

Guidelines for Leading Children's Time

The Children's Time is usually led by the preacher as these two elements of the liturgy are closely linked, however there is no 'hard & fast rule'.

These guidelines are provided to give shape to the leading of Children's Time when the role is taken on by a liturgist or another person. One of the most important things is to be yourself and enjoy spending time with the children (and the rest of the congregation).

1. This part of the service serves as an introduction to the theme of worship, therefore liaise with liturgist and preacher regarding this. In fact it is a significant teaching time for the whole congregation. Keep things simple – have one point in mind
2. We have some beautiful coloured cushions which are housed under the front pews. Invite the children to collect a cushion as they come to sit out the front and invite parents and other adults to join them. It is important to have some adults in the mix.
3. The format is usually up to you. You may like to read or tell a story, prepare a drama, teach a dance or a song. It is useful to have a strong visual focus. Children's Time is a great opportunity for engaging children in being creative through use of their bodies, their imaginations and their senses.
4. The principles of 'Godly Play' can be used during Children's Time. The goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of religious language, parable, silence and liturgical action to help them become more aware of the mystery of the presence of God in their lives. A response feature of "Godly Play" is to ask open-ended 'I wonder' questions rather than fill in the blank with a 'correct' answer
5. Be aware of the age of the children in your preparation. There are usually a number of pre-schoolers and young primary aged children in addition to a smaller number of older primary aged children. Try to use the children's names. They respond better if they feel known. If you do not know the children you might ask a member of the congregation or ministry team who is familiar with them to sit amongst them and help you with names.
6. You may like to consider asking children ahead of time to be involved with you in leading a prayer or doing something in the Children's Time.
7. If you are starting the Children's Time with a song it is often good to have the children stay with their parents first and then invite them out.
8. It is more usual to finish this time with a song before going out to Sunday Morning Program. Either make sure they can see the words on the screen OR have them move across to sit or stand facing the musicians so the children can see them. Children need to read the words from the screen or from a poster that you have prepared with the words of the song.
9. Please talk to the children in the same tone of voice you would speak to an adult, putting on a 'special' voice gives both the children and the adults listening a confusing message, that subverts the intention of this time.
10. Remember at all times the intelligent sensitivity of children. They know immediately if they are being patronised. When you are teaching them, ask yourself if this is a truth that you celebrate and want to hear and pass on. Don't just tell them what you think they should know. Tell them what we all need to know. They are the ones who often enable the adults to hear these important truths.

Resources available

- 100 Worship Activities for Children (located in the Tower room bookshelf)
- 5-minutes messages for Children (located in the Deaconess room bookshelf)
- www.sermons4kids.com
- <http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com.au>
- <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au> (general contemporary worship ideas including Children's talk)
- <http://spillbeans.org.uk>