



FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer

What is the Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer Ministry?

The mission and ministries of the grant will take place over five years and will demonstrate the many ways we acknowledge the importance of children in worship and prayer through corporate worship, mission, camps, and retreat experiences.

The goals for this grant, through our South Carolina United Methodist connectional system, will impact more than 60 churches over 5 years, 500 children, and reach more than 7,000 congregation members.

Our connectional system can allow us to organically impact children in other United Methodist Church conferences, and through our global partnerships with Messy Church USA, Narrative 4 and UMC Discipleship Ministries.

Who leads the effort?

The Children and Intergenerational Worship Leadership Team will lead the grant initiative. It will be comprised of clergy, laity, artists, worship leaders, a congregational specialist, parents, children, representatives from Messy Church USA and Narrative 4. In addition, the South Carolina Conference will hire a Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer specialist to oversee and implement the grant from the Lilly Endowment.

This team plans, executes and evaluates the grant. It will organize and schedule cohort training for each church to create a culture of belonging, set goals to shift from multigenerational to intergenerational worship, increase the number of children participating in worship and increase opportunities for children to share worship experiences through the arts.

What do churches need to consider before they apply?

This team will accept applications from churches every year and select up to 12 churches to participate in a new cohort. The selected churches will bring a team to participate in training for the grant project once each quarter. Suggested team members might include:

- Elder, deacon or local pastor (senior pastor).
- Youth and children's ministers (clergy or laity).
- Worship Committee member (child advocate).
- Choir/music director.
- Two adults of different generations.
- Children/youth and a parent or grandparent.

What are the expectations?

Training for each leadership cohort will be in person once per quarter, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Training for the remaining two months each quarter will be virtual, up to 2-hour sessions for group coaching, collaboration, and to share learning. Portico will be the tool through which we deliver courses, book studies and other resources. The grant leader/specialist will visit each cohort church quarterly to check in with the pastor and team members. This will provide consistent accountability throughout the first five years.

Each cohort will reflect on the "Involvement of Children in Worship Services Survey," the Conference Statistical Tables and S.C. United Methodist Conference Children in Worship Continuum to complete a SWOT analysis, determine their current reality and set SMART goals to:

- Create a culture of belonging for children and adults.
- Increase the number of children participating in worship.
- Increase the ways children participate in worship.
- Create intergenerational mission and ministry opportunities.

These goals will be used for accountability and evaluation annually.

What will training include each quarter?

First Quarter: Focused on how to create a culture of belonging for children, and what intergenerational worship is. The cohort will analyze their data to set a goal on creating a culture of belonging. Portico will be shared as the learning management system for all courses, webinars and video to support learning.

Second Quarter: Focused on connection, moving from multi-generational worship to intergenerational worship. Narrative 4's Story Exchange training will provide a connection to each other through story. Each church will set a goal to host a Story Exchange to support empathy-building relationships.

Third Quarter: Focuses on intergenerational worship possibilities in the churches. Messy Church USA will provide start-up training, and each church will identify a commitment level to Messy Church as a model to support intergenerational worship experiences.

Fourth Quarter: Focused on increasing engagement in worship. Clergy and laity will learn the dynamics to design intergenerational worship; how to deliver sermons that speak to children, youth and adults; and ways to employ local artists to create an arts-focused children's ministry. Each church will host a "Children's Worship Sunday" to share the many ways children can lead and participate in worship.

What is the cohort team model?

The cohort team model is designed to provide a system to multiply the number of churches and children with consistent high-level training. In addition, Portico, an online learning management system, will host ongoing training in worship, prayer and spiritual formation. Coaching will provide additional support needed during transition. Cohort churches will mentor and support a church from the incoming cohort.

The approach of this initiative will help children come to know God and grow in faith through intergenerational corporate worship, informal worship (Messy Church), building connections (Story Exchange), family spiritual retreats, and artistic programs created with local artists. The cohort leadership model over five years establishes consistency in training and support for more than 60 churches and 500 children.

How can all churches participate?

- Children's Worship Day.
- Intergenerational Sunday (We Sunday).
- Messy Church experiences hosted by cohort churches and shared in the community.
- Story exchanges hosted in each cohort church.
- Children's worship experience during Annual Conference.
- Mini Conference focused on nurturing children in worship and prayer.
- Book Studies – Intergenerational Worship on Portico