



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the Avondale Presbyterian Church (APC) starting the “My Special Worship Service” at 11:00 am each Sunday?

Answer: It is an extremely sad fact that many families with special needs individuals and/or a loved one with dementia don't attend church because they have never found it to be a comfortable, stress-free setting. APC understands this and welcomes God's children of all ages to worship Him on Sunday mornings. This is an inclusive worship service where we welcome families to worship together in the Sanctuary. Worshipping together helps strengthen families and forms friendships.

2. Why is attending Worship Service stressful for these families?

Answer: Worship Services are traditionally quiet and reflective, especially during the Sermon and the serving of Holy Communion. Many parishioners do not respond well to having distracting movements and/or loud sounds during these quiet times. If people want to talk during the “My Special Worship Service” – they are welcome to talk. If people want to dance in the aisles during this service – they are welcome to do this as well.

3. Why is it called “My Special Worship Service?”

Answer: This service is for a broad scope of individuals, from emotional and neurological disorders to physical challenges of all ages. Everyone is welcome and invited to this service.

4. What will this service be like?

Answer: This **half-hour service** will be as follows:

- Prelude Music (Before the service begins)
- Welcome and Call to Worship (Prayer)
- Music Video (e.g., Jesus Loves Me)
- Passing of the Peace (“May the peace of God be with you – And also with you”)
- Brief Scripture Reading (New Testament)
- Sermon (no longer than 5 minutes) - sometimes in the form of a Social Story – it will feature the Christian Theme for that week, and it will be interactive with parishioners.
- Offering and Prayer
- Music Video (e.g., “Down in My Heart”)
- Prayer and Benediction

***NOTE:** Weekly social time would enable everyone to connect and form friendships. Individuals can socialize with one another while their children play with the basketballs, color, etc. in the other half of The Great Hall.*

5. When will this weekly service begin?

Answer: This special worship service will begin Sunday, October 2, 2016 from 11:00-11:30 a.m. with social time immediately following the service.

6. What's different about "My Special Worship Service?"

Answer: There are several differences.

- A. First of all, the service will be one-half hour not a full hour.
- B. There will be repetitive elements included in the service for better learning.
- C. It will be an interactive time for everyone because everyone's voice matters.
- D. The environment will be loving, understanding, and supportive.
- E. It will foster an opportunity to connect with other Christian families.
- F. Singing, talking, and dancing at any time is encouraged – absolutely no hushing!

7. How will the sermon/message be delivered?

Answer: The "Message" will be about five minutes and might be, at times, in the form of a Social Story. Social Stories enable a person to put him/herself into the message.

8. Who can attend this service?

Answer: Anyone and everyone who desires something different from a traditional worship service, wants to have a more interactive worship experience, or wants to dance in the aisles if the Spirit so moves them, is invited.

9. Do parishioners have to be Presbyterian?

Answer: No. If you want to explore faith in a whole new, fresh way, you are welcome.

10. Will you administer Communion?

Answer: Yes, our Ruling Elders are ordained to administer Communion. Typically Communion is administered and received the first Sunday of the month. This will start in November 2016.

11. Will there be a Minister at this service?

Answer: There will not be an ordained Teaching Elder (Minister) presiding over this service in the beginning; however, Pastor Charlie Gross will provide the weekly theme and review the components of the service. There will be at least one ordained Ruling Elder officiating. One of our Elders has a 22-year-old daughter with an intellectual disability.

12. What do you hope to achieve with "My Special Worship Service?"

Answer: APC hopes that the larger community will come to accept individuals who might be different from them and realize that God is a God of all the people. Each one of us is here because God knitted us in our mother's womb. We were meant to be here and we were meant to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus. In addition, we want to encourage these men and women to eventually take on some of the leadership positions in the church and become part of a loving, Christian Family.

13. Can my child be him- or herself during "My Special Worship Service?"

Answer: Absolutely! In Mark 10, blind Bartimaeus began shouting when Jesus walked near him. The crowd wanted Bartimaeus to be quiet because he was a distraction. But Jesus welcomed the distraction of this blind beggar and healed him. And what about the children in the marketplace found earlier in the same chapter? The disciples tried to stop people from

bringing their children to Jesus. Again, they were a distraction. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:14 – New International Version).

14. What safety measures does APC utilize to protect our children?

Answer: APC requires a *Pennsylvania Criminal History Check* and a *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Check* for anyone over 21 years of age who works with children.

- We have windows in every classroom door.
- Men are not allowed to change diapers or accompany a child into the bathroom.
- Volunteers can only release a child to an authorized person.

15. Is APC able to welcome worshippers in wheelchairs?

Answer: Yes. Parking for the physically challenged is available at both the front and back entrances to all worship areas. Worship spaces in the Great Hall, Sunday School Rooms, Sensory Room, Youth Group Areas and Sanctuary are all wheelchair accessible. There is an elevator on all levels and the bathrooms meet ADA Standards. Personal sound systems for the hearing impaired are available in the Sanctuary. Let us know if you have a special request.

16. What is the goal of “My Special Worship Service?”

Answer: The goal is to help children and adults with physical, mental, and developmental differences (and their caregivers, friends, and relatives) grow in understanding of God’s great love, while reaching out to all who would like to become part of a church family. Your loved ones will find a warm, welcoming atmosphere at Avondale Presbyterian Church, so that each member may learn and grow in his/her walk with God.

17. What staff is needed for this service?

Answer: APC is reaching out to the agencies within Chester County to secure volunteers for the Sensory Room. These individuals have the training and knowledge to effectively work with special needs individuals. There will also be APC members and church leaders (Elders, Deacons, and/or Trustees) in attendance.

18. What is APC’s Sensory Room like?

Answer: It is a room divided into sections that correspond to each of the seven senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, proprioceptive, and vestibular. If your child would rather go to the Sensory Room than stay in the Sanctuary, families have that choice available to them.



19. Do I need to get dressed up to attend this service?

Answer: Absolutely not! We want you to come worship our Lord Jesus Christ with us. Whatever you decide to wear is fine. We want you to be comfortable.

20. How will you publicize this new worship service?

Answer: We are personally calling all the agencies in Chester County and the surrounding areas that would be interested in knowing about this service; however, word-of-mouth will most likely be the best way to reach out to the community. We shall also be contacting members of the print and electronic media.