

PARENT CONVERSATIONS

Ideas to Foster a Family-Friendly church

We tell parents that they are supposed to bring their children to church, but how do we support and encourage them in that endeavor? Here are some family-friendly ideas. They won't necessarily all work for your church but consider which ones may and adopt one or two in the new year.

—Nicole Balza

This message from Peace, Hartford, Wis., lets families know that children are welcome. Consider including a similar message on your website and in your bulletin.

Sometimes parents (and even churches) can think that church is not a place for children. At Peace, we're convinced that nothing could be further from the truth. We want children in church worshipping with their families and learning about Jesus' love. Why?

- Even from the earliest of ages, children are models of faith that all of us can learn from (Luke 18:16,17).
- Our worship format not only encourages families to be together but is ideally suited for active engagement and participation by all, including children.
- The sights and sounds of active children within our congregation are a great joy to us and evidence that God is blessing our future even now.

We realize that, especially at first, having children in church can be a challenge for parents. To help, we offer a parents' room, equipped with "practice pews" and a television with a live feed of the worship service.

Other ideas:

- Purchase children's activity bulletins from Northwestern Publishing House.
- Have activity bags available with crayons, coloring pages, puzzles, and quiet fidget toys.
- Recruit a "Grandparents Brigade" for an extra set of hands to help parents during church.
- Consider staffing your nursery so that parents can drop off fussy young ones on occasion.
- Preview something from next week's service (a hymn, portion of liturgy, etc.) in the bulletin so that families can familiarize themselves with it.
- A new book from Northwestern Publishing House titled *I Can Go to Church!* by Madeline Lindke and Dr. Rachel Youngblom helps guide children and those who are neurodiverse or have special needs through worship. Have some on hand as families enter church.

LEARN MORE > about products from Northwestern Publishing House at nph.net or by calling 800-662-6022.

I CAN GO TO CHURCH

I Can Go to Church! is an encouraging guide designed to help every child—especially those who are neurodiverse with shorter attention spans or special needs—experience worship in a way that feels safe; meaningful; and, most importantly, doable. This simply illustrated resource breaks down each part of the service using simple language and images, making the flow of worship clear and approachable for even the littlest learners.

One of the standout features is its three-hole-punched, fully rearrangeable design, allowing families and

churches to adapt the book to their own worship order. The sturdy rings, durable paper, and ten additional pages for hymns and prayers make it practical for real-life Sunday mornings.

The step-by-step prompts help kids know what they can do in each moment, while the communication board offers a way to share needs or emotions quietly. Perhaps the most Christ-like message woven throughout is: Your child may not make it through the entire service—and that is perfectly okay. Worship is lifelong learning, and small steps matter.

This book is for families with neurodivergent kids, children's ministry leaders, and any congregation wanting to make worship more accessible.

As a mom of a wonderfully complex neurodiverse kiddo, I can say wholeheartedly: Tools like this don't just help kids—they help parents breathe easier, celebrate progress, and see God's grace in every tiny victory!

Kaycee Welke, St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin



Price: \$9.99