

FAQ About Connecting Children

Why would my church want to participate in the “Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer” Initiative?

A church might want to participate in the South Carolina United Methodist Conference's Lilly Endowment grant initiative to enhance its ministry with children by fostering their spiritual growth through worship and prayer. This grant supports creating intergenerational worship experiences, incorporating arts and storytelling, and connecting worship to family life. It also emphasizes inclusivity, including children with disabilities, and provides training and resources to strengthen children's engagement in faith practices. Such initiatives help churches nurture children's faith, deepen their connection to God, and build supportive communities.

When we apply to be in a cohort, does that mean we receive grant money and then we figure out how we will use the money?

No, not really. A grant from the Lilly Endowment will fund specific training, coaching and support for each cohort church to develop and implement a plan for ways they grow their children's ministry and intergenerational worship. Micro-grants will be given to cohort churches to fund Messy Church, or for special programs which may include money for instruments, culinary arts resources, dance, drama, speaking, story-telling, etc.

Can the pastor do this alone?

No, the pastor must have a team to support this work.

Can a church do this without their pastor committed to this work?

No, this requires a commitment of both the pastor and the laity.

What if our church wants to partner with one or two other churches?

A United Methodist church may partner with other churches who are in full communion with The United Methodist Church. (A United Methodist church must be the lead church.)

Full communion relationships

- The African Methodist Episcopal Church
- The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- The African Union Methodist Protestant Church
- The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- The Union American Methodist Episcopal Church
- The Uniting Church of Sweden
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The Moravian Church of North America
- The Episcopal Church (pending final approval in 2027)

What if I don't know who to ask at my church to be a part of the cohort team?

The Connecting Children Leadership Team will provide support to churches who want to apply and need some assistance with planning and figuring out if they can be ready.

What if my church does not have any children?

This will be a discussion, with possible questions such as: What are your strengths as a church? What challenges and obstacles will need to be overcome? What is your commitment level to this work? What other churches could be partners with you in this initiative?

Why should my church apply?

- My church wants to create a culture of belonging for all children
- My church wants to increase the number of children in worship
- My church wants to increase the number of ways children participate in worship
- My church wants to learn ways to develop an intergenerational worship experience.
- My church is seeking ways to heal and work together in ministry.

What is "in it" for my church? What will we receive if we are a part of a cohort?

Cohort churches will receive training and coaching at no cost. Special funding from the grant will provide additional support for cohort churches to:

- Create a children's ministry program to teach children how to use communication arts (writing and speaking prayers, homilies, scripts, story, song in front of a congregation or audience with confidence).
- Create a children's ministry that integrates the arts into worship such as singing, instruments, culinary, story telling, drama, dance, etc
- Receive training and funding to start or continue Messy Church
- Receive free training for N4 Story Exchange to develop relationships and empathy
- Access Portico for free classes, courses, books and Bible studies.

How much work is involved to be in a cohort?

- One in-person training (full day - 6 hours) will be scheduled each quarter (4 total for the year)
 - Quarter 1 – Portico, Culture of Belonging, and goal setting
 - Quarter 2 – N4 Story Exchange Training
 - Quarter 3 – Messy Church, USA Training
 - Quarter 4 – Intergenerational Worship, children's ministry areas
- Following each quarterly in-person training will be 2 online coaching and support training sessions (1.5 hours each) (8 total sessions)
- Time to plan, implement and be accountable to your goals.

For more information, go to umcsc.org/children, or email Toni Taylor (ttaylor@umcsc.org) or Nona Woodle (nmwoodle@umcsc.org) if you have additional questions.