



All Means All

I recently found myself in a meeting with a local school district who determined that a child's needs did not fall under their policy of "reasonable accommodations" and therefore they could not provide the needed support for this child's success.

One of the principles I appreciate most in the United Church of Christ is our commitment to diversity and inclusion. I have championed it in our offerings for children and youth for the last eight years in my role; all means ALL are welcome. But I know that this isn't always lived out for a myriad of reasons in our churches and society. In a society that has 7.1 million kids living with ADHD, another 1 million on the autism spectrum, and many more terms that fall under the umbrella of disability and neurodiverse, it can be a challenge to know how to welcome all children and what accommodations can look like.

With the Love of Children initiative, we are committed to providing resources, learning opportunities, and support as you take a closer look at the children you have been called to serve. We hope this newsletter provides the first step of many as you support the growing faith and lives of children.

By Rev. Trayce Potter

Even Small Moments Matter

I hadn't even realized that it had happened at the time.

When I lead memorial services, I have a standard thing that I do during the open mic sharing time. To help people feel more comfortable sharing, I run a wireless mic around the room so that folks can speak from right where they are (which is a form of inclusion, too!). But my other standard thing is that I always forget to bring a program with me!

So as it goes along I need to take a look at a program that someone is holding and, if I can't see the clock in the room, ask them for the time, too. In one particular service, I was in the back of the sanctuary and I knelt down to ask a church member who was in a wheelchair to see his program. He showed me, I said thanks, and I didn't think anything more of it. But a few months later, I learned that there was more to it.



His wife asked to talk with me, and she shared how much that small moment had meant to both of them. The first reason it had meant so much is that he is usually ignored and folks will speak to his non-disabled wife first and often only to her. But I didn't ask her for her program; I had asked him. The second reason it meant so much is that it didn't appear

to have been an intentional choice on my part, and he said that showed him how automatically included and valued he was in his church and by his minister.

It was a tiny moment, and yet it had meant a lot to them. Our inclusion work happens in many different ways: in large program and building decisions, in weekly and daily programs and procedures, and in the small moments, too. And it's not only direct actions and choices with the people we're working to include but also their family. When I attended the Nurturing Children with Disabilities in the Faith symposium this past month (listed in the resources), one of the things that stood out was the data about the families of children with disabilities and how much they said they valued their church community and support. It's really the work of many people, with many people. The big decisions and the big moments as well as all of the smaller ones too.

By Rev. Michelle Collins



The congregation I serve, Ebenezer United Church of Christ in West Seneca, NY, begins its service like most UCC churches in the United States. We begin with “no matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” This church also added “and whoever God created you to be.” This statement of welcome is often the first words spoken, after we listen to a prelude. But what does welcome really mean?

When I began my call in 2025 as the Associate Pastor of Faith Formation and Pastoral Care, I noticed the dedication the people here have to accessibility and the spirit of welcome. We have friendly greeters on Sunday mornings, ramps into the building with accessible doors, an elevator that can get you from the narthex to the sanctuary and to the community spaces. We still have room to grow to make our entire building accessible.

A less obvious dedication to welcome came in our Sunday School program, where we had already taken into consideration children’s differing abilities. The teachers and Christian Education Board took time, energy, and resources to do their best so that all could participate in Sunday school to the best of their ability. This made focusing on strengthening the ministry of the church for those with special needs a natural continuation in my first year.

One young boy, whom we will call “Christopher,” had been happily participating in the nursery and in worship services for short periods of time. In the year that I started, his family was working with early intervention to help him receive a diagnosis and proper educational care. In that time, he also turned 4. Because our nursery ages out at 3.5/4, I knew the next step would be to move him up into our pre-k/k class. With the help of the classroom teachers and a handful of volunteers who dedicated themselves as his personal aide, Christopher has been able to participate in Sunday School with his peers. He is given fidgets when listening to stories, and time to wiggle when he cannot sit through a lesson. His friends love to see him and include him in their play time.

Because of Christopher’s integration into the classroom, we’ve also added options for other children who may have less obvious but more common struggles. We have noticed an improvement in participation, enthusiasm, and attendance.

While welcome is not one size fits all, those with differing abilities are an asset to all communities. We learn with and from each other, and in doing so are more able to live into the body of Christ.

It has been a blessing to hear about the ministries of my cohort members in Love of Children. I’ve learned even more ways to expand our welcome and thank God for their presence in my life!

By Rev. Miranda E. Hammer

Cohort Notes & Announcements

Heads Up: Applications for the **2027 Love of Children Cohort** will be posted on September 1 and advertised here in this newsletter, with applications accepted through **October 31**.



SOME THOUGHTS FROM OUR TEAM

If children could teach adults one thing about faith, what do you think they would teach us?

“Ask good questions.” —Scott

“Pray bold prayers.” —Sarah

“Figure out what you believe, not what other people think you should believe.” —Michelle

“It’s okay to change your mind.” —Trayce

Featured Resource:

[Western Theological Seminary's Center for Disability & Ministry](#) and their 2026 Symposium Nurturing Children with Disabilities in the Faith

This is a great resource on inclusion for folks with disabilities and their families in our congregations and has a variety of things available on their website. This year's symposium was specific to children, youth, and their families. Keep an eye on their website for the videos to be posted soon. The Center gave their permission for us to share the [unedited video](#) of the event and their [resource files](#) for anyone who would like to dig in prior to their posting it.



Free Resource:



Each month we are trying to share something free to help you and your congregation's faith development program and families. Check out these free resources with two versions of a [Blessing of the Backpacks](#) and other bags, and two versions of a faith development [Teacher Commissioning](#) litany.

Love of Children is Hiring!

We are currently searching for a part-time remote Coordinator for Prayerground Development to join our team. You can find the position description and application [here](#). Check it out and please forward it to anyone you think might be great for the job!



Seeking Resource Suggestions:

We are seeking suggestions for our resource review team to consider! Right now we are particularly looking for suggestions of great resources (podcasts, webinars, websites, books, picture books, etc) for parents and guardians on supporting their children's faith development and social justice development. Please send your suggestions to loveofchildren@ucc.org. Thanks!



Upcoming Webinars

Faith@Home: Family, Formation, and Fun

[Rev. Richelle B. White, Ph. D.](#)

Kuyper College

This family friendly webinar explores the connection between the role of the family in faith formation. It delves into creative teaching and learning experiences that families can enjoy together. Approaches to teaching and learning include incorporating music, character development, exploration of history and culture in conversation with biblical teachings. Come and engage with pedagogical practices that will build a foundation for lasting faith.

Registration closes September 14, 2026.

[Zoom | September 16 | 12 – 1:30 pm EDT](#)

Across the Ages: A Unique Approach to Intergenerational Ministry

[Jack Davidson](#)

Spring Glen Church

This workshop will offer reflections on an experiment-in-progress, examining the successes and shortcomings of strategically intergenerational ministries and how they (dis)empower youth leadership in congregations. We'll consider reasons your ministry setting definitely doesn't want to but absolutely needs to invest in an all-ages model for youth ministry, and we'll begin to brainstorm ways to translate these approaches into your own setting.

Registration closes October 5, 2026.

[Zoom | October 7 | 12 – 1:30 pm EDT](#)

Spiritually Equipping Children and Youth During Difficult Times

[Deshna Charron](#)

University of Oregon

Around the world, communities are facing major social and systemic change. Signs of societal and environmental collapse are evident. Our attempts to live “independently,” create the experience of separation that leads to suffering, division and destruction, all of which runs counter to the sacred teachings present in all the World Religions, Earth-centered expressions and the teachings of Jesus. Nourishing children spiritually and equipping them with the skills they need to not just survive but thrive within this chaotic and stressful environment can ground, prepare, and inspire the next generation. We do this by providing spiritual practices, self-awareness exercises, and organizing tools so that youth and their communities may rise up resiliently, modeling a healthy, and whole way forward for all.

Registration closes November 9, 2026.

[Zoom | November 11 | 12 – 1:30 pm EDT](#)

August Fun Days:



August 1: National Mustard Day

This special day was created by the National Mustard Museum in Mount Horeb, WI. It was created as an annual event in 1991. To celebrate National Mustard Day, try different kinds of mustard, try mustard on new things or eat some mustard greens.



August 16: Tell a Joke Day

To fully participate and enjoy this day, just tell some jokes. You can do it in person or pass along a few humorous emails. That's easy enough to do. The more jokes you tell, the more fun this day will be!



August 21: National Senior Citizens Day

On August 19, 1988, President Ronald Reagan issued Proclamation 5847 creating National Senior Citizens Day on August 21. On this holiday, we encourage all to recognize and show appreciation for the value and contribution of elderly people to home, family, and society.



August 25: National Park Service Day

This holiday exists to show our appreciation for the many park rangers, service and maintenance personnel, as well as the many volunteers who serve to protect and preserve our beautiful national parks. And, they also work to keep you safe during your visit.



August 29: International Bat Night

This is a special holiday evening created in 1997 by EUROBATs, a European bat conservation group. Tonight is set aside to promote and enjoy these nocturnal creatures. The goal of International Bat Night is to educate people on the good things about bats and to dispel false rumors and myths.



For more information, feel free to contact Rev. Trayce Potter
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Love of Children Website

The Love of Children Website offers resources, stories, and support for children's ministry. Find tools for prayergrounds, intergenerational worship, and creating spaces where children are fully part of the church. "Let the little ones come to me."

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, email loveofchildren@ucc.org with "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

You can find these previous webinars on the Love of Children Website: ucc.org/childrens-ministries/

- Storytelling with Spirituality
- The Meaningful Inclusion of Children in Worship: Theology and Practice
- Impact of Social Context on Emotional Growth
- Trauma-Informed Ministry with Children
- Passing on the Faith to Children: Supporting Caregivers with the Process