

## **SOME IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING CHILDREN INTO WORSHIP**

*(adapted from Vibrant Faith Ministries by Rev. Kate Epperly)*

1. Purchase booster seats or provide cushions for your youngest members so they can see more of the action during worship. (Families wouldn't return to a restaurant if it didn't offer high chairs or booster seats).
2. Reserve front pews for families with young children and include an invitation in the bulletin for families with young children to sit in the front pews.
3. Include banners with child-friendly symbols and bright pictures in the sanctuary at a lower eye level.
4. Use the simple, specific names when talking about objects in the church - altar, pew, aisle, font, etc.
5. Let families with young children know where the nursery is but don't assume they'll want or need to use it. (If you don't have a nursery, please DO at least have a changing table/wipes somewhere accessible.)
6. Provide a rocking chair or two for nursing mothers and others who need to feed/soothe infants.
7. Hang pictures of Jesus and other Biblical characters at a young child's eye level.
8. Appeal to children's sense of touch by textures which they have permission to touch and explore in and around the worship area or chancel. including
9. Provide lectionary related activity sheets or seasonally appropriate Godly play (or Children Worship and Wonder) type Biblical story figures, toys or crafts in a family friendly area at the front of the church (on a front pew or on the floor with pillows after taking out a front pew or two).
10. Be sure to shake hands with or hug a child during the sharing of the peace.
11. Encourage members to learn the names of the children in your congregation, get to know their interests and express care for the children and their activities.
12. Involve children in many ways - acolytes, processional members, readers, choir members, soloists.
13. Create and model simple hand gestures and or movements to accompany simple songs which they can
14. Learn and count on to be repeated often during a liturgical season.
15. Include children in the prayers of the church.
16. Celebrate birthdays and other milestone occasions by sending a card and/or noting them in the bulletin and newsletter.
17. Use a child's name when you greet him or her. If a child has a biblical name, talk about its meaning.
18. Invite children during worship and in the bulletin to receive a blessing during communion.
19. Invite children to surround the baptismal font during a baptism.
20. Ask children to submit prayer requests.
21. Invite children to place a non-monetary offering in the offering plate or on the worship center/altar (such as a picture or sentence describing how they will offer a time or talent to God) or assist them in bringing forward non-monetary offerings such as dry or canned goods for a food bank, or gently-used clothes or toys for children in a homeless shelter.
22. Present one of the scriptures for the day in the form of a skit, readers theatre or interactive storytelling with children or youth participating.
23. Include a "touchable" physical object, action, or song during a "Time for all God's Children".

24. Frequently explain parts of the liturgy, hymn, or community customs; and reinforce with bulletin inserts and offer at-home devotional or action possibilities for living out the message of the day.
25. Observe “Week of the Young Child,” “Light A Candle for Children Prayer Vigil” and/or “Children’s Sabbath”(sponsored by the Children’s Defense Fund)with special songs, prayers, presentations, advocacy actions, etc.
26. Offer large print hymnals and bulletins for children in your congregation who are new readers.(Visually impaired adults will appreciate them too!)
27. Rethink the contents of activity bags (Do they help kids tune in or tune out?) and create age-appropriate activity bags (readers versus nonreaders is a start).
28. Develop guidelines for worshiping with young children, create laminated cards with these guidelines on them, and then place these cards in every pew.
29. Use children's drawings and faith affirmations as bulletin covers (with their parent’s permission, of course).
30. Emphasize certain words or symbols to listen for in worship during different seasons of the church year.
31. Encourage children to draw pictures of what they hear about in church; post their art in the narthex.
32. Include suggestions for family at-home faith discussions and rituals in weekly bulletin inserts.
33. Encourage confirm ands to create and lead a worship service, worship stoles or banners as part of their confirmation activities.
34. Provide opportunities for children of all ages to create seasonal banners, stoles or other worship area adornments.
35. Invite families with young children to church on a Saturday morning to let them explore the meaning of various objects and symbols in the sanctuary and/or tour the building and learn about the church’s many ministries.
36. Create colorful handouts that describe various seasonal symbols, objects and pictures in the sanctuary and other common areas, making them available for both current and new or prospective children and worshippers.
37. Provide family discussion guidelines for talking about why their family goes to worship or participates in other church activities such as service projects, global mission, advocacy activities justice seeking activities and how all this relates to regular faith practices and God.
38. Invite families to be greeters and/or invite individual children to assist you in greeting people sitting in the pews before worship.
39. Move traditional spoken sermons (non-interactive) near the end of the service so that children can stay in worship for the majority of the time, yet also creatively respond to the hearing of the scripture/Biblical story in whatever way is age appropriate during their time apart.