

THE SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT

22nd March 2020 – 4th Sunday in Lent – Mothering Sunday

Welcome to our Sunday Supplement, a way to maintain prayer, worship and community during the suspension of services. The Sunday Supplement will be available every Sunday morning by email, to those who have provided an email address to Stephen. Print versions will be available in church for those who cannot use email. Please help those who are housebound or self-isolating by taking away a copy for them.

*Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Amen.

If you or a neighbour have not yet returned a yellow contact slip to Stephen, now is the time to do so.

Get in touch: stephen@kdbchurches.com or 715259.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Although our services are suspended, our life of worship and prayer need not be. There are many options for alternative Sunday worship, some of which I outlined in my email on Friday. They include broadcast services, such as Radio 4's Sunday Service, transmitted just after 8am. Included with this Sunday Supplement is a form of worship known as 'An Act of Spiritual Communion', which is intended to be used at home, perhaps during normal service times, to express our sense of communion with Christians everywhere.

If you are an Apple or Android smartphone user, I strongly recommend Church House Publishing's *Daily Prayer* app by Aver Media, which provides morning, evening and night prayer (compline) in contemporary and traditional forms, with seasonal variations and readings integrated. It is exceptionally well-produced and free. Imagine if one outcome of the pandemic was a great increase in Daily Prayer across the Church.

Finally, please visit the prayer stations which are springing up in our churches, thanks to volunteers!

MOTHERING SUNDAY

Had we been together this Sunday, we would have been celebrating Mothering Sunday. Here are the readings for that day:

I Samuel 1:20-end
Colossians 3:12-17

Psalms 127:1-4
Luke 2:33-35

Traditionally, the Fourth Sunday in Lent was "*Laetare Sunday*," the Sunday to rejoice, a break from Lent also known as 'Refreshment Sunday'. It's a day on which I was formerly deputed by my children to purchase refreshments for their mother, from one of the aisles in the supermarket that you have to be 18 to shop in. It is also mid-lent Sunday. In parts of Europe there is a tradition of *Graaf van Halfvasten* – the Count of Mid-Lent, who comes, like Father Christmas, to give presents to good children. Someone dressed as a nobleman would go round the town, on horseback or carried in a chair, throwing sweets or money.

For centuries in England this Sunday was known as Mothering Sunday, *not* because people visited or gave presents to their mothers, but because they returned to worship at their *mother church*, meaning the Cathedral of the Diocese, or the church in which they were baptised. When they got there, they might join in 'Clipping the Church'. The congregation would go outside and join hands in a circle round the whole building, sing hymns and then enjoy refreshments. Does that sound good? The puritans thought it so good that it was the only old festival they didn't want to abolish. After clipping the church, everyone went inside to enjoy a really long sermon. Doesn't that sound even better? A few churches still do this (minus the long sermon), sometimes on Shrove Tuesday.

In times when people didn't move around as much, visiting the church where you were baptised often involved visiting your mother too, and gradually that became a part of the festival. People would celebrate by baking (and eating) a Simnel Cake. Samuel Curwen, an American diarist who visited England in 1780, wrote this in his diary:

After church, met Miss E, declined her invitation to tea, being pre-engaged to partake of Mrs Bearpacker's mothering cake. It is a custom here in midlent Sunday for a

cake or cakes to be brought to mother's, and to dine with her; in conformity with which custom, some persons, namely Females, do make a large one and present to their friends and acquaintance.

In the US in 1907, Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia proposed that there be a day each year to honour mothers, held on the second Sunday in May. Anna's mother had died in 1905, but not before she encouraged Anna to do things that were unusual for women at that time: going to university and doing jobs that had traditionally been done by men.

Imported from the US by visiting servicemen, Anna Jarvis's Mother's Day came to eclipse the old Mothering Sunday in the UK. Anna Jarvis was actually none too keen about the way in which her commemoration had evolved, writing that:

A printed card means nothing except that you are too lazy to write to the woman who has done more for you than anyone in the world. And sweets! You take a box to Mother—and then eat most of it yourself. A very pretty sentiment, I must say!

Anna wanted the day to be a memorial to the mother she had lost and for whom she was so grateful.

There are some other aspects of Anna Jarvis' life which remind us that celebrating motherhood can be a complex thing. Anna Jarvis herself never married and never had any children. Although she celebrated her mother, she never knew motherhood herself. I don't know whether that was something that made her sad, or whether it was a choice in which she found special happiness.

The story of Anna Jarvis reminds us how difficult it can be to talk about mothering. In our own family, Charlotte's mother died a few years ago, in her early 50s, and that makes the celebration of Mothering Sunday hard for us. Many children will spend today remembering mothers they have lost. And some mothers will spend today remembering children they have lost. Let us think of them all in our own prayers and thank God that he welcomes our loved ones into his heavenly Kingdom where we will one day be united again.

Another friend of ours sends 8 Mother's Day cards every year. One is to her birth mother; one is for each of the foster mothers who cared for her while her

mother was too ill to look after her; one is to her step mother; and one is to her mother-in-law, who now does many of the things that a mother would do for a daughter. The circumstances in which she came to have those 8 mothers are very sad and very difficult for her, but she values each one of her mothers, for all the varied contributions they have made to her life at different times.

We also have friends, as I am sure some of you will, who have not had a good relationship with their mothers and don't see them any more. We have friends and family who cannot be mothers. And we have friends and family who have chosen not to be mothers, and are very happy with that decision.

And, I don't know about you, but I'm not proud or satisfied with every last thing I have done either as a parent to my own children, or as a child to my parents.

The Mothering Sunday Gospel from Luke 2 shows gives us another insight into mothering. Mary and Joseph have brought the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, for the ceremony of purification, and they meet two old and faithful people: Simeon and Anna. In the little passage set for today, Simeon blesses the holy family and says to Mary: *your son will do great things, (no doubt things that will make Mary proud) but will also cause you to feel great sorrow.* I wonder what Mary made of Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her heart? I wonder if she imagined at this stage that she would see her son crucified by the authorities when he was just 33 years old?

The passage tells us something about being a mother, about being a parent or in any way responsible for another person: we share in the good things, but we also share in the bad. In that sense, Mary models for us what it is to be a good parent, what it is to be a good human being: we are entitled to enjoy the good things, but we should be prepared for – and we should not resent – sharing in the burden of the things that are difficult. That's a message for us in these difficult times, but it's also a lesson in how we can relate to God as a parent, as our heavenly Father.

It cost Mary a lot to be Jesus' mother, not only in the sorrow she had to bear, but in the risk that she took when she humbly submitted to the angel's news that she was going to be a mother. At that time, an

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unmarried mother like Mary risked being stoned to death. Yet Mary trusted God and cared for her son. And Jesus cared for her in return: even when he was hanging on the cross, close to death, one of his final acts was to ask the disciple John to take care of his mother.

One of the great things about Christian faith is that it encourages us to celebrate what is good, without allowing us to ignore the things that are difficult, or the people for whom they are difficult. We worship a God who not only knew what it was to have a mother, but also knew what it was to be parted from his mother, in circumstances of great tragedy. We don't hide from the fact that there is a crucifixion in our story, but we see the love and the hope that is to be found in it, and to be found in a God who understands both the happiness and the sadness in our lives, and who went to his death so that we might be forgiven.

The history of Mothering Sunday in England is about looking at where we have come from; at the church, the people and the communities that have mothered us. Let's give thanks to God, our good parent and shepherd, all through this day: for all that has been good in the care we have given and received, and all the wonderful things we enjoy with parents, family and friends. Let us know ourselves forgiven wherever we have fallen short. Let us ask God's healing and comfort for all those who face difficulty; and let us refresh our confidence in the promise of an eternal life in which all will be united again in the perfect love of God.

THE COLLECT FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY

*God of compassion,
whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary,
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,
and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself:
strengthen us in our daily living
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

Please pray today for all those for whom mothering Sunday is a difficult day, a day of sadness. Please turn our mourning into joy as we remember all that was good in the lives of our loved ones. Help us to trust in the promise that they await us in the heavenly realm. **Let us also pray** for everyone affected by the present pandemic, for all those stars in a galaxy of different

callings, who are keeping the country going; for all those in self-isolation, especially those who are finding it lonely; for the NHS and its staff (already hard-pressed in London); and for teachers as they grapple with the complex demands which will be made upon schools from next week. Pray that our community may be strengthened and that, holding on to that which was good before, we may also find new things of value.

NOTICES

Community support group established

You may already have received a flyer advertising the community support group which will assist those who require help while in isolation, or who are self-isolating to reduce the risk of becoming infected.

THANK YOU to the small army of those who have already offered assistance. We expect the need will develop slowly at first and we hope and pray that we will all be spared as far as possible. Nevertheless, it is a comfort to know that so many people are standing by.

If you need help that you can't get elsewhere, no matter what your age or circumstances, you can email duddoncommunity@outlook.com

In Kirkby, you can phone Stephen Tudway (01229) 715259 or Linda Dean (01229) 889630. In Broughton and the valleys you can phone Stephen Tudway (01229) 715259 or Selwyn Wright (01229) 716797. We will be pleased to point one of our volunteers in your direction.

Our churches are OPEN

The Church of England encourages all church buildings to remain open during the restrictions, so that they can be used for individual prayer and reflection. We hope to equip all our churches with prayer stations that are changed regularly. Please volunteer to create one if you can. Encourage your friends and neighbours to visit.

At St Mary's, Brian Wright has flown the parish flag (a St George Cross with the Diocesan crest in one quarter). We hope that this will be an encouragement to all who see it, and a visible sign that the church is more active than ever.

Lent courses

We have had to suspend the three lent groups, which was a great shame – I found the conversation stimulating and the insights of the group a great stimulus to my own thoughts. If you are reading one of the books, please email me your thoughts so that I can share them in a weekly digest.

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

You may wish to set aside a space for prayer in front of a cross and/or candle, in a part of the house which is calm and comfortable.

The Act of Spiritual Communion is best used at the time of normal church services, or as a personal response after listening to a broadcast or livestreamed service.

It may also be used in church outside normal service times. Sit where you would usually sit. Be careful about hand hygiene and maintain social distancing at all times.

Guidance appears in italics. You may wish to say aloud the words in bold type.

Introduction

Begin by making the sign of the cross and thinking of those who might otherwise be sitting around you in church.



**In the name of the Father,
And of the Son,
And of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Reflection

Reflect on the week past and the relationships in which you belong.

- What good things have come from God?
- Where have I fallen short?
- What might I do better in the week to come?

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

In the stillness, be thankful for the grace of God that heals us and forgives all our sins.

The Word of God

Read one or more passages of scripture, perhaps the readings set for the day. Sunday readings can be found in the Sunday Supplement. You may like to read the sermon.

Prayer

You could start with the Collect. Pray for the needs of the world, our community, family and friends. Suggestions elsewhere in the Sunday Supplement. End with the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven... or

Our Father in heaven...

Prayer for Communion

Remember those who would ordinarily kneel beside you at Communion. In church, this prayer may be made at the altar. Please avoid touching surfaces.

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day.
Amen.**

(After the prayer of St Richard of Chichester)

Closing prayers

**Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples,
'I am with you always'.
Be with me today, as I offer myself to you.
Hear my prayers for others and for myself,
and keep me in your care. Amen.**

**Lord, in these days of mercy,
make us quiet and prayerful;
in these days of challenge,
make us stronger in you;
in these days of emptiness,
take possession of us;
in these days of waiting,
open our hearts to the mystery of your cross.**

**The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life. Amen.**