

**Mothing Sunday,
Sunday, 27th March 2022**



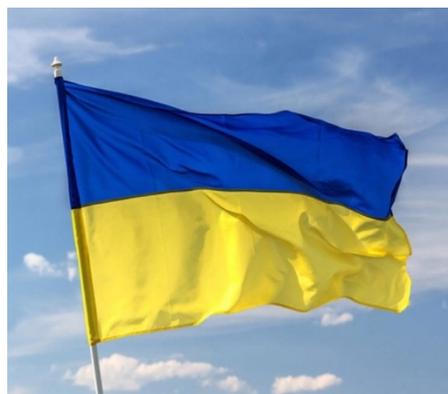
'The Holy Family' by @reverendally

Dear Friends,

'And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.'
(John 19: 27)

This is my third Mothering Sunday newsletter written as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I wrote the first, we were all struggling to comprehend how a virus could have so consumed our world as to force our beloved churches to close their doors by government decree in the middle of our Lenten observances. We thought things couldn't get any worse, yet two years on, this Mothering Sunday, our world faces the consequences of one power-crazy man's attempt to control the innocent by force.

Yet one constant rises above everything we confront at the hands of others. The Good News of Jesus Christ. Even at the cross, in the agony of His final moments, Jesus showed His compassion for others. For the convicts hanging alongside Him, for the soldiers, for the disciple He loved and for His own mother. Jesus teaches us to love others even in the face of shared suffering. Across the world, there are so many people in the throes of physical and mental suffering. Starving, homeless, lost and lonely, Jesus teaches us that whatever we do for even one other soul we do for Him. This is why we must continue to support charities such as DEC and Karis Kids, who are working tirelessly to bring the right help to people when and where they need it most.



If you haven't done so already, please consider making a donation to DEC at: <https://donation.dec.org.uk/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal> Whilst many groups and churches are collecting items to send to Ukraine, the mechanisms for getting these things to the right places is costly and not without difficulty. My decision to ask you to donate to DEC is a pragmatic one, reflecting our need to ensure every penny possible gets to the people who need our help.

This weekend, we will reflect on the importance of Mothering Sunday in the middle of our Christian Lent; our honouring, both of our mothers and our mother church. There is an imperative for us to think deeply on the actions of love which spring forth from Jesus' maternal love – for His own mother, His dear friend and for all of us who follow Him in faith and who have become His church. Cyril of Alexandria speaks into the actions of Jesus at the cross and of the disciple, John's response: 'And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.' He writes:

Christ here wanted to confirm the commandment that is clearly emphasised in the Law: 'Honour your father and your mother that it may be well with you.' Honouring one's parents is surely a very precious virtue. And how else would we learn the importance of that love – even when we are overwhelmed by a flood of intolerable calamities – except by this primary example that Christ offers us. It is one thing to be mindful of the holy commandments in times of peace and quietness and quite another to fulfil your duty during the storms and troubles of life.

These words were written by Cyril between the years 412 to 444 AD, when he was Patriarch of Alexandria. His thoughts could so easily be contemporaneous to our own times and speak the eternal truth of Christ's compassionate heart for us all.



'Icon of Cyril of Alexandria - Monastery of Roussanou at Meteora, Greece'

Jesus, our perfect shepherd and teacher, reminds us what ought to be done and by His own example instructs us to care, not only for our parents, but for all those in plight who need our care. If we do not do this, if our natural reflex action as Christians is to ignore the suffering of others, wherever and however we come upon the reality of it, means that we deny our faith. A serious transgression with eternal consequences for us personally and for the Christian church corporate. For people, not buildings, make up the church, and as Christ's handmaid, it is our bounden duty to ensure that we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

I pray you enjoy your Mothering Sunday. We have 10am services in each of our five churches. There is no longer any need to book – just turn up and join in. Bring your families and friends. Make that invitation part of your Lenten offering as you bless others with the opportunity to come and meet with Jesus Christ; renewing our baptism and welcoming others to experience the source of our faith and our love.

On the evening of Palm Sunday, 10th April at 6pm, we will be holding a special Benefice Evensong for Ukraine and for World Peace in St Mary's Church, Chilbolton at 6pm. All are welcome.



'The Annunciation' by Leonardo da Vinci

Yours, in the compassion of Christ,

Jax
Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect Prayer for Mothering Sunday

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.



John 19: 25b-27 – Jesus Speaks to John at the Cross

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Benefice Lent Reflections

This year, we are hosting a series of Lent talks around our parish churches reflecting on the life and works of remarkable Christian activists. Please see the schedule of talks below. Do make a point of coming along as part of your Lenten meditations.

Dr Cicely Saunders (1918-2005) – Founder of the Hospice Movement. (Crawley – Monday 7th March)

John Wesley (1703-1791) - Leader of a revival movement within the Church of England which gave birth to the Methodist Church. (Sparsholt – Wednesday 16th March)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) - German pastor who wrote 'The Cost of Discipleship' and was interned by the Nazis for his resistance to Adolf Hitler. (Littleton – Tuesday 22nd March)

Gladys Aylward (1902-1970) - Missionary to China depicted in the film 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness' starring Ingrid Bergman. (Wherwell – Thursday 31st March)

Wilson Carlile (1847-1942) – Founder of The Church Army – (Chilbolton – Friday 8th April)

These talks will be held in the Churches and start at 7pm

| Date | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|------------|--------|---------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| 31st March | | | | Wherwell | |
| 8th April | | | | | Chilbolton |
| Holy Week | | | | Maundy Thursday | Good Friday |

Schedule of Services

Now that all national Coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, it is no longer necessary to book seats in our parishes for services. Neither is it mandatory for you to wear masks in church. However, Coronavirus is still very much with us. There are a number of people in our villages with it at present, so we are encouraging people to observe social distancing measures.

As our services begin to open up again, we have a wide range of sacramental and lay-led services on offer. Of particular note, Peace and Wholeness begins again on 20th March at St Catherine's, Littleton. St Mary's, Crawley and St Stephen's Sparsholt are enjoying new lay-led Morning Worship services on 3rd and 4th Sundays respectively.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Ch</i> | <i>Cr</i> | <i>Li</i> | <i>Sp</i> | <i>Wh</i> |
|--|---|---------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>27th March</i> | Mothering Sunday Family Service | Mothering Sunday Family Service | Mothering Sunday Family Service | Mothering Sunday Family Service | Mothering Sunday Family Service |
| <i>3rd April</i> | Morning Prayer | Holy Communion | 4pm – Café Church with Karis Kids | | |
| <i>10th April Palm Sunday</i> | <i>Palm Sunday Service with Wh</i> 6pm – Benefice Evensong to pray for Ukraine and World Peace | | Holy Communion with a Donkey Procession | Palm Sunday Service with a Donkey Procession | Palm Sunday Service |
| <i>14th April Maundy Thursday</i> | | | | 6pm - Holy Communion with Washing of the Feet | |
| <i>15th April Good Friday</i> | <i>With Wh</i> | 10am - Easter Garden | 12 noon - Good Friday Meditation | | 3pm - Good Friday Meditation |
| <i>17th April EASTER SUNDAY</i> | Easter Holy Communion | Easter Service | Easter Holy Communion | Easter Holy Communion | Easter Service |
| <i>24th April</i> | | | Morning Prayer | Morning Worship | 8am – BCP Holy Communion |
| <i>27th April WEDNESDAY</i> | | | Holy Communion | | |