

# Christian Family Sunday 2006

## Celebrating Families at Home

### Family Prayer Flag

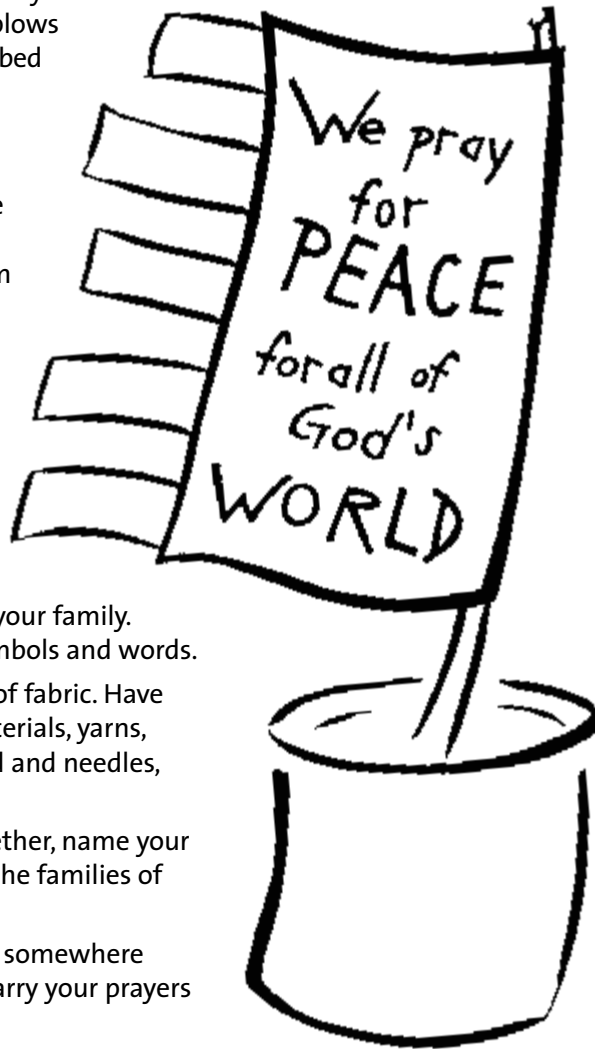
Prayer flags are part of Tibetan culture and are also part of the heritage of China, Iran, and India. They are found on rooftops, bridges, monasteries, mountains—anywhere the wind can catch the prayer. It is believed that when the wind blows through the flags, the prayers inscribed on them are carried as blessings to all beings.

The Tibetan term for prayer flag is *lung ta*, meaning “wind horse.” The wind horse is a symbol of strength and freedom. Another Tibetan term for prayer flag is *dar cho*. “Dar” means to increase life, fortune, health, and wealth. “Cho” means all sentient beings. So whether you think of your prayer flag as a prayer for strength and freedom or one wishing life abundant for all God’s creation, consider the kind of prayer or prayers you wish to offer to the world and for your family. Then create a prayer flag using symbols and words.

As a family gather around a piece of fabric. Have available fabric pens, scraps of materials, yarns, sequins, beads, ribbon, glue, thread and needles, and so on.

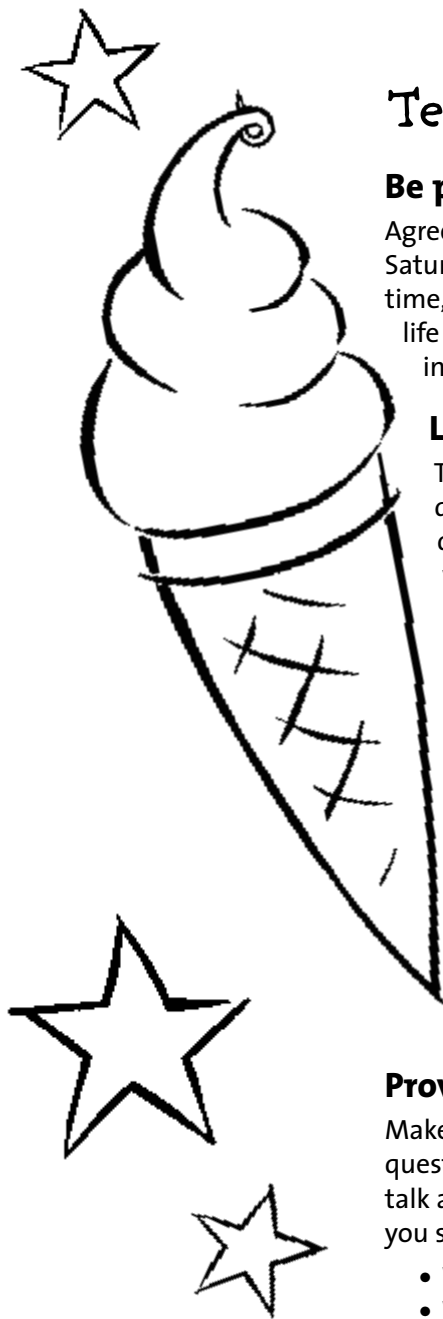
As you create your prayer flag together, name your prayers for your family and for all the families of the world.

Once your flag is complete hang it somewhere where it will catch the wind and carry your prayers into the world.



To learn more about prayer flags see *Sacred Rituals: Connecting with the Divine through Labyrinths, Sand Paintings and Other Rituals* by Eileen London and Belinda Recio (Gloucester, MA: Fair Winds Press, 2004), or visit [www.prayerflags.com](http://www.prayerflags.com).





# Ten Ways to Celebrate Being Family

## **Be present**

Agree on a time when you will be together each week. It might be breakfast on Saturday morning or for an hour after dinner on Sunday afternoon. During that time, pose a question for discussion, such as “What good thing happened in your life this week?” or “How might our family be faithful to God or serve God together in the coming week?”

## **Laugh, dance, and sing together**

Tell jokes or relate a funny incident of the day at dinner. Sing together as you drive to the grocery store or to a soccer game. Put on a child’s favourite CD and dance together. Teach your children the dances that were popular when you were a teenager. Laugh together!

## **Go for walks**

Walk in any kind of weather, at various times, and for many reasons: during a summer rain shower, after a snowstorm, to look at the stars, to say hello to neighbours, to get ice cream cones, along a beach, through a wooded park. While walking is good exercise for every family member, this is also a time to enjoy being together and to discover new things. Don’t rush it.

## **Listen**

Really hearing what someone is saying when we rush from one thing to the next is difficult. Play this listening game for a few minutes: Begin a conversation about any topic. Each person must say what the previous person said to the satisfaction of that person before adding to the conversation.

## **Provide space to ask questions**

Make a question box in which any family member can place a question. Draw a question when everyone is together (for a meal, in the car, just before bedtime) and talk about it together. You might “salt” the box with some of these questions to get you started:

- What would you like to change about the world?
- What living person would you like to meet?
- If you could ask God any question, what would it be?

## **Hold one another in your thoughts and prayers**

Any time a family member goes away for a sleepover, business trip, camp, or wherever, assure that person that those at home will pray for her or him each day until she or he returns. Parents, bless your children as they leave for school each day and encourage them to bless you with words such as “May God be with you today.” If something special is happening, such as a test or an interview, make the blessing more specific, such as “May you feel God’s presence today when you take the test.”

## **Honour differences**

On birthdays, pay special attention to the birthday person. Pray for her or him, inviting each family member or person present to say a sentence prayer for the honouree. In some families, the birthday person chooses the menu for the family

For more ideas and a theme on Family Values, visit [www.nccusa.org/elmc/family2006](http://www.nccusa.org/elmc/family2006)

meal together. Other families have a special plate the honouree uses. Celebrate the uniqueness of the birthday person in other ways that fit your family's interests and schedule.

### Say, "I'm sorry."

Keep a supply of plain index cards and art supplies in a box. Explain to the family that these supplies are to make "I'm sorry" cards when you have upset a family member. They are for both adults and children to use.

### Play games together

Make up games to play together or adapt games you already have so every family member can be involved. Look for games that encourage everyone to work together to reach a goal. Here's one for travelling: List all the provinces and territories on a sheet of paper. See how many licence plates for different places you can identify as you travel to your destination.

### Eliminate comparisons

Look for ways to celebrate the individuality of each family member, whether adult or child. Play a simple game such as "What's your favourite?" Each family member has a turn to select a category (ice cream flavour, book, game, sport, colour, etc.) and each person answers the question. The categories can be more complex if you have older children. Use questions that ask for people's preferences, which have no wrong answers.

(Written by Carol Wehrheim for the National Council of Churches USA. Reprinted with permission.)

## A Family Toast

- Left: Family by adoption.
- Right: Family by birth.
- Left: Family by friendship.
- Right: Family by mirth.
- Left: Family by marriage.
- Right: Family by love.
- Left: Family on this earth.
- Right: Family above.
- Left: Family by memories.
- Right: Family by trait.
- Left: Family early on.
- Right: Family of late.



**ALL: Here's to family!**

*These ten ways are listed on an attractive bookmark that can be ordered free of charge from United Church Resource Distribution (UCRD). Order "Family Ministries Bookmark," #200 000 194, from UCRD by calling 1-800-288-7365 or locally 416-253-5456.*

## Morning Light Prayer

As the morning light appears  
may I be ready to walk humbly and gently  
on Mother Earth, with all my relations;  
may I be ready to share all that I have  
with my brothers and sisters  
and may I be open to hearing your voice  
as it speaks to me.

As the light reaches its zenith in the sky,  
may I continue to lift my hands and my heart  
in service to others.

As the evening light meets the horizon  
may I always be ready to come to you, Creator,  
with peace in my soul and with a gentle spirit.

—Alf Dumont

From *That All May Be One*;  
(The United Church of Canada, 2004), p. 72.  
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## Letters to the “Family”

In our day and age many of us keep connected with loved ones by email, but there is something about receiving a letter or card in the mail that people value.

As a family think about someone you consider family, such as a relative, a neighbour, or a family friend. Together think about and name shared times and things you value about this relationship. Then invite each family member to write or draw a message for this person. Put these in an envelope and send them to the person as a way of reaching out, keeping connected, and honouring this important relationship.

You might also consider tracing the head and arms of one member of your family, cutting the outline out, and writing or drawing on it your thoughts, remembrances, wishes, appreciations, and prayers for the person. Fold up the outline and send it to him or her—you are sending a hug.

For resources to  
support and nurture  
family life, visit  
[www.united-church.ca/  
familyministries](http://www.united-church.ca/familyministries).

## Talking Together

Find some time to gather for conversation, maybe over a meal or at a special time, and talk about one or more of the following:

- Identify the family configurations you are a part of: nuclear family (the family with which you live; often relationships identified by blood ties), extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins), church family, global family, Christ’s family, God’s family, chosen family (which may include friends).
- Help one another identify the gifts you each bring to your family.
- What is the best thing about being part of your family?
- If you could create a rule for your family, what would it be?
- What is one of your best memories of your family?
- What is one of the hardest things you have endured as a family? What have you learned from the experience?
- If you could change one thing in your family, what would it be?
- What is your favourite (meal, flavour of ice cream, colour, book, movie, song)...?
- List five things you could do together as a family. Identify when you might do at least one of them.
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?
- What is the best thing about being part of the Christian family?
- What is one of your favourite stories of the faith family?



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