

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



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Sunday 22 March 2020 Mothering Sunday

A prayer for the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy,
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Good News in Tough Times

During the present Coronavirus pandemic holding onto our Christian hope and joy might feel like a real challenge, as our lives will be so restricted for many weeks and the future is uncertain. It is tempting to think that as all our services are now suspended we will be 'less' as a church and 'less' as Christians - but I would like to urge you in God's grace to be *more*.

We need the same love and care that runs through our normal church life together to be at work now in *more* prayer for each other and in meeting *more* practical needs. We need the example and Spirit of Jesus to inspire us now to love our neighbours and to encourage each other even *more*.

So let's give ourselves to prayer, as we have health and strength, for each other and our communities. Let's talk to those we sense might need help and offer what we can. And let's ask that God will continue to help us follow the way of Jesus and build the Kingdom even in these unique times.

If you need some practical help or someone to talk to - or if you can offer this to others- please do phone or email the Ministry Team or the Church Wardens. Thank you to those who have already volunteered.

in friendship and Christ's service, *Adrian Jones*, Vicar

(Thanks to Mark Powley, St Hild College, for ideas used here)

Church opening during the Coronavirus epidemic: Encouraged by the Archbishops, we are opening the church buildings of the benefice for quiet prayer and reflection at regular times each week, following our normal service pattern. While there will not be a service then, we will provide materials to help you pray and to continue growing in faith during this exceptional time. You can of course drop in at any time when the churches are open, and stay for as long or as short a time as you like. A member of the Ministry Team will be in church at these times, but conversation will need to abide by 'social distancing' rules (ie staying 2 metres/ 6 feet apart). We will be careful not to have physical contact, and frequently used surfaces and toilets will be cleaned afterwards.

Pause for Prayer: On Wednesday evening at St Mary's from 8-9pm we will also open the church for a 'Pause for Prayer'. This is not a service but a time when there will be music and prayers to listen to as well as the usual material to read, use and take away home. As we sit we will need, again, to abide by the social distancing rules and good hygiene practice.

If you are self-isolating because you, or a member of your household, have symptoms of Coronavirus or any other illness, then please keep everyone safe by staying at home and not coming to church – but do pray with us! Why not fix a regular time each morning and evening when you will use the special prayer which can be found on the front of the newsletter.

Light a candle of hope: A national call to prayer

Presidents of Churches Together in England have issued a call to prayer in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic. This is for all churches and people of prayer to join on Sunday 22nd March, Mothering Sunday. They write....

'This Mothering Sunday, 22nd March, we are calling all churches to a National Day of Prayer and Action. At such a time as this, when so many are fearful and there is great uncertainty, we are reminded of our dependence on our loving Heavenly Father and the future that he holds.

At 7pm this Sunday, light a candle in the windows of your homes as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.'

St Guthlac's open for quiet prayer: Sunday 22nd March 10.00 – 12.00

Adrian or Matthew will open St Guthlac's to enable people who are not self-isolating to drop in for quiet prayer time. If you want one or two candles to light later that day there will be some available for you to take.

On-line worship

Sundays at 10am. Every Sunday at 10am (starting this Sunday, 22 March) on the [@DioceseofLeicester Facebook page](#) there will be a short pre-recorded video providing an opportunity to engage with the Gospel reading of the day. There will be simple prayers, a reading, a brief devotional homily and a creative interpretation of the Bible story by an artist, and a closing blessing. Just follow the Diocese of Leicester Facebook page and join with others around our diocese in experiencing God's word in a slightly different way.

Daily Offices with the Diocese of Leicester Community of the Tree of Life. The Diocese suggest we keep an eye out for details of the new monastic community's own Daily Office, which will be livestreaming on

their @LeicTreeofLife Facebook page every day. There will be a shortened morning, noon and night-time version from members of the Community who will provide a rich opportunity for us to punctuate our day with prayer, knowing that we're doing so in company with other Christians from around the city and county.

For those without Facebook, you should be able to access via the website. The details about the service times and logging on are here <https://leicestertreeoflife.org/>.

BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship 8.10am

You can listen to a Sunday service on the radio at 8.10am, or if you have the 'Sounds' App you can listen to it whenever you want.

COLLECT 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

READINGS

Ruth 1.1-18

Naomi Loses Her Husband and Sons

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Naomi and Ruth Return to Bethlehem

When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.” Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.”

But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord’s hand has turned against me!”

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.”

But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Gospel Matthew 23, 37-39

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

REFLECTION

The gospel reading may seem a strange place to start for mothering Sunday. And yes, the main focus of the passage is on the prophetic destruction of Jerusalem. However, it the almost incidental detail of the

Lord comparing himself to a mother hen with the gentle image of chicks being gathered under her wings. For me, it shows the universal nature of mothering. Mothering is not just for mothers and not just for women. And for those who insist on the exclusively male characteristics of God-a mother hen challenges this-showing the paradox of protection and vulnerability required for the caring for little ones.

This inclusive aspect of God is important for those of us who may find Mothering Sunday difficult or painful. Perhaps you had a difficult relationship with your mother. Perhaps as a mother you have suffered the pain of child loss. Perhaps you may grieve not having your own child. Alternatively you may resent the assumption that childbearing is desired for fulfilment. I belong in the camp of not enjoying Mothering Sunday with having lost my mother aged six. I felt the pain of abandonment reinforced every year we made 'Mother's Day' cards at school. Schools could be insensitive places in the 1970s where it was announced to my class by the teacher, 'Matthew's mummy has died, now his daddy has to be a mummy and a daddy'. A bit thoughtless? Though the words stuck and take me to gospel passage where mothering is beyond gender and the Lord is someone who mothers as well as being a father to us.

The story of Ruth and Naomi is similarly affirming of loving relationships beyond male and female, child and mother. Ruth and Naomi show a great loyalty to one another, **"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried"**. Such beautiful words of commitment and courageous love. These speak of such eternal truths that they have been appropriated by many Church wedding services to show the divine standard for the covenant of marriage. Very ironic, when Ruth and Naomi are not a married couple. The wonderful 'motherly-daughter' love is made more exceptional because, of course, they are not mother and daughter. Their connection is through the dead husband of Ruth, Naomi's son. Ruth is encouraged to start again, but doing so would mean abandoning Naomi, herself an older widow and alien in the land. Her prospects would not be good. What a beautiful story of sacrificial loving beyond natural family lines and relational patterns.

We should be encouraged, especially at this time of global pandemic and mass social isolation. We have a God that walks alongside us. He promises repeatedly to never abandon us nor forsake us. We also have a God that goes beyond our social conventions when it comes to gender

roles and being far more inclusive than our narrow human thinking permits. My prayer this Mothering Sunday is for Church (that is all of us) to rediscover our capacity for motherhood. Whether we are young, old, male or female—who can we mother? Who risks being abandoned and left behind? Who needs our courageous vulnerability to protect them at this time. In this time of despair, let us claim for ourselves and share with others, the hope from **Isaiah 43, ‘Do not fear. I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the flames, you will not be burned.’**

Reverend Matthew Gough, Mothering Sunday 2020.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS Please remember those whom we have been asked to keep in our prayers. Please remember those who have died recently and keep their families and friends in your prayers. For other prayer requests, please contact a churchwarden.

WELLBEING TIPS

MIND have produced a range of really helpful tips and factsheets to support us during the Coronavirus situation, there's a wealth of information under the following headings:

- **Take care of your mental health and wellbeing**
- **Plan for staying at home or indoors**
- **Tips for if you have to stay at home for two weeks or more**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse80ef2>

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

All services and meetings are cancelled for the foreseeable future.

In future the church may be open for private prayer but details are not available yet. Benefice wide plans for spiritual, pastoral and practical support during these difficult times are being put in place. We hope to set up contact between members of the congregation. **If you are self-isolating and would like to keep in touch by telephone with others in the same situation for a chat and support please contact Tina.** Email: churchwardens@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk

KNIGHTON PLAYERS This year's production of 'The Sword in the Stone' has been postponed. It is hoped it will take place either this autumn or next spring, depending on the availability of the cast and the hall. If you have already bought tickets you will receive a full refund as soon as this is practically possible.

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING: this has been postponed. Three PCC members and two Deanery Synod representatives will be elected when the meeting eventually takes place and new people are encouraged to get involved. If you would like to stand for election to the PCC or Deanery Synod, or would like to find out what is involved, please speak to Lesley Meakin .

MOTHERS UNION In accordance with current guidelines, there will be no Mothers Union meeting next Tuesday, March 24th, nor April 28th. We shall continue to review the situation and keep members informed."

BENEFICE MAGAZINE

Please send your articles, pictures and announcements to Nigel Siesage. stmaryknighton.magazine@gmail.com If you would like to receive a digital copy please ask James in the Parish Office to add you to the mailing list. 0116 2702705 office@knightonparish.co.uk. Hard copies are available in church.

FOR THE NEWSLETTER Please send material to be included in the next newsletter by **Thursday 10pm** to administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk