

# Instructions for Children's Storytellers



*People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. – Mark 10:13-16*

Thank you for facilitating the Children's Offering and Story part of our worship time; it is indeed kingdom work!

FMC is committed to worship as a **multi-generational exercise**, to being strengthened in life and faith by praising God alongside people of all ages. Above all, we seek to emulate Jesus who, by words and actions, elevated the littlest ones around him to a place of honor and blessing. In Mark 10 (quoted above), Jesus says with his actions what elsewhere he says with words: "Blessed are the little children, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (a paraphrase; see Matthew 5:3-12). Adults should be more like them!

The Children's Offering and Story time is the time in our Sunday worship when young children are invited to participate most fully in the service. What follows is a guide to assist you, the Children's Storyteller, as you prepare for and facilitate this time.

## PREPARATION

You should hear from a pastor or worship leader 1-2 weeks prior to the service, usually by email. A pastor will highlight the Bible passages for the morning and offer some thoughts on the service's theme. Occasionally the children's story is scripted, especially if part of a sequence or special season (Advent or Lent, for example).

More often, you are free to develop your own story to complement the morning's theme, such as: write something, find an appropriate book, share a personal story, "show and tell" something, bring a puppet to do the talking.

Aim for 5 minutes.

Sometimes storytellers come with handouts – snacks, cookies, or other objects related to the story itself. You are welcome to prepare something if it fits, but it is *not* necessary.



## STORY TIME INSTRUCTIONS

Prior to the service, meet with the rest of the morning's worship facilitators for prayer in the library. While there, collect the lapel mic and children's offering basket. During the service:

1. The Worship Leader will invite the children forward for the offering and story. That's your cue.
2. As the children assemble, consider welcoming each one by name. If you don't know someone's name, that's OK; just ask!
3. You may find it helpful to instruct the children to sit around you in a semi-circle. This avoids confusion about who gets to be closest to the storyteller, ensures that the more outgoing young ones do not dominate the space, and makes space for the shiest among them.
4. Consider introducing yourself. You might even tell the kids something about you: "That's my [family/spouse/child] over there" or "During the week I..." This can be especially helpful if you are a new face to them.
5. Pass around the children's basket for each child to touch as a sign of their blessing for the recipients. This is an opportunity for all the children to participate in the offering, whether or not they brought forward money. You could combine this with #2 by saying each child's name as you invite them to touch the basket.
6. Tell the story.
7. End with a short prayer. It can be a sentence or two related to the theme. For example, "God, thank you for loving us deeply. Help us to share your love with our neighbors. Amen." The prayer models how we go before God with our thanks, praise, and petition. It also has the practical effect of announcing the end of the story-time, which should help avoid any awkward "Are we done yet?" looks from the children.
8. Dismiss the kids by thanking them for their attention and directing them back to their seats.

## A FEW MORE TIPS

- Be concrete. Young children are remarkably intuitive, but struggle with abstract ideas. Evoke their imaginations with visual demonstrations, drama, parables, vivid descriptions, props, etc.
- While preparing (yes, do practice ahead!), test yourself to be sure your story and other remarks will stay on topic: Can you summarize the main point of your story with just one sentence?
- Don't be afraid to involve the children by asking questions or inviting them to repeat phrases or make hand motions.
- If you ask questions, listen carefully for the answers. It's ok if the kids lead you a little off topic.
- Be ready to learn from the children. If Jesus is right, they know something about the kingdom of God that we adults do not.
- Sometimes children say funny things, but it's not always best to laugh. They may not mean for it to be funny, and laughter from adults can discourage future boldness in speaking out.
- But do smile!
- Look a child in the eyes when you address him or her.
- Some kids may be shyer than others, but pay special attention to the ones who sit near the edge of the circle. If possible, find an opening to invite them closer to see a picture or handle an object. The outgoing kids can be intimidating for the shy ones.
- The whole congregation is watching, but the story is for the kids. It is tempting to throw in a few nuggets for the adults who are listening – that's ok, but focus your attention (and the content of your story) on the young ones in front of you. The microphone will be sure that the adults hear what you are saying.
- The church library and Pastor Michael's office hold several books filled with 5-minute children's stories. Visit him if you want some suggestions.