

Children in the Sanctuary

WE ALL WORSHIP TOGETHER

At baptism, the whole congregation promises to bring children into worship. Not to do so would be like sitting down to family dinner but excluding the kids! Being with family is how we learn to be family. Worship is no different.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Worship is encountering God together in. When we gather in worship we watch for God's presence in scripture, our own lives, and the world around us. We receive and practice our belonging to God and to each other as human beings. We are all ministers, made in God's image to care people. We meet Jesus who is with and for us, when we are with and for one another. Worshiping together helps us remember whose we are and who we are, and bring this way of seeing and being right into our every-day lives.

KIDS ARE WORSHIPERS – WE ALL ARE

Our whole life long, each of us is both gaining and losing abilities. How we join in worship today is not how we did yesterday or will tomorrow. God meets us wherever we are, and we welcome each other however we come. We expect each person will participate as themselves and contribute to worship with whatever capacities they have.

Kids giggle, poke, ask questions, and move around *a lot* because they are children. Children learn about worship and how to participate by *experience*, by how they are welcomed into the community, and by what they see big people doing.

Bringing a child to church can feel frustrating. Their behavior can make it hard for parents and others to concentrate. So much of raising kids is *both* challenging *and* worthwhile. We're in this together! We are all able to watch for God and participate in God's love and healing. Worship includes everyone; we are all worshipers, kids too!

YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN TO WORSHIP...

- by seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and touching the sanctuary as a place of welcome and worship that engages voice, body, heart, and mind.
- by being around other kids and adults in the worship space.
- by watching how their significant adults sing, pray, listen, and share.
- by the liturgy, or patterns, that hold us all in worship. For all of us, these repetitions, traditions, and habits shape our hearts even more than what we think or believe, and sustain us throughout our lives.
- by being taught ways to watch for God's presence in their own lives, and encouraged to share where they notice God and how they participate in God's love.
- by actively leading portions of worship, sharing their gifts and perspectives.

ADULTS LEARN TO WORSHIP by “becoming like a child” (Mt. 18:3). Children notice, absorb, and feel deeply. They respond freely and honestly. Kids sense God and keep us in the present. *Children learn to worship from adults and adults learn to worship from children.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULTS WITH CHILDREN

- **Find a comfortable place to settle in**, perhaps next to the aisle or at a work station, or in front where they can see. There are kid-sized chairs and rockers available (feel free to move them!)
- **Tell kids before worship begins what will happen and what to expect.** Show them (in the bulletin) the parts of the service where they have an active role, and the parts where we all listen or watch others quietly.

SATURDAYS: The prayer stations are accessible for all ages; all may participate.

Babies are welcome – holding a baby is a wonderful way to pray, and many worshipers will be happy to hold your baby so that you may experience the other prayer stations.

- **Take advantage of the worship supplies and materials** available near the door and bring them to your seat. Return supplies to their place when you leave. *Saturday services include a table with contemplative worship supplies for everyone.*
- **Worship with your child**, guiding them through the service so they can feel what it is like to worship together. **Or if you need a break, let your child be another adult’s worship buddy for the day** – many of us would be delighted!
- **Worship at home** by things like saying prayers before eating or sleeping or when you wake up, blessing each other before leaving for school and work, and asking each other how you noticed God’s love in your day, and how you shared in it.
- **Remember that sometimes children just plain need to rest or play.** A bright and safe nursery space is available for your young child to take a break at any time during worship. Please gather them back for Communion, so we all can receive from one another, and share all together in God’s blessing. As your child develops more patience, curiosity and abilities, work toward being together in worship the whole service whenever possible, but know breaks are always an option!

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN

- Pray for the kids (and parents, grandparents and caregivers) among us!
- Be helpful to the adults of small children, welcoming and orienting them to the space if they are new, or offering to be worship buddies with kids you know, if you’re willing.
- Make a special point of sharing the Peace of Christ with our kids.
- Chat with our congregation’s children whenever you get opportunities. Being church with all ages is a gift to us all!

We all belong to God. and we all belong to each other.

We are the Body of Christ!

Let us worship the living, loving God!