



WEEKLY UPDATE

Mothering Sunday, Sunday 22nd March 2020

From the clergy...

Dear all

This is to let you know that we are intending to get a weekly communication out to you. It has been quite a few days for all of us as we adjust to our new situations, and we do not wish to bombard you. Over the next month we will be developing the communication we send out to you, telling you about what pastoral care and support we are starting to offer as well as directing you towards resources that can help us travel through Lent to Easter resurrection together, even in our separate spaces!



Our first offering is that Lyndon and I have recorded the Mothering Sunday Eucharist from today: just two of us present in physical terms, but we gather as the community of saints wherever we are. You may watch and 'take part' in that at home, by clicking our YouTube video link here, <https://youtu.be/dmoAw7noZFY>, or access it from the St John's website at <http://www.stjohnschurchbroadstone.org.uk/>

Or you can just hear Lyndon's address rather than the full service: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qD2I4ITsfDg&feature=youtu.be>

We will be varying and adapting what we offer each week, as we learn and grow in this strange new way of being church, and particularly exploring ways of how we might make our communications more interactive. We may be able to offer a link to Morning or Evening Prayer, or have a conference call Bible Study! Bear with us as we take a step at a time..!

Please note that today, Sunday 22nd March, has also been designated a Day of Prayer and Action. We are invited to light a candle in our windows this Sunday evening at 7pm.

For now, this simply comes with our love and prayers.

Revd Helen and Revd Lyndon

News and Updates

It is with sadness that we write to let you know that Shirley May, after a short illness with pneumonia, died in hospital on Saturday 21st March. I know we will hold Shirley's family in our prayers, as we also remember with fondness our dear friend. May she rest in peace, and rise in glory.

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



Sharing the Good News

In the midst of the very real suffering at the moment, there are still signs of hope to be found as the world responds to Corona Virus – there is still Good News.

This week, for example, the BBC has reported that even in such a short period of time, the environment has already started to flourish in new ways as human activity slows down. In Venice, dolphins and swans have begun swimming through the canals, which have become quieter and clearer since boat traffic was stopped; and around the world, greenhouse gas emissions have dropped drastically. It's good to see how resistant the world is, and how quickly life is able to flourish when it is given some space.



At Home This Week

If you have a camera at home, why not take a photograph of a small sign of Spring's arrival from your window, or in your garden and, if you are able, post it on the church's Facebook page.

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This Week's Sermon, Luke 2.33-35

Rev Lyndon Webb

Well I think it's fair to say, they didn't train us for this. After the chaos of last week, it's shocking to stand in an empty church now, talking to a camera, rather than the gorgeous faces who normally fill our pews. It feels especially sad given that this is Mothering Sunday, a day which should be all about celebrating our relationships. Instead, it feels like the joy of church has been replaced with uncertainty, and for some of us, fear.

But although we may be isolating at the moment, we are not alone.

It seems completely upside-down, but isolation is actually the best way of standing together at the moment; by socially distancing ourselves from others, we are showing compassion towards the most vulnerable in our society, and towards the extraordinary doctors and nurses who care for us. In this way, we are being invited to make our whole lives an offering of love at the moment, a sacrifice, something holy. Simply sitting in an armchair at home may not feel heroic at the moment; but it is.

But then, what could be more appropriate during Lent, a season which is all about giving things up in order to grow in compassion and love? And what could be more motherly?

Like motherhood, the coming weeks will feel lonely at times, and deeply costly; and we will need others to support us. But perhaps there will also be unexpected joys along the way.

And I wonder, on this Mothering Sunday: what was motherhood like for Mary?

In our Gospel reading, we hear that a day which should have been full of joy and love for Mary also ends up filled with uncertainty, and maybe even fear. She and Joseph have gone to the temple to give thanks for the birth of their new son, and to celebrate their new family life. But as they enter, Symeon interrupts them, and speaks these strange words to Mary: *'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'*

Hearing those words, Mary must have felt afraid, and terribly alone; maybe she was angry that this man had interrupted what should have been a day of simple joys; or perhaps she thought Symeon was just a confused old man, and didn't take his warning seriously. Perhaps some of us are struggling to take current warnings seriously, too. Either way, we know that Symeon was right, and that motherhood took Mary through terrible grief, before leading her to unimagined joys.

But today also reminds us that Mary's life as Jesus' mother can't always have been this intense. As well as Mothering Sunday, this is also known as Refreshment Sunday, a day to rest from our Lenten fasts and relax together. And I wonder, where did Mary find her rest? Did she ever while away a quiet afternoon feeding Jesus in the warm sunshine? Or enjoy watching him grow and play? Did she ever drop him off in Joseph's workshop, and dare to take some time just for herself? At night, as Jesus and his brothers and sisters slept, did Mary ever kneel to pray, and just let God mother her for half-an-hour?

In the weeks ahead, we will also need to rest, to turn off the news and enjoy the signs of Spring outside our windows, or in our gardens. Although Helen and I will be calling everyone, and working to keep people who are isolating supplied with whatever they need, if you ever feel lonely or afraid, reach out – pick up the phone and call us, or one another; take a moment to stop and pray and rest in God's love. Take time to let all of these sudden changes sink in and settle, however you are feeling. Be gentle with yourselves. This will be a costly season; but I also trust that faith will emerge in new, and stronger ways from it, as our love for one another and for the world finds a new shape.

And as we step into this new season, remember too that we stand in solidarity with Christians who have gone this way before us. Remember that the tradition of Mothering Sunday itself goes back to the 16th century, when Europe was still regularly plagued with diseases. But even so, society endured; the church endured; and God's love endured, as it continues to endure now.

None of this makes it any easier for me to stand in this empty church today. It's confusing, and sad, and it feels wrong. But I am hopeful. And I'm glad that Helen and I can be here on Sundays, fumbling around with cameras and breaking bread, until the day finally comes – as it will – when we are all gathered here again, held in God's great, motherly love for all her children.

Until then, stay well, stay in touch; and remember that, although you may be isolating for now, you are never alone.

Amen.