

Welcoming Families

Many churches do not have children regularly attending weekend services. However, almost all churches will have children visit at some point in time. What do you do when a child arrives at your service? How can your church be best prepared to embrace families?

Be warm and welcoming

Warmly welcoming families to your church services is key. Parents might be wondering if your church truly values and welcomes children, and letting them know that you're glad they've come along, as well as having available some helpful things for engaging children, will help put them at ease.

Have a few simple resources to have ready to go

Keeping a few simple resources in a cupboard, which can be easily accessed if a family attends, takes very little time or money to set up, and could completely transform a family's first experience at your church. Some ideas of helpful resources to have on hand include:

- **Help children to engage with the message in the gathering.** The A-Z activity sheet (below) can be used to help older children (Year 3 and above) engage with the sermon. For all ages, small portable whiteboards are great (these can be made from laminating A3 or A4 paper). Provide whiteboard markers and paper towel, and encourage the kids to draw or write the words they hear during the message.
- **Toys for Toddlers and Pre-schoolers.** Choose toys that are quiet to play with, for example, soft toys and puzzles with large pieces. Simple toys engage the children and help parents relax. Perhaps there are people in your church who have good quality toys they could donate. Who could sit with the family and help with young children?
- **Bible Sticker Books.** Young children often love stickers, and a range of Bible themed sticker books can be bought from Christian bookstores.
- **Christian Kids' Magazines.** The Salvation Army puts out a kids' magazine called "KidZone". A few back issues of this magazine would be great to offer as a gift that the children could use during the service and take home with them. You can order them from the editorial department: 03 8878 2313
- **Children's Bible.** The Jesus Storybook Bible is an excellent choice for children of all ages. Older children will be able to read the stories, and younger children will enjoy the pictures.
- **Colouring or Activity Sheets.** There are endless free Bible themed colouring and activity sheets for all ages online. Search in Google images to find what you're looking for. Make sure you have pencils or textas available.



Plan for their return

After the service, thank families for joining you, and make sure they know you'd love to see them again. Pray for the family throughout the week. Think about how you can engage the children if they come back again. Were the resources available suitable for the children who attended? Is there anything else you might need?

Listen and see what words you can hear that begin with each letter of the alphabet. Afterwards see what you can tell someone else about the message.

A	
B	
C	
D	
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V	
W	
X	
Y	
Z	

I think the main point of today's talk was:

God might be saying to me:

One next step could be: