

No Greater Love

Intergenerational Worship for Mothers Day

Notes

OBSERVING MOTHERS DAY

It goes without saying that the reality of family relationships is far from the 'sweetness and light' image that is often promoted at Mothers Day, Not everyone sees Mothers Day as a joyful celebration.

Although Mothers Day is a secular, not a traditional church observance, there are a number of good reasons for observing Mothers Day in worship.

First, we honour mothers as a gift of God. In the Ten Commandments we are told to 'Honour your father and your mother. St Paul urges us to: 'Pay all that you owe, whether it is taxes and fees or respect and honour.' He continues: 'Let love be your only debt! If you love others you have done all that the Law demands'. (Romans 13:7,8)

By honouring mothers, we honour God who gave us mothers.

Second, we need to remind ourselves and our children of ideals of kindness and compassion that we can aim for in our lives. Paul writes: 'Finally my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise.' (Philippians 4:8)

We honour God by honouring the 'ideals of Christian family life' which we can only partially achieve, but which every one of us can strive for.

Third, we recognise the different experiences of motherhood in our families; and as a wider Christian family we walk beside and support people, whatever their experience. Paul writes: 'When others are happy, be happy with them, and when they are sad, be sad'. (Romans 12:15)

In observing Mothers Day we validate each person's experience.

ALL-AGE WORSHIP

Mothers Day is, by its very nature, an intergenerational event. So it is fitting that we observe it with intergenerational worship.

All-age (intergenerational) worship is, first and foremost, worship - 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.

Intentionally intergenerational worship

- * allows this dialogue to take place through several of the senses, movement and activity

- * focuses on a single theme and connects that theme with the lives of the worshipers. It reinforces the theme by exploring it in several different ways

- * provides worshipers (young, old and in-between) with an experience and thoughts they can remember and talk about in their homes. It may provide resources to support that conversation

- * encourages interaction and dialogue among people of the various generations represented in the worshiping community

- * differs from worship that is planned by adults for adults, and differs from worship for children alone - planned either by adults or by children

- * 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

All-age worship recognises and values the children present in worship and 'the child within' each adult.

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USING THIS RESOURCE

These notes have been prepared by the Children and Family Ministry Team, Mission Resourcing SA to help congregations plan Mothers Day worship involving children and families. You may make as many copies of the notes as needed for your worship planners and leaders.

Use of music and other copyright elements is not covered in this permission.

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

If you use the resource, we would appreciate your letting us know what you do. Send a brief email to children@sa.uca.org.au

You can find more all-age worship resources on our web site www.XXXXXXXXXX

BIBLE TEXTS & THEME

The lectionary texts for 13 May, 2012 (the sixth Sunday of Easter) are

- Acts 10:44–48 (Gentiles are given the Holy Spirit)
- Psalm 98 (Sing a new song to the Lord)
- 1 John 5:1–6 (Being God's children)
- John 15:9–17 (Love as I have loved you)

The theme of God's love runs through these texts. The Gospel passage contains the theme for the service:

No one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends. (v13 NIRV)

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:12-14&version=NIRV>
<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:12-14&version=NIV>

PLANNING

It is good to plan all-age worship as 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, one the middle and one the oldest third of the congregation.

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

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

Suggested planning steps:

1. Begin with prayer, and trust God's Spirit to guide your planning.
2. Consider the worshipers and what God has to offer them on Mothers Day.
3. Look through these notes to see how they can help in planning a service that clearly presents God's message this Mothers Day.
4. Use these notes and other resources to develop a worship outline.
5. Flesh out the outline, consider your own people and facilities.
6. Work with worship leaders to organise details: who does what, when and how.

INVITATION AND ADVERTISING

The first people to notify about your service are the members of your congregation. Begin early to let them in on the excitement of what is being planned. Encourage them to catch the vision of honouring mothers in worship.

Guests will come in response to personal invitations from people in your congregation, and to advertising done in your community.

Consider

- inviting people to come themselves and to bring their mothers, grandmothers, women friends
- giving a special invitations to people in groups that use your church facilities, eg playgroup, sporting clubs, exercise groups
- placing a notice/invitation in your local newspaper
- placing printed invitation notices in a shopping centre or other gathering places
- putting a sign board outside your church.

HOSPITALITY

When you invite guests to a worship service it is especially important to provide them with a warm welcome and a comfortable environment. This is the responsibility of all members of the congregation, but you may designate specific people to take on specific duties.

Your **HOSPITALITY TEAM** may include people of all ages, possibly family groups. Their responsibility will be planning for and ensuring the comfort of guests. This may involve:

- being aware of the safety features of the worship space, eg location of alternate exits, location of first aid equipment, identity of people with first aid training
- greeting people as they arrive
- helping guests to get settled (possibly showing them to seats, introducing them to someone sitting near them, telling them where to find toilets and other facilities, giving them a worship leaflet
- paying 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.
- providing a quiet activity bag or play item for very young children
- keeping alert to needs of people during the service, and assisting as required
- providing some fellowship food or activity after the service (with something special for children who may not want to stand around while adults have a cuppa).

If it is your intention to make follow-up contact with guests, the hospitality team may be responsible for obtaining guests' names, contact details, special needs, requests or other information.

WORSHIP SPACE & VISUALS

A clean, tidy attractive worship area can help guests and regular worshipers feel that this is an interesting and inviting place to be.

Visual arts can enhance various aspects of the service by illustrating what is presented and discussed. So involve people with artistic talent and your technology team (if you project images electronically) in creating memorable visual impact that will enhance your presentation of the Good News.

Proverbs 31:10 in the Amplified Bible says: 'A capable, intelligent and virtuous woman . . . is far more precious than jewels and her value is far above rubies or pearls.' Feature the ruby colour in any special decorating you do for Mothers Day.

You may use the cross and heart image from page 1 on a banner or poster; as a PowerPoint slide (and/or background for other slides) or as a cover of a printed worship bulletin.

Before the service, show slides with pictures of women (all ages) from your congregation: they could be just faces or shots of the women interacting with other people.

MUSIC

Most of the worship music will be congregational singing. Invite the participation of all worshipers, but be aware that some people are not familiar or comfortable with the practice of congregational singing. Invite people to sing along or to just listen.

Consider ways of involving children too young to read or sing the words, eg

- show visuals along with words if you use PowerPoint, or include some illustrations in worship bulletins
- teach actions for some key words in the song and ask everyone to do the actions as they sing, or use some Auslan signs, which you can find at the Auslan sign bank: www.auslan.org.au
- teach one or two lines that are repeated so everyone can sing these lines
- give children a percussion instrument to play or a flag to wave during a song
- encourage parents to hold children, sway and bounce or clap with the music.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

There are at least three Christian songs titled *No Greater Love*

- the Rachel Lampa version
- the Gmwa Mass Choir version
- the Steven Curtis Chapman version

You can sing the following words to the tune of *Walzing Matilda*. The familiar tune will help people remember the words.

God demonstrated his love for u-us.
God demonstrate his great love for us
(in that) while we were sinners
Jesus died for you and me;
while we were sinne-ers, he died for us.

No greater lo-ove; no greater lo-ove:
while we were sinners, Christ died for us.
And he gave gave a command to
lo-ove one ano-other
Jesus commanded u-us to love.

Other theme-related songs you might consider using in the service are:

- As we lift our hands to worship you (G Bullock)
- Because of your love (R Fragar)
- Deeper and deeper (G Bullock)
- Forever loved by you (G Bullock)
- He's got the whole world in his hands (make up verses about mothers and grandmothers)
- Jesus dying on the cross (G Simpson)
- Jesus loves me, this I know
- Jesus, fill me with your love (G Bullock)
- Jesus, no one loves me more (S Tzeegenkoff)
- Lord I come to you (G Bullock)
- May our homes be filled with dancing (R Morgan)
- One family (G Strelan)
- The steadfast love of the Lord (J&D Makedonez)
- What wondrous love is this (Folk hymn)
- You placed your love (G Bullock)
- Your love is higher than the mountains (G Bullock)
- Your love keeps following me (R Fragar)
- Your love surrounds me (R Mann)

WORSHIP LEADERS

One person will be the overall worship leader for the service. Worshipers (particularly guests) will recognise this person as the

host/compeer who is responsible for the overall flow of the service.

Several other people (of different ages) can each lead different segments of worship. For example, the sample service may have

- Bible reader/s
- song leade/rs
- presenter/s of the creed
- prayer leader/s
- sermon presenter.

SERMON

In an all-age worship service the sermon should be an all-age sermon. This means it's short and simple.

If the sermon is for 'adults only', provide a theme-related activity for children to do during the sermon, either sitting with their families in the worship area or in a special children's area.

If children do a separate activity, allow a time for them to share what they have done with the older worshippers.

Starting points for a Mothers Day sermon can be found in

- the lectionary texts for the day
1 John 5:1–6 (Being God's children)
John 15:9–17 (Love as I have loved you)
- 'No greater love' meditation (page 5)
- 'Love languages' (page x)

REHEARSAL

A service that is different from your regular worship format requires time for planning and for rehearsal. A complete walk-through will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions for the worshippers and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

Use rehearsal time as an opportunity to pray together and to remind participants of the awesome privilege and task they have in leading worship.

Discuss these two statements with the team who are leading worship:

- Worship leaders are the lead worshippers.
- You have to walk the same road as the people you lead.

No Greater Love

from A Meditation for Mother's Day
Charles Henderson at www.godweb.org/mothersday2.htm

Colleagues express their ambivalence about Mother's Day in words such as these:

- 'As one who has never been a mother, nor wished to be, I always hated Mother's Day, as I felt that it put on a pedestal one way of being a woman.'
- 'Mother's Day makes my skin crawl. It is a painful day for those of us who desperately want to be parents, but have been unable. There's not much good news for us in the message that 'it's a gift to be a mother'.
- 'My mother died when I was six, and after my father remarried I hid the fact that she was my step-mother. Then the flower bit would occur on Mother's Day. When the minister said we should take a white carnation if our mother had died and a red carnation if our mother were still living, I never knew which flower to take.'

As a first step in the attempt to resolve some of these tensions, we might do well to reflect on the history and purpose of Mother's Day

The woman credited with founding Mothers Day is Anna Jarvis*. Anna Jarvis was inspired by her mother, Anna Reeves Jarvis who organized Mothers' Work Day Clubs in the 1850's. The clubs provided medicines for the poor, nursing care for the sick, and shelters for children with tuberculosis.

When the Civil War broke out Anna Reeves Jarvis called her clubs to 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.

Anna Reeves Jarvis became a genuine peacemaker after the war. She organized Mothers' Friendship Days to bring together families across the Mason Dixon line.

These women were not celebrating the mere fact of bearing children, but what they had learned through the pain and suffering of childbirth about the essential meaning of life for us all.

This is where I begin to see the deep connection between the themes of Mother's Day and the sacred themes of Easter

While he was with his disciples following the resurrection, Jesus also called his family to a higher cause. In the pain of death and in the suffering of the cross, he exhibited a love that knows no bounds. God's love extends across the boundaries that separate families, tribes and nations from each other. In speaking of God's love he called God, Father. In this image he found a powerful new way of speaking of God's compassionate love for all.

Today there are those who want to express the same truth by speaking of God as Mother. These biblical scholars and theologians have noticed that the Bible contains a host of images and metaphors that illuminate God's maternal care for all creation.

In a powerful and provocative book, *She Who Is*, Elizabeth Johnson of Fordham University, weaves these ancient biblical texts together. She points out that within the Bible, the wisdom of God was often personified as one in whom there dwells a compassion that is clearly maternal.

Johnson traces these biblical passages in which God as Wisdom 'cries out in terrible labour to deliver the new creation of justice' (Isaiah 42:14). As Wisdom, God suckles the newly born, teaches toddlers to walk, bends down to feed them, and carries them about, bearing them from birth even to old age with its grey hairs (Isaiah 46:3-4). As a mother comforts her child, so too God comforts those who lament (Isaiah 66:13). But unlike some human mothers, God . . . will never forget the children of her womb (Hosea 11:3-4; Isaiah 49:15).

Hosea the prophet depicts God as furious as a mother bear deprived of her cubs. Angered by those who threaten her children God says, 'I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast' (Hosea 13:8).

Writes Johnson, 'The religious experience of divine mercy is made luminous in maternal metaphors. By the power of her mighty Spirit God gives birth anew to those who receive the word, those who become her children, born not out of blood nor of the will of the flesh, but born of God' (John 1:13).

The compassion of God the Mother insures that she loves the weak and dispossessed as well as the strong and beautiful. We do not have to be wonderful according to external norms to elicit her love, for this is freely given by virtue of the maternal relationship itself. God looks upon all with a mother's love that makes the beloved beautiful.

I would submit that this understanding of God's nature is exactly the antidote we need in the face of the ills of our culture and our civilization. The real issue is not 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. The one thing that can free us from the anxieties, the pressures of life in this all too hectic world is the knowledge that we are loved by God.

In the end, there is nothing more radical than to teach people that they are loved by God, and that this is a matter of sheer unmerited grace; for this is a source of a deep self-confidence that will never fail.

In conclusion, I believe it is appropriate to celebrate Mother's Day in the church of God. For in its origin, inspiration and intent, this day touches upon the deepest truths of our religious tradition. As we are reminded on this day, the most powerful gift that any mother can give is this sense that we are loved unconditionally. This is what each of us needs. Yet it's what only a few of us have experienced fully even in the most loving mothers. But what we have seen in part in a mother's love, we see fully in the love of God. And it's that love which supports and inspires us as we struggle to make God's love and God's justice real not only for ourselves and for our families, but for all the peoples of the world.

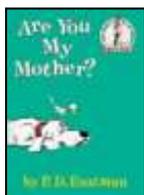
*It is worth noting that Anna Jarvis became disillusioned with how Mother's Day evolved, and in particular with the commercialisation of the holiday. She told reporters shortly before her death at age 84 that she was sorry she had ever started Mother's Day. (cited from a PRCL note by the Rev. Alice W. Erickson, United Church of Christ, Gloucester, MA, 2005)

Being God's Children

A script for the epistle reading 1 John 5:1–6 (NIRV) Combines a children's address with the reading.

You will need:

- a face washer or cloth for each child that they can dip in the water of the baptismal font and that will remain damp for children to hold during the reading.
- a copy of the PD Eastwood book *Are you my Mother?*
- a baptismal font or bowl of water.



Invite children to the front as you usually do.

PRESENTER: *Today is Mothers Day. That's my mother, over there.* [Point to own mother.]

Who's your mother? [Encourage children to point to their mothers.]

[Show the book *Are You My Mother?* Show several pages as you talk.]

I really like this book. Do you know it? It's about a little bird that is looking for its mother. The bird finds a lot of animals that are not her mother. At last she finds her own mother.

How do you think she knew that it was her mother? [Let children respond.]

Generally we know our mothers because:

- *Mother is the one who loves us*
- *Mother is the one who's like us.*

[Invite children to stand around the baptismal font.]

Some of you have been baptised. Maybe your mother brought you to be baptised when you were so young you can't remember it. We sometimes say that when we are baptised, we are born again.

Give each child a face washer or a rag

When someone is baptised, they are washed in a special way with ordinary water. You can wet your cloth in the water.

PRESENTER AND HELPER assist children to dip their rags (and wring them out).

PRESENTER: [*Name of Bible reader*] *is going to read something to us from the Bible about being born again and being God's child. Let's sit here and listen. You can feel the water in your cloth as you listen.*

READER reads the Bible text as naturally and clearly as possible, using the script below.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born again because of what God has done.

And everyone who loves the Father loves his children as well.

[question 1] How do we know that we love God's children?

[answer] We know it when we love God and obey his commands.

Here is what it means to love God. It means that we obey his commands.

And his commands are not hard to obey.

That's because everyone who is a child of God has won the battle over the world.

Our faith has won the battle for us.

[question 2] Who has won the battle over the world?

[answer] Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is the one who was baptised in water **and** died on the cross.

He wasn't just baptised in water. He also died on the cross.

The Holy Spirit has given a truthful witness about him.

That's because the Spirit is the truth.

PRESENTER: *That was a pretty hard reading, wasn't it? But the main thing it tells us is that our heavenly Father loves us even more than our mothers do. And we are a bit like our heavenly Father because we can love other people.*

It may be hard to understand that, but it's as true as the water in your cloth.

You can go back to your seats. Take your cloth with you and show it to your mother or another grownup that's with you.

As I Have Loved You

A script for the Gospel reading John 15:9-17 (NIRV)

PRESENTER:

In Auslan when people go like this,

[demonstrate the sign]
it means;

'I want happiness for someone who is very important to me; I'll be kind and caring to them and protect them'.

Can you think of a word that means: 'wanting happiness for someone who is very important to you; being kind and caring to them and protecting them'?

[love]



Can you think of someone who loves you, wants you to be happy, is kind, cares for you and protects you?

[Encourage people to respond. Chances are you'll get the responses you're looking for: 'Mum' and 'God'.]

Even if you can't think of anyone who loves you like that, the Bible tells us that God feels like that about us. God loves us.

You can make the love sign when you hear the word 'love' as [Name of reader] reads.

READER needs to have a Bible and/or this script on a lectern or stand so their hands are free to make the sign.

The reader may use the following script. It omits verses 15 and 16.

[Jesus said] "Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you.

Now remain in my love.

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love.

In the same way, I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy will be in you. I also want your joy to be complete.

Here is my command. Love each other, just as I have loved you.

No one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command. . .

Here is my command. Love each other.

PRESENTER: That's a lot of loving! You can pass the love around now, by giving a hug and a smile to some of the people around you.

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Mothers Day Prayers

When we pray for ourselves and others on Mothers Day, we pray for Mothers: thank God for providing mothers to care for most of us and ask God to lead, teach, equip, protect and comfort mothers everywhere

We may also pray for other people who have been 'mothers' to us: grandmothers, aunts, carers and mentors.

You can find several comprehensive Mothers' Day prayers at

www.mothersdaycelebration.com/mothers-day-prayers.html

and

www.godweb.org/mothersdayprayer.htm

Consider using a recorded prayer such as the flash presentation 'Prayer for Mothers' on www.andiesisle.com/amothersdayprayer.html

Naming a variety of motherhood experience (good or bad) can raise the awareness of people in your congregation.

Don Hoffman (gives this 'quick list off the top of my head'). We pray for people

- who experienced the love of a natural mother, an adoptive or foster mother
- who grew up in single-parent families, or who never got the chance to know a mother/father)
- whose mothers were abusive, neglectful, addicted, or who enabled fathers like this
- who have not been able, for whatever reason, to form adult relationships with their parents
- who are waiting/wishing to adopt
- who are children of blended families with step-parents
- who had an abortion and now feel bad about it
- who never had an opportunity to become mothers
- who 'mother' their own elderly, crippled, or demented parents
- whose mother has died
- whose child or children have died
- who are unreconciled with their mother or children.

This kind of naming falls in the category of 'prayers for others'. It is always incomplete.

In 'prayers for ourselves', it may be more beneficial to give worshipers quiet space to name their own experience and hand it over to God.

INTERFAITH PRAYER FOR FAMILIES (2000)

God of all, Living and Loving:

How pleasant it is when women, men, and children live together in unity!

How noble is your creation and the world that you have made!

How blessed we are to receive the gifts of life and love!

We are thankful for families, where scattered piles of stuff testify that we live fully in the moment; where the noise of laughter and the silence of sadness are freely shared.

We are thankful for families, where we find sanctuary from danger and judgment; where words of love and openness are the rule of life.

We are thankful for families, where our differences are the spices of life; where our unity is something that we can always take for granted.

We grieve for families, where violence and rejection are living realities; where hearts are broken, and dreams are shattered.

We grieve for families, where walls of protection become fortresses of isolation, where language is a weapon of destruction and hate.

Help us to understand, those families whose identities are different from ours; the ways of loving, parenting, partnering and working together for peace.

Help us to dare, to stand strongly against hate and divisiveness; to encounter our differences with love and respect.

This we believe: that love is stronger than hate; that hope is stronger than despair, and that good is stronger than evil.

In the name of the One who is Loving and Living, Amen.

CHILDREN PRAYER FOR MUMS

Several children may compose and speak their own prayers for their mums. Note that these children can be *any* age.

OR one child may pray their own prayer or use the following words:

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for giving me my mum. I love her and I know she loves me.

Please help my mum put up with me when I make her life hard, when I don't always listen to her and obey her.

Please help her to be strong, smart, patient and kind and happy.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

MUMS PRAYER FOR THEIR CHILDREN

Several mums may compose and speak their own prayers for their children. Note that these mums can be *any* age.

OR one mum may pray their own prayer or use these words::

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving me a child to love and care for. It is such an awesome responsibility. I can't begin to cope without your help each and every day.

Please watch over my child when I can't be with them — and when I can. Keep them safe. Give them joy and peace, confidence in themselves and trust in you.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

GRANDMOTHERS PRAY FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

Several grandmothers (or great grandmothers) may compose and speak their own prayers for their children. Note that these mums can be *any* age.

OR one grandmother may pray their own prayer or use these words:

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the privilege of having children and grandchildren in my life.

The love you have given me for these people has helped me understand, in part, the great love you have for all your children.

May they, too, know and trust your love and power. Please keep them safe.

Give them joy and peace and love.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Mothers Day Creed

(from South Yarra Presbyterian Church, author unknown)

*I believe in Jesus Christ,
the Son of the living God
who was born of the promise to a virgin named Mary.*

*I believe in the love Mary gave her Son
that caused her to follow Him in His ministry
and stand by His cross as He died.*

*I believe in the love of all mothers,
and its importance in the lives of their children.
It is stronger than steel, softer than down,
and more resilient than a green sapling on the hillside.
It closes wounds, melts disappointments,
and enables the weakest child to stand tall and straight in the fields of adversity.*

*I believe that this love, even at its best
is only the shadow love of God,
a dark reflection of all that we expect of Him in this life and the next.*

*And I believe that one of the most beautiful sights in the world
is a mother who lets this greater love flow through her to her child,
blessing the world with the tenderness of her touch and the tears of her joy.*

Thank God for mothers, and thank mothers for helping us understand God!

Children's Presentations

Children tend to be less inhibited about being 'out front' than adults. Adults can be blessed by seeing/hearing a children's presentation — particularly on an occasion such as Mothers Day.

You need to be careful about asking children to be involved if their home situation makes it difficult for them.

Following are some possible songs and recitations that could be presented by children. Even better would be to work with a group of children and let them plan and present their own message.

M-O-T-H-E-R

by Howard Johnson (c. 1915)

(Children can hold up cards with the letters as they recite this poem)

'M' is for the million things she gave me,
'O' means only that she's growing old,
'T' is for the tears she shed to save me,
'H' is for her heart of purest gold;
'E' is for her eyes, with love-light shining,
'R' means right, and right she'll always be,
Put them all together, they spell 'MOTHER,'
a word that means the world to me.

Or the shorter version

M-U-M

based on Leanne Guenther

M is for the many times you've hugged me,
U is for the unlimited love you show,
M is all our memories together --
Mom, I am so glad that I have you!

Happy Mother's Day to You

Thanks to Kimberly
(tune of Happy Birthday to You)

Happy Mother's Day to you
Happy Mother's Day to you
Happy Mother's Day to my Mummy
Happy Mother's Day to you.

M-O-M-M-Y

(To the tune of: B-I-N-G-O)

I love her and she loves me
And Mummy is her name o
M-U-M-M-Y
M-U-M-M-Y
M-U-M-M-Y
and Mummy is her name.

Mommy loves me

Thanks to 'Swan'
(To the tune of: Clementine)

Mommy loves me
Mommy loves me
Mommy loves me
This I know.

Mommy loves me
Mommy loves me
Everyday she tells me so.

Mommy loves me

Thanks to 'Debbie'
(to the tune of 'Jesus loves me')

Mommy loves me this I know
For she always tells me so.
Hugs and kisses she gives me
When I fall and scrape my knee.

Yes, Mommy loves me
Yes, Mommy loves me
Yes, Mommy loves me
She always tells me so.

Mother's Care

Thanks to 'Janice'
(Tune: 'Here we go round the mulberry bush').

Children make up their own verses. Each child can suggest one thing their mother does for them and how to mime the actions.

Example verse:

This is the way Mum combs my hair, (mime)
combs my hair, combs my hair. (mime)
This the way Mum combs my hair. (mime)
My mother cares for me. (love sign, see p 8)

You may want to end with:
This is the way Mum prays with me.

To my mother

based on Christina Rossetti

The language in this is a bit archaic, but kids can handle it. Use if you are actually presenting flowers to mums.

Today is Mothers Day.
Sweet flowers I bring;
Mother, accept, today,
my offering.

And may you happy live,
and long us bless;
receiving as you give
great happiness.

Some Ideas for Honouring Mothers

- Give a chrysanthemum posy to every woman. This can be really special if it happens during the service and children give them out. Children can also prepare the posies by tying a ribbon (ruby-coloured) on the stem, and attaching a pin so women can pin on their posy.
- Send Mothers Day cards to middle aged non-mothers in the congregation, saying something like, 'Bless you and thank you for "mothering" the children in our Sunday school (or some similar task they perform); we wouldn't be the same without you.'
- Have the children of the congregation sing a song during the worship.
- While honouring mothers in your community, think of mothers who are struggling for their own survival and their children's.

Of the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals, two relate directly to mothers and their children —

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality rates

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

— while the others relate to improving the environment in which mothers raise their children.

Do some research on these goals and what is being done to achieve them. Consider having a speaker about these goals during or after the service

- Have a special offering or fundraising project to assist mothers in developing areas. *Uniting World's Everything in Common* resource highlights a variety of projects and it is easy to donate via the website www.everythingincommon.com.au.

Two projects that directly empower women and girls are:

1) Solomon Islands Women's Project. a livelihood project which emphasises skills training and leadership capacity as well as awareness raising around relevant local issues, such as HIV, child mortality and family nutrition.

2) Water projects in PNG and Zimbabwe.

Also consider projects like Tear Australia's 'Adopt a Midwife' program or put together kits for the Birthing Kit Foundation (Australia). You can find information about these projects on the Internet.

- Have a 'baby shower' on Mother's Day. Each person /family is invited to bring a gift for a baby. Donate the gifts to a local refuge or hospital. You may turn this into a real party with brunch (served by teens) and some party games that people of all ages can join in.

MOTHERING SUNDAY & SIMNEL CAKES

Before there was a *Mothers Day*, there was a *Mothering Sunday*. In the 17th century, Mothering Sunday (the fourth Sunday of Lent) was the day when girls and boys in who worked as servants were allowed a day off to go and visit their mothers.

A girl's employer would provide her with fine wheat flower (known as *simnel*) and other ingredients to bake a cake for her mother.

Simnel cake is a light fruitcake, similar to a Christmas cake, covered in marzipan.

Recipes for simnel cake are available on the Internet.

Mothering Sunday is still observed in some churches in the lead-up to Easter.

Mothers Day, 2012, is observed about a month after Easter (8 April 2012). Modern Mothers Day retains two traditional aspects of Mothering Sunday. It is a day when many people living away from home make the effort to visit their mums, and it's a day when children give their mums a gift.

Your congregation may be able to facilitate visits to their mum by children of all ages, eg

- Provide transport across town where needed.
- People with Skype may set up on-line visits for mothers/children who do not have that facility.
- Provide invitations that mothers/children can use to invite one another to worship together.
- Organise a tea or lunch after the service for mums (or for any women in the congregation who do not have children visiting them). Serve Simnel cake.
- Visit mums in nursing homes (or perhaps in gaol) who will not be visited by their own children.
- Organise counselling before Mothers Day for mothers/children who are uncomfortable visiting one another.

A Mothers Day gift card and flower

The worship planning team, youth or other volunteers prepare this gift, which combines the traditional 'mum for Mums Day' with a card that reflects the theme of today's service.

PREPARE THE CARDS

Do this before time.

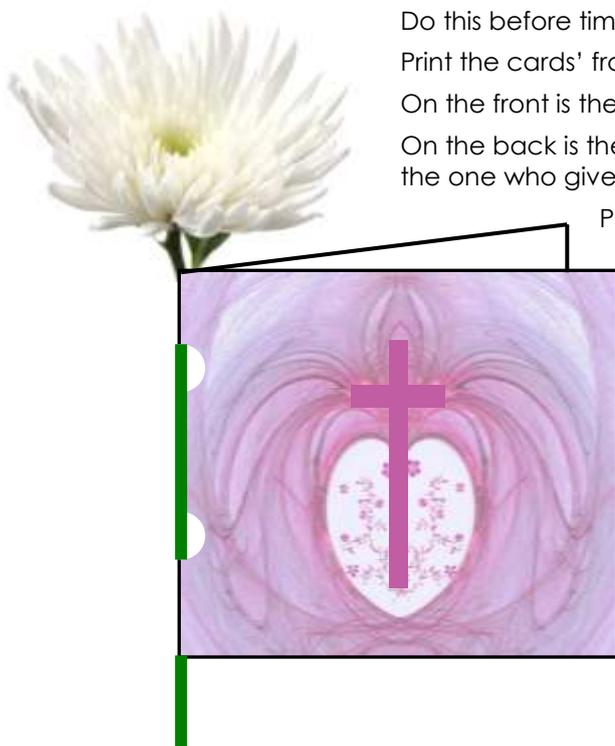
Print the cards' front and back on a strip of light card.

On the front is the no greater love logo.

On the back is the theme verse: 'No one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends.'

Punch two holes along the fold line of the card.

Inside the card write a Mothers Day greeting. (Children may do this during the children's program the week before the service.)



PREPARE THE FLOWERS

Pick or purchase mums as close to the time of the service as possible. Separate stems with one blossom on each stem. Remove leaves that will keep the stem from going through the holes of the card.

Keep the flowers in water or between damp towels in a fridge until you are ready to assemble the cards.

ASSEMBLE CARDS AND FLOWERS

Do this just before the service. Or — depending on the size of your congregation:

- a small team of volunteers could assemble them during the service
- children assemble them during an adult sermon
- several helpers assemble them on the spot, as they give them to children to distribute.

Carefully dry off the flower and stem. Then insert the stem through the holes in the card as shown in the illustration.

You may lay the assembled cards in a basket, ready to give to children to distribute.

Love Languages

'The five love languages' is a helpful theory proposed by Dr Gary Chapman in a series of books including:

* *The Five Love Languages*

* *The Five Love Languages of Children* (with Dr Ross Campbell)

* *The Heart of the Five Love Languages*

The languages are summarized below, but if you are incorporating the 'love languages' into your service, it would be good to read one of the books or at least check the web site: www.fivelovelanguages.com

According to Dr Chapman there are five different ways that people demonstrate (or speak) their love to others and understand another person's expression of love to them. He refers to them as 'love languages'. He suggests that it is important that we are aware of our own language preference and that we understand and speak the love languages of the people we love.

www.fivelovelanguages.com includes a simple test that will help you determine your preferred love language.

Very simply, the languages are:

1. quality time: spending time with a person, which may include quality conversation, shared activities and experiences
2. words of affirmation: telling a person that we love them; giving verbal compliments and encouragement
3. physical touch: touching a person in appropriate ways
4. acts of service: doing thing for a person out of love, not duty
5. gifts: giving a person tangible presents and the gift of one's self.

With children, we use all of the love languages. We watch the child's reaction to discover which is the most important to them, and use that one a lot (even if it is not our own preferred love language).

GOD'S LOVE

There truly is no greater love than God's love. God created us and knows exactly what we are like. God knows the love languages we most like to hear. God actually uses all the love languages in showing us he loves us.

God shows his love in WORDS.

The Bible is sometimes called 'God's Word'. It's the way God speaks to us. We hear God's affirmation, encouragement and self-revelation.

In the Bible God tells us about God's love: God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

As the children's song says: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so'.

God shows his love by spending TIME with us

In the Bible God tells us about the time he spends with us: 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Joshua 1:5).

No one but God can make that kind of unconditional promise!

God shows his love by SERVING us.

An often-repeated phrase in the Psalms is: 'The Lord has done great things for us.

And in the greatest act of loving service: Christ died for us.

God shows his love by giving us GIFTS

God has given to us everything we need — and more.

Jesus is the greatest gift God has given us: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son so that that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16).

God shows his love by TOUCH

God is spirit — a supernatural being. Spirits can't touch us in a physical way, but there are times when God touches people by a special experience of his Spirit.

God provides sacraments in which God actually touches us through physical elements of water, bread and wine.

More often, God puts us in relationship with other people who do the touching for God.

While theologically incorrect, a thought we are bound to hear around Mothers Day holds a germ of truth: 'God couldn't be everywhere, so God created mothers' — to hold us and give us physical comfort and security.

Mothers Day Humour

THINGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME

My Mother taught me LOGIC...

'If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the store with me.'

My Mother taught me MEDICINE...

'If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way.'

My Mother taught me TO THINK AHEAD...

'If you don't pass your spelling test, you'll never get a good job!'

My Mother taught me INTUITION...

'Put your sweater on; don't you think that I know when you're cold?'

My Mother taught me TO MEET A CHALLENGE...

'What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you...Don't talk back to me!'

My Mother taught me HUMOUR...

'When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me.'

My Mother taught me how to BECOME AN ADULT...

'If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up.'

My mother taught me about GENETICS...

'You are just like your father!'

My mother taught me about my ROOTS...

'Do you think you were born in a barn?'

My mother taught me about the WISDOM of AGE...

'When you get to be my age, you will understand.'

My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION...

'Just wait until your father gets home.'

My mother taught me about JUSTICE...

'One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like YOU...then you'll see what it's like.'

And she thought no one was listening!

MOTHER'S NEVER CHANGE

MONA LISA'S MOTHER: 'After all that money your father and I spent on braces, Mona, that's the biggest smile you can give us?'

HUMPTY DUMPTY'S MOTHER: 'Humpty, if I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times not to sit on that wall. But would you listen to me? Nooooo!'

COLUMBUS' MOTHER: 'I don't care what you've discovered, Christopher. You still could have written!'

GLENN McGRATH'S MOTHER: 'Glenn, how many times have I told you -- quit playing ball in the house! That's the third broken window this week!'

MICHELANGELO'S MOTHER: 'Mike, can't you paint on walls like other children? Do you have any idea how hard it is to get that stuff off the ceiling?'

NAPOLEON'S MOTHER: 'All right, Napoleon. If you aren't hiding your report card inside your jacket, then take your hand out of there and prove it!'

BATMAN'S MOTHER: 'It's a nice car, Bruce, but do you realize how much the insurance is going to be?'

GOLDILOCKS' MOTHER: 'I've got a bill here for a broken chair. Do you know anything about it, Goldie?'

MISS MUFFET'S MOTHER: 'Well, all I've got to say is if you don't get off your tuffet and start cleaning your room, there'll be a lot more spiders around here!'

ALBERT EINSTEIN'S MOTHER: 'But, Albert, it's your senior picture. Can't you do something about your hair? Styling gel, mousse, something...?'

JONAH'S MOTHER: 'That's a nice story, but now tell me where you've really been for the last three days.'

SUPERMAN'S MOTHER: 'Clark, your father and I have discussed it, and we've decided you can have your own telephone line. So you can quit spending so much time in phone booths.'

THOMAS EDISON'S MOTHER: 'Of course I'm proud that you invented the electric light bulb, Thomas. Now turn off that light and get to bed!'

MOTHERS MAINTENANCE MANUAL

Many of us take better care of our cars than we do our mothers. Yet we only expect our mothers to last a lifetime and our cars to last a few years.

Maybe we need a maintenance manual for mothers so we know how to take care of them at least as well as we do our automobiles.

This Mother's Maintenance Manual will work on any year, make, and model.

ENGINE: A mother's engine is one of the most dependable kinds you can find. She can reach top speed from a prone position at a single cry from a sleeping child. But regular breaks are needed to keep up that peak performance.

Mothers need a hot bath and a nap every 100 miles, a baby-sitter and a night out every 1,000 miles, and a live in baby-sitter with a one week vacation every 10,000 miles.

BATTERY: Mother's batteries should be recharged regularly. Handmade items, notes, unexpected hugs and kisses, and frequent 'I love you's' will do very well for a recharge.

CARBURETTOR: When a mother's carburettor floods it should be treated immediately with tissues and a soft shoulder.

BRAKES: See that she uses her brakes to slow down often and come to a full stop occasionally. (A squeaking sound indicates the need for a rest)

FUEL: Most mothers can run indefinitely on coffee, leftovers and salads, But an occasional dinner for two at a nice restaurant will really add to her efficiency.

CHASSIS: Mother **run best** when their bodies are properly maintained. Regular exercise should be encouraged and provided for as necessary. A change in hairdo or makeup in autumn and spring is also helpful.

If you notice the chassis begins to sag, immediately start a program of walking, jogging, swimming, or bike riding. These are most effective when done with fathers.

TUNE-UPS: Mother need regular tune-ups. Compliments are both the cheapest and most effective way to keep a mother purring contentedly.

If these instructions are followed consistently, this fantastic creation and gift from God, that we call 'mother' should last a lifetime and give good service and constant love to those who need her most.

MOTHERHOOD FACTS

Somebody said it takes about six weeks to get back to normal after you've had a baby...

Somebody doesn't know that once you're a mother, 'normal', is history.

Somebody said you learn how to be a mother by instinct...

Somebody never took a three-year-old shopping.

Somebody said being a mother is boring...
Somebody never rode in a car driven by a teenager with a driver's permit...

Somebody said if you're a 'good' mother, your child will 'turn out good'...

Somebody thinks a child comes with directions and a guarantee.

Somebody said 'good' mothers never raise their voices...

Somebody never came out the back door just in time to see her child hit a golf ball through the neighbour's kitchen window.

Somebody said you don't need an education to be a mother...

Somebody never helped a fourth grader with her math.

Somebody said you can't love the fifth child as much as you love the first...

Somebody doesn't have five children.

Somebody said a mother can find all the answers to her child-rearing questions in books...

Somebody never had a child stuff beans up his nose or in his ears.

Somebody said the hardest part of being a mother is labour and delivery...

Somebody never watched her 'baby' get on the bus for the first day of kindergarten, or on a plane headed for military boot camp.

Somebody said a mother can do her job with her eyes closed and one hand tied behind her back...

Somebody never organized a lamington drive with a troop of scouts.

Somebody said a mother can stop worrying after her child gets married...

Somebody doesn't know that marriage adds a new son or daughter-in-law to a mother's heartstrings.

Somebody said a mother's job is done when her last child leaves home...

Somebody never had grandchildren.

Somebody said your mother knows you love her, so you don't need to tell her...

Somebody isn't a mother.



No Greater Love

Intergenerational Worship
for Mothers Day

Sample Worship Plan

Suggested wording for some parts of the service are in italic.

Prepare cards and flowers that children can present to women in the congregation during the service. See page 15.

1. ARRIVAL, BEFORE WORSHIP

MUSIC TEAM may play quietly songs that will be used in worship.

TECH TEAM displays slides showing faces of women in the congregation and community.

HOSPITALITY TEAM greets people as they arrive, helps them settle in the worship area and invites them to join in the carol singing.

2. WELCOME AND INVITATION TO WORSHIP

WORSHIP LEADER: *Welcome to [Name of church]. It's great to have you here today.*

Mothers Day is a special day for many people. It's a day for thinking about our mothers' love for us; and a day for expressing our love for our mothers.

If you are here with your mother, give her a hug now — just to get into the spirit of things.

If your mother isn't with you, you can give another lady a hug.

PAUSE

When you love someone, like your mother or your child, you like to spend time with them.

God, loves us with a greater love than any mother, wants us to spend time with him. It's actually God who has invited you to worship — to be with him for a while this Mothers Day.

Let's sing . . .

3. OPENING SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing an opening song, eg

Come, now is the time to worship (Vineyard) or

Come in, come in and sit down

4. THEME INTRODUCTION 'NO GREATER LOVE'

WORSHIP LEADER: *Did anyone here give their mum a card today, or send one to her if she's not here? (hands up)*

Did anyone here receive a card today? (hands up)

I'd like one of you who gave your mum a card to tell us about the card. [Invite a capable child to tell about any picture or words on their card.]

I'd like someone who received a card today to tell us about it. [Invite an older woman — perhaps a grandmother — to tell about any picture or words on their card.]

[You may have prepared a child and mother and asked them to bring cards to show.]

Mothers Day cards usually have great pictures on them. We have a special Mothers Day picture here today.

TECH TEAM shows a slide with the 'No greater love' logo.

WORSHIP LEADER:
I'd like you to look at this picture. Tell someone sitting near you what you see in the picture.



[Allow some time].

You didn't all see the same thing, did you? That's great. It's that kind of picture.

Mothers Day doesn't look the same to everyone, either. It's that kind of day.

5. MOTHERS DAY SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing and doing motions for:

Jesus loves me, this I know
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong;
they are weak but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me (X3)
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! He who died
heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
let His little child come in.
Yes, Jesus loves me (X3)
The Bible tells me so.

Followed by a Mothers Day verse, (possibly sung by children alone) eg

Mommy loves me this I know
for she always tells me so.
Hugs and kisses she gives me
when I fall and scrape my knee.
Yes, Mommy loves me (X3)
And I love her so.

6. GOSPEL READING

WORSHIP LEADER (and/or another PRESENTER) and a **READER** present the Gospel reading (John 15:9–17) using the script on page 8.

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the sign for love and the definition of love that is used in the presentation.

This ends with the invitation to 'pass the love' similar to the way you may ordinarily 'pass the peace'.

7. SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing: *Pass my love around* (David Yantis)

8. CONFESSION

WORSHIP LEADER: *Mothers Day can be a happy day of celebration. But it's never a perfect time. As mothers and children we are not perfect — even when we try to be.*

A MOTHER: *For myself and the other mothers here, I confess that I often try to do things in my own power without calling on the help my heavenly Father is always ready to provide.*

The example I sent for my children in my actions and words is not always what I would like it to be. I fall way short of Jesus' example of complete, unconditional love for my children.

A CHILD: *For myself and the other kids here, I confess that I don't always love, honour and obey my mum the way God wants me to.*

9. FORGIVENESS

WORSHIP LEADER/MINISTER: *Jesus lived and died to set us free from sin. In his name I can tell you with confidence that you are forgiven. You can go with joy and peace and share Jesus' love with your family and everyone you meet.*

10. PRAISE SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing *What wondrous love is this* or another song of praise

12. SERMON

WORSHIP LEADER or another **PRESENTER** reads the story 'Are you my Mother.

TECH TEAM may show slides of the book illustrations during the reading.

PREACHER: Refers to the story and develops these themes:

- We can tell who our mother is: it's the person who loves us; and we are like her (we may look like her; we may act like her).
- God is our heavenly Father: God loves us even more than our mothers do. We are like our heavenly Father because we can love, too.

13. MOTHERS DAY CREED

WORSHIP LEADER: *A creed is a statement of something we believe. {Name} is going to read to us a special Mothers Day creed.*

A GRANDFATHER reads the Mothers Day creed (page 11).

Alternatively three men, possibly three generations of one family, alternate reading the six sections of the creed.

14. ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORSHIP LEADER makes any necessary brief announcements. Include

* invitation to after-service activities or refreshments

* invitation to further activities and services of the congregation, including prayers for individuals after the service

* explanation of the way the offering will be collected and used.

15. OFFERING

The offering is collected in your usual manner.

17. SONG DURING OFFERING & PRESENTATION

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing: *Because of your love*

18. CHILDREN'S PRESENTATION

After the offering,

WORSHIP LEADER: *The children have a special gift for the women here on Mothers Day.*

CHILDREN (with assistance as needed) give a card/flower gift to all the women present. See page 14.

As they do so, the offering song continues or is repeated.

17. PRAYERS

PRAYER LEADER: *Let's pray.*

(1) **CHILD, MOTHER** and **GRANDMOTHER** lead specific Mothers Day Prayers, see page 10.

(2) **PRAYER LEADER** leads General Prayers for the concerns of the community and the world.

(3) **PRAYER LEADER:** *Let's pray together the special prayer that Jesus gives us as families.*

We'll say it slowly. Whenever we say the word 'our' or 'us', try to think of your family.

*For example, when we say 'Our Father in heaven', I'll think that God is the heavenly Father of **my family**.*

You may want to hold hands with other people in your family who are here with you today.

TECH TEAM shows slides of the words of the Lord's prayer, one section at a time.

Have the word 'our' in bold or underlined:

Our Father . . . give **us** this day . . . forgive **our** sins. . . lead **us** . . . deliver **us**.

19. SENDING AND BLESSING

WORSHIP LEADER: *God loved you so much that he sent his only Son that you may believe in him and have eternal life.*

May Jesus' love joy and peace be with each of you — in your hearts, your homes and your world, now and always. Amen.

Happy Mothers Day — whatever your circumstances.

20. CLOSING SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing *He's got the whole world in his hands*

Include verses:

He's got the mothers and the fathers in his hands

He's got the grandmas and the grandpas in his hands

21. AFTER WORSHIP

Worshippers are invited to the hall where tea, coffee and fruit cordial are available along some Simnel cake.

If possible, allow mothers to be seated and served by children and youth. Some helpers look after small children to give their carers a few peaceful minutes.