



Equipping Parents to Help Kids Engage

How can I equip parents and carers to help their kids engage with the spiritual content in services or groups?

Parents and carers - even if they are new to faith - can help their kids engage with the service and with God far more easily than we can as leaders. With just a little support and resources like visual timetables or pew packs (there are ideas about what to include in pew packs at the end of this document), all parents and carers can help their children with prayer, worship and more.

01 Key Ideas

- **Use choices to help parents know how their kids can engage:**
 - Offer a range of ways to engage: 'We worship by singing because that seems to help people express big feelings to God, but not everyone sings; some love waving these flags, some like to join in with instruments, some sit quietly and listen ... everyone can join in the way they like to, including the kids'.
 - Rather than correcting or instructing people, consider using a 'hint drop'.
 - Always include permission not to take part.
- **Use a 'side-by-side' to help parents/carers and their kids engage with God together** - there's a how to explaining this in Session 3 part 2 or you can learn more from this post about working with fringe families.
- **Consider resources that might help children and young people engage:** having a playlist of songs you share in advance, using Makaton signing, visual timetables, pew packs containing things relevant to the service.

- **For regular church families, give them information in advance if there's something new coming up** - for example, everyone is staying in for communion - with ideas about how to prepare their kid for it.
- **Session 8 of our original course and session 5 of our teens course** are all about how parents and carers can help their children engage with church and you may find them useful.

02

Here are some top tips from other children's, youth and families leaders:

- We have family busy baskets and a sensory tent with resources in.
- We have written some social stories with pictures to explain what happens in the service - what will happen but also spaces they can go if they need to wriggle etc.
- We offer fidget toys and ear defenders to children as they come in.
- We have instruments available, but make sure they are collected after the songs are over!
- We have a space to the side where parents and carers can take their children if they need a bit of space to move.
- Encourage and remind parents that their kids are not too young to engage and join in
- If you use flags or similar, it is helpful if an adult or older child is using them so kids joining in have someone to copy.
- We have family sheets aimed at the whole family setting out what's happening, when it's 'time to listen', 'time to sing and dance', plus information about communion and kids' church.

03

Here are ideas from others about what to put in pew packs

- Material for responding to the story or message (or just drawing) - plain paper and pens or crayons, pipe cleaners, playdough
- Clipboards
- Laminated prayer prompts with drywipe pens

- A visual timetable of the service
- Sermon notes / sermon bingo
- Age appropriate bibles
- Board books
- Small (quiet) toys, fidget toys
- Ear defenders
- Small flags, instruments or ribbons for worship
- Websites like Muddy Church have downloadable resources that may be helpful.

FIND OUT MORE

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SPACE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
