

MEETING THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

The spirituality of young children is intensely social, highly collaborative, and deeply embodied. It wonders. It pesters. It fidgets. It sings. The spirituality of children needs adults who are willing to mirror its exuberance. It requires spaces made to be exuberant in.

- J.L. Shattuck

REPETITION

Including repeated elements in worship, like familiar songs and simple rituals that happen consistently week after week, can help meet a young child's need to be able to predict what's going to happen in their environment.

MOVEMENT

Many young children connect with people and experiences using their whole bodies. A worship space that allows for a high level of movement (dancing, wiggling, snuggling) can meet their need to engage in the worship experience in an embodied way.

SHARED JOY

Young children can bring a great deal of joy and exuberance to worship spaces. When the community makes room for this energy and commits to reflecting it back to them, children feel fully welcome.

PARTICIPATION

Shared ritual activities like candle lighting can help meet a young child's need to "do together" with loved ones. Building in as many of these shared rituals as possible can keep kids engaged in what's happening.

FLEXIBILITY

Giving families several comfortable and accessible options for participation (like a cozy corner at both the front and the back of a worship space) can increase engagement and help families feel welcome.

