



# Newsletter

Week beginning Sunday 22 March 2020

Mothers and Others



This is the first of our weekly news sheets to enable us all to keep in touch and pray and worship together during the current emergency situation.

Today's lectionary readings: (OT) Exodus 2: 1-10 *Moses in the bulrushes*  
(Gospel) John 19: 25-27 *Mary at the foot of the cross*

Our theme for today: 'Mothers and Others.'

Without a doubt this is a memorable mothering Sunday. The reality of coronavirus-related restrictions placed on all of us, combined with the first Sunday we don't have a formal service puts us in a very unusual situation indeed. For many, self-isolation and quarantine mean that visits to mothers and grandmothers are impossible this year. Our two readings for today also highlight some very unusual situations. Firstly, we have Moses, a Hebrew baby boy, whose people are enslaved, oppressed and controlled by the Egyptians. Government policy was that newborn Hebrew baby boys were to be killed. His desperate mother hid her baby in a basket among the reeds of the riverside, while his sister watched and waited... we all know the story. Moses ends up in the most bizarre situation - adopted/stolen/saved by Pharaoh's daughter, child-minded by his own birth mother, funded by royalty, and transferred to the Egyptian court on reaching adulthood. Unbelievable! How did he, a Hebrew young man, feel about entering the Egyptian palace as the so-called 'son of the princess'? In the second reading, we see the dying Jesus transfer the care of his mother Mary to the apostle John. Strange, as Mary had her own sons and John had his own mother, Salome. They had all been together with Jesus for His ministry. Amidst the emotion and agony of the moment, a small thing. But afterwards, I wonder if anyone in the natural families felt put out, hurt even? Did anyone feel rejected, not good enough, overlooked? We are not told.

Our readings today do not make us feel comfortable or portray an ideal family life - Moses with his confused and conflicted upbringing, Mary and John forming a new adopted relationship beyond their birth families. Imagine how each of the mothers in the stories must have felt. Moses and his family must have questioned God's purpose, love, or even existence all the time. Moses' mother had the relief that her baby was not killed, but the pain that the enslaved family was not free. Mary's suffering at the death of her Son and the beloved disciple John's distress at the loss of his Lord: their shared joy at resurrection gave them a unique bond. Yet they and their natural families could have found it awkward to adjust to the household changes as they tried to follow through the Lord's last wishes. The readings also remind us of important 'others' in our lives: those people beyond our immediate family whose care and influence have a significant footprint on our lives, who are part of our growth and direction in life. Moses learned his Hebrew identity in his parent's home but learned to be a leader in Pharaoh's court. That strange experience helped him in unimaginable ways, and eventually, eighty years on, proved a blessing to his people. John, writer of the gospel and 3 letters, had Mary in his home as he pieced together the life and teaching of Jesus. They could talk at length about their

time with Him, sharing memories, asking questions, teaching others. All the characters in our readings found that God was still with them- faithful, powerful, true, leading them onwards. Maybe it is easier than usual for us to relate to the strangeness of today's readings. Right now, everything is confusing and surreal as we each adjust to the new world in which we find ourselves. Many of us don't feel properly equipped or adequate for what lies ahead and we would rather look back than move forward. Yet, learning to live with non-ideal situations is so often where we, like the people we read about in the passages, learn how to trust God in uncertain times- life lessons we never forget.

So today, apart but together, let us take time to give thanks for our mothers and others whose love has shaped our lives. Let us trust God for our situations. Let us pray for parents whose children born into danger. Let us pray for those who are bereaved and missing loved ones today. And as we face these unknown tomorrows, let us remember the Christmas message, that God IS 'with us, and for us, for always and for ever.'

May the Love, Grace and Peace of the Lord be with you all. Amen.

Anne Rockley

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION - Church opening during the coronavirus emergency**

All churches are now **closed for public worship** in accordance with the Archbishops' instructions. This means our usual Sunday and Wednesday services/prayer fellowship will not be taking place, and there will be no Morning Prayers at St Paul's on Mon/Tue/Wed. However, in accordance with the Archbishops' wishes and in order to continue to witness to our friends and neighbours, both our churches will be open at specific times from Monday 23 March as follows:

St Paul's: Church open for prayer 10-11am Mon-Sun.

St Andrew's: Church open for prayer 2-3pm Mon-Sat. and Sun: 11am-Noon

Please note: this is not public worship. There will be prayers prayed by the minister on behalf of us all during the opening times. **PLEASE PRAY AT HOME DURING THIS TIME if you can, so that we will all be praying together.** People are welcome to come into church to pray during the hour it is open but must wash hands on arrival and sit apart from others. If you are in an 'at risk' category, we encourage you, in line with government guidance, not to come. We will try to live-stream Sunday services whenever possible: look for our Facebook page (St Pauls Kersal and St Andrews Carr Clough). Contact Revd Hilary or Anthea to receive a copy of Prayer for the Day.

### **Prayer**

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.

### **Useful things to know**

All church groups associated with or meeting in St Paul's and St Andrew's are currently suspended. This means the following church groups will not now be operating- at St Paul's: Toddler Group (Mon am); Lent course (Thur pm); at St Andrew's: Wed afternoon fellowship and Messy Church. No Sunday evening Meditation and Tue evening prayers.

The PCC meeting on 6 April has now been cancelled. The APCM scheduled for 10 May has now been postponed.

These arrangements are current as of 21 March 2020 but are subject to change at any time.

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### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**Hall Bookings:** St Paul's and St. Andrew's ring Len on 792 3877

**Emergency prayer chain:** ring Maureen 792 4873 or email [rober382@sky.com](mailto:rober382@sky.com)

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