

CHILDREN IN CHURCH



CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

A Guide for Parents and the Assembly

RELAX. YOUR FAMILY IS IMPORTANT HERE.

Let the suggestions contained in this flyer help you relax and appreciate the children who are present. Remember, the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

We are delighted to see children of all ages in our congregation. We want to help them enjoy the experience of sharing and participating in our worship service.

We have a commitment to help children worship. Perhaps they won't always understand what is going on or being said, but they understand more than we give them credit for, and, by our attitude, they can understand that this is a place where they meet God and where they are loved and accepted.

The formal worship service can provide an excellent opportunity for parents to be involved in the spiritual nurturing of their children. Talk with them about the service. Explain what is happening. Help them catch your enthusiasm and excitement about being part of the church.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Remember, we promised as a community at the Baptism of these children to help them grow in the Christian life.

What You Can Do:

- * With the permission of the parents, invite a child with whom you are acquainted to sit with you during worship on occasion, even when the child's parents are present.

- * Hand the offering basket to children, not over their heads.
- * During the passing of the Peace, greet children as well as their parents. Say your name and ask for theirs.
- * During coffee time, introduce children by name.
- * Compliment children who have listened attentively during the service.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Before the Service:

- * Prepare the children beforehand for what will happen in church. When possible, make a point of knowing the Gospel story beforehand and telling it to them so they have something to anticipate.
- * On your way to church in the car, begin to calm down as a family and get into a peaceful mode.
- * Children learn *worship etiquette* by participation. Teach your children what to watch for, what is taking place now, when to respond in unison.
- * Advise your children that people in church appreciate quietness around them so that they can concentrate on their prayers and the service free of distractions.
- * Talk about what people or events need our prayers and might be included during the prayers of the people.
- * Arrive at church in plenty of time to take the children to the bathroom and get settled before the service begins.
- * Parents often tend to sit with their children toward the back of the church. This is an understandable option, though we would suggest that you try sitting toward the front of the church so that the children can better see what is going on at the altar. It could help children feel more included in the ceremonies.
- * Introduce your children to people who are sitting nearby.
- * Allow your children to speak for themselves when adults engage them in conversation.
- * Share the hymnal with your child at eye level and encourage them to sing along.
- * Teach and encourage the child to participate when capable, as in joining in the Lord's prayer, making the sign of the cross, or saying the responses such as "And also with you," and passing the peace with "The peace of Christ be with you" and "Amen."
- * Allow your children to participate in the offering by sharing either some of their pennies or by "putting

their hearts" in the basket as it comes around.

- * Baptized children are invited to receive the Eucharist if the parent(s) feel comfortable about the child's readiness.
- * Carry quiet toys or books in a bag for emergency diversions for small children.
- * Remember that it is hard for small children to sit still for long. Allow small children to sit or kneel on the floor and use the pew as a desk if necessary.

After the Service:

- * On your way home and during the rest of the week, talk about the worship experience. "That's like what we heard at church last Sunday." "Do you remember the Gospel story you heard?"
- * Pray meal prayers together. Pray morning and night prayers with your children. Include some of the hymns we sing at church or parts of the prayers used in worship in your family prayer life at home.

