

Dear Parents,

At Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church Kindergarten through First Graders begin the process of staying in the sanctuary for the sermon. To make this transition easier we have a once a month Worship Class designed especially for them that meets once a month on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month. They will learn about the songs, prayers, liturgy and sacraments of our worship service in this class. They also will learn strategies for listening and keeping up with the order of worship using their bulletins. Children older than 1<sup>st</sup> grade are welcome to come especially if they are new or need more time transitioning.

As children grow in their worship maturity, we continue building on these skills introduced with a once a month Worship Play for children 6-12 that meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month. Now that your child is attending worship, they will begin growing as sermon listeners.

\*Listening to one person speak for about 15 minutes without interruptions is not something children often do in today's world. That does not mean they cannot do it. The truth is that most people tune in and out from sermons. They often listen until they hear something that sends them off on a "important to them" rabbit track, then return when they have run that course or when something breaks through their thoughts calling them back to the sermon. Children do the same thing. The trick is not to expect them to hear the whole sermon or to insist to them that they should listen to the whole thing. Instead we can teach them how to tune in and out and to think about what the preacher says. Here are some strategies:

**Your attitude is critical.** Repeatedly let your child know that worship and the sermon are important to you and that you are excited that he/she is now old enough to share it with you. Whenever possible talk more about the content of the sermon than about worship behavior and focus on what a child did hear rather than what was missed.

**Avoid giving a child an electronic device, book or other diversion** that clearly says "the sermon is not for you. You are stuck here, but nice parent that I am, I'll provide an escape hatch." For younger children who can only attend to a few minutes of the sermon we have provided bulletins with games and activities related to the sermons message and a book cart of extra paper to draw what they see or feel or hear in worship and children's Bibles and Bible storybooks to supplement the bulletin activities.

Point out the preacher's prayer time at the beginning of the sermon is the invitation that your job **as sermon listeners is to think in God's presence**, i.e. sermon listening is active rather than passive.

To encourage thinking in God's presence with the preacher, look for "Sermon Take Aways" and "Windows."

A **Sermon Take Away** is something the preacher said that you think is important and want to remember. It may be a new idea or an idea that speaks to you right now. It may even be a joke or funny story. You might encourage your child to record their sermon take away's on the blank paper or children's bulletins so you both can talk about it later.

A **Window** is something the preacher says that makes you think about something important that is going on in your life and that you need to think about with God. It is an opportunity to crawl out an imaginary window, think what you need to think, then crawl back in when you are done.

Have a **written conversation** about the sermon with your child during the sermon. Write notes or draw pictures about what you hear and think in the margins of the bulletin or in a worship journal you bring to worship every week.

**Talk about the sermon in the car on the way home.** Share some of your “sermon take aways” and “windows.” Ask your children about theirs. When this happens every week, over time children learn to be ready with at least one contribution to the conversation. \*\*

Children are an important part of this congregation. Your child is welcome, especially at this big step toward fuller participation in worship. Please let any of the church staff here at Woodlands Community Presbyterian know if there is a way we can help make it a richer, fuller step.

Blessings,  
Susan Duncan, Dr. Children’s Ministry,  
Rev. Charlie Hornes, Rev. Laura Grice and Rev. David Jones, Pastors

Information between the \* and \*\* is taken with permission from Carolyn Brown’s Blog spot, *Worshiping with Children* [www.worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com](http://www.worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com) This is a resource recommended and used by the WCPC staff for parents looking for materials on spiritual education for their families.