks ahead. We need to shine brightly despite our fears, and we need to care for all our neighbours and friends as a mother cares for her children. But we need to do this while keeping ourselves as safe as possible, following the advice from the government and the health experts. And in all of this, if we do nothing else, I urge you to pray!

Today we celebrate mothers and those who played the role of mother in our lives. We give thanks for the love they have shown us and we thank God for each one of them. We also pray for our country and our world as we face this new threat, confident that God cares for each and every one of us

A Prayer

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers for Mothering Sunday

Holy God, on this Mothering Sunday we thank you for mothers who care for their children. We thank you for those who give children a mother's love whether they are their own biological children or other children. We give thanks for those who loved us in our childhood and gave us the care we needed. We remember too today, Heavenly Father, all those who have not been able to experience the joy of motherhood, for whom this day is a particularly difficult one. Lord, we thank you that we live in a society that provides for children who are vulnerable and may not have a loving home.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you all who are working to stop the spread of Covid19. We pray for those who have to make difficult decisions that affect the lives of many. We give thanks for the skills of the medical profession and other front-line staff who are working hard to give some security to our world. We pray for all countries affected by the virus and give you thanks for those who have started to show signs of recovery

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, as we watch and read the news, we see the brokenness of our world and that for many families life is more dangerous than ever before. We pray for healing among the nations; for food where there is hunger; for freedom where there is oppression; for joy where there is pain. We pray that your love may bring peace to all your children.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God, your Son, was born into the human family of Mary and Joseph; bless all those that we live amongst who are parents and all who care for children in our local communities. Strengthen all families who are living under stress and shine your love into homes where no human love is found.

We pray for our children whose life at school has been taken away from them. We bring to mind those who were due to take exams and now have an uncertain future. We pray for those children for whom school was a place of safety and hope that their security will return again soon.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we pray for all mothers of children suffering from serious illness, recognising not only their anguish but also the way that their love and determination really makes a big difference to chances of recovery. We thank you for the time the adults in our lives spent caring for us when we were ill.

We bring to mind all who are ill at this time especially those who are suffering with the Covid19 virus and for those whose anxiety levels are increasing due to their concern about the uncertainty of their lives.

Please add the names of anyone you would like to pray for

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, turn the despair that comes through the parting of death into hope and may we, through your gentleness find comfort and restoration in our sadness.

Please add the names of anyone you would like to pray for.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God, you alone can see the future and so we pray to you, who can see ahead of us, asking for your protection for each of us, for our families and those whom we love.

Merciful father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen