

Children as Active Participants in the Worshipping Community

<https://rowsofsharon.com/resource-recommendations/children-and-worship/>

Including children in the worshipping community is grounded in our Baptism - we are all full members of the Body of Christ in the Church. Besides their presence, children have much to offer in their participation and contributions to our liturgy. Whether participating in the congregation, in ministerial roles or as contributors to the writing of liturgy, children's voices and presence completes the whole family of God in worship.

Children can minister in many ways, including:

- ▶ Singing in a choir
- ▶ Serving as an usher or greeter
- ▶ Serving as an acolyte
- ▶ Serving as an oblationer (bringing forth the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine)
- ▶ Serving as a lector; reading a lesson or prayers
- ▶ Participating in presentations such as chancel dramas or pageants
- ▶ Composing parts of the liturgy, including various prayers

Steps Toward Writing a Liturgy

Step 1: Divide up roles for writing and leading

Divide into as many groups as you would like (according to grade, age level, interest) and have each group be responsible for one of the following:

- ▶ Propers (lessons) for the Day: The Collect, Old & New Testament readings, Psalm, Gospel)
- ▶ Prayers of the People
- ▶ Sermon / homily
- ▶ Eucharistic Prayer
- ▶ Hymns and music

Step 2: Study the scripture readings

Once lessons have been chosen (which may already be set according to the lectionary readings), each group should have these to refer to in designing their part of the liturgy. Each group should do some bible study as to what particular lesson should be focused on, or a theme that they wish the entire liturgy to embrace. This means having groups come to a consensus so that all are working on the same idea.

Step 3: Break into writing groups

- ▶ *Propers Group* – Determine how the lessons will be presented. Study the scripture to understand why it was written – who the audience was, what it's context was, how it connects to us today. Define words. Practice pronunciation. Determine how each lesson will be presented. Will it be read, presented dramatically, using art?
- ▶ *Prayers of the People Group* – brainstorm and write – use lots of newsprint and edit frequently. Connect the prayers with the readings.

- ▶ *Sermon / Homily Group* – can take the form of a skit, readers' theatre, personal testimonies / thoughts & reflections on the Gospel or other lessons. This takes rehearsal and many weeks of preparation, especially if the group is going to write its own as opposed to using a pre-written drama. Doing a bible study on each of the readings, or one in particular is essential as a first step. How does the text speak to them personally? Does it remind them of something that happened to them in their life? How is God speaking to us today in the reading?
- ▶ *Eucharistic Prayer Group* – this too is a series of brainstorming of children's responses using lots of newsprint. Questions to ask to get kids thinking are:
 - Who is God?
 - What are you thankful for?
 - What has God done for us and the world?
 - Why are we here?
 - What do we do in church?
 - What are we remembering when we celebrate Eucharist?
 - What did Jesus do and say at the Last Supper?
 - What do we want to remember?
 - What do we want for the future?
 - How can we ask the spirit of God to be present with us?
 - Why are we doing this?
- ▶ *Hymn Group* – Finds songs that are appropriate and compliment the lessons being read. Check out all the hymnals:
 - *The Hymnal 1982*
 - *Lift Every Voice and Sing*
 - *Wonder, Love and Praise*
 - *Voices Found*
 - *My Heart Sings Out*

Step 4: Put it all together

Put all the pieces together and make sure they each compliment each other. Determine roles and who will be leading each part. Practice, practice, practice! If possible, do a “rehearsal” or run-through to make sure the space is used as you envision, especially if drama or technology, such as power point is going to be used.

Templates for Writing Prayers

Writing a Collect

- ▶ Address - opening salutation to God
- ▶ Ascription - naming God; ascribing to God certain qualities (this can be decided upon when studying the biblical texts of the day)
- ▶ Request - asking for something that we would like God to do
- ▶ Consequence - what we expect will be the result of our request (Please do this, so that . . .)
- ▶ Doxology - a closing that reminds us of our relationship to God (a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity)

Example: God, You are We hope So that In Jesus' name. Amen.

Writing a Eucharistic prayer

Must have the following prayers included:

- ▶ Praise to God for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ
- ▶ Words of institution (words to God) of the Lord's Supper (based on I Corinthians 11:23-26)
- ▶ Words of memorial (what we are remembering)
- ▶ Invocation of the Holy Spirit (asking to be present in the bread & wine = body & blood) asking the Holy Spirit to be present in the Sacrament and the people's lives as they serve the Lord (this tends to be the most difficult part for children - they don't seem to think it is necessary and have trouble understanding the concept - a doctrine the Church has been struggling with for ages!)
- ▶ Concluding doxology

Writing Prayers of the People

Brainstorm what you wish to pray for - use the following categories to help organize thoughts:

- ▶ The Universal Church, its members and mission
- ▶ The nation and those in authority
- ▶ The world
- ▶ The local community
- ▶ The departed
- ▶ Those who suffer or are in trouble
- ▶ Our own needs

Compose short prayers and/or sentences combining thoughts from that what was brainstormed.

Decide how the prayers will be presented:

- ▶ All said by one person
- ▶ Each person taking a line
- ▶ How the congregation will respond: (ie: Lord, have mercy or by a different response to each prayer)

Resources for writing liturgy:

Enriching Our Worship: Supplemental Liturgical Materials

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer

- ▶ p. 400-409 - An Order for Celebrating the Holy Eucharist
- ▶ p. 383 - Rubrics (instructions) for writing Prayers of the People
- ▶ p. 107 - Of the Eucharistic Liturgy

As We Gather to Pray: An Episcopal Guide to Worship edited by Marilyn L. Haskell and Clayton L. Morris (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1996) p. 66-67

The Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education, 3rd edition by Sharon Ely Pearson & Robyn Szoke (New York: Church Publishing – Summer 2009) - helpful in finding themes and learning the lectionary / preparing sermons

Resources for including children:

Bailey, Julia R. Huttar and Ernesto Medina, co-editors. *Awake My Soul: A Liturgical Resource for use with Children and Adults* (New York: The Office of Children's Ministries, Episcopal Church Center 2000.) https://episcopalchurch.org/files/MYP_Awake_My_Soul%281%29.pdf

Brown, Carolyn C. *Forbid Them Not: Involving Children in Sunday Worship* by. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.) (For years A, B, C) <http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com>

Caldwell, Elizabeth F. *Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children* Cleveland: United Church Press, 2000.

Castleman, Robbie. *Parenting in the Pew: Guiding Your Children Into the Joy of Worship* (InterVarsity Press, 1993)

Fairless, Caroline. *Children at Worship: Congregations in Bloom* (New York: Church Publishing, 2001) - creative, out-of-the-box ideas and examples for fully integrating all ages in worship.

Love, Jean Floyd, Mickey Meyers and Silvia Washer *Get Ready! Get Set! Worship!* (Geneva Press, 1999)

Pritchard, Gretchen Wolff. *Offering the Gospel to Children*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992.

Sandell, Elizabeth J. *Including Children in Worship: A Planning Guide for Congregations* (Augsburg Fortress, 1991)

Resources for children:

What We Do in Church / What We Do in Advent / What We Do in Lent all by Anne Kitch (Church Publishing)

Alleluia! Amen. and *New Life* by Gretchen Wolff Pritchard

Holy Communion for Children from Forward Movement

Let Us Pray by Jenny Turrell (Church Publishing)

Today is a Baptism Day by Anna Ostenso Moore (Church Publishing)

We Gather at This Table by Anna Ostenso Moore (Church Publishing)

Children's Worship Bulletins: <https://buildfaith.org/the-childrens-bulletin/> and

- Children's Worship Bulletins: <http://www.childrensbulletins.com/tour/info.aspx>
- Kids Word <http://www.kidsword.com/bulletins.html>
- Gospel Grams: <https://www.sermonsuite.com/gospel-grams-1>
<https://www.sermonsuite.com/gospel-grams-2>
- The Sunday Paper and Sunday Paper Junior <http://www.the-sunday-paper.com/index.html>
- Peace Papers: <https://ipj-ppj.org/shop/churches-religious-education/peace-papers-packet-detail>
- An Illustrated Children's Ministry https://store.illustratedministry.com/collections/worship-resources?sort_by=created-descending