ABC’s for Parents and Friends of Children

Arrive in time to find a good place to sit.

Sitting near the front will provide younger children with a better view of the Chancel.

Bring colored pencils or crayons and paper along with a favorite book or children’s Bible.

These tools can be used for quiet coloring or reading during times when the worship activity is beyond their understanding.

Clue children in as to what will happen next in worship.

Children who can read will want to go over responses and printed prayers, and find hymns in the hymnbook. They also like to look up the scripture and readings for the day. They like to be prepared.

Discuss worship at home.

This will give children time to ask questions and receive answers concerning worship. It will also help prepare them for any special events or services of worship (i.e., the Lord’s Supper, Baptism, Youth Day or special dedications).

Express your joy in having children in worship.

During the Greeting be sure to welcome the children near you. Include them in your conversations before and after worship to let them know they belong.

Free yourself from worry about children’s behavior.

Be open to receiving their ministry to you.

Then, Now—Always
Jesus is Lord!

This folder is designed to aid parents and members of our congregation in making room for children at worship.

The Reformed Church in America thanks the Children’s Committee of Central Reformed Church for developing this brochure and for making it available for use throughout the Church. Permission is granted to reproduce this brochure for use in the congregations of the Reformed Church in America.
Welcome to Worship

Children are very much a part of our worshiping community. Their presence here is based on the Biblical tradition and Reformed conviction that children are members of the covenant community.

Worship is one of the basic ways people learn what it means to be Christian. Children learn worship by worshiping with the congregation Sunday after Sunday.

Children gain the following from worshiping with the community of faith:

- They learn that they belong to Christ and are welcome to His church.
- They come to know, through repetition, the Lord's Prayer, the Doxology, the Gloria Patri, and other frequently used responses.
- They build memories of shared experiences of Christian community.
- They are enriched by the beauty of music and art as creative expressions of human praise to God.
- They hear stories from the Bible read and interpreted, and begin to experience worship as one place where God may speak to them.
- They witness the drama of Baptism and the Lord's Supper—both visible signs of God's grace.
- They discover that they are valued as persons by God and by God's people.

The Preschool Child

Parents may wonder at the wisdom of including preschool children in worship. They can be restless, distracting to those around them, and even embarrassing to their parents by their behavior.

The preschool child comes to worship with:

- a rather limited attention span,
- seemingly endless energy, and
- a growing curiosity about everything.

While these ingredients can combine to test a parent's patience, there are several things parents can do to make the preschooler's experience (and their own) more relaxed and enjoyable:

- Sit near the front where the child can have a clear view of the Chancel.
- Prepare the child for the various parts of the service of worship, explaining special events ahead of time and answering questions that need an answer "right now" in a quiet whisper.
- Encourage the child to use the children's worship activity bulletin (if available), inviting them to draw or color in these bulletins.
- Allow the child to bring a favorite stuffed animal, colored pencils or crayons along, or allow the child to check out a book from the Media Center before the service.

A sensitivity to the preschooler's abilities and needs can help make worship a pleasant experience for everyone.

The Primary Child

The school-age child brings some new abilities to worship:

- a greater capacity for attentive listening,
- an increasing ability to read, and
- the ability to organize and memorize information.

Parents can help the primary child toward greater participation in worship as these capacities develop by:

- helping the child memorize the Lord's Prayer, Gloria Patri and the Doxology;
- reviewing the bulletin with the child to identify new or difficult words, previewing together those parts where the congregation responds by reading and speaking,
- inviting the child to follow the reading of the Scripture lesson in the pew Bible;
- encouraging the child to locate hymns in hymnbook, and going over the words;
- encouraging the child to listen to the sermon for stories, answers to questions, or important thoughts; and
- talking about the sermon after church and asking the child what he/she remembered best about the sermon.

For this age group, some parts of the regular worship bulletins will be more meaningful due to their newly acquired skill in reading.