

Worshiping with Children

Before Worship Begins:

- Locate your sense of humor!
- Breathe a prayer of thanks for the children God's entrusted you with, and the opportunity to spend time together with them, in the presence of our loving Parent!
- Be mindful of the physical needs of your children.
 - Don't worry about "church" clothes; let them choose comfortable things to wear. Tutus, pj's, favorite Halloween costumes, out-of-season shorts are all just fine!
 - Consider bringing a snack and/or water bottle.
 - Make a routine stop in the restroom before entering the sanctuary.
- Pick up a worship bag and worship journal for your kids on your way in.
- Help children use the sticky notes in their worship bags to mark pages in the Bible and hymnal.
- Consider sitting toward the front. It's harder for small people to follow what's going on when they can't see!
- Introduce yourself and your children to the people near you if you don't already know them!

During Worship:

- It's developmentally necessary for kids to move their bodies; it is how God made them. Wiggles are okay!
- Sometimes children (and adults) can listen better when their hands are busy. Each worship bag should have one or more "busy hands" item (E.g., lacing card, playdough, wikistix, etc)
- Narrate the service to your children. Help them follow the order of worship by whispering an explanation of what's happening. ("Pastor Jeff is going to pray for our world--we can pray along with him in our hearts." "Pastor Erin is reminding us of Jesus' last meal with his friends." "Look! The bell choir is playing today--do you think you'd like to try that some day?")
- Encourage children to stand and sing with the congregation. Standing on the pew is okay! Hold the hymnal where they can see in, pointing along with your finger so they can follow. Pre-readers can clap, hum, dance, sing "la la la"—all is worship!
- Help your child use their worship journal. Many times, Pastor Erin or Pastor Jeff may give the children an "assignment" (a picture to draw during the sermon). But if they don't, coach your child to draw or write something in response to an idea from the sermon or Bible passage.
- You know your child best. If your child needs a break, the nursery is an option for all or part of the service for ages 0-5.

After Church:

- Talk about the worship service with your children on the way home. Was there a prayer you liked? A musical offering that stood out? A Scripture reading you connected with? Maybe you even had a spiritual “aha!” moment? Share those thoughts with your kids! Let your them see you engaging in your faith.
- Ask your child what their favorite part of the service was. Ask if they have any questions about what happened in church that day.
- Don’t forget to warmly affirm specific positive behaviors. (“I really loved singing to God with you this morning.” “I think that made Mrs. Smith feel really good when you shook her hand during the passing of the peace.”)
- Keep talking. Throughout the week, look for opportunities to talk with your kids about how following Jesus affects the choices you make in how you treat others, how you spend your money, how you spend your time.
- Come back next Sunday! Children (and adults) find comfort and meaning in a steady rhythm, and the more we practice anything the better we get at it!

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

(Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16)