

Children's Ministries



Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

He established a testimony in Jacob
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children,
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments.

Psalm 78:1-7

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Purpose

The Children's Ministry at City Presbyterian Church exists to glorify God by caring for the children of our community and guiding them into relationships with God. We seek to reinforce the biblical truths that parents are teaching at home, and to give children the opportunity to benefit from relationships with other children and adults in our congregation. Children's Ministry is not about controlling, babysitting, or entertaining kids on Sunday morning, it is about teaching children to be followers of Christ and in so doing, making an investment in his Kingdom for eternity. Ultimately, we want to see these little ones walking with God as mature Christians ten, twenty, fifty years from now.



"Suffer little children to come unto me."—Luke xviii. 16

Henry La Jume

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 19:13-14

Worship Services

We believe that children can truly know God, and should be encouraged at a young age to worship with the rest of God's family. Although they may not be able to understand or participate in every aspect of the service, they often absorb more than we give them credit for. At the most basic level, it is important for children to learn that they belong with God's people, and that Lord's Day worship is a special time.

Suggestions for Helping Your Child Worship

Like many things about parenting, teaching a child how to worship well takes a lot of time and work. We can all agree that it would be easier to let the kids play with each other during the service, or to just leave them at home with a babysitter to begin with, but most things that are worthwhile are not easy. Worship is our greatest privilege in life, and we do children a disservice when we teach them (by words or example) that it's inconvenient, boring, or optional.



Celebrate Sundays. It's never too early to teach that the Lord's Day is set apart for worship and rest. God gave the day as a gift to be anticipated and enjoyed, and children can be taught to do this. Let children pick out their church clothes the night before, make a special breakfast or dinner, do something fun together as a

family... whatever would communicate to your child that Sundays are unique- be creative!

Take time to explain to your child why we worship and what is happening during the different elements of the service. He or she is not there to “Sit still and be quiet!”, but to participate in what’s happening, and is dependent upon you to know how to do that. As with all areas of parenting, consistency is crucial. Expecting, modeling, and teaching regular participation in worship with a firm and loving attitude will make a big difference. The children’s bulletin is a tool created to assist you with this. We also make the adult bulletins available on our website by Friday afternoons so that parents can go over the sermon text, music, prayers, etc. with their children ahead of time.

*Please see the end of this booklet for additional resources on this subject. Also be aware that the staff is considering how we can provide opportunities to help parents think through these things and put them into practice.

Children’s Bulletins

Each Sunday there is a separate bulletin available for children to use to assist them in worship. We encourage parents to talk their children through the bulletin and show them how to use it. The bulletin helps children to remember what happened during the service, so families can use it as a tool to discuss it later that day. The children’s catechism memory questions for each week are included in the bulletins as well.

Children’s Church

Children’s Church is an age-appropriate worship time for children ages three through five that helps them make a smooth transition from being in the nursery to meaningfully participating in corporate worship with the rest of our community. The kids and their leaders remain with everyone else during the other parts of the service (singing, praying, passing the peace, communion, etc.), but spend the sermon portion in a separate room working through a simplified worship routine that is designed for them. Here the children pray, sing, and learn catechism questions accompanied by a lesson to reinforce them.

Catechism Memory

A catechism is a systematic summary of biblical teaching organized into a question-and-answer format for instructional purposes. General topics that are covered include: God, Creation, Man, Salvation, Christian Living, and Glory. At City Pres we use catechisms that are based on the Westminster Confession of Faith. There are two separate catechisms available for memory, one for younger children and the other for older children and adults. Memory is reinforced during Sunday School and Children’s Church, but this is something that we encourage parents to implement at home. It is an easy and valuable addition to bedtime reading, family devotions, homework or mealtime. Monthly schedules for both are always available for parents to pick up, and the questions for the current and past weeks will be made available in the church bulletin.

Sunday School

During the school year (September-May) there are Sunday School classes for all ages meeting the hour before the worship service. Preschool and elementary classes typically use the *Show Me Jesus* curriculum that is published by Great Commission Publications. Each of the elementary classes has a regular teacher who is responsible for preparing and teaching the lesson each week. The junior/senior high class material varies by semester. Contact Sara Bartley for current information.

"No matter how many converts we bring in the front door of the church, if we lose our children out the back door we are missing the starting point of the Great Commission. We are to begin in Jerusalem. We are to begin where we are. We are to begin in our own homes and with the children of our own churches."

-Susan Hunt, *Heirs of the Covenant*

Nursery

We have a staffed nursery available for infants and toddlers throughout the Sunday School hour and worship service. Although children officially "graduate" from the nursery when they turn three, younger children are always welcome to worship alongside their parents if you prefer. Parents who do make use of the nursery during the worship service typically pick their children up after the offering, just prior to the communion part of the service.

Safety

Nursery workers are carefully chosen and screened, and we require them to complete an infant/child CPR and First Aid course. They are always able to reach the Minister of Church Life or Tivoli Security by phone during Sunday School and worship services. As an additional security measure, we ask that when parents bring their children into the nursery they sign in, make a nametag for their child, and take a "Child Claim Check" with them to identify themselves when picking the child up. Only workers are permitted to change diapers and take children to the bathroom. No adult (worker or member) is permitted to be alone with children, so our environment and routines are designed to enforce this.

Member Involvement

While parents ordinarily play the largest role in a child's spiritual development, we cannot overestimate the value of children forming relationships with other adult believers. For this reason, when a child is baptized in our community all of the members are asked to take this vow: "Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?" Church members are expected to fulfill this vow in part by serving in the Children's Ministry as Sunday School teachers, Children's Church leaders, helpers or substitutes.

Child Wellness Policy

We realize that a child's illness can be difficult for parents, and it can be frustrating to rearrange schedules to provide care for a sick child at home. However, we ask that parents consider the well being of other children when considering whether to bring a sick child to church. We have developed the following policy to assist parents and nursery workers. A child cannot be allowed in the nursery if any of the following is true: the child has a fever or has had a fever in the past 24 hours; has vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours; or has obvious signs of infection or cold symptoms. If your child becomes sick while he or she is in the nursery, you will be contacted quickly.

Mom's Group

A group of City Pres moms meets bi-weekly for encouragement, discussion, prayer and play. Every other week they come together with their children to play and visit with one another. On alternate weeks, they meet to discuss chapters from the current book they are studying, share and pray with one another. During discussion weeks, there is childcare provided for the kiddos in a separate room. For information about the current schedule, please contact Lauren McMonagle: lmcmonagle@gmail.com

Sacraments

There is certainly not enough space here to adequately explain what the Bible teaches about a child's

relationship to the sacraments, but the subject is included because it is important for parents to think through.

We believe that the children of at least one Christian parent should receive **baptism** as a sign of the child's membership in the church community and of God's promise to bless him or her. It is not an "automatic guarantee" of salvation any more than circumcision (its Old Testament counterpart) was, but rather a celebration of the child's special covenant relationship with God and His people. Children are responsible to respond in faith and obedience to the formal and informal instruction of his/her parents and church community. (For more information, see the resources section and/or talk to a member of the church's ministerial staff).

We discourage small children from participating in the **Lord's Supper** because the Bible commands us to examine ourselves spiritually before coming to the Table (1 Corinthians 11:28), and small children cannot realistically do that. As soon as children are able to articulate a basic understanding of the Gospel and affirm their trust in Christ, a member of the ministerial staff will gladly welcome him or her to participate in this sacrament. We recognize that children become ready to express their faith at different ages, and for this reason we leave the decision to the discretion of the child and his/her parents. When you feel your child is ready, please talk with Sam, Bill or Sara. We assure you that the "interview" will be simple and brief, the goal is for it to be a memorable rite of passage for children.

Church Membership

Normally, we require adults to participate in a New Members Class and have a membership interview with someone on the pastoral staff prior to coming before the church to take membership vows. This ensures that they are Christians, know what City Pres believes, and understand the membership vows before they join the church. Baptized children are automatically considered members of the church once their parents join, so we do not have a membership class or requirements for children. We encourage parents to work through Stephen Smallman's book *Understanding the Faith* with their children at home to develop a deeper understanding for what we believe about God, the church, etc. We occasionally teach through this book during upper-elementary Sunday School classes as well.

Resources

Children and Church

- *Parenting in the Pew: Guiding Your Children into the Joy of Worship*, by Robbie Castleman
- *Heirs of the Covenant*, by Susan Hunt
- *Including Children in Worship*, by Elizabeth Sandell
- *A Child Shall Lead: Children in Worship*, edited by John D. Wituliet

Christian Parenting

- *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, by Ted Tripp
- *Sacred Parenting*, by Gary Thomas
- *Treasuring God in Our Traditions*, by Noel Piper

Devotional/Training Material for Home

- *Big Truths for Little Kids*, by Susan & Richie Hunt
- *Leading Little Ones to God*, by Marian Schoolland
- THE BIBLE !! (Children understand more than we realize, and there is no substitute for God's Word)

Covenant Baptism

- *Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants* by Geoffrey W. Bromiley
- *What Christian Parents Should Know About Infant Baptism* by John P. Sartelle (booklet)
- *Why Do We Baptize Infants?* by Bryan Chapell (booklet)

Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.

Deuteronomy 31:12-13