

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 playground 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 meet monthly on Zoom:
 - **Playground Development:** Specifically for faith formation and/or worship leaders in congregations that would like to establish a playground in their worship space. It will be led by Love of Children's new Coordinator for Playground 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.

Mini Ministers: Youth Leading the Future Today

Last fall, I launched Mini Ministers at Church of the Foothills in Tustin, California, with a simple but powerful belief: young people are not just the future of the church, they are the church today. As a commissioned pastor, I want to help change the story for the next generation by creating opportunities for youth to lead alongside clergy and adults.

On the first Sunday of each month, our young people, ages 3–17, step into meaningful roles. They serve as Scripture readers, communion servers, offering collectors, and greeters. Others help fold and sort bulletins and prepare our for worship. Even our youngest children participate by helping distribute communion.



These may seem like small acts, but they are significant moments of leadership. When a young person reads Scripture before the congregation, they are finding their voice. When they serve communion, they are helping open Christ's table to everyone. When they collect the offering, they are learning generosity and stewardship. When they greet someone at the door, they are helping create a welcoming community.

Mini Ministers gives youth more than a place to serve. It gives them a place where their voices matter, their gifts matter, and they belong. My favorite part is that our youth continue to be kids but bring joy to worship in their own way. Our youth program may be small, but it is fiercely dedicated. We know our young people by name, recognize their gifts, and encourage them to say, "I can do this. I have something to offer."

Mini Ministers is more than a program it is a mindset shift. It is about changing how we see young people and how they see themselves within the church. Thank you to Love of Children for empowering leaders to dream, create, and thrive.

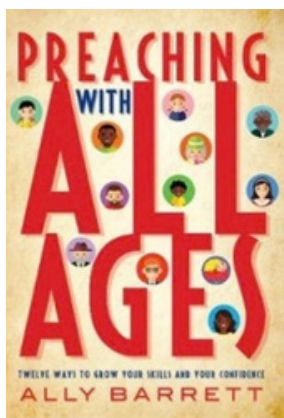
by Pastor Cristina Flores, Church of the Foothills

We Need Your Feedback

As you may know, the Love of Children program is a multiyear grant program that aims to connect, resource and support children, caregivers and ministry leaders. We need your feedback to best understand the realities our children and churches are facing. We hope you will thoughtfully answer the following questions to enhance the work of the Love of Children program and help to guide our plans for the future.

[Fill out the survey here!](#)

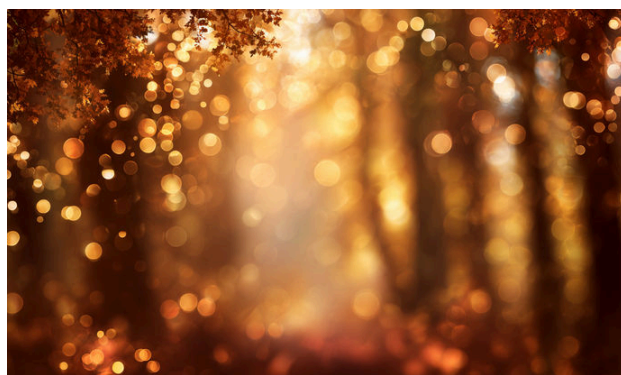
Featured Resource:



As you're getting into the new church year, you may want to think about preaching techniques, especially as we think about including all ages in our worship services. The book ***Preaching with All Ages*** by Ally Barrett is a great resource for that. You can find more about it on [Rev. Ally's website](#).

Free Resource: Try a Photo Booth at Your Next Intergenerational Event

Looking for a fun, easy way to spark connection at your next event? Consider setting up a photo booth with themed virtual backgrounds! Guests choose a backdrop, snap a photo, and get it emailed straight to them, while your team automatically gets a copy too. Read the [full how-to guide](#) and check out some [Halloween](#) and [fall](#) background sets to try it out this season.



Upcoming Webinars

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.

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

Registration closes October 5, 2026.

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.

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

Registration closes November 9, 2026.



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.

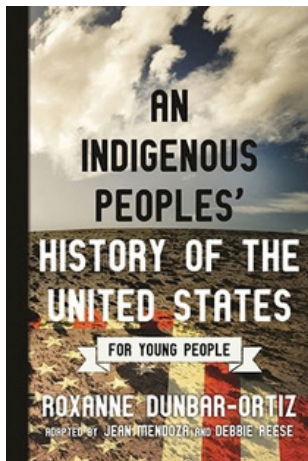


This year's Love of Children cohort had a great in person gathering this past month in Kansas City. We visited two local churches to get inspired and excited about what they're doing in their children's ministry. Our group's programming focused on stories and supporting one another in our children's ministries. We also visited The Rabbit hOle, an interactive sensory story museum in Kansas City. A great time was had by all!

Days of Note in October:

October 12: Indigenous Peoples' Day

- [Resources for Indigenous Peoples' Day & Native American Heritage Month](#) Southern New England Conference of the UCC
- [Book: Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#), by Rozanne Dunbar-Ortiz
- [Book: Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People](#), by Rozanne Dunbar-Ortiz adapted by Jean Mendoza & Debbie Reese



October 11: Access Sunday

Each year the second Sunday in October is designated on the United Church of Christ calendar as Access Sunday. The UCC will join together and celebrate the gifts of persons with disabilities and the strides that the Church has made in being more inclusive and becoming more Accessible to All. Find resources [here](#).

October 18: Children's Sabbath Sunday



The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® offers a sacred invitation to worship, reflect, and act with and on behalf of children. Each year, congregations and faith communities across the nation gather to amplify children's voices, center their well-being, and move faithfully from worship to justice-centered action. Find resources [here](#).



October 31: Reformation Day

This is the day that Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of his church in Wittenberg, Germany. These were his questions and challenges to practices he believed needed reform within the church. Reformation Day can be a good opportunity to reflect on the issues and challenges we see in children's ministry, the church, or our communities that are worth discussing and addressing faithfully.



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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