

The United Benefice of St Michael
Lichfield and St John, Wall

**Mothering Sunday - Fourth Sunday of Lent
14th March**

Canticle - Te Deum Laudamus - a Song of the Church

We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as the Lord;
all creation worships you,
the Father everlasting.
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you:
Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son, worthy of all praise,
the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.

You, Christ, are the King of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.
When you took our flesh to set us free
you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.
You overcame the sting of death
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come and be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
and bring us with your saints
to glory everlasting.
Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.
Govern and uphold them now and always.
Day by day we bless you.
We praise your name for ever.
Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
Lord, show us your love and mercy,
for we have put our trust in you.
In you, Lord, is our hope:
let us never be put to shame.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Collect

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.

New Testament Reading - Ephesians 2.1-10

¹ You were dead through the trespasses and sins ² in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Psalm 127.1-4

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.

² It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved.

³ Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.

⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading – John 3: 14-21

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

Sermon

The three Rs of motherhood

John's description of the exchange between Jesus and his mother at the cross furnishes us with three deep insights into motherhood.

The first insight is what I would call the reality of motherhood. In v25b we read: 'Stood near the cross was the mother of Jesus.'

As she stands at the foot of the cross Mary, the mother of Jesus (though John's Gospel never uses her name!) is experiencing the heartbreak of losing her son to a premature death. She is aware of the terrible pain that he is enduring and of the shame which belongs to this very public act of execution. She had lived with this fear ever since Simeon, the elderly priest at the Temple, had prophesied that a sword would pierce her own heart. And now as she faces this costly sacrifice, and embraces suffering and loss, Mary epitomises the reality of motherhood. To love a child as a mother does is to leave the heart and mind defenceless against whatever trouble or trauma that child might bring. Winifred Holtby, writing to her lifelong friend Vera Brittain said this:

'Babies are a nuisance. But so does everything seem to be that is worthwhile...husbands and books and committees and being loved and everything. We have to choose between barren ease and rich unrest...or rather one does not choose; life somehow chooses.'

The 'rich unrest' of motherhood stems from the fact that most mothers do what John 19 v25 tells us that Mary did on that dark Friday afternoon when Jesus was being done to death on the cross: she 'stood near'. Mary was near, attentive to every groan and heavy breath, to the straining of muscles and to the tearing of flesh as Jesus struggled to hold off the onset of death. She was near so she could dispel the awful loneliness of his dying. She was near because there was nowhere else she could dream of being knowing the pain and humiliation her son was going through. Hugh MacDiarmid in his poem, *The Two Parents*, begins by admitting his own sense of detachment towards his sick child and then compares it with the deep commitment and motherly love of his wife:

I love my little son, and yet when he was ill
I could not confine myself to his bedside.
I was impatient of his squalid little needs.
His laboured breathing and the fretful way he cried.

And longed for my wide range of interests again,
Whereas his mother sank without another care
To that dread level of nothing but life itself
And stayed day and night, till he was better, there.
Women may pretend, yet they always dismiss
Everything but mere being just like this.

Mary had descended to that 'dread level of nothing but life itself' as she stayed close to her dying son. And it is from this recognition of how much our mothers are willing to forego and sacrifice in order to be available to us that our deep sense of gratitude springs. As we grow up it gradually dawns on us how costly and selfless was the love our mothers bestowed on us; their quiet heroism and courage leaves us ever indebted to them.

The second insight we can glean from today's Gospel concerns the reward of motherhood. In v26 we read: 'When Jesus saw his mother he said to her, 'Woman here is your son.'

Knowing how devastated she would be by his imminent death Jesus provides for her through the care and companionship of the beloved disciple. Here is the love Jesus had received from his mother throughout his life being returned. He shows how much he understands her vulnerability and how deep runs his desire to ease her sense of loss.

And that must surely be the chief reward of motherhood – to receive back freely and joyfully and unsolicited the love of a child. What the mother has lavished on the child, all the values she has sought to teach him or her, all the sensitivity and care she has tried to nurture, has not been wasted. Instead it has borne fruit in the formation of a person who now shares those same values and exercises that same care. The love has become reciprocal and it flows in both directions between mother and child.

When my mother was a widow living alone in South Wales and I was serving a parish in York I knew one thing which brought her a lot of enjoyment was a hand-written letter. So every Thursday I sat at my desk and wrote a long letter to my mother. It was often hard to think of news because we had a weekly phone call lasting three-quarters of an hour in which I had updated her on all the latest happenings in our lives. But I knew when that envelope dropped through the letter-box on to her front door mat it would make her day. 'I got your letter – thanks very much!' would be one of her opening remarks on the phone next time we spoke. I'm sure you have similar stories of how you have recognised the humanity and vulnerability of your mother and acted to show her how much you loved and valued her. 'Seeing his mother' says John's Gospel, Jesus offered her the care of the beloved disciple. Likewise all of us need to 'see' our mothers in that way so that we can be sensitive to their need and help them experience and rejoice in the reward of motherhood.

The third insight to be found in these few verses from John 19 is what I want to call the reach of motherhood. Here is v27: 'Then Jesus said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.'

This shows the disciple at the foot of the cross acting in a motherly way towards Mary, the mother of Jesus. He made space for her in his home and committed himself to being responsible for her well-being. And in doing that the disciple was not showing motherly love to a member of his own family but to a woman who in one sense was a stranger. Her main claim on him was that Jesus had asked him to care for her. He had no legal or familial obligation to protect her or provide for her. The motherly love he showed her

was a free gift inspired by his love of Jesus Christ. From this we can see how motherly love is freed from its family bond and made universal in its application.

Such love can be shown as much by men as by women and Jesus himself is the supreme example for all genders. 'The human character of Jesus ... combining the strength of manhood and the tenderness of womanhood in perfect alliance is always strengthening to contemplate and adore' wrote Bishop Charles Gore¹. We catch a glimpse of his motherly love as Jesus looks out over the city of Jerusalem: 'How often I have desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing!' I doubt that many hymns have been written on those words of Jesus but I did find one in a book called 'Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists' – just the kind of book Archdeacons read late at night! Here are a few verses:

Thou glorious hen
We stand before Thee
It is not only Jerusalem
That Thou lovest

So love us and hatch us
Thou glorious hen
We stand before Thee
Hen of Heaven.

O Lord bring it forth
This Ekuphakameni (paradise)
Like the hen
Loving her chickens

So the Church's focus on mothers and all they give to their families invites us to do more than express gratitude to them and to God. It challenges us as those who stand before the glorious 'Hen of Heaven', Jesus Christ, to respond to the desire he expressed over the city of Jerusalem and which he directed to the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross. It is the desire that we who are loyal and obedient to him should extend the power of motherly love into every part of our world, taking it much further than the bonds of kinship. Then that love can reach dark and troubled places like the city of Jerusalem. It can be released towards those individuals who are overwhelmed by pain and sorrow and loss like Mary. For as we spread that love to others we are helping build the Kingdom of God and becoming heralds of the salvation made available to us all in the cross of Jesus Christ. May this Mothering Sunday be very special for each and everyone of us and bring us all fresh inspiration. Amen.

The Ven Paul Thomas

Post Communion Prayer

Loving God,
as a mother feeds her children at the breast
you feed us in this sacrament with the food and drink of eternal life:
help us who have tasted your goodness
to grow in grace within the household of faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

¹ The Incarnation of the Son of God, Bampton Lectures 1891 page 3. A great read!

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Phillip Goodwin, Sam Bassett,

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Colin Eastwood, Robert Harris, Chris Kirk, Alison Knight, Robert McAllester-Jones, Matthew Martel, Marielouise Oliver Norah and Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie,

Those who have died

Alan Thompson, Dave Edge

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST JOHN

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

CHURCH NOTICES

MARCH FAMILY PRAISE

Family Praise for Mothering Sunday is now on the website

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/sunday-sermons.html>, and on youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=057u526xrVQ>

SERVICES FOR LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Our services for the remaining Sundays of Lent and then Holy Week and Easter itself will follow a rather different pattern from usual and the details are set out below. As things stand, with the progress being made to remove restrictions and give more freedom of movement and meeting, we intend to worship together in church again on Easter Sunday and then each Sunday after that. That will be more than we managed last year! Because a number of people, who would not be able to come to church, have been able to join in worship and fellowship at services on Zoom we will continue with some services entirely on Zoom and some services will be live streamed on Zoom so that people can join in at home.

Mothering Sunday 14th March

8.00am BCP Holy Communion on Zoom

10.00am Service on Zoom

Passion Sunday 21st March

8.00am BCP Holy Communion on Zoom

10.00am Service on Zoom. This will be led from St Michael's church and is an opportunity to see how live streaming of services might work in the future. Please log on for this service as usual and do not come to the church.

Palm Sunday 28th March

8.00am BCP Holy Communion on Zoom

10.00am Palm Sunday Service

A service of hymns, readings and prayers with a brief address ***outside in the churchyard at St Michael's***. All are welcome but we will need to maintain social distancing. A one-off order of service will be printed and palm crosses distributed.

6.00pm Palm Sunday Service on Zoom.

Holy Week Compline

9.00pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Good Friday. Compline is traditionally the last service of the day and this year we are offering the service at a later time.

Maundy Thursday

6.00pm Commemoration of the Last Supper on Zoom.

This service will include an agape meal. We invite everyone who joins this service to prepare something to eat and drink together in fellowship and to remember the last meal Jesus had with his disciples. ***This service will not be Holy Communion.***

Good Friday

2.00pm Good Friday Service for the Last Hour on Zoom.

This service will take place at the time of the last hour that Jesus was on the cross and will a service of music, readings and address focussing on his Passion.

Walk through Good Friday Experience at St Michael's.

During the day St Michael's church will be open for prayer and a walk-through reflection on the crucifixion.

Easter Sunday

6.00am Dawn Service in church.

The service will start in the churchyard with the lighting of the Easter candle and hymn singing. The service will continue in church using one set of seats.

8.00am BCP in church.

10.00am Service of Holy Communion at St Michael's.

This service will be live streamed on a zoom link using the Sunday service link we have used each Sunday.

10.00am Service of Holy Communion at St John's.

Easter 2

8.00am Holy Communion at St Michael's

10.00am Holy Communion at St Michael's

This will be the final service conducted by Rev Preb Simon Baker. Please notify the parish office if you wish to attend so that we have a good idea of numbers. This service will be live streamed on Zoom.

10.00am Holy Communion at St John's.

Family Praise online

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN for the St Michael's & St John's **Lent Bake & Deliver Scheme!** If you know anyone in Lichfield or Wall who might be in need of a friendly (distanced) hello and a baked treat, please complete the nomination form on our website. Nomination deadline is **Thursday 25th March.**

If anyone would like to volunteer to bake and/or deliver please let Mel know revdr.melclark@gmail.com. Thank you!

"Love – Our World"

All Age Churchyard Trail for Lent and Easter

Suitable for all ages, in the churchyard there are five "stations" - laminated A4 sheets. They offer a simple framework for your own reflections, and offer a set prayer on each theme. They are located in the Easter Garden by the Cross, and by the empty tomb; on the compost bins; on a bench outside church; on a bench in the lower churchyard. If able, you may wish to use them as an opportunity for reflection and prayer on your daily walk. If you're not able to get there for any reason they are available on the website, and you may be able to imagine the setting! *Linda*

BIBLE STUDY IN LENT

We will be starting a new series of Bible Studies on the Wednesdays of Lent continuing on **Wednesday 17th March until Wednesday 31st March.**

Each session will be on Zoom at 10.30am.

This year the gospel that we are mainly reading at our Sunday services is the Gospel of Mark. Our Lent Bible Study will focus on **The Passion of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.**

Jesus's death and resurrection lies at the very heart of our Christian faith and has done so from the very beginning. These sessions will give us an opportunity to focus on the passion story and its meaning for us in a way that we are not often able to do.

The zoom link will be sent out each week with the links for our services. There will also be a sheet with the Bible text and questions to think about available to download from our website. Everyone is invited to join these sessions.

NOT QUITE THE TUESDAY CLUB because it is a Wednesday. Using the Lichfield St Chad Rotary Club Zoom facility, Trevor James has arranged for a very good speaker from the Christian charity Tools-for-Self-Reliance to provide an on-line presentation about the on-going and very positive work that this charity is accomplishing in Africa. The speaker Jo Shannon will speak to us, with on-line illustrations, on **Wednesday 17 March at 2.30 pm.** Anyone interested in this opportunity is invited to contact Trevor on 258434 or t.m.james@ntlworld.com for the registration code.

PATHWAY PROJECT REPRESENTATIVE. I've taken on Caroline's old role as St Michael's representative to the Pathway Project. In doing this I'll be working with Elizabeth Allen (MU) and Brenda Liptrot (Charity Coordinator). If you have any questions about Pathway please contact me on 262342 or ctgreen@ntlworld.com. *Ted Green*

THANK YOU

I have been so grateful for the support of so many church members during the last difficult year. Living alone with no relatives nearby I would have been such a burden on my wonderful, very busy neighbours. You have phoned, offered and done shopping for me, collected prescriptions, delivered magazines and the weekly newsletter for and to me, baked and delivered a wonderful Christmas surprise. Hopefully the end of isolation is in sight, but not for 2 or 3 months. Thank you all so much, *Pauline Sale*.

CAKES FOR PATHWAY. Elizabeth Allen and I would like to thank everyone who provided cakes for the residents of the Pathway Project Lichfield Refuge. They were mainly from MU but other members from the Benefice also contributed. The cakes were very warmly received and I was also thanked for our continuing support for women and children who have suffered from domestic abuse. Elizabeth and I will now try to agree a routine with other churches so that we know well in advance when our cakes will be needed. *Ted Green*

CHURCH FLOWERS

I am looking for someone to take on the weekly flower rota. You don't need to be a flower arranger to do this job. I usually put up a list in church of dates when we need flowers, and arrangers are responsible for a two week slot. People are very good at signing up but sometimes need encouragement and we can always do with new people. Reminding people the week before they are on duty endures the church always looks good for Sunday. Anne Lingwood is responsible for organising the major festivals. Please let me know if you can help. Many thanks *Diana*

WALK FOR WATER.

Many of you will remember Imogen, who sang with Girls' Choir from the age of nine until she went to college a couple of years ago. She has sent me this message and asked me if I can publicise it through the church. "This Lent I'm taking on the Walk for Water Challenge. I'll be walking 10,000 steps a day for 40 days to raise money for CAFOD's work around the world. Watching the amazing key workers do wonders throughout this tough pandemic, I want to make sure that I do what I can to help struggling communities. I know these are hard times but anything you can spare for this cause would be really greatly appreciated. My website is: <https://walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/imogens-walk-for-water>" Our official charity in this area is Water Aid, which we support at Harvest, but you may want to thank Imogen for her years of service by making a small donation. Many thanks. *Ted Green*

COUNSELLING Phoenix Counselling Service is a small charity providing counselling to adults who are not able to access counselling via the NHS and who cannot afford private counselling. At present all the counselling is online or by telephone although we will offer face to face sessions when restrictions permit.

Contact details: www.phoenixcounselling-service.co.uk

email: phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com

Mobile: 07415517663

Best wishes, Rhoda Wharton

THE FOODBANK is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them.

Donations of food can be left at **51, Lime Grove, Lichfield WS13 6ER**

Maggie and David_01543 255308

CHURCHES TOGETHER www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html

LEAVING GIFT FOR SIMON AND DIANA

We are starting a collection to buy Simon and Diana a leaving gift from everyone here at St Michael's church. This is obviously trickier than usual as we are not currently in church to receive donations and need to minimise the handling of cash.

If you would like to contribute you can pay your donation straight into the church bank account which would be very helpful.

Lloyds Bank

Account Name – PCC of St Michael and St Mary Lichfield

Account Number – 00114488

Sort Code – 30-95-04

Reference – **RETIREMENT**

(This is really important as we need to distinguish between this and other donations)

If you would prefer to post your donations somewhere, please deliver them to:-

| | | |
|--------------------|----|---------------------|
| Sue Jones | or | Lyn Shiel |
| 38 Bracken Close | | 1 Aspen Close |
| Lichfield WS14 9RU | | Lichfield WS 13 6FE |

Angie is currently working from home with the exception of Thursday's when she is in the church office, so if you prefer to use the church post box, please ensure that you drop your donation off by 11am on a Thursday.

Many thanks,
Sue and Lyn Churchwardens

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 14th March: Lent 4/ Mothering Sunday

8:00am Holy Communion Zoom
10:00am Sunday Service Zoom

Monday 15th March

8:15am Morning Prayer Zoom

Tuesday 16th March

8:15am Morning Prayer Zoom

Wednesday 17th March

8:15am Morning Prayer Zoom
10:30am Bible Study Zoom

Thursday 18th March

All day **OFFICE COSED**
8:15am Morning Prayer Zoom
10:30 Darwin Court Songs of Praise Zoom

Friday 19th March

8:15am Morning Prayer Zoom
10:30 First Steps Zoom

Saturday 20th March

10:00am Churchyard Working Party St Michael's

Sunday 21st March: Lent 5

8:00am Holy Communion Zoom
10:00am Sunday Service Zoom