

A Road Map for Children in Worship

Worship Ministry Leadership Team



All illustrations by Kate Seidel

*Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
in the heavens.
Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against
your enemies.*

Psalm 8:1-2a



A Road Map for Children in Worship

A Living Document | Worship Ministry Leadership Team

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

In Psalm 148, the Bible calls us to worship in this way: “Young men and women, old men and children – Let them all praise the name of the Lord!” It is our conviction at Trinity that God is honored when the whole family of God assembles together to worship and praise His Name. But we all know that this isn’t always an easy thing to do. Because we find ourselves at different stages of life with different needs, it is often a challenge for us as a community to sing the same songs and pray the same prayers and study the same Scriptures. But this is what we believe God calls us to do.

The following document is called “A Road Map for Children in Worship.” This road map is not meant to represent an exclusive route for children; rather, it is our hope that the ideas will be a resource for families looking for more ways to talk to their children about worship, as well as a guide for members of our congregation without young children, that they might better understand how they can help in this process.

Two of the themes in this road map are *empowerment* and *hospitality*. We want to empower our children, challenging them to stretch forward and take hold of the rich worship feast that God has for all of us. To this end, many of the ideas here are ways to draw our children further into our existing practices. We also want to be hospitable to our children, fully welcoming families who may be new to our community and accommodating the very real needs and frustrations of families whose children struggle to make it through worship. So, in addition to drawing children into our existing practices, this document also represents some new ideas of how we might be more hospitable to all the families in our midst.

The God we worship is a God who embraces children. Jesus scolded His own disciples when they tried to keep the children from Him. The Psalms are full of specific invocations to children (*Psalms 8, 34, 78, 115, 148*), and when the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the church, he specifically addressed the children (*Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1*), assuming they would be in the assembly with their families. So we invite our children in worship, both as an act of conformity to the Scriptures and as an act of hope as we all stretch forward in faith, believing that God is at work in our worship. Let’s continue to ask for the illumination of His Holy Spirit as we shepherd our children through corporate worship.

THE ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

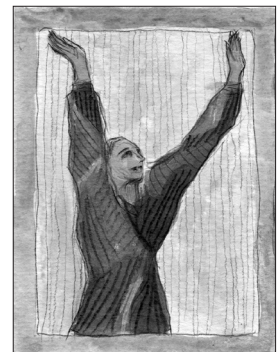
Each Sunday, as the worship leader welcomes us and calls us to worship, we are reminded that we are part of a story: the story of God’s redeeming work in the world. We tell and act out the gospel through our songs, prayers, and Scriptures. We praise and thank God for His goodness, stand before Him broken and forgiven, hear the proclamation of His holy word to us, and commune together around the feast table, before being blessed and sent out into the world. Here are a few suggestions for how we might encourage the children of our congregation to fully join this story with us:

1 PRELUDE & CALL TO WORSHIP

- 1A. Entering the Worship Space** | When we come to corporate worship, we are taking time out of our lives to worship God together with our church, and to order our lives around His good news. We encourage individuals and families to take note of the decorations in this space—what season are we in? What does that mean? It is good for us to reorient ourselves and our children to the story of which we are all a part. Then we join our voices together in singing (*Exodus 31, 35; Psalms 33, 67*).
- 1B. Finding a Seat** | Trinity is a large church, and it might seem hard to “manage” children in front of so many people you don’t know. And even folks who are willing to help might be uncomfortable stepping in to help someone they’ve never met. Consider sitting with friends who know your family or with some members of your small group. Other folks in our church community can ease the load and be encouraging to our children as we learn to worship together. *If you’ve not yet joined a small group, go to trinitycville.org/Small-Groups to sign up.*
- 1C. The Call to Worship** | It is good for all of us to be reminded that the reason we wake up and travel to church each Sunday is that our God calls us to worship. Worship begins with God. Responsive readings are a good way for us to participate beyond singing or listening to someone talk. Our responsive readings are always adapted from scripture, and are often repetitive as a way for our children to better join in. There are some responses we use in every service that even very young children can learn (“This is the word of the Lord; Thanks be to God!”).

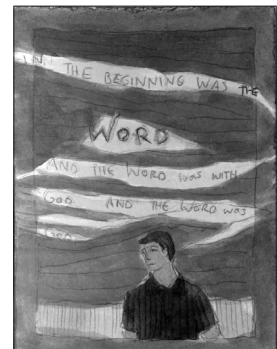
2 ADORATION

- 2A. Singing and Standing** | Our time of adoration is a good time for us and our children to stand up and to lift up our heads and stretch out our hands, singing and praying. God tells us in His word that He desires that we not just speak or sing words of praise, but that we lift up our heads and hands in praise and worship Him with our movements (*Psalms 28, 63*).
- 2B. Children’s Choir** | The Children’s Choir participates in worship about once a month during the school year. They often lead us in our songs of adoration. We enjoy seeing them up front and want to teach our children to sing—but we also want them to know that the worship service is for them. The choir can give our children a sense of ownership in the worship service—either through seeing their friends singing or by participating in the choir themselves. *If your K–5th grader has not yet joined the Children’s Choir, email Frances Shaw (frances.shaw@trinitycville.org).*



3 SCRIPTURE READING

- 3A. Physical Bibles** | As part of this plan for our children in worship, we encourage everyone to use their bibles during scripture readings. You can bring your own or grab a bible from underneath the chairs. We encourage the practice of adults and children looking up scripture readings in their bibles; this will help our children learn the layout of their bibles as they flip through them and will also make a strong connection between something happening in the worship service and something that they take home with them (*Psalms 119, Hebrews 4*).

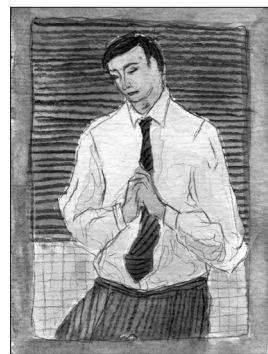


4 CONFESSION & REPENTANCE

4A. Kneeling | Confession is a good time for us to use our bodies in a posture of repentance and humility. This is a time when adults and children can fold their hands, bow their heads or even kneel. The Bible describes the posture of kneeling in penitence as a regular part of worshipping God (*Psalms 22, 95*). Sometimes an uncomfortable posture helps us to remember that we are broken and need Christ's forgiveness.

4B. Silence | We often leave spaces for silence in our times of confession so that we can think of specific times when we have needed God's forgiveness (*Psalms 34:22, 38, 51, 62, 131*). During this time of silent confession, we encourage our children to use the "children's confessions" printed in the Order of Worship to shepherd this time (i.e., "Lord, please forgive me for being unkind to my brother/sister." "Lord, please forgive me for being disobedient." "Lord, I confess that I have been angry and not forgiving.")

4C. Naming Individual Sins | When we confess our sins to God, we are saying "I'm sorry." It can be helpful for us to name particular sins in our lives and to confess them, so that we are not just confessing broad, abstract categories. Sometimes it is good to spend the confession time asking the Lord to show us any sins we need to confess to Him. While we are doing this, we remember that we don't confess our sins to feel guilty, but to appreciate even more what is coming next (*1 John 1*).



5 ASSURANCE & THANKSGIVING

5A. Remembering Our Baptism | Baptism is a sacrament, a physical sign, reminding us that our sins have been washed away (*1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6; Ephesians 4; Colossians 2*). While we are only baptized once, we "remember" the meaning of our baptism each time we declare God's forgiveness. We always keep the baptism bowl and water at the front of the worship space to remind us of this sign. We also invite our children up front during infant baptisms. Each week we will seek to make the connection between baptism and assurance of God's forgiveness in creative, physical ways.

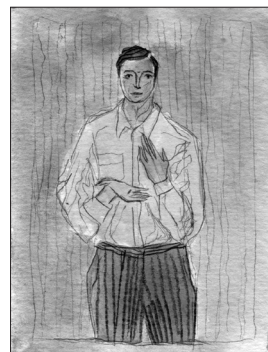
5B. Refrain | To reinforce the centrality of the cross for the forgiveness of sins, we will seek to use simple refrains like, "What can wash away our sin?" with adults and children echoing: "Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

5C. We Rise | We stand up together when we hear the words of Assurance. While we bow our heads, or fold our hands, or kneel our bodies in confession, it's appropriate for us to teach our children to stand up, lift up our heads to the cross and remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God revealed to us in Jesus (*Romans 8*).



6 TITHES & OFFERINGS

6A. Passing the Plate | We encourage everyone to take part in the act of giving—even in a very small way. Giving of ourselves is an important part of worship. We encourage everyone to keep a jar of coins or small bills that our children can take to church and put in the offering basket each week. Physically participating in tithes and offerings is a great way for our adults and our children to remember that everything comes from God and we give back to Him what is already His as an act of worship (*2 Corinthians 9; Luke 21; Proverbs 11; Luke 16; Malachi 3:8*).



7 MINISTRY UPDATES

7A. Speaking to Children | We encourage those giving ministry updates to acknowledge and speak to children during their update. If they are global partners, we encourage them to bring their families up with them (*Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1*).

8 SUPPLICATION

8A. Writing Prayer Requests | We encourage our children to write down their own prayer requests in their order of worship and to use this time to think of people that they can pray for. Currently, in the children's bulletin, we give the simple structure of praying for our Church, Community and World, to help them think of areas where they can ask for God's help (*Philippians 4*).

8B. Lament | The prayer of supplication can sometimes be an unsettling part of the service. We often pray about terrible tragedies and complicated situations. We ask for God's blessings and for solutions—but we may not know what those are, and they may not come for a long time. When we lament, sometimes all we can do is ask "why?" Some children may know this word very well, but they might not grasp the weight of what they are asking. Encourage your children to think of or write down things they don't understand, and then to ask God "why?" (*Psalms 2, 13, 90, 115*).



9 THE WORD OF GOD

9A. Illumination | Each week we sing together our Prayer for Illumination, asking the Holy Spirit to open our ears to God's Word. We encourage our children and adults to hold out their hands palms up in a gesture of openness to the Spirit's teaching.

9B. Sermon Length | Our pastors have implemented a 26-minute time limit for sermons. We're also encouraging our pastors to prepare a single theme or point, which our children will be able to take away from the sermon.

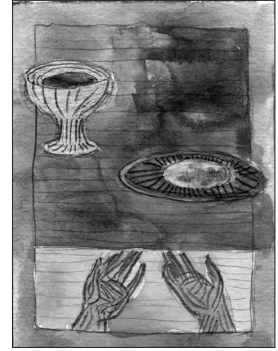
9C. Keeping Hands Busy | Giving our children something directed to do with their hands is a good way to help them concentrate on what they are hearing. We encourage our children to draw something they hear or write down specific words that they think are interesting. For older children, we will be providing a space in the Order of Worship to take notes during the sermon and think of a few key points they can take away.

9D. Children's Worship | We offer our children (ages K–2nd grade) the option to attend a Children's Worship program during the sermon at the 8:30 service, in which they will study the Scriptures in an age-focused way, preparing them to fully participate in the service, sermon and all, by 3rd grade, at which time they could begin taking sermon notes.



10 COMMUNION

- 10A. Coming Forward** | This is the joyful feast of our Lord, patterned after the last supper before Jesus' death. It is a somber time because whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we remember Christ's great sacrifice for us. But it is also a joyful time because Christ is risen! Families are invited to take communion together, and our communion servers are happy to pray with and for our children. Consider inviting other people into your communion family (*Ephesians 4*).
- 10B. Communion Litany** | Each week we repeat the same simple questions and answers ("Is the Father with us?" "He is."), which are simple for our children to memorize. When we speak our communion litany together, we "proclaim the mystery of faith!" (*1 Corinthians 11*).



11 BENEDICTION

- 11A. Raising Hands** | We invite everyone to open their hands to receive God's blessing (*Numbers 6*).



12 THE GREETING OF PEACE

- 12A. Offering Each Other Peace** | The Greeting of Peace is not just another way of saying "hi." When we do this, we offer each other the peace of the Lord. This can be an uncomfortable act, but we encourage our adults and our children to consider what it might mean that the last thing they do before leaving the service is to offer each other "God's peace" (*1 Peter 5*). Adults can encourage children sitting near them by making a point to offer them the peace.
- 12B. Encouraging One Another** | We long for Trinity to be a place where our children can learn and grow and be challenged in an intergenerational community. Sitting through a long service can be quite an accomplishment for the children among us. Don't forget to encourage and affirm them. Consider telling the children around you that you appreciate having them there after the service. And don't forget to encourage their parents.



We welcome your ideas to add to this document. Please send ideas to worship@trinitycville.org. Thank you.