

Worshiping with Children



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Latrobe, PA

Welcome to Worship

Welcome to worship at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Each Sunday, we gather as God's people to offer our praise and thanks to God, to hear the good news of the Gospel, and to share our joys and concerns as a caring family of faith.

We believe that the Gospel is for persons of all ages, and we welcome all to be a part of our worship. Worship is one of the primary means by which our faith as Christians is formed and expressed. Worship is to the Body of Christ what breathing is to our physical bodies, without it we die. Children learn to worship by worshiping with the gathered congregation Sunday by Sunday. Support, understanding, and encouragement of children, and the ways they worship, are ways that members of our church family fulfill the vows we make to God on behalf of children at the time of their baptism.

Children are very much a part of our worshiping community. Their presence here is based on the biblical tradition and the writings of Martin Luther himself in his sermon on *The Estate of Marriage* (1522). We are guided by Luther's words that parents need to bring their children to worship:

“But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worth while, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls... Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal. Whoever teaches the gospel to another is truly his apostle and bishop.”¹

¹Luther, M. (1999, c1962). *Vol. 45: Luther's works, vol. 45 : The Christian in Society II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Vol. 45, Page 46). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Learning to Worship by Worshiping

Children gain the following from worshiping with the community of faith:

- They learn that they belong to Christ and are welcome to His church.
- They come to know, through repetition, the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and other elements of worship that are repeated every Sunday.
- They build memories of shared experiences of Christian community with their own families and other members.
- They are enriched by the beauty of music and art as creative expressions of human praise to God.
- They hear stories from the Bible, read and interpreted, and begin to experience worship as a place where God speaks to them.
- They witness the drama of the days and seasons of the Christian Year with all of its pageantry and beauty.
- They observe and participate in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper which shows God's love and forgiveness among us.
- They come to know the pastor and other worship leaders as people they can trust as they are included in special ways in worship during "The Children's Sermons" and the musical offerings by the children.
- They discover that they are valued as persons by God and by God's people.
- They become bonded to the family of faith whereby they say, "That's my church."

Worship Readiness: Preschool Children (under 4 years old)

Parents and other adults may wonder about the wisdom of including preschool children in congregational worship. They can be restless and distracting to those around them, and even occasionally embarrassing to their parents by their behavior. However, including young children in worship for short parts of the service prepares them for the time when they will stay for the whole service.

The preschool child comes to worship with

- a rather limited attention span
- seemingly endless energy
- a growing curiosity about everything

While these ingredients can combine to test a parent's patience, there are several things parents can do to make the preschooler's experience (and their own) more relaxed and enjoyable

- Sit near the front where the child can have a clear view.
- Cue the child for the next act of worship.
- Answer questions when they are asked, in a whisper.
- Encourage the child to go forward for "The Children's Sermon".
- Allow the child to bring a favorite stuffed animal.
- Touch, cuddle, hug, and smile to show your acceptance of the child in worship.

When young children are brought to worship they learn that worship is important to their parents and for them. They discover they are welcome and are part of a larger church family. They begin to find ways to express their love for God and to receive God's love.

Worship Readiness: 4 Years Old and Older

As children get older, they bring new abilities to worship ...

- a greater capacity for attentive listening
- an increasing ability to read and count
- ability to follow directions
- increasing ability to sing
- ability to find pages by numbers
- ability to find Bible verses by chapter and verses
- the ability to organize and memorize information.

The transition from a four-year-old with limited participation in worship to more responsible involvement in worship by a twelve-year-old is a process that each child moves through at his or her own pace, a little at a time. At every stage, children can use all of the above abilities to aid them in their worship participation.

A worship orientation program for three and four-year-old children and their parents can be held by making a request of the Pastor.

Special worship bags, bulletins and crayons for children are also available in the NatheX of the church.

A to Z Worship Guidelines

Arrive in time to find a good place to sit where the child/ren can see what is happening.

Book marks are important to keep track of the service; use them to mark the hymns.

Communicate expectations of behavior beforehand.

Demonstrate by your own actions what is expected at different times during worship.

Express your joy in having your child/ren in worship with you.

Free yourself from expecting your child/ren to have perfect behavior.

Give your child/ren something to do that will help him/her participate. (i.e. finding hymns, etc...)

Help the child/ren to memorize parts of the liturgy; i.e., Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the responses during the Kyrie and Communion.

Introduce your child/ren to persons near you in the pew when the congregation greets each other.

Join with the congregation in all singing and corporate prayers.

Keeep some things in your pocket or purse: "life savers", tissues, pencil, etc.

Learn from the creativity and spontaneity of the children what it means to praise God.

Music and words of hymns will be easier to follow if you point with your finger to the words.

For Parents and Other Adults

Nothing will teach children more about worship than experiencing worship directly.

Offer compliments when children have accomplished something good.

Pass the offering plate to your child not around him/her.

Quiet the child with a gentle touch rather than a verbal “shush”.

Read parts of the liturgy to the non-reader child.

Stay alert to the needs of children to see, hear, wiggle, and snuggle during worship.

Try to kindle a sense of awe in children as they come into the presence of God in worship.

Utimize all of the resources that are available for preparing for and engaging in worship.

Value your child’s participation by soliciting responses and ideas after the worship service.

Worshiping together as a family is a valuable experience that is important for you and your child/ren to share together.

eXamine the bulletin before the service begins to help the children know what is coming.

You will be forever grateful that you encouraged your child/ren to worship at an early age.

realiZe that children do not automatically know the *why* and the *how* of worship; they learn, with help, by worshiping with their family.

A Guide to The Service for the Lord's Day

The following outline has been prepared to help parents and their children understand the meaning of the various elements of the worship service. Worship is deeply rooted in Christian Scripture. References to Scripture that pertains to the various places in the service have been noted.

WE GATHER

Announcements

We are welcomed to worship. The pastor shares information about persons and events in the church. We learn how we can become more involved in the life of the congregation.

Prelude

Music helps draw us into an attitude of prayer and praise. We prepare with silent and prayerful hearts as we begin the worship of God.

Invocation (Matthew 28:19; Matthew 18:20; Ephesians 2:18)

We call upon God to be present with us. We worship the triune God, remembering our Baptism in His name. Amen means "So be it, it is true!"

Confession (1 John 1:8-10 [Romans 7:14-8:4] and John 20:23)

We examine ourselves and publicly confess our sins. Such a confession at the beginning of the service provides a climate of acceptance. In spite of our sins, we are accepted by God, and in turn we can accept each other. Christ said to his disciples, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven". The pastor speaks with God's authority and announces God's cleansing forgiveness to those who made confession.

Entrance Hymn

We are a "singing church," so we follow the advice of the apostle Paul to teach and admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the lord" (Colossians 3:16). This hymn may be one of praise, prayer, or reflection on the season of the church year.

Greeting (2 Corinthians 1:2)

We are greeted in the name of our Lord Jesus in the words of St. Paul.

Kyrie (Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 20:30-31; Luke 17:13)

Kyrie is a Greek word meaning "O Lord." It is a cry to the Lord for help and strength. In ancient times, the crowds would shout "Lord, have mercy" as the King entered their town. The church has taken over this prayer to greet its King Jesus Christ in the church service. As the people so long ago expected help from their King, so we Christians expect help from our Savior.

Hymn of Praise

("Glory to God in the highest," Luke 2:14; "This is the feast," Revelation 5:12f.)

Two hymns of praise, "Glory to God in the highest" and "This is the feast of victory," give the congregation the opportunity to praise God and express joy because Jesus is our victorious Savior.

Prayer of the Day

The main thoughts of the day are collected, or summarized in this short prayer. The prayers for the reason of the church year have come to us from the rich treasury of the church's heritage.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

First Reading (1 Timothy 4:13)

The first reading is from the Old Testament, except during the Easter season when it is from the Book of Acts. This reading usually relates to the Gospel of the day.

Psalm

The Psalms are ancient hymns that date back to the time of King David and are written to show praise to God or joy, despair or sorrow in the lives of the faithful.

Second Reading

The second reading is usually from one of the Epistles (letters) in the New Testament.

The Verse (John 6:68; Joel 2:13 (through lent))

A verse from the Holy Scriptures is usually sung in preparation for the reading of the Gospel. There are general verses as well as specific verses for the seasons of the church year.

Gospel

The Gospel Lesson is a selection from the accounts of the life of our Lord recorded by the four evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. Because Christ is with us in the Gospel reading, we stand to honor his presence. We also sing or speak short verses before and after the reading of the Gospel.

Sermon

The Pastor proclaims God's Word and applies that Word to modern life and problems. He stresses both what God demands of us (the Law) and what God does for us through Jesus Christ (the Gospel).

Hymn of the Day

This hymn usually follows the theme of the readings and helps to reinforce the message of the sermon.

The Creed (1 Corinthians 15:1ff; 1 Peter 3:18ff; 1 Timothy 3:16)

After hearing the word of God read and proclaimed, the worshiper responds with a confession of faith in the words of the Apostles', Nicene or Athanasian Creeds.

Prayers of Intercession (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

This prayer in the service follows the directive of the Apostle Paul to young Timothy, a pastor: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for Kings and all those in authority, that we may live in peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness". For this reason, the hymnal says "prayers are included for the whole church, the nations, those in need, the parish, and special concerns.

WE SHARE A HOLY MEAL

Greeting of Peace (John 14:27; John 20:19-21)

The greeting of peace which Jesus spoke on the first Easter is shared before we approach the altar to receive Him. *In the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ are truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine.*

Offering

The gifts of God's people are a response to God's blessings "as God has prospered them" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Our offerings are for the support of the church. They enable the church to provide the written and spoken word of God, Christian education, and pastoral care, food, clothing, shelter, and a helping hand to those in need.

The Offertory ("What shall I render to the Lord," Psalm 116:12, 17, 13-14, 19; "Create in me a clean heart", Psalm 51:10-12)

As the offerings are brought to the Lord's table, the worshipers sing the offertory to express gratitude for all God's blessings, dedicate themselves to God, and request His continued blessings.

Preface ("Salutation"; Lamentations 3:41; Psalm 86.4)

Preface means "introduction." The pastor and people get ready to celebrate the Holy Meal by greeting each other and with an exhortation as how to celebrate the meal.

Proper Preface (Psalms 69:30; 95:2; 100:4; 107:22; 116:17; 147:7)

These words state why we should give thanks using words and ideas appropriate for the season of the church year.

Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) (Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9 (Mark 11:9); Psalm 118:25-26)

Sanctus is a Latin word meaning "Holy." The Sanctus contains words from Isaiah's vision of God (Isaiah 6:3) and the crowd's response on Palm Sunday when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9). We join them in spirit by singing their words as we anticipate Christ's coming in the sacrament.

The Words of Institution (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20)

The pastor speaks the words which Jesus spoke when He instituted the Supper with His disciples in the Upper Room. With these words the bread and wine are consecrated, that is, set apart for God's use in the special meal.

The Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7)

Agnus Dei is a Latin phrase meaning "Lamb of God." John the Baptist spoke these words as he pointed to Jesus coming toward him (John 1:29). As Christ comes to us in the Holy Supper, we recognize him as the Lamb of God sacrificed for us to free us from the bondage of sin and death.

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew. 6:9ff; Luke 11:2ff)

We pray to God as our Father using the prayer of the family of God because the Lord's Supper is our family meal.

The Distribution of the Sacrament

As we come to the Lord's Table, the pastor invites us, "Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins. Take, drink, this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins." After we receive the Sacrament we hear the comforting words spoken by the pastor, "The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and keep you in his grace to life everlasting." We respond, "Amen," for this is our sincere desire. It is a good practice to offer a silent prayer of thanks when we return to our pews. While the meal is being distributed, the congregation and/or the choir sometimes sing one or more hymns.

Post Communion Canticle ("Lord, now you let your servant"

Luke 2:29f)

"Thank the Lord," "Lord, now let Your servant go in peace," or an appropriate hymn is sung. The purpose is to offer our thanks and express our faith in what God has done for us and promised to do for us in the future.

Post Communion Prayer (Psalms. 107:1; 118:1)

Once again we express our appreciation to our gracious God for giving us this Holy Meal through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

WE ARE SENT TO SERVE

Blessing/Benediction (Numbers 6:23-27)

The blessing spoken by the pastor is the Aaronic benediction, the blessing God first gave to Aaron and the other priests to speak to the people of Israel. Jesus Christ, our High Priest, has come to us in a special way through this Holy Meal. The blessing is God's promise that Christ will go with us as we leave the church and return to the world to serve Him. We say "Amen" to affirm the blessing; "So be it -- it is true!"

Closing Hymn

We sing of our commitment to God, to live as God's faithful people. The words of the hymn bring closure to our participation in worship.

Dismissal

We are sent out into the world to love God, proclaim his name and serve others who are in need. We respond with thanks for the many blessings that we have received, ready to go and share them with the world.

Worship in Families and Households

When Christians live together in a family or in a household they should observe times of worship together. When it is possible to worship together daily, households may engage in:

- table prayer, which may be accompanied by the use of Scripture;
- morning and evening prayer;
- Bible reading, study reflection, and memorization;
- singing psalms and hymns;
- expressions of giving and sharing;
- prayer at bedtime.

Given the complexity of schedules and the separations incurred in daily occupations, it is especially important to cultivate the discipline of regular household worship. When members of a household are not able to come together for worship, they may nevertheless observe a common time of personal worship with common readings and prayer concerns.

Parent(s), or the one(s) exercising parental responsibility, should teach their children about Christian worship by example, by providing for household worship, and by discussion and instruction.

Children join in household worship by ...

- praying and singing
- listening to and telling Bible stories
- reading and memorizing
- leading and sharing
- enacting and responding.

Simple table graces for the family

Bless us O Lord and these thy gifts that we are about to receive
from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen

God is great, and God is good,
And we thank him for our food;
By his hand we all are fed;
Give us, Lord, our daily bread.

Give us grateful hearts, our Father,
for all your mercies,
and make us mindful of the needs of others;
through Christ our Lord.

Dear Lord, thank you for this gift of food
You've placed upon our table.
And help us all to do your work
In any way we're able.

Let's Join Hands

(Tune: Mary had a little lamb)

Let's join hands and give our thanks,
give our thanks, give our thanks,
Let's join hands and give our thanks,
Give our thanks to God!

Lovely Treat

(Tune: This Old Man)

Bread and Jam, Bread and Jam
I am grateful, yes I am
I thank God kindly for the food I eat.
Thank him for this lovely treat.

Worship Opportunities for Children

Infants

Infants are especially welcomed in worship. Infants are stimulated by the rich tapestry of colors and sounds of the sanctuary. Care should be given to time feedings and diaper changes so that the child's physical needs are met, and a contingency plan such as sitting close to the door is helpful for those Sunday mornings when the child is restless and fussy. But, generally, parents are encouraged to bring their infants to worship and care for them as they would in any public setting.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

With a little help and encouragement from parents and other caring adults, Toddlers and Preschoolers are able to participate more and more in worship. They learn by rote and, in time, will be able to say the Lord's Prayer and the Creed and sing some of the songs used regularly during worship. They're able to sing some of the hymns and hear parts of the sermon. They need to feel included in the family of faith. Special worship bags, bulletins and crayons are provided for preschoolers.

Five Years Old and Older

Kindergarten and elementary age children are perfectly able to sing God's praise. Worshiping with other children, youth and adults, they're able to grow in the knowledge of God's Word and in their understanding of themselves as children of God.