

we want to celebrate mothers and fathers, and yet, we recognize that for some these days can be painful and difficult

Mother's Day and Father's Day are just around the corner. As the church, we want to celebrate mothers and fathers, to help them know how important their ministry of parenthood is to our community. And yet, in our celebrations, we often unknowingly alienate a portion of our community. There are those among us who do not or did not have nurturing, loving parents. There are those for whom neither "mother" nor "father" captures their gender identity as they raise children. There are those who struggle with infertility and those who made the decision to abort a pregnancy.

We have people in our congregations who will never have a biological child and yet they play a crucial role in the Body of Christ. Our ministry is with each and every one of these and we are grateful for the ways that they love and nurture our children. Let us be intentional in expressing this gratitude. Here are a few of our suggestions. Please share your own in the comments.

Be Intentional in Prayer

Taking time to choose or write prayers in advance helps us to be sure we are thoughtful in our language.

- "[A Mother's Day Prayer](#)" by Magrey deVega - This prayer thanks mothers and prays for them to receive wisdom and the honor that they deserve, while also lifting up "motherly figures," including neighbors, friends, and others. It also notes the sorrow, loneliness, and tensions that Mother's Day brings about for some.
- [Faithful Celebrations: Family and Friends: Making Time with Family and Friends](#), Sharon Ely Pearson, Ed. includes both a litany for Mother's Day and one for Father's day that might be helpful - These litanies are clear in celebrating those "who have been like mothers/fathers to us." They also speak to those who have experienced loss of a child or father.
- Prayer "For the Care of Children" in the [Book of Common Prayer](#) - This prayer applies to the whole family of God, as we are all blessed "with the joy and care of children" and it is appropriate for all of us to pray for "calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up."

Affirm the Diversity of Families Through Crafts

In Sunday school classes and beyond, we can affirm the diversity of families even as we create space for children to make a gift for a loved one who parents them. Explain to children the spectrum of parenthood and how there are many who parent us who did not give birth to us. Provide examples (teachers, church members, friends, etc.) and note that we can celebrate all those who parent us on Mother's Day and Father's Day.

The language and explanation of what we are doing and for whom is more important than what exactly we make. Allow space in your supply count to accommodate needs for two or three items per child. This will vary based on child and family.

- Collages - Use images and words from magazines that remind the maker of their parent or nurturer or let families know in advance and request photos of the individual(s) to be honored that can be cut and pasted into the project. (See "Father's Day Collages" in Faithful Celebrations)
- Pipe Cleaner Flower - Make flowers using pipe cleaners and tissue paper as suggested in Faithful Celebrations - This resource provides multiple ideas for Mother's Day and Father's Day. We suggest helping children to make a few of the flowers so they have one or two to give to someone of their choosing and one to give to someone who might not have someone else making one for them on this occasion.
- "[Mother's Day Craft: Make Potpourri Baskets](#)" - These baskets are fun for all to receive. They could be made available for all in the congregation who choose to receive one, or children could choose a specific person to honor with their gift.

Modify Your Message

No resource is perfect, but there is a lot you can do to modify your celebration to be sensitive and widely inclusive.

- Consider changing language from "mothering" or "fathering" to "parenting," emphasizing appreciate for all parents and all who care for us.
- Invite everyone to brunch, lunch, or tea - All can participate in a gathering to celebrate those who parent us. Be clear that the "Mother's Day Brunch" is a celebration of all those who parent us to be sure that all feel welcome.
- Draw on books that celebrate diverse views of family. Try this bibliography of [Books about Adoption](#) from our friends at Storypath or this list of [11 Books about Modern Families](#) from parenting.com.

The Rev. Katherine A. Malloy is the Associate for Lifelong Learning, Director of Christian Formation Resources

Image: Jeffrey Vallance, Divine Mother Hen, 2018 Stained glass, metal, wood.