

# Lent and Easter

## for mothering sunday

### AIM

Here is an all-age service for Mothering Sunday.

### INTRODUCTION

It can be quite a challenge to produce a service for Mothering Sunday, which falls mid-way through Lent. In this document you will find an order of service, suggested prayers, reflections and activities and a letter of invitation that you may adapt to your own situation.

### Let me tell you....

Pat Stannard who wrote the material says:

One of the difficulties I had organising the Mothering Sunday service was that I was aware that there would be some children, as well as adults in the congregation, who had lost their mothers, had stepmothers or fathers, or had negative experiences of motherhood. There was also the usual complication with family services of providing material that would interest the adults without going over the heads of the children. It's not easy.

One activity was a 'photo wall':

As far as the 'photo wall' was concerned, what I did was ask the regular congregation to bring in their pictures and I also wrote a letter to be distributed to the members of the youth organisations and their parents. The results was that I got about 60-80 pictures altogether.

Pat chose some bible readings:

The stories of Moses, Hannah and Samuel and Solomon's judgement on the child who was claimed by two women were chosen. These can be found on the accompany document. I completed the readings with the first five verses of Timothy 2.

After each of the first three stories I drew out the messages 'on the hoof' (so I don't have any notes). Basically I highlighted that Moses' mother found a way of not only saving his life but continuing to care for him lovingly; after Samuel had gone to live in the temple, Hannah did not forget him but visited him each year with a gift of a little gown or coat that she had made for him; and the message of true love in the Solomon story; and also that such loving care is special with mothers but not confined to them. After the Solomon story we visited the wall of pictures and talked about some of the people in them before a short prayer.

As far as the Timothy passage is concerned, I attach the outline of what I said after the reading. Again, it was an effort to cover all the bases, and to keep the attention of both adults and children. It is simple, but it seemed to go down well on the day, and one father came up to me afterwards and said: "I have always gone along with the view of (can't remember who) that 'Christianity is for women and slaves', meaning for foolish people, but you've made me think again."

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### LETTER OF INVITATION

Please adapt this for your situation:

Dear...

As part of our Mothering Sunday Service on [DATE], I am planning to create a "wall" of photographs of mothers and/or people who care for us as mothers would.

I have asked members of the church to let me have their photos and I would like yours too – and that includes the mums' and dads' mothers, the children's grandmothers! With any luck, we should have lots and lots of pictures!

If possible, I would be grateful if you could let us have the pictures in advance so that I can get them all on to boards, but if you have to bring one or two along on the day I will have spare materials to put them up. [DETAILS OF WHERE TO BRING THEM IN ADVANCE]

Just pencil your name on the back, or put a sticker on the back, so that I can return the pictures.

Yours sincerely

(Worship Leader)

### ORDER OF SERVICE

Introduction

Call to worship

**HYMN: CG 4 (All are welcome)**

Prayer of confession, followed by the Lord's Prayer

*TWO BIBLE STORIES: They gave their children away! Why? [this is Moses and Samuel]*

**HYMN: RS 526 (Hushed was the evening hymn)**

*A BIBLE STORY: Clever King Solomon! [this is the judgement of Solomon]*

Prayers of thanks for mothers and carers

Your offerings are received

**HYMN: RS 477 (Let there be love shared among us)**

*BIBLE READING AND FINAL THOUGHTS: 2 Timothy 1: v 1-5 [thoughts on this given below]*

**HYMN: RS 646 (Help us accept each other)**

Prayers for others

**HYMN: RS 72 (Now thank we all our God)**

BLESSING

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Books are CG: Common Ground, and RS: Rejoice and Sing. Other hymns or songs may be used.

### THOUGHTS ABOUT FINAL BIBLE READING

The short passage we have just heard comes at the beginning of a letter. It was written by St Paul who was by then in the dreadful Mamertime prison in Rome, facing trial and execution. The person he was writing to was Timothy, a much younger man who was his companion on some of his missionary journeys.

Second Timothy is one of the shortest books in the bible and also happens to be one of my favourites. It is full of good advice to young Timothy. And it is very revealing about Paul himself – about what he is suffering, about his loneliness, about the people who support him and oppose him. One of the commentators I read describes the letter as “a little gem”.

The five short paragraphs which start the letter are touching and offer no fewer than three thoughts for Mothering Sunday.

First there is the way Paul refers to Timothy. He calls him “his dear son”. He talks of how he thinks of Timothy night and day, remembering the tears the younger man shed when they last parted and goes on: “I long to see you again and so make my happiness complete”.

From what we know of St Paul, he was quite a crusty character and, though much admired by his supporters, he was probably not too easy to get along with. Yet here he shows his heart. Timothy was not actually his son but Paul regards him as he would his own child. He worries about the young man and he is desperate to see him again. As a daughter myself I have sometimes found this sort of worry rather trying, and my own daughters can get impatient with me for the same reasons. Well, tough. It's a classic sign of parental love and should be seen as such. Parents just can't help wanting their children to be well and happy and safe. St Paul, in that respect, is no different to the rest of us.

The second key reference is to Timothy's grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice. (Incidentally, Lois is the only grandmother actually referred to by name in the bible). St Paul believed that women were equal to men in many ways. He even made some of them leaders of Christian groups. But he also wrote things about the role of women which many of today's women are annoyed, even angered, by. He was a man of his time. Yet here is he is praising the “sincerity of faith” of Lois and Eunice. These two were Jewish women who had married non-Jews but carried out their duty to Timothy, teaching him about the scriptures. Paul generously recognised their contribution to the lad's upbringing. For us too, the women in our families usually make a significant contribution to our learning, and we should show our appreciation of that.

Finally, these four people and the many others in St Paul's letters are linked by the fact that they are all part of the growing Christian community of the time, what we would now call the church. The church is a kind of extended family, bringing together all sorts of people who might otherwise have very little contact. That family includes everyone who is associated with it, like the youth organisations represented here today. Just as in St Paul's time and like all families, we have disagreements and even blazing rows. We sometimes say thoughtless or unkind things to each other. We can be disappointed by other members of the family or furious at being offered advice we don't want to hear. On the other hand, we also care for each other. In times of trouble, we stand by to offer help. We listen to each other's problems and are thrilled by each other's good news.

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Whatever happens, we are family. And our prayers for everyone, whatever our circumstances, must be that – with God's help – here, and in our own families, we learn to forgive when relationships go wrong, say sorry when we make mistakes and rejoice when times are happy. And to say thank you.

### PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

God, who is our father and our mother,

As we celebrate Mothering Sunday, we pray for all those who do not enjoy a happy family life for any reason. We beg you to help and support men, women and children whose relationships are going through a troubled time. We think of children and parents who struggle to understand each other. We pray for young people and adults who suffer abuse from others they should reasonably expect to treat them kindly. We pray for those who wish they had children to care for, but don't; and for those who want to be cared for by someone else, but feel alone and isolated. We pray for everyone who is far from his or her family, and for those who have no family. And we pray too for all the agencies which give support when the burdens become too great.

BE WITH THEM ALL, LORD, AND HELP US TO HELP THEM WHENEVER AND HOWEVER WE CAN.

We bring to you in our prayers all those we know of who are ill in body or mind. We ask you to be close to people who are facing death or have lost their loved ones, and to comfort them. And we pray too for the doctors, nurses and counsellors who are assisting them.

BE WITH THEM ALL, LORD, AND HELP US TO HELP THEM WHENEVER AND HOWEVER WE CAN.

Across the world, we pray for people who are suffering from the financial recession, who have lost their jobs or see their retirement incomes diminishing, and fear for the future. We think of the countries where people are going hungry, are facing droughts or floods or are suffering under oppressive regimes. We pray for the people of countries where war is taking lives and livelihoods. And we pray too for the aid agencies and the peacemakers.

BE WITH THEM ALL, LORD, AND HELP US TO HELP THEM WHENEVER AND HOWEVER WE CAN.

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves and for those around us today in church. We do not always know what others are suffering or enduring, but we do know we should be ready to hold out a helping hand or offer a listening ear when it is needed. Help us, we pray, to do that with grace, sympathy and humility.

We ask all this in the name of your beloved son, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

### MORE SHORT PRAYERS FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY

- 1) Dear God, bless all mothers and fathers and all those who look after us. Make us grateful for their goodness and thankful for their care. Help us to respond to them in loving obedience.
- 2) Lord, we remember all those who have cared for us and helped us in many ways as we grow up. Thank you for grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, teachers and nurses. Help us to show that we are grateful for what they do for us.

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- 3) Please Lord, bless all the children who don't have a mother or a father – and those who may even have no family at all. You know what they are feeling and how much love they need. You love us all. Give more love than ever to these children now. Heal their hurts and ease their pain. In the name of Jesus. Amen

### EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

### THE NEXT STEP

If you want more Lent and Easter materials please revisit the website.

### Acknowledgements

This material has been prepared by Pat Stannard who has given permission for it to be used in the Vision4Life process.

### HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at [admin@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:admin@vision4life.org.uk)

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via [prayer@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:prayer@vision4life.org.uk)

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: [evangelism@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:evangelism@vision4life.org.uk)