



On your marks

During your Mothering Sunday service, you might like to have some active prayers that include all ages and are prayers that involve seeing, smelling, touching and tasting.

Get set

Set out the stations for your prayers as detailed below with enough room for several people to stand around each one. Are they pushchair / wheelchair-friendly, too? You don't need to have all these stations, of course. The Bible verses suggested for each one are taken from the Contemporary English Version (CEV). You may or may not choose to display them, depending on how literate your congregation is.

Go!

Invite everyone to visit the stations and to pray at each one in different ways. Describe briefly what each station entails. Put on some quiet music. It can help to prime one or two people to get things moving if your congregation doesn't usually leave their seats. Draw the prayers to a close by saying the Lord's Prayer when almost everyone has returned to their seats.

Station 1: Confession for not treating our families well

Respect your father and your mother (Exodus 20:12a—the fifth commandment).

Have a large picture of a house cutaway to show the different rooms inside. Place a pile of cut-out hearts next to the picture.

Think about your home or the home where you grew up. Which room (or memory) would you really like God's love to fill? Where do / did you have most quarrels or fights with your family or friends? Tell God how sorry you are for your part in these troubles and place a heart in that room or memory to ask him to heal it and fill it with his love in the future.

Station 2: Giving thanks for our own mothers

A truly good wife is the most precious treasure a man can find!... She takes good care of her family and is never lazy. Her children praise her, and with great pride her husband says, 'There are many good women, but you are the best!' (Proverbs 31:10, 27-29).

Have a pile of paste jewels (available from craft shops) and a treasure chest

Our mothers and grandmothers have done things for us that shine like jewels. What is the most precious thing they've done for you? Say thank you to God for that precious thing and place a gem in the treasure chest to show how valuable it is to you.



Station 3: Giving thanks for the mothering of the church we belong to

Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Father is a merciful God, who always gives us comfort. He comforts us when we are in trouble so that we can share that same comfort with others in trouble (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Have some soft pieces of cloth and blanket washed in the well-known fabric softener. Place the bottle in the middle with the lid off.

Hold the soft cloth, smell it and give thanks to God for the way the people in your church care for you and comfort you when you need comfort. Who do you thank him particularly for?

Station 4: Praying for the motherless, the childless

'Don't call me Naomi any longer! Call me Mara, because God has made my life bitter' (Ruth 1:20). You must help needy orphans and widows (James 1:27b).

Have paper in the shape of teardrops, pens, some segments of lemon and a bin.

Taste the lemon and write in the teardrop shape how it tastes to you.

For many people there is a lot of bitterness tied up with motherhood and childhood. Pray for them while you still have that bitter taste in your mouth.

Station 5: Committing ourselves to caring for others

But when (Moses' mother) could no longer keep him hidden, she made a basket out of reeds and covered it with tar. She put him in the basket and placed it in the tall grass along the edge of the River Nile (Exodus 2:3).

Have a Moses basket, some slips of cream-coloured paper or papyrus-like paper (from craft shops) and some black pens, and a poster suggesting various ways of showing care for people: a smile, a phone call, some time over a coffee, a big hug, a lift somewhere, or some special care only you and God know about, giving blood, giving money to a charity, buying some Fairtrade goods, sponsoring a child in a developing country

Ask God who he would like you to care for this week. Write their name and how you're going to show God's care for them on a piece of 'papyrus' and place it in the Moses basket, just as Moses' mother took care of Moses by putting him in a place of safety. Commit yourself to care for that person in that way. When you've actually done it, you can take that papyrus out of the Moses basket—perhaps you could set yourself the challenge of achieving it by next week?