

The Preschool Child

Adults may question the wisdom of including preschool children in worship. It is true that they sometimes distract those around them and distress parents by their behavior. But as members of the family, they are needed by all of us to complete the circle at God's table.

The preschool child comes to worship with a short attention span, seemingly endless energy, and a growing curiosity about everything. A sensitivity to the preschooler's abilities and needs can help make worship a pleasant experience for everyone.

Special Needs

We recognize that not every child's needs are identical and that God has created each child uniquely in God's own image. While we are not able to meet every need we do try to accommodate all children and honor them as blessings bestowed upon us by God. A monthly Special Needs Sunday School class is offered by a trained special education teacher. If your child has special needs, please speak with a member of the clergy or the Sunday School Director so that every effort may be made towards accommodation. We hope to work with parents to ensure St. John's is a nurturing, safe, and holy environment for all children.



Tips for Parents

- Arrive in time to find a good place to sit. Sitting near the front will provide children with a better view of the sanctuary.
- Bring quiet toys, books, or coloring books for younger children.
- Allow children to be active within limits, as long as the activity is not distracting to others. We encourage parents to take their children to the narthex (entryway) or one of the hallways if they need a break.
- Clue in children as to what will happen in worship. Children who can read will want to follow the service in the Prayer Book and find hymns in The Hymnal.
- Explain special events such as Baptisms and answer questions ahead of time at home; answer pressing questions in church in a whisper.
- Express your gladness at having children in worship. During the Peace, be sure to welcome the children near you. Include them in conversations before and after worship to let them know they belong.
- Use the quiet time of church as a chance for a special togetherness of parent and child that may not be possible during the week.

WORSHIP AT ST JOHN'S

Sunday Services:

8:00 am, 10 am & 5 pm

Morning Prayer: Daily at 8:45 a.m.

Weekday Eucharist:

Wednesdays at 10 am

MAKING ROOM FOR CHILDREN IN CHURCH

A Guide for Parents



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Children in Worship

While St. John's offers free nursery and toddler care and we have a vibrant Sunday School program, please know that your children are always welcome to worship with you in church. Children are an important, valued, and welcomed part of our worshiping community. Even children attending Sunday School during the service return to their parents or guardians before Communion, and parents of younger children are encouraged to pick up their infants and toddlers to receive Communion as a family.

Bringing coloring or quiet games is an acceptable way to allow children to be present in church – they pick up much more than we know! Modeling appropriate church behavior for children by teaching them to stand, sit or kneel with the congregation keeps them engaged and children quite often respond to ritual – just think of the number of times you've read "Goodnight Moon." An effective teaching method is to gradually lengthen the time a child remains in church. Children can usually be expected to participate in a service in an orderly manner by the time they enter second grade. Often we hear the question, "How can you expect children to behave in restaurants if you never take them out to eat?" The same logic applies to children and church.



Worship & Learning



Sunday after Sunday. They learn they belong to Christ and are welcome in his Church. They learn to know the Lord's Prayer and other parts of the liturgy from memory. They build a fund of memorable, shared experiences of Christian community against which they may draw when they are older. They are enriched by the beauty of music and art as expressions of praise and as human responses to God. They hear stories from the Bible read and interpreted and begin to see Christian worship as one place where God may speak to them. They witness the drama of Baptism and Eucharist as signs of God's kindness and favor. They discover that they are valued as persons by God and by the people of God at Church. Bringing children to worship may not always be easy, but it is an essential part of their growth in Christ. The Body of Christ assembled is incomplete in their absence. We need children!

Worship is one of the basic ways People learn what it means to be Christian. Children increase their understanding of Christian worship by joining the congregation

Kids & Communion

Parents who have grown up in other traditions often wonder why young children take Communion at St. John's. Indeed even "cradle" Episcopalians often did not receive Communion for the first time until after Confirmation. This leaves some parents with a conundrum: how and when should we allow our children to receive?

In keeping with the practices of the ancient church, the Episcopal Church places emphasis on Baptism. Once an individual is baptized, they are viewed as full members of the Body of Christ with access to the sacraments. Nothing "completes" Baptism – neither First Communion, nor Confirmation, nor reaching a certain age.

This is why children are welcome to receive Holy Communion. This doesn't mean that children are fully formed as Christians; none of us are. We spend our entire lives living into our Baptismal vows and entering into the mystery of Christ's "real presence" in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. And, on a practical level, instruction about the meaning of Communion takes place at various points throughout the Sunday School curriculum. That said, we do occasionally offer brief, conversational training sessions about Communion geared toward young children. We discuss the nature of the sacrament, what happens, and why this is such a special "meal." Please contact the parish office to find out when the next session will take place.