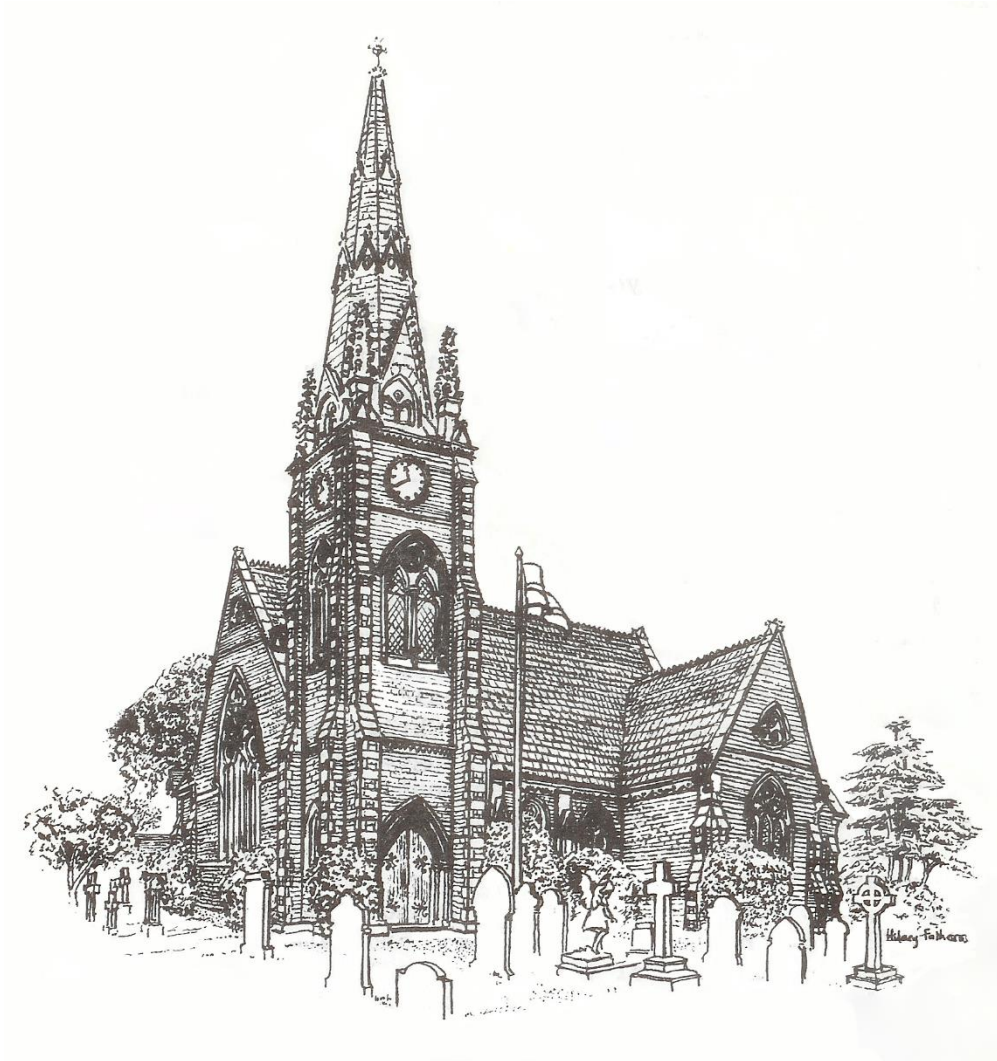


## All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



**Morning Prayer**  
**Mothering Sunday**  
**(Fourth Sunday of Lent)**  
Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Online (from 10:30am)

## The Greeting

The Lord be with you

***And also with you.***

Come, worship the God who said:

As a mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you.

*Isaiah 66:13a*

***We will come before our God.***

## Gathering Prayer

***Heavenly Father, we rejoice with thanks***

***for all those who have mothered us in our lives.***

***In a world that is broken and in need of your motherly love,  
please use us to aid others as you do us in providing comfort,  
nurture, protection and support.***

***We ask that you help us grow as carers to those who need us,  
so that we might celebrate your goodness together  
even through our own brokenness.***

***Amen.***

## Hymn: Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers

1 Fathers and mothers,  
sisters and brothers,  
all those who love us,  
for whom we care:  
help and befriend them,  
keep and defend them,  
Jesus our Saviour,  
this is our prayer.

2 And for those others,  
fathers and mothers,  
children who hunger,  
they must be fed:  
we would be caring,  
readily sharing,  
one with another  
our daily bread.

3 Sisters and brothers,  
fathers and mothers,  
we who together  
offer our praise:  
hear our thanksgiving,  
God ever living,  
may we walk with you  
all of our days.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

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### Act of Penitence

Loving God, as Pharaoh's daughter noticed the needs  
of a small child alone in the reeds,  
so help us to notice those areas of our own lives  
needing care and attention.

*(We pause for reflection.)*

Your love gives us life from the moment of conception,  
but we fail to live as your children.

Lord have mercy.

***Lord have mercy.***

You call us to do good,  
but we seek our own good.

Christ, have mercy.

***Christ have mercy.***

You hear us when we cry for help,  
but we ignore the cries of others.

Lord, have mercy.

***Lord have mercy.***

May the Father of all mercies  
cleanse you from your sins,  
and restore you in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Amen.***

## **Bible Readings**

### **Exodus 2:1-10**

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river-bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. 'This is one of the Hebrew babies,' she said.

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?'

'Yes, go,' she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.' So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.'

### **John 19.25-27**

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

## **Reflection**

Tears are an integral part of today's Mothering Sunday readings. The tears of a desperate mother, making one final, risky effort to enable her son to survive under a genocidal regime which meant that any male Hebrew baby was supposed to be killed by the midwives at birth; she abandons him in a basket in the river. We have a crying baby, and then the tears and cries of a mother as she looks at her dying son's broken body on the cross, weeping both for him and for herself, who would be left disgraced and destitute by the death of her firstborn son in such a horrific manner.

Have you ever wondered why it's difficult to ignore a baby's crying, even when it's not your child? Scientists have discovered that human brains are hard-wired

to have a strong response to their cries; we instinctively want to go and meet their needs and stop their crying. Babies' cries are painful to our ears in order to catch our attention. No wonder then, that Pharaoh's daughter was drawn to the baby abandoned amongst the reeds in the River Nile in a basket.

These harrowing scenes in which mothers lose their children are not the complete picture. God's plan is bigger than that. New kinds of family groups are created. In a glorious piece of subversion, Moses' sister, Miriam, who has been watching from her hideout, is able to offer Pharaoh's daughter the services of Moses' own mother, Jochebed, to act as wet-nurse to the child, for which Jochebed is well paid. For all his attempts to destroy the male Hebrew children, Pharaoh is ultimately powerless – and it is the women in this story who are powerful. This adopted Hebrew boy goes on to be brought up as part of the Egyptian royal household.

As we mature, we may learn ways to both hide our tears and ignore those of others, but the scene from John's gospel portrays a group of women who are distraught at the foot of the cross and will not abandon Jesus. Even in his agony, Jesus recognises and acts upon their distress.

Jesus ensures that his mother is not left abandoned. At the foot of the cross, he brings together Mary and the Beloved Disciple: the cross is the place where a new order is created. There is a beautiful kind of interrelationship between them, where she will care for him, and he will care for her. Jesus gives them a new identity as mother and son, and a transformed home where both have a place at the table. In the midst of his pain and suffering, Jesus gathers together what might otherwise be lost and broken forever.

God's longing is always to gather people. When Jesus lamented over Jerusalem and its people, he said, "how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings." (Luke 13:34) It is a beautiful image of a loving mother, whose only desire is to protect her young. The loving message of being welcomed under that stretching, protective wing is also extended to us, regardless of gender, social status, culture or our physical or mental capacities. Our church should be a place which models this mothering role.

This Mothering Sunday may well be a painful time, as well as a time of joy and thanksgiving. As yet, we can't gather together to both give thanks and to grieve. Nevertheless, we can be comforted and rejoice in the fact that we are all supremely loved, and we all have a part in God's family. Whatever our

experience of mothering in our lives is or has been, we can be assured that our Father God also mothers us.

### **Affirmation of Faith**

Let us declare our faith in God.

***We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.***

***We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.***

***We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.***

***We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.***

### **Intercessions**

We give thanks for the Church, our mother, who brought us to birth in the family of Christ, through the waters of baptism. We thank you for all who have loved us and nurtured us in faith. May we be bold to share what we have received. We pray that all who walk the way of Christ will respond to God's call to mother those in need.

Lord, in your mercy.

***Hear our prayer.***

We pray for all those in authority in our nation and in our world. May they learn from the example of Jesus Christ that true power is the power to feed the poor and the hungry, to make a home for the homeless and to offer hospitality to the broken-hearted. We pray for our government as difficult decisions are made about budgeting for the future. May we not forget the vulnerable people in places like the Yemen and Syria.

Lord, in your mercy.

***Hear our prayer.***

We pray for our own community. May we see each other as sisters and brothers, called to sit at God's family table together. As we begin to return from lockdown, may we learn how to serve one another,

rejoicing in our diverse talents and callings. Enable us to nurture our environment for your glory, working together for that great day when God comes again to restore heaven and earth.

Lord, in your mercy.

***Hear our prayer.***

We pray for all who suffer today, in mind, body or spirit. Be present with those who find this day especially difficult, for whom painful memories are stirred. We pray for those who cannot visit their mothers today; for those who would love to be mothers but cannot; for those who suffer the pain of losing a child, and those whose families have been places of discord or abuse. May they find consolation in God, the one in whom every family on earth finds its home.

Lord, in your mercy.

***Hear our prayer.***

We give thanks for all those who have died and who are now in your presence. We pray especially for those who have lost their mothers, or those who have loved them like a mother. Comfort those who mourn today, and enable us all to trust God's care and provision for us, all the days of our life and into our death.

Lord, in your mercy.

***Hear our prayer.***

### **The 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 forever.

***Amen.***

## **The Lord's Prayer**

As God's children, and heirs with Christ  
we pray with confidence as our Saviour taught us:

***Our Father,  
which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today 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.***

Loving God, accept the cries of our heart as we offer you our prayers;  
through them transform us and all creation  
until you are in all and through all.

We ask these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus.

***Amen.***

## **Hymn: God of Eve and God of Mary**

- 1 God of Eve and God of Mary,  
God of love and mother-earth,  
thank you for the ones who with us  
shared their life and gave us birth.
- 2 As you came to earth in Jesus,  
so you come to us today;  
you are present in the caring  
that prepares us for life's way.
- 3 Thank you that the Church, our Mother,  
gives us bread and fills our cup,  
and the comfort of the Spirit  
warms our hearts and lifts us up.



4 Thank you for belonging, shelter,  
bonds of friendship, ties of blood,  
and for those who have no children,  
yet are parents under God.

5 God of Eve and God of Mary,  
Christ our brother, human Son,  
Spirit, caring like a Mother,  
take our love and make us one!

Fred Kaan (1929–2009)

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## **Blessing**

May the Lord who brought us all to birth,  
strengthen us for daily life.

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

May the Lord whose steadfast love is for all, send us out 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.***

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