

Good Sunday morning Church of the Apostles Family and Friends,

Happy Mother's Day to all of our Moms out there: Moms in traditional families, Moms who are single, Moms who are step-moms, Moms who are step-In-moms. You all deserve our honor today. And I am also aware of those of you who are missing their mothers – whose moms are no longer with us, me included.

I was blessed to have an amazing mother. I've shared a story or two with our folks at Apostles, such as the one I shared this morning during our combined Worship Service with Trinity UCC. As I shared, my mother, Maw, was quite an adventurous woman. She was also a woman of faith.

Growing up we attended Honey Brook Presbyterian Church. The church where our mother was baptized, confirmed and married by pastors serving that church. My four sisters and I were all baptized, confirmed and two were married there. Our family had a pew. We sat on the right side, facing the front of the church. Our pew was just behind our maternal Grandparents pew. In front of our Nanny and Pappy's pew was my mother's sister, Josephine and husband, John and their five children.

One fond memory I have of a Mother's Day at the church was when our Junior Choir sang a song for our Mother's. The words of the song went:

*“Lord Jesus, Thou hast known
A mother's tender love and care:
And Thou wilt hear, while for my own
Mother most dear I make this fervent prayer.*

*Protect her life, I pray,
Who gave the gift of life to me;
And may she know, from day to day,
The deepening glow of Joy that comes from Thee.*

*I cannot pay the debt
For all the love that she has given;
But Thou, love's Lord, wilt not forget
Her due reward – bless her in earth and heaven.*

For years I tried to locate this song so that I could teach it to the many Children's Choirs that I was able to direct in several of our churches. I could never locate the music or the words until recently. I went online and typed in some of the words and discovered that the words were not written for a song but were written as a poem for a mother's birthday.

The poem is entitled: “A Prayer for Mother's Birthday” by Henry Jackson VanDyke. Some of the words are different, as I think Miss Sangrey, our choir director, changed them so they would fit better to be used as a Mother's Day Anthem. It was also quite

enlightening to read about the author, Henry Jackson VanDyke – (1852 – 193300. VanDyke was born in Germantown, PA, to Henrietta Ashmead and Henry Jackson VanDyke, a respected Presbyterian Clergyman. The son was influenced by his father's role as minister, though the boy was not necessarily a model child. As his father said of his two sons, "Paul was born good, but Henry was saved by grace." His ambition was to become a writer, but he later changed his mind and became a minister in the Presbyterian Church. As a pastor he was known for integrating literature into his sermons. VanDyke gave up his position in ministry to become an English Professor at Princeton University. In 1910 he took a break from teaching to become the US ambassador to Netherlands. He fought in the First World War. Despite his changing circumstances, he never stopped writing. He had approximately 70 books published.

I am still searching for the music score using these words for the song I learned as a young child. Maybe someday I will be able to teach those words to my own grand-boys.

Before I close today, I would like to share the words from a picture that hung in my own mother's home for years. It was a gift from my own family for our Maw on Mother's Day 1998. The words are:

HOW TO BE A MEAN MOTHER

A mean mother never allows candy or sweets to
take the place of a well-balanced meal.

A mean mother insists on knowing where her children are at all times,
who their friends are and what they do.

A mean mother breaks the child labor law by making her children work –
washing dishes, making beds, learning to cook and doing
other cruel and unpleasant chores.

A mean mother makes life miserable for her offspring
by insisting that they always tell the truth.

A mean mother produces teenagers who are wiser and more sensible.

A mean mother can smile with secret delight and pride
when she hears her own grandchildren call their parents "mean".

What the world needs now are more mean mothers!

So glad I could share some fond memories of my own mother on this Mother's Day. May this day be filled with wonderful memories for all of you to make you sing, or at least your hearts sing.

Blessings,
Pastor Narda

Prayer: *Loving God, we give you thanks for adopting us into your family through the miracle of your grace, and calling us to be brothers and sisters to each other. Today we pray for our own mothers: who cared for us when we were helpless, who comforted us*

when we were hurt, whose love and care we often took for granted. We pray for those who are grieving the loss of their mother, those who never knew their biological mother, and now yearn for her, those who have experienced the wonder of an adopted mother's love. We are mindful of families separated by war or conflict, families struggling with various issues due to the Coronavirus. Compassionate God, we ask that you would give all an extra measure of your strength and peace. Keep us united with you and with each other, so that we can be and become all that we are meant to be. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.