

CHILDREN AT WORSHIP

Welcome to worship at [**your church's name**]. As you look about you in the sanctuary, you will see that children are very much a part of our worshiping community. Their presence here grows out of the biblical tradition and the conviction that children are members of the covenant community.

We Make Room for children in our worship by:

[Change this section to reflect the things that your congregation does to welcome children.]

- having a special time for children during morning worship.
- providing quality childcare for children from birth through age two in our infant nursery.
- providing a children's worship center for children age three through second grade every Sunday.
- making sure that bible story books, activity sheets, paper and crayons are available for children during worship.
- including children among those who help to plan and provide leadership for worship.

Parents may wonder at the wisdom of including preschool children in worship. They may be restless, distracting those around them and embarrassing their parents with their behavior.

The Preschool Child comes to worship with:

- a rather limited attention span.
- seemingly endless energy.
- a growing curiosity about everything.

While These Ingredients can combine to test a parent's patience, there are several things parents can do to make the preschooler's experience, and their own, more relaxed and enjoyable:

- sit where the child can have a clear view of the chancel.
- prepare your child for the different parts of the worship service, explaining special events ahead of time and answering questions that need an answer right now in a quiet whisper.
- allow the preschooler to bring a favorite stuffed animal along, or pick up a bible story book from the bookshelf to browse in when boredom sets in.

A Sensitivity to the preschooler's abilities and needs can help make worship a pleasant experience for all.

THE PRIMARY CHILD

The School-age Child brings some new abilities to worship:

- greater capacity for attentive listening.
- an increasing ability to read.
- the ability to organize and memorize information.

Parents can help the primary child toward greater participation in worship as these capacities develop by:

- helping in the memorization of the Lord's Prayer and Gloria Patri.
- reviewing the bulletin with your child to identify new or difficult words and those parts where the congregation responds by reading and speaking.
- inviting the child to follow the reading of the scripture lesson in the bible.
- finding hymns in the hymnal and going over the words.
- encouraging your child to listen to the children's message or prayers for answers to questions or important thoughts.

For this Age Group, some parts of the regular worship bulletin will be more meaningful because they can be read.

Worship is one of the basic ways people learn what it means to be Christian. Children learn to worship by worshipping with the congregation Sunday after Sunday.

They learn they belong to Christ and are welcome in his church.

They come to know the Lord's Prayer, the Gloria Patri and the Doxology by heart.

They build a fund of memorable, shared experiences of Christian community from which they may draw when they are older.

They are enriched by the beauty of the music and art as expressions of praise and as human responses to God.

They hear stories from the bible, read and interpreted, and begin to see Christian worship as one place where God may speak to them.

They witness the drama of baptism and communion as signs of God's grace and love.

They discover that they are valued as persons by God and the people of the church.

Bringing Children to worship may not always be easy, but it is an essential part of their growth in Christ.

ABC'S FOR PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF CHILDREN

Arrive in time to find a good place to sit. Sit where younger children have a good view of the chancel.

Bring something along for small children to hold or look at - something soft and quiet - crayons, drawing paper.

Clue in children as to what will happen next in worship. Children who can read will want to go over the litanies and find the hymns in the hymnal. They like to be ready.

Discuss worship at home to prepare children for any departures from the routine of worship such as a baptism. Also, give time to answer questions about worship.

Express your gladness at having children in worship. During the greeting, be sure to welcome the children near you. Include them in your conversation before and after worship to let them know they belong.

Free yourself from worry about children's behavior and be open to receiving their ministry to you.

Give thanks to God for the presence of children in worship.

Help parents of small children by showing your appreciation for our children.



Making Room for Children

[your church name, address, phone number, and e-mail]

ADAPTED from a Zion United Church of Christ (South Bend, Indiana) Brochure.