**Morning Praise @ Home 19th March 2023**

**Mothering Sunday**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Exodus 1:22 - 2.10 John 19:25 - 27

**Reflection from Sue Coyne**

**Did your parents ever teach you how to make a ‘basket’ with your fingers?** The ‘hand-basket’ is a symbol of the way in which adult and child care for each other.

**Think about a slender willow twig.** It doesn’t look very strong does it? Sometimes we can feel a bit on our own and not very strong. But if we are twisted together with other twigs, woven into their love and care, then we become a lot stronger.

**Now think about a gardening basket.** The handle of this basket is only a few twigs or reeds wound together, but think how sturdy it is! When I am gardening, I can put my whole weight on it to help me get up. When we have others around us who protect us and look after us, we become much stronger and more stable. And today we want to say thank you to those people, particularly our Mums, who are close by to us, helping us become strong and secure.

Sometimes Mums don’t find it easy to be ‘the grown-up’ who always makes the right decisions. Sometimes we can feel more like the vulnerable twig. Yet if we think about the gardeningbasket it is *only made out of thin reeds*. But when we support one another, we create a network of strength.

Parenting is hard; the traditional roles of birth mother and father, with their instinctive role to look after their offspring, has become more complex as many households are now made up not just of birth parents but also of step-parents, adoptive and foster parents, adults just living together and other carers. Our church family needs to look after all these different ways of nurturing our children, weaving together the secure with the anxious, the stable and the wounded, the ideal alongside the less than ideal, so that all are supported.

**The gardening basket** can hold a lot within it because every twig is bound to other twigs. As God’s children we are never expected to make the parenting journey alone. We are drawn together as one in Christ. We’re not just bound to one another but to God.

When we place things in a basket, we have to trust that the basket is able to hold them. Out of love, when she could no longer mother him alone, Moses’ mum *entrusted* her baby to a basket, and ultimately, to the care of others - a ‘basket’ of support that included both a family member *and* a caring stranger. In our Gospel reading, Jesus too had to *trust* his beloved mother to the care of a friend, knowing that he couldn’t be around to look after her as she got older.

We want our church fellowship to be a place where children who may not have much access to part of their birth family can discover honourary grannies and aunties, brothers and grandads, people with love and experience to help in their development. It should always be a place of trust.

The ‘motherly’ embrace of an effective church can also provide Mums with advice and help, at play groups or small Bible studies that have a creche, for example.

By helping parents to parent, and in cherishing our children, the church demonstrates God’s loving embrace. Just as the basket held baby Moses, so we can see that **the basket** also symbolises God’s parental love that holds and carries all, in joy and sadness. And of course we need to remember that it also carries those who have *not* been able to fulfil a mothering role for whatever reason.

So, as we give thanks for our own mothers, and celebrate all the ways that they have looked after us, let’s keep in mind that what they do is only an echo of the way in which God adores us and supports us, holding nothing back in order to draw us close to his heart. **Amen**.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Geoffrey Parsons**

On this special Sunday let us all give thanks for our families and friends:

for the blessings of home and family, for our friends and all who play a great part in our lives. Most of all today, we thank God for our mothers and for all they are or have been to us – for their caring, their guidance and their love.

We give thanks for the Mothers’ Union here and around the world and for its dedicated commitment to home and family life.

There is a hymn – “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform”.

Lord, we know there will be times of hardship and times of doubt. We know You will guide us through these times and bring us to a deeper understanding of your wonder and mystery.

As we pray today, let us pray for those less fortunate than ourselves:

Those whose lives are overshadowed by war,

Those who experience hatred or distrust,

Those who live each day in fear,

Those who are homeless or who hunger for lack of food,

Those who are sick and those who have lost hope –

Please Lord, give them “Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow” for

“Great is thy faithfulness, O God our Father, there is no shadow of turning with Thee”.

Lord, give hope to all in distress for Great is Thy faithfulness, O God our Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you too for drawing us into God’s family – the Church through faith in you.

We thank you for the love we share, the care and friendship that we have been shown and the

calling you have placed upon us to offer your love to those who are hurting, to pray for those who are bereaved and to share your saving love with any who are strangers to you.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**