

# HONORING THE MANY WAYS GUIDANCE, CARE, PROTECTION, AND LOVE SHOW UP IN OUR LIVES.

How to honor the deep meaning of Father's Day while also recognizing the complexity of gender, family, grief, and lived experience. That awareness itself is a meaningful step toward more inclusive ministry.

**One helpful shift is moving from “Father’s Day” as a gendered recognition to honoring the many ways guidance, care, protection, and love show up in our lives. This opens space for people of all genders who father, mentor, and support others, as well as those for whom the day carries tenderness**

At its core, this is about moving from assumption → invitation, and from gender → vocation and relationship. You don't have to lose the warmth or celebration—just widen the circle of who is seen within it.

**Here are a few ideas that congregations have found meaningful:**

**Broaden the language intentionally  
In worship, consider naming and  
celebrating:**

- all who guide, parent, mentor, and care for others
- people of all genders who embody fathering roles
- those who long to be parents
- those who have lost fathers, children, or relationships
- those for whom this day is complicated

This can be done through prayers, a litany, or a short reflection that gently reframes the day.

**Shift how gifts are given**

Instead of distributing gifts based on who is perceived to be male, you might:

- Offer a gift to anyone who would like one (self-selecting)
- Invite people to take one in honor or memory of someone
- Create a space where people can write names or prayers and take a token as part of that act

This removes assumptions and gives people agency.



## **Create space for multiple emotions**

A brief acknowledgment like:

“Today holds joy, grief, gratitude, and longing. However you come today, you are held in God’s love and in this community.” Even one sentence like this can make a big difference.

## **Offer an alternative or addition**

Some congregations:

- Light candles for those we honor or remember
- Include a moment of quiet reflection
- Provide a small take-home blessing or prayer card instead of gendered gifts

## **Consider a “Blessing of Caregivers” moment**

Invite all who nurture, guide, mentor, parent, or protect others (of any gender) to stand or be acknowledged. This centers the role and calling, not gender identity.

## **Communicate the “why”**

If you make a shift, a short note in the bulletin or a brief pastoral word can help:

“We are expanding how we honor this day so that all people—across gender identities and life experiences—can feel seen and included.”

## **Share the following prayer**

God of love and relationship,  
We give you thanks today for the many ways care, guidance, protection, and wisdom are shared among us.

For those who have nurtured us, taught us, walked beside us, and helped shape who we are we offer our deep gratitude.

We honor all who embody fathering in its many forms: parents, mentors, elders, caregivers, and companions people of every gender who offer strength, presence, and love.

We hold before you the fullness of this day: the joy of connection and celebration, the longing for what has not been, the grief of loss or strained relationships, and the complexity many carry quietly.

For those who have lost fathers or children, for those whose relationships are broken or distant, for those who hoped to parent and could not surround them with your comfort and tender care.

For those who show up day after day to guide, protect, and nurture others,  
give strength, patience, and deep joy.  
Open our hearts, O God, to recognize and honor the many ways your love is lived out among us.

Help us to move beyond assumptions,  
to widen the circle of belonging,  
and to celebrate the sacred calling of caring for one another.

We trust that however we come today—  
with joy, grief, gratitude, or uncertainty—  
we are held in your love.

In your holy and life-giving name,  
Amen.

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LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION

