

MOTHERING SUNDAY SERVICE WITHOUT EUCHARIST

A Mothers' Union Family Service for Mothering Sunday

Welcome to our Mothering Sunday Family Service

We come here today to thank God for mothers and carers around the world. It takes a very special love to care for a family. Today we'll celebrate that love and thank God for his own perfect love for us all.

We're not all mothers ourselves but we all have a mother, whether or not they are still with us, and we are all children of God. He is our loving Father but is also the one who remembers and comforts us as a mother comforts her child, and draws us close as a hen protects her chicks.

Let us pray: *a child may read this prayer*

Dear Jesus,

We thank you for mothers and carers everywhere,
and for the special love they have for their children.

We thank you Jesus for your special care and comfort
and the perfect love you have for us all.

Help us all to show your love to those who care for us,
and to the people that we meet in our lives. Amen

Hymn:

Readings *Two children could read these if appropriate*

First Reading: Exodus 2:1-10 The love of a mother

About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River. The baby's sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.

Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, and her attendants walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it for her. When the princess opened it, she saw the baby. The

little boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This must be one of the Hebrew children," she said.

Then the baby's sister approached the princess. "Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked.

"Yes, do!" the princess replied. So the girl went and called the baby's mother.

"Take this baby and nurse him for me," the princess told the baby's mother. "I will pay you for your help." So the woman took her baby home and nursed him.

Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, "I lifted him out of the water."

This is the Word of the Lord:

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 God's care for us

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy. And he is the God of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us every time we have trouble, so that we can comfort others when they have trouble. We can comfort them with the same comfort that God gives us.

This is the Word of the Lord:

Thanks be to God.

Talk *The children may come up to the front for the talk*

Have a variety of soft and hard/tough objects: e.g. cotton wool; feathers; a bath sponge; toy building bricks; plastic/wood container; metal pan scourer

Refer back to the OT reading and stress that it was because Moses' mother, Jochebed, loved Moses so much that she made a plan to keep him safe at a time when baby boys were in danger.

Ask the children to wonder how Jochebed felt when she said goodbye to her baby and placed him in the river.

Then wonder how she felt when she heard Moses had been found and was safe.

Finally, how might she have felt when Moses was given to her by the princess to care for him while he was young?

Jochebed's special love for Moses meant that he was protected from harm and cared for well.

Show the children the soft and hard objects, let them handle them and say which are soft and which hard. Ask for suggestions as to what you might use them for – and make the point that softness and toughness are appropriate for different tasks...

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You might clean a wound with cottonwool but you wouldn't build a shelter with cottonwool! You need strong bricks to make a place to keep us safe. A bath sponge is good for washing us clean – a pan scourer would be too rough! We need different types of materials for different tasks.

Our mums and those who care for us need a special kind of love. It's a love which is gentle to care for us and strong to keep us safe.
The Bible talks a lot about love. It says that God loves us in a way which is soft to comfort and tough to protect.

He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge.
Psalms 91:4

The Lord is a mighty tower where his people can run for safety.
Proverbs 18:10 (CEV)

Let's say thank you for God's love and for the love of those who care for us.
The children can lead with the actions

Love is tough and strong to protect. *Strong muscle actions*
Thank you God for your love *Shout*
and the love of those who care for us. *Clap*

Love is soft and gentle to comfort. *Stroke own hands or face*
Thank you God for your love *Whisper*
and the love of those who care for us. *Clap*

Now let's hear about another mother, not from the Bible but who lives in Jamaica today. Her name is Shirley and she needed help to care and protect her children with strong, special love.

If appropriate a Mothers' Union member or another member of the congregation could tell Shirley's story.

Shirley Lee Stone is from Jamaica and has six boys and one girl. Sadly one of her sons was lost to gun crime. But Mothers' Union's Worldwide Parenting Programme has completely revolutionised the relationship she has with her children and, she believes has prevented her from losing any more of them.

"I did not used to have a relationship with my children. I would call them awful names and throw stones at them. I would seldom sit and talk with them. I fed and clothed them but never found the time to show them a mother's love."

But Mothers' Union showed me how to be a true parent to my children, loving and caring for them.

I began communicating with them. I now encourage them when they do not do well in school and congratulate them when they do. It has been amazing to open up to my daughter. We talk about relationships and school work; I am more involved in her life but still allow her space. I show her love.

Had I known about this programme sooner, I believe my boy would still be here.

I would have known how to truly be a mother and how to properly protect him. But I have learnt how to reach out to the others and be there for them. Even though their father has passed, I promise to do my best for them.

Thanks to Mothers' Union they will stay alive."

Sometimes mothers need some help to know how to care and protect their families with special love. Mothers' Union helps many mothers to learn ways to be good parents and to show special love for their families.

Hymn:

Offering:

Since *Make a Mother's Day* was first launched in 2007, over £1 million has been given to help Mothers' Union support mums and families all over the world.

Your gifts and your prayers enable us to make a massive difference.

But there are still millions of mothers all over the world who need your help.

Millions who will not get flowers this Mothering Sunday. Mums, grannies and care givers who despite the odds achieve amazing things.

So this Mothering Sunday please support us as we aim to reach many more struggling families, and meet the needs of mums like Shirley.

We've given our money to help God's work in helping people to care for their children with strong and special love

We now want to give our Mums and those who care for us something to thank them for loving us. We also want to remind them how much we love them and how much God loves them too.

The children could share their memory verse here

God says: *Point upwards then touch mouth*
As a mother comforts her child, *Rock baby gestures*
so will I comfort you. *Hug self*
Isaiah 66:13 *Make book with hands*

Children may give out "Thank you cards" or other appropriate gifts. (These can be given to all women not just mothers.)

It's good to give gifts to people to thank them for their love and it's also good to pray and thank God for his love for us. So let's pray now.

God with a mother's heart,
you gather us as your children.
You comfort and hold us in your warm embrace.
When we hurt your arms enfold us.
When we are afraid your wings protect us.
When we are hungry you feed us with the bread of life.

God with a mother's heart,
your love surrounds and supports us,
in good times and tough,
in the midst of joy and pain,
always and everywhere.
You will never leave nor abandon us.

God eternal and loving one,
God with a mother's heart,
we thank you this day
for being part of your family.
Christine Sine <http://godspace-msa.com>

Final hymn:

Blessing

May the love of the Father fill our hearts;
May the love of the Lord Jesus fill our homes;
And may the grace of the Holy Spirit
bind us together in love
in our families and communities.
And may the blessing of God be with you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen
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Welcome to our Mothering Sunday Family Service

We are here today to thank God for mothers and carers around the world. Caring for a family is a very special role but it isn't always easy. Today we'll celebrate all that they do and ask God to show us how we can be of support to them.

We're not all mothers ourselves but we all have a mother, whether or not they are still with us, and we are all children of God. He is our loving Father but is also the one who remembers and comforts us as a mother comforts her child. When our own family fail us or are absent, his love is perfect and constant.

Let us pray: *a child may read this prayer*

Dear Jesus,

We thank you for all mothers and carers around the world,
and for all they do for their children.

We thank you for their patience when we don't get things right.

We thank you for their encouragement when we find life hard.

We pray that mums would feel really special today
and that you would remind us every day to show them
as much love and help as they give to us. Amen

Hymn:

Readings *Two children could read these if appropriate*

First Reading: 1 Kings 17:8-16 Elijah helps a mother.

The Lord said to Elijah, "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you."

So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, "Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?" As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too."

But she said, "I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die."

But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you've said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!"

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So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

1 Kings 17:8-16 (NLT)

This is the Word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Mark 1:29-34 – Jesus heals Simon Peter's mother in law

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

This is the Word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Talk *The children may come up to the front for the talk*

Ask for a mother to be a volunteer. Have a pile of boxes ready.

Ask the children (and adults if you wish) to suggest different things that mothers and carers do to help them. With each suggestion give a box to the volunteer to hold.

Eventually the boxes will tumble down as the pile becomes too big to be held.

Then ask for ideas as to how the boxes can be carried? (Encourage suggestions to spread the boxes between them so they share the load.)

Our mothers and carers do so much to look after us and make our lives happy but they do need help and support as well.

In the Bible readings we heard firstly about a mother who needed help to provide food for her son and her visitor. God provided a miracle so that all were fed.

Then we heard about Simon Peter's mother in law who was unable to look after her family and guests because she was ill. Jesus healed her and she was then ready to care for them.

Now I want to tell you about a mother, not from the Bible but who lives in Guyana today. Her name is Lena and she needed help to look after her family.

If appropriate a Mothers' Union member or another member of the congregation could tell Lena's story.

Lena lives in Guyana and is a Parenting Group Facilitator. She says:

The Mothers' Union parenting programme is a special ministry and has touched over 200 lives through the six groups I have facilitated. One woman who was recently been deported back to Guyana heard about the programme and joined my group. Before in the other country she stole, shoplifted, prostituted and used drugs. She even went to jail and her first daughter was born in prison. She felt so low that she wanted to commit suicide and kill her daughter when she was deported back to Guyana once she was released from prison. When she joined the parenting group she felt so supported by all the other parents and carers

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there. She started to sell snacks, her local priest assisted her with a house and this led her to start assisting others in greater need. In this parenting group all the members provide emotional and practical support and also financial if it is needed. This support has enabled her to develop her little business and it is now very successful. She also works with the local youth to clean up their local environment. Her daughter is now in high school and doing well. This is just one story of many where the programme has provided a supportive and nurturing environment where people are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Sometimes mothers need people to help them as well as them helping us. Mothers' Union helps many mothers to care for their family by sharing with them useful ways of being a good parent and encouraging the parents to support and help each other.

Hymn:

Offering:

If an offering is to be taken for the work of Mothers' Union this is an appropriate time.

Now let's hear what God says about helping people.

You obey the law of Christ
when you offer each other a helping hand.
Galatians 6:2 (Contemporary English Version)

You obey the law of Christ **make hands into a "book" shape and look at them**
when you offer each other **hold out your hands to each other**
a helping hand **join hands together and swing them upwards**

Children can demonstrate the actions to the verse and then teach them to the congregation.

We've given a helping hand to God's work in looking after mothers and others who need support, by giving our money.

We now want to give a helping hand to our Mums and those who care for us.

Children may give out "Helping Hand cards" to their Mums and flowers or other appropriate gifts to all the women.

It's good to give a helping hand to people to make their lives easier. One important way is to pray and thank God for them. So let's pray now.

The children could pray their "Hands" prayer from the children's resources here.

Thank you God for our Mums **Give a "thumbs-up"**

Thank you God that our Mums are stars **make "twinkling" action with fingers**

Help us to give our Mums a helping hand **hold hands out**

We pray that you will bless all Mums **clasp hands together**

Amen

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Father God

we thank you for mothers around the world
and for the care they give their children.

We offer our support and prayers
for their lives to be blessed
and for families to flourish. Amen

Final hymn:

Blessing

Let us go from here rejoicing
in the goodness of God.

May our families be touched
by his hand of blessing.

May we hold out a helping hand
as a sign of God's love to the world. Amen

