

CHILDREN IN WORSHIP!

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN WORSHIP:

- Children see their parents and other adults and youth worship. With the hectic schedule of today's families, many children never observe their parents in worship at home.
- When children are in worship they feel welcomed and a part of the church family – they experience love and worth.
- When children are in worship they make emotional connections that enhance the building of relationships and learning. Children who wait till the teen years may not have any emotional connections to the larger family and many times they choose not to attend worship at all.
- Jesus said, "We must become like little children" – he knew the ways of a child lend themselves to be open to training. Every year worship is delayed fosters an attitude that worship is about me – that worship is boring or must meet my needs to earn my participation.
- Between the ages of 5-12 a child's attitudes, beliefs, and values are formed – making childhood a critical time for spiritual formation.
- When children are in worship children hear, see, and experience worship – which are the ways that children learn best. They may not understand all of the meaning, but they do sense the importance of God in the lives of others.
- Children need to experience the church in all of its expressions: baptism, communion, ordination, dedications, mission trip reports... so they can perceive the importance of those moments.
- The congregation is blessed by the presence of children.

MATERIALS FOR WORSHIP:

- Consider purchasing a blank book for each child to use as a journal during worship.
- He or she will also need a pen or pencil, some bookmarks (they make want to make their own), and a Bible/Bible storybook.
- Place all these items in a bag and keep it ready for church use only.

You may want to suggest some of the following ways to use the journal:

- Make drawings of visual elements in the sanctuary.
- Draw pictures based on the Scripture readings.
- Write words/names they hear and like/know.
- Write the titles of the songs of the day.
- Record the prayers and upcoming events.
- Illustrate anything that connects them to worship.

EXPECTATIONS:

Make your expectations about your children's participation in the worship service clear. Encourage them to participate in some of the following ways:

- Greet people and allow others to greet them.
- Pray - talk about how they can best join in prayer: keep quiet and focused on think-talking with God OR drawing a picture for God/write words to God about people they care about/thankful for/what they are worried about.
- Stand when everyone stands.
- Sing – hold hymnal and follow songs.
- Give during the offering.
- Listen – to be able to complete the Children's Bulletin and use their journal.
- Ask questions using his/her "whisper" voice.

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PREPARATION FOR SUNDAY (at home)

- Talk about what they will see and do in worship. Show your child a bulletin and talk about the different parts of worship and what we do in each of them. Ask them how they can participate in each of them. Share with them how you are looking forward to Sunday morning.
- Let them know that there will be a Children's Bulletin for them to help them participate in worship.
- Admit that it won't always be easy because our church family is large and people are all ages. Remind them that worship is important to you and especially to God.
- Pray together for the worship service.

BEFORE THE WORSHIP SERVICE (at church)

- Take your child to get a drink of water and to the restroom before going into the Worship Room.
- Pick up a Children's Bulletin. Have your child wait until worship begins before they begin using it.
- Arrive in time to find a good place to sit where your child can hear well and see what is happening during the worship service. Children cannot and will not sit still in the service. A certain amount of wiggling is expected and appropriate.
- Have them look around the Worship Room. Ask them what they see. Ask them what they notice around them that helps them to focus on God. (Bibles, stained glass, hymnals, flowers...)
- Check the bulletin to help your child anticipate what is coming in the service. Help your child to follow the order of the service in the bulletin by numbering the parts of the worship service.
- Look through the Children's Bulletin to help them know what to do and when to do it.
- Have your child locate the hymns in the hymnals and mark them with their bookmarks; tell them they are the "keeper of the hymnbook."
- Have your child locate the Scripture reading in their Bible/Bible storybook and mark it with a bookmark.

DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE:

- Passing of the peace – encourage them to greet those around them; if your child is shy, introduce them to the people around you.
- While the musical introduction is playing, tell your child something you like about the hymn/song or instruments being played. After the song ask your child how they think God liked that song and why – what was especially pleasing to God.
- Allow a younger child to hum or sing la-la-la if they don't know the words.
- With the hymnal and Bible, use a bookmark on its side or your finger to help children follow the words.
- Challenge your child to draw a picture in response to a scripture/the sermon. Ask "How they think Jesus looked, sounded or felt when he said this?" and/or "How would you feel if you had been there?"

ON THE WAY HOME AND THROUGHOUT THE WEEK:

- Let your children know your joy in worshipping God together; celebrate what you want to replicate.
- Discuss the service on the way home or after you arrive home, answering questions they may have about the experience.
- Share with your child how God spoke to you through the songs, Scriptures, and message and how each helped you to more fully worship God.
- Ask your child to share their bulletin and/or journal with you.
- Encourage them to look at their journal during the week to follow up on questions or thoughts or prayer requests.
- Find opportunities for your child to meet worship leaders and get to know them.
- Continue to worship God together throughout your daily activities.