



Introducing Children and Youth to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

Holy Baptism joins people of all ages, including young children and youth, to the body of Christ. Whether baptized or still anticipating baptism, people who are gathered into the Christian assembly participate in worship. So, all people – young, old, and in between – should be introduced to the resources used in worship.

As part of the effort to introduce *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in your community of faith, it is important to include young children and youth. Often drawn to variety or new things, young people are particularly teachable when it comes to new songs, prayers, and patterns for worship. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes new compositions, global rhythms, classic hymns, and a wealth of other material that will be of interest to children and youth.

The “how” of introducing young people to this new book of worship is rich with possibilities. The suggestions listed below provide a place to start. These may cause you to think of other creative possibilities. And the things you try with children may lead you to discover things that will work with other generations. Whatever you decide, approach the task with care and delight, knowing that words and music that are placed in the mouths and on the hearts of young people are likely to form them in faith for a lifetime.

Consider these ideas:

In Worship

- Very young children should be encouraged to hold the book as soon as they show interest. Turning pages and seeing the images created by art, words, and music contributes to a child’s sense that they are included when they see others holding the book.
- Children are more likely to feel connected and participate if they can see. Encourage families with children to sit near the front, where children can see what is happening in worship. Help older children follow the action by showing them where the action corresponds with the words, art, and music in the book.
- Encourage children and youth to be a part of the movement of worship – standing, kneeling, following a procession, making a sign of the cross, coming to the table during Holy Communion, sitting near the font



during a baptism, bringing gifts forward when invited, sharing their own gifts when the offering is gathered, exchanging the peace of Christ.

- If your worship includes a “time for children,” consider explaining in clear and simple ways some of the actions and words of worship. When the explanation is then “connected” with the biblical readings for that day, by participating in this time together, the children are participating in the assembly’s proclamation.
- Use the “Kids Celebrate Worship” resources from Augsburg Fortress as weekly handouts for children. When that is not possible, consider including announcements or graphics in the “announcements” part of your weekly worship folder that are intentionally designed for young people.
- Many of the new hymns and songs have refrains. Take time to teach these to the whole congregation, increasing children’s participation in the singing by intentionally inviting them to join in.
- Provide regular opportunities for hymn-sing preludes, where both new songs and old favorites can be learned and enjoyed. Ask a variety of members, including youth, to choose the hymns that will be sung during these preludes.
- Encourage the directors of youth and children’s choirs to use the hymns and psalms from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in planning their musical offerings for worship and as a regular part of their rehearsals.
- Invite and train young people who are able to participate in worship leadership, helping them to see how their role comes to expression in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

In Christian Education

- Use announcements in Christian education classes, in newsletters, and on bulletin boards to encourage families to talk with one another about their worship experience each week.
- Teach hymns from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in Sunday School using a variety of methods – audio, visual, print, projected, hands-on, movement. Incorporating rhythm instruments, movement, and other artistic responses (drawing, painting) helps children learn more quickly.
- Use the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* “Calendar of Sundays and Principle Festivals” to teach about the church year, saints, and important church figures. Look for additional helpful resources on the websites www.elca.org/worship and www.augsburgfortress.org.



- Use the art included in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to shape discussions about symbols of faith or discipleship. This can be done in different ways depending on what is appropriate for the age group. Use the art to encourage drawing or painting young peoples' own expressions of faith.
- Use the “Kids Celebrate Worship” resources from Augsburg Fortress with younger children (ages 6-10) in Sunday School.
- Use *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* as a resource in First Communion classes. Present a copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to the children upon entering First Communion classes or Confirmation instruction.
- Use *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* as a resource in confirmation classes, especially when studying *Luther's Small Catechism* and services related to Holy Baptism. (Remember, confirmation is an affirmation of baptism.)
- Explore together prayers and the words of hymns, songs, and canticles within *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. There are many additional resources in this book of worship that may serve as topics for discussion, especially among junior and senior high school students.

In the Home

- Encourage families to use *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for personal and family devotions. During Advent and Lent, learn the prayers or words from worship services used during that particular season of the church year. Responsive Prayer can be used with children who are able to read.
- Explore some of the psalms and say or sing them together whenever your family prays.
- Celebrate Baptismal anniversaries with children and youth, using the services of Holy Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism as the guide for “remembering” and giving thanks for their baptism.

Remember, this is but a beginning. Work with others to intentionally include children and youth in the introduction of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Your efforts are likely to contribute to more fully including *all* generations in worship.

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