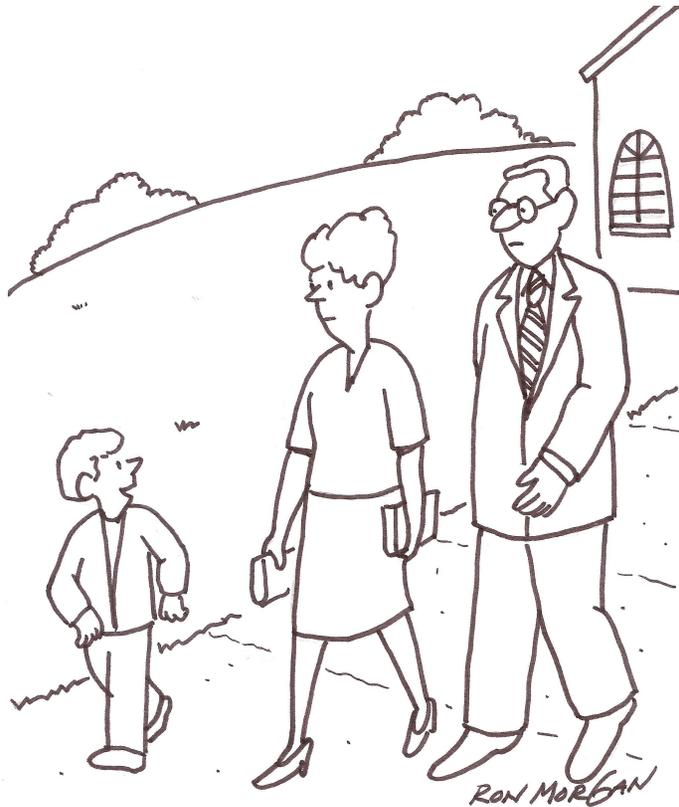


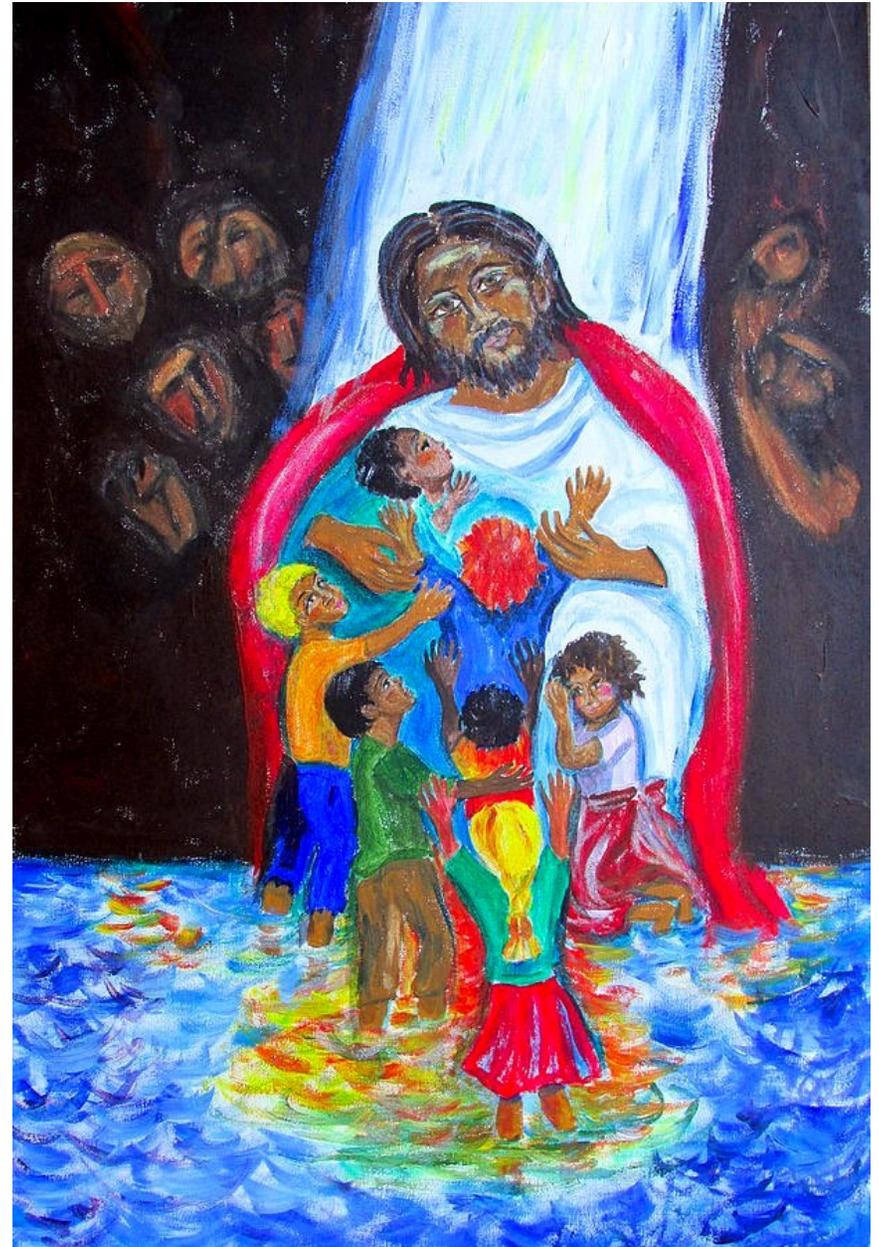
In Jesus Christ, the Church is called to be a royal priesthood, giving glory to God in worship and devoting itself to God's service in the world. Worship is a collective activity of the people of God and an expression of our common life and ministry. It demands the full, conscious, and active participation of the whole body of Christ, with heart, mind, soul, and strength. Children and youth bring special gifts and grow in their faith through their regular participation in worship. Those who plan and lead worship should provide for their full participation in the Service for the Lord's Day.

Presbyterian Directory for Worship, 2019



"I made the Top Ten on our church's prayer list."

Monday Morning



Jesus loves the Children by Sarah Hornsby

Then some people came to him bringing little children for Jesus to touch. The disciples tried to discourage them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant and told them, “You must let little children come to me—never stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Indeed, I assure you that the man who does not accept the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” Then he took the children in his arms and laid his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16, J. B. Philips translation

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

King James Version

Know this: children are a gift from the Eternal;
the fruit of the womb is His reward.
Your sons born in your youth are a protection,
like arrows in the hand of a warrior.

Psalms 127

Most holy and merciful Father, we give Thee hearty thanks that Thou hast numbered us amongst Thy people, and dost also call our children unto Thee, marking them with this Sacrament, as a singular token and badge of Thy love. Wherefore, we beseech Thee to confirm Thy favour more and more toward us, and to take into Thy tuition and defense this Child, whom we offer and present unto Thee with common supplications. Grant that she may know Thee her merciful Father, through Thy Holy Spirit working in her heart, and that she may not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified; but may continue His faithful soldier and servant, and so prevail against evil that in the end she may obtain the victory, and be exalted into the liberty of Thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Presbyterian Book of Common Worship, 1906

Mighty God: by your love we are given children through the miracle of birth. May we greet each new son and daughter with joy, and surround them all with faith, so they may know who you are and want to be your disciples. Never let us neglect children, but help us to enjoy them, showing them the welcome you have shown us all; through Jesus Christ the Lord.

The Worshipbook, 1970

In too many congregations, our children are “dismissed” to go to “children’s church” or something like it either a few minutes into the congregation’s worship or in place of being present in the congregation’s worship at all. As far as I can tell, this is a 20th century phenomenon.



In reviewing session minutes from Presbyterian congregations in the archives here at Columbia Theological Seminary, this action of sending children out of worship began in the 1950s at the height of the post-war baby boom. Prior to this, no such thing existed. Children were in the whole of worship with their families. But in the years following the second world war with the tremendous influx of newborns, congregations began looking for immediate and cost effective ways to gain more space in the sanctuary to accommodate all these young families and their children and some inventive pastor or church educator thought about sending the children out to make more space for adults and thus, the phenomenon of “dismissing” children from worship was born. If a generation runs approximately 20 years, then we are into our third generation of this experience and it has become normative for us all. Indeed, when I have preached in congregations where there is now plenty of room for all ages to worship together, church after church still sends children out of worship because “that’s what we have always done.” The truth is, that is NOT what we have always done and even more, we are now reaping what we have sown.

We have sown three generations of children leaving or never worshipping with us, and it is no wonder that so many find worship boring and incomprehensible when they come of age and are expected to join us. Further, when I suggest that children remain with us during the whole of worship, some of the loudest objections come from some young parents who want worship to be a time for them when they do not have to worry about their child’s behavior. My own sense is that this reflects the current belief among developmental theorists that adolescence is extending well into young adulthood and what else is a true sign of adolescence but the primary focus on one’s own needs over others. And after all, these parents of young children experienced the pattern of a separate “adult worship” and “children’s worship” when they were young so is not that what church is supposed to be like?

“Children’s Church is the Church” by Rodger Nishioka