



Welcoming and Helping Our Children Grow In Worship

In preparation for having CCC's kindergarten-2nd grade children participate in the entire worship service over the summer months, we want us all to be prepared to welcome and help our children grow in worship. Though it is only for 3 months, we want to use the time in obedience to **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** and **Psalms 78:5-8** that commands us to teach the next generation of God's worthiness for worship. We also want to honor the baptismal vow that we made to those children and their parents to help raise our kids in the admonition of the Lord. Diana R. Garland helpfully captures this ethos as she writes, "Children's presence in the church service represents the inclusion of all who want to worship, regardless of their ability to sit still or fully understand everything that we do together. More than that, however, their presence challenges us to change our style of worship so that everyone is a part. Worship should actively include the whole congregation. An active service encourages everyone to worship, and it also helps persons to recognize one another as members of the same community."¹ Remember, we all exhibit flawed worship at best this side of glory. It would be unreasonable for us to expect our children to be angels during the whole service. Let's be patient with them and give them room to fail and grow in worship along with the rest of us!

From the Front: We will seek to be more thoughtful of the presence of more children in the service. We will strive to keep the sermons to around 30 minutes. We will also try to engage our kids with appropriate illustrations and direct applications. There will also be age appropriate activities pages on the children's table that they can use during the service.

For the Congregation: We ask that you encourage our children and their parents through prayer and by supporting their presence in the service. Greet children and learn their names. Compliment their participation in the various elements of worship and the service. Offer help if the occasion warrants (i.e. watching over the other children if a child needs to go to the bathroom; letting a child sit with you if their parents have other responsibilities). Encourage parents who may be dealing with a noisy child as opposed to expressing frustration. Remember that this will be messy at times and that the Gospel is a process in our

¹ Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 467-8.

lives and in our children's lives that requires patience and perseverance. We want our children to feel welcome and loved in worship!

For the Parents:² The following suggestions are offered to help parents think through how to help their children be engaged during the service. Not all of them will work for every child. You may have other great ideas that are not listed. Do what is going to help your child best grow in worship of the Lord and community.

- **Make Use of the Gospel:** Remember first of all that it is the Holy Spirit that will make worship truly meaningful in your child's heart and mind by faith alone in God's grace alone through the work of Christ alone. Pray for your child regularly to receive the means of grace offered week in and week out in the worship service. Remember that there is a war going on for the hearts of our children which means that some weeks their behavior will reflect the intensity of that war; some weeks they will declare their disdain for worship. This is to be expected! Persevere gently but firmly knowing that God's faithful sovereignty and goodness has the final say. Take every opportunity to teach your child the fullness of the Gospel by pointing out how various aspects of the service evidence or emphasize the various parts of the Good News.
- **Make Use of the Devotionals:** Help them to learn the Congregational Confession so that they can potentially recite it from memory and auditory cuing as the congregation reads it together. Read the Bible passages in the devotional together during the week for the upcoming Sunday to familiarize them with what they will hear. Help your child to understand the basic message of the sermon text. A child's mind perks up when they hear familiar words from the pulpit.
- **Make Use of the Spotify Playlist:** Each week, Josh posts the songs for the coming week on a Spotify playlist that can be accessed through the web site (www.christcommunitycobb.org/weekly-playlist) or on our Facebook page. This is a great way for our kids to learn the songs so that they can sing along on Sundays. Encourage them to sing along by you singing along.
- **Make Use of the Explanations of the Worship Elements:** Sometimes you can take the regular elements of the service and make them part of the anticipation. "What's coming up next? What are we supposed to do here and why? Which member of the Trinity (or part of the Redemptive Story) does this element focus on? Why do we sit after the Assurance of Pardon and Song of Comfort?"
(See Our Liturgy: The Shape of Our Worship, p.4)

² Many of these suggestions were modified from John and Noel Piper, "The Family: Together in God's Presence," *Desiring God*, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-family-together-in-gods-presence> and Robbie Castleman, *Parenting in the Pew: Guiding Your Children into the Joy of Worship*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

- **Make Use of the Bulletin:** Let your child have their own bulletin — it helps them feel like a participant in the service. Before service begins, point to the different parts of the service listed in the bulletin to remind them when to do what.
- **Make Use of a Notepad (Or Other Attention Helps):** The beginning of the sermon is the signal for “note-taking” to begin. Note-taking doesn’t mean just scribbling, but “taking notes” on a special pad used just for service. “Taking notes” grows up as the child does. At first they can draw pictures of what they hear in the sermon. Individual words or names trigger individual pictures. You might pick out a word that will be used frequently in the sermon; have the child listen carefully and make a check mark in his “notes” each time he hears the word. Later they may want to copy letters or words from the Scripture passage for the morning. When spelling comes easier, they can write words and then phrases they hear in the sermon.

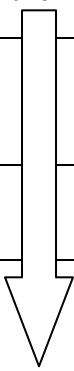


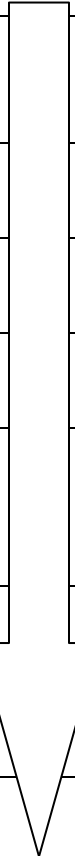
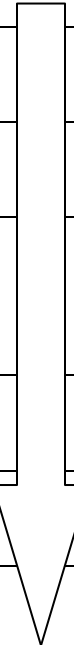



If coloring, drawing, or doing puzzles helps your child stay awake and engaged, then let them engage in these activities. We will make sure to have enough age appropriate activity pages that they can use on the children’s table as you come into the sanctuary. Avoid activities that are noisy or too distracting to your child. Discourage them from using headphones or sleeping through the service.

- **Make Use of Our Time of Tithes and Offerings:** Encourage your children to participate in the ministry of the church by giving on a regular basis. Have them mark special offerings so that their gift will be appropriately applied. Pray with them for the things that they give to keeping them updated on the various mission works.
- **Make Use of Community:** Help your child learn the names of other people in the church especially those who frequently sit near your family. This will help them to feel more connected. They can make a significant contribution to the welcoming nature of our church by learning the value of greeting others and learning their names.

If your child does get noisy, don’t automatically take them to play in the lobby. Give them a chance to grow in obedience with the support of our leaders and regular attendees. We understand that including children in worship is a dynamic process requiring patience and flexibility from all of us. Seek wisdom and learn from other parents in the same boat and who have gone before.

- **Make Use of the Drive Home and Lunch:** After the sermon, perhaps on the way home or at lunch, ask a few questions about the sermon that will encourage kids to listen for details. A story illustration, a repeated phrase, or a key word in the text can provide young minds with something concrete to latch on to. Knowing their parents will ask them about it will encourage them to be on the lookout for these things during the sermon.

Our Liturgy: The Shape of Our Worship: The Trinity and Redemptive History:

Elements	Trinity	Redemptive History	Call/Response	
Call to Worship	God the Father	Creation	God calls us to attend to worship	
Congregational Confession			Our affirmative response to God	
Prayer of Invocation			Our recognition of God's faithful presence	
Song of Preparation and Praise			Our praise for God's faithful presence	
Confession of Sin			Jesus the Son	Fall
Assurance of Pardon			The Word's assurance of redemption in Christ	
Song of Comfort			Our praise for Christ's redemption accomplished and applied	
Tithes and Offerings			The Holy Spirit	Our tangible commitment to the work of the Church
Family Additions			Our commitment to the life of the Church	
Song of Reflection			Our preparation to receive God's Word	
Pastoral Prayer			Our confession of dependence upon the Holy Spirit to illuminate our hearts and minds	
Sermon			God's call to apply His word and our salvation in the world	
Sacrament			God's Word made visible to nourish and improve our faith	
Song of Response			Our commitment to live out what we have heard	
Benediction			God the Father	Reconciliation