

Trinity United Reformed Church Wimbledon



Mothering Sunday, 22 March 2020 Order of Service for Worship At Home

Preparation

You might like to use this resource at 11am on Sunday: it will be good to know that, even whilst we can't meet in person at the church, Trinity folk will be 'gathering' for worship at the same time.

If possible, find somewhere to sit where you won't be distracted. Turn off your mobile phone, and have some calm music playing beforehand. You might like to have a candle to light, a pen and paper to hand, and a jar in which to place your offering.

It may seem odd, but try reading aloud for the parts of the service in normal type (you don't need to recite the sections in italics, which are for information, instruction, or reflection). You could even try singing the hymns – but if that makes you feel too self-conscious, then simply read the words!

Gathering in God's presence

If you have one, light a candle.

Call to Worship

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God's love was revealed among us in this way:

God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. *1 John 4.7-9*

Hymn

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come to us,
you are one with us,
Mary's Son -
cleansing our souls from all their sin,
pouring your love and goodness in;
Jesus, our love for you we sing,
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
now and every day
teach us how to pray,
Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
this in remembrance, Lord, of you;
into our lives your power breaks through,
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come to us,
born as one of us,
Mary's Son -
led out to die on Calvary,
risen from death to set us free;
living Lord Jesus, help us see
you are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
we would come to you,
live our lives for you,
Son of God;
all your commands we know are true,
your many gifts will make us new;
into our lives your power breaks through,
living Lord.

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Praying our Praise & Thanksgiving

Pause to make a note (mentally or on paper!) of three things for which to be thankful. If you're sharing in this act of worship with others in your household, you might like to talk about and identify these three things together. Then recite this prayer.

Intimate God,
we praise you because you know each one of us;
the worries that nag us,
the achievements we are proud of,
the hopes and expectations
that we hold, half-recognised, in our hearts.

We praise you for what we know of you;
the ways in which you have welcomed and met us,
your quiet, constant, presence in our lives.

Today we give you thanks for... *(name the thanksgivings you've noted).*

And we praise you for what we do not yet know;
the mysteries of your creation,
the questions that baffle us,
the wonders of discovery awaiting us.

Unknown God,
may we be open to meet with you
in unexpected ways;
discerning your presence
in what is strange to us,
and seeing the familiar
with newly-opened eyes.
Amen.

(Adapted from A Service of the Word, "Worship: from the United Reformed Church", p.86)

The Lord's Prayer

Use either of these forms, or a different version/language if you prefer:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive
those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

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.

Listening for God's Word

Bible Reading: Mark 7.24-30

Whilst "on retreat", Jesus is approached by a woman who begs him to save her daughter. Jesus initially tells her that she, as a Gentile, shouldn't have a claim on his ministry – but she persists, for her daughter's sake, and the girl is restored.

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, **25** but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. **26** Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' **28** But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' **29** Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' **30** So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Theme Introduction

This is a good reading for today, Mothering Sunday; indeed it's a good reading for this time of public health emergency. The woman's determination to do all that she can to ensure her daughter's safety, can inspire us to give thanks for the depth of care that is freely and lovingly given throughout the world – by mothers, and by others. For some, it may prompt memories of what our own mums have done for us. For all of us, maybe it can be a reminder that our actions and decisions shouldn't just be about ourselves – but should be motivated by a desire to protect the most vulnerable.

Many of us may have had to abandon or at least drastically alter the plans we'd made for family visits and celebrations, whether today for Mothering Sunday or for other special occasions around this time. Still, let's do all we can in the present circumstances to show our love for one another - and to take special care of all our

neighbours, looking out especially for those who might be in particular need. Even a simple phone call can make such a difference!

Hymn

Give thanks with a grateful heart.

Give thanks to the Holy One.

Give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son. *(repeat section)*

And now let the weak say 'I am strong,'

let the poor say 'I am rich,'

because of what the Lord has done for us. *(repeat section)*

(last time:) Give thanks.

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Bible Reading: Isaiah 49.13-16a

The prophet reassures God's people: though they have experienced suffering and fear, God's care for them is as close and unquenchable as a mother's care for her children; God promises to bring comfort and safety.

13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;

break forth, O mountains, into singing!

For the Lord has comforted his people,

and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

14 But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me,

my Lord has forgotten me.'

15 Can a woman forget her nursing-child,

or show no compassion for the child of her womb?

Even these may forget,

yet I will not forget you.

16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.

Reflection

Right now we're in strange territory, having to learn how to foster and maintain a sense of togetherness when we can't physically gather as a congregation. It's a challenging and confusing time, and it's normal to have feelings of anxiety and heartbreak and even anger about it.

In the Gospel passage, we might think the woman's boldness in approaching Jesus suggests that the Church shouldn't have to comply with "social distancing" restrictions – after all, she even dares to cross what was a huge cultural distance between a Jew (Jesus) and her own Gentile people, and it results in her receiving what she needs.

But if anything, this encounter should strengthen our resolve to observe the official guidance on "social distancing". Remember: the woman acts out of a single-minded wish to protect her vulnerable daughter. For us, the instruction not to meet together isn't just about protecting ourselves, it's also to ensure we reduce the risk of carrying the corona virus to others in our wider communities – especially the most vulnerable.

It's also a demonstration for us that God's power in Jesus is active even when we're not together: the little girl is delivered from danger whilst she's still at home, as her mother discovers when she returns there.

What's needed above all, though, is a building and deepening of individual and community relationships – among ourselves, and across society. Remember one another – and act upon this remembrance! If we are even “inscribed on the palms of God's hands” (as the prophet Isaiah so movingly expresses it), then whom are we each being called to remember?

Responding to God's grace

Praying for Needs & Concerns

Pause to make a note (mentally or on paper!) of three individuals or groups for whom you want to pray: one local to you, one elsewhere in the UK, and one elsewhere in the world. If you're sharing in this act of worship with others in your household, you might like to talk about and choose these together. Then recite this prayer.

Living God, you are always near to those who call on you.
I ask you to lift from me all that weighs me down,
all that spoils my relationship with others or separates me from you.
(short silence)

In Jesus, you have given assurance
of forgiveness of sins and renewal of life.
So make me confident in prayer and responsive to your word,
that I may know your peace in my heart
and your healing in my life.

(Adapted from Prayers for Healing, “Worship: from the United Reformed Church”, p.114)

I pray for my neighbours and local community,
especially today for... (*local concern...*).
Guide your people, Lord, each day,
that they may become
“the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” (Isaiah 58.12)

I pray for this nation,
especially today for... (*national concern...*).
Keep your people, Lord, each day,
that they may be given
“as a covenant to the nation, to establish the land.” (Isaiah 49.8)

I pray for the world we share,
especially today for... (*global concern...*).
Tend and nurture your people, Lord, each day,
that they may grow
“and fill the whole world with fruit.” (Isaiah 27.6)

These and all my prayers
I offer, loving Father,
in the power and unity of the Holy Spirit,
through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

Offertory

This is an opportunity to set aside your regular financial contribution to Trinity's ongoing work and witness. You might like to put it in a jar for now, ready to be brought in person when circumstances allow. Then say the prayer below.

If you already participate in Trinity's Planned Giving scheme via direct bank transfer, then simply recite the prayer.

Generous God, your gift to me is life, and sustenance, and hope.
I bring to you my gift, and myself.
Receive, Lord, and bless:
so that both gift and giver may bring blessing to others,
and glory to your name. Amen.

Hymn

Now thank we all our God,
with hearts 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.

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 all in grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
who reigns in highest heaven,
to Father and to Son
and Spirit now be given;
the one eternal God
whom heaven and earth adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart tr. Catherine Winkworth, altd. (public domain text)

Blessing

Together and in our separate places,
let us be bringers of love, makers of peace, and messengers of hope;
in the assurance that the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
shall be upon us and among all who are dear to us, whether near or far,
today and always. Amen.