

Marvellous Mums

AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP RESOURCE for Mothers' Day

In Australia, Mothers' Day is observed on the second Sunday in May. Mothers' Day is a secular holiday, driven to a large extent by commercial interests.

As Christians we are commanded to honour our mothers at all times — including Mothers' Day.

ALL AGE WORSHIP

Worship is an encounter between God and God's people; a dialogue in which God speaks and people respond, both in the worship service and in their lives. All-age (intergenerational) worship is, first and foremost, worship.

Intentionally *intergenerational* worship

- allows this dialogue to take place in a variety of ways
- focuses on a simple theme and connects that theme with the lives of the worshipers
- provides worshipers (young and old) with an experience they can remember and talk about in their homes
- encourages interaction and dialogue among people of the various generations
- includes some surprises and fun
- takes seriously the understanding that people of all ages worship together in the body of Christ. People of all ages can also plan worship, invite people to worship, and lead worship
- recognises and values the children present in the worshiping congregation and 'the child within' each adult.

Mothers' Day is by definition intergenerational. Worship on Mothers' Day can be a significant part of the celebration. Mothers' Day is an opportunity conversation with God on the topic of mothers and motherhood.

USING THIS RESOURCE

These notes have been prepared by the Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry of the Uniting Church (SA) to help congregations plan a special worship for children and families (including grandparents and great-grandparents).

You may make as many copies of the notes as you need for your worship planners and leaders.

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Read through all the material. Discuss it as a planning team. You may use any of the ideas that are appropriate in your situation or you may use the entire sample service.

If you use the resource, we would appreciate your letting us know what you do. Send a brief email to rccfm@bigpond.com

For other intergenerational worship ideas see <http://mrn.sa.uca.org.au> Click on 'Helps', then 'Children's Ministry', then 'All-Age Worship'.

CONTENTS

Theme	2
Worship Planning	2
Invitation and advertising	2
Worship space and visuals.....	3
Music	3
Children's contribution	4
Hospitality	4
Worship leaders	5
Sermon	5
Take home	5
Upsizing and downsizing	5
Rehearsal.....	5
Lydia — a Bible story.....	6
Lydia — a picture of a mum.....	7
Honouring your Mother	8
Mothers in the Bible.....	9
Why Mothers' Day?.....	10
Celebrating Mothers' Day	11
Quotes about Mums	12
A sample worship plan.....	13

THEME

The theme for this worship service is God's gift of Mothers. As we honour mothers, we honour God who gives us mothers.

Mothers' Day is not a church festival, but the liturgical readings for the day include the story of Lydia Acts 16:9–15, 40. That story can be the basis of a worship service honouring mothers.

LYDIA'S STORY The Bible story of Lydia leaves many unanswered questions. There is no mention of husband or children. Lydia was the head of a household, which may have been a business or a family home or both.

It is generally assumed that she was well to do, dealing in expensive purple cloth; with a home big enough to provide hospitality to visiting missionaries and serve as a meeting place for the Christian community at Philippi.

Other writers suggest something quite different. Lydia may have been dealing in cheaper purple cloth, which required a hot, smelly dyeing process with a ready supply of water. The occupation may have made her more of an outcast. She may have been near the river outside the city, not because it was a pleasant meeting place, but because it was the only place she was welcome.

What we do know is that Lydia (named for a place) was not a native, but was living in Philippi at the time Paul and Silas first visited there.

She worshiped and prayed to God. She was a gentile who had affiliated herself with the Jews of Philippi, meeting with the women, but not welcome in the synagogue where Jewish men congregated.

She was open to the good news preached by Paul and Silas. In fact she is remembered as the first European Christian convert.

She was baptised and led her household (family and/or workers) to be baptised as well.

She went on to be a leader of the Christian community at Philippi, which Paul encouraged in his Letter to the Christians at Philippi and praised as his fellow workers.

Because it does not get bogged down in a specific model of motherhood, the story of Lydia can serve as an introduction to some important, universal aspects of Christian motherhood.

WORSHIP PLANNING

An all-age worship service is best planned by an intergenerational team, working with the pastor/minister/priest or lay ministry team. If possible the team should consist of at least three people: one representing the youngest third, one, the middle third and one, the oldest third of the congregation.

Planning as an intergenerational team can be a valuable experience for all involved.

If women ordinarily take the main role in organising worship, this service that honours mothers may be an excellent time for men and children to take on these roles

The team may also draw on people who have special abilities, eg in the areas of hospitality, music, drama, visual arts and technology.

In planning this service be particularly careful you don't make inaccurate assumptions about the families and mothers who will be worshipping with you.

Suggested planning steps:

- Begin with prayer, and trust God's Spirit to guide your planning.
- Consider how the theme relates to people in your congregation and community.
- Look through these notes to see how they can help in planning the kind of service you want to hold.
- Use these notes together with your regular worship format to develop a worship outline.
- Flesh out the outline; consider your own people and facilities.
- Work with worship leaders to plan details: who does what, when and how.

INVITATION AND ADVERTISING

The first people to notify about your service are the members of your congregation. Encourage them to catch the vision of an intergenerational worship event for Mothers' Day.

Encourage grandparents and godparents of children (including adult children) who do not worship regularly to see this as a special way to observe Mothers' Day.

Encourage children and young families whose mothers do not worship regularly to see this as an opportunity to invite mothers (and other female carers) to share a worship experience with them.

Invite families involved in your church's children's programs: playgroup, Sunday school, kids club, day care, etc. Invite people from organizations that use your church's facilities.

Be sure to include the date, time and location of the service in all of your promotional material.

In your planning and invitation, be sensitive to people who may be marginalised by a Mothers' Day celebration, eg

- people whose mothers are not with them at this time
- people who have recently lost mothers through death or another circumstance
- mothers who have lost children through death or other circumstances

- women (couples) who would like to have children but have been unable to do so
- people who have been hurt or abused by, or who are experiencing strained relationships with their mother
- people who live alone either by choice or by circumstances and will feel excluded by any emphasis on family relationships.

WORSHIP SPACE & VISUALS

A clean, tidy worship area is an inviting space for regular worshippers and visitors alike.

Call on people with technical and artistic skills to create an atmosphere that supports the theme of the service.

Consider showing a PowerPoint slide show as people arrive, eg

- photos of a range of types of mums
- photos of kids from your congregation with their mums
- kids' drawings of their mums
- kids' messages to their mums.

If you expect to have people worshipping with you who may be uncomfortable in your worship centre, consider having the service in another setting, eg your hall — possibly with seating at tables in family groups.

LYDIA'S HOME OPTION: The believers in Philippi met in Lydia's home. If you are a home based group or if you are able to arrange a home-like setting for worship, consider 'meeting at Lydia's home' with a costumed 'Lydia' serving as hostess and leading the worship. The monologue on page 6 is a starting point.

THE COLOUR PURPLE Lydia was a dealer in purple fabric, so consider using the colour purple as a visual theme for this service, eg

- purple flowers and/or candles
- purple background for PowerPoint slides
- worship leaders dressed in purple
- purple badges for mothers

Purple is an intriguing colour, combining hot red and cool blue. It has a range of hues in nature, including lavender, orchid, lilac and violet. Purple is associated with royalty in many cultures and is worn by people of authority or high rank. The Purple Heart is a U.S. military decoration given to soldiers wounded in battle.

In the Bible, the Israelites were commanded to decorate the curtains of the tabernacle with 'blue, purple, and scarlet thread; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them'. (Exodus 26:1)

When Jesus was suffering just prior to the crucifixion 'they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head'. (Mark 15:17)

MUSIC

Most of the music in the service will be congregational singing. All worshippers are invited to participate.

You may also use some instrumental or sung performance or recorded music in the service.

Remember that some people may not happily join in with congregational singing. Make it clear that it is OK just to sit and listen to the music. Invite people to join in the singing when they are comfortable doing so.

Your regular instrumentalists (organist, band) lead/accompany the singing. Display song words in your usual manner.

Include traditional hymns as well as more contemporary songs and songs for children.

For the benefit of children and visitors, explain briefly any obscure images or unfamiliar language in the songs.

Consider ways of involving children who are too young to read the words, eg

- teach Auslan symbols or other actions for some key words in the song and ask everyone to do the actions when they come to the words in the song (See www.auslan.org.au for a vocabulary of signs)
- teach one or two lines that are repeated in the chorus and give a cue when everyone can join in singing these lines
- give children a percussion instrument to play during some songs.

Small congregations, or congregations that do not have strong musical leadership, may sing with CDs or other electronic music.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

Use mostly songs that are familiar to your congregation and that they can sing comfortably. You may want to include some of these in your Mothers' Day service.

Traditional hymns

- *Fairest Lord Jesus* (Munster Gesangbuch; trans. Various)
- *Holy God, we praise your name* (unknown)
- *Now thank we all our God* (Rinkart)
- *Praise and thanksgiving, Father we offer* (Bayly)
- *Faith of our Fathers* (Faber)
A. B. Patton has written a Mothers' version:
 1. Faith of our mothers, living still
in cradle song and bedtime prayer,
in nursery lore and fireside love;
thy presence still pervades the air —
Faith of our mothers, living faith;
we will be true to thee till death.
 2. Faith of our mothers, loving faith,
fount of our childhood's trust and grace;

oh, may thy consecration prove
source of a finer, nobler race —

Faith of our mothers, loving faith,
we will be true to thee till death.

3. Faith of our mothers, guiding faith
for youthful longing, youthful doubt;
how blurred our vision, blind our way,
thy providential care without:

Faith of our mothers, guiding faith,
we will be true to thee till death.

4. Faith of our mothers, Christian faith
in truth beyond our stumbling creeds;
lead us in service and save the Church,
and breathe thy spirit thro' our deeds —

Faith of our mothers, Christian faith,
we will be true to thee till death.

Contemporary songs:

- *Bind us together* (Gillman)
- *Breathe on me, breath of God* (Hatch)
- *God loves you and I love you* (Mann)
- *God of Abraham* (Farrell)
Choose some of the mother verses
- *One family* (Strelan)
- *I'm changed, I'm not the same* (Fragar)
- *I'm your child* (Bullock)
- *Lord of all hopefulness* (Struther)
- *May the Lord bless you today* (Russell-Schlenker)
- *Open the eyes of my heart, Lord* (Smith)
- *Power of your name* (Bullock)
- *Thank you Father for everything* (Boucher)
- *Your love keeps following me* (Fragar)

Some songs for children:

- *He's got the whole world in his hands*
include verses 'fathers and mothers', 'sons
and daughters'
- *God gives* (Boucher)
- *Come in to my heart* (Clarke)
may use just the familiar chorus

Try writing your own song, eg this one by Nikki McQuery based on the story of Lydia and sung to the tune of 'Mary had a little lamb'.

1. Lydia was there that day,
there that day, there that day.
Lydia was there that day
at the place of prayer.

2. As she listened to Paul's words,
to Paul's words, to Paul's words,
As she listened to Paul's words
God opened up her heart.

3. She began to trust in Him,
trust in Him, trust in Him.
She began to trust in Him
and obey his words.

4. Be like Lydia and seek the Lord,
seek the Lord, seek the Lord.
Be like Lydia and seek the Lord.
Open your heart to His word.

Tom Chapin's song 'Mothers' Day' is a humorous secular song about family observation of Mothers' Day. A recording of the song could be played as people assemble in the worship area. You could make a feature of the song by having children present it (singing with the recording) or having a family do a skit, miming the activities mentioned in the song. 'Mothers' Day' is on the album *Moonboat*. You can download it as MP3 through Amazon.

CHILDREN'S CONTRIBUTION

A children's contribution to this service could take almost any form; eg

- make invitations and give them to mums and nanas
- greet worshipers and give mums special gifts or badges
- pray for mums and grandmas
- sing a song for/about mothers
- bless mums
- perform a dance or skit about mums

Ideally the children's contribution will come from the children. Let them know that a special worship service is being planned to honour Marvellous Mums for Mothers' Day. Ask them what they might contribute to the service.

As much as possible, use the children's suggestions and involve the children in planning and carrying out the details.

A performance by children can be a drawing card for parents and grandparents. But it should be more than this. A children's performance will honour mothers and honour God who gives us mothers.

Be sensitive to children who do not have mothers or whose mothers are unlikely to participate in a church event.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is the responsibility of all members of the congregation. People who invite and bring people to the service have the primary responsibility for looking after their special guests.

A designated **HOSPITALITY TEAM** has responsibilities that include:

- being aware of the safety aspects of the worship space, eg location of alternate exits, fire extinguishers and first aid equipment, identity of people with first aid training
- greeting people as they arrive
- helping people to get settled

Pay special attention to the very young, the very old and people with handicaps. Seat them where they will be able to see/hear, but not feel conspicuous

- being alert to needs of people during the service, and assisting as required.

You may make Mothers' Day a day-off for those mothers who regularly serve as worship hosts and have other duties in worship. Consider challenging youth and singles to honour mothers by allowing them to sit with their families for this worship service.

Alternatively, you may arrange to have family groups perform hospitality duties together.

Be sure to give every mother attending the service a special, hearty welcome.

Some churches have the lovely practice of giving each worshiper a chrysanthemum posy on Mothers' Day. You may want to find purple flowers or add a purple ribbon to the posies in keeping with a purple theme.

WORSHIP LEADERS

Your regular worship leader may lead intergenerational worship. Alternatively, the worship can be led by another person or a group of people representing different generations (genders and/or ethnic backgrounds).

If women ordinarily take the main role in leading worship, this service that honours mothers may be an excellent time for men and children to take on these roles

The sample service involves leadership roles for:

- A WORSHIP LEADER who serves as host (or compere) leading worshipers through the service.
- MUSIC TEAM/SONG LEADER who encourage and lead congregational singing
- HOSPITALITY TEAM
- TECHNOLOGY TEAM
- BIBLE READER
- PRAYER LEADER, an individual or a group
- PREACHER
- TEENS who lead a pre-service activity and an 'honouring mums' activity during the service

It may involve a STORY-TELLER or ACTORS.

SERMON

A sermon in an all-age worship service should be an all-age sermon. This means it's short and simple — generally no more than three points. Stories, illustrations and dialogue can be helpful.

If an adults-only sermon is used, you will need to organize an activity for children to do during the sermon. See gardenofpraise.com/bibl62s.htm for some printable children's resources relating to the Lydia story.

It's good to follow the adage: first tell people what you are going to say, say it, and then tell them what you said. If you do each step in a different, engaging way, people of all ages are likely to remember the message.

There are some sermon ideas on page 6.

TAKE HOME

It is a good idea in an all-age service to provide worshipers with a memento of the service that they can take home with them. Try to have a memento that will encourage ongoing conversation about the worship theme and the worship experience.

UPSIZING & DOWNSIZING

These Mothers' Day worship ideas can be used in large or small congregations. They can also be used in a home setting.

Each planning group will need to adapt the ideas to suit their own particular situation: people, traditions and facilities.

REHEARSAL

Because this service will be different from your usual service, it requires careful planning. It also requires rehearsal. A complete walk-through will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions for the worshipers and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

Use rehearsal time as an opportunity to pray together.

- Praise God for his love and care.
- Thank God that you, as a team, have the privilege of leading people in worship.
- Ask God to bring people to worship who need to hear the good news.
- Ask God to be with all who worship with you – especially the mothers and grandmothers.
- Ask God to accept your planning and worship leading as acts of love and service to him.
- Ask God to bless your efforts and to work through what you do and say — to his glory and the benefit of all worshipers.

Lydia — A Bible Story

IDEAS FOR PREACHING ON LYDIA'S STORY

The story of Lydia can provide a starting point for talking about Christian motherhood today.

1. Lydia's example: God opened her heart; she opened her home
2. Lydia and the noble wife (see painting and notes on page 7).
3. Honouring mothers like Lydia (see notes on page 8)

IDEAS FOR TELLING LYDIA'S STORY

1. Read directly from the Bible

We [Paul and Silas] . . . travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer.

We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God.

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

[Some time later] After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.
(Acts 16:12-15, 40 NIRV)

2. Read the story with puppets or people miming the action.
3. Read the story from a children's Bible story book.
4. Present the story as a play. For a script using a narrator and four characters, see www.kidscorner.net/stories.php?action=story&story=lydia
5. Present the story as a monologue, Lydia giving a first-person account.

MONOLOGUE

LYDIA enters wearing a simple purple robe and carrying a rolled up scroll: Welcome to my home. It's good when believers come together to encourage one another.

LYDIA sits on a stool: I want to remind you of my story. As you know, I used to meet with some of the women down by the river on the Sabbath to pray and talk about the Scriptures.

One day two men (Paul and Silas) approached us. That was surprising in itself — for Jewish men to come to the women. But what they had to say was more surprising.

They claimed that the Jewish Saviour, who had been prophesied about in the Scriptures, had actually come. He was born in Bethlehem. He preached and taught and helped people. He was put to death by his enemies. Then he came back to life! Paul even claimed that this Messiah, Jesus, had actually come to him and talked to him.

It was an unbelievable story. But, somehow God opened my heart that day and I believed. You're believers here. You know what it's like.

Well I wanted to hear more about this Jesus, so I invited Paul and Silas to come to my house. They stayed here while they were in Philippi, and even came back after that awful time when they were in jail.

Some of you have been here with me right from that beginning. We've continued to meet together to encourage one another, to talk about Jesus, to support Paul and his missionary travels, to read his letters [show scroll] and to pray.

WORSHIP LEADER: Thanks, Lydia. Now let's continue our worship.

LYDIA moves to a seat in the congregation.

Lydia — A Picture of a Mum



She Worketh Willingly With Her Hands

Lydia from Acts 16

Elspeeth Young

from a series of paintings:
'Women in Scripture'

THE STORY IN THE PAINTING

Lydia was the first recorded European convert to Christianity. Although the Bible does not say specifically that she was either a wife or a mother, Lydia can be viewed as a model of the 'noble wife described in Proverbs 31. In many ways, she may also be a model for mothers today.

Such a woman

- loves to work with her hands (13)
- provides food for her family. (15)
- reaches out her hands to those who are needy (20)
- All of them are dressed in the finest clothes (21,22)
- teaches faithfully (26)
- watches over family matters. (27)

Her children stand up and call her blessed.
Her husband also rises up, and he praises her.
(28)

Lydia's faith is made active through her works. Therefore, the painting shows Lydia working 'willingly with her hands', hands which have stretched out in kindness to Paul and his companions, providing shelter for them, and for her fellow saints as well (Acts 16:40).

Lydia's humility is evident in the composition of the painting. She is working, watching over family matters, not drawing attention to herself. The viewer is drawn to focus on her work, not on herself.

She radiates the beauty which comes from faith, humility, and quiet selflessness.

SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS IN THE PAINTING

Lydia is depicted as a woman of means and social status, selling costly Tyrian purple coveted by the Roman elite. Such purple was produced by crushing shells of the Murex snail and was extremely precious. Hundreds of snails were required to create enough purple for just one piece of cloth. Two or three of these murex snails are visible among the logs in the bottom right of the picture.

Two pieces of purple cloth remind us of Lydia's work, in a literal sense, as a seller of purple. More importantly, however, the purple indicates Lydia's divine worth as an individual and her 'royal' rights as a child of God. Gentile though she was, Lydia was baptised and 'adopted' into the chosen people.

The flowers at the lower left of the painting are *Euphorbia milii*, known as 'Crown of Thorns' or 'Christ plant' traditionally the plant from which Christ's crown of thorns was made.

Christ's sacrifice enables those, like Lydia, who believe on his name to be cleansed of sin — to be as pure as the white fabric she holds in her hands. It reminds us that: 'Even though your sins are bright red, they will be as white as snow'. (Isaiah 1:18)

(from
alyoung.com/Art_Gallery/Elspeeth_Young/Women_in_..Lydia.html -)

Honouring your mother

GOD'S COMMAND ABOUT HIS GIFT OF MOTHERS

Honour your father and your mother so that you will live a long time in the land that the Lord your God is going to give you. (Exodus 20:12)

The Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20 as part of the account of the tribes of Israel becoming a unified people through forty years wandering in the wilderness. To this day, God's people see the Ten Commandments as a summary of God's law — the way he directs and expects us to live in relationship with him and with one another.

One of these commandments is particularly significant to us on Mothers' Day: Honour your father and your mother.

Here are some implications of this commandment.

Why should we honour parents?

(1) God tells us to honour them. So honouring them is obeying and honouring God.

Children, obey your parents as the Lord wants, because this is the right thing to do. (Ephesians 6:1)

(2) God promises good things to those who honour their parents.

This is the first command that has a promise with it — then everything will be well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth. (Ephesians 6:2,3)

Obeying God by honouring parents brings not so much living to a ripe old age, but enjoying the blessings of happiness, health, family, peace, good government, etc. for several generations.

(3) Parents represent God in our lives.

It is our duty to show the world that we are grateful for all the good things we have received from our parents. They are the ones through which God has given us so much — physically, materially and spiritually.

How should we honour our parents?

Honouring parents involves such things as: loving them, obeying them, serving them, doing cheerfully what they ask us to do and repaying them with kindness and love for their care of us.

We are to control ourselves when we speak to them.

We should show by our attitude that we look on them as having the highest status after God —

no matter how humble, poor, frail or odd they may be. They don't lose their honour because of their way of life or their failings.

We are to honour them by being of service to them, giving them a helping hand and looking after them when they are old, sick, frail or poor. We do this respectfully and enjoy doing it.

Nothing is to count more than the will and word of parents. However, while still honouring our parents, we are to refuse to obey them when they tell us to do what is sinful.

We must obey God, not human authority! (Acts 5:29)

What does God require of parents?

God requires that parents be worthy of love and respect.

Every parent is to bring up his children above all to respect and know God.

Such parents do not make their children angry, but raise them with the training and teaching of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

Who are the parents we honour?

We honour four kinds of parents:

- parents by blood relationships,
- parents in charge of a household,
- parents of their people, eg teachers, employers, government leaders,
- spiritual parents who encourage and guide us by God's word. Paul wrote: *'Through the Good News I became your father in Christ Jesus.'* (1 Corinthians 4:15)

... and the good news

No human parent can, by himself or herself, completely fulfil their God-given role.

No child can, by himself or herself, completely fulfil their duty as a child.

Jesus was a perfect Son of a perfect Father. Yet he chose to pay the penalty for our shortcomings and our wilful disobedience.

Because of this, we are restored to the roles God intended for us in our relationship with God and with one another.

Mothers in the Bible

The term 'Mother' is used over 300 times in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to animal mothers. When it refers to human mothers it sometimes identifies individuals and sometimes to motherhood and characteristics of mothers in general.

Bible mothers represent the whole range of status, personality and character. There are few if any traits, flaws, weaknesses, virtues or strengths of mothers today that won't find a parallel in the Bible.

MOTHERHOOD IN GENERAL

Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12)

If anyone attacks his father or mother, he will be put to death. (Exodus 21:15)

He gives children to the woman who doesn't have any children. He makes her a happy mother in her own home. Praise the Lord. (Psalms 113:9)

A foolish child makes his father sad and his mother sorry. (Proverbs 17:25)

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside. They wanted to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside. They want to speak to you."

Jesus replied to him, "Who is my mother? And who are my brothers?" Jesus pointed to his disciples. He said, "Here is my mother! Here are my brothers! Anyone who does what my Father in heaven wants is my brother or sister or mother." (Matthew 12:46-50)

INDIVIDUAL MOTHERS

Mothers mentioned by name in the Old Testament include Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Hagar, Naomi, Hannah, Abigail, Jochebed, Zippora.

Adam named his wife Eve. She would become the mother of every living person. (Genesis 3:20)

In the New Testament: Elizabeth, Mary, Claudia, Drusilla, and Eunice and Lois:

I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also . . . from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).

Some women were identified by some characteristic, eg the widow of Zarephath, the widow of Nain, the wise woman of Tekoah.

Many others are known simply as the mother of Jeremiah, Elisha, Micah, etc.

These are the sayings of King Lemuel. His mother taught them to him. She spoke them as if they came from God. (Proverbs 31:1)

In some cases the identity of the mother helped to establish the 'credentials' of the son.

Here are the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron.

His first son was Amnon. Amnon's mother was Ahinoam from Jezreel.

The second son was Daniel. His mother was Abigail from Carmel.

The third son was Absalom. His mother was Maacah. She was the daughter of Talmai, the king of Geshur.

The fourth son was Adonijah. His mother was Haggith.

The fifth son was Shephatiah. His mother was Abital.

The sixth son was Ithream. David's wife Eglah had Ithream by him.

David reigned in Jerusalem thirty-three years and these were the children born to him there. They included Shammua, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon. The mother of those four sons was Bathsheba. She was the daughter of Ammiel. (1 Chronicles 3:1-5)

GOD AS MOTHER

Today some people speak of God as Mother. They have noted that the Bible contains many images and metaphors illustrating God's maternal care for all creation. See, for example, Psalm 27:10; Isaiah 42:14; Isaiah 46:3-4; Hosea 11:3-4; Isaiah 49:15; Hosea 13:8 and John 1:13.

The issue is not so much the gender of God, but how the love of God transcends differences of gender, and everything else that divides us and brings us into conflict — as individuals, in families and in societies.

Why Mothers' Day?

There are some valid arguments against celebrating Mothers' Day in church. These cluster around two ideas:

- this is the time of year to celebrate the resurrected Lord Jesus, not our mothers
- the celebration exacerbates the problems of people who are conflicted in their family relations.

On the other side of the coin, secular Mothers' Day is a reality in our culture. It can be a point where churches meet people in the context of where they live. A church's observation of Mothers' Day can emphasise healing and reconciliation rather than glorify the 'Hallmark-cards' image of motherhood.

Some suggest that it would be more appropriate for churches to observe a 'Christian Family Sunday' or a 'Women of Faith Day'.

BACKGROUND

This background on the history and purpose of Mothers' Day can help you decide if you want to make it a special observation in your church.

The woman credited with founding Mothers' Day is **Anna Jarvis**.

Anna's mother, Mrs. Anna Reeves Jarvis, an active member of the Methodist Church, organized 'Mothers' Work Day Clubs' in the 1850's in and around Grafton, West Virginia, USA. The clubs provided medicines for the poor, inspected milk for children, provided nursing care for the sick, and shelters for children with tuberculosis.

When the Civil War broke out she called together four of her clubs and asked them to make a pledge that friendship and good will would not be a casualty of the war. In a remarkable display of courage and compassion the women nursed soldiers from both sides and saved many lives from both sides.

After the war, she organized 'Mothers' Friendship Days' to bring together families across the Mason Dixon line.

In 1907, two years after her mother's death Anna Jarvis organized the first 'Mothers' Day' in Grafton, so that her mother's work of peacemaking and war against poverty would not be forgotten.

Within the next few years, the idea of a day to honour mothers gained popularity. On 9 May, 1914, by an act of Congress, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as

Mothers' Day — a time for 'public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country'. Since then the idea of Mothers' Day has spread to Australia and many other countries.

Apparently, as the holiday became more and more commercialized, Anna Jarvis ended up opposing the holiday she had helped to create.

Another early promoter of the idea of Mothers' Day was **Julia Ward Howe**.

She was also American and is known for composing 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic', an inspirational hymn of the Union Army during the Civil War.

As the war dragged on and following the war, Julia became more and more anti-militant. After the war she focused on voting rights for women.

In 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, she began organizing what she called 'Mothers' Peace Day' festivals and wrote:

Why do not the mothers of mankind interfere in these matters to prevent the waste of that human life of which they alone know and bear the cost? . . . As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war, let women on this day leave the duties of hearth and home to set out in the work of peace.

With or without Mothers' Day, per se, modern mothers, in fact all of us, owe a debt to these early Mothers' Day pioneers.

Celebrating Mothers' Day

THREE SIMPLE MOTHERS' DAY HINTS

- Thank your Mother
- Apologise to your Mother
- Celebrate with your Mother

IDEAS FOR MOTHERS' DAY

As a church family, you may want to honour mothers on Mothers' Day with something in addition to the worship service.

While being cautious of interfering with individual family Mothers' Day traditions, you might consider:

- **A breakfast or lunch** for mums before or after the service, prepared and served by non-mothers (teens, singles, men). Make sure that the mums' kids are catered for and you don't add extra hassles for them.
- **A Mother-Daughter dinner** the evening before (or on another date). While the idea may sound 'sexist' and you might consider changing to Mother-Child, or Child-Carer, there is something very powerful about a 'secret women's business' affair when girls and young women can mix with experienced mothers and older women.

Plan such an event to be a stress-free enjoyable event: pleasant surroundings/ decorations, good food, enjoyable entertainment, prizes, gifts, and perhaps a speaker with a short, inspirational message. Honor with a corsage the oldest mother present, the newest mother, the mother who has travelled the farthest to be present with her family, and or the daughter who has traveled the farthest to be with their mother or grandmother.

Be sure to find a way of involving every woman in the congregation in the event as a natural, adopted or 'surrogate' mother or daughter.

- **Baby shower:** Have a baby shower on Mothers' Day: a brunch after the service, served by the men. Ask each family to bring a wrapped gift as you would for a baby shower. Present these gifts to a local ministry for unwed mothers or for low-income new mothers. People of all ages may play together some of the silly games often associated with baby showers.
- **Mothers' Day cards:** consider sending Mothers' Day cards to the middle aged non-

mothers in the congregation, saying something like, 'Bless you and thank you for mothering the children in our church school (or some similar task they perform); we wouldn't be the same without you.'

- Recognise the participation of women of your congregation and community in causes and organizations that support women and mums, eg Mothers Day Classic March for Breast Cancer Research or mothers' support group of your own congregation.

For lots of other Mothers' Day ideas, check www.chiff.com/home_life/holiday/mothers-day-party.htm

MAKING SOMETHING FOR MUMS

It is quite common for children to make Mothers' Day gifts at school and at clubs. You may work with your church's children's program to help children make a memorable card or gift for their mums in the week/s before Mothers' Day. If possible, link the project with the worship service.

Children may make two of any project so they will have one to give to their own mum and another to give to a grandmother or another woman who cares for them or, perhaps, to a woman in a nursing home.

Tie-dye — Lydia, we are told, worked with purple cloth. In a session before Mothers' Day, children can do the same: use purple fabric dye to tie-dye a scarf or handkerchief as a gift for mums. The process is fairly involved and you'll need to have someone with experience in tie-dyeing to supervise the project.

Plant — Children can use purple paint to decorate a plant pot then fill the pot with potting mix and easy-to grow seedlings, eg alyssum.

Photo and frame — Take and print a photo of each child, possibly holding a poster 'THANK YOU FOR BEING MY MARVELLOUS MUM'. There are many ways children can make frames for the photo using card or craft wood. Alternatively children can decorate purchased frames or photos can be laminated to make drink coasters.

Quotes about Mothers

'I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life.' — Abraham Lincoln

'God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers.' — Jewish proverb

'Of all the rights of women, the greatest is to be a mother.' — Lin Yutang

'The heart of a mother is a deep abyss at the bottom of which you will always find forgiveness.' — Honore' de Balzac

'My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her.' — George Washington

'By and large, mothers and housewives are the only workers who do not have regular time off. They are the great vacationless class.' — Anne Morrow Lindbergh

'The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom.' — Henry Ward Beecher

'Youth fades; love droops, the leaves of friendship fall; A mother's secret hope outlives them all.' — Oliver Wendell Holmes

'The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.' — Author Unknown

'A mother is a person who seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie.' — Teneva Jordan

'A suburban mother's role is to deliver children obstetrically once, and by car forever after.' — Peter De Vries

'The phrase "working mother" is redundant.' — Jane Sellman

'The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new.' — Rajneesh

'An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.' — Spanish Proverb

'I love my mother as the trees love water and sunshine - she helps me grow, prosper, and reach great heights.' — Adabella Radici

'The only mothers it is safe to forget on Mothers' Day are the good ones.' — Mignon McLaughlin

'A mom forgives us all our faults, not to mention one or two we don't even have.' — Robert Brault

'One good mother is worth a hundred schoolmasters.' — George Herbert

'There's nothing like a mama-hug.' — Adabella Radici

'Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.' — William Makepeace Thackeray

'Mother's love grows by giving.' — Charles Lamb

'I cannot forget my mother. She is my bridge. When I needed to get across, she steadied herself long enough for me to run across safely.' — Renita Weems

'A little girl, asked where her home was, replied, "where mother is".' — Keith L. Brooks

'Every beetle is a gazelle in the eyes of its mother.' — Moorish Proverb

'A man's work is from sun to sun, but a mother's work is never done.' — Author Unknown

'No one in the world can take the place of your mother. Right or wrong, from her viewpoint you are always right. She may scold you for little things, but never for the big ones.' — Harry Truman

'Biology is the least of what makes someone a mother.' — Oprah Winfrey

'A man loves his sweetheart the most, his wife the best, but his mother the longest.' — Irish Proverb

'When mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.' — Author Unknown

Marvellous Mums

A SAMPLE WORSHIP PLAN

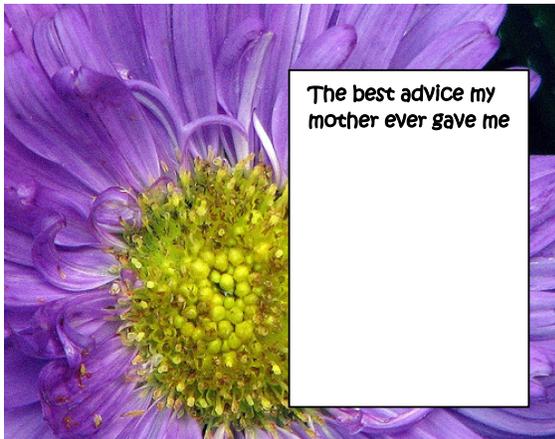
Suggested wording for worship leaders is in *italic print*

CHURCH DECORATION

At the front of the church, is a large basket, which is overflowing with purple fabric. This fabric is purple scarves that worshipers will give to their mums as a token of honour and thanks.

You may use inexpensive dress-lining fabric (or ribbon) as the scarves. You may simply cut the fabric and leave raw edges. Hemming would be nice, but hemming a large number of scarves could be a daunting project (especially if you don't want to involve mums).

ARRIVAL ACTIVITY



As people arrive they go to the hall. **YOUTH** of the congregation help each person make a 'best advice card'.

Provide blank cards A-5 or any convenient size and writing materials on tables where people can work. Although the 'product' (the card) is important; the process (talking as family groups about the advice — profound and or humorous — that has been passed on by mothers) is more important.

Collect the cards when they are completed and arrange them as a display that worshipers can look at as they leave the service.

NOTE: If you have the facilities, photograph the cards with their writers or scan the cards and put together a slide presentation to show during the offering towards the end of the service.

1. ENTRY

After worshipers have done the arrival activity, they move into the worship space.

- **HOSPITALITY TEAM** welcomes people to the service and helps them settle into seats.
- **TECH TEAM** shows PowerPoint slides of mums and grandmothers from the congregation and community interacting with their children in various ways.
- **MUSIC TEAM** plays some of the music that will be used in the service.

2. WELCOME / INVOCATION

WORSHIP LEADER: *Welcome to (name of church). A very special welcome to each of the Marvellous Mums with us to celebrate Mothers' Day.*

We are here on this special day to worship God, who has made himself known to us as our Father — our all-powerful, perfect, loving, forgiving heavenly Parent,

as Jesus Christ — our Brother, Lord and Saviour and as the Spirit who brings us together in faith.

We'll begin our worship with a song. Please stand and join the music team.

3. OPENING SONG

MUSIC TEAM leads people in singing: 'Bind us together' or another song about Christian family.

4. A COMMAND

BIBLE READER: *Marvellous Mums are a gift from God. In the Bible, God has given us laws for living well in his world. Here is one of them that is especially about mums.*

Reads:

... God spoke. He said, "I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of Egypt. ... Do not put any other gods in place of me. ... Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:1-3,12 NIRV)

WORSHIP LEADER: may add some comment on what it means to honour parents. See notes on page 8.

5. CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

WORSHIP LEADER: *Hands up if you have (or have ever had) a mother. [raises own hand]*

Keep your hands up if you are honouring your mum today.

Keep your hand up if you always honour your mum the way God wants you to honour her. [puts hand down].

I love my mum, but . . . I don't always respect and obey her the way God wants me to.

I sometimes think and say unkind things to her and about her. I sometimes take her for granted and feel that the time I spend with her is a bit of a burden. Sometimes I get upset when she asks me to do something I don't want to do.

I don't know what your relationship with your mother is like. I hope it is generally a good one. But I'm pretty sure each of you has some things in your relationship that are not perfect.

Now is a time for you to think of your mum, and quietly, in your heart, tell your heavenly Father about anything that is bothering you.

The music team will play some music while you are thinking about your mum.

MUSIC TEAM plays a quiet instrumental for about one minute as people meditate silently.

WORSHIP LEADER: *No human mother can fulfil her God-given role as parent perfectly.*

No child can fulfil their duty as a child — only Jesus, the perfect son of a perfect heavenly parent.

Jesus chose to pay the penalty for our shortcomings and for our wilful disobedience.

Because of this, when we are sorry for what we do wrong and tell God about it, God forgives us. And God helps us live as parents and children the way he planned for us.

6. SONG

MUSIC TEAM leads people in singing 'Because of your love' or another song about God's forgiveness.

7. A BIBLE STORY

WORSHIP LEADER: *One of my favourite stories from the Bible is about a woman named Lydia.*

Present the story of Lydia (Acts 16:12-15) in the most effective way you can. See suggestions on page 6.

After the story:

WORSHIP LEADER: *I wonder: if Lydia had children, what might she have told them that night as she tucked them into bed.*

Invite family groups to spend a minute or two talking about this topic. People worshiping alone can form small groups or simply think about it on their own.

8. SONG

MUSIC TEAM plays an instrumental introduction to the next song while family groups are chatting.

Then invites the congregation to join in singing 'Come into my heart, Lord Jesus' or 'Open the eyes of my heart, Lord'.

9. SERMON

WORSHIP LEADER or **PREACHER** uses Lydia's story as the basis of a short address on honouring Christian mums today. See suggestions on page 6.

10. HONOUR MUMS

TEEN: *Lydia in the Bible was a woman who worked with purple cloth. Purple is a special colour. It is some people's favourite colour.*

In Bible times purple cloth was very expensive. It was worn only by royalty or people who deserved special honour.

Our Marvellous Mums are royalty in our homes and in our hearts. Today we give them special honour.

Mum, will you come here, please.

TEEN'S MOTHER comes to the front.

TEEN takes a purple scarf from the basket at the front of the church, ties it around his/her mum's neck and gives her a hug, saying: 'Thanks for being my Marvellous Mum.'

TEEN: *Each of you who is here with your mum, please come and get a scarf for her. When you give it to her, be sure to give her a hug and thank her for being your Marvellous Mum.*

TEEN and TEEN'S MUM help distribute scarves to children of all ages who come forward, get a scarf and give it to their mums.

TECH TEAM can display a slide with the words: 'Thanks for being my Marvellous Mum'.

MUSIC TEAM can play quiet instrumental music.

Note: it may be a good idea to have enough scarves for every woman worshiping with you. Several 'spotters' may have the responsibility to make sure that no woman goes un-recognised.

11. SONG

MUSIC TEAM leads people in singing 'He's got the whole world in his hands (include verses 'fathers and mothers', 'sons and daughters') or another song that will particularly appeal to children.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORSHIP LEADER makes any necessary brief announcements.

- Explain and invite people to any fellowship activities planned for after the service.

- Explain how the offering will be collected and how the offering money will be used. Also give guests permission to refrain from giving an offering.

13. OFFERING

The offering is collected in your usual manner. As the offering is collected:

MUSIC TEAM may play instrumental music

TECH TEAM shows PowerPoint slides of the 'Mum's advice' cards made before the service.

14. PRAYER

PRAYER LEADER (one person or several people) leads the congregation in prayer:

God our Creator, we thank you for your gift of Marvellous Mums.

We pray for

- *expectant mothers, wondering and waiting;*
- *new mothers, coming to terms with new responsibility;*
- *mothers who are tired, stressed or depressed;*
- *mothers who struggle to balance the tasks of work and family;*
- *mothers who are unable to feed their children due to poverty;*
- *mothers whose children have physical, mental or emotional disabilities;*
- *mothers who have children they do not want and those suffering the results of an abortion;*
- *mothers who raise children on their own;*
- *mothers who have lost a child;*
- *those who 'mother' the children of others: step mothers and mothers in blended families;*
- *mothers whose children have left home;*
- *and for those whose desire to be a mother has not been fulfilled*

Bless all mothers, that their love may be deep and tender,

- *and that they may lead their children to know and do what is good,*
- *living not for themselves alone, but for you and for others.*

Help us to honour our mothers as a gift from you. And help us to let them know that to us they are truly 'Marvellous Mums' — today and always. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

PRAYER LEADER may add other petitions.

CONGREGATION may pray the Lord's Prayer.

15. BLESSING SONG

WORSHIP LEADER: *We're going to finish our worship today with a blessing song. We'll sing it three times.*

The first time, the MUSIC TEAM will sing it to give God's blessing to all of us.

The second time, the Marvellous Mums can sing it to bless their children. Mums, you may want to hold your kids as you sing.

The third time, the children can sing it to bless their Marvellous Mums. Kids, you may want to hold your mums as you sing.

MUSIC TEAM leads the singing of 'May the Lord bless you today' (Russell-Schlenker) or another short, simple song of blessing.

WORSHIP LEADER: *Go in God's peace. Serve the Lord. Have a blessed and happy Mothers' Day.*

16. LEAVING AND HOSPITALITY

As people leave they can examine a display of the 'best advice' cards made before the service. They can take their own cards home after they have a cuppa, cake and a chat.