



CHILDREN AND WORSHIP

We encourage children to participate in worship here at First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino. We want them with us as we offer our praise to God. We believe:

- + Jesus loves children. The praise of children gladdens the heart of Christ and makes our worship a better gift.
- + Praying and singing together helps us to fulfill our baptismal promises to help each child know and love God.
- + We all learn to worship by worshipping.
- + Children know instinctively about wonder, awe, celebration, and delight. We aim to display those qualities in our worship.
- + Worshipping God is the most important thing we do and so we include our children.
- + None of us, no matter how adult, can claim to understand the Living God we worship, nor the mystery of why God loves us. We are all children here.

- + Jesus invites all to the table of Holy Communion so children are welcome to receive as adults if deemed appropriate by parents.
- + Worship is not primarily an intellectual act. It is gathering together, lifting our heart, "tasting and seeing" that the Lord is good. Intellectual capacity is not a prerequisite.
- + Children need to hear the stories of God's faithfulness and older believers need to tell them. Both storytellers and hearers are needed to share the Good News of Jesus.
- + God often blesses us through the children in our midst, by their questions, openness, and love. The Word we need to hear on a given Sunday might well come through a child.



A Word to Parents

We hope worship with your children is a blessing for you. Thank you for bringing them and enriching our worship. Please know that:

- + Worship bags are available for your child to borrow in the narthex.
- + You can feel free to step out of worship if your child needs you to, and return when you are ready. The service can be overheard on speakers in the nursery, office, or fellowship hall. Do not worry if your child is not attentive to every part of the service. It's surprising what they pick up even when they appear not to be listening. The God who meets us in worship is not nervous, and is not disturbed by your child's restlessness or any uncertainty you may feel. Relax into the reality of the welcome that God offers you in this place.

Children attend worship, have a time in the service specifically for them (which adults enjoy too!), have a separate learning space, and are invited to participate in various aspects of leading worship through music, drama, and reading.



First Presbyterian Church
 1900 N. D St, San Bernardino, CA
 92405 (909) 882-3308 •
www.fpcsb.net
The Rev. Dr. Sandra R. Tice, Pastor

Helping Your Child Worship

A few suggestions you may find helpful:

- 1. Be Prepared:** Begin the night before, aiming for bed on time and perhaps choosing what to wear tomorrow. If you will bring an offering or a small (non-electronic) toy, get that ready. Make breakfast simple to avoid rushing.
- 2. Be a Role Model:** Prepare to be with God's people. Express enthusiasm when it is genuine. While in worship, seek to open your heart and to be present to God. Children watch carefully - they know when something is important and of value to you.
- 3. Walk Your Child through the Service:** Show them when we will sing, maybe mark your hymnal. Point out when they will put their (and your?) offering in the plate. Explain the time with children. Note when we stand up.
- 4. Encourage Your Child to Participate:** Children can stand and hum long before they can read and may sing regular tunes (Alleluia) with great joy and gusto. The wholehearted singing of children is pleasing to God! Prompt them, quietly, to think about their own prayer, confession, praise, and wonder.
- 5. Help Your Child Become an Active Listener:** With brief questions, you can help kids stay connected to the scripture, sermon, and other parts of the service. "Listen to this story." "Can you draw a picture of that?" "Do you remember when WE did that?" "What do you think Peter will do next?" Think about how your child will

hear what is being presented and help them to connect it to their own lives.

6. Stretch Your Child's Ability to Sit Attentively:

In this effort all of us will stretch – parents, older adults, and children. It's good for us! Help them to sit longer and longer. Affirm their success. Give them help if and when they really need a break. This is a learned skill.

7. Talk About the Service on the Way Home:

Remind them that God rejoices in them, and that you are proud of them for helping our church family worship. Ask them what they liked or did not like, what they will remember, and what they found puzzling. Especially ask them where they felt or noticed the presence of God. Often they have eyes to see and ears to hear holy moments. Ask to see their puzzles or drawings. Let them hear where you noticed God too, so they know this is a shared family experience.

8. Pray for your Child and for Yourself:

Growth and development in faith take time and patience. Pray for your child's ability to notice God, to receive God's gift of love and belonging, and to treasure what is real. Pray too that you will be able to help and guide them toward Jesus, who loves them. We need God always, but particularly when we begin new things. Give God room to help you, and to give you peace.



Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. – Mark 10:16

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