

Strengthening Invitation Towards Families

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Welcoming the Gen X, Millennial, Gen Z and Alpha generations means welcoming...

Families

Today's families may not look like the traditional family structures you're used to, so it's important not to assume that every family is made up of one mom and one dad. There are blended families with more than two parents...single parent families...grandparents or other relatives acting as the parent...foster families...polyamorous families...

Ask how children and adults are connected, don't assume!



The 2SLGBTQ+ Community

In 2018, the LGBTQ2+ population was made up of almost 1/3 youth, compared to the non-LGBTQ2+ population which was less than 1/6 youth. (StatsCan)

Ask what names and pronouns (she/he/they) folks would like you to use – share your own!

Consider your washroom situation – is there a single-stall option?



Children

Caregivers often enter worship spaces feeling pre-judged – reassure them that they are welcomed as they are, noise and all. This can be done verbally or with a sign/pew card.

Consider having a “yes” space in your sanctuary for children that prioritizes their comfort and worship styles. Can they see what’s happening? Is there a chair that is their size? Is there a table to do a worshipful activity on?



St. John's UC, Marathon, the children's space is off of the sanctuary where children can see everything taking place at the front of the church



Grace Lutheran Church, Apple Valley MN has their "pray ground" front and center

Ensure family bathrooms, potty seats and change tables are available and easy to find for any gender of parent.

How can children participate in your worship beyond just the designated “kid’s time”? This could be worship bulletins, having them help as readers, greeters, collect offering or even serve communion.

Appreciate children and youth as whole persons. Learn their names, but also what they care about – invite them to share their unique faith stories. Benefit from fostering inter-generational friendships – for many families who are far away from grandparents or have a challenge relationship with older relatives “adopted” church grandparents can be an amazing gift

Generational Differences

Conversations around consent are very different today. Children and parents may feel uncomfortable if someone touches their child without permission. Discuss as a community what a *culture of consent* can look like.

There may be differences around what is considered appropriate dress, including head coverings – do we really mean “come as you are”?

There may be different feelings around what “regular attendance” looks like. Some families may consider attending once a month as regular attendance. Let’s celebrate when folks are with us, not shame them for having competing priorities

An Attitude of Welcome

All of this work comes from a central attitude shift from expecting younger generations to attend to church to feeling excited to have them among us. This attitude shift starts by holding these individuals in love, let’s pray for them and nurture a deep care for their lives.

Hospitality is anticipatory, not reactionary. By fostering this attitude of curiosity and care you’ll be able to come up with ideas of how to welcome families best in your space!