

# Single friendly Church

A CAMPAIGN HELPING CHURCHES TO INCLUDE SINGLE ADULTS

## INCLUDING SINGLE PEOPLE ON MOTHER'S DAY

### 01. REMEMBER THAT IT CAN BE A PAINFUL DAY

#### For those without children

Mother's Day can be a painful day for single people without children, for those who are childless due to other reasons like health or infertility, and for those who have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth or later in life.



#### For those who have a complex relationship with their own mother or motherhood

Remember men and women whose relationships with their own mothers have been neglectful, unloving, abusive, or estranged, and those who have grown up without a mother. And for mothers themselves who have found motherhood a challenging experience,

### 02. PRAY INCLUSIVELY FOR THOSE WHO ARE HURTING



Explicitly mention and pray for different circumstances for which Mother's Day can be painful. Recognise all forms of childlessness, not just couples experiencing infertility. Acknowledge that not everyone will have had a positive relationship with their mother (see above).

Hold a quiet moment for people to acknowledge any pain and bring it to God. Invite people to bring whatever situation they are in. This can help them grieve.

### 03. LIGHT A CANDLE

Invite people to light a candle as a moment of reflection for those grieving for children or mothers they have lost – or ones they have never had. Try and make this as inclusive as possible, recognising different reasons for childlessness.



## 03. RECOGNISE AND INCLUDE ALL MOTHER FIGURES

Celebrate all women who have been a mother figure in children's lives: Godparents, those who foster; who help, guide or act as mentors; who step in when parents are struggling; and those who are simply a motherly presence in the lives of young and old. Celebrate your Sunday school leaders, teachers, carers, hospital workers.

Single people often step into these other parenting roles, and it's important to acknowledge the impact this has and the value they bring.

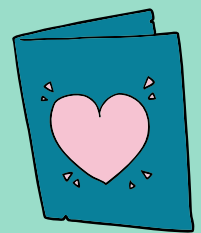
If you want to give out flower posies, reframe this by acknowledging that the whole church community is involved the raising of children. Present them to everyone in the church. Be aware that if children are giving them out, they may feel nervous approaching adults they do not know - ensure that no one is left out.



## 04. ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO THINK OF THOSE WHO CARE FOR OR INSPIRE THEM

One church told us that they give everyone a card and pre-stamped envelope, and encourage them to spend some time writing to someone who is like a mum to them, or who has inspired them with their mothering or care of others.

This is inclusive of both old and young, single and married, parent and childless. It's good to be reminded to encourage and celebrate people in our lives. It will also deepen some connections between families and single people.



## 05. EXPLORE THE ROOTS OF MOTHERING SUNDAY



Traditionally Mothering Sunday had very little to do with mothers, instead it focussed on a place - returning to your mother church where you were baptised or nurtured in faith. The day was about reconnecting with the roots of your faith and your identity in Christ.

Taking time to reflect on your spiritual roots and identity can be a useful exercise today too. You could encourage your congregation to reflect on the people and places that have nurtured their faith, and how this has changed over the years.

## 06. DO SOMETHING TO BLESS SINGLE PARENTS



Being a single parent can be incredibly challenging, with many facing financial or practical pressures to support their children by themselves. Mother's Day itself could be a difficult day, especially for those who are recently widowed or separated. You could hold a special Mother's Day event for single parents with entertainment and childcare, to give them a night off and make them feel seen and valued.

## 07. INCLUSIVE SERMON IDEAS FOR MOTHER'S DAY

### **Spiritual family**

Jesus' attitude to family didn't place much emphasis on biology. Consider Luke 8: "Who are my mother and brothers?", or when he says to the Beloved Disciple: "This is your mother", and to Mary: "This is your son". You could reflect as a church on how we can form spiritual community, or focus on different women in the Bible who act as a mother figure to others.

### **Looking at the cross for Lent**

Mother's Day is exactly halfway through Lent, and marks the point where we start turning towards the cross. In Matthew 23, Jesus turns to Jerusalem and says how he has longed to gather them into his arms like a mother hen. You could reflect on how God is mother-like and nurturing, consider God as a rejected or frustrated mother, or someone who longs to be a mother but isn't, Turning towards the cross also gives the opportunity to reflect on Mary after she has lost her child and on others who have lost or haven't have a longed for child.

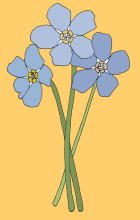
## 08. CONSIDER HOLDING AN ALTERNATIVE SERVICE



Despite your best efforts, some people will find Mothering Sunday services too raw and painful, and will avoid church on that day. It's good for people to know in advance that you will be doing a Mother's Day service, so they can choose to come or not come. If your service will be inclusive, this may help to reassure them that they will be welcome, whatever their circumstance.

You could consider holding an alternative service for those who find Mother's Day too painful. This could be a simple service or Holy Communion, or even a time of prayer over Zoom with a short reflection. This could make a huge difference to those struggling with Mother's Day, and provide an opportunity for comfort and healing.

## PRAYER POINTS FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY



**Making your Mothering Sunday prayers inclusive to cover a range of circumstances is really important. Here are some ideas to get you started:**

- Give thanks for Godparents, mother and father figures, mentors, teachers, Sunday school and youth group leaders.
- Give thanks for all those who nurture others and show them the love of God.
- Give thanks for the family of God that gives us a place to call home and experience love. Pray that we would understand how to be family to each other.
- Give thanks for older members of the congregation, for the support, wisdom, counsel, encouragement and love that they have to offer to the church community.
- Pray a blessing over your single parents, and for strength and support as they carry both parenting roles by themselves.
- Pray for those who find Mothering Sunday difficult. For single people who wanted to be parents, women (and couples) who couldn't have children, who have experienced miscarriages, stillbirths or had children who have died.
- Pray for people whose relationships with their own mothers have been neglectful, unloving or abusive. For those who have grown up without a mother. For those mourning the loss of a mother.
- Pray for those who are isolated and who long for a family, to have opportunities to build close friendships in the family of God, and find a loving place in a spiritual family.
- Give thanks for mothering love of God, and pray that everyone would feel and receive that love. Pray that we would be able to offer that love to people we know and meet, whoever they are.

**"I am widowed, I have friends who have lost children and friends who have never married or had children. If the people leading the service have a heart for us, they will lead it with kindness. It's really that simple."**

**"My church recognises all people have a role to play with children in our church."**

**"We have speeches from women from all different situations. Single mothers, Godmothers, mothers who have adopted, female mentors and spiritual mothers."**

**QUOTES FROM OUR 2022 MOTHER'S DAY SURVEY**