

Jesus said,
"Let the little
children
come to me;
do not stop
them; for it
is to such as
these that
the kingdom
of God belongs."



Mark 10:14 NRSV



Welcoming Children
at Bryn Mawr
Presbyterian Church

Whole Community Worship

Children are becoming a more visible segment of our worshipping community here at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian, a trend we encourage. While bringing or encountering children in corporate worship offers some challenges, it nevertheless is an essential part of their faith development. We belong together, all of God's family, worshipping as a community of faith. Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church recognizes that children are an important and loved part of this household of God.



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The Big Question

Q. Why is it so important that children be included in the worship service? Aren't Church School and Choir enough?

A. Church School, corporate worship and choir offer children distinct sources for learning and growth in the Christian faith. While Church School and choir are times for learning and activities with peers, corporate worship is a time to:

- Discover they belong to God and are important members of God's family, the Church.
- Learn the language and flow of worship.
- Build a fund of memories and shared experiences in community upon which they may draw when they are older.
- Hear the Bible read and interpreted and begin to see Christian worship as a place where God may speak to them.
- Witness the drama of baptism and communion as signs of God's kindness and favor, and be enriched by music, art and symbolism as expressions of human response to God.
- See others worshipping, confessing sin and celebrating their faith.

Adults Worshipping with Children

- Remember the promises we make at the baptism of the children among us.
- Welcome children and interact with them.
- Speak to children directly and not just to their parents.
- When children lead us in worship respond to them as leaders and not as performers.
- Pass the fellowship pad and offering plate to children, not over them.

- Look for ways to assist children sitting near you in locating a hymn, finding a scripture, following along in the bulletin, etc.
- Consider inviting a child to sit with you in worship sometime, instead of with his or her parents.
- Do expect relative quiet from children in worship, but don't expect inactivity.
- Be patient. We are all children of God, continually learning to worship God to the best of our ability.

Hints for Parents

- Be sure your child uses the bathroom before coming to the Sanctuary.
- Set an example for your children by participating fully in worship. Children benefit from seeing their parents praying, reading the Bible, singing hymns, listening to the music and the pastor's words, etc.
- Let your child help choose where you sit. Seats near the front are especially good for children as they can see better and are less likely to be distracted.
- Use slips of paper to mark the hymns, scripture readings, etc.
- Allow your child to put his regular church school offering in the plate in worship.
- Before worship begins tell your child you need to be quiet and talk with God, and suggest that she do the same, asking God's help for the pastor, the choir and musicians, and herself.
- Don't be overly concerned that the music is unfamiliar or "too difficult" or that your child is "not getting anything out of the service." Being together as a family, praising and praying, in the midst of the community of faith, is an important experience in and of itself.

- Try not to say: "Be quiet," "Be good," "Sit still." Children move because they need to, not noisily or without regard for those around them, but as their young, developing muscles require. Boundaries of acceptable behavior are important to children. Try emphasizing by word and action the positive, important, happy things you and the rest of the congregation have come together to do.
- Sit close to your children. Touch and hug them frequently during the service. Let them know how happy you are to be together in worship. Let them lean against you, ask questions, have your attention.
- Take your child on a tour of the Sanctuary when it is empty to enjoy its beauty and to point out and explain the various parts of the sacred space. A pastor would be glad to accompany you and to speak with your family about worship. Contact the Church Office (610-525-2821) to arrange a convenient time.
- Avoid making worship attendance a power struggle. Treat it in the same matter-of-fact way as attendance at school or other family events. Refuse to be drawn into arguments; convey family values by clear, firm statements such as "Our family goes to church."
- Discuss the worship service on the way home with your children. With the help of the Holy Spirit they are surely absorbing much more than they can easily express --in words. Your discussion can assist them in putting words to their feelings. Reiterate joy at having your child with you at worship.

Worship Education Opportunities for Children

Ages 3 and 4

- Children ages 3 and 4 will learn about worship as a part of their Church School education.

Grades K-5

- Children in kindergarten through fifth grade will learn about worship as a part of their Church School and choir education. In Church School this learning will take place as part of their regular class time as they practice the doxology, the Gloria Patri and talk about other aspects of worship. Children in kindergarten through fifth grade will join our worshipping community each Sunday.
- During the Gloria Patri, children will come to the front of the Sanctuary for a **Children's Moment**. After the Children's Moment, children will be safely led by adult "shepherds" back to the education building for church school.