



## VICTORIA KIDS CHURCH (EMMA GHAZARIAN)

**P**arents and carers of young children will be familiar with the difficulties that often come in getting toddlers ready and into the car. In my experience, this task is always easier when they are excited about going somewhere. One day, when trying to motivate my girls to get ready because we were 'going to church,' my plan backfired. My 5-year-old daughter Chloe's response included eye rolling and the statement, "I hate church."

I had hoped bringing my daughters regularly to worship and familiarising them with church culture while they were young would give them the same positive experience I had had as a child. But when I saw her sitting next to me during worship disengaged with a sad look on her face, I questioned whether or not I should have brought her. I also realised by using language like "going to church" I had unintentionally conditioned her to believe that 'church' meant having to sit still and quiet for 30 min while not really understanding what was happening.

I hope my daughter's comments won't be taken as an insult to traditional congregational worship. I recognise that as our congregations become smaller in number, and ministers are stretched thinner, it's an increasing challenge for small congregations to reach the spiritual needs of all age groups. Let alone engage young children with their short attention spans and shallow comprehension. Thus, carers of these children often spend the majority of the worship managing behaviour during a mostly adult focused worship service.

Thankfully, when sharing my concern with other parents close to me, they too recognised the need for additional ministry focused specifically on children. We decided on a time other than Sunday morning and a different location. This way carers and children can still attend a traditional Sunday worship, while helping our children understand that church isn't a place you go, it's a community you're a part of.

We call our gatherings Kids Church, intentionally using 'church' with the hope to create a positive association with this word.

The neighbourhood house we are using includes an indoor play space, kitchenette with a fenced in

playground, perfect for preschool aged children. Like most programs, we unfortunately have been impacted with lockdowns and restrictions. When we were over limit for numbers indoors we adapted and gathered outside in a sculpture park. Not being tied a location means we can have the flexibility to change and adapt programs and venues as our children grow. Our focus is on building relationships and trust, introducing them to age appropriate spiritual practices and to the identity, mission, message and beliefs of Community of Christ. Hopefully, this ministry allows another avenue to be creative and equip them with different ways to gather and to be a church community.

I feel blessed that my girls have the opportunity to experience church specifically created for them that is fun and engaging, with simple spiritual concepts. I am grateful that other parents have jumped on board and made space for this in their family life and would like to express my gratitude towards the ministers involved in providing us with support and resources so that this can happen.

Kids Church is a ministry for Victorian children 6yrs old and under. Gathering monthly in Mount Eliza on the Mornington Peninsula. If you would like to know more or would like to give it a try please contact Kassandra ([kunger@cofchrist.com.au](mailto:kunger@cofchrist.com.au)) for more information.





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