



Educating the Minds, Strengthening the Bodies, and Nurturing the Souls of Children and Families

Children and Worship Nursery Care for Children Infant – Kindergarten (8:30, 9:30 and 11 am)

Children, birth through kindergarten, need to interact physically with their world. They learn primarily by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. Therefore, these children need appropriately-sized space to move around and explore soft cuddly toys, manipulate large and small blocks, trucks and puzzles; investigate God's world and strengthen their bodies and minds by running, jumping, smelling, and feeling outside in it; hear, play, sing, and see God's songs and stories; draw, color, and paint God's stories, and experience God's love from face-to-face personal interaction with parent disciples and a child's care expert. Hearing God's stories, singing God's songs, praying prayers and experiencing God's love are all an act of worship.

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church provides secure, nurturing care for children from infancy through kindergarten on Sunday mornings during all worship services. Our infant, toddler, two-year old, three-year old, four-year old, and kindergarten rooms are staffed with childcare experts, as well as parent disciples, providing our children with consistent and attentive care.

“If our children are to have faith, they must worship with us.”

John Westerhoff, Professor of Theology and Christian Nurture at Duke University Divinity School, says that, “[i]f our children are to have faith, they must worship with us.” This past year the Children's Ministry Team spent some time reflecting on how best to integrate our children here at SMPC into the worship service. To this end, we are starting two new programs.

First, the Children's Ministry Team has put together a four-week study for first grade children and their parents examining the central understandings of the sacraments from the Reformed perspective, as well as examining what our denomination is teaching children about worship. This study will begin on Rally Day. Patty Stevenson will be leading the children and Kim Lee will be leading the parents.

Second, the Children's Ministry Team, in concert with the Worship Committee, planned and thoughtfully put together a Children's Worship service to be held in the Chapel each Sunday for children up to third grade. The Children's Worship service will be held during the 11 am worship service. Childcare will be available for parents with children younger than first grade at all worship services.

Children are, by their baptism, members of the people of God. The call to worship is addressed to all. In *The Public Worship of God* Henry Sloane Coffin affirms, "Worship is the offering to God of the entire congregation of his people, and children should certainly be included. A childless congregation presents an abnormal and unpromising appearance." Therefore, children will enter the Sanctuary with their parents at 11 am to hear the call to worship, pray the prayer of confession, hear the Good News, sing the Gloria Patri, meet their newly baptized brothers and sisters in Christ, and listen to the anthem. We will then recess to the Chapel following a short liturgy with the congregation. Once in the Chapel, the children will engage in their own call to worship, hear the scripture, engage in a children's sermon, sing a hymn, say what it is we believe, and pray for the people. They will return at the doxology to celebrate the Lord's Supper with their families, hear and say the Lord's Prayer, hear and say the affirmation of faith, sing a hymn, and receive the benediction as they scatter back out with their families into the community.

Yours in Christ,
Kim Lee, Director of Spiritual Formation

11 am Worship and Children

Children ages Three, Four, and Kindergarten gather together in one classroom with their childcare professionals to participate in the Children's Message during the 11 am worship service.

First – third graders are invited to participate in Children's Worship during the 11 am worship service. Immediately following the Anthem, first – third graders will leave the Sanctuary to share in Children's Worship located in the Chapel. They will return to worship with their families in the Sanctuary at the Doxology.

First Graders and Communion

First grade is an exciting time in the life of the church community as well as in the life of your family. It is our tradition here at South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church to formally welcome first graders to the Lord's Table.

In Sunday school the first graders learn that we have a place to worship; worship is our response to God's love; we have a plan to help us worship; we pray as a part of worship; and the Reformed understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The culmination of our class will be that on World Communion Sunday, the first graders will be welcomed to the Lord's Table at the 11 am worship service.

The sacrament is known by different names, such as The Lord's Supper, Communion, and Holy Eucharist. Eucharist comes from two Greek words Eu + Charis. Eu means well or good. Charis means favor or grace. Eucharist is receiving the good grace of God. Coming to the Lord's Table gives each of us the opportunity to accept in faith the gifts of grace, love, and forgiveness, and to remember God's divine presence in our lives. Through it we celebrate our oneness in Christ.

For children it is a chance to see God's people share a meal together as God's family. They can begin to know that in this celebration we say "thank you" to God. The sacrament of communion is a way to remember Jesus. Remembering is something children understand. The sacraments are heavenly mysteries that none of us ever fully understand, but in the sacraments are an opportunity to listen to your children's questions and inner grappling with faith.

Third Grade Bibles

It is our tradition here at South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church to present our third graders with Bibles during the *11 am service*. This is a very exciting event for both parents and children! The Bible we present is the *NIV Adventure Bible*, a Bible specifically edited for children ages 8-12.

Children and Sunday School

Children and Sunday School (9:30-10:30)

Children Three through Kindergarten

Children Three-years through Kindergarten need to interact physically with their world. They learn primarily by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. They are concrete thinkers who need consistent, face-to-face interaction with loving and faithful adults. Therefore, these children need appropriately-sized space to move around and explore soft, hard, prickly toys, manipulate large and small blocks, trucks and figures, markers, crayons, and pencils, books and puzzles, as well as paint and glue; investigate God's world and strengthen their bodies and minds by running, jumping, smelling, and feeling outside in it; hear, play, sing, and see God's songs and stories; draw, color, and paint God's stories, and experience God's love from parent disciples. Hearing God's

stories, singing God's songs, praying prayers and experiencing God's develop a basic sense of trust in God.

Sunday school begins in September and ends in May for Threes, Fours and Kindergarteners. We are using the Live B.I.G. curriculum by Abington Press. These lessons are taught using Bible story, arts, crafts, and song. Our Sunday school classes are taught by parent disciples. These parent disciples have been called, taught, encouraged, prayed for and with by members of our Spiritual Formation Committee.

Children and Sunday School (9:30-10:30)

First through Fifth Grade

Children first through fifth grade are beginning to learn through the use of language, memory, imagination, logical, and mathematical concepts related to concrete objects. They are beginning to understand that not all people think the way they do. Their thinking is still concrete, though they are beginning to demonstrate some abstract thinking. While they are beginning to engage in abstract thinking, they cannot predict all logical outcomes. They are very interested in fairness. They love stories, but their understanding centers on good or bad, right or wrong, black or white, fair or unfair. It is important for Sunday school teachers to present stories through a positive lens, demonstrating God's characteristics of love, care, concern, constancy and compassion.

Sunday school begins in September and ends in May for grades first through fifth. Each Sunday morning, first through fifth graders gather with their Shepherds in Mecklenburg Hall from 9:30 to 9:45(ish) to sing, pray, take attendance, give an offering, hear a "Moment for Mission," and talk about where the children are going that Sunday and what they are going to do. They dismiss by age to their grade specific class. Each Sunday for five weeks, the children encounter the biblical story from a different medium. For example, the story of Creation may be presented to first graders through Art the first Sunday, Cooking the second Sunday, Science the third Sunday, Film the fourth Sunday, and Drama the fifth Sunday. This pattern repeats for each grade. Sunday school is led by parent disciples. These parent disciples come in two forms: teachers and shepherds.



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