

Intergenerational Approach to “Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer”

SC United Methodist Conference
Lilly Grant Initiative



Overview

2026

GOAL

The goal is to impact
60 churches over 5
years, 500 children,
and reach over 7000
congregational
members.



1. Create a culture of belonging for all children and adults

2. Increase the number of children participating in worship and prayer opportunities.

Grant Outcomes

3. Learn new ways children can participate and lead in worship with a focus on integration of the arts.

4. Move to more intergenerational worship, mission and ministry experiences.



Children and Intergenerational Worship Leadership Team:

A BIG THANK YOU!



Members:

Rev. Millie Nelson Smith,
Rev. Michael Jarrell,
Rev. Christopher Greene,
Rev. Suzanne Walker,
Rev. Meg Sweeney Cook,
Rev. Martin Quick,
Rev. Nona Woodle,
Toni Taylor,
Briana Brooks,
Evan Barker
Toni Strawther,
Dawn Fairley,
Kim Bryant, Cari Treece,
Johannah Meyers

This grant focuses on developing church leadership, clergy and laity, through a cohort model to lead a cultural shift in how we experience worship.

Why Participate?



(Note: churches do not receive money to participate)

A Church might participate:

If you are interested in working with other churches to collaborate and learn:

- new ways to lead intergenerational worship experiences
- develop programs that teach children how to read, write and speak prayers, homilies, stories and scripture with confidence leading worship & prayer
- utilize artists to support the integration of the arts into children's ministry areas; music, instruments, dance, culinary arts, etc.
- add Messy Church to your intergenerational worship experiences
- provide intergenerational story exchanges that promote developing relationship and empathy.

What is “in it” for my church?

How does this grant work?





NURTURING CHILDREN THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP & PRAYER

GRANT TIMELINE

Year 1

- Children and Intergenerational Worship Leadership Team created
- Grant Specialist hired
- Grant specialist plans, schedules and facilitates training
- Story Exchange training
- Messy Church USA start up training
- Portico training
- Workshop (1 speaker)
- Book Study

Year 2

- 12 churches selected for cohort 2
- Grant specialists facilitates training
- Cohort 1 will facilitate cohort 2 first story exchange
- Cohort 1 churches mentor one of cohort 2 churches
- Children's Worship Day Camp
- Workshop (1 speaker)
- Book Study

Year 3

- 12 churches selected for cohort 3
- Grant specialists facilitates cohort 1 training for cohort 3
- Cohort 2 facilitates cohort 3 first story exchange
- Cohort 2 churches mentor one of cohort 3 churches
- Children's Worship Camp
- Story Exchange training (50 additional children/youth)
- Family Spiritual Retreat
- Workshop (1 speaker)
- Book Study

Year 4

- 12 churches selected for cohort 4
- Grant specialists leads the training for cohort 4
- Cohort 3 facilitates cohort 4 first story exchange
- Cohort 3 churches mentors one of cohort 4 churches
- Children's Worship Camp
- Story Exchange training (50 additional children/youth training)
- Family Spiritual Retreat
- Workshop (1 speaker)
- Book Study held
- Full Day Children in Worship Conference

Year 5

- 12 churches selected cohort 5
- Grant specialists leads training
- Cohort 4 facilitates cohort 5 first story exchange
- Cohort 4 churches mentor one of cohort 5 churches
- Children's Worship Camp
- Story Exchange training (50 additional children/youth)
- Family Spiritual Retreat
- Workshop (1 speaker)
- Book Study

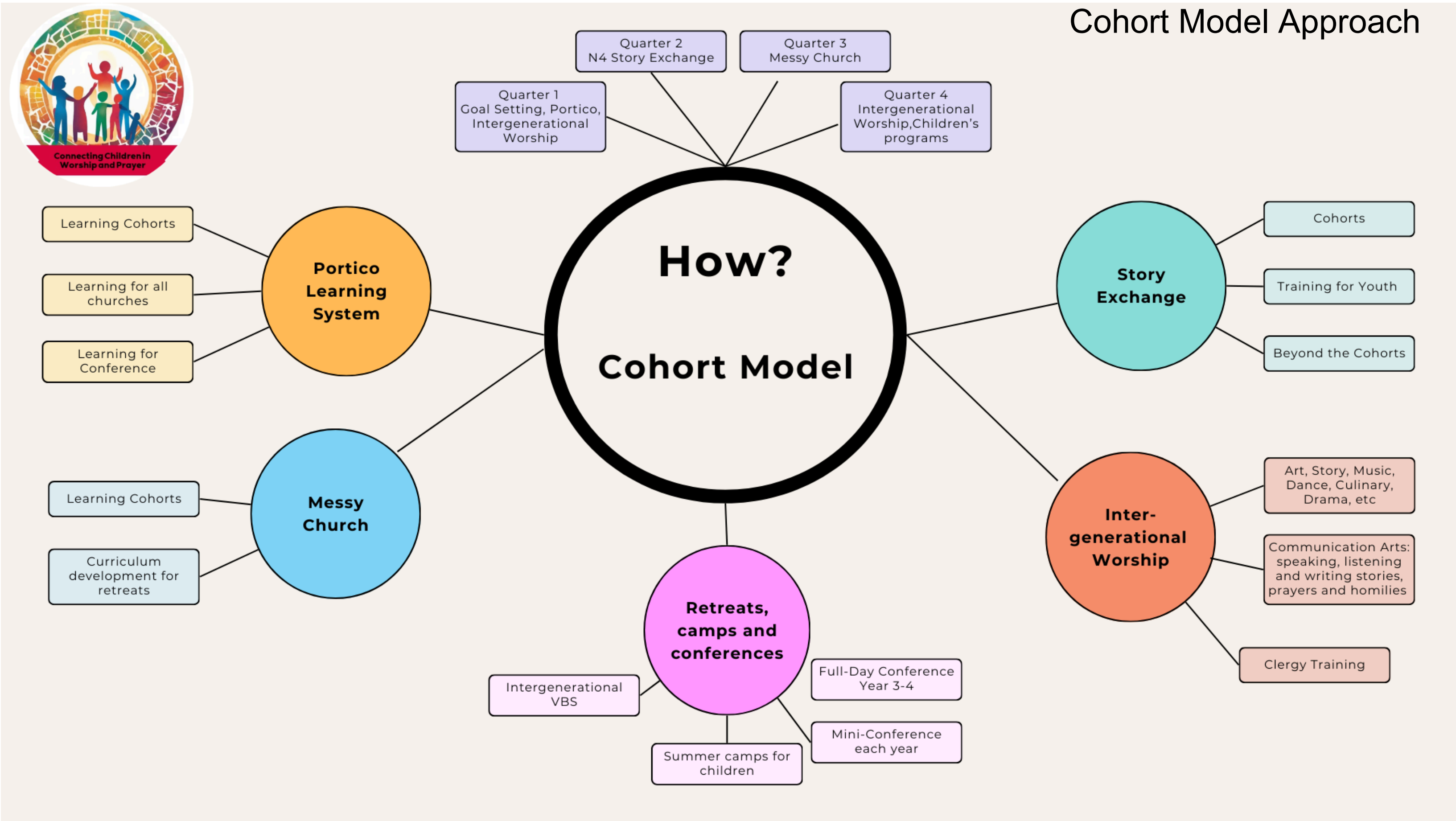
SC UNITED METHODIST CONFERENCE
TONI TAYLOR

12 Churches Selected Annually as a Cohort

Cohort 2
Deadline to apply is
JULY 30, 2025

60 Churches over 5
Years will provide
Conference
leadership in
Interdisciplinary
worship, which
connects children to
worship and prayer.

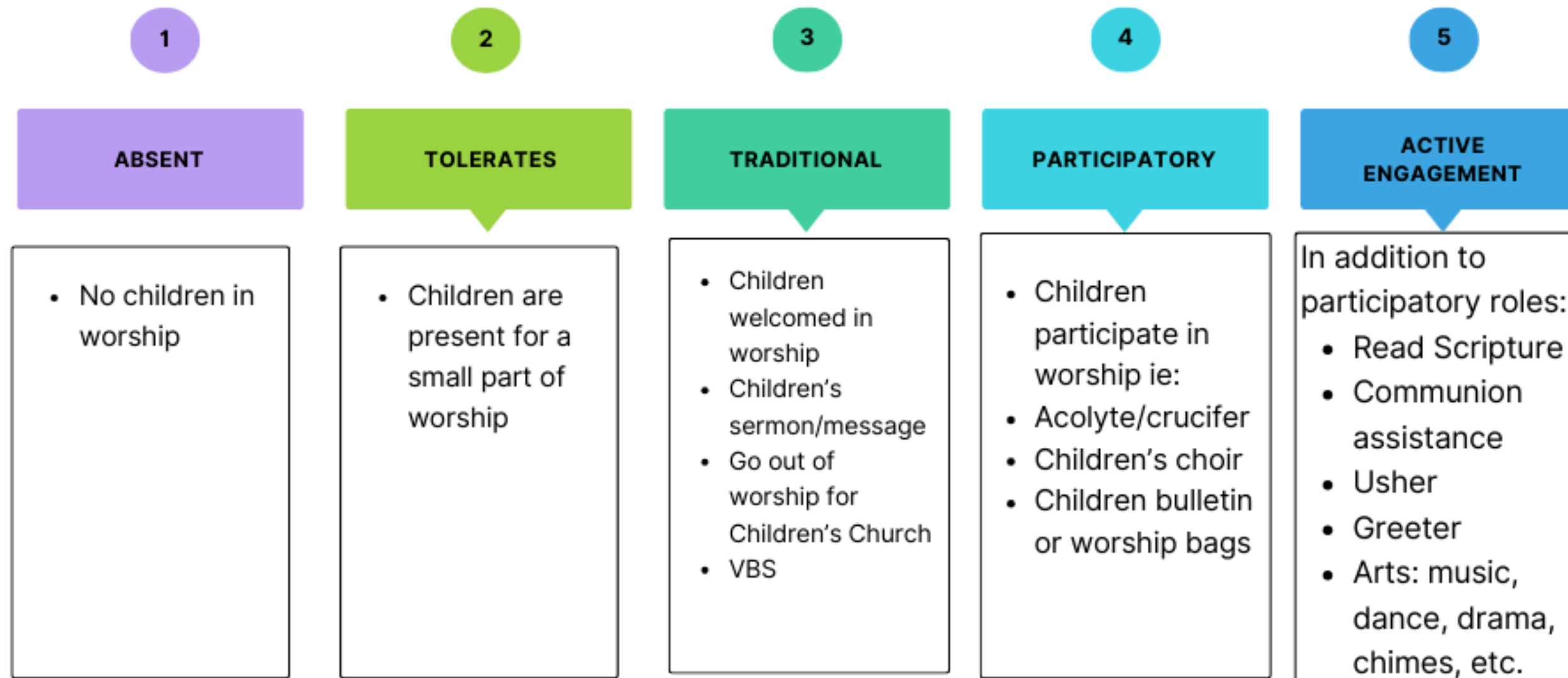
Cohort Model Approach



\$36,000 training value for each church

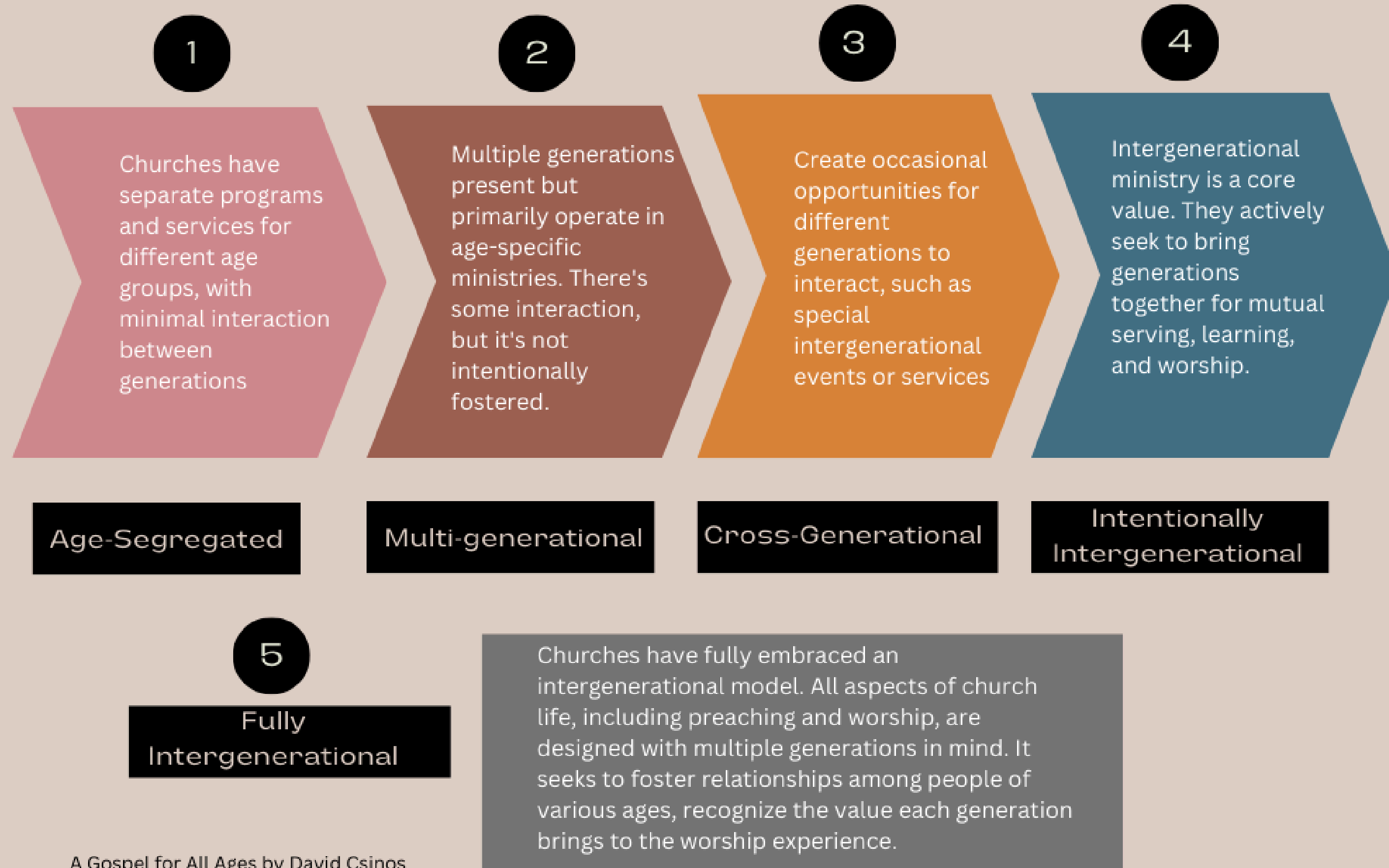
SC United Methodist Conference Children in Worship Continuum

Where is
your church?



Reflection:
Where is your church on the continuum?

Intergenerational Continuum



Where is
your
church?

Each church creates a team of clergy/laity committed to a year of work as a part of a cohort to set goals, implement and evaluate. Share with your Church Council.



Clergy



Worship Leader



Children's Ministry



Church Council



Youth or other leader

Who Will Be on Your Team?

Apply for Cohort 2026: Steps:

1. Pastor, with staff and laity discuss with Church Council before applying for the 2026 Cohort.
2. Select diverse team members. Choose your team leader.
3. Review the dates for training (Columbia may be the location).
4. Select 4 team members (the pastor will make it 5) that will commit to attend the trainings.
5. Attend an Online Q& A Session to learn more about the grant. (3 will be offered)
6. Complete and submit your application.
7. Complete and submit your application.
8. An interview will be scheduled online for your team (4 + Pastor)





COHORT 2026 TRAINING DATES

Quarter 1

- Jan 17, 2026 - In-person 9:00-3:00
- Feb 12 Online: 6:00-7:30
- Mar 12 Online: 6:00-7:30

Quarter 2

- Apr 25 In-person 9:00-3:00
- May 28 Online: 6:00-7:30
- Jun 11 Online: 6:00-7:30

Quarter 3

- Aug 1 In-person 9:00-3:00
- Aug 27 Online: 6:00-7:30
- Sep 17 Online: 6:00-7:30

Quarter 4

- Oct 17 In-person 9:00-3:00
- Nov 12 Online: 6:00-7:30
- Dec 3 Online: 6:00-7:30

IMPORTANT!

In Summary...

This grant represents a strategic investment in uniting and revitalizing the United Methodist community through intergenerational worship, fostering belonging, and inclusivity for all members, especially children.

Our connectional system is an advantage, allowing the leverage of collective wisdom, innovative approaches, and partnerships to bring voice to our children in worship, ultimately contributing to the Lilly Endowment's overall aim "to help children come to know and love God and grow in faith".

Q & A Sessions by Zoom - Choose a date and email Toni Taylor for the Zoom link: ttaylor@umcsc.org

June 16 at Noon
June 18 at 6:00 PM
June 24 at 7:00 PM



2026 COHORT - 12 CHURCHES CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER



Please reach out to:

- Toni Taylor (ttaylor@umcsc.org)
- Nona Woodle (nmwoodle@umcsc.org)

Website: <https://www.umcsc.org/children/>



Thank You!