

What is Children and Worship?

Children and Worship is a worship-education experience for children apart from the worshipping community that prepares them to worship with the worshipping community. Children and Worship utilizes a method of worship-education called Godly Play, a Montessori-related approach to experiential learning.

What is Godly Play?

Godly Play is a method of Christian education and spiritual direction for children four years old through Kindergarten. The goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of using religious language — parables, sacred stories, and liturgical action — to help them become more fully aware of the mystery of God's loving presence in their lives.

Godly Play assumes that children have some experience of the mystery of the presence of God in their lives but that they lack the language, the permission, and the understanding to express and enjoy that spiritual experience in our secular culture. In Godly Play, we enter into our parables, sacred stories, silence, and liturgy in order to discover God, ourselves, one another, and the world around us.



What makes Godly Play distinctive?

In Godly Play, we tell Bible stories to children to encourage them to enter into the stories and relate them to their personal experiences. Godly Play is concerned with the spiritual development of each child as an individual and with the behaviors of all people living together in Christian community.

Will my child enjoy Godly Play?

One of the goals of Godly Play is to create a safe space for children... a place where their ideas, opinions, and gifts are deeply respected. Because everything in the worship-education center is designed for children to use and enjoy, most children look forward to coming to Children and Worship.

How will I know if my child is learning anything?

The most important thing we teach in Children and Worship is how Christian people live and work together in community. Many parents whose children participate in this program find that their children will begin to retell the Bible stories — often in the car on the way home from church. Parents also report that their children “wonder” aloud at various times during the week about the meaning of the Bible stories they heard on Sunday.

“This is a very special place.

This is a special place to be with God, to hear the stories of God, to listen and to talk with God.”

So begins Children and Worship.

What kinds of projects will my child do in Children and Worship?

After the lesson, the teacher and children wonder together about the story. Then, each child chooses how to respond to the lesson with art or lesson materials.

We encourage children to take time on their projects.

What are on the shelves in the classroom?

These objects are the lesson materials that make the images of religious language come alive. In Children and Worship, the teacher (storyteller) sits in the circle with the children on the floor, literally surrounded by our religious language system. The materials help us tell the story of the day and are placed in the middle of the circle, symbolizing the fact that God is present and accessible to all, children and adults alike. Working in the circle also helps us emphasize many aspects of being together in a Christian community.





Tips for Parents

- Children and Worship is held each Sunday at 10:10 am following their choir time. Please help your children be on time! They won't want to miss a minute!
- The Children and Worship circle is built slowly and lovingly, to welcome each child, one at a time. When children arrive, they wait outside the door while the greeter helps them get ready to join the circle.
- Please say your goodbyes at the door and know that the leaders are ready to make the next 40 minutes a safe and welcoming time for each child.
- When you pick up your child, keep in mind that young children will not always be able to tell you what they learned because what they learned was how to learn about the powerful language of the Christian people.
- Children may not always be able to show you a physical product for their work that day because some of what they've learned cannot be put into words, even by adults.
- Please don't enter the Children and Worship room during class because we want the room to be a special place for the community of children. Even the teachers keep their profiles low during a session.
- We would be happy to welcome you on a visit to Children and Worship outside of session time.

What happens during Children and Worship?

- Children are invited into a peaceful room where adults model reflective behavior and where lessons can be explored.
- Religious stories or parables are shared with the children using three-dimensional materials that invite them into the stories and connect them to their personal experience.
- Open-ended "I wonder" questions and ample response time give the children the chance to consider their own questions and reflect on the story from their own perspective.
- Children choose from a range of options to respond to the story. After clean up time, they enjoy a "feast" (snack and juice).
- Each class parallels the experience of worship, including the Lord's Supper. Each session includes a period of Preparation (meeting and greeting), the Ministry of the Word (listening and responding to a Bible story), Communion (sharing food and drink), and a Blessing and Dismissal.

This is play. It is Godly.
It is child and adult,
meeting God together.

Contact us to arrange a visit or to ask any questions you might have about the program.

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Welcome to

Children
and
Worship



at **wellshire** church
Presbyterian Church (USA)



A Parent Guide to

