



Call to worship

Isaiah wrote that God is a mother to us, comforting and carrying us in her arms.

'As one whom a mother comforts, so I will comfort you' (Isaiah 66.13).

Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.

Hymn STF81, Now thank we all our God *Watch on YouTube* <https://youtu.be/K7gMDXylzW8>

**Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.**

**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.**

**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!**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Isaiah also wrote that God would never forget us. He knows each of us, like a mother knows her own children.....

Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you' (Isaiah 49.15).

Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.

David wrote that in God's presence, he was quiet and at peace, trusting his mother God like a child safe in loving arms. 'But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a child quieted at its mother's breast; like a child that is quiet is my soul' (Psalm 131.2).

Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.

Jesus spoke of himself as a mother, longing to wrap his arms around us, like a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. 'How often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not' (Matthew 23.37).

Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.

Paul writes about his missionary ministry and likens his work to that of a nurse who looks after those in her care. 'I was gentle among you like a nurse taking care of her children' (1 Thes 2.7).

Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.

On this Mothering Sunday, we thank you, Lord God, for the gift of mothers and the mother-like nurture that many people have and continue to show to us and to others. **AMEN.**

A prayer of confession

Nurturing God,

we praise you for the way in which you care for each one of us.

You love us whoever we are, whatever we do.

Even though we frequently disappoint you,

you are always there, concerned for our welfare, forgiving us.

Nurturing God, we praise and thank you.

Forgive us for the times that we take you for granted,

when we do things to hurt others,

particularly members of our family and friends.

Forgive us for getting so involved in the activities -

pleasures and concerns of our lives that we forget that you are there.

Nurturing God, forgive us. Bring us home again to you.

Nurturing God, we praise you. Amen.

Bible readings:

John 2.1-5 - The Wedding at Cana (NRSV) 'On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

Luke 8.19-21 - The True Kindred of Jesus (NRSV) 'Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.' But he said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.'

Reflections - 'celebrating mothers and others

The Fourth Sunday of Lent (or *Laetare* or Refreshment Sunday), allowed as a day of relief from the rigour of Lent, and the Feast of the Annunciation, almost always, falling in Lent, two breaks from austerity, that form the background to the modern observance of Mothering Sunday on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Jesus was probably invited to this wedding in Cana because his mother was known to the family. Mary must have been a respected figure at the celebration because they told her of the embarrassing problem that arose when they got their catering sums wrong! This story is so well known that we sometimes miss the fact that it contains the only recorded words of Mary during Jesus' adult life. They stand as a marvellous piece of advice from a mother – 'Do whatever he tells you.'

Just as our best mother instincts are a signpost towards the God who loves and cares for us, so this best advice from Mary takes us to the truth that we all need to listen and follow the words of Jesus. Does Mary's instruction to Jesus 'Do whatever he tells you.' evoke memories of your own with parents or carers?

Jesus loved and cared for his mother, Mary in Luke 8. Tradition says he cared for her after Joseph died and helped run the family business until he was about 30 years old, when he started on his mission to proclaim the kingdom of God. Even then he did not forget his mother. Even on the cross he remembered to entrust Mary to his beloved friend, John.

There must have been many times when Mary was puzzled and pained by her son's work. She had been warned of this at his dedication, when Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her heart also. In this reading, the family came to rescue Jesus from the crowds of needy people, and we hear his words that true motherhood is something we are all called to. He said this to enlarge his family, not deny it, calling all who follow him to love and care for each other with the very best of motherlike love.

Mothering Sunday is now commercialised, but it didn't start that way. When many people worked long hours as servants in large houses, on farms or in factories, Mothering Sunday was the one day in the year when they were allowed to visit their parents. Sometimes they took a special gift, like a simnel cake, to say thank you for all their mothers had done for them. They also went with their families to the 'Mother Church' to thank God.

Mothering Sunday is still an opportunity to visit parents and grandparents whom we don't see as much as we might like during the year. It is also a time to thank God for our mothers and for God's love for us. But Mothering Sunday is difficult for those whose mothers have died, whose relationships with their parents are difficult; those who would like to be mothers, but can't be, and those whose children have died.

On Mothering Sunday, many families will attend church to thank God for mothers, carers and others. Despite gloomy statistics about family breakdown, there remains a deeply rooted longing to celebrate all that is best about the family, embodied particularly by the role motherhood plays. Mothering Sunday is an opportunity to remember and give thanks for those who have been like mothers to us. including teachers, grandmothers, godmothers, nurses, healthcare professionals, the Church and others, as well as own mothers.

Finally, we must acknowledge, that Mothering Sunday can also be a difficult time for many who do not have good relationships with their mothers/parents or children, those whose children have died, remembering especially Ukraine and other places in the world, where mothers are retrieving bodies of their sons/children from battlefields. So this end, I wish you all every blessing on this Sunday.

Hymn – STF 519 – father I place into your hands Watch on YouTube <https://youtu.be/uHGokg-rYOI>

*Father, I place into Your hands,
The things I cannot do.
Father, I place into Your hands
The times that I've been through.
Father, I place into Your hands
The way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust You.*

*Father, I place into Your hands
My friends and family.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that trouble me.
Father, I place into Your hands
The person I would be,
For I know I always can trust You.*

*Father, we love to SEEK Your face,
We love to hear Your voice.
Father, we love to sing Your praise
And in Your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with You
And in Your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust You.*

*Father, I want to be with You
And do the things You do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That You are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
That You will draw to You,
For I know that I am one with You.*

Prayers of intercession

- Nurturing God, who gave us an example of unconditional love, we give thanks for our parents, families and friends. Thank you for those who care for us, who sit by quietly, supportively and let us make our own mistakes, who are willing to forgive and encourage us.
- Loving God, we pray for those who find Mothering Sunday a difficult day, those who have had difficult experiences of their mother or father, or whose family life is full of conflict, bitterness and recrimination, assure them of your love and bring them peace.
- Empathetic God, we pray for those who find Mothering Sunday difficult because they have lost a child, or because they are unable to have much-wanted children.
We pray for those who struggle to bring up children alone.
- Loving God, whose son died on a cross, be with all those who need you and assure them of your love.
- Caring God, we pray for those throughout the world who live in conditions like those experienced by the prodigal son when he lost his money, those who do not have enough water or food or shelter, those whose children die of starvation.
Show us how to care. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

We say the prayers that Jesus taught us:

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

A time of personal offering to God

Hymn - STF536 – He's got the whole world Watch on YouTube <https://youtu.be/YZ0crxOVEEQ>

*He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

*He's got you and me, brother, in his hands.
He's got you and me, brother, in his hands.
He's got you and me, brother, in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

*He's got the wind and the rain in his hands.
He's got the wind and the rain in his hands
He's got the wind and the rain in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

*He's got you and me, sister, in his hands.
He's got you and me, sister, in his hands.
He's got you and me, sister, in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

*He's got the little tiny baby in his hands.
He's got the little tiny baby in his hands. .
He's got the little tiny baby in his hands. .
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

*He's got everybody here in his hands.
He's got everybody here in his hands.
He's got everybody here in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

A prayer for God's blessing

Loving God, we give thanks for all who care for us,
who have encouraged us and helped us grow,
who have forgiven us, and cared for,
and supported us when times were hard,
who have challenged us, who have told us about you.
Nurturing God, we give you thanks.
And now may the blessing of God be with us
as we love and serve one another;
and as we share Christ's unconditional love
– in the name of God the Creator, Redeemer and Spirit. **Amen.**

This service contains resources from Rootsontheweb, Church of England, Singing the Faith and YouTube.