fresh ideas

1,000 ways to grow a thriving and energetic church

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Dedication

To Dr. Stephen P. Davis,
My husband
my best friend
my love
my greatest encourager.
Thank you for believing in me.

My son, Justin,
the most remarkable young man I know,
who between PhD work, teaching, and triathalons
still finds time to encourage his mom.

My amazing daughter, Autumn,
whose creative brain makes mine look bland,
and whose sold-out love for God shines brightly.

Keep on shining!
Mother’s Day

“Rise up and call her "blessed" today.

“She is far more precious than jewels.”

—Proverbs 31:10

Need fresh ideas to honor moms?

**Preschool Prayer Parade**

Teach an appropriate Scripture to older preschoolers in the nursery, and then allow them to march down the aisles of the sanctuary during a worship song, spreading all around the worship center. Ask all women to stand, and then lead preschoolers to repeat their verse for their moms aloud before marching out.

**Memory Gift**

Ask every woman attending worship to stand. Present each one with a fresh flower or small gift. You could order or make a gift, such as bookmarks, special pins, booklets, or mementos with the church name on it. Ask a church member with poetry talents to write a poem about Christian mothers, copy and distribute it. Use ribbons and cardboard to make Bible place-markers. Each year’s small gift can be unique and meaningful.

**Presenters**

If your church gives token gifts on Mother’s Day, vary the presenters each year. The presenters should be recruited ahead of time, and should be old enough to accomplish the task efficiently. Examples: teen boys, fifth graders, older men, new members, ushers.

**Baby Dedication**

Mother’s Day is a great day to schedule a baby dedication ceremony.
**Baptism**
Many people who aren’t Christians attend church with their mother on Mother’s Day. Schedule a baptism on that day to demonstrate a clear witness.

**Oldest/Youngest**
Not to be a fuddy-duddy, but pointing out the oldest and youngest moms during worship isn’t a great idea. Some churches present a gift to the mother with the most children, but these days that often involves blended families and may be embarrassing to them. Consider recognizing the mother who has been a Christian the longest, the mother with the newest baby, or even the tallest mother! One year you might ask all mothers who have a new baby this past year to stand and then offer a prayer for all mothers and for those in particular. Or invite ladies to stand briefly if they have children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, then great-great-grandchildren. Or recognize mothers of preschoolers, elementary-aged children, teens, then those with adult children.

**Teen Guy’s Video**
Ask teenage boys in your church to work together to prepare a brief video to honor their mothers. Play it as a preservice video during morning worship.

**Mother’s Day Picnic**
Plan a casual, catered picnic at a local park for Mother’s Day. Ask church members to make reservations for themselves and family members who will attend, and order food from a deli or restaurant so moms don’t have to cook.

**Worship Him, Not Her**
Carefully plan to joyfully honor mothers on Mother’s Day, but worship only God.
Send those high school graduates off with your church's blessings. Need fresh ideas?

**Sealed “Blessing Book”**

Begin early to complete this simple but meaningful project to celebrate high school graduation. Purchase a bottle of rubber cement and a nice journal with lined pages for each high school graduate from your church. Write the graduate’s name on the front of the journal, and a note, “Do not open until 2013!” (four years from now). Pass the book around to youth leaders, church staff members, and other church friends of the graduate. Each person writes a personal note on a separate page with this in mind: the graduate can’t read the note for four years! They may share words of Christian encouragement, Scriptures, observations of spiritual gifts, funny or serious predictions, notes of love or prayers. After each person writes his or her note, they seal their page closed using rubber cement. My daughter just opened her blessing book after four years of college. What a blessing it was! The notes were convicting, hilarious, challenging, touching.

**And the Graduates Are . . .**

Make bookmarks with a list of your church’s high school graduates and a challenge to pray for them. Print them on cardstock paper and laminate. Distribute the prayer reminders to church members on Sunday.
Testimony
Graduates’ Christian testimonies could be printed as a bulletin insert.

Senior Wall
Take an annual group photo of your church’s grads on graduate recognition Sunday. Pose the group uniquely each year, i.e. leaning, walking in line, on playground equipment. Let the group choose a Scripture to add to the bottom of the photo, then frame it and hang it on the “senior wall” in the church’s youth area.

Projected Pictures
Preservice video projection could feature a baby photo and cap and gown photo of each graduate along with a challenge to the church to pray for graduates. It could also include a quote by a youth worker or staff member about that student’s spiritual walk during the past years or a quote by the graduate about his or her relationship with God.

Stand Up
When introducing graduates during worship, ask church members who have invested in that student to stand, such as family members, past Sunday school teachers, church youth workers.

Graduate Commissioning
Some churches honor graduates with a brief ceremony during worship. Graduates wear their caps and gowns and are seated on the front rows. They are introduced with a sentence about their Christian walk. After all graduates have been introduced, invite parents to come forward to stand with their graduate for a special prayer of commitment and commissioning. Youth workers should pray with students whose parents aren’t present. Read Matthew 28:18–20 as a challenge. Allow a time for parents and friends to pray quietly with their student before the group prays together. Conclude with a pastoral prayer, commissioning the students to impact their world.

Thanks a Bunch
At the graduate recognition service, present each graduate with a sunflower or daisy as they’re introduced. After all have been introduced, invite them to take the flower to an adult in the congregation who has been a Christian encourager to them.
Receiving Lines
After the worship service where graduates are recognized, ask graduates to form a line in the church foyer or hallway so members may offer words of encouragement to them.

Visual Story
The youth minister or parents may prepare a video or slide show of the students at church activities over the years and share it during a special fellowship gathering. A party for the entire group of graduates from your church could spotlight each student with a poster, prepared by their parents. Give parents plenty of advance notice, requesting that the poster be submitted a couple of weeks early. The poster could portray the graduate from infancy through graduation.

Breakfast for Grads
Plan a special event to honor your church’s high school graduates—a casual reception, an outdoor barbecue, a formal tea party, a photo party, or a huge banquet. Our church hosted a lovely breakfast for graduates and their families on the Sunday morning of graduate recognition. Graduates shared testimonies of what the church had meant to them and their future plans. Youth leaders led concluding prayers for the graduates.

Bible Gift
A friend of mine bought a nice “Share Jesus without Fear” New Testament for his son’s graduation gift. The month before graduation, he asked many church leaders, staff, deacons, and youth workers to highlight one inspiring Scripture and write their name and a brief encouragement note in the margin beside it.

Light Your World
If your church presents a gift to graduating seniors, select a gift that will encourage their Christian walk. Order personalized flashlights for each graduate, imprinted with their names and Matthew 5:14a, 16b. Other ideas: Scripture magnet, Christian bookstore gift certificate, study Bible signed by church leaders, an appropriate Christian book.