



# Christ Church

## Our welcome to children



Children are never too young to come to church and are very welcome here.

We know that bringing children to church, especially babies and toddlers, can be challenging. Here is some information which we hope will make being here a little easier. This includes practical things and a little about our worship.

We have a children's corner, to the rear of the church on the left-hand side as you enter. This is equipped with toys, books and colouring materials including 'pew bags' with activities to take back to your seat if you prefer.

### **Activities for children**

Most weeks there are one or two Junior Church sessions aimed at children from 3yrs up to 11yrs, however children of any age are welcome, including visitors. Groups are run in the choir vestry and children and leaders leave after the Collect and re-join the service during the Peace (as indicated in your order of service booklet).

If you would like to remain in the session with your child you are welcome to do so.

When they return to the service, the children may choose to come to the front to tell the adults a little about what they have done.

### **Where to sit?**

Sit where you feel comfortable. Some families with young children like to sit nearer the front, so they can see the action of the service, but others feel happier at the back, or in the children's corner. Even if they are occupied with crayons or their favourite book, children absorb the atmosphere of worship.

### **Toilets and baby changing**

The entrance to the toilets is to your left in the porch (as you exit through the main glass doors at the back). The larger cubicle has a changing table, toilet seat and step.

### **Feeding your baby**

You are welcome to feed your baby in church. If the pews aren't comfortable for breast or bottle feeding, there are chairs at the back or bean bags in the children's corner.

### **Standing, sitting, moving**

You know how best to engage with your child during a service. The only time another adult would intervene would be to prevent an injury.

If your child is comfortable, remain seated, even if others are standing. If you want to walk around to settle your baby or to explore the building with your child, please do. Come nearer to the front if there are things they want to see.

You may feel happy keeping a watchful eye on your child from a short distance away, that's fine too.

### **God's whisper in special places**

There are a couple of areas of the church we aim to keep separate and special, places where we might hear God's whisper. These are behind the rail in the small side chapel (at the front on the left-hand side as you face forwards) and area around the main altar where the priest stands at Holy Communion. If your child does explore here though, please don't worry, just gently let them know they are places we try and keep special. See if they would like to light a candle or say a prayer in the side chapel. There are some children's prayer books near the chapel which you could look at together.

### **Taking part in worship**

Children learn by watching and doing, you may wish to encourage your child to take part by copying you – holding a book or standing beside you to join in when you are singing, kneeling, or sitting quietly for prayer.

Children also become familiar with the pattern of the regular service: the welcome, the 'saying sorry' prayer, the Gloria and so on. They begin to learn the parts of the service which are loud and others which are quieter. Encourage them to follow what is going on, but don't worry if they are not always interested. Adults don't always pay attention for the whole service either! During communion you are welcome bring your child with you to receive a blessing, or to take communion if this is what they do in their own church.

### **At the end of the service**

After worship, there is a chance for people to catch up over coffee and biscuits. Squash is available for children by the kitchen hatch. Some of us (young and old)

are not always steady on their feet, so please take care moving around when there are lots of adults with cups of hot coffee.

### **If things get too much**

A service can be a long time for a baby or young child. Help yourselves to our toys, books, and colouring materials from the children's corner. If you want to give your child a drink or snack, that's fine too. Someone will be happy to get you a drink from the kitchen if needed.

If at any point you'd feel more comfortable taking your child out of the main service, of course you are free to do so. You can use the porch or the choir vestry as a separate space to gather your thoughts. But please come back when you are ready, Jesus said: 'let the children come to me'.

We are not here to judge one another but to support, celebrate, encourage, and pray for one another, whoever we are: young, old, tired, full of energy, confident, unsure, leading worship or coming to church for the first time. Please feel at home here.

*God our creator, we thank you for the gift of children, and we pray for those who nurture them. May we serve them so that through our welcome they may come to know your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

