# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 2023

## CELEBRATING FAMILY

### **INTRODUCTION TO THEME FOR LEADER AND 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.

*If you are using the* ***Family Likeness*** *illustration, you will need to prepare a family in plenty of time to be able to interview them during the service. Let them know you will be asking the congregation to look at them closely to find some family resemblances. If you have a family attending your corps or centre where there are grandparents and grandchildren too, that would be great, but also consider a family that might be less traditional. If children or grandchildren live far away, you could record a Zoom interview with family members in different places; or you could use the This Time Tomorrow template for the interview* [This Time Tomorrow | LICC](https://licc.org.uk/resources/this-time-tomorrow/)

*If you are using the* ***Families in the Bible*** *illustration, you might want to have a* ***flip chart*** *and some board pens available to display the list your congregation comes up with.*

*If you are using* ***All the Same on the Inside****, you’ll need to buy a variety of apples.*

*If you want to encourage the conversation about family after the meeting or session, offer take-home activities like the* ***Mealtime Card*** *or* ***Take Home Challenge****.*

*You might want to consider having some* ***Celebration****s chocolates to share at the end of the meeting as people leave, to help them celebrate that they are part of your corps family and more importantly the family of God as well.*

### **RELATED BIBLE VERSES**

**These have been chosen as they offer a variety of language to help in the understanding of family and what belonging might feel or look like for individuals within a family and more broadly the family of God.**

‘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*)

### **ILLUSTRATIONS**

**Family Likeness**

*Prepare a family in advance to be interviewed during the service.*

*Here are some ideas of how you might like to organise this and the questions you might like to explore as a congregation’ or you could use This Time Tomorrow if you want to take another angle.*

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.

*Invite the family to return to their seats*

Follow up with:

For better or worse, some of the most important years of our lives are spent growing up with our families. So today we are highlighting the United Nations International Day of Families that is observed on 15 May every year to highlight the importance of families of all kinds, individuals, people, societies and cultures all around the world.

**Video clips**

Here are a couple of video clip that illustrate various languages, cultures, and religions around the world – if appropriate show one during your service.

The World’s Family

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

How Are Families Around the World the Same and Different? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUeSQFjnhoM>

**Families in the Bible**

Family is God’s idea, and throughout the Bible we can learn about many different families who tried to love and serve him. What a relief to know that sometimes they 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.

So, how many Bible families can we remember today? – I’ll start: Adam and Eve …

Encourage as much participation as possible and highlight differences and similarities as appropriate. Depending on your congregation, consider introducing Timothy’s family – his mum and grandmother; Lazarus’s family; the family of the little girl who had died.

All of life and death happens in families, and we can see that illustrated in the different families here in this whole church family as well as these families from the Bible. God calls us all as his beloved children and invites us to call him Father. Even though some of us may have different colour skin, speak different languages, eat different food, and enjoy doing different things, 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 own family, this church family, and God’s worldwide family.

**All the same on the inside!**

***Allergy alert – some people react to the pectin in apple skins***

*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:*

*You’ll need some adults to help.*

* Ask people 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.

### **MEALTIME CARD**

* What is the best thing about belonging to your family?
* What traditions do your family share? Could you start some new ones?
* What do you think it means 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 might want to start with one week initially and check in to see how they are getting on. You could ask them to provide ideas for the following weeks!

Here are some ideas for the first week:

* Enjoy a walk together (the school run counts)
* Watch a film
* Bake a cake - you can keep it simple with a packet mix
* Leave encouraging notes for each other – ‘You’re great’, ‘Thanks’, ‘I love you’, ‘Dinner was delicious’ etc.
* Offer to help another family member by asking, ‘How can I help you today?’

You could leave some days blank for the family to choose an activity together.

### **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’