

If you wish, light a candle, and sit quietly for a moment

Looking around at those who were sitting in a circle about him, Jesus said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother," *Matthew 12: 49-50*

Sing, listen to or read the hymn <https://youtu.be/PTOfSKXkRa0>

For the beauty of the earth (H&P 333, SoF 112, StF 102)

On this extraordinary Mothering Sunday which marks a year of virtual church, we can catch a glimpse through a mother's love for her child, of God's love for us. This love, acceptance and care which makes God as much "our Mother" as "our Father"...

Let us pray: **Gracious God,
as a mother tends her children,
comforting in times of distress,
reassuring in times of uncertainty,
encouraging in times of challenge,
nursing in times of sickness,
so you tend us,
always there to lift us up
and set us on our feet again when we fall.**

**Loving God,
you have put us in families and communities
so that we might learn more about you.
Forgive us when we have been selfish, bossy, or unkind.
Loving God, Jesus said that those who do your will are his family.
Forgive us when we have been cowardly, lazy or loud.
As we ask forgiveness for the past, we ask also that you will deepen our faith, make our
commitment stronger and bring us into a closer relationship with you.**

God hears our prayers and forgives our sins:

Thanks be to God.

Our Father who art in heaven...

Read: 2 Kings 4: 1-7

This is a lovely story for Mothering Sunday, since it is full of people who care for each other. But most of all it shows that God cares for all kinds of families from the richest to the poorest.

You don't have to be a "Happy Families" family with a mum and dad, son, and daughter to be special to God.

Today God wants to tell you how special you are – if you are a mother, or a father, if your children have grown up and left home, if you are single, if your mum and dad are not with you today, if you don't have the children you wish you had – whoever you are – you are special.

Just as the children and mother and neighbours worked together so that God could work a miracle, so God longs for families and communities today to help and support each other.

Now, in a country of grab and greed, we who are the family of the church must continue to show love and compassion.

As we realise that we are all brothers and sisters, even when we cannot meet, we are still a family, loved and accepted .

Sing, read or listen to the hymn <https://youtu.be/vZYQZPHABY8>

Let there be love shared among us (SoF 329,)

Let us pray: **Everlasting God,
on this Mothering Sunday we bring our prayers
for all entrusted with the responsibility of motherhood.
We pray for mothers the world over,
recognising both the joys and demands they experience -
the privilege and pressures,
hopes and fears,
pleasure and pain that motherhood entails.
Equip them with the love, wisdom, and strength they need.**

**We pray for single mothers,
bearing the responsibility of parenthood alone,
struggling sometimes to make ends meet,
and stigmatised by some sections of society.
Give them the emotional, physical, and financial resources they need.
We pray for mothers who have experienced heartbreak -
their children still born or disabled,
injured, maimed or killed through accident or assault,
struck down by debilitating disease or terminal illness.
Comfort them in their sorrow**

**We pray for those denied the joy of motherhood -
enduring the trauma of infertility,
prevented on health grounds from risking a pregnancy,
or unable to establish a relationship
into which children can be born.
Help them in their pain.**

**We pray for those who foster or adopt children,
those who long to do so but who are denied the opportunity,
and those who for various reasons
have given up their children
and who are haunted by the image of what might have been.
Give them your strength and support**

**We pray finally for those who long to discover their birth mothers,
those who have become estranged from them,
and those whose mothers have died -
all those for whom Mothering Sunday brings pain rather than pleasure,
hurt rather than happiness.
May your love enfold them always.**

**Gracious God, we pray for mothers and children everywhere.
may your blessing be upon them, your hand guide them and your love enfold them.**

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Read: Matthew 12: 46-50

One of the most striking things I have noticed while David and I have been self-isolating, is that I have spoken to many more of my neighbours than in the last 10 years! Instead of rushing out to the car for the next church meeting or service, I am walking once a day in my neighbourhood (at a safe distance). For the first time in many years I am passing the time of day with people who do not go to church. Maybe this time of change will help us make new connections with the neighbourhood and our community. Maybe now is the time to make “being church” just that – human beings not humans doing!

Who is my family? – we all have the capacity to be mothers/brother/sisters to Jesus today. In our loving and prayerful concern for each other; in our looking to and listening for God’s word.

Sing, read or listen to the hymn: <https://youtu.be/sw5ZCZeS32M>

Love Divine (H&P 267, SoF 377, StF 503)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.