

WELCOME CHILDREN– A Fun Guide



ST. STEPHEN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF RIDGEFIELD
Belonging with purpose

Opening Hymn and following

With all of the congregation participating together, your kids have a chance to participate, too. With toddlers, use this time to hold them as you stand. Or have them stand on the pew beside you. Perhaps they want to hold their own paper, like you are doing. Let them pretend that they're big. Show them how you close your eyes. If you've got a more rambunctious little person, this is an easy time for them to be active in the pew.

Lessons

When we all sit to hear, show your toddler what we're focused on. Point out who is doing the speaking. See if they take a cue from you on how to do this part. They can usually still handle direction to be quiet here at the start of the service. It's early, yet. Let your quiet motion (not sound) be a secret password between the two of you. Little kids like being "in" on stuff. Quiet toys are good for this part of the service.

Sequence Hymn

When we stand to sing, it's another invitation to be active. Holding the book so that they can see or getting them their own feels like being included. If the attention span is too short to see it through the entire hymn, quiet movement or toys is a great alternative.

Sermon

The sermon is SNACK TIME! And maybe lap time, too. Sitting with one's parents eating a snack is pretty special. You can use this time to get some extra snuggles in. As a child, I used to love that my grandma would scratch my

arm during the sermon and/or that I was allowed to lay my head down on a shoulder or lap and have my hair played with.

The Nicene Creed and following

The Creed and the Prayers are full of activity and opportunities to participate. If your child is still working on snack, no need to interrupt. I found it easier to have snack time be all at once, rather than broken up. After all, The Eucharist is coming!

The Peace

The Peace is definitely a fun time! Let's get out of the pew!!!! Kids like meeting people and people like meeting kids. It will feel more like community to all of you if you take some moments to get acquainted.

The Offering

Let your child assist you with the offering- passing the plate, putting in one dollar. It feels good to give.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Eucharistic prayer has a lot of activity. Stand, kneel, sing. Invite your toddler again and again to do this with you. With all of this movement, quiet activity is easy to disguise- dolls, cars, etc, are great ways to get engaged. AND we get to get out of the pew. Help your child notice when it will be your turn.

Children are allowed to receive communion. All baptized people, regardless of age or church affiliation, are allowed to receive communion. Notice how your child wants to do what you do. This is usually obvious to us at this time. They've had the same feelings earlier in the service, they simply couldn't notice what was being done without you pointing it out.

Post Communion Prayer

Almost finished!!!! Is there one more toy in the bag? Do you want to clean up your bag before the post-communion prayer and after praying move to stand in the back for announcements? You could sing the hymn from back there. Just a thought.