

How do I make (virtual) church family friendly?

Updated 24th March 2020

Your usual Sunday congregation probably welcomes families with children. As we reimagine church for these strange times, how do we best include children and families?

Here are a few ideas:

- 1) If you are broadcasting a worship service think about how to make the content appealing to children so that everyone can watch together. Maybe include some content from your usual children's team or a song they are familiar with within the main service.
- 2) Provide some downloadable colouring or activity sheets on your website ahead of the service that parents can print off for children to complete during the sermon. Try to link these to the main theme of the service so that everyone is thinking about the same thing. Or record a separate stream, on the same theme, for children to watch during the sermon.
- 3) At the end of the service leave everyone with some questions or a challenge that households can go away and do after the service.
- 4) Set up a Facebook page or WhatsApp group or video chat (virtual coffee time) on Zoom or even an email address to a coordinator so that families can share what they have been doing.

And some resources that might help you:

Roots are offering free, lectionary based, activity and colouring sheets for families
<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/>

Here's a couple of sites/playlists with contemporary kids' songs with lyrics

<https://www.youtube.com/user/hillsongkids>

<https://rendcokids.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUmTiGOxKUOhwpvDtOI62mc4bs9JEUyFP>

What else can churches do to support families?

Run a Parenting for Faith course

Parenting through this situation is not going to be easy and parents will need a good deal of support. This could be an ideal time to run a virtual parenting course and establish a virtual group of parents who are able to support each other

- Gather (virtually of course) a group of interested parents.
- Download the leaders' handbook for yourself and ask everyone to download a copy of the participants' handbooks.
- Agree a day and time to watch the relevant session video.
- Introduce this and follow this up with a video conference call to talk through the handbook together.
- Once you've finished the eight session course you could still meet up but listen to one of the podcasts ahead of your discussion instead.
- All the resources can be downloaded for free from: <https://parentingforfaith.org>

Consider Holding a Virtual All Age Service

- Gather a group of families for a conference call at an agreed time
- Agree who will lead the different parts of the service, this could be anyone of any age
- Choose a Bible reading (possibly a video), songs and follow up activities.

You can find the lectionary readings

here: <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/lections.php?year=A&season=Lent>

- Send out links in advance for anything you will be watching or listening to or doing as well as downloadable resources you'll be using.
- Follow the order of service suggested
here: http://www.going4growth.com/downloads/Worship_at_home_March_2020.pdf
- When it comes to 'Time to read the Bible' break the conference call and allow families to read or watch the chosen Bible story and do the follow up activities at home. Follow up activities could include:
 - A prayer activity
 - Some wondering or discussion questions
 - A craft or game

(See the Resources list above for lots of ideas)

Allow an appropriate time for this (15 or 20 minutes as a guide)

- Restart the conference call and encourage families to share what they have been doing, discussing and thinking.
- Pray together and finish your service, following the order of service again.

We will update the ideas and FAQs regularly, these were last updated 24th March 2020

If you want to be in touch, please email parishcoordination@cofeguildford.org.uk

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