

Children - Welcome to Worship

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Welcome to Worship

at

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

We hope that this booklet will help children (and their Moms and Dads) as we learn about worshipping God together.

TO PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

MAY WE SUGGEST... [TOP]

✓ Relax! God put the "wiggle" in children.

✓ Sit near the front where it's easier for children to see what's happening.

✓ Use a gentle touch; an arm around your child's shoulder or your hand in his or hers gives reassurance and appropriate attention.

- ✓ Quietly explain parts of the service.
- ✓ Help your child find his/her way through the bulletin and hymnbook.
- ✓ Encourage them to follow and use the children's bulletin, available from ushers.
- ✓ Children learn by watching you worship.

Always remember that the way we welcome children in the church directly impacts the way they respond to church, God, and Christ. Let them know that they are at home in this time of praise and thanksgiving!

Children and the Church [**TOP**]

The value and importance of Children Worshipping

Since earliest times families have worshipped together. The Bible records examples of very young children who were known for participation in worship.

In Genesis 22:7 Isaac noticed the absence of a sacrificial animal and asked his father, Abraham, "Where is the lamb?" In 1 Samuel 2:18 we read of Samuel ministering before the Lord when he assisted Eli, the priest, in his sacred duties.

Every Sunday we see our parents bringing their children to St. Matthew's worship services instilling in them the value of nurturing their faith.

In a time when our children have so many issues confronting them on a daily basis we know that early participation can help educate our young people and provide them with a stronger foundation to balance the obstacles that might arise.

The weekly worship service is an effective opportunity for children to understand that they belong to a larger family that will nurture, support and love them unconditionally. We are so fortunate at St. Matthew's to have this strong family of believers that welcomes children and encourages their participation to serve Christ.

Introduction

Opening this book shows that you have a commitment to worshipping with your children and that's TERRIFIC!

Children learn to participate in the worship of our congregation by DOING! It is not always an easy task for children or for parents. Many parents bring their small children to our staffed nursery following the children's sermon and back into the sanctuary for communion and the closing prayer and hymn.

The following pages contain "some words of wisdom" for you as you learn about worshipping with your child.

Please feel free to take this booklet home with you

What Does It Mean To Worship God? [TOP]

When we worship God, it can mean many things:

- ✓ We give thanks to God for God's love and care.
- ✓ We praise God for God's power and might.
- ✓ When we worship, we listen for what God has to say to us.
- ✓ We confess (tell) to God the things we have done wrong.
- ✓ We promise to live as God expects us to live.

People of the Church worship God in many ways and in many places:

- ✓ Sometimes we worship as families at home.

- ✓ Sometimes we worship alone.
- ✓ Sometimes we worship as a congregation.
- ✓ Sometimes we worship by learning more about God, as we do in our Christian Education classes at 9:45 on Sunday mornings (Sept.-May).

What will happen in our Service of Worship? [TOP]

MANY good things happen! We gather together as a congregation of people (that's you and everyone else present who sits, stands, prays, sings, and listens.)

- ✓ We hear the Word of God read from the Bible.
- ✓ Lessons from the Old and New Testament are used each week.
- ✓ We join our pastor for a Children's sermon each week.
- ✓ We offer our gifts to God during the offering time.
- ✓ We see God working in our lives through the Word and Sacrament.

Generally, our worship has the following parts:

- ✓ A welcome is offered to all present, and announcements are shared.
- ✓ We begin our service with a hymn, and opening responses, which are either spoken or sung by the pastor and the congregation.
- ✓ The lessons are read by a lay reader, and the pastor reads the Gospel lesson.
- ✓ The sermon makes connections between our lessons (God's word) and our daily life.
- ✓ We give of "ourselves, our time, and our possessions" during the offering time.
- ✓ We lift our prayer concerns to God.

✓ We share in the Lord's Supper together and conclude with a blessing and a final hymn.

Usually . . . We STAND to sing . . .

We SIT to listen . . .

We BOW OUR HEADS to pray . . .

The Sacraments [TOP]

When we worship God through special acts, these acts are called sacraments. The Lutheran Church celebrates two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion.

BAPTISM

When a baby is baptized, the mother and father make some very important promises. They promise to remind their child that he or she *belongs to God*. They promise to teach the child about God's love and the "building blocks" of our father.

The minister puts water on the child's head three times and says that the child is part of God's family, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." God loves the child unconditionally and forever.

We, the people in the congregation, promise that we will welcome, teach, and pray for the child also.

Teenagers and adults may be baptized, too - not everyone is baptized as a baby. But each of us is baptized only once.

HOLY COMMUNION

The second sacrament we celebrate is Holy Communion. Some churches call it the "Eucharist," a Greek word meaning "Thanksgiving."

Just before Jesus died, He had supper with His special helpers, the disciples. At the end of the meal, He took bread, broke it, and blessed it. Then He gave it to each of His disciples to eat. Jesus then took a cup, gave it to His disciples, and told them to drink from it. He said to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus said that whenever His friends ate in this way together, gathering around bread and wine,

they were to remember Him. In a special way, we believe that Jesus is *truly present* when we share this meal.

If your children have not received their First Communion, they are invited to come forward for a blessing. At St. Matthew's, we practice communion of the baptized. The pastor invites 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th graders to receive instruction during Lent. First Communion is celebrated at worship on Holy Thursday.

THE CHURCH YEAR [TOP]

ADVENT is the first season. It usually starts at the end of November. In Advent, we prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus. Blue is the color for Advent - it stands for waiting and getting ready.

CHRISTMAS is the second season. It lasts only twelve days, beginning with Christmas Eve. White is the color for Christmas - it stands for happiness and light.

EPIPHANY is the special name for the last day of the Christmas season - Epiphany is a Greek word that means, "God has come to earth." White is the color of Epiphany.

LENT is the 40 days before Easter, not counting Sundays. Lent is another season of waiting and getting ready. We remember the things we have done wrong and ask God to forgive us as we remember again the death and resurrection of Jesus. Purple is Lent's color.

The last week of Lent is called **HOLY WEEK**.

EASTER is the most joyous season of the year! It has seven Sundays, beginning with Easter Sunday. In Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the beginning of the work of Jesus' friends, the disciples. The color of Easter is white.

PENTECOST comes fifty days after Easter. Some people call Pentecost the "birthday of the Church." On Pentecost we remember God's gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the power and bravery to go out into the world to tell people everywhere about the Good News of Jesus. Pentecost's color is red.

The rest of the church year (through summer and fall) is counted as "Sundays after Pentecost."

This is a time for growing, learning, praying, and worshipping.

These Sundays are marked with green for "growing."

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARENTS [**TOP**]

1. Worship in a location from which the child can see. Use a pew toward the front or put him/her on the aisle.
2. Offer to let your child help find the hymns, printed prayers, or responsive readings.
3. Relax! Help your child learn that worship is the joyful recognition of God's love for us.
4. Smile in your child's direction occasionally to express your joy in having him/her with you!
5. Help your child by quickly alerting them that something is coming up soon.
6. Include your child, with your assistance, in passing the offering plate and holding the bulletin, lesson and prayer insert, or hymnal.
7. Practice at home such things as the Lord's Prayer or familiar hymns.

BEATITUDES [TOP]

For parents . . . or other adults

- ✓ Blessed are the parents who bring the family to worship service regularly every Sunday.
- ✓ Blessed are those who are aware that worshipping together is an important part of "church family" life.
- ✓ Blessed are those who realize that small children will sometimes make noises and squirm.
- ✓ Blessed are those who know that children can respond to the feelings of wonder, glory, and beauty which are part of the worship service.
- ✓ Blessed are the parents who understand how much more important prayer is to children when they see their parents praying.
- ✓ Blessed are the parents who teach their children the love of giving by offering what they can each week to the glory of God.
- ✓ Blessed are those who sense that when a member of our church family, tall or small, is missing, we are incomplete.

"Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.' And he laid his hands on them and went on his way."

Matthew 19:13-15

The Importance of Involving Children [TOP]

in the Worship Service

by Kathren Miller

All people desire a sense of belonging. No matter what our age, we all have an innate need to feel valued, loved and wanted. In the Lutheran church, children are members of the body of Christ by virtue of their baptism. We have an opportunity and responsibility to involve our children in the worship services. A church that intentionally plans for opportunities to involve children is a church that says "*Children belong here.*"

The weekly worship service is the most frequent and effective opportunity for reaching families with young children. A service that uses a variety of visuals, sounds and experiences will enhance the worship service for people of all ages.

History, research and statistics have shown when a child is actively involved in the worship service they feel valued and loved by that congregation and are more likely to continue to worship as adults.

Children learn through sensory faith traditions that build on ritual, repetition, and relationships. These include liturgy, music, prayer, passing of the peace, lighting of the candles and more. We can involve our children in the service every week by encouraging, teaching and modeling.

As a young child is learning to read, they love to follow along and see where the entire service is written in the hymnal and bulletin. The service becomes very meaningful as they follow the liturgy and music. What joy a parent or grandparent feels as they share that hymnal and bulletin with their young child and watch them become an active participant in the worship service.

There are many special opportunities for our young people to be acolytes, lay readers, ushers, greeters or young musicians.

A famous author once wrote,

"When children learn to drink from the fountain of God's presence in the worship, they are more likely

to maintain a thirst for God in their adult years."

Tips for Parents Worshipping with Children [[TOP](#)]

Teaching Them Church Etiquette

When my children were toddlers I remember leaving church wondering what the sermon was about, what the scripture said, and how I was going to get through these difficult years.

Now as I watch young parents with their small children I smile and reflect with wonder why I worried so much. Children are excellent learners, but some days it seems like the teaching is taking place but the learning is going slow. Each of our children had their Sunday or Sundays when they had to be taken out of the church service because their behavior was not acceptable. We continued to go to church, and with repeat performances they finally realized we were not going to give in. They were expected to participate and sit quietly for this one hour every week. I had an excellent teacher myself - my mother. She passed on to me wonderful advice and suggestions, and I am honored to share them with our young parents of St. Matthew's.

1. Bring your child to church every Sunday. Going to church is a good habit my mother always told me. It is one of those valuable habits you want your child to have and never forget. There are no excuses for not going to church - only reasons. The only good reason is illness.

2. Talk about the church service and what you expect before you arrive. Let your child know what you will accept, what you expect. This was very helpful. As we drove to church we would review what was expected of them, depending on their ages.

3. Interact with your child. Even a young two year-old can stand when you stand, pray when you pray, and follow along when the lessons are being read. They can be the one to hold the bulletin or hymnal.

4. Bring a book that they have not seen for awhile. This was one of my best strategies. I would take a book that they had not read for some time, and they knew they could not have the book until it was sermon time. They would sit so quietly and look at the pictures over and over. I also bought more small boxes of raisins than anyone would ever know. They sat on my lap and the only people that knew they were eating during the sermon were the families in our pew. When the sermon was over, the book and raisins were put away and we all were back to participating in the service. When people would ask me how I could keep them so quiet every Sunday I would just smile. My children still love raisins on Sunday, now only in pie.

5. Teach them church etiquette. Whisper if you have to say something. Go to the bathroom before you enter the church. Watch what is happening during the service. Look at the choir when they are singing. Look at the person who is speaking whether they are making announcements, reading the lessons, or giving the children's sermon. Sit very still during the service. Your example is the best lesson you can provide for your child.

6. Don't be Discouraged. None of us learned how to worship by doing it once. Be persistent and patient. Knowing that while it may not be said, what you are doing is vitally important to your child's faith development. Talk to other parents for support. That is the importance of a family; to support one another. I remember those older members telling me it does get easier, and they were so right. Hang in there. You're doing great!

Children's Activity Bags

Activity bags are available in the Commons area for your child to use during the worship service.

Please return the bag to the box provided at the end of the service.

Thank you!