

# Sanctuary Worship Orientation For Adults and Children

A Workshop for Parents (approximately 2 hours)

**Purpose:** To help parents and other care givers nurture young children as they come to sanctuary worship.

**Objectives:**

- Make sure that adults know what children have been experiencing in Children Worship & Wonder.
- Discuss the theological meaning of the different parts of a worship service.
- Identify ways that children can participate in worship leadership.
- Identify mentors who have been trained to help children as they enter into sanctuary worship.
- Detail the things mentors will do to help orient children to sanctuary worship.

**Welcome and Opening Prayer**

**Introduce Workshop Objectives** (above)

**Develop the Objectives**

- I. Help participants understand Children Worship & Wonder
  - a. Have everyone gather in the sanctuary and tell the story “The Light” from *Young Children and Worship* pg. 72, using the adaptations for Disciples congregations.
  - b. Lead a wondering time (Be sure to ask adults to respond out of their own experiences and not try to figure out how children might respond).
  - c. Debriefing – allow time for questions and discussion of story and other aspects of Children Worship & Wonder.
- II. Discuss the theological meaning of different parts of a worship service.
  - a. Have copies of several weekly worship bulletins for each participant.
  - b. Go through the different aspects of worship and discuss. You will find pages 17 – 21 of *Young Children and Worship* quite helpful in leading this discussion.

- III. Have a list of church members (who have agreed ahead of time and who have been trained to help children as they begin to participate in sanctuary worship). Ask parents/care givers to identify and contact mentors for their children.
- IV. Discuss ways children can participate in worship leadership. The on-line document, "Worshiping with All Ages of God's Children," and "Making Room for Children," a brochure for parents bringing children to worship, may be helpful to this discussion.
- V. Discuss ways in which mentors will offer support to parents in orienting children to sanctuary worship such as:
  - a. Making contact with children before the celebration date and meeting with them on the day of the celebration to make sure they are ready to carry their light into the sanctuary worship.
  - b. Sitting with parents and children during worship and quietly answering any questions.
  - c. Spending time with children after worship, answering questions and seeing if they have discovered ways that they would like to participate in worship leadership.
  - d. Making the appropriate contacts and arranging for children to participate in worship leadership.
  - e. Continuing to have contact with parents and children and offering needed support.

**Wrap-Up:**

- Have a table of resources, if you have them to offer the participants.
- Answer questions.
- Give out a copy of "A Service of Welcome."
- Have a closing prayer.
- Answer questions.

# Sanctuary Worship Orientation For Adults and Children

A Workshop for Children (approximately 2 hours)

**Purpose:** To introduce children to sanctuary worship.

**Objectives:**

- Provide a safe, comfortable place for children to:
  1. Meet mentors who will help them get ready to participate in sanctuary worship.
  2. Discuss their feelings about leaving Children Worship & Wonder.
  3. Become familiar with the order of sanctuary worship and discuss the differences between Children Worship & Wonder and sanctuary worship.
- Tour the sanctuary, including places of prayer and preparation.
- Review and practice the celebration of their first sanctuary worship when they will carry their light into the sanctuary.

**Welcome/Introductions**

*Prayer: We are so thankful for each person gathered here today. God's loving presence is always with you. Being part of a congregation gives all of us opportunities to share our light with one another and with those beyond our church doors. Amen.*

**Introduce the Orientation Objectives:**

*Say to the children: This is a special time for you to meet the adults who will help you get ready for sanctuary worship. During this special time you can talk about how you feel about leaving Children Worship & Wonder and going to sanctuary worship. Together we will talk about the things in sanctuary worship that are like Children Worship & Wonder and the things that are different. We will tour the sanctuary, the place where communion is prepared, the choir room, and the place where the minister and worship leaders (lay leaders, elders, deacons and choir members) meet for prayer before worship. And each of you will get to practice carrying your light into the sanctuary.*

- I Encourage the sharing of feelings about leaving Children Worship & Wonder and going to sanctuary worship by asking them to tell their mentors about children's worship. You might ask some wondering questions, such as:
  - a. I wonder what you liked the best about Children Worship & Wonder? Or, I wonder what you will miss most about Children Worship & Wonder?
  - b. I wonder what you already know about sanctuary worship and what you are curious about?
  - c. I wonder what you are looking forward to in sanctuary worship?
- II. Introduce the order of sanctuary worship.
  - a. Ask the children why they think people come to church. Along with their answers, you might add the following comments from page 24 of Michael Morwood's book, *Children Praying a New Story*:
 

*We go to church to hear about God and how Jesus taught people to let God's loving presence shine in their lives through their good deeds. We go to be thankful for the good things we have in life – like you, and daddy, mommy, and all our family and friends. And we also go to show that we want to live the way Jesus taught people to live. If all people lived lovingly it would be a better world.*
  - b. Give out worship bulletins to each child and mentor.
  - c. Go through each part of the service and talk together about the similarities to parts of Children Worship & Wonder. Pages 15 – 21 of the book, *Young Children and Worship*, will be helpful to you in leading this discussion (don't forget to add the offering to this information).
  - d. Tour the sanctuary. Let them look, touch and ask questions about this special place where people come to talk to God, to listen to God, and to hear the stories of God.
  - e. Take them to the other places where people prepare for leading worship, such as the choir room, the place where communion is prepared, and the place where leaders gather for prayer before worship.
- III. Practice the First Sunday Ceremony (see below, "A Service of Transition and Welcome").

**Wrap-Up:**

- Answer any additional questions
- End with prayer.

*Prayer: May the presence of the Spirit of Love that is in each of you be nurtured and constantly affirmed by your family, your friends and by this church community. Amen.*

**A Service of Welcome**  
**For**  
**Graduates of Children Worship & Wonder**

Perhaps your children have been through an orientation to introduce them to sanctuary worship. Perhaps they have participated in a series of transitional worship services. Whatever you have done to help prepare Children Worship & Wonder graduates for sanctuary worship, it is recommend that this “Service of Welcome” take place the first Sunday that they are scheduled to attend sanctuary worship.

**Supplies:**

1. Christ candle, matches, candle snuffer;
2. Candle and candle holder for each child;
3. Any special gifts that you are planning to give to the children.

**The Service:**

At the very beginning of the service explain to people that today is the day that graduates of Children Worship & Wonder are being welcomed into sanctuary worship.

At the designated time walk quietly to where the Christ candle is located (on the communion table or a smaller table in front of the communion table) and say:

*Once there was someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people began to follow him. But they didn't know who he was. So one day they simply had to ask him. And he said, "I am the Light." [Light the Christ Candle.]*

*Today we are celebrating the light of children who are graduating from Children Worship & Wonder and joining our church community in sanctuary worship.*

Have the children process into the sanctuary with their candles already lit. As you assist each child to place the candle in the provided candle holder, look him/her in the eyes and say,

*“ \_\_\_\_\_, this is your light and we are happy that you are here.”*

When all of the children’s candles have been placed, have the congregation stand and say:

*We, the congregation of (name of your congregation), know that we are one in the body of Christ. Each of us has been given special talents and gifts. We welcome you and the gifts you bring to sanctuary worship – your prayers, your voices, your movements, your reading abilities, your art, your smiles and greetings. We look forward to the ways that we will all grow together in our worship of God and we give thanks for your presence with us.*

After giving each child a welcoming hug (During the orientation or transitional worship times, ask each child for permission to hug him or her.), give each child any special gift and/or worship helps, if these are provided by your congregation. Suggested gifts include a small stuffed lamb, a wooden sheep from Worship Woodworks, or a “mini” Good Shepherd parable box with small parable objects inside. Invite each child to sit with their parents and/or mentor.

At the end of worship, before the benediction, say:

*And now I am going to change each of your lights so that they can be in more than one place.*

Slowly lower the candle snuffer over each of the children’s lights, holding it over the wick for a moment and then slowly raising it, watching the smoke curl up into the air and fade into the whole room. Do the same with the Christ Candle as you say:

*There was even a time when the Light of Christ was changed so that the Light that was just in one place at one time is now in all places at all times.*

\*This Service of Welcome is adapted from the story of “The Light,” pages 72 – 74 of the book, *Young Children and Worship*, by Sonja M. Stewart and Jerome W. Berryman

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