



Celebrate with The Children's Society this Mothering Sunday

Fighting for hope for children and young people

**The
Children's
Society**

Contents

Introduction	3
How to use this resource	3
What is Mothering Sunday?	3
Our 2021 theme: Fighting for hope for children and young people	4
Fighting for hope: Alyssa's story	5
Supporting The Children's Society through your service	6
All-age talk 1: Moses – a community of care. Based on Exodus 2.1-10	7
All-age talk 1: Activities	9
Who cares?	9
Tough times	9
Signs of Care scavenger hunt	10
All-age talk 2: Happy times, hard times. Based on Luke 2:33-35.	11
All-age activity: Happy times, hard times	12
Prayers	13
Hymns and songs	15
Children's group activities	16
What carers say...	16
Clothe yourselves...(Based on Colossians 3.12)	16
The basket (Based on Exodus 2.1-10)	17
Youth group activities	18
Come, listen...(Based on Psalm 34.11-20)	18
Dreams and prayers	18
Discussion: care, help and love	19
Takeaway prayer card	20

Introduction

How to use this resource

This resource is designed for you to pick and choose from – we encourage you to use whatever is helpful to you in your context.

Given that many churches and groups are meeting online rather than in person at the moment, all the talks and activities are designed so that they may be used online as well as in person.

There is also a related Lent resource designed for smaller discussion groups, available from childrenssociety.org.uk/lent-and-mothering-sunday

This resource was written by Nick Harding, children's ministry consultant and trainer, and a Reader in the Church of England.

What is Mothering Sunday?

Mothering Sunday is celebrated in churches on the fourth Sunday in Lent (14 March in 2021). Traditionally it is a day when we thank God for the love of our mothers, and we thank them in person for their care for us.

In the UK, the service dates back hundreds of years to the time when people were encouraged once a year, on Laetare Sunday, to return to their home or 'mother' church or cathedral. In Latin, the first words of the prayer for this Sunday were 'Laetare, O Jerusalem' ('Rejoice, O Jerusalem') taken from Isaiah 66.10, and the prayer spoke of the love for Jerusalem – the original 'mother church'.

This means that there is a small but distinct difference between Mothering Sunday, and 'Mother's Day', the more commercial celebration. Mother's Day was instigated in 1914 in the USA as a holiday on the second Sunday in May, as a result of a campaign by Anna Jarvis to recognise the important role of mothers in society following the death of her own mother. Initially the wearing of a white carnation and a proclamation from the House of Representatives honoured mothers. The commercialisation of the day rapidly grew, though Anna Jarvis is known to have taken a stand against this.

Mothering Sunday as we know it today in the UK, and across the Anglican Communion, is an evolution of the traditional pre-reformation Laetare Sunday observance. It retains the post-reformation practice of returning home from domestic service to visit church and family – picking flowers on the way to give to mothers and decorate the church.

Constance Smith, who was inspired by Anna Jarvis, campaigned for a revival of Mothering Sunday observance in Lent, writing a booklet 'The Revival of Mothering Sunday' in 1920. This was so influential and widely read that by 1938 it was said that every parish in the UK celebrated Mothering Sunday.

Today, many churches provide small posies of flowers for children in the church to give to their mothers and other carers to thank them. Increasingly, churches are also aware of those for whom Mothering Sunday is a painful time and are including prayers and affirmations of care for children in all its forms, addressing issues of infertility, baby loss, childlessness, child bereavement and parental bereavement, particularly of a mother.

This year, many Mothering Sunday services may be taking place online as we continue to live under restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Our 2021 theme: Fighting for hope for children and young people

Mothering Sunday is a time when we think about and thank all those who care for us.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all our lives, but it has hit vulnerable children and young people particularly hard. They have had months out of school, hidden from view and often without access to online learning resources. Lockdown has trapped children at home with people who hurt and abuse them, and our research shows lockdown has also made some children more vulnerable to criminal exploitation and online grooming. As their mental health and well-being suffers, many children are losing hope.

Over the last 15 years, The Children's Society has studied and reported on children's well-being. And each year we have seen a consistent decline, which has only worsened as a result of the pandemic. We don't think that's acceptable – which is why we have launched our ambitious goal of overturning that decline by 2030. To find out more about our 2030 goal and the gospel values it is rooted in, [please watch this video talk by our Chief Executive, Canon Mark Russell: vimeo.com/501682834](https://vimeo.com/501682834).

The theme of this resource is 'Fighting for hope', as that's what we continue to do for children and young people. We fight for hope by providing support for those who need it most and by campaigning for changes that make life better for young people like Alyssa.



Fighting for hope: Alyssa's story

We're helping children and young people like Alyssa (whose name has been changed to protect her identity) to fight for hope. Alyssa grew up in a home where there was violence, and that affected her mental health. Then she started getting bullied at school too. At one point Alyssa felt that she was completely overwhelmed, like she was 'drowning'. Unfortunately school didn't offer her the support she needed and she bottled up her feelings and thoughts. She says:

'My life before The Children's Society, I wouldn't even consider it a life. I would try and stay in the house as much as possible. I'd refuse to go to school, or I would pretend to be sick so I wouldn't have to go, and it wasn't healthy.'

Eventually, Alyssa came to one of The Children's Society's projects and received counselling from Kerry, one of our project workers. This gave Alyssa the strength and tools to get better. Today she says:

'I probably would be dead by now without The Children's Society and I've noticed such a big change in myself. It brought back the Alyssa that I knew, that I love and that everyone else around me seems to love, but I guess she got lost on the way before that. I don't know what I would have done without The Children's Society and I'm very grateful for everything they've done for me.'

Alyssa found a community of care through The Children's Society, and the care and help she received has enabled her to move forward in life and to reach her full potential.

Supporting The Children's Society through your service

There are many ways you can get involved in supporting our vital work with vulnerable children and young people and their families. Why not join many other churches who support our work?

1. Hold a collection: You may wish to take a collection for our work during the service. It's really easy to pay in your donations. Simply choose one of these options:

i) By Cheque

Please make all cheques payable to 'The Children's Society' and send to:

The Children's Society, Whitecross Studios, 50 Banner Street, London, EC1Y 8ST. It's helpful if you can send a covering note, explaining that this is a Mothering Sunday collection.

ii) By Giro slip

Please use the Fundraising Giro slip (please request from **supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk**) to pay in cash donations at any bank or Post Office. Please note that paying at any bank other than Barclays may cost you a small fee.

iii) BACS payments

To ensure that we can accurately tie your BACS payment to your records, please ensure that you include your full name and Supporter number (if you have one).

2. Pray for our work

We send out a monthly prayer email, enabling you and your congregation to pray for our work. Sign up at: **childrenssociety.org.uk/how-you-can-help/support-in-church** (scroll to the bottom of the page)

3. Volunteer

Find out about our many volunteering opportunities at: **childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/volunteer**

4. Campaign

The Children's Society actively campaigns for changes to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people and their families.

Sign up for our campaigns updates at: **childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/campaign-change**

If you have any questions, please call our friendly Supporter Care team on **0300 303 7000**. (Lines are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm).

All-age talk 1:

Moses – a community of care. *Based on Exodus 2.1-10*

Use the following bullet points to help you deliver this talk on Moses.

- **On Mothering Sunday, we give thanks for the love and nurture of mothers** but we also think of all those who play any kind of 'mothering' role in the lives of children and young people – whether extended family members (siblings, aunties, grandparents) or those in the wider community (teachers, nurses, all those who care for others).
- In this passage, we see a wider community involved in the **rescue of Moses from death to life**
- **The context for this passage from Exodus 2** is that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and oppressed by their Egyptian masters, who feared they were being 'overrun' by the Israelites (Exodus 1.13-14). They exploited them and made them work without pay. Pharaoh also ordered that all Hebrew boy children should be killed at birth (Exodus 1.16). So because Moses was a boy his life was in immediate danger from the moment of birth – hence the reason his mother hid him for three months (Exodus 2.2)
- **Moses' mother does her best for him** but there is a point at which she can no longer protect him and she decides to entrust his fate to the river – making sure he is as well protected as he can be (Exodus 2.3)
- **Others are moved by compassion and care for this child**, including Pharaoh's daughter, who technically is an enemy of the people of Israel but is moved to act by the vulnerability of this small child floating down a river in a basket (v.6)
- **Note how many others are involved in caring for Moses** – his sister keeps a watchful eye out (v4), and intervenes in v.7, cleverly enlisting her own (and Moses' mother) to care for the child
- **The name 'Moses' means 'I drew him out of the water'** – the name is given to him by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses has been rescued from sure and certain death by a community of people who have compassion for him and act

- **Link with the work of The Children's Society**, who want to help children and young people to be freed from all that oppresses them and stops them living life to the full, so they fulfil their potential – as Moses did in his life, growing up to be a great leader of Israel and leading them out of oppression in Egypt
- **The Children's Society does this by helping children and young people fight for hope** – young people like Alyssa (see case study on p.5; her name has been changed to protect her identity). Alyssa grew up in a home where things were difficult and that affected her mental health. At one point Alyssa felt that she was completely overwhelmed, like she was 'drowning' (you might draw a parallel here with the story of Moses, who might have been at risk of drowning if his basket had overturned in the river). Unfortunately school didn't offer her the support she needed and she bottled up her feelings and thoughts. She says:

'My life before The Children's Society, I wouldn't even consider it a life. I would try and stay in the house as much as possible. I'd refuse to go to school, or I would pretend to be sick so I wouldn't have to go, and it wasn't healthy.'

- Eventually, **Alyssa came to one of Children's Society projects and received counselling** from Kerry, one of our project workers. This gave Alyssa the strength and tools to get better. Today she says:

'I probably would be dead by now without The Children's Society and I've noticed such a big change in myself, it brought back the Alyssa that I knew, that I love and that everyone else around me seems to love, but I guess she got lost on the way before that. I don't know what I would have done without The Children's Society and I'm very grateful for everything they've done for me.'

- **Alyssa found a community of care through The Children's Society**, and the care and help she received has enabled her to move forward in life and to reach her full potential.
- **The Children's Society helps young people to fight for hope through direct project work**, for example in prevention work, counselling and well-being work, as well as through campaigning and lobbying for changes in government policy to improve the lives of children and young people
- **Will you stand with us and be part of that community of care**, that 'mothering' community that will fight for the hope that lies within the hearts of all children and young people?

There is a video version of this talk by the Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Derby and Vice-chair of Trustees of The Children's Society available to download here: vimeo.com/503539150



All-age talk 1: Activities

Who cares?

Each person needs a piece of paper to write or draw on.

Remind everyone that many people cared for the baby Moses in the story we have heard (Exodus 2.1-10).

Give a few examples of people who care for children, care for adults and so on, including family, carers, teachers, nurses etc.

Ask everyone to think for one minute (timed) about people that care for them. Then they have one minute to write the names or roles down. After the minute has passed, invite everyone to speak a little about what they have written or drawn, and how they care for them.

Tough times

Explain that the baby and his mother faced very tough times – they were slaves, the rulers hated them and worried that there were too many babies, babies were threatened with death, the mother was worried for his future, and so on.

Invite people, particularly children and young people, to talk about the tough times they or those close to them may face. We know that some children and young people are missing seeing their friends and members of their wider families, and unable to go about their sport and leisure as they normally do. There has also been a rise in poverty and the use of foodbanks, and unemployment is putting families under additional pressure.

Once everyone has spoken, say this prayer, leaving space for each person to think about the tough times they and others they know may face:

Loving God, you knew what Moses and his mother needed, and you were there to help them through their tough times.

Compassionate God, you know what we and those we know need, and you are here to help us and them through these tough times. So we think of all we and others need...

Merciful God, we thank you that you hear our prayers and meet our needs, even in the tough times.

Amen.

Signs of Care scavenger hunt

If people are at home and the activity is being led on Zoom or similar, ask everyone to spend a few moments finding something they can show that reminds them of someone who cares for them (e.g. a cuddly toy, a special gift, a photograph). Encourage all ages to do this, and spend a moment each explaining what the item is, and why it reminds them of care.

If the service takes place in church, you could invite people in advance to bring a suitable item to church with them, and to stand where they are and speak about the significance of the object when invited.



All-age talk 2:

Happy times, hard times. *Based on Luke 2:33-35.*

Before you read the following, ask those listening to say 'happy times', and put their thumbs up, or 'hard times' and point their thumbs down, at the appropriate points.

We remember the story of Jesus – how he was born to the world (*happy times*), but born in a rough stable (*hard times*) and laid in a feeding trough called a manger (*hard times*). His parents, father Joseph and mother Mary, looked after him (*happy times*), and visitors came to see him after his birth and when he was older (*happy times*). Mary and Joseph took their son to the temple to give thanks to God for him (*happy times*), and an old priest called Simeon knew that this baby was special (*happy times*) – he was the promised Son of God (*happy times*). Simeon said to his parents, who really cared for Jesus, that he was special (*happy times*) and that many people would be challenged and changed by him (*happy times*). But then Simeon said that Mary's heart would be hurt too (*hard times*). Mary cared for Jesus, and she and Joseph had no idea what Simeon meant. They were amazed by his words (*happy times*), but a little scared by them too (*hard times*).

The Bible tells us that after this Jesus was in danger (*hard times*) and Joseph was warned in a dream to travel to safety somewhere else (*hard times*). Joseph, Mary and their precious son were refugees, travelling to another country to try to find safety (*hard times*).

We know that Mary really cared for her son (*happy times*), but saw what he suffered and went through, even standing and watching Jesus die on the cross (*hard times*). Those who care for us, like our mothers, carers, and lots of others, would love to see us safe and happy (*happy times*), but know that life isn't always like that (*hard times*). When we have sad times and difficult times they suffer too (*hard times*), they feel our pain and upset (*hard times*), just like when things are going well (*happy times*) they can share in our joy (*happy times*).

Just like Jesus' mother Mary, those who care for us know how we feel in the good times (*happy times*) and tough times (*hard times*), and Jesus knows how we feel too.

All-age activity: Happy times, hard times

Make sure everyone has a piece of paper. On one side draw a smiley face, and on the other a sad face. Keep the 'hard times, happy times' idea going.

Think about the children and young people in your community. First of all, ask people to write on the smiley face side things that are good for many young people (*happy times*). This may be their homes being safe, school, sports facilities etc. Then ask everyone to write on the other side of the sheet things that might make life hard for children and young people, and make them lose hope (*hard times*). These could include a difficult home, danger in the local community, lack of money, poverty, loneliness etc.

Remind everyone that we can all help turn hard times into happy times by giving, supporting and helping, including supporting The Children's Society, who work to bring hope into the lives of those children and young people who have too many sad times, and not enough happy things in their lives.



Prayers

We remember Mary, the mother of Jesus, as we worship today.

We think of her example to all those who care for others.

We remember her willingness to obey and her thoughtfulness.

We remember her risk-taking, and her confusion.

We remember her deep concern, and her painful sorrow.

Help us to learn from the mother of Jesus, and give thanks for all who care for us.

Amen.

God of all, you care for us as a mother and a father.

We are created by you and we are special to you,
yet we have not appreciated that relationship.

We are made to follow your ways and we are special to you,
yet we have chosen to ignore you.

We are loved without conditions and we are special to you,
yet we have not learned to love others.

We have the hope that you give us and we are special to you,
yet we have failed to share your hope with others.

God of all, you care for us as a mother and a father,
and we are special to you.

Forgive us all our failings, and renew us.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

There are things that happen which bring pain upon those who care for us,
and sometimes we have been responsible for them.

We seek God's forgiveness.

There are things we have done that cause upset for those who care for us.

We seek God's forgiveness.

There are things we have done that cause despair for those who care for us.

We seek God's forgiveness.

There are times when we fail and cause sadness for those who care for us,
We seek God's forgiveness.

Amen.

Loving God, give us the will to care for children and young people.

Help us to fight for hope.

Give us the compassion to help those who are lonely.

Help us to fight for hope.

Give us the generosity to share what we have.

Help us to fight for hope.

Give us the kindness to support those who struggle.

Help us to fight for hope.

Give us the energy to work to bring change.

Help us to fight for hope.

Give us a heart that loves and gives without conditions.

Help us to fight for hope.

Amen.

A prayer for the work of The Children's Society

Creator God, you made us to help and serve others,
you call us to fight the good fight, **fighting for hope.**

We pray for staff of The Children's Society as they serve others,
fighting for hope.

As they work to improve lives of children and young people,
fighting for hope.

We pray for their project workers who support individuals in crisis,
fighting for hope.

We pray for their teams, campaigning for hope and change,
fighting for hope.

We pray for their volunteers, giving time and energy,
fighting for hope.

We pray for The Children's Society as they fight the good fight,
fighting for hope.

Amen.

Hymns and songs

- **All Things Bright and Beautiful** (found in most hymn books)
- **A Mother Lined a Basket** (linked to the story of Moses)
- **Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You** (by Richard Gillard)
- **Beautiful Saviour** (by Stuart Townsend)
- **Dear Lord and Father of Mankind** (found in most hymn books)
- **Father I Place into your Hands** (by Jenny Hewer)
- **Fill your Hearts with Joy and Gladness** (found in most hymn books)
- **For the Beauty of the Earth** (found in most hymn books)
- **Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart** (by Henry Smith or Don Moen)
- **He's Got the Whole World in His Hands** (by Tim Hughes)
- **Jesus Put This Song into Our Hearts** (by Graham Kendrick)
- **Let us Build a House where Love can Dwell** (by Marty Haugen)
- **Lord of All Hopefulness** (found in most hymn books)
- **Moses, I Know You're The Man** (linked to the story of Moses)
- **Now Thank We All Our God** (found in most hymn books; also version by Ian Hannah)
- **Sing We of The Blessed Mother** (found in most hymn books)
- **Tell Out My Soul** (found in most hymn books)
- **The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want** (found in most hymn books)



Children's group activities

What carers say...

This is a discussion activity for children, with the aim of helping them understand what motivates mothers and other carers. Explain first of all that a lot of people care for us, not just mothers. Ask for a few examples before doing the activity. Remind them also that they care for others such as their friends, siblings and so on.

Go round the group, asking the children to imagine that they are an adult who cares for them or other children. Invite any children who want to, to finish each of these phrases:

I love being caring because I can...

My main role in caring is to make sure...

I care for children because it makes me feel...

I do my best, but sometimes I wish I had more...

As someone who cares for children I have to have lots of...

When I lose patience with children I really want to...

Clothe yourselves...(Based on Colossians 3.12)

If you are doing this in a group, bring along a range of clothes for the children to dress themselves up in. If you are meeting virtually (on Zoom, for instance) then ask the children to get some coats, scarves and other clothes handy for this activity. You will need five items per child.

Read this from Colossians 3.12: '...clothe yourselves with **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**'.

Then read it again, and as you say each bolded word that we are called to 'clothe ourselves' in, ask them to put on a piece of extra clothing. Then repeat the exercise, getting faster each time you do.

Then repeat the exercise slowly, stopping at each bolded word and asking the children what they think it means. People who care for us such as our mothers have to have these qualities. As Christians we

should 'clothe ourselves' with these things, which means to always be people who show compassion, kindness etc. Ask when and where they could show these good habits.

Finish by doing the exercise quickly again, with a prize for the fastest if appropriate!

The basket (Based on Exodus 2.1-10)

If you are meeting as a group, prepare strips of thin card the length of an A4 sheet and about 3cm wide, enough for 8 per person. If you are meeting remotely, ask the children or carers to prepare the same in advance. Also, if possible, have an example of a woven basket to show what the Moses basket may have looked like.

Remind the children of the story of Moses as a baby from Exodus 2.1-10. Ask them to write on each strip people who may have helped save Moses, care for him, and keep him safe. These could include his father, his mother, sister, Pharaoh's daughter, her attendants, possibly family friends, midwife, neighbours etc. Write one of those characters onto each strip of paper. Then ask them to think about who cares for them, and write one of those on the other side of the strip of paper. Moses' mother used a basket made of reeds that would have been woven together by hand. Place four of the strips vertically and the other four horizontally, and weave them together. This is done by weaving the top horizontal piece over/under/over/under the vertical strips, and then the second horizontal piece under/over/under/over the horizontal ones.

This activity is a reminder that lots of people contribute to caring for children and young people, but there are some young people who don't have many people (or possibly any people) who really care for them. What can we do to become one of the names they could write on a strip of paper?



Youth group activities

Come, listen...(Based on Psalm 34.11-20)

Read Psalm 34.11-20 through together twice, allowing a little time for everyone to pick out a few words that they have particularly noted.

Invite each person (if they would like to) to share a word or two that stood out for them. Remind them that mothers and carers should try to live out the aspirations in this passage in their caring of others, particularly children. Then pick up on the following verses:

v14: 'Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it'. What does that mean for us in our daily lives? How can we bring change as individuals? Can we 'do good' to help other young people as a group?

v18: 'The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit'. What things may make young people broken-hearted? What does it feel like to be 'crushed in spirit', and how may that happen? Again, is there something we can do to help others who feel like that?

Dreams and prayers

Talk with the young people briefly about the work of The Children's Society in fighting for hope in the lives of young people. This means helping individual young people through projects such as one-to-one counselling support and help for those in poverty, struggling with mental health, being bullied or suffering in other ways. It also means working to make Government and others think more about the well-being of the young. The Children's Society wants all young people to move from 'Surviving' to 'Thriving'.

Invite the group to talk about their own lives – what things do they 'survive' in and what things do they 'thrive' in? What is needed to move from 'survive' to 'thrive'?

These things may help: write down negative thoughts and rip them up, try something fresh and new, look in the mirror and say 'God made me, I can do this', get help from people you know and trust, tell someone how you are feeling etc.

Then move on to these examples, again asking them to consider the help and support needed to make the move from surviving to thriving:

- A young person who is being bullied online.
- A young person who is the main carer for their mother.
- A young person who lives in poverty, has no internet and not enough food.
- A young person who gets no home support in schoolwork.
- A young person who struggles with their mental health.

Discussion: care, help and love

Talk through these three areas of care, help and love, giving some examples along the way.

On Mothering Sunday, we think of what the ideal mother or carer would do for their child. They would be loving and caring, and also fight to help and protect their child. This is the ideal – the reality is that not every child or young person has someone who does all this for them.

Care

We are cared for when we are born and unable to care for ourselves.

We are cared for when we get hurt or injured, and offer us that special care that we really need.

We are cared for when we get older, and our carers never stop thinking about how we are and what we are doing.

We are created by and cared for by God.

Help

We are helped to speak, to walk and to do all the things that we are made to do.

We are helped to learn, and shown good examples.

We are helped when we get in trouble and do things that we shouldn't do.

Our carers are chosen and helped by God.

Love

We are loved even before we are born, and our parents and carers have a special connection with us.

They show their love for us by doing everything possible to make life good.

Carers love us despite anything and everything, and often feel the pain of love.

God loves carers and loves us even more than a mother can love her child.

So what can we do to help those who don't have this care, help, and love? The Children's Society is 'Fighting for hope', working to change the lives of those who don't have this care, and need more. We can join the fight too.



Generous God, you care,
you help, and you love.

We thank you for the care, help
and love we have experienced.

Help The Children's Society
in its fight for hope,

bringing care, help and love to
children and young people.

And help us to join in that fight.

Amen.

**The
Children's
Society**

© The Children's Society 2021. Charity Registration No. 221124 Photo: Francis Augusto

- Fighting for hope – bringing care, help and love to children and young people.**
- Look around and think about how you and your church community can bring hope to children and young people in need.
 - Work with children's centres, schools and nurseries in providing extra support
 - Find out more about the work The Children's Society at childrenssociety.org.uk
 - Sign up to pray for the work of The Children's Society at childrenssociety.org.uk/how-you-can-help/support-in-church
 - Give thanks for the care, help and love you receive.

The Children's Society fights for the hope and happiness of this country's young people when they are threatened by abuse, exploitation and neglect. We take inspiration from the courage and hope we see in young people every day. It fuels our belief that every young person deserves a good childhood.

We fight for hope by understanding young people's needs and providing local services that support them through their challenges. We also campaign tirelessly for the big social changes that will transform the well-being of young people, and strive to improve the lives of those who need hope most.

Driven by hope and working alongside young people and supporters, we will not rest until together we've created a society built for all children.