

Children in Church

Children add richness to the community gathered at worship. Adults sometimes wonder why little children are brought to church...but bringing children into our sanctuary is a little like inviting children to eat with us at the dinner table. Even when their manners are far from polished, it is our hope that, given time and exposure, they will become comfortable participating in our rituals in their own meaningful ways. In the meantime, children are still an integral part of our church family and so they belong here with us.

Children giggle, poke, squirm, and swing their legs simply because they are children. But they can also learn to sing, pray, and listen as they are able. They absorb so much more than we can imagine! We hope that all adults will learn to welcome, accept, and value the presence of children, even if it is sometimes manifested by some restlessness during worship!

As children worship with us, they also learn:

- It is important to come together with other believers as part of their faith heritage.
- They are part of God's family and therefore belong and are most welcome in God's house.
- The sights, sounds, and feel of the sanctuary are good to experience, even when we don't understand everything.
- Something is expected of them in this holy place and they are invited to respond with us in song, prayer, and in offering their gifts.

Here are some tips for parents to make things a little easier:

- Arrive early to get a good seat, preferably down in front where children can see the liturgical action and feel included in the congregation.
- We have a "soft space" in front of the first pews, for children younger than 8 and their parents to worship together in a more comfortable space. We ask that parents sit with their children, either in the soft space or in the pew, and engage in worship as fully as possible.
- Share your service bulletin, prayer book, and hymnal with young readers and help them follow along.
- Follow the lessons printed in the bulletin, as the lector reads them.
- It helps everyone when you are clear about the behavior you expect in church, especially when stated in a positive way. ("We all stand when we sing." "This is the quiet time; you can talk after the next song.")
- Please don't worry if you need to take your child out of the service for a few moments. You can listen to the service in the New Narthex and return when your youngster seems calmer. When you are attending to your young child's needs, you are still part of our community.