

Doing Church with a Toddler!

Yes we may have all been there and 'welcome to motherhood' but this is my turn to tell the stories...



Church life as a single Mum...

It starts way before you even get in the car to drive to church, even at the age of 13 months a girl wants to look her very best, so she must of course accessorise her outfit, and if that means wearing a brown and orange necklace with her purple and turquoise dress then lets choose the battles and let that one slide! Who knows what we will be wearing to church by the time we are three!

Then there is the 'do I take the stroller or do I carry you battle' - I have orchestrated both of these scenarios and still post church mornings I am not entirely convinced which option is the greater of the two - except this week a little 14 month old friend decided he wanted to sit in the stroller and broke his little heart when we put the stroller in the car to leave.

As we enter into the church, the best (and some would say only) place to sit is in the back row, so if, this morning you have brought the stroller you need to discreetly yet confidently remove the chair on the end so the stroller can sit next to you - and then what does one do with that chair? There are no spare chairs hanging around - so you just quietly put it against the back wall and pretend all those eyes watching you are thinking happy thoughts! And that is all before you have even sat down! As you sit down you see the family that sat next to you last week walk past you, they too are trying to be discreet and not make eye contact as they pass your row and you are thinking - I bet they are thinking lets not sit next to the white lady with the baby....and so you sit in an empty row again - until church fills up and the seats next to you are just about the only option for the late comers to come and sit in.

The strobe lights and their various colours on the roof seem to keep the toddler entertained long enough to get through worship unscathed and of course, the music, to an African who has this natural ability to find the beat in any form is in her element even clapping hands to appreciate her joy in the music.

Being a Church of Christ Church, there is communion every week - a lovely communion table set up the back and down the sides of the church, complete with lace table cloth, 50 communion glasses on either end of the table and of course two plates of bread. Sounds nice - sounds like the norm - the norm that most churches have and you don't even think about - until - that is - the Sunday morning that your toddler has in fact started walking and leaves your side, only to toddle over to that very appealing lace table cloth at the communion table!

Yes you guessed it - somebody I know and love gently pulled on that lace table cloth long enough for her raging Mumma to call out 'Oya' (no in Kinyarwanda), she turned around quite indignantly as if to say - what do you want now - you mean I cant touch this either? Oh the images I had in my head of those full communion glasses going flying across the back of the church!

To bring the stroller or not to bring the stroller - maybe I should have brought the stroller because the exact same morning after the queues of communion were finished, and now the Pastor is up preaching - and who knows what he is thinking about this white woman with this toddler - there is so much more to explore in the eyes of a 13 month old. On the other side of the back of the church is a table, again with a black table cloth this time, and a whole bunch of electrical cords that also look quite inviting. Of course all cords lead to the entire sound system and visual projection of the church....all she had to do was pull that one lead and the whole system is down! Give me strength - why do I bother some days - a church creche is not a right - its a privilege!

Then of course there is the echoing foyer that one said toddler loves to not only run around, but also practise any verbal sounds she has at the top of her voice - I thought Rwandan babies were all so quiet - nope - I get the noisy one - and there is only one noisy one! That is of course before she finds the plants in the pots, which has some lovely textured bark that feels great as it falls from your fingers and you can watch it float down to the floor. Or that little hole at the front door that the lock to the door goes into, if you lay on your belly, face down you can put your finger down that little hole and see what you can pick out of it! Oh the shame of a baby laying on her belly at the risk of getting dirty.

Aaaaah and this week we ventured past the last row of chairs and realised if I run as fast as I can and look as cute as I can I can get half way down the aisle, nearly to the man on stage talking into the microphone while Mummy discreetly runs full steam ahead in high heels to retrieve me as gracefully as she can, picks me up and politely smiles as we walk back to the last row - where no body will sit next week!

Oh - there was that week when I was wearing my pearl ear rings and thankfully there was a friend there I knew, who I had to ask her to come out into the foyer because the said toddler, had grab that lovely little white pearl from my ear and it had of course come undone.

Undone so much that I could feel the pearl that was stuck under neath my bra strap, which holding a run away baby and holding the back of the earring in my other hand, I could not retrieve on my own, so had to ask my 'new' friend to put her hand down my bra and retrieve my pearl! Oh the joys - oh the stories - wouldn't change it for the world!

If you don't have a toddler - enjoy your Church experience - and maybe just maybe you could bless that family that has the toddler and give them the gift of sitting through a church service un interrupted while you chase the toddler around the foyer!

