

As Sarah walked into the door with the Open Space sign, she was greeted by some teenagers, who said hi and directed her into the fellowship hall. There, she was invited to take a card that would give her directions for helping with the service. Although Sarah was worried that she would do it wrong, the greeters assured her that there was no right and wrong, and that the Pastor would be there to guide her, and added that her help was really important. Sarah saw that there were bean bag chairs in a semi-circle with toys in the middle, an art table, chairs set-up in rows, some with musical instruments on them, tables for eating, a screen with a moving image saying "Welcome" and she heard music playing. People were laughing and talking, and almost everyone went out of their way to say hi to her. She had no idea what to expect, but she already knew this was different from the way she imagined church to be. The announcements were so welcoming, that she really did feel like the space was open and she could move around. Sarah also felt as though she mattered, because the announcement person said "We create the space together" and "Come as you are and be who you are." Sarah was also less afraid than she thought because the announcer said you could ask questions during church.

Everyone stood for the Opening Song, and then the pastor invited up the person with the Opening Prayer card. Everyone was looking around, and Sarah realized that it was her! She went up front and asked everyone to read the prayer on the screen with her. And they did! Sarah had no idea church could be a place where she was listened to and respected.

After that, everyone sat and someone read a Bible story. The pastor talked about the story a little bit, and then Sarah did an activity that helped her learn the story and integrate it into her life. As Sarah would come back over the weeks, she would see times of laughing and playing, times of holy silence, and times of building community. She came to know and love the people there, and there was so much space in the service to talk to others, she felt surrounded by a caring community with Jesus at its center. After the message time, there was a song, and then someone got up to do Talent Show for God Time. Sometimes people brought in animals, or played songs, or demonstrated something they were good at. Everything people did related to their faith in God, and they shared those stories.

The next portion of the service was a prayer time, but it almost felt like getting to know and help each other. Anyone there could say a prayer, and then afterwards say, "Lord in your Mercy," and everyone else would say "Hear Our Prayer." Even the two and three year olds were helped to say prayers for the group. Then, the pastor said "Peace Be With You" and everyone repeated her words to one another. Sometimes, as the pastor said was ok, people waved to each other or shook hands, but most often people hugged.

Sarah had never seen a church work like this one – the Offering, which came next, was a dance party! There was a music video on the screen, and she danced back to the table. She did not have enough to pay her rent this month, but instead, at the pastor's invitation, she wrote down things on a piece of paper that she could give to God: prayer time, reading Bible time, checking on her neighbor. She resolved to bring in at least a quarter every time she could.

After the offering, as the pastor explained, came "the work of the people", which she said was called liturgy. She said P meant Pastor and C meant Congregation, and that she would say some parts and we would say other parts. Then she told this amazing story about Jesus sharing his body and blood in bread and wine. A five-year-old and a four-year-old came up and were handed the cups of wine and grape juice. As Sarah went up front, the pastor gave her bread, and said, "Jesus bread for you." The kid help up the cup and said, "This is Christ for you." She couldn't believe how serious the kids were, and how much it clearly meant to them. After communion, there was a blessing, and a final song. So many people had worked together to make the worship happen, all without special training or knowledge!