



We welcome children here!

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." *Luke 9:48*

Following Jesus' example, at Manchaca UMC we welcome children of all ages as integral members of the body of Christ, and we welcome the sounds and activity that accompany them! Worship is one of the primary ways people learn what it means to be a Christian. Faith is more often "caught," not "taught"! Children learn best through participation in worship. We include children in worship so that being a part of a church family and gathering regularly for community worship becomes part of the normal routine.

When a child is baptized in our midst, members of the congregation promise to be active in nurturing that child's faith. Therefore, we work together to nurture our children in their faith and to be nurtured by them in return. Children give us the gift of trust and a fresh point of view. Adults can share the gift of acceptance, experience and the wisdom of the church through the ages.



Worship Spaces and Aids

Worship Gear Shelves

Located in the Narthex and in the back of the Family Life Center, the Worship Gear shelves contain books, Bibles, clipboards, coloring sheets, paper, crayons, pencils, pipe cleaners, stuffed animals, fidget toys, and other items to help keep busy hands occupied while sitting in the pews or chairs in worship. Borrow anything you would like and return them to the shelf after worship.

Family Pray-ground in the Family Life Center

This space in the front of the Family Life Center worship space is intended especially for families with young children, recognizing that small kids are often more engaged when they can see what's going on. Small tables and chairs, baby bouncer, soft toys and books keep little ones occupied under the watchful eyes of the parents.



Narthex in the Sanctuary

While the sounds that children make are most welcome in the Sanctuary, we recognize that concerns about disturbing others can hinder parents' ability to focus on worship. The Narthex at the back of the Sanctuary is available so parishioners can both see and hear what's happening in worship, while children can freely play.

Rocking Chairs

Rocking chairs are available to parents with infants and young children in the Narthex and in the back of the Family Life Center.



Nursery

A nursery is available for children ages 0-5 if your little one (or the parents!) simply need a break.

For safety, please do not leave children unattended in the back of the worship space, a classroom, or the narthex.

Tips for Parents Worshipping with Children

- Relax! God put the wiggle in children – don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. We welcome the joyful noises children bring to worship!
- Be Positive! Instead of saying "We have to go to church," say something like "we get to go to worship!" Teach children that worship is something we do with God's family and when we aren't there, God's family isn't complete!
- Pack a worship bag! Bring along tools that will involve your children in church – a child's Bible, a small notebook and colored pencils, prayer mandalas or cards.
- Let children choose where you sit! Children often enjoy sitting up front so they can see and be a part of the action! It may also be helpful to sit near an aisle. It is okay if children stand in the aisle, or on a pew or chair, in order to see and to sing. It is also okay if they sit on the floor.
- Sing the hymns and songs, pray and voice the responses. Children learn to worship by watching you! Encourage them to participate with you.
- Explain the parts of the service quietly. Help your child find the pages in a Hymnal or the Bible, or show them the words on the screen. Even if they can't read, they can participate by humming, dancing or clapping! Whisper about your favorite part of a song, or ask what they think about something said in the sermon.
- Prepare your children for worship by using the bathroom before worship starts and reminding them of your expectations.
- Encourage your child to participate in Children's Time where they can hear the gospel message presented just for them.



Tell me, and I'll
forget. Show me,
and I may
remember.
**Involve me, and I'll
understand!**



Supporting Parents with Children

We understand that it takes a village to raise a child! A few tips for engaging our families with small children include:

- Greeting and learning the names of the young children who sit near you in worship.
- Offering to read or color with one child during worship, especially if another child in the family is especially fussy or upset.
- Helping preschoolers and elementary-aged kids to navigate the liturgy, locate hymns, follow the bulletin, read from the screens, etc. (Children learn to worship by participating.)
- Invite kids to serve alongside you in worship as ushers and greeters.
- Recognizing the certain conditions or disabilities don't present physically, and some children (and adults) may make noises or act in ways that seem strange or upsetting, but are perfectly normal for their situation.
- Celebrating that God put the wiggle in children, and that children's "mode of being" in worship is intrinsically more vocal and more physical than that of adults.
- Always remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to church, God and Christ. Let them know that they are at home in this liturgy of praise and thanksgiving.



And Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." *Matthew 19:14*