

A Template for the Philosophy of Children in Worship

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. – Psalm 145:3-4

As the visible body of believers, the church is called to gather in worship, giving glory to God and receiving His grace through the ordinary means He has provided.

What the Church Is

- The visible church comprises all who profess faith in the true religion and their children (Acts 2:39, WCF 25.2).
- Children of a believing parent(s) are members of the covenant community, based not on their own beliefs but on the beliefs of their parents (WCF 28, BCO 6-1).

What Worship Is

- Worship is giving glory to the triune God (Colossians 3:15–17, WCF 21, BOC 47-3).
- Corporate public worship is the gathered assembly of believers and covenant children who together participate in the Lord's Day worship, marking the visible church (BCO 47–7).
- The Word, sacraments, and prayer are ordinary means whereby Christ communicates the benefits of redemption (WSC 88).
- Through public worship on the Lord's Day, Christians learn to serve God throughout the week (BCO 47–3).

The active participation of children in corporate worship benefits all visible church members and the watching world.

Benefits To the Children Themselves

- Children are members of the covenantal community and are deeply loved by their Creator and Redeemer (WCF 25).
- Worshiping amid the body of believers solidifies their purpose and identity (WSC 1, Heidelberg Catechism 1).
- Children learn obedience to God through worship, even before fully understanding all the elements (BCO 47–3).

Benefits To the Body of Believers

- We are reminded that we are called to “become like children,” free to delight in and depend on our heavenly Father (Matthew 18:3).
- The presence of children in corporate worship reminds us that God's promises are generational. He has been faithful to the generations before us; He is faithful to us now, and He will be faithful to the next generation (Genesis 17:7, Acts 2:39).
- Children illustrate how the body of Christ is comprised of many different members (1 Corinthians 12:12–27).

Benefits For the Watching World

- The dignity and inclusion extended to children show how God confounds the mighty and the wise to reveal His greatness through the powerless, the weak, and those our culture often deems insignificant (1 Corinthians 1:26–31).
- Incorporating children of all abilities into corporate worship provides a visible representation of our unity in Christ and dependence on Him (John 15:4–5).

The corporate worship service reflects God's story of redemption. We aim to involve worshipers of all abilities in this narrative.

This is a lofty goal, and the work to achieve it is an opportunity for the congregation to use the gifts God has given them for the edification of the body and the glory of God.

With Regards to the Planning of Worship, We Will . . .

- Encourage all to remember that on the Lord's Day, God gives His grace to His church through corporate worship and provides the body of Christ the spiritual nurture it needs to live daily (BCO 47-3, WCF 25.3).
- Ensure that all ages are present whenever possible and invited to participate with the body (BCO 47-7).
- Train worship leaders and pastors with an understanding of the stages of a child's cognitive and emotional development so that they can wisely select visuals, sermon illustrations, examples, songs, and more that are meaningful to children as well as to adults.
- Intentionally include children in the corporate worship service, helping them learn through experience and practice.
- Deliberately instruct children in the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments so that they grow in an understanding of their purpose and identity as covenantal members of the visible church (Romans 14:7-8).

To Support Parents, We Will . . .

- Affirm that parents are the primary caregivers in raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the church is responsible for assisting them (Deuteronomy 6:4-8, BCO 56).
- Encourage and equip parents as they train children to be active worshipers during the corporate worship service.
- Provide resources and teaching to help parents and congregants prepare for and reflect on the corporate worship service and its application to their lives throughout the week (WCF 21.8).
- Promote opportunities to build intergenerational relationships outside of the corporate worship service.

Conclusion

We worship a promise-keeping God who, through His Son Jesus Christ, has brought all of God's people into a covenant relationship with Himself. The weight and beauty of this truth are seen when the local body of believers gathers in weekly corporate worship. With one voice, we sing our praises to God; as one body, we hear the truth of His Word and are shaped. Creating opportunities for children to become active worshipers in the corporate worship service reminds us that God's promises will continue to the next generation (Psalm 78:4-7). It unites us as people who value all the members of the body of Christ and recognize our complete dependence on Him.