

Expectations for worship services

“Sunday morning is the only time during the week that I can relax and meditate and get centred. I need this to be a quiet time, just for me.”

If this is our expectation of worship services it is understandable that we might feel resentful about the presence of children during this time. We need to remember that communal worship was never intended to be a time for individuals to conduct their private devotions. Instead, it is a time to gather as community to worship God and share in ministry with one another.

Preparing children

Most children understand routine and enjoy ritual. Parents can help children prepare for worship services by...

- having times of prayer and silence at home before meals and at bedtime
- talking about your own special memories of worship services
- practicing the responses that are used in worship each week
- helping children get to know their place of worship by exploring the sanctuary when it is empty
- borrowing a hymnal from church, or buying your own family hymnal and using it during family devotions
- creating a Saturday evening ritual: choosing clothes to wear to church; gathering money for offering; packing a “Sunday bag” with Bible and other service books, soft toys, books, drawing materials, snacks
- planning enough time on Sunday morning to eat a good breakfast and prepare for church



Being with Children in Worship



Hints for parents, grandparents, and other adults in the congregation



Children belong in the faith community. Young and old, we are called to gather together to participate in the worship, witness, and service of the community of faith.

Hints for parents and grandparents

The very young child comes to worship with...

- a growing curiosity about everything
- lots of energy
- a rather limited attention span

You can help your child participate in worship by...

- sitting near the front of the church so your child can see clearly
- bringing books, soft toys, or drawing materials
- bringing a snack of finger food
- removing your child's shoes so he or she can move around quietly
- answering any questions in a quiet whisper



The school-aged child comes to worship with...

- a greater capacity for attentive listening
- an increasing ability to read
- an increasing ability to remember and memorize information

You can help your child participate in worship by...

- arriving in time so that you can sit together as a family, and being open to where your child wants to sit
- making sure your child has a name tag if adults are wearing name tags
- helping your child learn the prayer that Jesus taught, the creed or statement of faith, and other parts of the worship service
- reviewing the order of service, especially those parts where the congregation responds by speaking or singing
- inviting your child to find the hymns and Bible readings
- answering any questions in a quiet voice
- bringing drawing materials
- talking about the worship service afterwards and sharing experiences



Hints for other adults in the congregation

- recognize your role as models for children in worship
- express your appreciation for children, and their presence in church, through your facial expressions and body language
- greet the children around you, just as you would greet adults; ask them about their week or how they are
- bend down to their eye-level as you speak to children
- help children feel included by getting to know them by name
- make sure that children have copies of the worship bulletins
- invite children to sit with you, and help them find the hymns and scripture readings
- pass the offering plate to children
- listen to what children have to say; ask them what they enjoy about worship

Above all, express your gladness at having children in worship. Free yourself from worrying about their behaviour and be open to receive their ministry.