Dear friend
Here is this week's virtual service, celebrating Mothering Sunday.

A reminder to those in Farmborough that the church is now open again for private prayer on Wednesday afternoons and Sunday mornings. This Sunday there will be posies of flowers available for you to pick up for your mothers or loved ones. A YouTube service is in preparation and when available I hope to send the link out to you.

Today's starting hymn is Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost to "Charity" sung by a virtual choir from Harringay:
https://youtu.be/Vv5aRYxufnc

A tuneful setting of the same words for 8-part choir by Philip Stopford, with a rolling score for singers:
https://youtu.be/e8HEgYIX4HI

There are various settings of today's passage from John's gospel; probably the best known is from Stainer's Crucifixion, here sung by a choir from Mumbai!
https://youtu.be/xhsoYih9G_A

Several contemporary composers have visited the text, including James Macmillan in his Seven Last Words from the Cross. The following dramatic setting is by Paul Carr, in a recording session by the modestly entitled Chorus Angelorum and Bath Phil, conducted by Paul's brother Gavin, under the watchful eye of the composer
https://youtu.be/s2zbrvS7X5A

Martin reminds us that Wednesday, 17 March is St Patrick's Day and here is a lockdown version of Be Thou My Vision and The Irish Blessing - over 300 churches from the Emerald Island sing a blessing over Ireland and beyond – inspirational!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TascsWZPj8U

May God go with you
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE 14.03.21
MOTHERING SUNDAY

The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. *Psalm 34.18*

CONFESSION Lord, if this day you have to correct us, put us right not out of anger but with a mother and father's love. So, may we your children be kept free of falseness and foolishness. *(Anon, Mexico). May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Common Worship).*

COLLECT God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READINGS Exodus 2.1-10, Psalm 34.11-20, Colossians 3.12-17, John 19.25b-27.

REFLECTION In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Polonius advises his son, Laertes, that "the apparel oft proclaims the man". In our daily life people may wear uniforms by which they can be identified, the paramedic in scrubs, the nun in her habit, the postman in shorts in bitter winter weather, and so on.
In his letter to the young church in Colossae, Paul describes a heavenly dress code, which comprises compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, the outfit is bound together by *agape*, the Greek word describing selfless love, a giving, practical type of love that shows concern for others.
Pharaoh's daughter exhibited self-giving love when she took pity on the baby abandoned by the river. Parenthood can demand this type of love, particularly at challenging times, as when the child asserts his or her independence.
We are invited to dress like Christ in our dealings with others, not as a hypocritical disguise, but to be transformed by God's own love at work in us. It can be difficult if we find it hard to like the other person but as CS Lewis puts it: "whenever we do good to another self, just because it is a self, made (like us) by God, and desiring its own happiness as we desire ours, we shall have learned to love it a little more or, at least, to dislike it less".
Like all garments, our heavenly wardrobe requires care and attention; regular prayer and learning from Christ's own example can prevent them becoming threadbare. At least these clothes will never be out of fashion!

PRAYERS At the foot of the cross Mary witnessed your loving sacrifice for us. You cared so much for her that your dying act was to commend her to the care of the Apostle John. May we continually thank the Father for our mothers who have formed us, educated us and cared for us. *(Anthony Castle)*

On this Mothering Sunday we give thanks also for our Mother church, where we were baptized, and for Mary's own selfless faith.

We pray for all parents finding it difficult to raise their children through financial hardship, through illness, through family disharmony.

We commend to your loving care all who are sick in mind, body or spirit, the dispossessed and refugees, the victims of natural or man-made disaster, those who mourn, those whose medical care has been delayed because of Covid, those suffering from long term illness or pain. Especially we pray for……

O Lord, never suffer us to think that we can stand by ourselves, and not need thee.
(John Donne)

We say the **LORD's PRAYER**
We share **THE GRACE**

Love is kind, and suffers long,
love is meek, and thinks no wrong,
love than death itself more strong;
therefore give us love.
(Christopher Wordsworth)