Sunday 15 March
Morning Worship for
Mothering Sunday
Led by Michaela McNeill, ALM
https://zoom.us/j/82311473640

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES

Call to Worship

We've come to worship God, who loved us before we were yet born,
who knows us even better than we know ourselves,
whose presence never leaves us,
and whose love for us never ceases.
This is our God. Let's worship together!

We say sorry

God of love we are sorry that we have not always lived up to our calling as your children.
We are sorry that we have not always found the time to notice and enjoy what you have given us.
We are sorry for not always being kind to people who love us.
Forgive us and help us to start again living our lives renewed by your Holy Spirit.

We are forgiven

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn – Blessed Assurance

1 Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation purchase of God;
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:
Chorus: This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour, all the day long.

2 Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture burst on my sight;
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love:
Chorus

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest -
I in my Saviour am happy and blest -
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.
Chorus

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915) (Public Domain)

Bible readings by Ann Griffiths

Exodus 2.1-10

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite
woman. [2] The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that
he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. [3] When she could hide
him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with
bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds
on the bank of the river. [4] His sister stood at a distance, to see what
would happen to him. [5] The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe
at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the
basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. [6] When she
opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him.
'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. [7] Then his sister
said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the
Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' [8] Pharaoh's daughter said
to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. [9] Pharaoh's
daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give
you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. [10] When
the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took
him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him
out of the water.'

For the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

John 19.25b – 27
Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord.
[25] Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [26] When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' [27] Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.
This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by Claire Robertson

Today on this fourth Sunday of Lent we are celebrate Mothering Sunday. The tradition started in this country in the sixteenth century, when people would return to their "Home church" or "Mother church" as it was known, for a special service. The pilgrimage, or journey to a sacred place, was apparently known as "going a-mothering", and became something of a holiday event. Domestic servants were traditionally given the day off to visit their own families as well as their mother church.

Despite its long existence in British culture, Mothering Sunday eventually fell out of fashion, at the dawn of the twentieth century. This is where a lady named Constance Penswick-Smith enters the picture. She was the daughter of a vicar. The loss of Mothering Sunday she considered a great shame, and she worked hard to rekindle interest. She wrote a book called "The Revival of Mothering Sunday" and also founded the "Society for the Observance of Mothering Sunday"! Her determination paid off, and a century later we are still celebrating Mothering Sunday, but with more of an emphasis on motherhood. Today's readings feature two wonderful mothers, Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both these mothers were truly blessed in their motherhood but also deeply challenged.

Today's first reading describes Jochebed protecting her baby with great resilience and resourcefulness and our gospel reading shows Mary supporting her son with great fortitude, as he died on the cross. Both mothers were under a huge amount of stress.

Jochebed copes with this stress by doing something practical. She takes a papyrus basket and covers it with bitumen and pitch to make it watertight. We don't know where she acquired the bitumen – perhaps from a boat yard as she lived close to the River Nile. Putting this thick black tar on the basket would have been a very messy job but perhaps it was also therapeutic. Doing something with your hands that is repetitive such as painting or sewing can also be a good way to pray. I think we can be fairly certain that Jochebed was praying in her heart as she prepared the basket for Moses and planned how she would use it.

Both mothers in these readings were supported by others. Jochebed's plan to save baby Moses would not have worked without the help of Moses' big sister, Miriam. She not only hid the papyrus basket in the reeds near the river bank where Pharoah's daughter came to bathe but also arranged for Pharoah's daughter to pay her mum for raising her own son.

There is some delicious irony in that situation as it would have been Pharoah's treasury that paid for Moses' upkeep. Jochebed was very resourceful herself and her daughter inherited that ability. Jochebed also showed great self control when she was introduced to the daughter of Pharoah. She must have been very frightened that something could go wrong. It was this woman's father who wanted Moses drowned. However, Jochebed trusted God and Moses was kept safe through the compassion of another woman, who was not Moses mother but became a mother figure to him. Jochebed had to take the very difficult decision to trust someone else to bring up her son, in order to keep him safe.

In our gospel reading Mary is facing her biggest challenge, yet: to watch her son die and to be there for him, in spite of her overwhelming grief. She is supported by the presence of two other Marys and by the disciple that Jesus loved – probably St John.

Mary, as we know from the references in the gospels, was a woman of prayer who trusted God implicitly. As a refugee with Jesus, when he was just a toddler, she must have suffered deprivation and great worry on their journey to a new land. Thankfully Egypt welcomed them and Joseph, Mary and Jesus were able to settle there for a number of years. At the start of Jesus' ministry at the wedding at Cana she shows her compassion for the young couple who had run out of wine and her confidence that Jesus would sort out the problem. Mary was always there for Jesus and became a mother to one of his disciples at the foot of the cross.

Mary is a role model for all mothers by the way she trusted God and with St Joseph looked after our Saviour, Jesus. I expect she had quite a lot of help from her parents, St Anne and St Joachim too.

On this Mothering Sunday, we remember mothers all over the world and in heaven and we include all those who act as mothers to us. We give thanks for all the ways they have helped us and ask for God's blessing on them. Amen

Affirmation of Faith

Praise God who loves us
Praise God who cares.

Let us declare our faith in God.
We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,

and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.

We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Intercessions prepared by Michaela McNeill

God of all, you care for us as a mother and a father. We are created by you and we are special to you, yet we have not appreciated that relationship. We are made to follow your ways and we are special to you, yet we have chosen to ignore you. We are loved without conditions and we are special to you, yet we have not learned to love others. We have the hope that you give us, and we are special to you, yet we have failed to share your hope with others. God of all, you care for us as a mother and a father, and we are special to you. Forgive us all our failings and renew us. Let us pray today for the whole church worldwide. For all its leaders and everyone who goes to worship you wherever that may be. Help us to be caring and compassionate churches who reach out to our communities and show Gods love to all.
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local communities and for this Zoom Church. We pray for our local hospitals, GP surgeries and for those voluntary organisations who are supporting people in difficult situations. Let us hold these in our thoughts those we know who are struggling with life currently. Let us as a church family remember our baptism vows and renew our love for you and those in our communities.
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We hold before you those who are ill physically, mentally or spiritually. Lord pour out your compassionate love on all those who are suffering

and help us to reach out to anyone we know and show your love to them.
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have died. We hold to you those who are left and for our various ministry teams who show your care to all. Give them strength in the time ahead and show them your compassionate love.

Let us be a caring church family, with each other and to the wider community. And finally, let us remember Mary, the mother of Jesus, as we worship today. We think of her example to all those who care for others. We remember her willingness to obey and her thoughtfulness. We remember her risk-taking, and her confusion. We remember her deep concern, and her painful sorrow. Help us to learn from the mother of Jesus and give thanks for all who care for us.

Merciful Father **Accept these prayers for the sake of your son Jesus Christ.**
Amen.

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 Jesu Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As Our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn – Be Still for the Presence of the Lord

1 Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;
Come bow before Him now with reverence and fear.
In Him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground;
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

2 Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned.
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

3 Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace.
No work too hard for Him, in faith receive from Him;
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.
Amen.

David J Evans (born 1957)

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Notices

Conclusion

May God, who gave birth to all creation, bless us:
may God, who was born to 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