##### ****A reflection for Mothering Sunday – Revd Clare Coates****

##### ****John**** ****19:25-27**** *Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”*

Mothering Sunday is a time to celebrate, honour and give thanks for our mothers; for all those who care for us; and for our families.

For some of us, it’s a hard day as we remember those who are no longer with us; or because we have no children; or if we have no immediate family. It’s important for us to acknowledge this. But also to remember that no matter what our circumstances, we all belong to the family of God. In today’s gospel reading Jesus, in his final words spoken from the cross, asks his friend, the beloved disciple, to love and take care of his mother. He also asks his mother to love and take care of his friend as her son. They become a new family. Jesus’s family. In doing so, Jesus gifts us a new way of being family. When we follow Jesus, we belong to his family.

Belonging to Jesus’s family also means we belong to each other, even if we are not biologically related. As members of Jesus’s family, we are all brothers and sisters; mothers and fathers. We come from all walks of life – from different areas, backgrounds, experiences. And we belong to one family, thanks to Jesus.

At times like this, it’s important to look out for one another and to stand by each other**.** It can feel scary – not knowing what’s going to happen. In this last week alone, there has been great uncertainty about what is going to happen. Things seem to be getting worse by the day. And we can no longer gather in St Andrew’s each Sunday, which has been very painful and distressing.

But our Church is more than just a building. We are the Church, wherever we are. We may not be able to meet face to face for a while, but we are still gathering as a Church family even when in our own homes. I have been very proud of us all this week as we have pulled together and worked as a team. Every member of St Andrew’s has either received a phone call or email. Simon and I have been greatly blessed with the help and support of the Pastoral team and the Church Wardens in particular. We are praying for every one of you. You are not alone. We are in this together. And God is with us.

It’s hard to imagine how Mary must have felt at the foot of the cross, looking up at her beloved son, and watching him suffer and die. There can be no more a painful experience than watching someone you love suffer and die. Mary’s courage and bravery are outstanding.She stands by him, firm and resolute. She does not leave his side.

**This is what God is like. He stands by us through everything.** We may find ourselves over the coming weeks in Mary’s position: watching and waiting, as someone we love suffers.We can take courage and inspiration from Mary – her love is steadfast, resilient and patient. She stands by Jesus. She stays by him, no matter what.At times like this, it’s important to look out for one another and to stand by each other.  **And we should never forget that God stands with us as we stand together.**