



Introduction

Mother's Day, or Mothering Sunday, is celebrated this year on Sunday 14th March. However, it is not a happy day for some people, such as those who have recently lost their mother, those who didn't have a good mother, those who haven't been a mother but would have liked to have been, those mothers who have lost their children and many others who are in a family situation which means that a focus on mothers and the role that they play in a family make it a reminder of how their situation is different and how they feel excluded and marginalised on such a day.

Mothering Sunday is part of the church calendar because we like to celebrate Jesus' own mother – Mary – and to celebrate all those characteristics that make a good mother – patience, kindness, loving, gentle, etc. All these characteristics are God's image and many people may play a mothering role in our lives, even though they are not our mother. So, this Messy Church session emphasises the mothering characteristics displayed in a family relationship that is not like a traditional one. The story that the session is based on is a family relationship of a mother and daughter in law.

The bible passage is from the Book of Ruth. This is a summarised version:

In a place called Moab there lived a man, Elimelech, with his wife Naomi and their two sons. They moved there because there was more food there than where they used to live. After a while Elimelech died but Naomi wasn't alone - she still had two sons who were grown up.

Her sons got married but after ten years they died too. In those days, when your husband and sons die, you go back to your own family to be looked after. It was only men who worked. Naomi's family lived a long way away, so she told her sons' wives (Orpah and Ruth) that she was going to go back to where she used to live and they should also go back to their families where they would be looked after.

Orpah left to go back to her family. But no matter what Naomi said to Ruth, Ruth would not leave. "Don't ask me to leave. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your friends will be my friends and your God will be my God."

So, Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem together. It was a good thing Ruth went with Naomi because Bethlehem was very far away and Naomi couldn't have travelled all that way by herself. Ruth never complained but was a good friend to Naomi. She wasn't expecting anything in return, she just wanted to help.

When they got there Ruth decided that she would get them food by going into the fields and following behind the harvesters to pick up any barley that they had dropped.

The owner of the field came by to greet the harvesters and noticed Ruth in the field. He asked one of the harvesters who she was. "She came back from Moab with Naomi, that's all I know." Lucky for Ruth the owner of the field was Boaz. He was a kind man who believed in God. He had also been related to Elimelech (Naomi's husband that died).

Boaz talked to Ruth, saying to her, "Don't go to work in any other field but stay here with the other servant girls. I will make sure you are safe and whenever you are thirsty go and get a drink from the water jars." When Ruth heard this, she bowed down to Boaz and asked, "Why are you being so nice to me, I'm not even from here."

Boaz replied, "I know what you've done for Naomi: you left your family and moved to a place you've never been. May the Lord reward you for your kindness."

Ruth thanked Boaz and continued to gather barley in the hot sun. Boaz even ordered his workers to drop extra barley so Ruth could have more for herself.

Ruth took all the barley home and shared what she had with Naomi. And eventually Ruth married Boaz and everyone was very happy!

Ruth and Naomi were good friends who were loyal to each other. Naomi could have insisted the women come with her, but she was unselfish and wanted them to be free to go home to be with their families. And Ruth had such a good attitude and wanted to help, she moved away from everyone she knew and went with Naomi. She didn't tell everyone what a good friend she was, she just knew that she should be a friend like God wanted her to be.

This story is linked with Jesus' story, as the place where Naomi and Ruth returned to was Bethlehem. When Ruth married Boaz, they had a son, who went on to have a grandson called David, who became a king. Then, 14 generations later Jesus was born into that family. This was not a normal arrangement as Ruth was a foreigner and she wouldn't normally have been welcomed into the family, but because she'd been such a good friend to Naomi, Boaz wanted her to feel she belonged to this family.

During Messy Church we will give thanks that we belong to a family, whatever shape that might take. We can say thanks to those mothers and others for their special contribution to the family, but most of all we can give thanks for the privilege of belonging to the family of God – this Messy Church family.

We will be making things that you can give to anyone who has been special to you. It might be your mum or your grandmother. Or it may be a mother-in-law, an aunt, or the elderly lady who lives alone down the road.

Activities:

1. Flower or gift pots

You will need: a large yoghurt pot or similar, cut up paper (included in Messy



Church at Home bags or from old magazines), PVA glue and a glue brush or spreader.

Spread some glue onto the outside of the yoghurt pot and stick on cut up sheets of paper like a mosaic to make a brightly coloured pot for your flower posy (see activity 3), a gift of biscuits or chocolate, or to plant a small pot plant.

Talk about: whether you know someone who doesn't have a family (or whose family lives a long way away), to whom you could give a gift to.

2. Heart paper chain

You will need: a glue stick, coloured paper strips (included in Messy Church at Home bags, or cut from A4 coloured paper).

Make a paper chain of heart-shaped links, rather than circular ones. Fold a coloured paper strip in half, feed one end into the last link in the chain and attach it to the other end using a glue stick. Make the chain long enough to go round your mother's neck as a garland to wear on Mothering Sunday, or longer to hang as a decoration for a special Mothering Sunday meal.

Talk about how we have spent a bit more time together with our families during lockdown. Caring for each other, like you might do for



your mum on Mothering Sunday, makes it much more enjoyable being together. Enjoy your time together as a family on Mothering Sunday.

3. Flower posy

You will need: tissue paper, pipe-cleaners, a doily and ribbon (all included in Messy Church at Home bags).

Cut the tissue paper into a long rectangle about 14cm wide, fold in half and make a series of cuts on the long (unfolded) edges approximately 2cm long. Put the paper in one hand and, using the other hand, scrunch the folded edge and push it together, twisting it as you go, to create a flower. Wind a pipe-cleaner around the base to create a stem.

Once you have made a few flowers on stems, make a hole in the middle of a doily and feed the stems through to create a posy. Wrap a ribbon around the posy and fix everything together with one of the pipe-cleaners or some sticky tape.

Talk about: A plant or flowers represent life and growth. Ruth and Naomi might have felt their life had come to an end when they were left without any family, but their family grew when they trusted in God and remained loyal to each other. Talk about how your family grows.



4. Decorate a gift bag

You will need: a bag (included in Messy Church at Home bags, or any paper bag), stickers, pens, glue stick and anything else you want to stick on the bag.



Personalise the plain bag to make a special gift bag that you could use to include gifts that you have made for your mother.

Talk about: Ruth went out to pick up barley left behind by the workers in the field, so that she and Naomi had enough to eat. How do you think she collected it and what did she use to keep the barley in to take it home?

5. Greeting card

You will need: a piece of A4 card or paper (folded), coloured paper from magazines, glue, scissors, pens.

Make a colourful card for your mother or someone else that cares for you, or that you love.

Talk about who you will give your card to on Mothering Sunday.



6. Make a heart shaped pizza

You will need: a pizza base, some toppings and an adult to help with the cooking.



Cut out a wide 'v' at the top of your pizza base and another (bigger) 'v' the same way up at the bottom, to create a heart shaped pizza. Add your favourite toppings, cook and eat!

Talk about: how making heart pizzas for each member of the family with their favourite toppings on, shows that you are taking notice and caring for each person individually.

Song: He's got the whole world in his hands

Ruth moved with Naomi to a place where she was a foreigner, but she found that she soon belonged there, as she had been so kind to Naomi. This is a song that reminds us that all those who believe in Jesus belong to God's family wherever it is that they live. The song is so well known that you may not need the words, or a reminder of the tune, but the possible verses you could include when you sing the song are:

- He's got the whole world in his hands.
- He's got the tiny little baby in his hands.

- He's got you and me, brother, in his hands.
- He's got you and me, sister, in his hands.
- He's got everybody here in his hands.

Here's a link to a version that we used before, which is a great to sing and dance to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T1CLIMjiTw>

Prayer

We've been praying 'teaspoon prayers' each month at Messy Church. Think about your family at home or others at Messy Church – they are both families to which you belong. Pray **thanks** to God for these people, say **sorry** for times when you might have upset them and ask God (with a **please**) to show you how you might care for these people better. The first letters of thank you, sorry and please (tsp), give an abbreviation for teaspoon and we call these prayers 'teaspoon prayers'.

Messy Grace:

This is a prayer that we say at Messy Church to ask God to always be with us, as we try to keep connected to Jesus.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (hold out hands as if expecting a present)

And the love of God (put your hands on your heart)

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (hold hands)

Be with us all (raise arms)

Amen (drop hands)

Next date: Friday 16th April 2021

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