
Children in Worship

Fairlington UMC

Jesus said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10.13-14)



At Fairlington UMC, children are included in our congregational worship services following the example of Jesus Christ, who welcomed and fully accepted little children. We want to help children know that we, too, accept them *as they are* and help them realize their potential as children of God. Through their participation in worship, they will learn about God's **presence in our midst and the richness of our faith**. And, consequently, all of us will learn to see and experience God with a child-like faith.

Here are some suggestions for you to use during worship with your child:

- ✦ **Activity Bags** are available for children to use during worship. The bags have books, paper, activity sheets, and crayons. Let your child draw on the bulletin or paper- they often eavesdrop while they are doodling and hear more than we think they do. Have them draw pictures of what they see around them. Let them 'turn it in' to a Pastor or Usher.
- ✦ **Sit near the front!** Our liturgy is full of things to stimulate the senses, and it is easier for children to focus on these when they are close. They will be more engaged if they can see.
- ✦ When the peace of Christ is passed, **introduce your child** to those around you. The connection to those around them will help them connect to the drama of the worship.
- ✦ Let your **child ask questions**- then answer the questions! It is how they will connect to what is happening around them. Teach them how to use their quiet voice, and when to use their loud voice.
- ✦ **Free yourself from worry** about your child's behavior - God put the wiggles in them and they cannot be taken out! Feel comfortable to take your children for a short walk in the hallways if you need. Touch them and hold them to build a sense of warmth and connection to the place they are in. Encourage them to stand when the bulletin designates so. We all know what children are like, don't stress about their conduct.
- ✦ Help your child **follow the service** in the bulletin. They can number the parts and check them off. Designate symbols for certain parts (a music note drawn next to a hymn). Give them clues about what will be happening next and talk about the unique parts of the service- Baptisms, Blessings, etc.
- ✦ Find **little ways for them to participate** and put them 'in charge' of certain things: passing the Friendship Pad or Offering Plate, finding the hymn number, putting the offering in the place, holding the hymn or Bible, underlining words they hear or don't know, or other jobs where they do something. If they can't read the words in a hymn, have them hum the tune, or they can be the 'conductor' during the music. When children's bodies are engaged, their mind is as well.
- ✦ Take time to **cuddle, hold**, or make other physical contact **prior to the beginning** of the service. This will connect you with your child and put them in a positive emotional state prior to entering worship.
- ✦ Encourage your child to participate in the **Children's Sharing**. Parents are always welcome to join their children up front, on the floor or sit in the front pew (it is almost always empty!).
- ✦ After the service, **talk with your child** about what took place in worship. Ask them open-ended questions and allow them to ask questions. Answer the questions, no matter how silly!

For **Communion**, tell your child what they will be doing. Tell them that they will get a piece of bread from one of the servers. Tell them to take the bread and dip it lightly in the cup and then eat it. Practice it at home so they can see what it is like. And, don't worry if they mess up!