

MOTHERING SUNDAY – 22 March 2020

For many of us, this will be a Mother's Day we won't forget.... ironically, because it was the Mother's Day our children couldn't come and visit, the one when we didn't celebrate by going out to lunch ... the one where we were perhaps separated from our families for fear of catching or transmitting coronavirus.

From the time I woke up spluttering on Sunday morning, the week has had a surreal quality about it. Having soon shared my cold with Jim (or having both caught it from our grandson?) we have been self-isolating ever since. The 7-day restriction was lengthened to 14 in Monday night's announcement. We are trying not to spread it to our daughter, Joanna, as that would extend our isolation for as much as another fortnight.

Meantime, we are keeping up with the rest of the family and friends by phone, email & WhatsApp. I'm tasked today with downloading Zoom, so that we can hold family conferences, and I have even been invited to join a local Zoom Art Class.

It strikes me that this might well be a good way for church groups to keep meeting in the months ahead.... or new ones to flourish.... **like a short weekly worship service, if a few people would like that? Let me know.**

Like other over-70s and those in vulnerable groups, we now face a summer of social-distancing, if not isolation and it is a daunting thought. Each evening brings bad news of the virus, the economy, the shortage of goods – and the appalling mortality figures from Italy, Spain and France.

Yet, come the early morning, the sun has woken us, and from the study, I see banks of blooming heathers, golden daffodils and clumps of bluebells. Starting with the dog walkers, people walk up and down as usual – and I see that the grass needs cut – and my spirits just soar! Today, I remembered words from a psalm that I had typed out and taped to my monitor during a past time of illness. It had disappeared when we moved house – but I have now reinstated it. Nearly every

word of the scriptures is written to encourage or warn – and, at present, we need both in our lives...

**But I will sing of your might;
Every morning I will sing aloud of your steadfast love.
For you have been a fortress for me,
and a refuge on the day of my distress.
O my strength I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love.**

[Ps59:16-17]

There can be no Sunday Service this week. But I sign off with a prayer for Mothers and Mothering on Mothering Sunday – the day when we remember the nurturing task of the Church despite differing and difficult circumstances, as we try to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Taking the Long View, the people of God have before faced crises of the same magnitude as we face today and their faith has carried them through. We cannot choose the times we live in but we can be sure that God will guide us through our days, and that we will find comfort by turning to him.

God bless, and keep safe,
Liz

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A Prayer for Mothering Sunday

**God of mothers and fathers, young and old, friends and neighbours,
be present in the needs of the world this week.**

Thank you for those who have loved us and nurtured us to grow in faith and wisdom....
we ask you to be with the mums and grannies and great-grannies among us.

Hold close in these troubled times all expectant mothers and strengthen them as they
prepare to bring new life into the world. O God, show also your tender care to all
women who would like to bear children but cannot.

We pray for foster mothers, adoptive mothers, stepmothers and all who give love to
children from their hearts.... for everyone who mothers others, old and young,
we thank you for the grace you give them.

We pray for parents and caregivers here, and around the world,
who struggle to find shelter and security for their children....
and all whose daily challenge is to put food on the table.

We pray for mums and dads facing the sudden challenge of nurturing all their children
24/7 for many months to come. And we pray for those in key jobs who must continue to
serve the public and who face long hours of work away from their children.

We pray for children and young people throughout the world,
who are facing the social consequences of coronavirus – especially isolation from friends
and normal activities

We pray for those who should have been sitting exams this year and now feel their
efforts have been wasted.

Help us to remind them of the longer view – where nothing of worth is ever wasted,
and Good begets Good, always.

Be with all our young people at this difficult time, especially as they come to make
decisions that will affect their lives.

Loving God, on this exceptional Mothering Sunday, bless families of all shapes and sizes.
Give to those who mourn, the comfort of your Holy Spirit - and where is conflict or
resentment, may your grace soothe old hurts and unclench old hates.
Bless the frail, and those who fear the future.

Live in all our hearts in the week to come,
and regardless of any physical separation from one another,
help us still to and look outwards in the Spirit, that we may all live fully.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.