

Messiah Messenger

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Therefore when you look at your Christian brother or sister, look at them through the lens of your Baptism: look at them and see Jesus. After all they are clothed in the same Holy Name as you. As scripture reminds us: “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8) and “If God has loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

This reality goes far beyond “playing nice” with one another. The unity we have places us in a life together, a *koinonia*, where we are members of the same body. (Romans 12:5) When one member of the body suffers, we suffer with them and share their pain. When one member of the body is joyful, we celebrate with them. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

It is my prayer that we continue to fix our eyes on Jesus, so that we may see what He has done for us, how he has lavishly poured out God’s love and mercy on each of us and brought us into a fellowship, a life together which will last into eternity.

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In fact, I wouldn't be surprised that—if such a thing were measurable—all the well-meant talk about getting congregations to grow has in many cases impeded the very numerical growth we all want.

What do I mean? I'm afraid that much of the material that we "Synod types" have put out in the church in this regard, while well-intentioned and often very good advice, has disregarded the great blessings which Jesus brings people in the small congregation. When our talk is all about "grow, grow, growth, mega, meta, magnificent," we run the very strong risk of giving—inadvertently—the small parish the message: You're bad, you're sick; you're backward, your abnormal. Any pastor worth his salt, with a decade or two of experience under his belt, will tell you that one significant factor in whether or not a church grows is how its members view their parish. That was certainly my experience in the parish.

I'd like to put before you a few simple thoughts in order to affirm and build up our small churches. Of the some 6,150 LCMS churches around the nation: 73 percent (4,510, more than three-fourths!) have fewer than 500 members on their roles; 38 percent have fewer than 200 members; 35 percent have between 200 and 500 members. Of those parishes of 200 or fewer members, average attendance is 53. For those between 200 and 500 members, average Sunday attendance is 128. Yet nearly one-third of these small parishes operate schools! That, frankly, is amazing!

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More important than anything else is that in these small parishes, Christ Himself, through His blessed Word and Sacrament, dwells to give sinners life and salvation. That is a point C.F.W. Walther loved to drive home when he sensed any devaluation of smaller parishes by anyone in the Synod. Very important to me as executive director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care is that so many small parishes so well approximate the ideal Luther held up for the church, as we all are members of the same body, caring for one another. He spoke about the Lord's Supper:

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Christ cares for us, gives Himself for us. We in turn give ourselves for the neighbor. This happens nowhere as well, as naturally, and as constantly as in the small parish. Where mistakes are made, we flee to the forgiving waters of baptism, confess our sins, and resolve in faith to begin anew in love, both "laying down our burdens in the midst of the congregation" (Luther) and also finding the burdens of others there to take up. God knows that as we often know well the sins of our neighbors (and they know ours!) in smaller congregations, the need for forgiveness and grace as we work together is all the greater!

We heartily support, thank God for, and affirm our many larger congregations that have been blessed by circumstances, God-given wisdom, demographics and grace to work hard—all which have allowed them to grow to such an extent. But let us always give thanks for the small congregations, which constantly remind us all that the church on earth is truly, and always, a "little flock."

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But I am a firm believer in "faith comes by hearing," and children certainly belong in the presence of their savior, and need to be a part of the body of all believers from the instant they are baptized. I am always scared that nurseries, children's church, or Sunday school during church give one of two (or both) messages to children: That they don't belong in the presence of God, or that they should be involved in activities that are more fun than church. Either message can be incredibly damaging to their faith. We segregate so many aspects of life according to age, I don't believe worshiping our Lord and receiving His gifts is an area where we should be doing this.



That being said, having children in church can be a challenge. I ought to know. As a pastor's wife, I am a single parent on Sunday. With so many men who are not involved in church anymore, and so many babies not born into nuclear, married families—many women are put in the position that if they want to go to church, they have to take care of their kids alone, and so many of them put off the challenge of having children in church until an age when they might be easier to handle.

I don't think there is an age that is "easier to handle." Babies and toddlers are truly a challenge, but they don't get easier, they just change how they fight against it, if they are not used to it.

I don't want to make it seem like I believe this is easy. There were days I stayed home because I wasn't up to the fight of keeping Maggie in the pew that day or dealing with Chris's moods (he definitely was NOT a morning person. A wonderfully friendly person would go up to him and say "Good morning, Christopher, and he would glare at them and yell "NOOOO" and then bury his head in my shoulder). And there were days when I wonder why I was there because I didn't hear a word of the sermon, wasn't able to go to communion, etc. and I was exhausted or in tears the rest of the day (which is why having a husband or family there with you is wonderful.) But as I sit with my kids in church now, and even watch them frequently go to church even when I can't, simply because they want to, I know that it was worth it.

So here are some things that did make it easier for me:

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2. Bring quiet toys, non-messy snacks, and a drink in a bottle or sippy cup (or discreetly nurse). The fact of the matter is, young children don't have the attention span to deal with nothing but church for the whole service, and having something quiet to do helps, and if nothing else, it helps you. Chris used to love to stack hymnals, and when he got done, he would put them in a new stack. Plastic animals, stuffed animals, Hot Wheels (if your kid is not the kind that goes Vrrrooom) or coloring books can be a help. And also, kids behave better when their blood sugar is even. Something like Cheerios is generally fine. And, having a drink right there means there is one less reason to take them out which means you get to hear more.

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I would take my kids out if they couldn't sit still, but somewhere around late two or early three, it became clear to me that it wasn't that my child COULDN'T keep from being active, he just didn't want to. This was then more of an issue of limits rather than ability. When this became the case, leaving the sanctuary meant that we went and sat perfectly still in a chair for 5 minutes out in the parish hall. They then learned that since snacks, coloring books, etc. were still in the church, they could actually do more in church than they could if we left.

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But I am a firm believer in "faith comes by hearing," and children certainly belong in the presence of their savior, and need to be a part of the body of all believers from the instant they are baptized. I am always scared that nurseries, children's church, or Sunday school during church give one of two (or both) messages to children: That they don't belong in the presence of God, or that they should be involved in activities that are more fun than church. Either message can be incredibly damaging to their faith. We segregate so many aspects of life according to age, I don't believe worshipping our Lord and receiving His gifts is an area where we should be doing this.



That being said, having children in church can be a challenge. I ought to know. As a pastor's wife, I am a single parent on Sunday. With so many men who are not involved in church anymore, and so many babies not born into nuclear, married families—many women are put in the position that if they want to go to church, they have to take care of their kids alone, and so many of them put off the challenge of having children in church until an age when they might be easier to handle.

I don't think there is an age that is "easier to handle." Babies and toddlers are truly a challenge, but they don't get easier, they just change how they fight against it, if they are not used to it.

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I would take my kids out if they couldn't sit still, but somewhere around late two or early three, it became clear to me that it wasn't that my child COULDN'T keep from being active, he just didn't want to. This was then more of an issue of limits rather than ability. When this became the case, leaving the sanctuary meant that we went and sat perfectly still in a chair for 5 minutes out in the parish hall. They then learned that since snacks, coloring books, etc. were still in the church, they could actually do more in church than they could if we left.

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This reality goes far beyond “playing nice” with one another. The unity we have places us in a life together, a *koinonia*, where we are members of the same body. (Romans 12:5) When one member of the body suffers, we suffer with them and share their pain. When one member of the body is joyful, we celebrate with them. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

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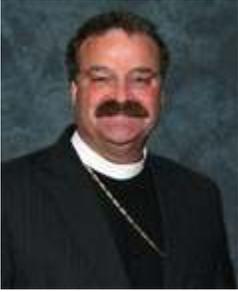
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What do I mean? I'm afraid that much of the material that we "Synod types" have put out in the church in this regard, while well-intentioned and often very good advice, has disregarded the great blessings which Jesus brings people in the small congregation. When our talk is all about "grow, grow, growth, mega, meta, magnificent," we run the very strong risk of giving—inadvertently—the small parish the message: You're bad, you're sick; you're backward, your abnormal. Any pastor worth his salt, with a decade or two of experience under his belt, will tell you that one significant factor in whether or not a church grows is how its members view their parish. That was certainly my experience in the parish.

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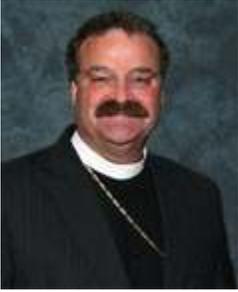
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How children should behave in church, and what limits should be set can be quite a contentious issue. Personally, I like children in church. I don't even think it is tantamount to a crime to hear them babbling or fussing in church. Over the years as a pastor's wife and a La Leche League Leader, I've heard so many stories about getting the evil eye by simply walking into the sanctuary with a babe in arms or a toddler. **Obviously, if your child is proving to be a distraction or too loud for others to hear, it is a matter of consideration to take them out and deal with it.** What that means is defined by your family perspective on it and the age and temperament of your child.

But I am a firm believer in "faith comes by hearing," and children certainly belong in the presence of their savior, and need to be a part of the body of all believers from the instant they are baptized. I am always scared that nurseries, children's church, or Sunday school during church give one of two (or both) messages to children: That they don't belong in the presence of God, or that they should be involved in activities that are more fun than church. Either message can be incredibly damaging to their faith. We segregate so many aspects of life according to age, I don't believe worshiping our Lord and receiving His gifts is an area where we should be doing this.



That being said, having children in church can be a challenge. I ought to know. As a pastor's wife, I am a single parent on Sunday. With so many men who are not involved in church anymore, and so many babies not born into nuclear, married families—many women are put in the position that if they want to go to church, they have to take care of their kids alone, and so many of them put off the challenge of having children in church until an age when they might be easier to handle.

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So here are some things that did make it easier for me:

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2. Bring quiet toys, non-messy snacks, and a drink in a bottle or sippy cup (or discreetly nurse). The fact of the matter is, young children don't have the attention span to deal with nothing but church for the whole service, and having something quiet to do helps, and if nothing else, it helps you. Chris used to love to stack hymnals, and when he got done, he would put them in a new stack. Plastic animals, stuffed animals, Hot Wheels (if your kid is not the kind that goes Vrrrooom) or coloring books can be a help. And also, kids behave better when their blood sugar is even. Something like Cheerios is generally fine. And, having a drink right there means there is one less reason to take them out which means you get to hear more.

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I would take my kids out if they couldn't sit still, but somewhere around late two or early three, it became clear to me that it wasn't that my child COULDN'T keep from being active, he just didn't want to. This was then more of an issue of limits rather than ability. When this became the case, leaving the sanctuary meant that we went and sat perfectly still in a chair for 5 minutes out in the parish hall. They then learned that since snacks, coloring books, etc. were still in the church, they could actually do more in church than they could if we left.

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In Scripture, the word *koinonia*, translated as “fellowship”, is a pretty broad term. Sometimes it also is translated as “participation” and other times as “communion”, it is even what Paul calls the contribution of the saints in Macedonia to help the Christians in Judea who were suffering because of a drought (Romans 15:16).

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Fellowship starts in our Baptism. There we are immersed into God’s Name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we have unity first and foremost with Jesus Christ (see Romans 6), His death – which atones for our sins, and His resurrection – which seals for us the promise and hope of the resurrection and eternal life.

Since this is true for every Christian, we have unity with each other in Christ. This is a profound reality! Just think about this next time you are having a difficulty with another Christian. You are Baptized, you are covered with Christ’s blood, you are Holy, you are forgiven! ... and so is your neighbor.

Therefore when you look at your Christian brother or sister, look at them through the lens of your Baptism: look at them and see Jesus. After all they are clothed in the same Holy Name as you. As scripture reminds us: “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8) and “If God has loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

This reality goes far beyond “playing nice” with one another. The unity we have places us in a life together, a *koinonia*, where we are members of the same body. (Romans 12:5) When one member of the body suffers, we suffer with them and share their pain. When one member of the body is joyful, we celebrate with them. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

It is my prayer that we continue to fix our eyes on Jesus, so that we may see what He has done for us, how he has lavishly poured out God’s love and mercy on each of us and brought us into a fellowship, a life together which will last into eternity.

Your servant in Christ, under the Cross,

Pastor Lorfeld



From Rev. Matt Harrison – Pres. Of the LCMS

Let's hear it for the small congregation!



Amid all the hype in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod over the last number of years about "growth," some important facts about small congregations have been overlooked.

In fact, I wouldn't be surprised that—if such a thing were measurable—all the well-meant talk about getting congregations to grow has in many cases impeded the very numerical growth we all want.

What do I mean? I'm afraid that much of the material that we "Synod types" have put out in the church in this regard, while well-intentioned and often very good advice, has disregarded the great blessings which Jesus brings people in the small congregation. When our talk is all about "grow, grow, growth, mega, meta, magnificent," we run the very strong risk of giving—inadvertently—the small parish the message: You're bad, you're sick; you're backward, your abnormal. Any pastor worth his salt, with a decade or two of experience under his belt, will tell you that one significant factor in whether or not a church grows is how its members view their parish. That was certainly my experience in the parish.

I'd like to put before you a few simple thoughts in order to affirm and build up our small churches. Of the some 6,150 LCMS churches around the nation: 73 percent (4,510, more than three-fourths!) have fewer than 500 members on their roles; 38 percent have fewer than 200 members; 35 percent have between 200 and 500 members. Of those parishes of 200 or fewer members, average attendance is 53. For those between 200 and 500 members, average Sunday attendance is 128. Yet nearly one-third of these small parishes operate schools! That, frankly, is amazing!

Here's a couple more interesting stats. We know that as a percentage of the congregational budget, small congregations give considerably more to their district and to the Synod. And perhaps as significant as anything, smaller congregations have in many cases significantly better member attendance (48 percent attendance for the 2,363 churches under 200 members).

Over the course of my pastoral service, I served two parishes. (One was well above 500 members; the other somewhat below that number.) I can tell you from experience, the quality of pastoral care in smaller congregations is quite often phenomenal. The LCMS has some of the best-trained clergy in the nation. The vast majority of our pastors and teachers serve parishes with small numbers with "full-scale" commitment. This blessing has marked the existence of our Synod from her earliest days and will continue to mark our existence well into the future. Despite radically changing demographics, many rural parishes live out their lives in Christ with "gusto."

Are there challenges and areas in which we fall short? Of course. But this little article is about the good things.

More important than anything else is that in these small parishes, Christ Himself, through His blessed Word and Sacrament, dwells to give sinners life and salvation. That is a point C.F.W. Walther loved to drive home when he sensed any devaluation of smaller parishes by anyone in the Synod. Very important to me as executive director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care is that so many small parishes so well approximate the ideal Luther held up for the church, as we all are members of the same body, caring for one another. He spoke about the Lord's Supper:

"Christ said, I am the head, I will first give Myself for you, will make your suffering and misfortune Mine own and bear it for you, that you in your turn may do the same for Me and for one another, have all things in common in Me and with me, and let this sacrament be unto you a sure token of that all, that you may not forget me."

Christ cares for us, gives Himself for us. We in turn give ourselves for the neighbor. This happens nowhere as well, as naturally, and as constantly as in the small parish. Where mistakes are made, we flee to the forgiving waters of baptism, confess our sins, and resolve in faith to begin anew in love, both "laying down our burdens in the midst of the congregation" (Luther) and also finding the burdens of others there to take up. God knows that as we often know well the sins of our neighbors (and they know ours!) in smaller congregations, the need for forgiveness and grace as we work together is all the greater!

We heartily support, thank God for, and affirm our many larger congregations that have been blessed by circumstances, God-given wisdom, demographics and grace to work hard—all which have allowed them to grow to such an extent. But let us always give thanks for the small congregations, which constantly remind us all that the church on earth is truly, and always, a "little flock."

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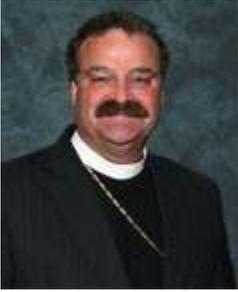
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Messiah Messenger

Welcome to the first (at least my first) issue of the Messiah Messenger. It is my hope that we will have an issue for each season of the Church Year. Over the next few issues I will be writing to you about “fellowship” as it relates to Baptism, Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, and the Church’s life of mercy.

In Scripture, the word *koinonia*, translated as “fellowship”, is a pretty broad term. Sometimes it also is translated as “participation” and other times as “communion”, it is even what Paul calls the contribution of the saints in Macedonia to help the Christians in Judea who were suffering because of a drought (Romans 15:16).

Often we think of “fellowship” as the time after the service where we share coffee, doughnuts, and the other wonderful treats that are graciously brought in by volunteers. In reality, fellowship is more about what God has done for us in Christ than about what we do or the common interests we share.

Fellowship starts in our Baptism. There we are immersed into God’s Name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we have unity first and foremost with Jesus Christ (see Romans 6), His death – which atones for our sins, and His resurrection – which seals for us the promise and hope of the resurrection and eternal life.

Since this is true for every Christian, we have unity with each other in Christ. This is a profound reality! Just think about this next time you are having a difficulty with another Christian. You are Baptized, you are covered with Christ’s blood, you are Holy, you are forgiven! ... and so is your neighbor.

Therefore when you look at your Christian brother or sister, look at them through the lens of your Baptism: look at them and see Jesus. After all they are clothed in the same Holy Name as you. As scripture reminds us: “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8) and “If God has loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

This reality goes far beyond “playing nice” with one another. The unity we have places us in a life together, a *koinonia*, where we are members of the same body. (Romans 12:5) When one member of the body suffers, we suffer with them and share their pain. When one member of the body is joyful, we celebrate with them. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

It is my prayer that we continue to fix our eyes on Jesus, so that we may see what He has done for us, how he has lavishly poured out God’s love and mercy on each of us and brought us into a fellowship, a life together which will last into eternity.

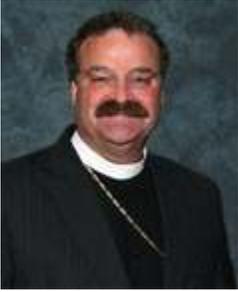
Your servant in Christ, under the Cross,

Pastor Lorfeld



From Rev. Matt Harrison – Pres. Of the LCMS

Let's hear it for the small congregation!



Amid all the hype in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod over the last number of years about "growth," some important facts about small congregations have been overlooked.

In fact, I wouldn't be surprised that—if such a thing were measurable—all the well-meant talk about getting congregations to grow has in many cases impeded the very numerical growth we all want.

What do I mean? I'm afraid that much of the material that we "Synod types" have put out in the church in this regard, while well-intentioned and often very good advice, has disregarded the great blessings which Jesus brings people in the small congregation. When our talk is all about "grow, grow, growth, mega, meta, magnificent," we run the very strong risk of giving—inadvertently—the small parish the message: You're bad, you're sick; you're backward, your abnormal. Any pastor worth his salt, with a decade or two of experience under his belt, will tell you that one significant factor in whether or not a church grows is how its members view their parish. That was certainly my experience in the parish.

I'd like to put before you a few simple thoughts in order to affirm and build up our small churches. Of the some 6,150 LCMS churches around the nation: 73 percent (4,510, more than three-fourths!) have fewer than 500 members on their roles; 38 percent have fewer than 200 members; 35 percent have between 200 and 500 members. Of those parishes of 200 or fewer members, average attendance is 53. For those between 200 and 500 members, average Sunday attendance is 128. Yet nearly one-third of these small parishes operate schools! That, frankly, is amazing!

Here's a couple more interesting stats. We know that as a percentage of the congregational budget, small congregations give considerably more to their district and to the Synod. And perhaps as significant as anything, smaller congregations have in many cases significantly better member attendance (48 percent attendance for the 2,363 churches under 200 members).

Over the course of my pastoral service, I served two parishes. (One was well above 500 members; the other somewhat below that number.) I can tell you from experience, the quality of pastoral care in smaller congregations is quite often phenomenal. The LCMS has some of the best-trained clergy in the nation. The vast majority of our pastors and teachers serve parishes with small numbers with "full-scale" commitment. This blessing has marked the existence of our Synod from her earliest days and will continue to mark our existence well into the future. Despite radically changing demographics, many rural parishes live out their lives in Christ with "gusto."

Are there challenges and areas in which we fall short? Of course. But this little article is about the good things.

More important than anything else is that in these small parishes, Christ Himself, through His blessed Word and Sacrament, dwells to give sinners life and salvation. That is a point C.F.W. Walther loved to drive home when he sensed any devaluation of smaller parishes by anyone in the Synod. Very important to me as executive director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care is that so many small parishes so well approximate the ideal Luther held up for the church, as we all are members of the same body, caring for one another. He spoke about the Lord's Supper:

"Christ said, I am the head, I will first give Myself for you, will make your suffering and misfortune Mine own and bear it for you, that you in your turn may do the same for Me and for one another, have all things in common in Me and with me, and let this sacrament be unto you a sure token of that all, that you may not forget me."

Christ cares for us, gives Himself for us. We in turn give ourselves for the neighbor. This happens nowhere as well, as naturally, and as constantly as in the small parish. Where mistakes are made, we flee to the forgiving waters of baptism, confess our sins, and resolve in faith to begin anew in love, both "laying down our burdens in the midst of the congregation" (Luther) and also finding the burdens of others there to take up. God knows that as we often know well the sins of our neighbors (and they know ours!) in smaller congregations, the need for forgiveness and grace as we work together is all the greater!

We heartily support, thank God for, and affirm our many larger congregations that have been blessed by circumstances, God-given wisdom, demographics and grace to work hard—all which have allowed them to grow to such an extent. But let us always give thanks for the small congregations, which constantly remind us all that the church on earth is truly, and always, a "little flock."

Come to think of it, the Synod would do best if we had many, many more small congregations!

From the Web
Helping Children in Church

By the Rebellious Pastor's Wife

How children should behave in church, and what limits should be set can be quite a contentious issue. Personally, I like children in church. I don't even think it is tantamount to a crime to hear them babbling or fussing in church. Over the years as a pastor's wife and a La Leche League Leader, I've heard so many stories about getting the evil eye by simply walking into the sanctuary with a babe in arms or a toddler. **Obviously, if your child is proving to be a distraction or too loud for others to hear, it is a matter of consideration to take them out and deal with it.** What that means is defined by your family perspective on it and the age and temperament of your child.

But I am a firm believer in "faith comes by hearing," and children certainly belong in the presence of their savior, and need to be a part of the body of all believers from the instant they are baptized. I am always scared that nurseries, children's church, or Sunday school during church give one of two (or both) messages to children: That they don't belong in the presence of God, or that they should be involved in activities that are more fun than church. Either message can be incredibly damaging to their faith. We segregate so many aspects of life according to age, I don't believe worshipping our Lord and receiving His gifts is an area where we should be doing this.



That being said, having children in church can be a challenge. I ought to know. As a pastor's wife, I am a single parent on Sunday. With so many men who are not involved in church anymore, and so many babies not born into nuclear, married families—many women are put in the position that if they want to go to church, they have to take care of their kids alone, and so many of them put off the challenge of having children in church until an age when they might be easier to handle.

I don't think there is an age that is "easier to handle." Babies and toddlers are truly a challenge, but they don't get easier, they just change how they fight against it, if they are not used to it.

I don't want to make it seem like I believe this is easy. There were days I stayed home because I wasn't up to the fight of keeping Maggie in the pew that day or dealing with Chris's moods (he definitely was NOT a morning person. A wonderfully friendly person would go up to him and say "Good morning, Christopher, and he would glare at them and yell "NOOOO" and then bury his head in my shoulder). And there were days when I wonder why I was there because I didn't hear a word of the sermon, wasn't able to go to communion, etc. and I was exhausted or in tears the rest of the day (which is why having a husband or family there with you is wonderful.) But as I sit with my kids in church now, and even watch them frequently go to church even when I can't, simply because they want to, I know that it was worth it.

So here are some things that did make it easier for me:

1. Sit in front. Most parents have a tendency to sit in the back because they don't feel like the whole church sees when their children act up, and they can make an easy exit. But scooch down to your child's level. They can't see anything besides the back of people's heads. They don't see why they are there. They often behave a lot better when they can see what is going on.

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