DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL | LET THE CHILDREN COME INITIATIVE



LET THE CHILDREN COME

Growing in Faith Through Congregational WORSHIP

At Duke Divinity School, we believe that congregational worship and prayer are vital to children's growth in faith. To that end, and with support from the Lilly Endowment© , our research group of scholars, children's ministry experts, and students is studying connections between worship and faith nurture.

We are seeking partnerships with congregations—pastors, children's leaders, parents, and children themselves—open to greater inclusion of young people in their worship assembly. We want to understand and to help you nurture children's faith through their praise and prayers before God.

COHORT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A Cohort invites the person responsible for ministry with children *and* a pastor from a congregation to join colleagues from other faith communities for mutual support, learning, strategizing, and experimentation.

HOW HAS THE COHORT IMPACTED YOU?

"We can see from experience that when children participate in our church activities, they help change our perspective. A church with children of all ages is naturally a more welcoming and resilient community of faith. Participating in the Let the Children Come Initiative has helped me to connect the dots from what I do as a Director of Children's Ministry to what the church body as a whole is about."

Megan Hopkins, Cohort 1 Member
Director of Children's Ministry
Pittman Park United Methodist Church
Statesboro, GA

Endeavoring to fulfill the dream of full inclusion of children in congregational worship and prayer

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WHAT YOU GAIN THROUGH THIS PARTNERSHIP WITH DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL

A two-year supportive learning cohort in company with other leaders from a wide variety of congregations

Teaching and reflection with experts in child development, theology, worship, and forming intergenerational communities

Strategies for implementing or strengthening child-friendly worship practices tailored to your setting that are not “childish”

Shared research findings on how best to support children’s faith formation, including through congregational worship

Resources to help you sustain and build upon worship, fully inclusive of all generations

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Cohort members can expect to grow in their appreciation of children’s faith nurtured through worship, to better perceive the barriers and the possibilities for children’s worship participation in their contexts, and to receive support in developing strategies and practices to welcome children in new and faithful ways.

WHAT WE HOPE TO LEARN

We hope to learn what encourages or prevents children from fully participating in communal worship, how they express and practice their faith, and which leadership approaches and congregational cultures best sustain their spiritual growth. We also hope to understand how greater inclusion of children may transform a congregation’s character and mission, and how our work can contribute to the ongoing dialogue about children’s full participation in worshiping communities.



LET THE CHILDREN COME COHORT 2...

- is organized ecumenically, and according to region, size, or context
- begins in January 2027, and lasts for two years
- meets via Zoom ten times a year, led by a theologically trained Cohort Facilitator with deep experience in children’s ministry and worship
- is selected through an online application process

CLICK TO APPLY

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YOU ARE INVITED TO APPLY

Duke Divinity School invites Christian congregations from across the US to apply to join us on this journey. Cohorts begin meeting in January 2027 via Zoom.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

ZOOM INTEREST SESSIONS

Tue 9/15/2026 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Thu 9/17/2026 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Wed 9/30/2026 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

https://bit.ly/LTCCInterest

Submit by

OCTOBER 16TH , 2026

Application notifications

November 12th, 2026

Scan the QR code or visit the link to fill out this online application.

APPLICATIONS OPEN
AUGUST 24TH, 2026

Application link:
https://bit.ly/DDSApp

CONTACT

Email
letthechildrencome@duke.edu

Instagram
@ddsletthechildrencome

Website
https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives/let-the-children-come

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