



Ministry with Children

Children's Moments: Liturgy versus the Current Reality

What are your thoughts on Children's Moments? As part of my ministry, I have the opportunity to attend various United Methodist Churches, and find myself curious as to the reason for and placement of Children's Moments. These moments are the topic of debate in many congregations whether the conversation centers on the theological implications or why the children are jumping around instead of listening. Liturgically, there is no explicit placement in the Order of Worship for Children's Moments [United Methodist Hymnal, p. 3-5], yet about half of the churches that I visit or contact offer Children's Moments within worship.

I talked with the Reverend Barry Bennett, Associate Pastor at Victory Memorial UMC in the Oklahoma Annual Conference about how their congregation includes children in worship. We discussed the realities of worship in the current climate, and the need to not have a "let's laugh at the kids" moment. This congregation has found a way to "bring children forward, bless them, and share with them what is going to happen in Godly Play". The children participate in Godly Play and return to the sanctuary after the sermon. He poses these questions that we should all ask ourselves. "How do we visibly show that children are a part of the church in the midst of worship? How do we bless these children that Jesus proclaimed that it is 'such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs?'"

Pastor Danyelle Ditmer who serves Atkins First and Bell's Chapel United Methodist Churches in the Arkansas Annual Conference offers another faithful way to include children in worship. She writes lectionary based children's moments that make the word "real" for children. These moments with the children come after the first reading and before the sermon, and offer children the opportunity to better understand what is happening in the text. She posts these on her blog Little People Big Word."

As you think about how we faithfully include children in worship, consider these questions:

- How are Children's Moments a part of the liturgy of the Church?
- What meaning do Children's Moments have for the children?
- How do we include children in worship in a way that does not put them "on stage"?

Weekday Preschool Ministry Opportunity

Are you serving as a weekday preschool director or teacher? Are you a member of UMAP? Do you wonder about the relationship between the Church and the Preschool? Are you interested in the foundation set for our children through weekday preschool ministries? Join the conversation! Send me an e-mail at mgordon@gbod.org stating that you would like to be a part of our next conversation, and I will send you an invitation to our next phone conference. Please include the name of your church, preschool, annual conference, and the position that you hold. E-mails must be received by February 11th at 12noon Central time.

Melanie Gordon is the Director of Ministry with Younger Children at the General Board of Discipleship.