

God of Eve and God of Mary
God of love and mother Earth
Thank you for the ones who with us
Shared their life and gave us birth.

As you came to us in Jesus,
So you come to us today;
You are present in the caring
That prepares us for life's way.

Thank you that the Church, our Mother,
Gives us bread and fills our cup,
And the comfort of the Spirit
Warms our hearts and lifts us up.

Thank you for belonging, shelter,
Bonds of friendship, ties of blood,
And for those who have no children,
Yet are parents under God.

God of Eve and God of Mary,
Christ our brother, human Son,
Spirit, caring like a Mother,
Take our love and make us one!
(Fred Kaan; tune: Love Divine)

Fred Kaan (1929 - 2009) was born in Haarlem. His family suffered grievously in the war, and by the time he came to the UK in 1952, to study for the Congregational ministry in Bristol, he was a convinced pacifist, "with dreams of a new humanity and a world crying out to be free from every form of injustice".

Other hymns by Fred include *Put peace into each others' hands* (his own favourite, sung at his funeral) and *For the healing of the nations*. Both are readily available via Google, though not with the best tunes.

His widow, Dr. Anthea Kaan, still lives in their beloved Lake District, but sadly afflicted with dementia.

Malcolm Sturgess

Mothering Sunday Reflections



Just as God is our Father so God is also our Mother.

Julian of Norwich

A Song of Anselm of Canterbury

- 1 Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you; ♦
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
- 2 Often you weep over our sins and our pride, ♦
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgement.
- 3 You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, ♦
in sickness you nurse us, and with pure milk you feed us.
- 4 Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life; ♦
by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.
- 5 Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; ♦
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.
- 6 Your warmth gives life to the dead, ♦
your touch makes sinners righteous.
- 7 Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us; ♦
in your love and tenderness remake us.
- 8 In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness, ♦
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

A reflection on Mothering Sunday by Revd Becky

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb and even to your old age I am he, even when you turn grey I will carry you. I have made and I will bear you; I will carry and will save. Isaiah 46.

The prophet Isaiah's words are among the strongest maternal images of God in Scripture. Through him, God asks and declares, "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb?" God's love for people is so strong- it carries them. It is such an intimate image- of being carried like a nursing child- carried in such depths of love that come from before time, into time and move beyond time. God's love knows us in our 'innermost parts' thoughts and feelings- often like a mother knows us. It is an image that reminds me of Massai women carrying their children on their backs- secure, safe and close. How wonderful that we are invited in to God's carrying love.

In the context of the time, God is telling the nation how precious they are even in exile. Words and images give the hope that they needed to hear. Perhaps this is also an apt image for our current exile into social isolation.

Our Gospel from Luke Chapter 2 speaks of sacrificial love. Simeon prophecies over the Christ child 'a sword shall pierce your soul.' In the prophecy we are given a glimpse of the pain of love. How difficult it must have been for mother Mary to be faithful in her love of Jesus, whom she brought to birth, followed in his radical lifestyle and teaching, and watched die. How costly her love and yet how strong. God provided for her as she was too was metaphorically carried by the beloved disciple, who was also gazing upon the dying Jesus on the cross. A pierced soul is an image that reminds me of all the women who have been through the pain of loss, in so many parts of the world even today- the mothers of the Syrian children in refugee camps, of the Yemeni women who cannot feed their children, and of

those who lose adult children. The prophetic words of Simeon and from Jesus on the cross remind me that God sees their pain.

'Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.' Colossians 3 v 12-14.

In our final reading the early church is being reminded to be clothed with love in their relationships with one another. The Colossians are being challenged to live like Christ because God has chosen them. The church is to imitate God as children imitate their parents. The church members must make a decision to *put on* mercy, kindness, gentleness and patience, forgiveness, peace and thankfulness as if putting on clothes. As a more modern pop song urges - 'One love, one blood, one life with each other sisters and brothers, one love but we're not the same. We've got to carry each other, carry each other.'

This Mothering Sunday we give thanks to God who knows us, loves us and heals our wounds. We give thanks for the Mother church, and for all those who have encouraged and guided us in the faith. We are challenged to meditate on the image of being carried by our heavenly Mother, and to choose to carry one another like a Massai mother carries her children.

The hymn- God of Eve and God of Mary

We had been hoping to introduce a new hymn on Mothering Sunday, but the coronavirus intervened. There are virtually no hymns specifically for Mothering Sunday. We usually have to fall back on *For the beauty of the earth*, with its whole list of relatives, and general "love" hymns.

But new hymns and new tunes are being written all the time. *God of Eve* is published with a well-known Victorian tune, Sir John Stainer's *Love Divine*, making it immediately singable.