

Sharing our Faith@Home



“Parents are the primary faith teachers, mentors and role models for their children with the church as a reinforcement – not replacement – of the parent’s duties.” Rich Melheim, Faith Inkubators

Dear Parents

You are your child's prime spiritual teacher. And we, your church, want to support and encourage you in this important task. Holistic parenting includes physical, emotional and spiritual care.

Babies first experience the love of God through their parents, particularly their mother or prime carer. God is Love and we are channels of His love for our children.

As spiritual teachers we introduce our children to a lifelong process of learning. The successful integration of spirituality into our lives depends on knowledge, practice and experience acquired in the early years (specifically the first seven years).

As parents we know that these important years pass by too quickly. Our children need our enthusiastic support and commitment to grow spiritually from an early age.

It's said "the family that prays together stays together". And parents who pray, practise and talk about faith with their children from an early age generally find that they have open and communicative relationships with their children during their teens and adult years.

This leaflet is intended to encourage you to in your spiritual parenting.

If you would like more advice or would like borrow some helpful resources, please contact your minister or children's minister.

God be with you as you spiritually nurture your children.

COME TO CHURCH WITH YOUR CHILDREN.....

We encourage you to bring your children to church from birth. Church offers children and families a community of faith, love and hope.

At church children learn that God loves all types of people, young and old, happy and grumpy, abled and disabled.

The church members are the child's extended family, who commit to support parents in their spiritual parenting and contribute to the child's experience of God's love.

At church children meet friends with similar values who often become lifelong supporters in the challenging experience of growing up.

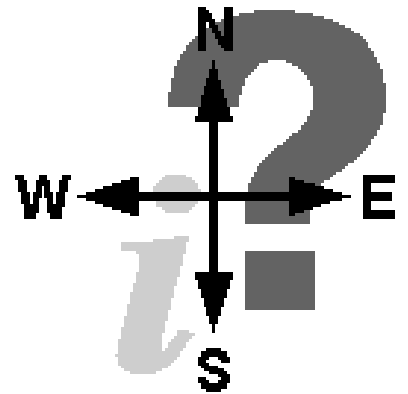
The distraction and demands of our lives can make regular church attendance challenging. But belonging to an inclusive community of faith offers not only knowledge, but an experience of a spirit that pervades everything and holds it all together.

Look for a Kids Friendly church where children are welcomed, nurtured, valued and celebrated and encouraged to participate and contribute.

We encourage you to prioritise your child's participation in your church community, so together we can nurture the gift of faith.

CREATE A SPIRITUAL THIRST IN YOUR CHILD

Everyday - in every way, you can create a spiritual thirst in your child. A thirst to know God, to enjoy His forgiveness, and to benefit from His love. You will enable your child to grow up knowing he is not alone in the universe. And your child will never lack a moral compass to guide his way.



You do not have to be perfect to be your child's spiritual equipper. We all have self-doubt and worry we might "mess up" or not give the correct answer. **But if we do our best God will do the rest.** We can't always "quench the thirst" of our child's spiritual needs, but we can "create the thirst" by trying these suggestions.

Seize any occasion to speak of God - When you're boogey boarding together in the sea, or walking in the forest, talk about how God has blessed us.

Weave spiritual lessons into your daily conversations - Seek teachable moments when children are watching TV, quarreling with their siblings or telling you about what happened at school.

Around your home, place visible reminders that testify to your faith in God - Your bible next to your bed, favourite quotes or bible verses stuck to the fridge, a cross around your neck.

Children are visual learners - What they see has more impact than what they hear. Our beliefs about God must be lived out rather than just told to them. If we want our children to accept God's forgiveness, we must forgive. If we want our children to understand charity, we must give. If we want them to strive for truth we must be truthful. If we want them to love unconditionally, we must love.

Participate enthusiastically in church - Make church attendance non-negotiable. On Sunday we go to church, on Monday we go to school. Encourage your child to love and enjoy it. Talk about what your child learnt at church each Sunday. Encourage your child to cultivate friendships with those who are like-minded in spiritual matters.

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
Deuteronomy 6:5-8

And when you drive to netball or watch a movie together, or your child comes home in tears because of bullying – Talk about your faith!

PRAY WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Prayer is crucial to spiritual growth. Prayer is one way we engage and talk to our spirit. Teach your children how to pray.

EXPLAIN:



When we pray we talk to God.



This can be done in our minds or out loud.



This can happen at home, at church, at school, anywhere.



Prayer is for saying thanks, asking for help, thinking of others, saying we're sorry.



Jesus (God) is our friend who never leaves us.

ROLE MODEL:



Share your own prayers. Thank God for your child when you put him/her to bed.



Pray for the family as you set off on a journey.



Pray with your child at bedtime inviting him/her to contribute to the prayers.



Pray a blessing for your child as he/she leaves for school and teach him/her to do the same for you.



Pray for your child when he/she is feeling scared or vulnerable and teach him/her to do this for him/herself.

ENCOURAGE:



Pray as a family.



Pray at mealtimes or sing a grace



Pray at bedtime.



Teach them the Lord's Prayer

THE LORD'S PRAYER (the prayer Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him how to pray)

Our father in heaven
Hallowed be your name (holy is your name)
Your Kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For yours is the kingdom
The power and the glory
Forever and ever
Amen.

A Helpful Prayer Resource: Family Prayers for Younger Children and their Parents by Rosemary and Peter Atkins.
Prayers form a key part of our relationship with God. They acknowledge God's strength and guidance for us. They express our gratitude to God and our need of God's help. Children will learn to pray as their parents pray with them and for them. Your child will love choosing prayers from this New Zealand book.

SHARE YOUR FAITH

At bedtime...Children love rituals. From the time your baby arrives from the hospital start a positive bedtime ritual of cuddles, stories, prayers and blessings. Choose a variety of stories including moral, values and faith stories. Bless each other. Play soothing spiritual music as your child goes to sleep.

A Blessing for children and parents

Face each other. As parent makes the sign of the ✝ on child's forehead she says:

"(name) may God bless you and keep you. May God's light shine around you (wave your hands around child's head and shoulders) and through you (lift up child's arms into the air) and grant you his peace (place your hands on child's shoulders). Amen."

Repeat with child blessing parent.

At mealtimes...Make mealtimes a special family time of thanksgiving and sharing. Share a regular family devotion.

Some family graces:

Superman Grace

Thank you Lord for giving us food (one arm up)

Thank you Lord for giving us food (other arm up)

Thank you Lord, Thank you Lord (wave arms)

For giving us food (circle arms around and take off)

The Adams Family

Diddle dee dum (click, click), Diddle dee dum (click, click)

Diddle dee dum, Diddle dee dum, Diddle dee dum (click, click)

We're hungry and we're thirsty,

We're rumbly in our tummy

We know the food is yummy

And so we thank you Lord (Repeat chorus)

Thank you for the world so sweet (hum hum)
Thank you for the food we eat (yum yum)
Thank you for the birds that singalingaling
Thank you God for everything.

Row Row Row the Boat

We thank you Lord for happy hearts
For rain and sunny weather
We thank you Lord for this our food
And that we are together.

Johnny Appleseed Grace

Oh the Lord's been good to me
And so I thank you Lord
For giving me the things I need
The sun and the rain and the apple seed
Thank you thank you Lord.

HELPFUL RESOURCES for nurturing Spirituality in children:

BOOKS

Old Turtle by Derek Wood - When all of creation--trees, stones, ants, the sky, fish---begins arguing over who or what God is, quiet Old Turtle is the only one who has the wisdom and ability to see beyond herself to capture the essence.

In the name of God by Sandy Eisenberg - After God created the world all living things on earth were given a name...But no one knew the name for God. So each person searched for God's name.

Emma and Mommy Talk to God by Marianne

Williamson - An inspiring story, written as a support for parents to help teach children that God is here and with us.

A Treasury of Moral Stories - a compendium of great fables and stories creating opportunities for you and your children to discuss values and morals.

The Lectionary Bible by Ralph Milton – three wonderful books paraphrasing bible stories following the lectionary with beautiful illustrations by Margaret Kyle.

Barnabas Children's Bible

You're Special (and all the other beautiful books) by Max Lucado - The world tells our kids they're special if they have brains, looks, talent. God tells them they're special just because.

The Treasure Tree – a delightful tale of Lion, Otter, Beaver and Golden Retriever that gives children insight into different personality types and why God made us all different.

Wriggle – a delightful collection of quirky God tales written by Rev Tom Kerr of Australia for “the inner child in all of us”. Each story also has an “unwrapping the story” section which makes it good for family discussions.

VeggieTales Family Devotionals - a fun and interactive collection of family devotionals including a story, bible facts discussions, activities and games, prayers and practical applications.

DVD'S – Veggie Tales DVD's. A great way to hear some of the favourite bible stories (for kids and adults!)

MUSIC CD'S – Fifty Action Bible Songs (great to play in the car on trips etc – available from the Warehouse for \$6.95).

COMPUTER GAMES – Bible Stories (The Learning Company) – quizzes, stories and games.

Once Upon a World – a wonderful collection of 46 old and new testament bible stories written by Robert Duncan and read by famous actor John le Mesurier. Some of the stories can also be downloaded for free from the website

www.onceuponaworld.net

"The home is the single most powerful arena on earth to change a life for God."

"For most parents, during the first few hours after birth as they hold that precious new baby in their arms, even the harshest critics of the church are often touched with wonder and mystery at such a miracle. It is said the hardest day in an atheist's life is when she finds herself profoundly thankful and has no one to thank." Marianne Williamson

"If you want a teenager who won't go to bed at midnight without first telling you about the date she's just been on, then start sharing your highs and lows when she's a toddler – it works!" Rich Melheim, Faith Inkubators

"There are no teachers so effective for good or evil as parents."

"Our country's future will be determined by the home and the school. The child becomes largely what he is taught; hence we must watch what we teach, and how we live."

CONTACT:

Sharing our faith@home is a Kids Friendly Resource
Email us: admin@kidsfriendly.org.nz

