# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

## CELEBRATING FAMILY

### INTRODUCTION TO THEME FOR LEADER & TEAM

**What is the International Day of Families?**

The International Day of Families is held on 15 May every year, and it’s important to note that it is a day to celebrate all types of families. Consider your congregation or setting and think of the ways that family is represented there.

The International Day of Families was established by the United Nations in 1993 as a way to raise awareness of issues faced by families throughout the world and highlight the important role that families hold in communities. [International Day of Families | United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-families)

**Why do we need to mark this day with a worship service template?**

The word ‘family’ can be an exclusive word. There are so many ways in which a person may not feel like they belong to a family: divorced, bereaved, childless, homeless, differently abled, single, plus many others, and church can be a place that amplifies that feeling.

What if we talked about belonging to the family of God? We can honour the human familial relationships and celebrate the divine one too.

This meeting resource contains several ways that you can illustrate family, so use the option that best suits your congregation or group.

### RELATED BIBLE VERSES

‘He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow.’ (Ephesians 4:16 *NLT*)

‘Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.’ (Romans 15:7)

‘God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.’

(Ephesians 1:5 *NLT*)

‘But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.’ (Joshua 24:15 *NLT*)

### MEALTIME CARD

* What is the best thing about belonging to your family?
* Does your family have any traditions you share, eg at Christmas?
* What does it mean to be part of a worldwide family?

### TAKE-HOME IDEA

Create a simple 30-day challenge for families to take part in together at home. You can suggest an idea for each day, such as go for a walk, watch a film, bake a cake etc. You could leave some days blank for the family to choose an activity together.

### QUESTION TO START AND END THE SESSION

So … what makes your family special? How do we show them this?

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Thank You Card**

*You will need:*

* Card
* Envelope
* Stickers
* Felt-tip pens

**Talk About** the people who make you feel loved. What do they do or say that helps us to know they love and care for us?

*Instructions:*

* Using the materials provided, make a Thank You card for someone in your family or for a special friend.
* Write a message inside to say thank you.
* Put it in the envelope and keep it safe to give to the person later.
1. **Family Beads**

*You will need:*

* Pipe cleaners
* Coloured beads

**Talk about** how God loves everyone and wants us all to be part of his family.

*Instructions:*

* Thread beads on to a pipe cleaner - putting beads on to represent your family and friends.
* Fold the pipe cleaner round and twist to make a bracelet.
* This bracelet can help you remember the people who love you and remind you to pray for your family and friends.
1. **Weaving**

*You will need:*

* Card - with cuts along the long side
* Strips of paper/card
* Glue
* Scissors
* Pens

**Talk about** how we are all different - we each look, think, and act differently - but God loves us all the same and weaves us together in his family.

*Instructions:*

* Weave different coloured strips of card/paper through the card.
* Glue down the ends to secure.
* Write on the top ‘God weaves our family together’
1. **Home Sweet Home**

*You will need:*

* Chocolate fingers
* Rectangle-shaped biscuits, eg Morning Coffee
* Icing
* Various sweets or jelly babies

**Talk about** who lives in your house.

*Instructions:*

* Please wash your hands before starting this activity.
* Write your name on a paper plate.
* On a rectangle-shaped biscuit, use some icing to stick on a sweet for each person who lives in your house.
* Add a roof on to your biscuit house using the chocolate fingers.
* Put your plate on the table ready to eat at tea time.
1. **Worldwide Family of God**

*You will need:*

* Paper
* Circle template to represent the Earth
* Pencils and pens
* Thick paint in various skin colour shades
* Hand wipes

**Talk about** what it means to be part of your family and what it means to be part of the worldwide of God.

*Instructions:*

* Colour the circle in green and blue to look like the Earth, and stick it on to a piece of paper near to the bottom.
* Draw stick people around the Earth and then use the various skin-coloured paints to fingerprint a head on each person.
* Write on the top ‘Thank you, God, for our worldwide family’
1. **Pizza Parlour**

*You will need:*

* Greaseproof paper and pen
* Half a large bread roll
* Passata
* Various toppings, eg ham, pineapple, peppers, pepperoni, mushrooms, onions etc.
* Grated cheese

**Talk about** food from different countries and what people like and dislike. Today we are going to make a pizza for our tea. Where does pizza come from? Talk about where in the world the different toppings come from too.

*Instructions:*

* Please wash your hands before starting this activity.
* Write your name on the greaseproof paper.
* Spread passata on your bread and then add the toppings you like before sprinkling with grated cheese.
* Put your pizza ready to be cooked and collect it at tea time.
1. **Happy Families Card Challenge**

*You will need:*

* Set of ‘Happy Families’ cards
* Stopwatch/timer
* Leader board and pen

**Talk about** the different people in your family. What makes each one special?

* Sort the ‘Happy Families’ cards into families as quickly as you can.
* Write on the leader board how long it took you.
1. **Praying for our Worldwide Family**

*You will need:*

* Map of the world or large globe
* Post-it Notes
* Pen

**Talk about** any places in the world you have visited, or if you know any people who live in different countries. Isn’t it amazing that people all around the world can be in God’s family!

*Instructions:*

* On a Post-it Note, write a prayer for someone you know who lives in another country and stick it on the map.

OR

* On a Post-it Note, write a prayer for people living in countries where there is war, poverty and famine, eg Ukraine, Syria, East Africa (South Sudan, Somalia (including Somaliland) Kenya and Ethiopia)
1. **All the same on the inside!**

*You will need:*

* Apples – as many different varieties as possible

**Talk about** how God created us all to be different but that we are all humans with a heart that beats and emotions that feel happiness, sadness and love.

*Instructions:*

* Ask the children if they can identify the different varieties of apple.
* Notice how the apples look different on the outside because of the colour of their peel, but cut some in half to discover how they all have a core, pips and fruity flesh.
* Try eating some slices of the different varieties to see what they taste like.
* Remind them that people from around the world may look different but that we are all God’s children and belong to his family.
1. **Family Photo Frame**

*You will need:*

* Craft/lollipop sticks
* Glue
* Small stickers and craft gems

**Talk about** the things you like to do with your family. Do you have any photographs of your family together?

*Instructions:*

* Make a simple photo frame using the craft sticks.
* Decorate it using the stickers and craft gems provided.
* When you get home, find a photograph of your family to put in the frame.

**For other possible ideas see:** <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/FMYorkshire/international-day-of-families/>

## CELEBRATION

*Ask one of the families who come to your Messy Church if they would be happy to be interviewed during the celebration.*

Invite all the family members to stand together at the front and ask everyone to look at the family and to observe any family likenesses, eg Do the children look like their parents/grandparents?

Ask them to talk about the kind of things they like to do as a family.

Then ask each member some simple questions such as: What is your favourite colour? What hobbies do you enjoy? What is your favourite sweet?

Point out that within this family everyone is different and likes different things, but they are still a family who share lots of things together.

*Get the family to sit back down.*

Families are regarded as the foundation of society. Some of the most important years of our lives are spent growing up with our families. So today we are celebrating the United Nations International Day of Families that is observed on 15 May every year to celebrate the importance of families, people, societies and cultures all around the world.

*You may like to show this video clip that illustrates various languages, cultures, and religions around the world.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ni_at59TzMA>

Family is God’s idea, and throughout the Bible we read of many different families who tried to love and serve him. Like most families, they sometimes got it wrong and would have arguments and fall out, but that didn’t stop God from loving them, just as it never stops him from loving us.

God calls us all as his beloved children and invites us to call him Father. This means that all people everywhere belong to his family. Even though we may have different colour skin, speak different languages and eat different food, we are all created in God’s image and are loved by him.

The Bible says, ‘God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.’

(Ephesians 1:5 *NLT*)

So today let us celebrate together how great it is to be part of our family and also to be part of God’s worldwide family.

*Have some Celebrations chocolates to share or use party poppers as a reminder that we are celebrating our family and belonging to God’s worldwide family today.*

## PRAYER

Dear God,

Today we want to thank you for our family and to celebrate the joy of family life. Thank you that our family love us and care for us.

Help us to remember that people all around the world are children of God, and that means we are all in your family. Please keep us all safe wherever we are in the world.

Amen

## SONG SUGGESTIONS

* ‘He’s got the whole world in his hands’
* *SoF* 2004 ‘Our God is a great big God’
* SASB 29 ‘Have you ever stopped to think how God loves you’

## MEAL TIME

You can use the pizzas and biscuit treats you made earlier. You could also have a bottle of soft drink on each table to celebrate the joy of family life, or send each family home with a small box of Celebrations chocolates to share.