

You and Your Baby at St Paul's



A little booklet to answer a few questions and help you get connected and access the support we want to give you.



Listen to God Enjoy Him Do what He says

Sunday Mornings

Where can I breastfeed my baby?

If you're happy to discreetly feed them in church you're very welcome to do so. If you'd like a bit more privacy but still want to hear the service, Garden Room 2 is available all morning and has feeding cushions and a live audio feed. Other mums choose to sit on the sofas in the concourse. Please go wherever you're most comfortable.

Where can I heat up my baby's bottle?

Boiling water is available from the Hydroboil in the Servedy. Help yourself or if it's coffee time ask one of the servers for boiling water. If you'd prefer to use a microwave there is one in the youth kitchen (walk past the office towards the youth area).

Where can I change my baby's nappy?

There are changing facilities in the ladies' and men's toilets. Please put nappies in the labelled bins provided.

What age does my baby go out to crèche, or whatever they call it? Do they have to go or can I keep them in church with me?

Our group for babes in arms, bum shufflers and crawlers is called Stepping Stones and meets in Garden Room 1 (just out of the back door by the organ or left at the toilets and to the end of the corridor). There is no lower age limit, so feel free to make use of this facility at whatever point you feel comfortable. If you'd rather not leave your baby with the team there you can stay with them. Equally, if your baby is content or sleeping in church you're welcome to keep them in the service.

What if my baby gets upset, fills their nappy or needs feeding during Stepping Stones?

When you drop your child off make sure to let the leaders know where you are sitting and what you would like them to do if your

crumbs I see a little girl who insists on going two pews up to share peace with someone she's never met. I hear a little boy slurping (quite loudly) every last drop of his communion wine out of the cup determined not to miss a drop of Jesus. I watch a child excitedly color a cross and point to the one in the front of the sanctuary. I hear the echos of Amens just a few seconds after the rest of the community says it together. I watch a boy just learning to read try to sound out the words in the worship book or count his way to Hymn 672. Even on weeks when I can't see my own children learning because, well, it's one of those mornings, I can see your children learning.

I know how hard it is to do what you're doing, but I want you to know, it matters. It matters to me. It matters to my children to not be alone in the pew. It matters to the congregation to know that families care about faith, to see young people... and even on those weeks when you can't see the little moments, it matters to your children.

It matters that they learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome, that their worship matters. When we teach children that their worship matters, we teach them that they are enough right here and right now as members of the church community. They don't need to wait until they can believe, pray or worship a certain way to be welcome here, and I know adults who are still looking to be shown that. It matters that children learn that they are an integral part of this church, that their prayers, their songs, and even their badly (or perfectly timed depending on who you ask) cries and whines are a joyful noise because it means they are present.

I know it's hard, but thank you for what you do when you bring your children to church. Please know that your family - with all of its noise, struggle, commotion, and joy - are not simply tolerated, you are a vital part of the community gathered in worship.

Finally an encouragement, to come to church even when it feels really tough (from iamtotallythatmom.blogspot.ca)

Dear Parents of Small Children

You are doing something really, really important. I know it's not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring.

I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant car seat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them.

And I see you with your toddler and your preschooler. I watch you cringe when your little girl asks an innocent question in a voice that might not be an inside voice let alone a church whisper. I hear the exasperation in your voice as you beg your child to just sit, to be quiet as you feel everyone's eyes on you. Not everyone is looking, but I know it feels that way.

I know you're wondering, is this worth it? Why do I bother? I know you often leave church more exhausted than fulfilled. But what you are doing is so important.

When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, the Body of Christ is more fully present. When you are here, we are reminded that this worship thing we do isn't about Bible Study or personal, quiet contemplation but coming together to worship as a community where all are welcome, where we share in the Word and Sacrament together. When you are here, I have hope that these pews won't be empty in ten years when your kids are old enough to sit quietly and behave in worship. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it's too late. They are learning that worship is important.

I see them learning. In the midst of the cries, whines, and giggles, in the midst of the crinkling of pretzel bags and the growing pile of

baby gets upset - some parents like to be contacted straight away while others prefer to try distracting or feeding the baby for a short while before one of the team comes to get them.

Support and Advice

Which groups can I go to, to meet other mums or mums-to-be?

Oasis meets on Wednesday from 9.30ish to 11.15am. This group is open to all women with or without children and a crèche is provided. Again there is no lower age limit and mums can keep their babies with them or stay in the crèche and help settle them if they'd like. The content and structure of the group varies but usually involves worshipping together, praying for each other and doing a Bible study or course together.

Tiny Tots meets on Thursdays from 10 - 11.30am. This informal group is for pregnant women and those with babies who aren't yet walking to meet, chat and get to know each other better. This is a great option if this will be your first baby or any older children are already at school/nursery.

Tots meets on Fridays from 9.30 - 11 am. This very popular group has plenty of toys, proper coffee and a song time for everyone at the end. Great as your baby gets a bit older or if you have other children you'd like to bring along (Tots is suitable for 0—3s).

Where can I get advice on bringing up my child with their own faith?

Sign up via our website for our monthly parents and carers' newsletter which contains resources and ideas both for you personally and to use with your child at home. www.pinterest.com/kidsminister provides a summary of previous posts. We also have a St Paul's Parents and Carers Facebook group. We also run various different parenting courses which you'd be very welcome to come along to.

Who can I ask to pray for me when I'm struggling?

At the back of church you'll find yellow prayer cards, which you can write requests on and hand to any children's leader in a blue T-shirt. Anna, our Families' Pastor, would love to pray for and with you and is able to come and visit you at home or provide toys and coffee for you to drop in at church. Do make the most of other contacts you have in church, whether that be from a home group, one of the midweek baby groups or your pre-children days! We also recommend joining forces with one or two other parents and arranging some playdates where you can be real about how you're doing and pray for each other.

What support can St Paul's offer me in the days and weeks after I've had my baby?

In the weeks following the birth of your child you'll receive a baby basket from the Mother's Union at St Paul's delivered by Linda Watson with some practical bits to get you started.

We'd also love to bring you some home cooked meals, to give you one less thing to think about in those early days. Please send an email to anna@stpauls-stalbans.org with number of portions needed, food likes/dislikes/allergies, dates needed (if known), preferred delivery time and address. You may choose to ask for this as soon as your baby arrives or a few weeks later perhaps when dad is back at work or grandparents have returned home. It might be a good idea to send an email with all these details while you're still pregnant and then just send the dates through once your baby has arrived.

Where can I find resources to encourage and help me?

Our kids' library has magazines, books, CDs and DVDs on parenting as well as for babies. Particularly well recommended are *Families First Magazine*, *Praise Baby* CDs /DVDs and *The Pregnancy Book* by Will and Lucinda van der Hart. You can see what's available at www.stpaulskidslibrary.wordpress.com or just browse the library cupboard in the concourse by the spiral staircase.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Anna Hawken (Families' Pastor), Heather Kingsman (Babies and Toddlers Team Leader) or Jenny McKnight (Children's Minister).



Anna

07552 828982

anna@stpauls-stalbans.org



Heather

01727 899324

h1@vanuber.com



Jenny

07871 555687

jenniferm@stpauls-stalbans.org

We'd love to pray for you during your pregnancy and once the baby has arrived so do let us know any updates or developments that you are happy to share.