

Mothers' Union's service outline for Mothering Sunday 2024:
Clothed with Strength and Dignity

Please use and adapt this service to suit your particular context.

You will find further ideas and children's resources on our Mothers' Union website:

www.mothersunion.org/mothering-sunday-resources

On Mothering Sunday we gather to praise God our Heavenly Parent for his constant, perfect love, which protects and surrounds us through good and hard times. We give thanks for the love of mothers and carers who persevere through good and hard times to provide for their family's wellbeing. We also thank God for the support Mothers' Union gives to enable families to thrive through good and hard times.

We gather together to worship
our loving, nurturing God,
who, like a mother,
knows us intimately,
loves us unconditionally,
comforts us in times of need
and gives us strength to persevere.

Praise God,
the Source and Sustainer of life! Amen

Hymn:

Opening prayers

Clothed with Strength and Dignity

Lord, on this special day set aside for Mothering,

we thank You for our mothers,

for all who fulfil the role of mother,

for 'Mother Church'

and for Mothers Union.

We thank You for the dignity, high calling

and honour You give to mothers and mothering.

Equip all mothers with the courage
and confidence to share their faith with joy.

Grant them wisdom, tenacity and love,
to meet the demands of this age.

Grant them zeal and grace
to meet the opportunities of each day.

Protect them. Guide them.

Comfort them. Strengthen them.

May all who serve in 'mothering roles'
know the peace that passes all understanding
as they seek to live and work for you.

Bible readings

Luke 8:11-15

Jesus said: This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Reflection

Our Gospel reading from Luke explains the meaning of the parable of the Sower. Jesus ends by describing the good soil as representing those who, by hearing and holding fast to the seed of God's word, have the patience and perseverance to produce good fruit - a harvest of righteousness.

The need for perseverance in order to produce good fruit is echoed in the stories highlighted in Mothers' Union's Mothering Sunday gifts. In each one, women who have embraced the seeds of literacy, business skills, and other training, have persevered to use them to fulfil their potential and provide for their families and communities.

So what motivates God to bless us by sowing his word in our lives, and also motivates these women to keep going through good and hard times to use for good the skills they have acquired? Our reading from 1 Corinthians 13 gives the definitive answer - love. God's love for us and our love for our neighbour.

Verse 7 sums it up: "Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." This outworking of love is what we see in Mothers' Union stories. This is what inspires us to persevere in producing fruitful works of righteousness as we hold fast to God's word. We pray that we will always be ready to share God's love with others, both in word and in practical action.

Intercessions

Highlight a particular example of dignity before each section of the prayer, either using the stories in Mothers' Union Mothering Sunday Gifts of Dignity leaflet, or ones from your local community. If you have the technology, show images of these on a screen. Have a moment's silence after every section for silent prayer and reflection.

Loving Lord,
we thank you for the love shown
by mothers and carers across the world
thank you for your word that tells us they are clothed with strength and dignity.

We pray for the seeds of trust
to grow and flourish in
families and communities.

we pray for the seeds of hope
to grow and flourish in
families and communities.

we pray for the seeds of perseverance
to grow and flourish in
families and communities.

Love always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.
Thanks be to God. Amen

Hymn:

Final blessing

May the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.

May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.

May the Lord whose steadfast love
is constant as a mother's care,
send us out as bearers of his love
to live and work for others.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you always. Amen