



FATHERS DAY

Church Service Ideas Pack

For some people
Father's Day is
wonderful, for others it
is deeply painful.

- Worship

- Celebrate

- Reflect

- Society/Culture

Fatherhood is complex. There are single fathers, estranged fathers, fathers who are kind and fathers who caused great pain. There are fathers who have died and fathers who have always sustained their whole family. There are children who rebel and children who conform. There are children who go missing and children who have passed away. There are those struggling with infertility, miscarriage and abortion. Fatherhood is complex.

We live in a society where fathers are expected to be strong and competent whilst being surrounded by messages that childcare is women's work and that men are incompetent at it. Where women and men share more of the household tasks and childcare responsibilities than ever before. But also where we see many children growing up without positive relationships with their fathers. Stereotypes abound, and men are pushed to not be weak, vulnerable or honest about their lives.

Into this complex space, we have a God who is described as a loving Father. Who runs towards us whilst we are still far away. Who loves us no matter how much we mess up. Yet, identifying with God as our father may simply be too painful, if our experience of our own father has been painful.

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1. Creating opportunities to celebrate fathers and father figures in our lives.
 2. Having space to worship and remember God as our Father.
 3. Giving time for us to reflect on the possible painful aspects of fatherhood in our lives.
 4. Considering the political and social issues of fatherhood in society.

This pack offers ideas and resources for running a Father's Day service which engages with the complexity of fatherhood.

Considerations:

When planning a Father's Day service, it is worth considering the pros and cons of making it an "all age" service.

PROS:

- Fathers can do tasks with their children.
- It can be a great reminder of what fatherhood is all about.
- It can be great fun!

CONS:

- The painful aspects of fatherhood are hard to deal with when there are children in the service.
- All age services are hard work to lead and maintain any type of order.
- There are always some people in the congregation who avoid all age services like the plague.

If you are part of a congregation connected to a parent and toddler group, nursery or other child focussed groups, considering whether to make the Father's Day service suitable for those who do not regularly come to church. This could include working with the children in advance of the service to prepare a song to sing for their parents during the service.

Before doing this it is worth considering whether this would be sensitive, given the demographic of the child focussed groups. Are there a significant amount of single mothers? Are there a lot of fathers who work away in the military or who do shift work?

It's really important not to make assumptions about family structures or people's relationships with their fathers (or children). There are many blended families, 1 in 6 pregnancies ends in miscarriage, 750,000 children witness domestic abuse, 1 in 7 couples have difficulty conceiving, single parents make up 25% of all families in the UK. Recognising and making space for these complexities in a Father's Day service can seem overwhelming, but offering sensitivity alongside celebration shows compassion and love to all those in the congregation.

Themes:

Based around the four topics of worship, celebrate, reflect and society/culture there are various themes we could incorporate into our service:

WORSHIP:

- God as our Father.
- God's love.
- The Prodigal Son story (Luke 15:11-32).

CELEBRATE:

- New fathers.
- Good fathers.
- Father figures.
- Children.
- Adoption.
- Mothers who also do the job of being fathers too.

REFLECT:

- Single parenthood.
- Disability and illness.
- Estrangement.
- Bereavement.
- Abuse.
- Infertility.

SOCIETY/CULTURE:

- Views of fathers as incompetent.
- Men not being allowed to show weakness or vulnerability.

Videos:

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DAD?

This video from the US has reflections from men about their experiences of fatherhood and could help with getting people to think more broadly about fatherhood:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR62SSo2DNs>

MARATHON

This video tells the story of Rick Hoyt and his father Dick, who has run marathons with his son in a wheelchair. It is inspiring and challenging. And could begin broader conversations about the extreme stories of fatherhood and whether they are what we should be seeking to emulate, or not.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPCK4THZtng>

CELEBRATE DADS

A video celebrating dads, from Dove.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Jpb2_YdxYM

By making space for both celebration and reflection, we can consider both the joys and challenges of fatherhood.

Activity 1

WHY I LOVE YOU

1. As people arrive, hand out a piece of paper and a pen to each adult and child.
2. During the service ask every one to write or draw something they would like to celebrate about their dad, a father figure or another person in their life who has a parental role.
3. Invite a few of the children to come up to the front and share what they have written/drawn.

Activity 2

GOD SAYS/THE WORLD SAYS

1. Print the statements out from Appendix 1 (pages 5 - 12).
2. Read out the statements and ask the congregation to decide whether the statements are things God has said men should be like, or whether it is what the world says men should be like.

Activity 3

PHOTO RECREATION

1. Use the Father's Day PowerPoint to show pictures of fathers and sons then and now.
2. Use it as a scene setter for talking about how parental roles change as children grow up.
3. Ask the congregation to consider whether God's relationship with us changes as we grow in our faith. Does anything change? If so, what?

Activity 4

GOD OUR FATHER

1. In preparation for this activity, cut out the person shapes in Appendix 2 (page 13).
2. Hand out the person shapes and pens as people arrive.
3. Invite people to write a description of their relationship with their dad on one side.
4. Ask them to write on the other side of the sheet what their relationship with God is like.
5. Use the exercise as an opportunity to reflect on how much our relationship with our dad affects our relationship with God (or not).

Activity 5

HOME FOR GOOD

1. Play the Home for Good short film: <https://vimeo.com/190082641>
2. Invite the congregation to think about how they could get involved with fostering or adoption, or supporting Home for Good this Father's Day.

Activity 6

PRAYERS

1. If the service has an specific time for prayers or intercessions, use it bring before God those who are struggling on Father's Day.
2. Include in the prayers specific mention of:
 - Single parenthood.
 - Disability and illness.
 - Estrangement.
 - Bereavement.
 - Abuse.
 - Infertility.
 - Adoption and fostering.

Activity 7

THE PRODIGAL CHILD

1. Before the service collect together props for acting out the story.
 - Fake beard for the father.
 - Soft toy pigs.
 - Pig sound effect.
 - Party poppers.
 - Balloons.
2. Invite children to volunteer to play the different parts in the story of the prodigal son:
 - Father.
 - Disobedient child.
 - Obedient child.
 - Party goers
 - Servants
 - Pigs
3. Tell the story of the prodigal child from Luke 15:11-32. It may be useful to use a children's version of the Bible.
4. Use the role play to draw out key themes from the story:
 - God's unconditional love.
 - Hurt of the obedient child.
 - The model of fatherhood shown in the story.
 - God runs towards us.

Further Thoughts

To think more about fatherhood, The Resource's Ali Campbell has written a blog with his reflections on fatherhood and has some "dad stuff" ideas that made be useful. Read the blog here: <http://theresource.org.uk/being-a-dad/>.

It may be worth considering whether additional pastoral support could be available on Father's Day for those who are struggling in some way with fatherhood or their relationship with their own fathers. Ask some of the prayer ministry team (or pastoral support team) to be on hand and mentioning their availability during the service.



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- There are many stereotypes about men in general and about fathers in particular. Strength, power, control, anger, aggression, success, being the "breadwinner". Creating spaces to challenge this can be hugely transformative for men.
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Real
men
don't
cry.

Jesus wept.

John 11:35

Child
care is
women's
work.

Let the
little
children
come
unto Me.

Matthew 19:14

Men
must be
the
“bread
winners”.

For God is
the one who
provides
seed for the
farmer and
then bread
to eat.

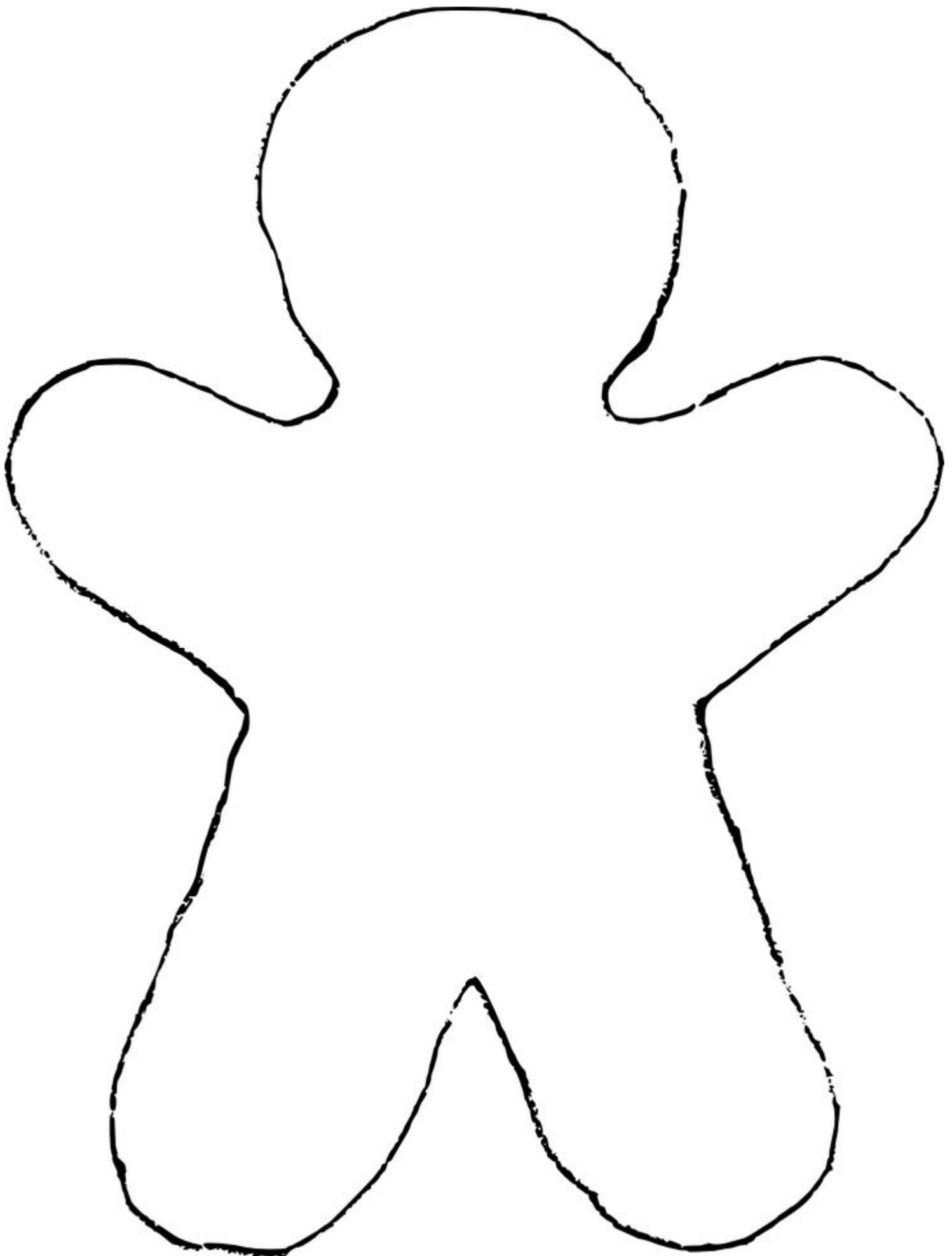
2 Corinthians 9:10

Fathers
should
always be
strong.

But God said to me,
"My grace is
sufficient for you,
for my power is
made perfect in
weakness."

Therefore I will
boast all the more
gladly about my
weaknesses, so that
Christ's power may
rest on me.

2 Corinthians 2:9



Father's Day Ideas Pack

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[@God_loves_women](https://twitter.com/God_loves_women)

This Ideas Pack has been made available free of charge, however if you would like to contribute to Natalie's work you can do so [HERE](#).

The Resource



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