

WORSHIP: In Celebration of Family

by Terry Dittmer

The Call to Worship

Leader: Family members, young and old, male and female, parent or child, everyone that is or has been a family member; let us gather to worship our God, who has made us family together.

All: We have gathered here together in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We are gathered as God's family.

The Opening Song

"Father You Have Made Us Family" (David Christian, from *Lift Up Your Hearts*, copyright 1988, Concordia Publishing House)

A Cheer to the Lord for Families

(The cheer celebrates the Lord who makes families and the variety of roles we can take in families. Participants should check out the response categories and respond under any category that includes them. Participants will stand.)

Leader: Praise the Lord!

All: Praise the Lord in families!

Leader: Let every family member, praise the Lord!

All: Praise the Lord!

Husbands: Praise Him at the altar!

Wives: Praise Him in the vows of husband and wife!

All: Praise the Lord!

Fathers: Praise Him with the children!

Mothers: Praise Him with the children singing!

Sons: Praise Him with children running!

Daughters: Praise Him with children laughing!

Leader: Praise the Lord in families!

All: Praise the Lord!

Brothers: Praise Him through diapers and bottles!

Sisters: Praise Him through primary-colored plastic toys!

Aunts: Praise Him through adolescence!

Uncles: Praise Him through drivers' licenses and first cars.

Nieces: Praise Him through parties and proms.

Grandmothers: Praise Him for children, youth and young adults!

Leader: Praise the Lord in families.

All: Praise the Lord!

Leader: For the Lord is a great God!

All: The God of families who decreed that people should not live alone.

Grandfathers: For people when they are hurting;

Cousins: For people in the pain of separation;

Wives: For people suffering the loss of a loved one;

Fathers: For people alone;

Mothers: For people whose families are torn apart;

Sons: For people looking, searching for direction;

Leader: The Lord God is a caring God...
 Daughters: A God who strengthens and enables.
 Brothers: A God who guides and supports.
 Sisters: A God who sustains and embraces His own.
 Aunts: A God who loves His people even in their unloveliest moments.
 Leader: Praise the Lord in families!
 All: Praise the Lord!
 Uncles: Praise Him in houses!
 Nieces: Praise Him in apartments!
 Nephews: Praise Him in condos!
 Grandmothers: Praise Him in retirement centers!
 Grandfathers: Praise Him in cities and towns!
 Cousins: Praise Him on farms and in the country!
 Leader: Praise the Lord in families! Let everyone who is or has been a family member, praise the Lord!
 Husbands: Husbands!
 Wives: Wives!
 Fathers: Fathers!
 Mothers: Mothers!
 Sons: Sons!
 Daughters: Daughters!
 Brothers: Brothers!
 Sisters: Sisters!
 Aunts: Aunts!
 Uncles: Uncles!
 Nieces: Nieces!
 Nephews: Nephews!
 Grandmothers: Grandmothers!
 Grandfathers: Grandfathers!
 Cousins: Cousins!
 All: Praise the Lord in families!
 Leader: Praise the Lord!
 Husbands: At weddings!
 Wives: At the birth of a child!
 Fathers: At baptisms!
 Mothers: At birthday parties!
 Sons: At confirmation!
 Daughters: At graduations!
 Brothers: At receptions!
 Sisters: At anniversaries!
 Aunts: At memorials!
 Uncles: At funerals!
 Nieces: At picnics, parks and parades!
 Nephews: In fun and recreation!

Grandparents: In worship and in singing!
Leader: For the Lord is a great God.
All: He is with His people wherever they are.
Leader: Praise the Lord in families!
All: He is the head of every family, however they are formed.
Leader: Let us praise the Lord!
All: Praise the Lord! Alleluia!

The Prayer for the Day

Lord, You have brought each of us into families. You have made us children with parents and parents with children. You have blessed some of us with marriage partners. You have blessed others of us to be single. You have given each of us to care for one another as You have made us members of Your kingdom. So, Lord, empower us to love one another, to affirm and lift each other up, to admonish where there is sin, to forgive where there is repentance, to encourage where there is fear, and to rejoice with each other in the knowledge that with You and one another, we are never alone. Thank You, Father, for making us family! Amen.

The Scripture Lessons

Genesis 18:1-15 - Abraham and Sarah learn they are to be parents even in their old age.

Genesis 21:1-7 - Abraham and Sarah have the son God promised and give him his name.

Genesis 22:1-18 - Abraham's faith is challenged even as he is promised that all nations will share the same name through his descendants.

The Meditation

1. Have name tags and pencils or markers for each worshiper.
2. Comment on how God has placed all of us in families. Note the variety of families that there are: nuclear, single-parent, singles, extended, etc.
3. Ask each worshiper to write his or her name on the tag. Comment on the fact that names are our own tag and say something about us. They set us apart. Isaac's name set him apart and identified him.
4. Comment that everyone has a surname that describes our "clan" or family. Bakers were bakers; Millers used to work in mills, Swartzkopf ("black head" in Germany) may have described the hair of a given family.
5. As members of the family of God, we all share the same surname—Christian. Ask family members to write Christian after their first name on their name tag, and then put on the name tags.
6. We all share in the love, grace, forgiveness and generosity of God. We struggle and work together. Sometimes we differ, but we forgive and rebuild. That's part of being family.

The Sharing of the Peace

Leader: As members of the family of God, celebrating and enjoying one another, let us share the peace of God with one another.

The Responsive Prayers for Family

Leader: Father in Heaven, as Your chosen family, we gather together before You in the name of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.
All: We are indeed Your family, brothers and sisters in Christ and one with each other.
Leader: Lord, You have laid Your claim on us in Holy Baptism, separating us from the world, calling us to be Your special people.
All: We are a chosen race, Your holy priests, a holy nation, Your own people.
Leader: Dear God, You selected each of us for a purpose, a marvelous plan which You designed for us before the world began.
All: We have been chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called us from the darkness into His marvelous light.

Leader: Once we were not Your people, O God. But now, we are Your family.
 All: At one time we did not know Your mercy, but now we have received Your mercy.
 Leader: Dear Jesus, through the tree of Your cross, You have made us family.
 All: Each of us is related in a wonderful way since we can trace our roots to the tree of Your cross.
 Leader: The lineage we trace to Adam leads to death.
 All: But the lineage we trace to the second Adam, Christ Jesus, yields life eternal.
 Leader: Oh, most Holy Spirit, keep us strong in our Baptismal faith through Word and Sacrament.
 All: Empower us to show love in our family circle and to those beyond it.
 Leader: Forgive us our trespasses against our mothers...our fathers...our sisters...our brothers...
 All: Wash us clean in the blood of Christ.
 Leader: Renew us for service, equip us for mission, uplift our spirits for ministry.
 All: Remind us of our Christian purpose and teach us to be servants.
 Leader: Lead us to those who are hurting...to those who are alone...to those without a family.
 All: Never let us forget that they, too, belong to You...and also are related to us.
 Leader: Forgive our forgettings...look not upon our avoidance of duty or our aversion to meaningful discipleship.
 All: But fill us with Your Spirit and grace that we might do better tomorrow.
 Leader: Father, we are mindful of those family members who are not here, but who are at home...near or far. We pray for these also and name them silently in our hearts....
 All: Guard and keep them in Your grace through Christ our Lord.
 Leader: These and all the petitions we bear in our hearts, we raise to You, dear God, in the name of the One who made us family and who promised to intercede for us,
 All: Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen!

Benediction

Leader: May God, our Father; Jesus, our Brother; and the Holy Spirit who daily empowers us to act as part of God's family, strengthen and keep you in the love of the one true God this day and always!
 All: Amen.
 Leader: Go in peace! Serve the Lord!
 All: Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

The Closing Song

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