

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.

Thank you for showing us the way to live and giving us opportunities to give, to take second place, to accept people as they are, to forgive them when they annoy us and look for their needs before our own.

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. We pray for those who have lost a child, or those unable to have much-wanted children. We pray for those who struggle to bring up children on their own.

Loving God, 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 poor conditions, those who do not have enough water or food or shelter, and those whose children die of starvation.

Loving Father we pray for all the mothering, caring and parenting that goes on in this community and for those who crave tenderness and are weary of the struggle to be strong. We are all your children help us to grow in your love.

Father God, whose Son died on a cross and rose again so that we may live. Send us out in the power of the risen Christ, to live and work each day to your praise and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

Closing hymn StF 186 / H&P86 **Tell out my soul**

Blessing May the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit, strengthen us for the Christian life.

May the Lord who provides for all our needs, sustain us day by day.

May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care, send us out to live and work for others.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Darlington District Worship at Home 14th March 2021 Mothering Sunday and Lent 4

Thank you to Local Preacher Rosemary Gray for preparing our worship sheet

Call to worship

Hannah's song of Thanksgiving:

My heart rejoices in the Lord;
In the Lord my strength is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.
There is no one holy like the Lord;
there is no one besides you;
there is no rock like our God.

Hymn H&P 463 / StF 74 **To God be the glory**

Opening Prayer

Lord, we come to worship you on Mothering Sunday. We thank you that you gather us together as your children, in the family of God. We thank you that you provide for us. We thank you that you feed us and nurture us. We thank you that you encourage and challenge us. We thank you that you love us.

Loving God, we worship you for loving us like a mother loves her children. Creator God, you care for our needs, giving us the world to be our home, providing us with food, shelter and a family. Father God, you make our lives good, healing us and teaching us.

Nurturing God, we praise you for the way in which you care for each one of us whoever we are, whatever we do. Even though we frequently disappoint you, you are always there, concerned for our welfare, forgiving us. Forgive us for the times that we take you for granted, when we do things which hurt others, particularly members of our family and friends. Forgive us for running away, for getting so involved in the activities, pleasures and concerns of our lives, that we forget that you are there. Bring us home again to you. Father God, we rejoice in the assurance that through Jesus Christ we are forgiven. AMEN

The Lord's Prayer **Our Father**

Reading [1Samuel 1:20-28](#).

This is the story of Hannah dedicating her son Samuel to the Lord

Message

I think this passage about Hannah's life is an inspiration to us all. She was a true servant of God. When she was discouraged and disheartened she took her problems to God, trusting him for her needs and his faithfulness.

Samuel was the result of Hannah's answered prayer; she did not forget this once the better times came, but kept her promise with God and gave up the son she wanted most, which meant the people of Israel benefited from a spiritual leader of remarkable integrity and wisdom.

Samuel was probably about 3 years old, when his mother left him at the Tabernacle. By saying "I give him to the Lord", she was saying I dedicate Samuel to God for a lifetime of service. She did not forget him, she visited him regularly, every year she brought him a new robe.

Each of us may face times of barrenness when nothing comes to birth in our work, service or relationships. It's difficult to pray in faith when we feel so ineffective. But as Hannah discovered prayer opens the way for God to work in our lives. God has a plan for each of us. In Hannah's case it was to postpone her childbearing years. Think for a moment about those you know who are struggling with God's timing in answering prayers and who need your love and help.

The great hymn writer Rev Timothy Dudley Smith said "the family that prays together stays together and the family that sings together clings together". So true.

Prayer can release our tensions in times of emotional stress. Trusting God will change our entire outlook on life. As Jesus says in John 14:1, "Do not let your hearts be in turmoil. Trust in God; trust also in me."

Refreshingly, our reading for Mothering Sunday places us squarely in the real world. Here family life is the wonderful patchwork of bright and dark colours, glowing sections and dull areas that we all recognise. It includes troubles and tragedies. What we are being reminded of is God's parenting, which is no false, demanding image but the real thing – the parenting we all need for our survival, and crave, sensing its importance. Not that we always remember to come to God for it; all too often we search for it instead among other people, and find ourselves let down and abandoned as a result.

God is the one who comforts us in all of our troubles. We don't have to pretend with God that there aren't any troubles or that we're managing very nicely thank you. God knows what family life is about – and single life. He knows the heart aches and the conflicts. He knows that loving makes us feel vulnerable.

God doesn't smother us or stop us exploring our world. In the same way God encourages us, he has given us his own Son Jesus to be our friend and the Holy Spirit to guide us. If we fall over and hurt ourselves in life, he is there to comfort us. If we go off and get ourselves lost or into bad company or stupid behaviour, God comes to search for us until he finds us, calling our name again and again until we hear him and shout out asking to be rescued.

A good way to remember that we are all called to look after one another in a loving, caring way is to think about dressing ourselves. When we are little our parents have to dress us and we read in Colossians 3:12 -14, "God's chosen people should put on clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Finally over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together" (as we need a belt). So I suggest that tomorrow and every morning when you get dressed – you think of yourself putting on those clothes. That way we'll be learning to look after one another in the way God looks after us.

Unfortunately, mother love or parenting love is less common than it once was. Out there, the world is hurting. God knows about that too. His only son suffered and died for our sins. Many people have grown up without experiencing love at all, without being nurtured.

God is looking for people like us, the family that is the church, people who can minister his love, provide a listening ear, perhaps even a shoulder to cry on; those who will love people through thick and thin without counting the cost, offering them acceptance and encouraging them to walk with Jesus and become all that God wants them to be. Could you be one of them? The challenge is there for us all to use the opportunities that God gives us to give and receive his love.

Hymn StF 519 **Father I place into your hands**