

Sunday March 27th 2022: Fourth Sunday in Lent

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time.

The clocks go forward today and, of course, it is Mothering Sunday.



INFORMATION: The origins of Mothering Sunday and Mother's Day

“Mothering Sunday began as an explicitly religious event of the 16th Century, with no connection to mothers at all. The word ‘mothering’ referred to the ‘mother church’, which is to say the main church or cathedral of the region. It became a tradition that, on the fourth Sunday of Lent, people would return to their mother church for a special service. This pilgrimage was apparently known as ‘going a-mothering’ and became something of a holiday event, with domestic servants 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 20th Century. This is where a lady named Constance Penswick-Smith enters the picture. The daughter of a vicar, she thought the loss of Mothering Sunday a great shame, and worked hard to rekindle interest, even writing a book whose title clearly laid out her ambition – it was called ‘The Revival of Mothering Sunday’. As if that wasn’t enough, she also founded the Society for the Observance of Mothering Sunday. Her determination paid off, and the fading festival was restored to the culture of the country, only with much more of a focus on celebrating motherhood. So, if our event is properly called Mothering Sunday, what is ‘Mother’s Day’? Technically speaking, it is a completely unrelated American event, invented by a woman called Anna Jarvis in 1908. Her initial inspiration was a desire to honour her own mother, who had been a militant peace activist during the US Civil War. Anna Jarvis’ growing ambition to create a formal ‘Mother’s Day’ for all American mothers was literally laughed out of the room at first, with officials jokingly saying that it might lead to a ‘Mother-in-Law’s Day’! Anna wasn’t easily put off, though, and in 1914 US President Woodrow Wilson officially signed Mother’s Day into existence. It was Anna Jarvis who inspired our own Constance Penswick to revive the more religiously-flavoured Mothering Sunday over here, although the two separate events have since become conflated in most people’s minds.”

www.yesterday.uktv.co.uk.

Hymn StF 117 H&P 511

Sing praise to God who reigns above / the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love / the God of our salvation;
with healing balm my soul he fills / and every faithless murmur stills: to God all praise and glory!
The Lord is never far away / but, through all grief distressing,
an ever-present help and stay / our peace, and joy, and blessing;
as with a mother’s tender hand / he leads his own, his chosen band: to God all praise and glory!
O you who name Christ’s holy name / give God all praise and glory:
O you who own his power, proclaim / aloud the wondrous story.
Cast each false idol from its throne: the Lord is God, and he alone: to God all praise and glory!

Johann Jakob Schutz (1640 – 1690), Frances Elizabeth Cox (1812 – 1897), Honor Mary Thwaites (1914 – 1993)

Epistle Reading for Mothering Sunday: 2 Corinthians 1 v 3 – 7

Gospel Reading for Mothering Sunday: Luke 2 v 33 – 35

Hymn StF 102 H&P 333

For the beauty of the earth / for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth / over and around us lies:
Gracious God, to thee we raise / this our sacrifice of praise.
For the beauty of each hour / of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower / sun and moon and stars of light.
For the joy of human love / brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above / pleasures pure and undefiled:



For each perfect gift of thine / to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine / flowers of earth and buds of heaven.

F. S. Pierpoint (1835 - 1917)

Message from a Circuit friend

Mothering Sunday is not an easy day for many. It is, doubtless, a lovely excuse to spoil your mother or to remember her with thankfulness. It is also a day of mixed emotions for all those whose children have died before them, for those who have longed for children who were never born, for those who never see mothers/ siblings/ children and for those who were not blessed with a 'good' mother to count but a few. Companies that send regular emails ask if I'd like to 'opt-out' of their Mothers' Day mailings. We cannot opt out of the complications and pain of life though, and this day brings to the fore, some of the pain of life that we often keep hidden. How many of us smile at church when we are given a little posy of flowers, when inside we are crying? Nor can we hide from the images on TV of mothers and children separated by war from each other or the rest of their families. Mary and Joseph themselves had endured the stress of travelling to Bethlehem, the census, the birth far from home. Simeon blessed the family, but also said to Mary –“and a sword will pierce your own soul too”. On this day, may we be sensitive to the needs of others and also be honest about our own sufferings. Healing can be found in a community of openness and trust, and our Mother Church should be the one place we feel we can be truly ourselves. If you can't recognise your church like this, what can you do to help it become such a community? As Paul reminds us, God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we have ourselves received.

Anne Richardson (Minister in the Central Norfolk Circuit)

Prayers of Intercession

We give thanks for mothers, for grandmothers, for carers, for fathers, for all who care.

We pray for all those suffering in our world today, especially mothers trying to protect their children.

We pray for all those in our own country who find this day difficult – for whatever reason.

We pray for our own ability to offer 'mothering' – love and care extended to others.

We give thanks for God's love and care, and for the fact that nothing separates us from his love (Romans 8 v 39).

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn StF 81 H&P 566

Now thank we all our God / with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done / in whom this world rejoices;
who, from our mother's arms / has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love / and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God / through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts / and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace / and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills / in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God / the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns / with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God / whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now / and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586 – 1649) translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827 – 1878)

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

Methodist News: The Methodist website now has a comprehensive section on prayers for Ukraine as well as full suggestions on how to help, including offering 'Homes for Ukraine' www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/ukraine.