



St Paul's Church



Dear all

I am always surprised and delighted at St. Paul's by our willingness to be open to different forms of worship as well as our readiness to grapple with Scripture in deep and intellectually honest ways. I don't take this for granted, and I really do appreciate it. It's very freeing for me to know that I can explore my often-quirky take on matters theological in such a safe space. As we have Mother's Day coming up this weekend, this seems like a good time to say more about why I sometimes refer to God in worship as 'FatherMother'; not two words but one, representing one of the three persons of the Trinity.

You may remember that a few weeks ago, there was a ridiculous debate in the media about the 'shock' news that God may not be a man. Perhaps I have been studying theology for too long, but it seems blindingly obvious to me that God is *not* a man, or indeed a woman. Perhaps the best we can say is that we may be edging towards the truth if we think of God as encompassing (among other things) the positive qualities traditionally associated with *both* genders; after all, we are *all* made in God's image.

This is not a new idea. As long ago as the Middle Ages, Julian of Norwich had some very counter-cultural things to say about the nature of God. She saw motherhood and femininity as intrinsic to trinitarian doctrine. For her, the feminine aspects of God's nature resided specifically in the qualities of sacrificial love, tenderness and nurturing. God's love, she said, is like the unconditional love of a parent; it does not need to be earned. She rejected the prevailing notion of God as a judging patriarch. Whilst mainstream medieval theology emphasised the masculine aspects of God and saw creation as inherently sinful and corrupt, Julian understood all of creation to be blessed and filled with the presence of the divine. Hers was a theology of awakening to the reality and blessing of the divine mother and father present in everything.

And so it is in this spirit that we invite you to celebrate Mothering Sunday with us this weekend. This experimental service will be led by Gwyn, and I know that she has a delightful and engaging act of worship planned. We hope that you can join us at 10am this Sunday.

Rev Anthea

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

All services are in church, zoom is available for some services.

SUNDAY 19th MARCH – LENT 4 (ZOOM)

10 am Mothering Sunday – Gwyn

SUNDAY 26th MARCH – LENT 5 (ZOOM)

10 am Holy Communion – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 2nd APRIL – Palm Sunday

10 am Café Service – Café Church Team, headed up by Gwyn

THURSDAY 6th APRIL – MAUNDY THURSDAY

7pm Stripping of the Altar – Rev Anthea

FRIDAY 7th APRIL – GOOD FRIDAY

2pm Good Friday Service – Gwyn

SUNDAY 9th APRIL – EASTER SUNDAY

10 am All-Age Communion – Rev Anthea

EVENTS

SATURDAY 18th MARCH

2.30 pm Afternoon Tea

SUNDAY 26th MARCH & 2ND APRIL

11 am - Craft sale

EASTER

Easter is an appropriate time to remember a loved one, relative or friend who has died. One way of doing this is to donate towards the annual cost of church flowers in their memory. During the Easter season a list will be on display in church giving the names of those in whose memory flowers have been donated. If you would like to contribute in this way, please complete the form at the back of the church and place it with your donation in the envelope provided. **To ensure that names are included, please return the slip with your donation to Charys Beswick by Palm Sunday 2nd April.** Thank you

FOOD BANK

The next deliveries will be on 24th March.

PRAYER RESOURCE

week beginning Sunday, 19th March 2023

‘This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”’ (Matthew 6: 9)

This week we give thanks for:

- All who show us a true mother’s love, and reflect on what that support has meant to us over the years.
- Women around the world boldly standing up against injustice in God’s name, often at great personal cost; pray they continue to be empowered by the Holy Spirit as they speak God’s words of truth.

Please pray for:

- The dawning of Spring: teach us to plant seeds of hope among our loved-ones, in our churches and our communities.
- Relief for communities around the world who are suffering because they are hungry; for much-needed rain so that crops will grow and flourish, and for good relationships between governments, charities and faith organisations so that decisive action can be taken to tackle the hunger crisis.
- God’s wisdom for all those exercising chaplaincy ministry in schools, care homes, businesses, prisons, police, armed services, etc., and may they know the support of their local churches and see God at work wherever they go.
- The valuable work of the Mothers’ Union throughout the world.
- Our Church family: all who are struggling; and Edith, Pat, Alice, Jill, Trevor, Maureen, Carol, Sandra and Brenda; and for Ruth, Helen and Meaghan.

You may like to use this prayer during the week:

Thank you, Lord, that whatever life brings, I face it with you, your arms wrapped tightly around me, as a mother embraces her child. Amen.