

A Mother's Day Prayer to Relieve Church-Service Angst

Many Baptist churches approach Mother's Day the way many men approach Valentine's Day - with fear and trembling.

A day intended to honor mothers amid a sacred gathering of worship becomes a day of great anxiety navigating how to do this or if it should be done at all.

Pointed questions emerge for the worship planning team to consider:

- Are we allowing Hallmark to dictate how we worship as opposed to the Christian calendar?
- Are we increasing the pain of those yearning to become mothers who are recognizing it will probably never happen?
- What about those people who are estranged from their mothers for a host of reasons?

Ardmore Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has prepared for the Sunday of Mother's Day in multiple ways.

At times we have had a parent-child congregation covenant service as a component of worship, something that used to be called merely a baby dedication service.

Using the language of covenant connects us to the language of the Bible and reminds us of the sacred promises our community is making to a particular family and to God.

At other times we have recognized mothers simply through a pastoral prayer.

Perhaps the most meaningful prayer I have ever heard related to mothers came from one of our lay members. Anna Rubin was the chair of our deacons and a stay-at-home mom for two little boys when she voiced this Mother's Day prayer in our church.

Rubin told me that it was inspired by the writings of Jen Hatmaker, Glennon Doyle Melton and Sarah Bessey as well as a few visits to the Catholic church with her

husband's family.

I have asked her permission to include it in this article. It seemed to address many of the anxieties associated with Mother's Day and covered them with heartfelt petition to God.

Rubin prayed:

"Dear God: We thank you for your word in Isaiah 49:15 that says, 'Can a woman forget her nursing child or lack compassion for the child of her womb? Even if these forget, yet I will not forget you.'

"Today, we rejoice in and hold on to the fact that you never forget us. No matter our circumstances, we are never forgotten by you. Today, on Mother's Day:

"We pray together for the children whose mother was not able to love them well. We pray together for the mothers who entrusted their children to another mother through adoption. We pray together for the adoptive mothers who received those children and love them so well.

"We pray together for the mothers who never met their babies or got to see them grow up, whether by choice or not. We pray together for the mothers who long for a child and ask that you sit with them in the waiting. We pray together for the mothers who have buried their children, and we wonder how you willingly gave us your son.

"We pray together for the mothers whose children are hospitalized. We pray together for the mothers of children with physical or mental limitations, and we ask a special blessing over them. We pray together for the mothers of children who struggle due to mental illness or addiction, and we join them in praying for healing and wholeness.

"We pray together for the single mothers who strive so hard and devote all they have to their children and still feel they are never enough. We pray together for the mothers who struggle to provide for their children, and we ask for your extra provision today.

"We pray together for the stepmothers who care for another mother's children as their own, and we thank you that we are all adopted into your family. We pray together for the grandmothers, aunts, friends, teachers and others who step in

and mother in order to share our joys and lighten our loads.

“We pray together for the mothers who have good relationships with their children, and we thank you for the love and comfort they provide. We pray together for the mothers who long to have better relationships with their children, and we ask for your redemption and restoration to come swiftly.

“And lastly, we pray together for all those who have lost their mothers, either physically or mentally, and long to be with them again.

“God, today, we thank you for all the ways we have been loved and mothered along our life’s journey.

“We thank you for creating the concept of motherhood and for all the different forms it takes in our lives. We thank you for these women we call mothers. We thank you for walking with us through it all, and we thank you that we are fiercely loved and never forgotten by you. In Jesus’ life-giving name I pray. Amen.”

Mother’s Day recognitions will take different forms in different churches and may change based on circumstances in a congregation’s life.

This annual celebration need not fill you with anxiety or fear and trembling, but it does require thoughtful preparation and sensitivity to the variety of experiences of the women in your congregation.

These three questions, as well as the diversity of experiences, perspectives and concerns expressed in Rubin’s prayer, offer congregational leaders a helpful framework for making such occasions meaningful to everyone present.

[Don Gordon](#) is senior pastor of Ardmore Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He is a board member of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Editor’s note: This article is the first in a series for Mothers’ Day 2017 (May 14).