**Sunday 22nd March 2020** WORSHIP AT HOME: Mothering Sunday

The fourth Sunday of Lent is also celebrated as Mothering Sunday.

Welcome to this service at home for Mothering Sunday, all of us have someone who has been like a mother to us. Today we especially give thanks and recognise all those who nurture us through our lives, including God.

Call to worship Isaiah wrote that God’s care and love is like that of a mother to us, comforting and carrying us in holy arms. 'As one whom a mother comforts, so I will comfort you' (Isaiah 66.13).

HYMN: Praise my soul the King of heaven

HP 13, MP 560, RS 104, STF 83

(Some of the hymn books widely used in the Wiltshire United Area)

Prayers of Praise and Seeking Forgiveness

Loving God, you care for us at every moment in our lives, like a parent you watch us from the beginning and throughout our lives. You care for each one of us, all your children, all humanity. When we ask for bread, you do not give us a stone, when we are lost, you find us, when we leave home and come back penniless, you run to welcome and embrace us. You never give up on your children, all our lives long, and we praise you, loving God. Amen.

We confess to God our failures in love and service; and let us ask forgiveness for our sins. (*Let us keep silence for a moment - - - reminding ourselves of our call to worship*) May God who comforts us as a mother comforts her child, forgive and reconcile us, and enfold us in mercy, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

HYMN Father I place into your hands

HP-, MP 133, RS 518, STF 519

**GOSPEL Matthew 23 verses 37-39**

**37** "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

**38** See, your house is left to you, desolate.

**39** For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise to Christ our Lord

REFLECTION

Visiting a supermarket or grocery shop has been an eerie experience this past week with row after row of empty shelves. In one I spoke about this to the person on the checkout, “Looks like the locusts have visited,” to which came the response “They’ve been going round like headless chickens.”

The word chicken is often used in the negative. At school we would often play “inventive” games using the word “chicken” for anyone who backed out, implying they were cowardly.

Jesus uses the image in a very different way. “*How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”* Matthew 23 is a tough chapter, but it concludes with this intimate, motherly protective image. I’m told that a hen will protect anything she hatches, if you slip a clutch of duck eggs under her and she broods over it, she’ll protect the ducklings when they hatch as if it were her own. And I’m told that, whenever a hen senses danger, she makes a clucking noise; and that’s the signal for her brood to gather to her. Once they’ve gathered to her, she puffs herself up and covers the chicks with her wings. I’m told a hen will give her life to save her chicks, that is her commitment. If anything should threaten the chicks, she bears the threat and keeps them from harm.

All of us can recite memories of motherly care, of love and commitment and today we give thanks for all those who have been like a mother. In these unprecedented times it is good to reminded of the motherly loving care of God. Psalm 91, words around 3000 years in age remind of God being akin to a hen protecting her chicks, “*He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge” (Psalm 91v4)* Wherever you find yourself today and throughout this week, whether you are having to self-isolate or having to go to work, may you know the truth of the divine care and may God keep each of us safe.

HYMN He’s got the whole world in his hands

HP25, MP225, RS-, STF-,

*ALTERNATIVE: If you are at home with little people, they might like this action song:*

Thank You Song *To the tune of “If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands”*

Thank you God for all who care for us each day

Thank you God for all who care for us each day

We will thank God when we pray

We will clap, and shout hurray

Thank you God for all who care for us each day

Thank you God for giving what we need to grow

Thank you God for giving what we need to grow

We will stamp our feet to show

God knows all there is to know

Thank you God for giving what we need to grow

Our Prayers: which give us also opportunity for personal reflection and petitions especially as we pray for all affected by or fearful of Coronavirus.

Let us pray:

Today, we are giving thanks to God for the gift of mothers and the mother-like nurture that many people show to others in their lives.

* Isaiah wrote that God is a mother to us, comforting and carrying us in her arms: *As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you...* (Isaiah 66:13, NIV1984).

*Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.*

* Isaiah also wrote that God would never forget us. He knows each of us, like a mother knows her own children: *Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!*(Isaiah 49:15, NIV1984).

*Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.*

* David wrote that in God's presence, he was quiet and at peace, trusting his mother God like a child safe in loving arms: *But I have stilled and quietened my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me*(Psalm 131:2, NIV1984).

*Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.*

* Jesus spoke of himself as a mother, longing to wrap his arms around us, like a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing*(Matthew 23:37, NIV1984).

*Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.*

* Paul writes about his missionary ministry and likens his work to that of a nurse who looks after those in her care: *…but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children*(1 Thessalonians 2:7, NIV1984).

*Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care. Amen*

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

HYMN Lord of all hopefulness...

HP 552, MP882, RS531, STF 526,

Blessing

May God, who gave birth to all creation, bless us:  
may God, who became incarnate by an earthly mother bless us: may God, who broods as a mother over her children, bless us. May almighty God bless us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen

**\*\*\*ACTION POINT -**from Churches Together

**National Day of Prayer and Action about the**[**coronavirus**](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/topics/coronavirus)**on Sunday 22 March. We have the great privilege and freedom to be able to call upon God, wherever we are, individually and corporately, for healing in our nation.**

**People are asked to light a candle in their window at 7 p.m. on Sunday or to open their curtains “as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ.**