
Holy Hacks: October 18, 2019

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

I recently heard about a little boy who high-fives his parents a lot during church. When his mother asked him why he does this, he replied, “Because whenever we finish a prayer, everybody says, “I’m in!”

Amen. “I’m in!” is actually a really good take on what this ancient word means. Usually defined as “So be it!”, *amen* is what we say to declare our desire to participate in God’s healing and redemptive work in our world. It is a great word to teach our children (even our littlest ones) and to encourage them to speak enthusiastically in church (high-fives optional).

Children know better than most what it means to commit themselves wholeheartedly to a cause. Whether it’s proving the existence of unicorns, compiling a Christmas list that’s five pages long, or planning for the Falcons to win the Super Bowl, kids bask in anticipation and possibility. They look forward unabashedly to the wonder and joy that are about to unfold. We adults tend to be different. We fear disappointment or worry we’ll look foolish. We’re acutely aware of all the things that can go wrong. So we hedge our bets. *Why aspire to something we probably can’t do? Why declare our love for someone who may not love us back?* Children—especially very small children—know nothing of this. They are “all in,” all the time. They live and love and long unequivocally. This gives them a bit of an edge on Sundays when it comes time to say *amen*.

Let’s face it—none of us is “all in” for God all the time. Often, our faith asks us to do things we’d rather not: *Forgive that person, after what she did to me? Pray for that nation, given the way they curse and attack us?* It can be hard to say *amen* to some of the prayers we speak in church.

When we gather together for worship, though, we do so, at least in part, to offer each other encouragement for taking on the difficult work our faith gives us to do. For pursuing the things that seem impossible—the forgiveness of those who have hurt us, the loving of our enemies, the seeking of justice for the poor and the oppressed, the trusting of God after a time of darkness and doubt. We gather to remind each other that none of us walks this path alone. We can risk saying “I’m in!” because others are making the same commitment. Our children will show us the way. *Amen!*