

Family Services Guide

How to approach a worship gathering with your child

As we enter a season as a church family where we will be having family services, we want to provide a guide for how to best include children in the worship experience, while providing practical tips for parents so you can worship and grow as well!

At Hope Church we believe that everyone is welcome to be part of God's family; this includes our children. The ministry of Hope Kids exists to help children understand this from an early age by creating a safe, fun, and Christ-centred environment for children to learn, grow, and be transformed by God's Word and who God is. We want every child to know that God loves them and God's people love them.

While it could be tempting to see children in the worship service as a distraction, we must remember the attitude of Jesus towards children. When the disciples saw them as a bother and sent them away, Jesus invited them close and said the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17).

Let's remember our Saviour and seek to reflect His humility and love.

Let's look at this season as an opportunity to be reminded we all come to God with a childlike faith.

Let's come together as a church family full of grace as we navigate this season of family worship services.

Parents, remember...

1. Your child is wanted in the service. God can speak to them too! It is good for them to see their parents and other church members worshipping God.
2. Setting your own realistic expectations may save yourself from some frustration. Children may need time to adjust to this new experience and that is okay. Helping them learn how to worship alongside you in the worship service is a long-term investment.
3. Your standing before God is not dependent on your child's behaviour. In Christ you are already righteous and blameless. There is no shame if your child is having a hard day.
4. When you commit to gathering with other believers even when it is hard, you are giving your child a priceless lesson and foundation, showing them Jesus is worth it. We gather as a church because God is worthy of our praise.

A helpful article:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/prioritize-worship-no-childcare/>

Tips & Best Practices

Preparation Before the Service:

- Review what to expect with your child: When will each activity come out? What will happen during the singing? during prayer? What is the order of service? Preparing your child beforehand and reviewing this each week will be a big help (especially ages 3 and up).
- Get the wiggles out before the service with gross motor activity. If your child has time to exert energy before the service, they may be more ready to have some still time.

*Make sure to bring the craft kit/activity for that week! It will correlate with the sermon! See more regarding this below.

During the Service:

- Invite your children to participate in the musical worship, saving the activities in the bag for the sermon. Let them sing and dance and make a joyful noise to the Lord!
- Consider rationing the activities in the bags provided, using one at a time. Only pull out a new activity when boredom sets in with the first activity.
- Consider starting with simpler activities, saving the more involved activities as you go along.
- Think about bringing a simple and quiet snack that your child likes. Snacks that are not messy and take a while to eat may work well!
- Allow your child to sit on the floor rather than a chair if you are comfortable with that.
- Let your child know their boundaries to aid in social distancing. We will have hula hoops, cones/pylons, or child gates to aid in setting visual boundaries if that is helpful for you.
- Sit in between siblings to minimize distracting each other.

Hope Kids Bags:

- When you arrive, find your child's bag with their name on it.
- Choose a seat that best suits your family. There will be chairs in rows and tables with chairs to choose from.
- Before the start of each month, you will have an opportunity to pick up a craft/activity kit that correlates with the sermons for each month. Bring the activity kit for that week to the service.
- The preacher will engage the children and help them know how to get started with that activity! (If you forget your activity supplies, no worries! We will have extras on hand.)
- You can take home the activity pages or crafts. Please return the clipboard and all "busy activities" to the bag and drop off the bag at the Hope Kids table.