

Children in Worship

Forming the Body of Christ
At
St. Paul's Episcopal Church



A Guide
for Parents, Children
and the Congregation

*Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is
such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.*

Mark 10:14

Children are an integral part of our church community and in our worship here at St. Paul's. We value and appreciate people of **all ages** during our worship. Children may not understand everything that is going on or being said, but they do understand when they are welcomed, accepted and loved.

Bringing small children (and perhaps teens) into our midst is like inviting the youngest members of the family to eat at the supper table even though their table manners are not very refined. Children wiggle and fidget and swing their legs simply because they are children! Children also sing with us and pray with us and share their wonder of God with us too.

Children are spiritual beings; they know God's presence in all of its awe and mystery. Their minds grasp things that grown up minds struggle with; it doesn't need to "make sense" to them. They are discovering the religious language and actions to express it.

Worship Styles: What is best for your family?

There are three types of worship experience offered at St. Paul's.

At the early service, 8:00 A.M. the service is spoken (no music) and tends to be a quieter worship experience. Some families enjoy this service because it is quiet. This service may not be the best for toddlers who want to embrace life fully, but it provides an early time to worship with your family.

A choral service is held at 10:00 AM using the regular Rite II service. Music is an integral part of this worship service, both congregational and choir singing. This service suits most families because Sunday School takes place at 10:00 AM with the children returning to the service at the sign of peace. Youth are encouraged to serve at the altar as acolytes, readers. Upon confirmation, they may also serve as chalice bearers. Serving at the altar is a more active way of serving this community and for many kids; it's a pleasure to be part of the liturgical ministry.

At all services, adults are asked to set an example of hospitality and behavior. Please turn off your cell phones. Save your long conversations for after the service during coffee hour.

Worship is one of the best ways for people of all ages to learn what it means to be a Christian. Children learn how to pray, sing praises to God, and to ask for forgiveness by participating. Through worship children understand they belong to the Body Christ and to our Church.

Suggestions for the Congregation

- Children sometimes feel invisible in a sea of adults; please take time to greet them before or after the service and certainly during the peace.
- Hand the offering plates to children, not over their heads.
- Learn children's names and greet them with a hand shake.
- Remember we are all members of the Body of Christ—
The Church!

Suggestions for Parents

- Remember that it is hard for children to sit for long. Allow children to sit or kneel on the floor next to you.
- Talk about worship at home during the week so children come to understand its importance in their lives.
- Take your child to visit the church when it is empty; walk around and name the places found in this space. Your rector will be happy to show you the "secret places."
- Go over the order of worship with your child before the service.

Suggestions for Children

- Remember that you are in a place of worship.
- Bring a book or quiet toy with you to help you through talking times or quiet times.
- There are bags at the back of the church on a wooden board that have activities and toys to help you listen while your hands are busy. On the same side in the back of the church are big books and a play mat with cars and trucks. Use them!
- Join everyone in song and prayer. You know the "Our Father!"
- Come and take communion with your family or ask for a blessing from the priest.
- This is your time to be with God, too. Be kind to the people around you; this is their time with God also.

Please, relax!

Your family is welcome here.

**Wiggly, giggly, noisy kids are welcome to join us in
worship and song.**