



Hello parents. I am super excited about our regathering this Sunday but sad that we can't offer preschool and children's classes yet. Don't worry. We are preparing for the time when it will be safe to regather those classes too. In the meantime, God has given you an incredible opportunity to worship together as a family. For many of you, this is nothing new. Our church has always encouraged families to worship together. But for some of you, this may be a new experience, or you may have younger kids who are not used to "big church." Take a deep breath and don't panic. Here are some suggestions to make it a great experience:

**First, have realistic expectations.** Is your three-year-old going to sit quietly and perfectly still for an hour? If so, you need to write a book with all your secrets. God didn't make them that way. You need to give children a chance to move and even talk. You just want to encourage them to do those things in a way that benefits the worship experience. For instance, tell them they can only ask questions about what is going on in the service, and they must whisper. This will give you some teaching moments. Will this take away from your ability to hear every moment of the sermon or sing every measure of a worship song? Yes, but the experience you are creating for your child and your family will be totally worth it.

**Second, make sure your kids know what you expect from them.** Before you come to church, take a moment to talk to your kids about boundaries. Remind them that there will be some fun music where they can move and sing, but then later, the pastor will talk to them about something very important from the Bible. Invite them to sit and listen closely. Word games are always fun. For instance, tell them to keep up with the number of times Pastor Steve says "Jesus." Make sure you give your kids consequences when they don't meet your expectations, good and bad. It never hurts to offer ice cream after lunch if they do as they are asked. Be positive about church and show the kids you are excited about worshipping with them.

**Third, bring a few items from home.** Don't be afraid to bring snacks and a spill-proof cup. Hungry kids are not happy kids. Also, help the kids choose one small comfort toy that doesn't make noise, like a stuffed animal or plastic dinosaur. Finally, bring a notebook, a Bible, a few crayons, and a pencil. For older kids, encourage them to take notes. For younger kids, invite them to draw and color pictures about the things they hear and see. Can you pack a phone or tablet? Sure. There are Bible apps, note-taking apps, and coloring apps available on Apple and Android products. Just make sure the volume is off and kids know what apps they can and cannot use.

**Finally, we want to help.** When you arrive Sunday, we will have some bags with some fun ways to help your kids enjoy their experience. Each bag will have some activity sheets, crayons, and some other easy and quiet craft items, like stickers and Wikki Stix. Grab one of these for the service and take it home when the service is over. And, if you are struggling to reign in your child, we have created a family room in Faith Hall. Please use this room only for a break and return to the worship center as soon as possible. We also have created a nursing room and baby changing station in one of the Faith Hall rooms.

If you are staying at home because you feel it is the safest way to worship for you and your family, that's awesome. But, don't stay at home because you are afraid of having your kids in the worship center. My parents took me as a child to worship, and our church didn't always have a nursery and certainly didn't have anything for preschoolers and kids during worship. We worshipped as a family. I know I took away from their ability to hear and understand the service at times, and I paid the price a few times too. However, I still value those moments to this day, and your kids will too. So, come worship together as a family with us this Sunday. I hope to see you there!