

## ABC's of Worship with Children

**A**RRIVE in time to use the restroom, get water, and find a good place to sit – a place where your child can really watch what is happening. When possible, let children sit near the front or on the aisle so they can see. Don't feel you must resign yourself to the back pews!

**B**RING quiet toys or books for young children and gradually increase the amount of time you ask them to pay attention. Children can usually be expected to participate in most of a 60-minute service by 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. Remember it is important to actively participate in worship yourself. Children will see that what we do in church is important and will take their cues from you.

**C**REATE some family rituals about church. Spend some time "playing church" at home, practicing periods of silence, singing service music, etc. Consider using the Lord's Prayer at home before meals or bedtime.

**D**ECIDE on a family signal to let children know when to settle down. Go over the service with your child or softly whisper hints about what happens next. Children like to be ready, so help them mark pages.

**E**XPRESS joy at having children here! During the Peace, welcome any children near you. Include them in conversation before or after the service and try to send an occasional smile their way. Children might not remember every word of a service, but they'll retain the experience of being a valued part of a faith community!

**F**EEL FREE to leave the service at any time if your child is crying or restless... but also know you can come back in at any time! Taking a break in the back of the church is often a good alternative to leaving the service completely. Times that are particularly easy to move with a child might be during a hymn, during the Peace or when we stand to say the Nicene Creed.

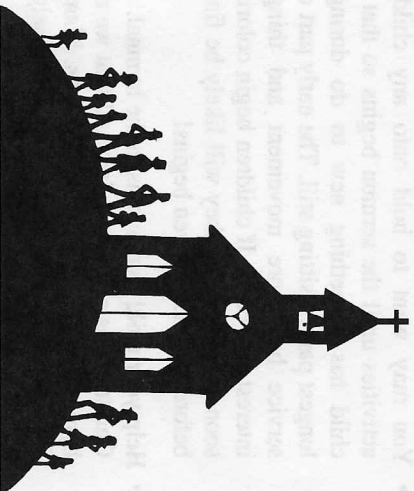
**G**IVE your child a chance to explore the church with you after the service is over. Although there is a holy mystery surrounding the altar, familiarity with the physical setting may make your child more at ease. You can also ask a priest to give you a tour of the church.

*"Then Jesus took a child and had him stand in front of them.*

*He put his arms around the child and said: "Whoever*

*welcomes in my name one of these children, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not only me, but also the One who sent me."*

*Mark 9:36-37*



301 E 8th Street, Austin, TX 78701, (512) 610-3500

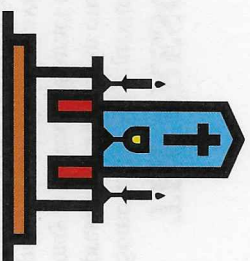
## ST. DAVID'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*"The ABC's of Worship" were adapted from materials by St. Columba's Episcopal Church (Washington, DC)*

*Adaptations and additional material written by*

*Tracey E. Herzer©2004*

## WELCOMING CHILDREN IN OUR CHURCH



Adults sometimes wonder why little children are brought to church... but bringing children into church is a little like inviting them to eat with us at the dinner table. Even when children's manners are far from polished, it is our hope that, given time and exposure, they will eventually become comfortable participating in our rituals in their own meaningful ways. In the meantime, children are still an integral part of our church family and so they belong here with us.

Children giggle, poke, squirm and swing their legs simply because they are children. But they can also learn to sing, pray and listen as they are able. They absorb so much more than we can imagine! This brochure is written for all adults in hopes that we will learn to welcome, accept and value the presence of children, even if it is sometimes manifested by some restlessness during worship!

**As children worship along with us, they are also learning:**

- ❖ It is important to come together with other believers as part of their faith heritage.
- ❖ They are part of God's family and therefore belong and are most welcome in God's house.
- ❖ The sights, sounds and feel of worship are good to experience, even when we don't understand everything.
- ❖ Something is expected of them in this holy place and they are invited to respond with us in song, prayer and in offering their gifts.