

**50 WAYS TO
INCLUDE YOUNG
CHILDREN IN
CHURCH LIFE**

**COMPILED FOR YOU BY DAWN RUNDMAN
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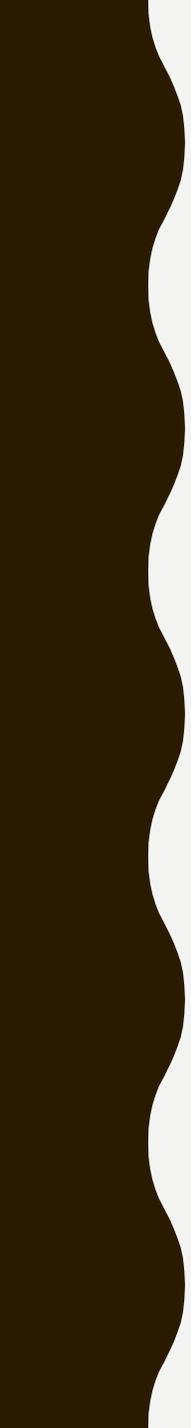


I. Provide booster seats or cushions for toddlers and preschoolers so they can see more of the action during worship.



2. Reserve the front seats in your worship space (not the ones in back) for families with young children.

3. Include banners and other artwork with faith-based symbols and pictures—not just words—throughout your worship space.



4. Use the specific names for objects in the worship space, like cross, altar or table, and baptismal font.

5. Train your greeters to tell families with young children where the nursery is. Also train your greeters not to assume families will want or need to use it.



6. Provide rocking chairs in your worship space and other areas for nursing mothers and others who need to feed and soothe infants.



7. Invite families with young children to visit the altar after worship to smell the candle smoke and the altar flowers.

8. Include an invitation in your worship folder or on the screen for families with young children to sit in the front seats. (It may take a few brave families to get this started. A pastor's public blessing of this practice will help.)



9. Display pictures
of Jesus at a young
child's eye level.

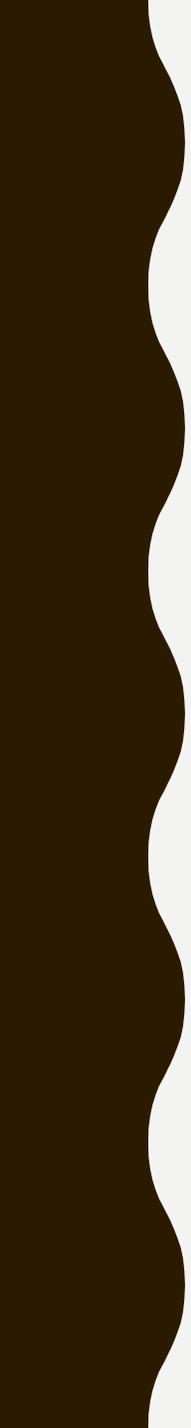


10. Appeal to children's sense of touch by including textures they can feel, like a touchable statue or a textured cross.

11. If you have a balcony, worship there one Sunday and pay attention to where families with young children sit and what they do during worship.



12. Shake hands or
make a peace sign with
a child during the
Sharing of the Peace or
before or after worship.



13. Encourage members to learn the names of the children in your congregation. If you use nametags, make sure they can clip safely to the back of a child's shirt.

14. When you see a wiggly, angry, or sad child, say a right-there-and-then prayer for this child and the parent(s). Encourage others to do the same.

15. Encourage worship planners to involve children in many ways, such as greeters, acolytes, readers, choir members, and soloists.

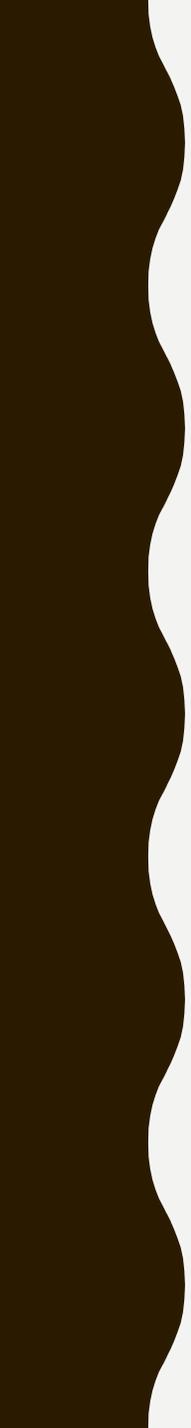


16. Encourage parents to bless their children in worship by gently cradling their heads or making the sign of the cross on their foreheads.

17. Regularly include children in the prayers of the church—not just when they are born, adopted, or sick.

18. If a child has a biblical name that is mentioned during worship, tell the child, "I heard your name today!"

19. Celebrate children's birthdays, adoption anniversaries, and other notable big days by sending a card or noting them in the worship folder, newsletter, or other publications.



20. Use a child's
name when you
greet him or her.

21. Make sure both women's and men's restrooms have diaper changing stations.

22. Create a photo album that contains photos of each child who is a member. (Get consent for photos and only use locally.)

23. Invite children
(including infants and
toddlers) to surround
the baptismal font
during a baptism.

24. Ask families with young children to submit their prayer requests.

25. Invite children to place a non-monetary offering in the offering plate that shows/tells how they will offer their time and abilities.

26. Invite children to give a non-monetary offering like nonperishable food or gently-used clothes or toys.

27. Welcome all children during worship by asking them to raise their hands.

28. Include something relevant to children during the "grown up" sermon.



29. Include a physical object, action, or song during the children's message.



30. Ask the pastor or
worship leader to explain a
part of the liturgy, hymn, or
special custom each Sunday.

31. Point out when a Bible story matches up with stained glass and other artwork/images in the church.

32. Celebrate the Week of the Young Child with special songs, prayers, presentations, and artwork. This week in April is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



33. Invite children to distribute something to every person at the end of the children's message.



34. Provide activity bags for young children to use during worship. Include photo albums, board books, and coloring supplies.



35. Develop guidelines for worshipping with young children. Then create laminated cards with these guidelines and place them throughout the worship space.

36. Use children's drawings for a temporary art installation, or as bulletin covers, projected slides, or artwork for your walls.

37. Provide safe, clean high chairs and booster seats in your fellowship areas. (Families wouldn't return to a restaurant a second time if it didn't offer high chairs or booster seats.)



38. Include words to
listen for in the
bulletin or children's
bulletin.



39. Encourage children to draw pictures of what they heard about in church. Then post their art for the community to see.



40. Find ways to connect families with young children to grandparents whose grandchildren live far away.

41. Include suggestions for family worship or devotional time in your worship folder, newsletter, or web site.



42. Ask families to be greeters so children can greet people attending worship.



43. Provide opportunities for young children to contribute to banners or other artwork that can be displayed in the church.

44. Show excitement for a families expecting a second child (or a third, or a fourth...) so they know *all* their children are eagerly anticipated in the community.



45. Train the leader of new member classes to emphasize children's importance and involvement.

46. Plan and register for a “shower” for your nursery to update toys and furnishings and to restock diapers and wipes.

47. Emphasize that sound and movement in children are okay! Children are present members and future leaders in the church.



48. Make photo books with pictures of your church's people, places, and things for children to look at during worship and other times.

49. Teach young children how to make the sign of the cross. Then model this sign when a worship leader says, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."



50. Smile at
children!