

Blackburn Baptist Church: Virtual Mothers' Day Family Service

Introduction

This is a first! We may not be able to meet together this morning, but we are all still part of the family that is Blackburn Baptist Church, and so welcome to you all on this Sunday – the 4th Sunday of Lent. We remember that Jesus spent time in the wilderness, preparing for all the joys and sorrows of the first Easter, but perhaps we better know and celebrate this as Mothering Sunday.

So we want to thank God today for mothers and carers around the world. It takes a very special love to care for a family and it isn't always easy. Today we'll celebrate that love and ask God to show us how we can be of support to them. We will also thank God for his own perfect love for us all.

We're not all mothers ourselves but we all have a mother, whether or not they are still with us, and more importantly we are all children of God. He is our loving Father but is also the one who remembers and comforts us as a mother comforts her child. He draws us close as a hen protects her chick, and when our own family fail us or are absent, his love is perfect and constant.

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

We thank you for all mothers and carers around the world, for all they do for their children and for the special love they have for them. We thank you for their patience when we don't get things right. We thank you for their encouragement when we find life hard. We pray that mums would feel really special today and that you would remind us every day to show them as much love and help as they give to us.

We thank you Jesus for your special care and comfort and the perfect love you have for us all. Help us all to show your love to those who care for us and to the people that we meet in our lives.

Amen

Call to Worship

Come, God gathers us for worship, like a mother hen gathers her brood under her wings.

Our God, loving, nurturing.

In love, God saves and supports us, teaching us the way we should go.

Trusting in God, we continually offer our praise!

Let us bring to God our songs of praise.

Songs

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you, Lord, thank you for the world I'm in.

Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you, Lord, for happiness and peace within.

I look around and the sun's in the sky, I look around and then I think oh my!
The world is such a wonderful place, and all because of the good Lord's grace.

Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you, Lord...

I look around and the creatures I see, I look around and it amazes me
that every fox and bird and hare must fit in a special place somewhere:

Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you, Lord...

I look around at all the joy I've had, I look around and then it makes me glad
that I can offer thanks and praise to him who guides me through my days:

Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you, Lord...

For all the love that from our earliest days has gladdened life and brightened all our days,
we bring you, Lord, our song of grateful praise, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For all the truth from wisdom's lighted page undimmed and pure, that shines from age to age,
God's holy word, our priceless heritage, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For all the joy that childhood's days have brought, the gifts of life, of sense and heart and thought,
of life's deep meaning to our spirits taught, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For all the hope that sheds its glorious ray along the dark and unknown future way,
and lights the path to God's eternal day, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For all the strength that we have gained through prayer, to face life's tasks, its eager quests to
share, till ampler powers fulfil its promise fair, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For Christ the Lord, our Saviour and our friend, upon whose love and truth our souls depend,
our hope, our strength, our joy that knows no end, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

All of us can help our families grow well by loving each other, showing kindness, forgiving each other when things go wrong, spending time together... but today especially we want to thank God for our mums and those who care for us, for their love and all that they do to make our families grow well.

And did you know that all of us here belong to two families! We have our own family we belong to and we have our church family that we're also part of; with God as our heavenly Father and each other like brothers and sisters. Sometimes the church is called 'mother church' so it's particularly good to remember we are part of it on this special day.

Some of us find it interesting studying our family tree – looking back to our parents, grandparents and even further back than that – I know some here have spent time researching their histories! You never know, we might all be descended from someone famous or infamous! So we have our own family tree and we have our family of God tree, and today we want to thank not only our mums and those who care for us but also our church family for helping both trees to grow well.

So we sing a song of thanks – to a very familiar tune! Hopefully you all have your wits about you, and your teeth firmly attached, as we sing to the tune of "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands".

Thank you God for all who care for us each day *(Thank you!)*
Thank you God for all who care for us each day *(Thank you!)*
We will thank God when we pray, we will clap, and shout hooray
Thank you God for all who care for us each day *(Thank you!)*

Thank you God for giving what we need to grow *(Thank you!)*
Thank you God for giving what we need to grow *(Thank you!)*
We will stamp our feet to show God knows all there is to know
Thank you God for giving what we need to grow *(Thank you!)*

We often speak of God as Father. We have fathers – some of them have been good fathers and some of them haven't. Some of us are fathers with varying degrees of success. We look to God as father to help and inspire us towards the best in fatherhood and to understand what makes for healthy fatherhood and what doesn't.

We should also have need to speak of God as mother. We have mothers. Some of our mothers have been good mothers and some of them haven't. Some of us are mothers with varying degrees of success. We look to God as mother to help and inspire us towards the best in motherhood and to understand what makes for healthy motherhood and what doesn't.

So today as we celebrate Mothering Sunday and thank God for our mothers who gave us birth, we also give thanks to God who is the very source of our being.

Prayers

Let us pray:

Father of us all, mother of each one, thank you for your love for us from the beginning of time. You formed us when we were in our mothers' wombs, you knit us together lovingly. Your devotion to us has not failed, your care has followed us our whole life long. All we are and all we have, we owe to you, and so on this, the Lord's Day, we give honour to you with our hearts and hands and

voices. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

A prayer of thanks:

Thank you, Lord, for all who care

Bless them with your love

Thanks for mothers everywhere

Bless them with your love

For those who brighten up our day

Bless them with your love

Who always have the right words to say

Bless them with your love

Thanks for hugs, and love and smiles

Bless them with your love

Thanks for all those extra miles

Bless them with your love

And when they feel they're not enough

Bless them, bless them, with your love. Amen.

Origins of Mother's Day

In many European countries, the fourth Sunday in Lent is set aside as a special day to honour mothers. In England, Mothering Sunday originally had a different meaning. It was the day when church-goers in outlying villages and hamlets would make the journey to the mother church of the parish, taking their offerings. By the sixteenth century, when many young girls worked as servants in the homes of the rich, Mothering Sunday had become a holiday when they were allowed home to visit their families.

To prove their newly acquired skills in the kitchen, they would bake a cake to present proudly to their mothers. It was called a Simnel cake, probably from the Latin word *simila*, a fine wheaten flour. The cake was usually made with a rich mixture, filled with plums, lemon peel and other tasty ingredients. It had to last until Easter, as it couldn't be eaten until after Lent had passed. If a girl had a sweetheart, Mothering Sunday was the day to bring him home for mother's approval. In this case it was the man's responsibility to provide the mothering cake.

In modern times, Mother's Day was introduced and is still kept in America and Australia on the second Sunday in May. The idea is attributed to Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia who, in 1907, suggested an annual day for mothers should be kept. At a church service people were asked to wear a carnation in honour of their mother. The custom soon became known and spread to other places.

Some of you may be wearing carnations today, I can't tell, and some of you may have baked a simnel cake, but whether or not that is the case, we still all join together in prayer:

Prayer

Lord God, today we thank you for our mothers and for all those who are mother figures to us. We thank you for all they have done and continue to do for us, and today we celebrate motherhood in its many forms. We pray for every mother, grandmother, godmother, carer and mother figure in this church. Would you encourage and affirm them in all they do to love, support and nurture the children in their care.

Thank you Lord God that you are the perfect example of parenthood in the way that you pour out your love upon us when you adopt us as your children. Would you equip us as mothers and fathers, as parents and carers, as individuals and as the whole Church family, to love as you do.

Thank you Lord Jesus that you teach us how to be family together. Would you continue to guide us as we seek to submit to one another in love and service, to be a community of welcome and acceptance, and to work together as your body, the Church.

Thank you Holy Spirit that you pour out your strength and peace as our great Counsellor. Would you bring healing, comfort and restoration to all who are hurting on this day.

We pray for all who grieve parents and carers who are no longer with them. We pray for all who grieve children they have lost or are yet to meet. We pray for parents who are separated from their children for whatever reason. We pray for children who are waiting to be welcomed into a family.

We pray for all who find this day hard and entrust them to your loving care.

We join together in saying the prayer Jesus himself taught us to say: Our Father, who art in heaven...

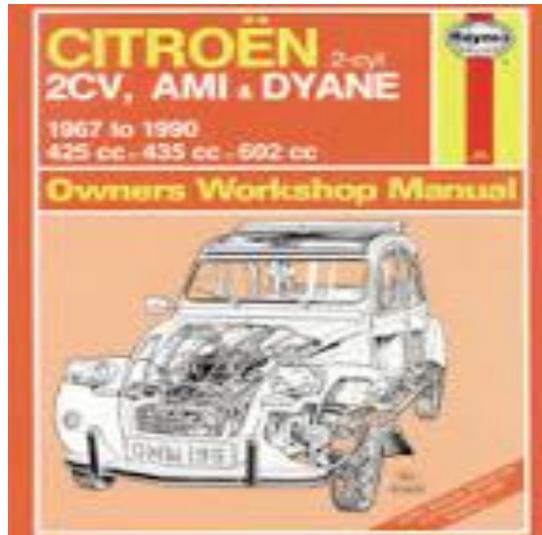
Photos

I found some old photos the other week that I'd like to share with you now:



You may notice a bit of a theme developing! The first one is our very first 2CV6 deux chevaux – I expect some knowledgeable linguist can translate that for us, yes, its 2 horses – I believe that's a technical term for how powerful the engine is – 2 horse power is rather on the low side – I'm sure the car buffs among you will be able to give comparative figures for other cars! The 6 refers to the fact that it's a 600cc engine – again, slightly on the small side – its quite hard to find cars with an engine smaller than that, and in fact even many motor bikes have more powerful engines! 2CVs weren't built for speed and power but were initially developed to carry eggs over ploughed fields without breaking them – the fact that there is less need for that these days may explain why they are no longer manufactured! However, they are a car memorable in more ways than one – its surprising how many cubs you can fit in a 2CV – practically a whole football team if you try really hard!

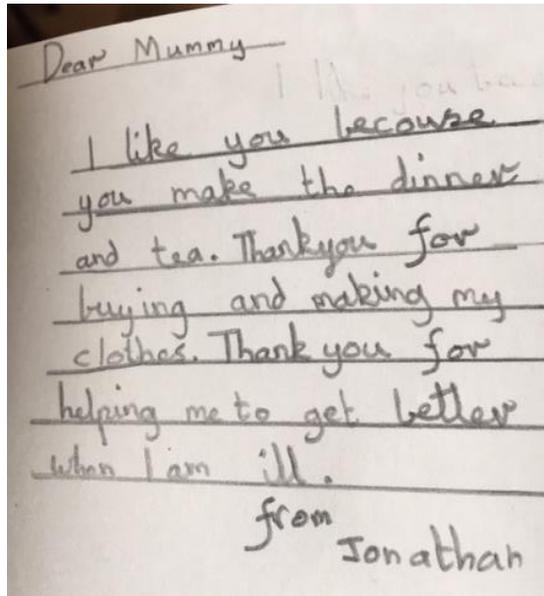
We had 4 altogether – and we belonged to a 2CV family – so whenever you saw another one on the road, you'd wave! Probably our favourite was Elizabeth Gertrude, beautiful and red and shiny, having been rebuilt by a fellow 2CV enthusiast called Duncan. I had a problem with one of them and had to bring her to the Citroen garage across the road. It seemed a fairly trivial problem but took quite a time to fix - so much so that I went into the workshop to see what the problem was. I found the mechanics studying the manual – Duncan didn't need a manual!



Maybe some of us could do with a manual for mothers – sometimes it seems as though we take better care of our cars than our mothers yet we expect our mothers to last a lifetime. If we had a manual it might include some things like this:

- **Engine:** A mother's engine is one of the most dependable kinds you can find. She can reach top speed from a prone position at a single cry from a sleeping child. But regular breaks are needed to keep up that peak performance.
- **Servicing:** Mothers need a hot bath and a nap every 100 miles, a baby-sitter and a night out every 1,000 miles, and a live-in baby-sitter with a one week holiday every 10,000 miles. (chance would be a fine thing!!)
- **Battery:** Mothers' batteries should be recharged regularly. Handmade items, notes, unexpected hugs and kisses, and frequent confessions of "I love you" will do very well for a recharge.
- **Carburettor:** When a mother's carburettor floods it should be treated immediately with Kleenex and a soft shoulder.
- **Brakes:** See that she uses her brakes to slow down often and come to a full stop occasionally. (A squeaking sound indicates a need for a rest)
- **Fuel:** Most mothers can run indefinitely on coffee, leftovers and salads, but an occasional dinner for two at a nice restaurant will really add to her efficiency.
- **Chassis:** Mothers run better, literally, when their bodies are properly maintained. Regular exercise should be encouraged and provided for as necessary. A change in hairdo or makeup in spring and autumn are also helpful. If you notice the chassis begins to sag, immediately start a program of walking, jogging, swimming, or bike riding. These are most effective when done with fathers.
- **Tuning:** Compliments are both the cheapest and most effective way to keep a mother purring contentedly.

If these instructions are followed consistently, this fantastic creation and gift from God, that we call MOTHER should last a lifetime and give good service and constant love to those who need her most.



Song

Let's lift our voices in song again, as we join together: - you can make up your own actions if you like:

God is good to me, God is good to me, he holds my hand, he helps me stand, God is good to me.
God is good to me, God is good to me, though I am small, he hears my call, God is good to me.
God is good to me, God is good to me, he holds me tight, he helps me fight. God is good to me.

Mum is good to me, Mum is good to me, when I am sad, she makes me glad, Mum is good to me.
Mum is good to me, Mum is good to me, I catch a bug, she gives a hug, Mum is good to me.
Mum is good to me, Mum is good to me, she lets me try, then ties my tie, Mum is good to me.

**All our blessings, all our joys, with thankful hearts we sing,
God of love and faithfulness, accept the praise we bring.**

For parents and for children, for husbands, wives, and friends,
For those whose care enfolds us with love that never ends.

All our blessings, all our joys,..

For fellowship and friendship, for all we have to give,
For those who've shared our journey and taught us how to live.

All our blessings, all our joys.....

For all who've shared our sorrow, walked with us in our pain,~
Who've held our hand through darkness and showed us light again.

All our blessings, all our joys....

In sacrifice and service, your love is clearly shown,
Your outstretched arms embrace us to bring us safely home.

All our blessings, all our joys

Homily

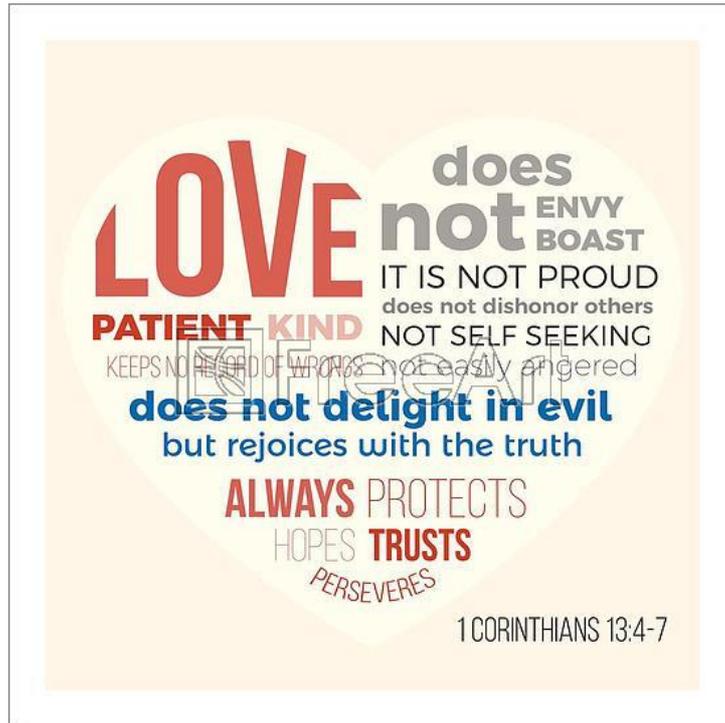
Q. What is it that you can give away but never runs out?

A. Answer :The Beatles got it right: 'All you need is love'

The Bible talks about love many times, in all different contexts – I expect if I asked you to quote John 3 v 16 many of you would be able to say it from memory – although the actual words may vary slightly depending which version of the Bible was more familiar to you – 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish but have everlasting life.'

Then there's 1 Corinthians 13 – which again is one of the best known and loved passages in the Bible

– ‘I may speak in the tongues of men or of angels but if I have not love, I am a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal. So faith hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love.’



What do shepherds do? Look after sheep? What sort of things:

1. Make sure they're fed
2. Make sure they're safe
3. Stop them from getting lost
4. Protect them from wolves and bears
5. Get stones out of their hooves
6. Cut their hair
7. Most important they love their sheep. That's why they do all that for them. They love their sheep so much that they will risk their lives to protect them.

That sounds a lot like what mums and dads and carers need to do. Jesus said "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – and I lay down my life for my sheep".

I had intended to show the children some soft and hard objects, to let them handle them and say which are soft and which hard, then asked for suggestions as to what you might use them for – and make the point that softness and toughness are appropriate for different tasks...

- You might clean a wound with cotton wool, but you wouldn't build a shelter with it
- You need strong bricks to make a place to keep us safe
- A bath sponge is good for washing us clean – a pan scourer would be too rough!

We need different types of materials for different tasks.

Our mums and those who care for us need a special kind of love. It's a love which is gentle to care for us and strong to keep us safe. The Bible talks a lot about love. It says that God loves us in a way which is soft to comfort and tough to protect.

- He will cover you with his feathers, **and under his wings you will find refuge.** *Psalm 91:4*
- The Lord is a mighty tower where his people can run for safety. *Proverbs 18:10 (CEV)*

Let's say thank you for God's love and for the love of those who care for us.

- Love is tough and strong to protect. *Strong muscle actions*
- Thank you, God, for your love *Shout*
- and the love of those who care for us. *Clap*
- Love is soft and gentle to comfort. *Stroke own hands or face*
- Thank you, God, for your love *Whisper*
- and the love of those who care for us. *Clap*

If we were to pass on one piece of advice to our children, to our young people, to nieces and nephews, grandchildren what would that be? Jesus' advice – love one another.

We are going to share God's love with everyone now as we give out gifts – or we would have done had we been at the chapel! I'd intended to have violas which we were all going to take home and plant either in our gardens or in pots on our windowsills, to watch the beauty of God's creation grow, but the best laid plans...!



Prayer

Let's pray instead

God of all living and loving: how pleasant it is when women, men, and children live together in unity! How noble is your creation and the world that you have made! How blessed we are to receive the gifts of life and love!

We are thankful for families, where scattered piles of stuff testify that we live fully in the moment; where the noise of laughter and the silence of sadness are freely shared;

We are thankful for families, where we find sanctuary from danger and judgment; where words of love and openness are the rule of life.

We are thankful for families, where our differences are the spices of life; where our unity is something that we can always take for granted.

We grieve for families, where violence and rejection are living realities; where hearts are broken, and dreams are shattered.

We grieve for families, where walls of protection become fortresses of isolation, where language is a weapon of destruction and hate.

Help us to understand those families whose identities are different from ours; the ways of loving, parenting, partnering and working together for peace.

Help us to dare, to stand strongly against hate and divisiveness; to encounter our differences with love and respect.

This we believe: that love is stronger than hate; that hope is stronger than despair, and that good is stronger than evil.

In the name of the One who is Loving and Living, **Amen.**

God of light and love; we pray especially for all who find Mothering Sunday painful: we pray for mothers who watch over children who are ill and children who watch over their suffering mothers; we remember mothers who are apart from their children and mothers who grieve because their children have died, for those who longed for children and who have none, for those without their mothers because of illness or death and who, in their longing, know themselves to be alone; for children who are abused or neglected, for children missing their mothers on this day; and all who suffer the impact of family breakdown.

We ask that you would be a light in the darkness.

Tender and compassionate God, surround us all in your loving embrace; and hold us always in your care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We commit our struggling world and the conflicts that spoil our relationships into your hands of love, naming before you today the pain of Syria and the Middle East, and all those whose lives have been impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, both in this country and worldwide.

For people we know who are sick and for those close to death, we ask for peace.

For all who offer us love and compassion and nurture us into growth and wholeness we give you thanks.

May we walk more faithfully with Jesus and follow him, as Mary did, to the foot of the cross and onwards into the light of resurrection hope.

In the company of one another and of all the saints in glory may we gaze on Jesus, the light of the world that will never be overcome.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Creation

This may not actually be in the Bible, but perhaps Genesis could have sounded rather like this:

The universe yet incomplete, on the sixth day God created her: Woman. And God said to her: "I shall give you a heart full of compassion, a spirit free to fly with the birds, a vessel to carry life into the world, wisdom to know great truths, courage to rise out of oppression, strength to move mountains, gentleness to kiss the earth, passion to set the world on fire, vision to respect the earth that bore you, a playful nature to dance with the children, laughter to fill the valleys, tears to wash the pain away, hands for labouring and loving, intuition to know the unknown, desire to be that which you were created to be." And God said to her: "Woman, I have created you in my image and likeness and you are good."

So, as we reflect on the wonders of this world and God's love, we sing our closing hymn together:

Closing Song

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Come let us sing of a wonderful love, tender and true;
Out of the heart of the Father above, streaming to me and to you:
Wonderful love dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell, joyfully came;
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell, sharing their sorrow and shame;
Seeking the lost, saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet; why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget; home! weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love, come and abide,
Lifting my life till it rises above envy and falsehood and pride:
Seeking to be lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Blessing

Let us go from here rejoicing in our family on earth and our family the church.

As the children of God we take his love into the world that others may also rejoice and be part of his family.

Amen