
Holy Hacks: September 13, 2019

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

Hi, I'm Julia Mitchener, and I'm so happy to have begun serving as Priest Associate for Children's Ministries at St. Philip's. My husband, Jack, and I have two children of our own, Sanders, age 8, and Margaret, age 6.

I was a priest for almost ten years before our kids came along, and I sometimes cringe looking back at a lot of the assumptions I made about what parents could/should/would be doing about their children's religious formation. I had no idea how hard parenting would be and how many things could compete for a family's time and attention.

Maybe this is why I've come to cherish something my mother taught me when I was young; namely, that there is no place where God cannot be found, that there is no moment in time—no matter how messy or mundane—that cannot become holy.

Bringing little ones to church is important—knowing that they are part of a community of people who love God and who love them makes a huge difference growing up. Most of life is lived outside church, though, and that's what I want to focus on each week in this column. I want to talk about ways to help kids connect with God not just at the cathedral but in the carpool line; not just at the communion rail, where everyone's freshly scrubbed and on their best behavior, but at the fast food restaurant, where your toddler's throwing chicken nuggets while you try to force your six-year-old's hair into a bun for ballet.

Think of this as a place to learn some "Holy Hacks"—not because there are any shortcuts or "tricks" to faith but because there are lots of simple, everyday ways we can help our children grow in their knowledge and love of God and of the world God has made. I'll post things like short bedtime prayers, table blessings, resources for observing the different liturgical seasons at home, ways to help children cope with the death of a pet or the illness of a loved one, what to say when your kid asks why the heck we do some of the weird things we do in church. Nothing is off the table, so let me hear from you —julia.mitchener@cathedralATL.org. I'd love to know what's on your mind and in your heart.