



## Welcome and create all-age worship

Many of us would love to have more families in our churches, as we recognise and acknowledge the significant shifts in culture and changes to the traditional understanding of family, our welcome and planning of all-age worship is more important than ever.

All-age worship should seek to:

- Welcome all ages in the church family
- Help all ages to spend time together
- Be appropriate for everyone there
- Enable and provide opportunities for people of all ages to worship and meet with God

(Adapted from Top Tips on All-Age Worship by Nick Harding)

This guide is not a quick fix on welcoming families and creating all-age worship, but rather offers some pointers and things to consider as we seek to love and embrace families of all types, enabling them to be a full worshipping part of our churches.

### Welcome

How we welcome new people (in fact anyone) into our churches matters. First impressions last! For some, stepping over the church threshold can be a huge moment. Often the building, the rituals, the regalia (and the people!) can be quite daunting, so having someone friendly at the door can make new people and families feel at ease very quickly. What should you say to new faces when they arrive at your church?

- Introduce yourself
- Talk to the whole family, not just the grown-ups
- Ask them if they are visiting and tell them that they are very welcome
- Tell them about the pattern of the service and if applicable tell them where the facilities and children's area are. You may like to introduce them to a children's/youth leader
- If your church has a welcome leaflet/pack, ensure you give it to them and explain what to do with it
- Ask them where they would like to sit – if they are unsure; suggest some suitable places e.g. near another family that you know will engage with them. Take them to their seats. Avoid putting them at the front. If they are unfamiliar to church, they may feel very exposed and unsure on what to do and when.
- Say Goodbye, making families feel welcome on arrival is important, but so is the way in which they leave your building

## **What is all-age worship?**

All-age worship is inclusive worship, in which everyone is able to give and receive at their own level. It seeks to engage with worshippers of all ages and walks of life, giving them a sense of the presence of God and an experience of worshipping him as part of a church family.

(Adapted from Barnabas in Churches online)

At Christmas we gather together – all ages; we spend time together and share food and festivities – we all enjoy and we all take part in different ways. Inter-generational worship is a chance to gather our church families together and celebrate. Sure - having children present adds a different dynamic, but one that blesses us all and brings great joy.

(Taken from Diocese of Birmingham)

## **Planning all-age worship**

The key to all-age worship is in the planning and preparation. Pixar films are a brilliant example of something that engages adults, teenagers and children through being multi-layered. We can look to do the same with all-age worship. There is often a perception that all-age worship is the children's service, a helpful idea to keep in mind when planning is this – 'everything needs to be child-accessible but nothing should be child focussed'. One of the ways to achieve this is through choosing a single theme, which is both deep yet made understandable to everyone. This theme can be unpacked throughout the service in various ways.

## **Components to consider**

### **1. Pace and length**

For a number of people, it is important to know how long the service is likely to be. This is especially true for families who have a child/ren with an additional need; some children are very literal, if we say no longer than an hour, it is important that all the formal parts of the service are concluded in that time. To help in this, you may like to create a type of menu/order so that people know the order of the morning. That doesn't mean we leave no room for the Holy Spirit to lead us, but we need to give people permission to opt out and leave.

When delivering all-age worship, pace is important, short and snappy can often work well for all-ages. We suggest changing activity every 4-8 minutes. This does not mean we compromise on quality, but rather it challenges us to engage with Scripture, but maybe in a way that is different to normal.

### **2. Varied music**

Include a mixture of styles. Be sure that your song choices have a purpose, linking to your theme. If you are going to use actions, think about using sign-language or Makaton, and think, can all ages take part in the actions if they choose? Don't define songs as being children's songs or adult songs, but remember they are praise and worship songs for all ages.

### **3. Visual**

Many people are visual learners (research says around 40%), therefore think of ways of making things in your service visual for example using videos, images behind the song words, props and visual art.

### **4. Participation and interaction**

The ideal for all-age worship is to have as many people from all ages and stages involved as possible. Hearing from different voices, will impact on those present. All-age worship provides a space for relationships across the generations to be built. Facilitating opportunities for this to take place is important. Story is a great way to do this; could you provide a space for people to share stories of their Christian journey with people from a different life stage? What other ways can you provide opportunities for participation? Examples include actions in the Bible story, games, quizzes, music and discussion groups.

### **5. Creativity**

Be creative and don't be afraid to try new things!

### **6. Review and Evaluation**

After the completion of your all-age worship service spend some time with your team reflecting and evaluating your service. Here are some questions you may like to ask...

- Was the service an act of worship or a collection of happenings?
- Was there quality and depth or was our service leaning towards superficiality and entertainment?
- Did EVERYONE present have an opportunity to worship and meet with God?
- What could we do differently next time?

Planning all-age worship is hard work. It takes time and energy. There is no easy fix or short cut to doing it, but with time and effort it can be hugely worthwhile. Ultimately it can have a profound and significant impact on people of all age and their lives.

For any further advice or help, contact your Archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/>

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