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Dear Mama God:
New Children's Picture Book Helps Kids Imagine God as Mother

Author Daneen Akers believes that “God-language” matters. Christian metaphors for God have been mired for centuries in tradition, sexism, and power. “The pervasive idea that God equals male turned into male equals God. It has damaged us all at every level from personal to societal, and it needs to change,” she says. Akers has introduced her two daughters to Mother God, and now, in a new picture book for ages 3-6, she offers a way for other parents to help their children imagine a feminine God. ***Dear Mama God* (Watchfire Media, April 18, 2023)**, illustrated by Gillian Gamble, features a simple, wonder-filled prayer addressed to God as a Mother.

Akers is part of a movement to incorporate explicitly feminine God-language into Christian practice. Though it's not a new movement—for decades, womanist and feminist scholars have pointed out the harm done by male-centric God talk—it's vibrant and growing, with many new additions to the literature, such as *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church* by Rev. Wil Gafney; *God Is a Black Woman* by Christena Cleveland; *God Is* by Mallory Wyckoff; and another picture book, *Mother God* by Teresa Kim Pecinovsky.

Feminine images and language for God are found in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, which include references to God as a compassionate mother, a midwife, and a woman in labor. She bakes bread to feed the hungry, shelters Her baby chicks, and nurses Her babies. Julian of Norwich, 14th century female theologian and saint wrote: “As truly as God is our Father, so truly God is our Mother.” In the 20th century, Pope John Paul I echoed Julian when he said, “God is our Father; even more God is our Mother.”

“Our texts and traditions have named and imagined divinity as He for so often and for so long that many of us have started to think God is actually masculine and male. This has enormous implications for how children of all genders grow up imagining (or not) their essence as part of the Image of God,” Akers says. Masculine language for God “contributes to a world in which women and girls remain marginalized and seen as less than, and the mothering and feminine qualities in all genders are undervalued. Feminine God-language is liberating for us all.”

The title, *Dear Mama God*, is inspired by Akers's 7-year-old daughter Lucy's name for God, and the text is drawn from Lucy's own prayers of gratitude, thanking Mama God for trees for birds to nest in, hula hoops for dogs to jump through, paper to draw on, cozy fires, loving hearts, and the universe that is our home. The illustrations invite readers into a warm, comforting presence.

“Hearing my children pray to Mama God and Mother God has been healing and transformative,” Akers says. “I want to share this expansive and life-affirming concept that God is also a mother, with others.”

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About the Author

Daneen Akers is a writer, producer, and teacher who believes deeply in the power of stories. She is the mother of two children, and they have been primary motivators for her writing about a faith that works for the common good. Akers is the author of *Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints*, and co-producer of the *Seventh-Gay Adventists* documentary and *Outspoken* short documentary film series. She lives with her family near Asheville, North Carolina.

About the Illustrator

Gillian Gamble is an award-winning artist and illustrator. She is the illustrator of several books, including the best-selling *When God Made the World* by Matthew Paul Turner. From Dundee, Scotland, she now lives in northern England with her daughters.

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Dear Mama God

by Daneen Akers

Illustrated by Gillian Gamble

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