

Praying for our world

God of all hope we call on you today.

We pray for those who are living in fear:

fear of illness, fear for loved ones, fear of other's reactions to them.

Grant them your peace, assurance and presence.

We pray for your Church and world in this time of uncertainty:

for those responsible for decision making locally and nationally;

for those who staff our hospitals, health and care services and food supply chains;

for those supporting local communities especially food banks;

for those anxious about money and how they will pay bills;

for those people who are worried about being in public spaces;

for those needing to make decisions about how to care for others;

for those who will feel isolated and lonely.

Gracious God, grant us your wisdom.

(A time for personal intercessions)

Holy God, we remember that you have promised that *nothing* will separate us from your love – demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.

Help us turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you.

Amen

Prayer adapted from the Methodist Church website

Make your offering.

During this time if you are able, please set aside your usual offering to give later or give now by bank transfer. You will enable the church to continue responding to the work of God.

Crucified and Risen Christ, I offer my gifts and myself as a thank-offering for all you have given to me, my Lord and my Saviour. Amen

Closing hymn: Sing Praise to God who reigns above (StF 117)

A version of this hymn can be heard [here](#).

The Grace of the Lord be with you and all you love this week.

United in Christ across Darlington District

Sunday 22nd March

If you are able, read the words in bold aloud.

Call to Worship:

**Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me,
for in you I take refuge.**

**I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed. (Psalm 57: 1)**

If you have access to a hymn book or the internet read sing or listen to Singing the Faith 355

Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly

While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Saviour, hide, til the storm of life is past..

Loving God, in this time of anxiety and concern we come, in our many different homes, to worship and praise you, our rock and security. You are unchanging in your love for this world, almighty in your eternal grace, unfailing in wisdom and in power.

In our human frailty we have often failed to live up to the way shown by Christ your Son.

*As you offer your personal confession to God,
know that you are forgiven by your maker.*

Forgive me Lord for all that is past.

Thank you loving God for your mercy and forgiveness. Amen.



Bible Reading 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

On this Mothering Sunday it is good to remember the beginning of the book of Samuel. Hannah longs for a child. When finally she is blessed with Samuel she nurtures him joyfully until he is weaned. Then she takes him to the temple to serve God, honouring the promise she made before he was born. (1 Samuel 1: 28) Despite the arrival of other children Hannah does not forget her firstborn. She continues to love and care for him, each year making him a new robe. (1 Samuel 2: 19)

At its best, the love of a mother is a life-long deep felt commitment which never ends. Even when parted the bond between Mum and son or daughter remains. 'I'll always be his/her Mum.'

A new Mum might look at her wrinkly new born baby and see the most beautiful sight in the world. She can recognise the scent of her own baby distinct from others. This is not superficial love, it is deep reaching out to deep, it is a God-given, instinctive all-giving care.

In today's reading from chapter 16 the Lord sends Samuel (now grown up) to select the next King. Jesse's sons are paraded before him. In verse 7 Samuel is reminded to look in the way God sees, with eyes of love:

But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height... The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'

God chooses the youngest and smallest son, David, for the special role. God who made you sees what is special in you. What is God calling you to do in this unusual season we find ourselves in?

- Who are you looking out for?
- Who are you praying for today?

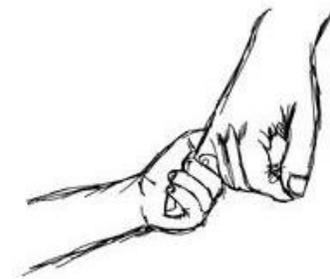
May God grant you and those you love courage and peace. Amen

The hymn "**Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord!**" (StF 186) is inspired by the wonderful hymn of praise offered by Mary, the mother of Jesus when, while carrying the unborn Jesus, she meets Elizabeth who will soon give birth to John the Baptist.

If you have courage, sing out the words so that your soul too praises God. Choose to read or listen to the hymn if you prefer.

Hannah, Mary and Elizabeth are all biblical role models for motherhood. Maybe you have precious memories on this day, or perhaps your story is one with regrets or anger.

Choose how you mark this day in your prayers.



Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'

Matthew 19: 14

Bernadette Farrell writes beautifully of God's love and the call to us to respond. (StF 496)

**God beyond our dreams you have stirred in us a memory;
You have placed your powerful Spirit in the hearts of humankind.**

**God of gentle care you have cradled us in goodness,
You have mothered us with wholeness, you have loved us into birth.**