

## Partners in Nurturing Children

St. Giles loves the energy and joy of children in our midst! Children are always welcome to join us in worship, but there are several other age-appropriate opportunities available, also:

### ◆ Birth to Age Three

Our **Nursery** is staffed weekly during worship for infants and toddlers. Nursery care is located in the preschool building.

### ◆ Ages 3-5

**Extended Session** provides children the opportunity to experience age-appropriate nurture and education while parents are in worship. Children ages 3-5 are dismissed to the preschool building for Extended Session following the “Word for Children.” Children ages 6 and older will stay with their families for the remainder of worship.

### ◆ Ages 4-10

**Worship Activity Folders** are available in the Narthex prior to the service. These folders are maintained by the Worship Committee and contain age-appropriate activities for children. Please ask one of the ushers if you need help finding them.

- ◆ If you have to leave the service with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back in when you’re able. As Jesus said, “let the children come to me.” (Matt 19:14)



## Questions?

If you have questions or if you’re seeking additional resources, we would love to talk with you!

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Portions of this brochure are adapted, with permission, using resources from the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia; Incarnation Lutheran Church (Shoreview MN); NEXT Church Conference; *Parenting in the Pew* by Castleman and Graham; and the *Worshiping with Children* Blog.

# Worship is a time for family!

All ages are welcome and encouraged to participate in the life of St. Giles!

Then Jesus took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”  
*Mark 9:36-37 (NRSV)*



**St. Giles  
Presbyterian  
Church**

## Why We Welcome Children

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In the sacrament of baptism, parents and families join with the whole congregation to promise (with God's help) to nurture the faith of children. Part of this promise is to include children in our services of worship, and not just for a few minutes! Children are welcomed in worship at St. Giles because they are part of the family, and because being with family is a big part of how we learn to *be* family. Children learn about worship and how to participate by experience and by how they are welcomed into the community by those gathered with them.

## Worship is...

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Worship is a response of celebration to God's mighty acts through the history of God's people, the beauty of creation, and particularly through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we gather in worship we come together to encounter Christ and to watch together for God's presence in our lives. When we worship God, we are reminded that we belong to God's love.

## How Children Learn to Worship

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Children learn to worship by seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling the sanctuary as a place of welcome and worship; by watching how the adults in their lives participate in worship; and by sharing prayers, communion, and even worship leadership alongside adults. In other words, children learn to worship by being taught that they have an important place in the community of the church!

## Tips for Parents & Families

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Worshipping with children can be a truly joyful (and sometimes frustrating!) experience for parents. Here are some suggestions for worship to be meaningful for the whole family:

- ◆ Relax! God put the wiggle in children, so don't feel as if you need to suppress it in God's house. *All are welcome!*
- ◆ Sit near the front of the sanctuary where your little ones can more easily see and hear what's happening. You can always sit on the end of a row so you can make an easy exit if necessary.
- ◆ Make sure your child has a bulletin of their own. Help your child find and identify parts of the service. Encourage your child to underline words he or she can read.
- ◆ Children learn worship etiquette by participation. Feel free to whisper to children to teach, explaining the meaning of difficult words in music or liturgy. Worship *with* your child, guiding him/her through the service so they can feel what it's like to worship together.
- ◆ Sing the hymns, pray, and voice the responses. Children learn liturgical behavior from you! Allow your child to follow along in the bulletin and hymnal.
- ◆ After your child has learned three-digit numbers, allow them to be the "keeper of the hymnal" and turn to the next hymn.
- ◆ Talk about worship at home during the week (ex: "do you remember the story we heard in church?") This reinforces what they've heard and seen.

## Tips for the Congregation

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Remember the commitment we have as a congregation to the children in our midst. As a part of the service of baptism, we commit to helping each person grow in faith! Here are some suggestions for us all to keep in mind:

- ◆ Please remember that we are all children of God, loved by God. We expect children to act their age, which is to say we don't expect a 5 year old to act like a 25 year old. Let voices of all ages join together in praise to God!
- ◆ Express joy at having children here! Greet them before and after worship, not just their parents. Make children feel like an important part of the worship service. Children might not remember every word of a service, but they'll remember the experience of being a valued part of a faith community!
- ◆ Hand offering plates to children instead of over their heads.
- ◆ Invite a child you know to sit with you in worship on occasion.
- ◆ Understand when parents need to take younger children out of worship or to the nursery and then return to worship. Make them feel welcome when they return, not self-conscious.
- ◆ Compliment children (and their parents) when children have participated and listened attentively during the service.

