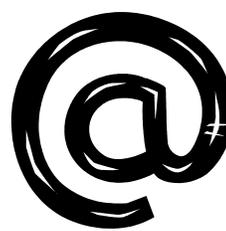


Living Faith



Dear Fellow Parents, Grandparents, and Caregivers,

YOU ARE MY HEROS! While enjoying some time out of the pulpit earlier this year, we were able to attend worship with our grandchildren and their parents. It was a blessing to be able to attend worship services with communion as a family. And it was an extra bonus and not to have worry about any of the details and responsibilities for the worship service that comes with serving God through congregational ministry. It was a nice break to be able to just show up, sing hymns, listen to the word, and praise God. (Even Diaconal Ministers need to be able to sit in the back of the church once in a while).

However, getting to the church on time proved to be a challenge. The first week, was not too bad. Our son and daughter met us at the church and we all went together. The next week, we were on grandparent's duty and on our own. That week we had to get the kids up, bathed, dressed, fed, and in the car by 7:45 to make it to the 8:00 service. That proved to be a challenge. I will spare you the details, because if you spend any time at all with the under 3 foot crowd, you already know. We arrived in the church seconds before the procession walked in. And since it was Baccalaureate Sunday, every parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, and assorted siblings from the tri-state area were in the congregation. We ended up going all the way to the front to the first available empty seats and were seated just behind the graduates.

The kids were tired from the marathon morning that we had already had and the first thing they did was begin forming their little nests with the placement of the adult that would best cuddle with them. Then they arranged the coloring books, bag of Cheerios, markers, pencils, and crayons, puzzles, and reading materials that they would need later during their break (the sermon). Which, by the way was timed by our seven-year-old grandson, who, at exactly 12 minutes into the sermon, lifted up his arm and pointed out the time on his new wrist watch, and then proudly proclaimed "times up". Declaring to all in earshot that the pastor that had gone over the prescribed amount of time. (I prayed that the pastor did not see that move.) After the third week of worshipping with our grandchildren, I must admit that I was happy to return to the pulpit and the duties and responsibilities of preparing for worship....it was WAY less work than worshipping with small children.

When we bring our children to be presented to be Baptized, we make promises.... one of those promises is to "bring them to the word of God and the holy supper". As I was recently reminded, this is not an easy promise to carry out....it is much easier to forgo the Sunday morning hassle and just stay home or do something more fun. But when we do that our Children will miss the opportunity to learn to worship. They learn by experiencing the music, hearing the word, and watching the adults that care for them. This newsletter offers some ideas to encourage families to worship together.

Blessings on the Journey,

Elayne Stoen Werges, Diaconal Minister

Cross Roads Lutheran Parish, Nora Springs, Osage, and Mitchell, Iowa



Baptismal Promises

"Bring them to the Word of God and the Holy Supper..."



The Three "R's" of Worship

These are things to keep in mind as parents and caregiver teach children to worship....

Rituals Are those things that are expected at a certain time and certain place. Often rituals are accompanied by words, music, and movement that have specific meanings. The Lutheran Liturgy offers all these things plus teaches security and gives a framework for the meanings to the message.

Repetition

When taking a three year old to worship for the first time, don't expect things to go perfectly. Children (and adults for that matter) learn over time. Think about how you learn to sing a song that is playing on the radio. You hum along, and then you start singing the words. Soon you are singing without the radio. Teaching children to worship is like that. It happens when it is done over and over.

Relationship

God created human beings to be in relationship with God and with each other. It is in the gathered body of Christ where faith comes by hearing in a community where God's message is spoken. It is there we find unconditional love, nurture, support and where the call to serve God through vocation is encouraged and taught. It is impossible to worship without a gathered community. Worship requires the "Body of Christ" to be gathered.

This information has been prepared for you by the

Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network

for use by families and local congregations. For more ideas about how you can pass on faith in your homes go to: http://www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/YouthFamilyResources.asp

If you have a comment or suggestion for future newsletters or are interested in joining the Home-Life Network please contact the synod office. Find us on Facebook!

Kids Worship



Including children in worship is more than worship bags and children's sermons! It is encouraging children and their parents to be active and valued participants in the life of the congregation.

- † Invite children to bring their offering, either coins or in kind, to the front and place it in a noisy can or pail. They like the noise and it teaches children giving as a spiritual practice.
- † As an alternative to the nursery, offer a "make to take" table. On the table is folded card stock, crayons, gel pens, stickers, foam shapes, old magazines, scissors, etc. During the sermon time, let them make cards that they will put in the offering plate. The cards are then taken by home visitors to shut-ins. Be sure to change up the items and projects once in awhile. For example, instead of cards make a windsock or kite at Pentecost or a Christmas tree ornament at Christmas.
- † Encourage children to use their spiritual gifts. If a child has a knack for reading, let them read the lesson for the morning or pray a petition during the prayers.
- † Use a family or a Sunday School class to greet and usher.
- † Celebrate life milestones during worship services with a blessing and presentation of a gifts. Be sure to include vocational blessings such as recognizing school personnel (including retired folks) at the Blessing of the Backpacks.
- † Invite children to meet the pastor for the sending. Kids love being able to yell in church! Many will hang out to greet everyone.
- † Offer special services such as Lent and Advent at an earlier time. Consider making them services that use body prayers, movement, and kid friendly music. Follow the service with a simple supper (ie hot dogs or sandwiches).
- † Have rhythm instruments available for use during songs. Let the children come to the front to play along. This is especially appropriate in a contemporary worship style.

When planning worship experiences for children, take into account their behaviors and development. Then plan accordingly. For example, it would be impossible for a three year old to participate in a service where the expectation is for quiet and reflection. In the same example, offering opportunities for movement and participation with rhythm instruments would be fun for them and fit their developmental needs.

Two Year Olds-are learning to listen. Encourage them to fold their hands at prayer and respond to music. If using actions with prayers, they will try to make the same movements.

Three Year Olds-are loud in their worship style and use words they know. They love to sing and will repeat words and enjoy movement. They can begin to memorize simple prayers and say prayers in their own words.

Four Year Olds-Love to sing and will copy rituals of worship. Encourage them to 'play church' at home. Five Year Olds-will joyfully participate in worship as they are able. They will fold their hands to pray and understand forgiveness.

School Age-Begin to fully participate in worship experiences. They like to be asked to help out and are wonderful ushers, greeters, and readers can be lectors.

Something to Think About...

In Mark 10, Jesus blesses children and teaches the adults... Today most of us teach the children and bless the adults! Consider offering classes to parents and caregiver classes about Faith Formation...

RESOURCES

For Children:

"Welcome Child of God"; Augsburg Fortress, 2010

For Parents and Worship Leaders:

"Living the Promises of Baptism-101 Ideas for Parents"; Augsburg Fortress, 2010

"Vibrant Faith in the Congregation" by David Anderson, 2011; Vibrant Faith Ministries-www.vibrantfaith.org

Table Talk....



Conversation Starters to use when you gather for a meal, as you are driving in the car, or as you are preparing for bed.

- ✓ What were your highs and lows today/this week.
- ✓ Ask what your child saw, smelled, and heard during worship.
- ✓ Sing a favorite hymn or song.
- ✓ Talk about how God was served through people at worship and in the community.
- ✓ Who does God call us to help today/this week?