

# FCCOG PrayGround FAQs



## 1. What is a PrayGround?

A PrayGround is an intentional area in the Meetinghouse for children and families to participate in the worship service.

Through the PrayGround, we help young children worship in heart, mind and body in age-appropriate ways. These ways include the use of quiet toys, books, coloring pages and objects that relate to the Scripture, season or worship theme.

## 2. Why a PrayGround?

Our goal is to create an environment where families are encouraged to worship together, children are welcome, and all members' faiths are fueled at their individual levels. This also allows families to learn liturgical flow and teach worship behavior. It is through the process of teaching children what worship looks like that they understand how to be active participants in the worship service.

## 3. Who is it for?

While geared and designed for toddlers/preschoolers and their families, the PrayGround welcomes all who wish to worship through it. A PrayGround Supervisor is in the space every Sunday, allowing families/caretakers the option to worship in the PrayGround or seated nearby.

## 4. Why is it located in the Chapel area?

PrayGrounds are often near the front of the worship space so children can better see and hear during the service. This helps to encourage their participation in worship and reassure understanding that they belong here!

## 5. Isn't it loud?

Not really! At least not any louder than if the same children were sitting in the chairs. Research shows that children are more likely to make noise when they feel separate from the worshipping congregation. Situating the PrayGround in the Chapel and filling it with engaging soft play objects to worship helps to keep any noise at the right volume.

## 6. Does the activity and noise distract the pastors?

Not at all! The pastors love seeing and hearing the bustle occurring within the PrayGround. It's a huge blessing to be witnesses to the new life in our congregation.

## 7. What if a child tries to walk/run up to the Chancel area?

Sometimes children want to be closer to what's going on in worship. They may want to dance in the aisles or come up to the Chancel when a prayer is happening. That's okay! As Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:13-14). Children being drawn deeper into the act of worship is a beautiful thing in our book!

## 8. Are snacks okay?

We encourage families/caretakers to do what is right for their children and their individual needs. If that entails a snack, please use the red chairs in the PrayGround as a designated snack area. While we love the heart of a sharing child, for the safety of everyone in the PrayGround, snacks should only be for individual consumption and cannot contain commonly known allergy items (i.e., nuts, nut butters). Also, please note that snacks are available for everyone during Community Hour following the worship service!

## FCCOG PrayGround Tips to Help Your Child Worship



- **God puts the wiggle in children and calls it good - and so do we!** Know that you and your child(ren) are most welcome in worship just as they are - wiggles, giggles, cries and all. We trust families/caretakers to know what's best for their families and children in any given circumstance.
- **“In The Beginning:”** Children may not yet be familiar with the “flow” of worship. Start by helping children to learn about the quieter times and louder times during the service. Children learn to worship by participating and practicing!  
Here are some ideas:
  - During quieter times of worship (i.e. prayers of the people, Scripture readings, sermon):
    - Invite children to fold hands, kneel or bow their head during prayers.
    - Invite them to listen for the word “Amen,” which ends the prayer and which they can then say with the congregation.
    - Coloring during the scripture readings or sermon is encouraged. The provided pages are often coordinated with the worship theme anyway.
  - During louder times of worship (i.e. hymns, call and response readings, unison prayers):
    - Invite children to stand and sing or move during hymns.
    - When a time of music does not call for everyone singing (such as a choir anthem, soloist, prelude/postlude), dancing and movement is great!
    - Invite children to clap when the congregation claps after a gift of music was given by a choir or individual. This is a great way to praise God together!
- **“Whispered Questions:”** Quietly ask your child questions like “What did you like about the hymn we just sang?” or “Who sang that anthem?” or “Did you notice [insert word here] being said a lot today? What do you think it means?” These questions can be especially helpful to keep children engaged in worship.
- **Jesus took breaks, too:** If you feel that your child is too noisy or is overstimulated, please do what you feel is best for your child at that moment. Some suggestions might be to walk around the Meetinghouse or building, or to find a quiet space outside until the child is ready to be in the worship space again.