

CIRCUIT SERVICE FOR 27 MARCH 2022-Rev. David Jenkins

Call to Worship - On Mothering Sunday we praise the God who has given us birth-our Creator; who has nurtured, fed, encouraged and led us-our Sustainer;
To God - Love Maker and Life-Giver, be praise and glory this day and forever.

Hymn 88 Singing the Faith (16 Hymns and Psalms) "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty the King of Creation"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= vegvb1u5s4>

1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, brothers and sisters, draw near, praise him in glad adoration.
2. Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do, who with his love doth befriend thee.
3. Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,
then to thy need he like a mother doth speed, spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.
4. Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,
who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,
sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of night, saints with his mercy surrounding.
5. Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the amen sound from his people again: gladly for aye we adore him.

Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Prayer

Living God, from whom we receive the gift of life, help us to cherish and receive this gift with thankfulness, awe and responsibility. May we live in the glad confidence that we are surrounded by your love as birds are surrounded by air and fishes by water.

Forgive our tendency to waste-our time, our gifts, our resources, your creation.

Inspire and challenge us through your Spirit and through Jesus our Lord to advance along the way of your love, to grow, to mature, to fulfil our God-given potential each day. 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.

All-Age Talk - "Mum's the word!"

Mums are a useful invention aren't they?

Where would we be without them?

Not here, for a start!

The chances of us being here in the first place are infinitesimally small.

This is what a man called Lewis Thomas wrote:-

"You start out as a single cell derived from the coupling of a sperm and egg; this divides into two, then four, then eight, and so on, and at a certain stage one of these cells has within it what will emerge as the human brain. The mere existence of that cell should be one of the great astonishments of the earth. One cell is switched on to become the whole trillion-cell, massive apparatus for thinking and imagining and creating. Statistically, the probability of any of us being here is so small that you'd think the mere fact of existing would overwhelm us with wonder. We are alive against all the odds and each of us is unique".

All of us owe our Mums a great debt, because, at the very least, they gave birth to us.

And that's no small matter, as any viewer of "Call the Midwife" can testify. I'm a member of "We've got it really easy" gender known as males, but even my gender can have an awareness of the pain and struggle involved in childbirth, which should make all of us deeply grateful that our Mums went through that for us. And especially if they didn't intend us to make an appearance in the first place!

I wasn't supposed to be here for a start!

My parents already had three beautiful daughters-the last thing they wanted was another little tyke running round causing mischief.

I was (and probably still am!) an accident.

My mother said of my birth, "I don't know how it happened".

That has made me wonder if I might be an immaculate conception?

To my great surprise no one else seems too convinced of that, and some cheeky people have even suggested that an immaculate misconception would be more accurate.

Well, whether intended or not, here I am-and clearly my Mum has a lot to answer for that (and my Dad no doubt too).

When my Mum would tell me off as a child (you'll be surprised to know this was quite frequently), with a child's logic and lack of grammar I would reply, "Well why did you born me then?"

I'm very glad that she did born me, and that she did much else besides.

She fed me-and she was a very good cook. As well as all the cooked dinners, there would be occasional special treats she would make called Welsh cakes. (You can get them from Tesco's by the way. This All-Age Talk is sponsored by Tesco's-every little helps).

She not only gave me birth and fed me, but she nurtured me, guiding me and making sure I had opportunities in life.

If it wasn't for my Mum I may never have worshipped in Church-but she insisted that all her children went to Sunday School. She didn't go herself when we were younger, but later in life, when I was training to be a preacher, she went and became a member and started taking on some responsibility in the Church's life.

If it wasn't for my Mum I may never have learnt to play the piano, but she insisted that all her children had piano lessons.

If it wasn't for my Mum I may not have persevered academically or learned to drive.

She was supportive, nagged when she needed to (which in my case was often), encouraged each of us to realise our potential.

My Mum had 3 somewhat extravagant Christian names. She was Ceinwen Margarita Rosina and out of this one Welsh name and 2 Italian ones she was simply called Rita.

She had a very challenging life. Each of her parents died in tragic accidents, and, though she wasn't the oldest, she looked after her 8 siblings, then immediately afterwards her own children and immediately after that her grandchildren. She was very generous with her time and her love.

It was in her late 50's that she started having some life of her own-she joined choirs and she had a fine and distinctive singing voice; she followed her practical skills of dressmaking and wallpapering and enjoyed reading and television. She continued to have immense energy and to move at considerable speed. I remember her coming to stay with us and we had a small cat who was terrified by this swiftly moving lady and hid away until she'd gone home!

In the last 13 years of her life she had dementia and lived in two different residential homes. It was painful to see how her personality and recognition began shutting down-but there was humour too. The first time she forgot my name was actually funny as well as bittersweet. I went into the Home and the staff said "Now Rita-who is this?" expecting her to reply -"That's my boy David", but instead her face lit up and pointing to me she said, "It's you". This strikes me as a very useful strategy if you recognise someone's face, but can't immediately place their name or where you know them from-showing that you recognise them and saying "It's you" will be a good start!

Saddam Hussein used to talk about "the Mother of all wars", and this is turning into "the Mother of all All Age Talks" (literally), so here's the really important things to remember:-

Although each of you will have had different experiences in your relationship with your mother, on this Mothering Sunday it's a really healthy thing to remember with gratitude all that our mothers have given us - from the gift of life itself onwards, for feeding and nurturing us, and possibly challenging, encouraging and opening up for us opportunities in life.

In those ways our Mums help us to catch a glimpse of what God does- God gives us the gift of life and enables that to happen through our mothers. God, in infinite generosity, feeds, nurtures, challenges and encourages our potential and opens up opportunities for us -as Jesus puts it, "I have come that you might have life in all its fullness".

Prayer Let us thank God for the gift of life, for the sheer miracle of existing, for the wonder of being; for every single day of life. Let us thank God for our mothers who enabled us to be born, and for all our parents have given us. Help us, who may be parents and grandparents, to be loving, sensitive, supportive and encouraging towards our children. Amen.

Hymn 526 Singing the Faith (552 Hymns and Psalms) "Lord of all hopefulness"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNILEI8rkSA>

1 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord,
At the break of the day.

2 Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord,
At the noon of the day.

3 Lord of all kindliness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, Your arms to embrace.
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord,
At the eve of the day.

4 Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord,
At the end of the day.

Jan Struther (101-1953)

Reader-2 Corinthians 5: 16-21

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view,^[a] even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view,^[b] we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,^[c] not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Sermon "Ambassadors of a new creation"

There are other readings for today, unrelated to Mothering Sunday, and this is one of them.

The reading may raise some questions for us-how do we experience and understand being part of a new creation? And how does that affect the way in which we regard other people, and in how we regard Jesus now?

The reading prompts us to recognise what God has done for us -in making life new and in reconciling us to himself through Christ.

It also speaks of what God has entrusted to us, calling us to a ministry of reconciliation, as ambassadors of Christ, in which we encourage people to be reconciled to God.

Mothering Sunday has focused on our creation, our birth. This reading focuses on a new creation and on what John's Gospel calls a new birth.

A new creation implies, at the very least, being given a fresh start in life.

Some people may talk about making a fresh start somewhere else-in another house, a different area, perhaps a different country.

Some people see that fresh start realised by changing job, perhaps following a different kind of work altogether.

For some people a new start may be in finding a new life partner after bereavement or after separation.

For some people, conscious of having made a mess of life, in some aspects at least, a new chance is life-giving.

When Paul talks about a new creation he is speaking about life having a totally new focus, a new direction, a new reason for living. It means entering into a life centred on Jesus Christ and that will mean fresh values, new insights. It will feel as if you had born again into a renewed expectation of life's meaning and purpose. Life feels and looks different now because of the reality and wonder and joy of your relationship with God. It means a new appreciation of the worth of human life-of all life as sacred, as all people created in God's image being deeply respected. Our perception of people and of Jesus is raised to a much higher and deeper level.

Wonderful as being recreated is in itself, the real issue is what we are recreated for.

Paul describes this in terms of each of us being a minister of reconciliation and an ambassador of Christ.

So what does that mean and how does that work out in practice?

A minister of reconciliation concentrates on bringing people closer to each other and closer to God.

An ambassador is a representative person. In a sense this person stands for the whole of their nation when they are living in another country. So they need to be diplomatic, to establish friendly relations with the people of the country to which they been sent, and, at the same time, to be faithful to the particular values and policies of the country they represent. They have a duty to protect and care for members of their nationality who are resident in the country to which they have been sent.

So if we are ambassadors of Christ we represent Jesus in everything we do and say. We are seen as the Church and people's faith may be drawn closer to God or further away from God because of the kind of person you or I may be.

It would help if we learnt to be more diplomatic in the way we relate to others.

Establishing friendly relationships with people, based on mutual respect; establishing trust, caring and looking after the best interests of people are important.

Conscious of the challenges of our age-climate change, warfare, and huge numbers of displaced people, our involvement in God's new creation becomes deeply and widely significant. Ours is a world in desperate need of reconciliation and we can be part of that, called to make a difference for good.

Along with many other people we will want to sign petitions, give money, actively recycle, and where we can to directly support those who are in need.

Think of the wonder and privilege of all this implies-

We have been given a new chance in life.

We can start again with God.

It's like being born anew.

We are caught up in a process of re-creation, gradually being transformed more closely into the likeness of God.

One of the reasons for our being part of God's new creation is that we may learn to serve in a way which brings people closer to God and to each other.

We pursue this ministry of reconciliation as representatives, ambassadors of Christ.
We are given new life so that we can work with God in bringing new life to others-and how wonderful is that?

Prayers - In the silence let us make our own response to what we have heard.....
We pray for the renewal of your creation.....Where there is destruction may new life blossom and flourish.
We pray for the renewal of your people.....Where there is hatred, despair and desperate need may the power of recreating love and hope and the meeting of need take place.
We pray for the renewal of your Church.....Where we lack motivation and purpose may we discover our role as your ambassadors and ministers of reconciliation.
We remember people with whom we ourselves need to be reconciled.....
We pray for people for whom we are particularly concerned.....
We offer ourselves afresh to serve you in familiar and in new ways, recreating, redeeming, renewing God.
Amen.

Hymn 696 Singing the Faith (402 Hymns and Psalms) "For the healing of the nations"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiIoXrApr4U>

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| <p>1. For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord, for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords. To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.</p> <p>2. Lead us forward into freedom, from despair your world release, that, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace. Show us how through care and goodness fear will die and hope increase.</p> | <p>3. All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned: pride of status, race or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan. In our common quest for justice may we hallow brief life's span.</p> <p>4. You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind; for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind; that by our response and service earth its destiny may find.</p> |
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Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

Benediction - The blessing of God who has created us and recreated us, who has reconciled us and called us to serve as your representatives; renew, reenergise and reinvigorate us, all peoples and all creation for all time, Amen.