



The Parish of St. Mark – Ocean Park

WONDER SUNDAY: Listening For God's Word



In many churches today, people are searching for ways to grow deeper in faith across generations rather than in isolation from one another. *Wonder Sunday* is one way we are intentionally nurturing that shared life. It may feel different from what some of us grew up with, but it is rooted in ancient Christian practices and in a long tradition of forming faith through listening, reflection, and community.

This article explains what *Wonder Sunday* is, why it matters that we listen to one another, and why involving children in the liturgy is essential to their lifelong faith.

I. What Is Wonder Sunday?

Wonder Sunday is an all-age service in which the entire congregation – children, youth, and adults – remains together for the entire liturgy. Instead of a sermon, the leader, facilitates a guided time of reflection shaped by an ancient pattern of prayerful listening to Scripture called *Lectio Divina*.

A short passage of Scripture is read aloud three times, slowly and prayerfully. After the three readings, there is silence and an invitation to “wonder”:

I wonder what you like about the reading.

I wonder what troubles you (or, what questions you have) about the reading.

I wonder what God is saying to us in this reading.

Participants are free to share their reflections, or simply to listen. No one is pressured to speak. There are no “right answers.” The goal is not discussion or analysis, but attentive listening – to Scripture, to the Holy Spirit, and to one another.

This approach is inspired in part by the work of Godly Play, which draws on the educational insights of Maria Montessori. In this model, the leader does not supply conclusions or answers; instead, the community trusts that God is already at work in each person’s response and it is up to us to **listen for God’s Word**.

Wonder Sunday is not less intentional than a traditional sermon – it is differently intentional. It creates space for encounter rather than explanation.

2. Why Is It Important to Listen to One Another?

Christian faith is not formed by information alone. It is formed in relationship.

From the earliest centuries of the Church, believers gathered not only to hear teaching but to discern together what God was saying to them as a community. The Word of God is living, and it speaks through the gathered Body of Christ – not only through the clergy (clericalism).

When we listen to one another:

- ☞ We are reminded that the Holy Spirit speaks through every baptized person, not only through one voice at the front.
- ☞ We discover dimensions of Scripture we might never have seen on our own.
- ☞ We practice humility, patience, and attentiveness – virtues that are themselves part of Christian formation.
- ☞ We become a community shaped by shared discernment rather than passive reception.

Many people are surprised to find that a child’s insight, offered simply and honestly, can open Scripture in a way that is both profound and faithful. Just as importantly, young people need to learn that in the life of faith we come to know the truth not by remaining silent before experts, but by entering into conversation – listening, asking, wondering, and praying together.

Too often young people receive the message that they have little to contribute; yet Christian spiritual formation has always been shaped by shared reflection within the community of believers. When we invite their questions and honour their voices, we teach them that seeking God is something we do together. And when they see adults engaging openly in conversation and prayer, it gently dissolves the illusion that some people possess all the answers while others have none. Wonder Sunday gives us permission to receive these gifts and to practice this way of growing in faith as one body.

Listening, in this sense, is not a break from worship – it *is* worship.

3. Why Must Children Learn the Sunday Liturgy?

For generations, churches have separated children from the main service in order to teach them at an “age-appropriate” level. While this has many strengths, it can also create an unintended problem: when children eventually “graduate” from Sunday School, the liturgy feels unfamiliar, even alien.

They may know Bible stories, but not know how to pray with the Church.

Wonder Sunday helps bridge this gap by allowing children to:

- ☞ Experience the full rhythms of the liturgy from time to time.

- ☞ Learn how Scripture is proclaimed, how silence is kept, and how the community listens together.
- ☞ See themselves not as spectators or future members, but as full participants now.
- ☞ Develop a sense that worship is something we do together, not something done for them elsewhere.

When children grow up inside the liturgy rather than outside it, the transition into mature participation is natural rather than abrupt. The Church becomes their home, not a place they must later learn to navigate.

A Different Pace for a Different Purpose

Wonder Sunday does not always feel quieter. At times it can feel less predictable, even a little uncomfortable. There may be more movement, more voices, and occasionally the anxiety of wondering, “*I couldn’t hear what was said,*” or “*Should children really be this close to the altar?*” These moments can unsettle our expectations of how things are “supposed” to feel. Yet that very shift invites us to practice patience, generosity, and trust – trust that God is at work not only in stillness, but also in the lived reality of a community learning together.

In a world that is loud, fast, and full of answers, Wonder Sunday creates space for something genuinely countercultural: not perfect control, but shared attentiveness to God in the midst of one another.

It reminds us that faith is not only taught – it is caught.

It is not only explained – it is practiced.

It is not only individual – it is communal.

By wondering together, we become the kind of church that listens: to Scripture, to the Spirit, to one another, and to the voices of our children who are learning, even now, what it means to belong to the worshipping people of God, centred in Jesus Christ, our Friend and Helper. Amen.

With Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Taylor', written in a cursive style.

the Reverend David Taylor
Rector