

Worship and Learning

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

- ✓ They learn they belong to Christ and are welcome in His Church.
- ✓ They learn to know the Lord's Prayer and other parts of the liturgy from memory.
- ✓ They build a fund of memorable, shared experiences of Christian community against which they may draw when they are older.
- ✓ They are enriched by the beauty of 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 Eucharist as signs of God's kindness and favor.
- ✓ They discover that they are valued as persons by God and by the people of God at Church.

Bringing children to worship may not always be easy, but it is an essential part of their growth in Christ. The Body of Christ assembled is incomplete in their absence. We need children.



ABC's for Parents and Friends of Children

Arrive in time to find a good place to sit. Sitting near the front will provide younger children with a better view of the sanctuary.

Bring quiet toys, books, or coloring books for preschool and early elementary school age children.

Clue in children as to what will happen next in worship. Children who can read will want to follow the service in the Prayer Book and find hymns in The Hymnal. Children like to be ready.

Discuss worship at home to prepare children for any departures from the routine of worship such as Baptism or other special features. Also give time to answer questions about worship experiences.

Express your gladness at having children in worship. During the Peace be sure to welcome the children near you. Include them in your conversations 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.



Making Room for Children in Church



*A Guide for Parents
and Friends of Children*

Children at Worship

Our parish family includes an increasing number of families with children. The inclusion of these children in worship is of great importance.

We welcome children to worship by:

- ✓ Providing a family worship service each Sunday;
- ✓ Encouraging families to bring their children of all ages to the family worship. Children are an important and welcomed part of our worshipping community;
- ✓ Providing child care for infants and toddlers through age two during worship and urging parents to slip out at the time of The Communion of the People to pick up their infants and toddlers so that they can go to the altar rail as a family;
- ✓ Encouraging older children to participate in worship as acolytes and choir members;
- ✓ Encouraging parents to take their children to the vestibule for a break whenever needed and to use the resources listed elsewhere in this brochure;
- ✓ Providing children's bulletins for young children based on the Gospel lesson and having picture and storybooks on a table in the back of the church;
- ✓ Modeling appropriate church behavior for children by teaching them to stand, sit, or kneel with the congregation.

An effective teaching method is to gradually lengthen the time a child remains in church.

Children can usually be expected to participate in an entire service in an orderly manner by the time they enter second grade.

The Preschool Child

Adults may question the wisdom of including preschool children in worship. It is true that they sometimes distract those around them and distress parents by their behavior. But as members of the family, they are needed by all of us to complete the circle at God's table.

The preschool child comes to worship with:

- ✓ A short attention span,
- ✓ Seemingly endless energy,
- ✓ A growing curiosity about everything.

While these ingredients can combine to test the patience of adults, there are several things parents can do to make the preschooler's experience—and everyone's—more relaxed and enjoyable:

- ✓ Sit near the front where the child can have a clear view of the sanctuary.
- ✓ Prepare the 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 whisper.
- ✓ Allow the preschooler to bring along a favorite stuffed animal, picture books, coloring books or other quiet toys to play with when they get bored. Make use of those provided in the back of the church.
- ✓ Encourage as much adult-like behavior as the child can tolerate. Allow children to be active within limits of the situation, as long as the activity is not distracting others.
- ✓ Use the quiet time of church as a chance for a special togetherness of parents and child which may not be possible during the week.

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

The Primary Child

The school-age child brings some new abilities to worship:

- ✓ A greater capacity for attentive listening.
- ✓ An increasing ability to read.
- ✓ The ability to organize and memorize information.

Parents help the primary child toward greater participation in worship as these capacities develop when they:

- ✓ Help memorize the Lord's Prayer and other parts of the liturgy.
- ✓ Review the bulletin with the child to identify new or difficult words and preview together those parts where the congregation responds by reading and speaking.
- ✓ Invite the child to follow the liturgy in the book *Holy Communion for Children*.
- ✓ Find hymns in *The Hymnal* and go over the words.
- ✓ Talk about the sermon and ask the primary child what he or she remembers best about it.
- ✓ Encourage the child to listen to the sermon for stories, answers to questions or important thoughts.

