

Prayer stations

Kinnecting to God's heart for mothers and mothering

Use these kinaesthetic prayer stations to help people engage with prayer for mothers and mothering. Each one details what if any equipment you need to get together in advance, instructions for setting up, and the text for the instruction signs you will need to display – (simply copy and paste these into a word document, enlarging the font so that the instructions are clear enough to read).

They can be used as a stand-alone resource, but obviously work best in the context of response to a sermon, seminar, or other exploration of how our faith relates to these issues.

Used together, the stations should take approximately 50 minutes to work round, but if you have less time you can obviously leave out a couple. You can use them within an intercessions slot, have them set up as an installation for a special service or day of prayer (perhaps on Mothers' Day) where people can come and go independently and/or use them individually as prayer or intercession responses. If you are using them all together, they should be worked round in order.

You might also like to use mp3 worship tracks of songs whilst people work round the stations. (We found Joanne Hogg's Raphael's Journey a brilliant album to have playing in the background.)

1. Mothering means...

Equipment needed: pens, paper a selection of pictures that speak of mothers and mothering, a cross and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and gather together the
2. On the day: Lay out everything required for the station and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- What does mothering mean to you?
- Think about Jesus' words in Matthew 23:37... when he says how he longs to "gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..." or the passages such as Isaiah 66:13 where God says he will comfort his children "as a mother comforts her children"... what do these images suggest to you about God's vision for mothering?
- Now take a piece of paper and a pen... If it helps you, jot down your thoughts of what mothering means to you and everything you're thankful for experiencing from your own mother – or others around you who have mothered you.
(If you have had some really difficult experiences, you might find it helpful to fold the paper in half and on one side write the hard things that come to mind and on the other side, write the good.)
- Spend some time offering these thoughts, reactions and emotions to God and listening to anything he brings to mind.

- You might want to take your piece of paper round with you to look back at during other prayer stations, or leave it behind, folded up at the foot of the cross. Choose what you would like to do before moving on to the next station.

2. Longing for life

Equipment needed: Bible open or bookmarked at 1 Samuel 1, a baby blanket and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

3. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.
4. On the day: Lay out the items described above and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Thank God for the strong, natural desire he has put in women to have children and to mother. And the excitement of those who have conceived, or are hoping to do so soon.
- Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20 which describes how much Hannah – Samuel's mother – longed for a baby:
 - What strikes you in this story about women longing to be mothers?
 - Think about other Biblical women – such as Sarah and Elizabeth – who longed for a child for a long time.
 - How did God feel towards these women and what they are longing for?
- Hold the baby blanket tightly and feel its softness.
- Do you know any women who are longing to have children but are struggling, or have been told they can't – or simply are in circumstances which mean they cannot? How do you think they are feeling? Lift each one to God now and ask for his healing, comfort and wisdom – for them, and for you as you continue to pray for, and relate to, each one of them.
- Spend some time praying for all women who are in this situation – whatever the reason – that God would hear their prayer and comfort them.

3. Developing life

Equipment needed: print outs of sonogram pictures, a print out of the extract from Psalm 139 and the lyrics to Yvonne Lyon's song, *Fourteen weeks* provided at the end of this document, a Youtube film such as the one available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiikeMu19vQ> and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

5. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and gather together and print out the items you will need.
6. On the day: Set up the laptop to play the film, lay out the photos and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Read the scripture and song lyrics, look at the pictures, watch the film and praise God for the incredible miracle of human life growing and developing!

- Lift to God all mothers who are pregnant now – especially ones you know and those who are anxious about their pregnancy. Ask God for his peace, protection, comfort and wisdom.
- Pray for reluctant or worried new mothers who are torn as to whether to go through with their pregnancy that they would have the courage and strength to do so.

4. Nurture-protect-stretch -release

Equipment needed: play dough, print outs of information and/or pictures of mothers in nature and how they raise and release their young (such as eagles, kangaroos and lionesses), a Bible opened or bookmarked to 1 Samuel 1:20-2:11 and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

7. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and get together the items you will need.
8. On the day: Lay out the copies of the poem and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Take some playdough and spend some time shaping it into a figure.
- Then begin to enlarge and stretch it so it gets larger – being careful to adapt its proportions as you go.
- As you sculpt your 'child', think about the different ways in which mothers have to mother – helping their children to be nurtured, protected and stretched as they grow...
- Look at the images of 'mothers' in nature... how do they help you to think about these different aspects of the way God has designed mothers to be.
- Thank God for each mother you know – including yourself if you are one! – who is balancing these different approaches as they look after their child. And ask for his wisdom for them to know when to protect and when to stretch.
- Read 1 Samuel 1:21-2:11 and think about the immense courage and sacrifice it must have taken for Hannah to release her child... and the incredible example of her praising God through this process.
- Pray for mothers to have the courage to release their children where they need to – and for those who know God to do so prayerfully and praise-fully.
- Leave your 'child' behind and move on to the next station.

5. Mothering mothers

Equipment needed: A4 paper, pens, scissors and a cut out template of a 'mother' such as the one provided at the end of this document and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

9. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and get together the items you will need.
10. On the day: Lay out the various items needed for this station and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Concertina fold a sheet of paper into four and draw round the 'mother' template provided on the front stack, making sure both of her arms is touching the fold. Now cut her out...
- There are around 2 million single parents in Britain today* (the majority of whom are women) and many more mothers – with partners – who still feel over-stretched with the pace of modern-life and/or working and bringing up children at the same time. In addition, fragmentation in communities and society, and people tending to live away from extended family – often make parents more isolated.
- Open up your paper chain... label one of the centre 'mothers' as 'Mums' and then label the others around her in the chain as things like family members, friends, community, church and other support organisations that can help.
- Pray for God to strengthen the relationships and connections between mothers (and fathers!) and those around them, and for them to be nurtured and supported so that they – in turn – can nurture and support their children.
- Pray particularly for any busy mums you know, and for support and encouragement to be given to them today. Ask God to bring to mind anything he would like you to do or pray for or practically support these mums.
- Fold your chain back up and hold it in your hands.
- Thank God that each mother is his child – whether she knows it or not – and pray for the space and means for her to know God's love and delight in her as his child. Pray this especially for mothers known to you who are feeling over-stretched at the moment.
- Take your stack of mothers home as a reminder to pray for mothers beyond today, and as a way of prompting you to do anything you've committed to do to continue to pray or support mums you know after today.

* 2014 www.gingerbread.org.uk

6. Mothers in crisis

Equipment needed: a glass of water, some food items, a Tshirt, some money, a toy, a model of a house, an empty medication pack, an educational book or toy and a children's bible and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

11. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and gather together the items you will need.
12. On the day: Lay out the copies of the poem and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Have a look at the different items at this station – all basic things a mother might want her children to have... clean water, food, healthcare, fun, access to education, a safe home and space to teach, learn and practice faith...
- Now imagine one mother at a time, hidden in each of the statistics and facts of the situations below, and how they might be feeling about the situation their children are growing up in:
 - 768 million people in the world don't have access to clean, safe drinking water.
 - 925 million people in the world don't have enough to eat.

- Even in the UK, there are reports in the current financial crisis of mothers missing meals so their children can eat – or of not having enough to feed their families. And many children are growing up in an atmosphere of stress and tension.
- As of the end of 2012, there were 15.3 million refugees worldwide – that number is rising rapidly as a result of Syria and other continuing conflicts.
- In nations such as Iraq and Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, there are many children who have *never* experienced life conflict-free.
- It is thought as many as 200 million Christians worldwide face some form of persecution... this varies in severity, but in places like North Korea, teaching your children about your faith must be done in secret, with quiet and limited resources, and in many cases at great risk of being betrayed.
- Take one item at a time – as many or few as you would like – and hold it, while you pray for the mothers who are not able to give their children this practical resource or freedom. Pray for God to give them ingenuity, strength and peace and for breakthrough and change in the root causes that put mothers in such impossible situations.

7. Questioning mothers

Equipment needed: a large flip chart with a big question mark drawn on it and a print out of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and get together everything you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the sheet on the floor and display the sign you have made.

For display

Questioning mothers

- We all know that mothers don't have all the answers!
- Stand on the giant '?' alongside all mothers who have questions or feel confused as to the right way forward today, and pray for them to have wisdom.
- Ask God to help Christian mothers find new ways and spaces in the midst of their days to meet with him, hear from him, pray about their children and receive guidance in how to bring them up in his ways.
- And pray that mothers who don't know God yet will choose to cry out to him at the difficult times and find him in their distress, confusion or exhaustion.

8. Missing mothers

Equipment needed: a pretty box with a lid filled with a number of pre-prepared slips/cards you have made from the printout available at the end of this document and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

3. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and get together everything you will need.

4. On the day: Lay out the copies of the poem and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Many children in the UK – and around the world – grow up without their mother because she has left, given them up for adoption or passed away. HIV/AIDS alone has left 17.9 children under 18 orphaned – the majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In addition, some children grow up with their mother but experience her as at least partially absent due to illness, depression or neglect...
- Bring to God your questions and feelings – whatever they are.
- When you are ready to, pray for the motherless...
- In the box are some things every child needs from their mother. Take a few out and pray for motherless children to know these things through other mother figures, other family members and friends and/or other adults so that they can grow up safe, loved, affirmed and with the knowledge that they are delighted in. Pray especially for the church and its role in mothering.
- Thank God for his creativity and redemptive power in providing others to mother, but pray also for healing for the lack that cannot be humanly replaced... and for each one to come to know the Father who loves them so completely.

9. Mothers in loss

Equipment needed: lolly pop sticks, oasis or something similar, printouts of daffodils, selotape, yellow pens or colouring pencils and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

5. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and get together everything you will need
6. On the day: Lay out the copies of the poem and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- One of the greatest pains imaginable is a parent losing their child – whatever the age or stage of development...
- Take a few minutes to remember anyone you know personally in this situation – or any mothers who are also grieving because of a broken relationship with one or more of their children or because a child has taken a destructive path.
- Take a daffodil head print out and cut it out, thinking about all mothers who are grieving as you do so.
- Construct your daffodil and hold it in your hand, asking for God's comfort, healing and love to surround and cradle each woman's heart in this kind of delicate situation.
- Now begin to colour in your daffodil, praying for grieving mothers to see hope and colour in the world in God's timing.
- Plant your daffodil and pray for God to surround each mother in this situation with loving friends, family and community.

10. God sets the lonely in families

Equipment needed: pens, paper and a print out of the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

7. In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and lay out the pens and paper at the station.
8. On the day: Lay out the copies of the poem and display the sign you have made.

For display:

- Psalm 68:6 says 'God sets the lonely in families'...
- Thank God that he is so creative in the way he builds community – whether we are parents or not! – and that the traits of mothering, nurturing, protecting, challenging and releasing can be offered to us by anyone – and by us to everyone...
- Thank him that as Christians – and members of his church – we get to be part of this 'setting in families'. Whatever our gender and status, we also get to part of the birth and growth of new members of the Christian family!
- Take a pen and a piece of paper. Draw a circle and then write your name at the centre of it... spend some time reflecting on who God might be asking you to nurture, protect, challenge or release... and jot their names down in the circle.
- Think back over the previous stations you have visited and ask God if to bring to mind anything new he might be leading you to pray or do as a result of what you have thought and prayed about today... if there is something, write it down outside of the circle.
- Don't rush away... spend some time offering to God any remaining emotions, concerns or ideas that have been stirred up by these stations and asking for his wisdom and guidance with how to take them forward. (Ask someone you trust to pray with you if there is anything you feel this would help with.)

Additional resources and print outs...

...for station 3

Psalm 139:13-18

For you created my inmost being;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.
 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
 your works are wonderful,
 I know that full well.
 My frame was not hidden from you
 when I was made in the secret place,
 when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
 all the days ordained for me were written in your book
 before one of them came to be.
 How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
 How vast is the sum of them!

Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

Fourteen weeks (Yvonne Lyon)

Saw you last night
At our kitchen table
All wrapped up in silence
And conscious of eyes looking in.

You were a sketch
An outline on paper
Two lives intertwined
In a picture of love and new life

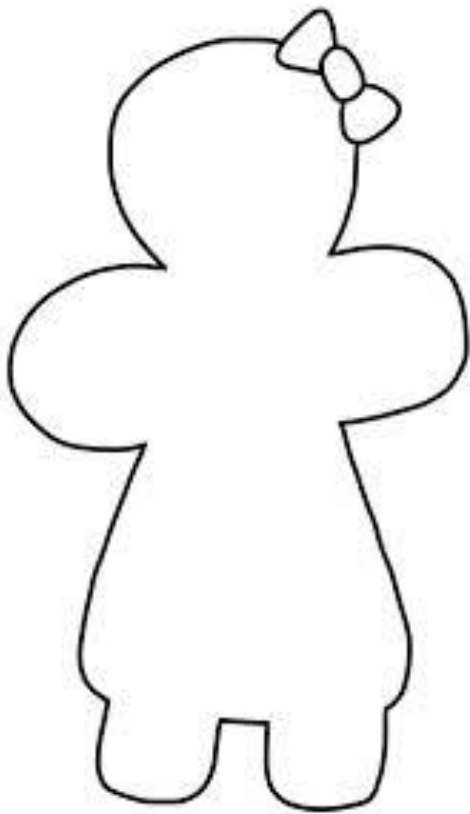
**You have no name
You have no name
But you have everything
That you need to hold on
In this little life.
Fourteen weeks.**

I'd give all I have
To know what you're thinking
You once were a rumour
And now I can see that you're real
You have become
My greatest adventure
So much to explore
As you find your own way
In this life.

**And life can be beautiful
If you have love, if you have love.
And life can be cruel
But you will have love, you will have love.**

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...for station 5



...for station 8

Hugs	Self-belief	Inspiration
Affirmation	Education	To hear 'I love you'
Nourishment	Quality time	To hear 'I'm proud of you'

Safety	Special presents	Stories
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...for station 9

