



Welcome to the Michigan Conference UCC Mitten Project

*The Michigan Conference has received a grant of \$1,250,000.00 from Lilly Endowment Inc. for the **Michigan Conference Mitten Project**. This 5-year program invites congregations to engage children and families in ways that deeply connect faith practices and community so that all of us, in each generation, can leave church more deeply connected with the spiritual and ready to find the sacred in our everyday lives.*

This box contains your local church 2026 Resource Kit. All UCC churches in the Michigan Conference will receive a Resource Kit for each year of the Mitten Project. The 2026 Theme is Worship and Prayer with Children in Nature. Each resource is an opportunity for your local congregation to engage this topic in some way.

[EVERY SEASON SACRED](#) by Kayla Craig

A weekly invitation to help parents and caregivers grow spiritually alongside children

This resource is designed to connect with the daily lives of parents and families, inspiring intention, imagination, presence, and purpose. Split into four seasons, follow the rhythms of the outdoors and the church year.

Includes: reflection and prayer for each season, weekly breath prayers, adult readings, family readings with discussion questions, and family prayers designed to support connecting worship and prayer with the daily lives of families. Kayla also has both free and paid weekly email subscriptions to support Christian parenting.

Ideas for use: Quarterly meetings with caregivers. Create mentor partners for parent check-ins. Include breath prayers in worship. Use discussion questions in sermon preparation. Use family prayers in Liturgy.

[SPEAK WITH THE EARTH AND IT WILL TEACH YOU: a Field Guide to the Bible](#) by Daniel Cooperrider

Deep theological reflection about the wonder of God's first book: Nature

Divided into four parts; Rivers, Mountains, Tree, and Clouds

This resource asks readers to examine Creation through history, philosophy, and biblical story paying attention to the many ways that nature can reveal God to us.

Ideas for use: Adult Book Study. Content for sermon preparation. Four part series. Theological connection for adults in nature. Inspiration for Creation Justice.

[BEING WITH TREES](#) by Hannah Fries

Recent research finds that time spent in the forest doesn't only help us feel better but is truly good for us. This small and beautiful book can be a gift that encourages new insights, reflection, and being in nature.

Includes: poetry, art, photography, quotes, reflections, and guided meditations.

Ideas for use: Prayer time. Great gift idea. Outdoor meditation. Connect with [forest bathing resource kit](#) created by author's colleague, Julia Wagner.

[FINDING CALM IN NATURE: a Guide for Mindful Kids](#) by Jennifer Grant

Being in nature is good for both our bodies and our minds.

This resource is designed specifically to help kids connect with Creation. Nature lessons about growth mindset, regulating emotions, sharing feelings, living in community, and how beauty transforms us. Age appropriate for 8-12 year olds to use independently, and for supervised use with younger children.

Includes: Breathing exercises, stretching, mindfulness, nature notebooks, and other tools to navigate feelings while spending time outside.

Ideas for use: Summer or VBS curriculum. Including nature in sermons that help kids understand. Messages for All Ages. Embodied spiritual practices. Family activity days at church. Nature Nights for All Ages.

[IF GOD WERE A GREAT BIG BEAR](#) by Paul Harbridge

Children's picture book sharing the nature of God in the world. Great resource for Easter, Earth Day, and every day!! Includes gender expansive language for God. This resource is designed to help individuals of all ages see the interconnectedness of all creatures in God's beautiful world.

Ideas for use: [Free Activity Kit](#). Messages for All Ages. Conversation starter about the language we use for God. Creation Care. Liturgy ideas. Art and poetry inspiration. [Coloring sheets](#).

[PSALMS OF WONDER](#) by Carey Wallace

Inviting poems and gorgeous illustrations that are inspired by the book of Psalms.

"A psalm is a song that we sing to God"

2026 Michigan Conference Mitten Project Lenten Resource

Each year of the Mitten Project will include a Lenten and Advent Resource for churches who would like to use them. Psalms of Wonder can be used all year long, but also comes with a [Free Resource Kit for churches](#) that includes a daily Lenten practice (available in English and Spanish) along with Narrative Lectionary and Revised Common Lectionary Guides.

Ideas for use: Read weekly in worship. Lenten Devotional. Messages for All Ages. Preaching, studying, and praying the Psalms. Writing Liturgy.

[ALL CREATION WAITS](#) and [ALL CREATION WAITS Children's Edition](#) by Gayle Boss

Rediscover the beauty and depth of the Advent season through the eyes of the natural world.

"The dark is not an end. It's a door. It's the way a new beginning comes."

2026 Michigan Conference Mitten Project Advent Resources

As we close out the 2026 program year of Worship and Prayer with Children in Nature, these daily Advent reflections are designed for both adults and for children. Each day of Advent reveals a new animal's incredible adaptation to the dark and cold, encouraging families to slow down and savor the beauty of waiting during the holiday season.

Ideas for use: Advent theme. Children's Edition can be used for weekly candle liturgy, including Christmas Eve. Sermon preparation during Advent. Bedtime stories. Messages for All Ages. Discussions about preparing, praying, and waiting. Creating family traditions.

[THE SERVICEBERRY](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World

“A bold and inspiring vision for how to orient our lives around gratitude, reciprocity, and community based on the lessons of the natural world”

This book is a relatively quick read and shares again the importance of what we can learn about ourselves and living into God’s vision for the world by paying attention to Creation.

Ideas for use: Youth Group Book Study. Adult Book Study. Sermon series or sermon preparation. [Small group discussion resource](#). Summer curriculum.

[THE BOOK OF BELONGING](#) by Mariko Clark

Bible stories for kind and contemplative kids.

“a Bible storybook that reflects the diversity of God’s people. For readers seeking a more expansive and wondrous view of God. The thoughtful text and rich illustrations present some of Scripture’s most important and overlooked stories—including many female-centered ones—alongside old favorites reimagined to convey greater inclusivity, diversity, and historical representation.”

Includes: Bible stories, mindfulness practices, beautiful illustrations, and prompts for wondering.

Ideas for use: Messages for All Ages. Bible readings. Faith formation curriculum for All Ages. Liturgy Ideas. Prayer practices.

Your Congregation is invited to all 2026 Mitten Project Events

Thursday, February 5, 2026 1:00pm - 3:00pm	Online Pastor Training
Friday, March 6, 2026 12:30pm - 2:30pm	Online Children’s Ministry Leader Training
Saturday, April 18, 2026 10:00am - 3:00pm Lunch included	Spring Onsite Event Location: Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center Theme: <i>The Gift of Baptism</i> For pastors, church leaders, families, children, and youth
Sunday, May 31, 2026 2:00pm - 4:00pm	Online Parent & Caregiver Training
Saturday, August 1, 2026 10:00am - 3:00pm Lunch included	Summer Onsite Event Location: to be determined Theme: to be determined For pastors, church leaders, families, children and youth



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