

Welcoming Families in your Bulletin

After finding your church (signage!!) and being greeted, the next place a family will look for a welcome is in your bulletin.

Things to remember:

- Make it stand out
 - *Don't make it just a line in your general welcome statement. They might miss it.*
 - *Give it a header or put the wording in bold to catch their attention.*
- Tell them your expectations
 - *Hopefully, these expectations are that kids will be kids and all are welcome as they are!*
 - *Give some examples - it's okay if they wiggle and chatter, etc.*
- Share your resources available
 - *If you have busy bags, tell them where to find those.*
 - *If you have a pray-ground space, tell them where it is and why (ie: sitting in the front allows your little ones to see what is going on instead of the backs of heads).*
 - *If you have a nursery, tell where it is and guidelines .*
 - *If you are doing children's church, explain when and where to bring children to join it.*
 - *Note where the restrooms are - especially ones with a changing table.*
- Say something to everyone without kids
 - *The hardest part about having kids in church is the reaction of everyone else!*
 - *Encourage them to welcome the children and deal with it.*
 - *If you have an alternative service that they can attend, mention that.*
- Use Jesus' example
 - *Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." This is who we are emulating!*
 - *Using Scripture gives a little more power to your statements.*

Example from around our diocese:

WELCOME!

We at St. Margaret's are excited by the new life and transformation in this place, and we are delighted that you are here to worship with us. We are a congregation committed to celebrating Christ's enduring love and respect for the dignity of all.

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, dirt poor, filthy rich, yo no habla Ingles. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying new-borns, skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds.

We welcome you if you can sing like Andrea Bocelli or like some clergy who can't carry a note in a bucket. You're welcome here if you're "just browsing," just woke up or just got out of jail. We don't care if you're more Anglican than King Charles III, or haven't been in church since little Joey's Baptism.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and to teenagers who are growing up too fast. We welcome soccer moms, NASCAR dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians, junk-food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you're having problems or you're down in the dumps or if you don't like "organized religion," we've been there too.

If you blew all your offering money at the horse track, you're welcome here. We offer a special welcome to those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell, or because grandma is in town and wanted to go to church.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake. We welcome tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts...and you!

To the Parents of Our Young Children:

Relax! God puts the wiggle in children; don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. All are welcome! Sit toward the front where it is easier for your little ones to see and hear what's going on at the altar: they tire of seeing the backs of other's heads. Quietly explain the parts of the service and actions of the priest, altar servers, musicians, etc., say the prayers and voice the responses. Children learn liturgical behaviors by copying you. If you must leave the service with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back. As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." Remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to the Church, to God and to one another. Let them know that they are at home in this house of worship.

To Our Parishioners:

The presence of children is a gift to the Church, and they are a reminder that our parish is growing. Please welcome our children and give their parents a smile of encouragement. If the wiggles and giggles of children distract you for the 10 am service, you are invited to attend the 8 am service.

