

# Should Kids Be Included in the Weekly Worship Service?

'Let the children come to me,' said Jesus.

Does what Jesus said have anything to say about the way we *do* and the way we *are* church?

New Australian research confirms that kids who regularly spend at least part of the service time in church are twice as likely as others to make a successful transition to adult church. *Lost in Transition - or Not?* by David Goodwin addresses the serious problem that kids who are raised in the church leave before they are adults and never come back.

Some churches have a separate program for kids during the church service and let the adults do grownup things alone. Some have the kids in for part of the service. A few do church together, intergenerationally - everyone in together.

Each model has its own advantages and challenges.

A separate kids program ties up lots of energy and resources, keeps those who run it separate from the worship service, and can make transition difficult for kids when they become too old for the kids program.

Some who have the kids in for the first part of the service before they leave for their own time wonder about the message we are subconsciously sending to the kids when they are taken out from 'real church', especially if they go out to an uninviting hall or their program is less than exciting.

Starting separately and then having the adults welcome the kids back in, to share the last part of the worship service, takes a little more coordination, but allows the adults to make a fuss of the children when they return and listen to what they have done. Adults can also share with the kids what they have been doing during that time.

Good questions to ask are: Why are we doing what we currently do? What are the benefits, and what are the disadvantages? Who is benefitting, and who is being disadvantaged?

Some churches are experimenting with intergenerational worship - all ages together. The *Sticky Faith* research has found that involvement in all-church worship during high school is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation. Some churches have a time with everyone together on a weekly basis, others once a term, usually in school holiday time. It means rethinking all that happens in the service so that it makes sense to kids, but hey! - that may not necessarily be a bad thing.