

Learning, Growing, & Sharing

THE PRAYGROUND GUIDE TO WORSHIP!		
	PRELUDE	
	CHIMES START WORSHIP	
WE GATHER!		
	CALL TO COMMUNITY	
	CALL TO WORSHIP	
	CHORAL INTROIT	
	HYMN	
	PRAYER FOR WHOLENESS	
	ASSURANCE OF GRACE	
	PASSING OF THE PEACE	
	SUNG RESPONSE	
	CHILDREN'S MESSAGE	
	CHILDREN'S RESPONSE	
WE LISTEN!		
	FIRST LESSON	
	ANTHEM	
	SECOND LESSON	
	MESSAGE	
WE RESPOND!		
	HYMN	
	PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE	
	LORD'S PRAYER	
	CALL TO OFFERING	
	OFFERTORY ANTHEM	
	DOXOLOGY	
	PRAYER OF DEDICATION	
	HYMN	
WE GO TO SHARE LOVE!		
	BENEDICTION	
	CHORAL RESPONSE	
	POSTLUDE	
OUR SERVICE BEGINS!		
	COMMUNITY & SECOND HOUR	

When I first read my job description, I reread the word "Prayground" half a dozen times, confident someone made a typo. After I first visited the space, I completely understood and fell in love with the mission. One of my favorite things about Jesus, and about being a faith formation leader, is the call to meet people where they are, in their wholeness, seen and beloved by God, maybe especially even noisiest of us.

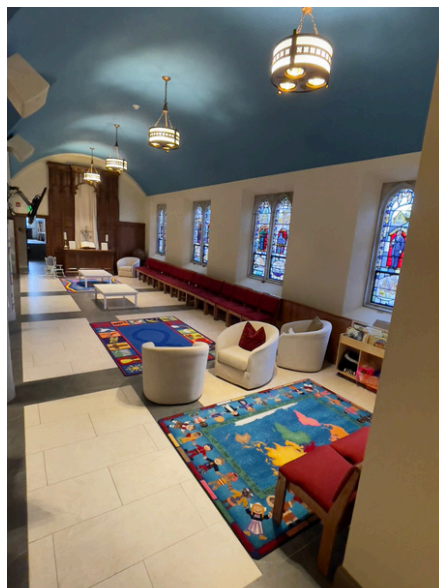
The Prayground was founded in 2019 under my beloved predecessor. Then, Covid. When we came back to worship in modified ways, we knew not only kids had changed, but volunteerism had too. A year after I started in 2023, we experienced our first growth of the space, filled with so many kids no one could literally move through the space.

My favorite role in the space is facilitator, though the more the children grow, the more often it becomes them. We utilize a laminated Children's Worship Guide, indicating voice level with green, yellow, or red and more. Our children also love the foam ball tipped pointer for our hymns on the slides.

The Sensory Sanctuary, designed alongside the UCC Disabilities Ministry Team in 2024, is crowned with noise canceling headphones, glitter tubes, crochet, and fidget beads, embracing how all of God's people worship. (Watch our future newsletters for more on this!)

As a 2026 Love of Children cohort member, I installed a Prayground at my home church, Park Avenue Christian Church in NYC, used nearly every week since Palm Sunday. In both places and communities, the need was already there. Children are running into church to claim their rightful place on the rug amongst their friends and the body of Christ. What sweeter fruit could the Church ask to seed, nurture, and witness, then that which comes from welcoming all of God's children to Christ's table?

by Rev. Khaleigh Laicher

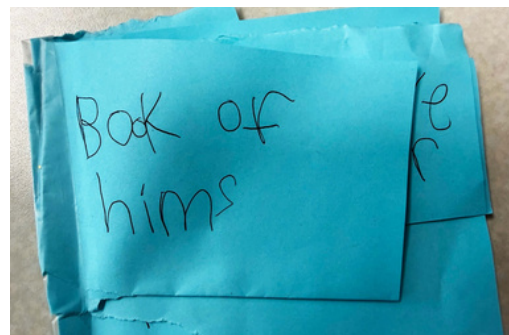


Theology From Our Children

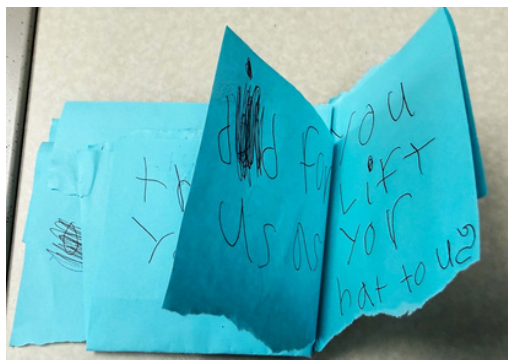
Summer at Lyndhurst Community of Faith has been all about worship. How we worship, parts of worship, and why we choose to worship! On one recent summer Sunday our church was gifted with a tactile theological understanding for why we worship from one of our children.

During the Children's Sharing I took the opportunity to help the children become more familiar with our church hymnals. We talked about how when we sing our voices join together, amplifying prayers and praise. We looked at the dates on the bottom of the page to connect with our ancestors who long ago resonated with the words we sing today.

As morning worship continued, one of our children was at work, at our prayerground, composing her own book of "Hims." The book is hand torn blue copy paper bound in scotch tape, but is really so much more. The "Book of Hims" is a melding together of words of praise as heard by a child reinterpreted to make meaning for her. The "Himnal" reads:



*Unite us god, unite us god / we lift awr voses up to you.
As you cum down on us, awr savyor / O god we lif ovr vois up to you.
O god awr savyor he dided for us / he dided on the cross /
Thank you for evrething you did for us / you lift yor hart to us.*



Because this was written by a child, we might be tempted to dismiss this craft as a "cute" little book. But please understand what a profound statement this book makes about church worship. This book is PRECISELY the reason why we worship. We have been handed a message about the love of God through Christ Jesus that sets people free and makes us whole. We gather for worship to be reminded of that message on a weekly basis, when we are already feeling whole,

but even more so when we are feeling at our most broken or deceptive. What is most essential is that our hearts KNOW this truth. If our children are gleaning the understanding of God's love for us and for the world through Christ then we are doing something right, during worship and beyond!

From Cohort Member Colleen Bloom and Rev. Francis Miller

Cohort Notes & Announcements

Applications for Our 2027 Cohorts Are Now Live

We are excited to announce that applications for UCC National Ministries Love of Children's 2027 cohorts are now live! Wait, you said cohorts, not cohort? That's right! We have multiple cohorts available for next year! We will have the traditional hybrid cohort that includes in-person gatherings, and WE WILL ALSO HAVE four virtual cohorts with specific focuses. Here are the exciting details:

- These are all 12-month cohort groups designed to provide educational experiences, nurture a supportive community of practice, and create opportunities to apply shared learning directly to your ministry setting.
- Our **traditional hybrid cohort group** will have two in-person gatherings, meet online twice monthly, and receive grants for establishing a prayerground or family-inclusive space in their congregation's sanctuaries. More details are available in the application form for this group.
- We will also have **FOUR all-virtual cohort groups** that will meet monthly on Zoom:
 - **Prayerground Development:** Specifically for faith formation and/or worship leaders in congregations that would like to establish a prayerground in their worship space. It will be led by Love of Children's new Coordinator for Prayerground Development.
 - **Faith Formation in Small Churches:** Specifically for faith formation leaders in congregations with a membership of 75 or fewer. It will be led by Rev. Michelle Collins, UCC National Ministries Associate Coordinator for the Love of Children program.
 - **Faith Formation in Racial & Ethnic Churches:** This cohort is intentionally created to be a space for those leading children's, youth, young adult, family or intergenerational ministry in racial and ethnic churches. This cohort will be led by Rev. Trayce Potter, the UCC's National Ministries Minister for Intergenerational Ministry.
 - **Intergenerational Ministry:** Will explore current trends and needs for vibrant intergenerational ministry and programming in a UCC context. It will be led by Rev. Trayce Potter, the UCC's National Ministries Minister for Intergenerational Ministry.

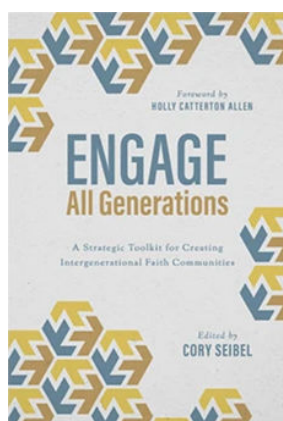
These groups are for both clergy and non-clergy leaders who are leading in faith formation in their UCC congregations. They are offered at no cost to participants. Please consider applying, and please forward these to anyone you know who may also be interested. More details about the groups can be found in [this application for the traditional hybrid cohort group](#) and [this application for the virtual cohort groups](#).

The deadline is October 31st, so don't wait too long! If you have any questions, please reach out to Rev. Michelle & Rev. Trayce at loveofchildren@ucc.org.

Featured Resources:

Children's Sabbath Sunday is coming up next month (the third weekend of October), and we want to share some resources with you to aid in planning how you might want to include that in your worship service and programming:

- [What is the Children's Sabbath?](#)
- [The Difference Between Childrens Sunday and Sabbath](#)
- [Caring for The Fifth Child: Children's Sabbath](#)
- [Children's Sabbath: 50th Anniversary](#)



[Engage All Generations, A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities](#), a collection of essays from a variety of great thinkers, edited by Cory Seibel, published in 2021, it's great for congregations already leaning into intergenerational ministry as well as those who are starting to think about it intentionally. Some ideas for your dreaming and scheming as you are kicking off your new church year!



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 for parents and guardians on supporting their children's faith development and social justice development. These might be podcasts, webinars, websites, picture books, books, etc, and of these, we would really like some more podcasts and webinars. 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](#)

Upcoming Webinars

Sex Ed as Resistance

Dr. Meg Bartlett-Chase

[Our Whole Lives](#) Progressive Faith-based Sexuality Education for Children and Teens

Join us as for a conversation with Dr. Meg Bartlett-Chase, sex educator, organizer and advocate-- about how providing great sexuality education is a way to resist authoritarianism. Dr. Bartlett-Chase has researched sex education policy, practice and controversy, and she is the founder and executive director of Honest Sex Ed Minnesota.

[Zoom | September 2 | 12:00 pm EDT](#)

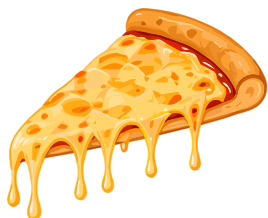


Save the date for UCC's Nurture the Soul webinar on supporting children with disabilities and additional needs, October 15th at 3:30pm eastern, featuring members of UCC's Disability Ministries Board.

<https://www.ucc.org/programming-webinars> for more details.

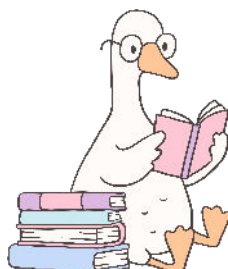
September Fun Days:

September 5: National Cheese Pizza Day



With its simple yet irresistible combination of dough, tomato sauce, and melted cheese, cheese pizza holds a special place in the hearts of food lovers around the world. Often considered the epitome of comfort food, this iconic dish has a rich and fascinating history that spans continents and centuries.

September 6: Read a Book Day



National Read a Book Day is observed annually on September 6th. On August 9th, we all celebrated National Book Lovers Day. While these bookish days may seem similar, National Read a Book Day invites us ALL to grab a book we might enjoy and spend the day reading.



September 19: International Talk Like a Pirate Day

It all began on June 6, 1995, when John Bauer and Mark Summers were playing a racquetball game and started to say different little phrases to make the game a lot more fun. Since June 6th is the anniversary of World War II's D-Day, Mark came up with the date of September 19th because it is his ex-wife's birthday and it didn't seem to have any connections to any other holidays.



September 25: Comic Book Day

National Comic Book Day is celebrated annually on September 25 to honor the history, art, and storytelling of comic books. Maybe try searching for "comic books for Christian faith formation" or "comic books for Christian kids" and see what turns up!



For more information, feel free to contact Rev. Trayce Potter
Email: pottert@ucc.org
Phone number: 216-736-3870



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."

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

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