

An open letter to the parents who bring their children to church on Sundays from the congregation of Grace Church *(by Jodie Webb Johnson)*

We know parenting is tiring, especially on Sundays. We remember the days of trying to get a family to church. Finding clean church clothes. That fit everyone (haha). Trying to just get the children ready even if it means your own hair is not dry. Slinking into church after the priest processed down the aisle, hopefully during the collect but maybe the Psalm. Baby on your hip, toddlers in tow, balancing a diaper bag on your shoulder. Looking for a space for 5 people. You just have to slide past 4 other people to get a spot in the middle of the row on either side of the donkey (new word -that wooden piece in the middle of the row is a donkey).

Digging through your bag to find anything to entertain your child because you forgot to get one of the little bags. Shushing your child when they speak in a what a toddler thinks is a "whisper" telling you that the communion wafer was a delicious cookie. Is everyone looking at you? We may not be trying to make you uncomfortable, but it can feel that way. Do you leave church thinking "Did I hear a thing that was said? Was it even worth all the trouble?"

The answer is a resounding yes. Your children fill our church with joyful noise. They remind us that we worship as a community where all are welcome. Your children are learning how we worship before they know what worship is. They don't need to wait until they can pray or worship a certain way to join us. They are wonderful just the way they are. It heartens our congregation to see and hear young people clamoring up for the children's sermon. You give us hope that these pews won't be empty in 10 years when your kids can (finally) sit quietly during church. Or in 25 years when they return with children of their own.

So, thank you for bringing your children to worship with us. Your family's exuberance and noisy commotion aren't a bother. Your family is an essential part of our community that is the Body of Christ.