



Some random thoughts about children and worship:

- Children belong in worship. In a time in which we celebrate the diversity of God's people, why do we too often ignore the worship needs and gifts of our youngest members. So we send them to the nursery or to a separate "kid's church" experience. Parents: bring your child to worship even if it is difficult at first. We want you here!
- Children bring life and vitality to worship. They are spontaneous and filled with wonder. Their "noise" is the sound that expresses the joy of living and the sorrow of unmet need. They echo the sound of life - as does worship when it is at its best. Parents: don't worry about this noise - it is real. Worship is about life, not quiet!
- Children need to be in worship. It's where they learn who they are; whose they are. Parents: remind your child that s/he is a child of God!
- Children learn by watching others. The corporate act of worship invites them to observe God's people of every size, shape, and age come together in an act of joyful love - for God and for one another. This cannot be copied in any other setting. Parents: Bring your child to worship!
- Children will worship. It's in their nature. Who or what will be the object of their worship? Worshiping with others will help them discern what is of real value in life. Children are very likely to value what their parents value. Parents: Bring your child to worship!
- Children need help figuring out how to live amid the mysteries of life. Too often I hear "I don't want to force any particular religion upon my children. I'll let them decide for themselves." Two responses seem appropriate: 1. Of course, and 2. Baloney. Of course they need the freedom to explore and think for themselves. What children actually learn from this parenting style is that faith doesn't matter. Walking that line between freedom and guidance is not always easy - but it is right! Parents: we are praying for you - patience and wisdom especially!
- Children need adults who will affirm them. The presence of caring adults is one of the best ways to help a child to grow in their baptismal identity and gifts. Parents: Bring your child to worship and other church activities!

Three things you can do as an adult member who cares about the children of our congregation:

- ◆ Talk to them - every time you see them. Be real, be yourself when you do.
- ◆ The next time you hear a noisy child in worship, say two prayers - one of thanksgiving to God for both parent and child, and one for patience and love for the parents.
- ◆ Invite a child and family into your family's life - for a meal, an outing, a new idea.