

DOCUMENTING OUR MINISTRIES

MINISTRY: CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD

DATE OF THIS DOCUMENTATION UPDATE: SEPT 2008

Ministry Description:

Children (usually kindergarten through elementary age) are invited by an adult leader at the 9 and 11 o'clock liturgies to the "Children's Liturgy of the Word" – a time of scripture reflection, stories and prayers. The children leave church with their adult leader at the conclusion of the Collect of the Day, gather in the lower level in front of the big mural for their own Children's Liturgy, and return to the worshipping community as the Peace is exchanged and the table prepared for Holy Eucharist.

Liturgy of the Word Leaders are active, worshipping members of the St. Michael's community. The Associate for Children and Families coordinates the schedule for Children's Liturgy of the Word and provides resources for the weekly, year-round gatherings. The Sunday after Christmas and Easter or occasional special liturgies may not include Children's LOW so that children can remain in the church for the entire service that day.

Every Children's Liturgy of the Word will vary to some degree depending on the number and ages of the children participating. Leaders are flexible and open to the dynamics of the group. Recognizing that personal styles vary among the leadership group, the important, core components of this ministry have been identified and leaders strive to include these components as part of every Children's Liturgy of the Word session.

Invitation: At the conclusion of the Collect for the Day, the adult Children's Liturgy of the Word Leader stands in the center aisle at the front of the church and says "I invite the children to join me for the (Children's) Liturgy of the Word."

Hospitality: The children and their adult leader gather in the lower level in front of the big mural. Children are seated in folding chairs placed in a semi-circle facing the mural. There is always at least one extra chair set up for any late-comers. If the extra chair is filled, another empty chair is added to the group. Leaders articulate the importance of making a place of welcome for everyone as they add the empty chair(s) to the circle.

Welcome and Signing In: A notebook is passed through the group and children sign their names to indicate their participation either at 9 or 11 o'clock. During the "sign-in" time, children and their leader have an opportunity to chat and check-in with each other. **The adult leader always welcomes the group of children by saying something like:** "I'm so glad to be here with you today" or "I'm so glad to see you again" or "I'm so glad that we are here at church together." Some young children may need help writing their name or may just be learning to write. Legibility is not critical - *a warm and sincere welcome is what is most important!*

Sacred Story: When the sign-in is complete, the leader transitions the children from the "signing in time" to the sacred story time. Leaders might say "The Lord be with you" or

“Our story today is from/about ...” to help indicate the beginning of the sacred story time. To prepare the children for what they are about to hear, leaders may ask children to listen for the story’s theme, or ask them to look for examples in the story that relate to a theme that has already been identified.

Children are invited to listen with their hearts and their minds and they are always encouraged to ask wondering questions and to share their own ideas with the group. Children’s Liturgy of the Word is a time for prayerful discussion to help children engage with the sacred scripture passed down to us through the generations. Children’s books may also be used to help illuminate a particular theme or reinforce a story from scripture.

Adult Leaders are encouraged to help children understand some of the basics of our liturgical tradition by highlighting special Feast Days, Baptismal Days and the seasons in the church year. Not all children attending Children’s Liturgy have been baptized and special care is given by the leaders to make all children feel welcomed into the life and worship of St. Michael’s.

Ushers give a signal: An usher walks through the room to count the number of the children in the Childcare Room and in Children’s Liturgy of the Word. The ushers alerts the LOW leader that it is time to transition to the closing of the Children’s Liturgy.

Prayers: Children’s Liturgy of the Word concludes with a time of prayer. Children are invited to stand in a circle holding hands. They are encouraged to share their prayers either silently or aloud. Leaders remind children (especially if any children are new to the LOW experience) that we always listen to each other with respect and never laugh or make fun of each others’ prayers. Leaders can also invite children to begin their prayers by saying “thank-you” for something or someone in their lives they are grateful for. The adult leader may take a moment to ask for God’s blessing, naming each child, before concluding the time of prayer.

Returning to Church: The LOW leader walks the children back upstairs, into the church to rejoin their families for Holy Eucharist. Leaders are encouraged to be mindful of what is happening in the liturgy when they return and to bring the children back into the gathered community in the least disruptive way possible.