

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Dan Haylett. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

**Opening Words (Psalm 34:1-3)**

- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*
- 2 My soul makes its boast in the Lord;  
let the humble hear and be glad.*
- 3 O magnify the Lord with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.*

**Hymn: STF 8 God with us: Creator, Father**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkaih98SO2A>

God with us: Creator, Father,  
bringing everything to birth;  
Mother of the whole creation,  
fire of stars and life of earth:  
down the countless years composing,  
from the earth's evolving night,

love's response to love, and forming  
mind and soul to seek your light.

God with us: Redeemer, Brother,  
Friend for ever by our side,  
here, in flesh, you walked among us,  
taking up your cross, you died.  
Crucified, despised, rejected,  
Perfect Love, who shared our shame,  
streaming from the cross, your judgement,  
full of mercy, clears our name.

God with us: Unwearied Spirit,  
from the birth of time and space,  
surging through unconscious being,  
joyful, Life-Creating Grace:  
through the centuries you find us;  
you, as God, inspire our prayer;  
Life and Power at work within us,  
Love for ever, everywhere!

God, Transcendent, far beyond us,  
closest Friend, unfailing Guide:

through the ages, wronged, affronted,  
in your poor, still crucified!  
God with us: convict, forgive us;  
by your holy love destroy  
all that hinders peace and justice:  
fill this aching world with joy!

Alan Gaunt (b. 1935)

Let us pray together

Gracious God, we bring our worship to you.

To you, we lift our hearts, bringing our praise.

To you, we dare to share our deepest fears and greatest hopes.

To you, we open our lives.

Lord Jesus Christ, our friend and saviour, we celebrate you with us today.

To you, we bring our thanks.

To you we turn with all that we are.

To you, we offer our love.

Holy Spirit, our comforter and encourager,

To you we turn, ready for your coming.

To you we bring our worship.

To you, we are open.

God, Creator, Redeemer and constant companion, we bring our worship and praise.

Holy God, we bring our confession, and offer our need for you and for mercy. We bring the sin of the world before you, trusting in your compassion to save, heal and bring peace.

Hear our prayer, let forgiveness reign.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

**Today's Reading from the Old or New Testament: Exodus 2:1-10**

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the

river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

**Today's Gospel Reading: John 19:25-27**

And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman,

here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**Time to Reflect**

Over half way through the season of Lent, just when we are immersed in themes of self-denial and reflection on our spiritual journeys with God, we come to Mothering Sunday.

It seems to break the flow of the narrative accounts we have been reading of Jesus heading towards Jerusalem. Mothering Sunday, and the invitation for thankfulness can seem at odds with the sense of foreboding and mounting opposition around Jesus in the Gospel accounts.

Yet perhaps remembering the roots of the celebration of Mothering Sunday being an opportunity to return home and to find a place in what we might call "family", we realise there might be more going on in this Sunday than meets the eye.

For our readings today also raise the same questions. They speak to us about finding our place within God's family and purposes, despite the suffering and pain that form the backdrop of these accounts. Just as we are aware there are so

many for whom today is a problematic and complex day, so too our readings reflect a far from straightforward celebration.

Exodus 2 is in some ways a second attempt to tell the story of God's initiative amongst God's people. Firstly, in Genesis, God has called Abram and a people to a life of obedience. That has been far from an easy path as we read throughout Genesis.

Now in Exodus, there is another attempt to tell a similar story: God calls a people, who are enslaved. And in the midst of what Walter Bruggemann calls "conflict and confrontation", transformation happens.

Moses' story is told in a way that has similarity to so many heroic figures throughout history. Out of such a vulnerable and hazardous beginning, Moses is nursed and nurtured. As we know, it's only when Moses is "drawn out" of his life in the palace that his eyes are opened to how things really are. That awakening leads to more vulnerability and hazards – and even murder – before Moses is able to play his role in God's rescue.

At the root of this story is the powerful reminder that God hears the cries of those who today pour out their hearts in desperation. God hears those who suffer the indignity of being seen only as cheap labour, exploited for the benefit of others. God hears the cries of those who cry out from shelters in

Ukraine, and those who have left homes because of that war and other conflicts. In this Exodus account, before prayers are formed in "churchy" language, and even before Yahweh is even named; God hears and remembers God's people, working to bring transformation to desperate situations.

In John's Gospel we read another foundational story. Now, John (aka the "Beloved Disciple") is charged by Jesus to offer care for Mary, for culturally, Mary would have been at the mercy of the wider community on the death of her son. In Jesus' reforming of this "family" group, some commentators see a symbolic union of Jewish and Christian traditions within the new Church.

Through all the symbolism of the encounter, John seems to be showing us how Jesus' death (and eventual resurrection) gives life to a new people, a new family. Out of the desperate suffering and loss of the cross, once again the reminder comes of how God's transforming power is at work.

On Mothering Sunday, we are invited as we are able to give thanks for all who have shown us the significance of what it means to belong, to be bound to those around us in bonds of love and mutual care. We are invited to ensure we are working in the ways of God to ensure all are welcomed,

included and enabled to play their part in God's family. We are reminded of the significance of "home", finding our true home in God through "conflict and confrontation", where God's power is transforming us and the world around us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

### Prayers

God our Father and our Mother, we bring to you the cries of our hearts, and join our prayers with your people on earth and in heaven.

We pray for the people of Ukraine, for those left behind in the ruins and devastation of war. We pray for those who have been forced to leave homes and families, for victims and refugees around the world.

We pray for all in power, that they may be turned to your ways. We pray for all seeking an end to the conflicts across our world, and for all who seek to prolong them. May your peace and justice be known around the world and in our lives.

We pray for your Church in every land, for those making new starts with you and for all who are on journeys of faith. Inspire the hope of your people everywhere.

We pray for those who have asked for our prayers, and for those who imagine you are not there for them. We pray in gratitude for all who have nurtured us and cared for us down the years. We pray for those who find this day to be a hard one for many reasons.

Loving Christ, turn us towards you and help us in these days of lent to be close to you.

Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

**Hymn: STF 287 When I survey**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4\\_fvFfPqjO4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fvFfPqjO4)

When I survey the wondrous cross,  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ, my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674 -1748)

**A prayer of blessing:**

May God Almighty, Father and Mother to us all, make her face shine upon us all. May Jesus, our high priest, and brother, walk with us always. May the Holy Spirit of God fill us and help us to minister to others to his praise and glory. **Amen.**

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