St. Peter’s Family Service Liturgy Outline
by the Rev. Emily J. Garcia

This liturgy typically lasted 45 to 50 minutes, depending on the length of the sermon and the songs.

1. WELCOME
Invite children and parents to find a spot in the very first pews or on the cushions on the ground. The table should be set up and the candles lit.

2. SONG, PART ONE
We had a bin of child-sized musical instruments, which were for children and adults alike so that all could participate.

“Welcome to church! We’re going to start with a song. We’re going to come around and pass out instruments for everybody.”

Introduce the song. Two things worked for us: either one song with long verses and a refrain, and you teach one verse at the start and another at the end; OR one very short song at the start and end. The latter is what’s used here. Strong preference for songs with motions, like the Fisherfolk songs. “I’ll say the words once and show you the motions, then we’ll sing it once together.”

If there’s any explanation needed for the song, this is a good place for it. The musician leads the song through as many times as the congregation enjoys.

3. GOSPEL
“Now we’re going to hear a very short story about Jesus. This is from the Bible, and from the book in the Bible called Luke.” Any short excerpt of a Gospel will do, according to the rubrics in the BCP. Of course, it should be very closely and obviously related to the homily. At St. Peter’s there’s no expectation that this will match the Gospel for the day.

Luke 6: 43-45
‘No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

4. ACTION HOMILY
See page on drafting a sermon for this service.
“That was a very interesting part of a story about Jesus! I have something for us to do think more about it.”
5. EUCHARIST

The priest introduces communion. At St. Peter’s worship is versus populum (facing the people), and so the low table was arranged that way too. It was covered with a white tablecloth, rather than church linen, and the candles were in low ceramic bowls. Children gathered around the other three sides.

“Now we’re going to come to God’s banquet table. That’s a big beautiful dinner that God made for us. We eat this food to remember how God loves us. Everyone, come up close! Kids in front! You can come as close as you like, and don’t worry if you need to move around a little while you watch and listen. You can put your hands on the table, but wait to touch the bread and wine until I give it to you.”

Say the Eucharistic prayer; distribute communion; say post-Communion prayer.

6. SONG, PART TWO

“Now we’ll sing our last song, to celebrate together!”