

WORSHIPPING WITH CHILDREN

Tips for Caregivers at Arden UMC

- Allow enough time to get settled and have bathroom visits before the service begins.
 - Sit towards the front of the worship space! While this may seem counter-intuitive, children who can see easily will be more engaged in what is going on. You can always sit on the end of the row so that you can make an easy exit if necessary.
 - Introduce your children to people nearby.
 - Make sure your child has a bulletin (especially if they are a reader). Help your child find and identify different parts of the service. Let your child underline words he or she can read. There are also children's bulletins for pre-readers and readers.
 - Encourage children to participate by sharing their own financial resources.
 - Children learn worship etiquette by participation – feel free to whisper to children to teach – explain the meaning of difficult words in music or liturgy. Share your own positive feelings about the various parts of the worship service.
 - Bring a Bible for your child to follow along, or use one of the Bibles in the pew.
 - Remember, it is hard for children to sit for a long time. Allow children to sit or kneel on the floor and use the pew or chairs as a desk if necessary. Feel free to pick up the provided children's activities or activity bags.
 - All are invited to participate in Holy Communion, including our children. In fact, we often involve children and youth to help serve communion as well. You may indicate to the servers whether you would like your children to receive communion, or a blessing instead.
 - Talk about worship at home during the week (“That’s like what the Pastor said during the sermon” or ... “Do you remember the story we heard in church?”) This reinforces what they have learned.
 - Talk about the prayer concerns and pray for them during the week.
 - If young children get too ansy, feel free to take them out of the service and try again next week—lengthening the amount of time in worship each week until they are ready for an entire service.
- The nursery is available for children birth – 2 years.

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Tips for the Congregation at Arden UMC

- Remember the commitment we have as a congregation to the children in our midst. As a part of the service of baptism, the congregation commits to helping each person grow in faith.
- Greet the children around you before and after worship, not just their parents, make them feel like an important part of the worship service.
- Hand offering plates to children, not over their heads!
- Invite a child you know to sit with you in worship on occasion.
- Make it a goal to learn the names of the children in this congregation, and greet children by name each time you see them in worship. You might work on one name per month, to get started.
- Understand when parents need to take younger children out of worship or to the nursery and then return to worship. Make them feel welcome when they return, not self-conscious!
- Have patience with the learning process; sometimes children will be restless and active in worship. Remember, we are all children of God, and learning how to worship is important. As a congregation we should help support, not hinder, families in honoring the promises they made at baptism.
- Compliment children (and their parents) when children have participated and listened attentively during the service.

It is our great joy at Arden UMC to welcome so many children into our worship and shared life! Will it always be easy? Absolutely not, because just like everything else, our children are counting on us, their families and their congregation, to teach them. It means that we can endure the goldfish in the pews, and the occasional loud comments with grace and the understanding that having them there is pleasing to God and part of our responsibility in fulfilling the promises we all made at their baptism.



Adapted from Incarnation Lutheran Church.

<http://incarnationmn.org/worship/children-in-worship-ideas/>