

Partnering Together- Equipping the Family of Families



April 14-16, NC - November 3-5, IN

Leading, Equipping and Discipling in Children's Ministry

Welcome from Katie



The Children's Ministry Team and I are so happy you are at LEAD retreat. We come to be equipped and encouraged as we pause from our weekly responsibilities to enjoy great teaching and worship together.

Children's Ministry in our churches is not a standalone program, but an overflow of worship as we seek to form lifelong worshipers within the covenant life of His church. It's only in Christ that the work of many can be made into one!

We all have the privilege of encouraging intergenerational connections in our churches, partnering with parents, church leadership, volunteers and congregants. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 reminds us that only God can transform a life, but others can nourish it. I pray we leave encouraged to partner with others and the Lord as we all "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18a).

Welcome from Stephen



Welcome to the CDM leadership retreat for those who serve the youngest members of the covenant community! Our hope is that the Lord will encourage and equip you in these few days. You are among people who share your love for covenant children, as well as the next generation of the Church. CDM's mission is to equip and encourage leaders in the church to make

disciples by connecting you to the people and resources you need. We hope the Lord will use the worship, the speakers, the workshops, and the conversations to refresh you.

Often leaders like you feel invisible to the elders of the church. At LEAD Retreat, we hope you are frequently reminded that the sovereign King of the universe sees you and the work you do for His glory. In a very real sense, you are the current expression of what the Gospels record: Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Thank you for your service to the Lord and His kingdom. We are grateful you joined us.

We're Here for You!

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Schedule Overview

— TUESDAY —

— WEDNESDAY —

7 AM		7:15-7:45 AM - Reachout Adv. Coffee Time
8 AM		7:45-8:45 AM - Breakfast
9 AM		9:00-10:00 AM - Workshops 2
10 AM		10:15-11:15 AM - Morning Session
11 AM		11:30-12:30 PM - GROW Groups
12 PM		12:30-1:30 PM - Lunch
1 PM		
2 PM	1:30-3:00 PM Conference Check-in	
3 PM	3:00-3:20 PM - Opening Session	1:30-4:30 PM Free Time
4 PM	3:30-4:30 PM - GROW Groups	
5 PM	4:45-5:45 PM - Workshops 1	4:45-5:45 PM - Workshops 3
6 PM	5:45-6:45 PM - Dinner	5:45-6:45 PM Dinner
7 PM	7:00- 8:30 PM - Evening Session	7:00-8:00 PM - Worship Service
8 PM		8:15-9:15 PM - Dessert Social
9 PM	8:30-9:30 PM - Dessert Social	

— THURSDAY —

	7 AM
7:30-8:00 AM - Reachout Adv. Coffee Time	
8:00-9:15 AM - Breakfast	8 AM
	9 AM
9:30-10:45 AM - Morning Session	10 AM
10:45-11:45 AM - GROW Groups	11 AM
11:45-12:45 PM - Lunch	12 PM
1:00 PM - Attendees Departure	1 PM
	2 PM
	3 PM
<p>BOOKSTORE HOURS</p> <p>Tuesday PM: 1:30-3, 6:30-7, 8:30-9:30</p> <p>Wednesday PM: 1:30-4:30, 6:30-7, 8:15-9:15</p> <p>Thursday AM: 8:30-9:30, 10:30-11:30</p>	4 PM
	5 PM
	6 PM
	7 PM
	8 PM
	9 PM

Plenary Speakers and Musician



Danny Kwon, Ph.D., is the Senior Director of Youth Ministry Content and Cross Cultural Initiatives for Rooted Ministry. He previously served 29 years as Youth and Family Pastor at a bicultural Korean-American church near Philadelphia. Danny is the author of three books, including *A Youth Worker's Field Guide to Parents and Mission Tripping*. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Eastern University and is a certified ministry coach who has mentored numerous youth ministry leaders. He holds graduate degrees from Westminster Seminary, Covenant Seminary, and Eastern University. Danny and his wife, Monica, have three children, and he now volunteers in youth ministry at his local church.



Monica Kim, Ph.D., is a psychologist and Christian counselor with nearly 20 years of counseling experience. She serves as adjunct faculty at Lehigh University and consults with the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF), where she also previously taught. Monica has spoken at conferences nationwide and has over 25 years of church ministry experience. She holds degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary and Lehigh University. She and her husband, Danny, have three children and coauthored *Mental Health and Teenagers: A Handbook for Parents, Pastors, and Youth Leaders*.



Burress McCombe has served as the Associate Pastor of Worship at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia for over 18 years. This year he celebrates his 50th birthday, 25th anniversary of being married to Kristin and the country's 250th birthday. It's a big year for everyone. Kristin and Burress have two teenage daughters, Cora and Shay. Burress loves the LEAD Retreat. He has led music and planned worship at this retreat for...6 years? Maybe? (He doesn't remember when he started and neither does anyone else.) He enjoys running, coaching, playing guitar, traveling and smiling.

Workshop Descriptions

WORKSHOP #1

Mission and Vision — Saralyn Tyler

People can't follow leadership with no direction. This workshop will unpack how your Mission and Vision are vital to informing the tapestry of your Children's Ministry. Together we will talk about why it matters to have these two statements, what informs them, how to write them, and then finally, how to implement them well as you seek to lead your Children's Ministry for God's glory!

Tech-wise Parenting — Joe Parker

Learn to partner with parents, teaching them to become tech-wise parents in our tech-savvy culture. Discover how to help parents guide their kids to use this amazing tool safely, including when to give a child their first phone, the benefits of social media, healthy screen time limits, and how your church can support them on this journey.

Reaching the Children in Your Community — Lisa Updike and Sarah Kalichman

Acts 17 tells us that God has placed each of us in our places and times so that we might reach out and find Him. That's exciting! So, who are the children in *your* neighborhood? Perhaps you have children who need help in school. Or those who come from other nations. Are you in an affluent area, or are your neighbors struggling to make ends meet? Let's talk about those whom God has placed in our communities and how we might be used to help guide them to seek Jesus!

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Building, Leading, and Sustaining an Effective Children's Ministry Team — Bethany Belue

Children's ministry is never a solo effort. This workshop will equip leaders to build, develop, and sustain a healthy team rooted in grace, truth, and shared vision. Together, we will explore how to recruit and train volunteers, shepherd your team spiritually, and structure roles in ways that honor each person's gifts and empower them for the mission of your ministry and church. Whether you're starting from scratch or strengthening an existing team, you'll leave with biblical principles and practical tools to encourage both you and those who serve alongside you.

How Being Presbyterian, Reformed, and Covenantal Shapes What We Build in Children's Ministry — John Kwasny and Sherry Kendrick

Children's ministries across evangelical churches often look alike on the surface—but our Presbyterian structure, Reformed theology, and Covenantal view of Scripture give us a unique blueprint for how we build and support the faith of the next generation.

In this workshop, leaders will explore the foundation stones that ground our ministry and the framework that shapes how we organize, teach, and care for the children entrusted to us. Come discover how these convictions guide every part of the ministry we are building together.

WORKSHOP #2

Belonging Together: Helping Children and Families Live Out Their Gospel Identity in the Church

— **Jajuan McNeil & Laura Tucker**

Together, we'll explore how gospel identity—who we are in Christ—shapes the way families engage in the life of the church. And how we as children's ministry leaders and volunteers can help children understand that they are fully valued members of the body of Christ, not future participants but present disciples with a meaningful place in God's family. Join us as we discuss how we can help children and families not only understand but joyfully experience their place in God's church—rooted in the gospel and lived out in everyday life.

Exploring the Teach Us to Worship Program — Heather Dirkse

Teach Us to Worship equips churches to cultivate intergenerational worship and nurture children as lifelong worshipers. In this workshop, we will explore the program's framework and walk step-by-step through practical tools that help congregations plant seeds of cultural change. Together, we'll examine how pastors, parents, and worship leaders can partner intentionally to form a shared vision of worship that welcomes, engages, and discipled every generation. Participants will leave with actionable strategies and resources to begin shaping a worship culture that teaches children—by participation and example—to love and live the rhythms of gathered worship.

Buddying Well: Helping Every Child Belong

— **Jeanette Simpson and Rebecca Howell**

Many ministries use "buddies" to support children with disabilities. While the intention is good, a buddy isn't always the right or only solution. In this

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workshop, we'll talk about how to start a buddy ministry, when to provide one, what the role should accomplish, and how to avoid unintentionally isolating or limiting a child. We'll explore how partnerships with buddies can foster safety, belonging, and discipleship as part of a larger vision to include and enfold every child in the life of the church.

Better Together: Children's and Student Ministry Partnership — Katie Flores and Isaac Terwilleger

Children's and student ministries have different rhythms and challenges—but a shared mission to help young people love Jesus. This session explores practical ways to strengthen connection, communication, and collaboration between Children's Ministry and Student Ministry, so together we can disciple children and students with greater unity and purpose.

How Do We Teach Teachers to Build Strong Bible Foundations in Children? — B.A. Snider and Sherry Kendrick

Teaching the Bible is the cornerstone of children's ministry, and leaders play a key role in helping teachers build Scripture into the lives of children. This workshop will equip you with the tools, guidance, and confidence needed to train your volunteers to teach God's Word effectively. Together, we'll look at the essential building questions:

- What materials belong in the “blueprint” at each age level?
- How do we construct lessons in ways that truly support spiritual growth?
- Why does theological accuracy matter—even in the earliest building stages?

This session will help you train teachers to build Scripture into children's hearts with care, clarity, and confidence.

WORKSHOPS #3

Hard Conversations When Everyone Is a Sinner

— Stephen Estock

Discipleship ministry involves a redeemed sinner (you) working with/ among other sinners (most if not all are also redeemed). We may not like it, but our Savior warned us, “In the world you will have tribulation.” Yet, His promise gives us hope, “But take heart; I have overcome the world. In Me, you may have peace.” (John 16:33). This workshop considers how we can “abide in Christ” (John 15:5) in the midst of ministry conflict. What can we say? What can we do (especially when we are not ordained)? We will consider principles of godly communication and work through some case studies.

Leading Little Hearts Without Little Ones at Home

— Kristy Mitchell

Explore how to serve faithfully and effectively while facing the challenges of leading in Children’s Ministry without children. Together, we’ll share encouragement, practical ideas, and a renewed vision for how God uses us to shape young hearts.

From Cradle to Calling: Nursery as the First Steps in Discipleship — Lisa Updike and Kris Zwanzig

The nursery is often children’s first encounter with the church—and that makes it a powerful place to begin shaping their experience of God’s family. Far more than childcare, the nursery plants the earliest seeds of discipleship. Yet this ministry should never stand alone. A well-connected nursery values our youngest members of the covenant community. When nursery practices are intentionally aligned with the broader discipleship vision, every moment—every smile, every interaction, every act of care—helps lay the groundwork for a resilient, lifelong walk of faith.

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The Importance of Character and Connectedness of the Children's Ministry Leader and Volunteer – Monica Kim

While the biblical content of what we teach is essential, our character and the connectedness we cultivate in our relationships with the children we teach are just as important. In this workshop, we will explore key aspects of gospel-centered character and consider what it means to build a connected relationship with the children we teach.

Foundations of Children's Ministry – Sherry Kendrick

This workshop will equip children's ministry leaders with the essential tools to begin building a strong, Christ-centered ministry. Together, we'll explore how to lay a firm foundation through clear vision, build solid partnerships with parents, and create safe, welcoming spaces for all children. You'll leave with practical strategies for constructing effective programs, recruiting and developing volunteers, and ensuring the ongoing safety and care of the children you serve. Whether you're just starting or strengthening what's already in place, this workshop will help you build with confidence and purpose.



children.pcacdm.org

Visit the children's ministry website to learn more about connecting to CDM



Grow Groups

Session 1



Teach Us
to Worship

1. When have you experienced joy or encouragement as you've helped children engage in the church's shared worship, even in small or imperfect ways?

2. In what ways does corporate worship shape (or fail to shape) the way you plan, lead, and evaluate children's ministry?

3. How does gathering with the whole church in worship form you as a leader before it forms the children you serve?

4. If corporate worship truly is the center of the church's life, what is one concrete way your ministry practices might reflect that reality?

5. Think about a recent decision you made in ministry. How might that decision have been different if participation in corporate worship had been your primary starting point ?

Reflection



Where do you sense God's invitation to deepen alignment between what you believe about worship and what you actually do week to week?

Grow Groups

Session 2



Age Range	Ways children can actively participate in corporate worship.	Possible Tools and Accommodations
0-3 yrs		
4-5 yrs		
6-7 yrs		
8-9 yrs		
10-11 yrs		

Reflection



How might these ideas change the way children experience worship in your congregation?

Which age group do you most often plan for? Which do you tend to overlook?

What is one small, realistic change you could advocate for or try in the next 3–6 months?

Grow Groups

Session 3



Worship at Home

What rhythms or practices could we encourage that flow naturally from Sunday's corporate worship (songs, Scripture, prayers, themes)?

How can we keep expectations realistic and grace-filled for families in different seasons of life?

Parent Training

How are we helping parents see themselves as primary disciplers of their children?

What training or encouragement would be most helpful right now (workshops, short guides, modeling, conversations)?

Communication

Are we communicating why corporate worship matters as clearly as what we want for families?

How can our communication be more consistent, simpler, and more aligned with our worship-centered vision?

Next Steps

- Consider one or two concrete next steps you can take in your ministry.
- Identify one way to better connect Sunday worship with a simple at-home practice.
- Adjust a current resource or communication to more clearly point families to corporate worship.
- Plan one intentional opportunity this year to encourage or train parents.
- Commit to listening to families—what do they need, and how can we serve them with humility and grace?

Reflection



Closing Thoughts

When we keep corporate worship at the center, we free families from pressure to “do more” and instead invite them to live out what God is already forming in them through the gathered church.

Children's Ministry Team

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Care for Missionary Kids

Being a missionary kid can be difficult. At MTW's missionary retreats and conferences, missionary kids have the chance to relax and play while their parents unwind and refocus. Help provide care for these MKs and experience the joy of many cultures blending together with fun and laughter. To sign up, email goevents@mtw.org

UPCOMING NEEDS:

July 6-11, 2026
Black Mountain, NC

Jan. 25-30, 2027
St. Simons Island, GA

2027 – Latin America
Area Retreat

“Him we proclaim,

warning everyone and
teaching everyone with
all wisdom, that we
may present everyone
mature in Christ. ”

—Colossians 2:6-7

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WHY COVENANT VBS?

You may wonder why, with so many creative, fun-filled Vacation Bible School programs available, we felt the need to add yet another. The answer to that is simple. We could not find a program that was a really good fit for us. We wanted something decidedly reformed in nature, that taught Biblical principles clearly and without compromise, with material accessible and challenging to both "churched" and "unchurched" children. At the same time, we wanted a program that was still full of fun and excitement and was presented more like a day camp rather than following a classroom model.

We are pleased to say that we believe our VBS materials do all of the above and more! Because children are broken up into small crews and rotate through different stations, children get individual attention whether you have a smaller VBS with 20 to 30 children, or a larger program of 600 or more children.

It is our prayer for you that our VBS materials will be used by the Holy Spirit to reveal to children that Jesus is the way, and to challenge both adults and kids to follow Him.

Every blessing,

Lisa Updike, Director of Children's Ministries, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg, VA



Are the young girls in your church longing for something other than what the world offers them? What opportunities do they have to grow into how God has *created* them?



A week-long creative arts camp for 3rd through 8th grade girls, Created for a Purpose Ministries provides a unique framework to churches desiring to nurture girls within their congregation in the gospel, as well as share the good news of Jesus Christ with visiting and non-believing families.

Through daily art projects, dedicated time for worship, solid biblical teaching, and small group discussion, every girl who attends a Created for a Purpose art camp is taught that she is created by God in His image, wonderfully gifted with unique talents to be used for His glory and His purposes. The beautiful art projects she completes each day serve as tangible reminders of these truths.

Additionally, the camp structure and art project rooms are a vehicle for the women of a church to serve alongside one another. High school, college, and adult women of various ages and stages participate in this model of intergenerational ministry: a beautiful picture of commending the greatness of God to the next generation.

BASIC FORMAT of Created for a Purpose

- ✧ One week (5 consecutive, 4¼-hour daily sessions)
- ✧ Girls are divided into groups according to similar age.
- ✧ Girls complete a different creative project each day.
- ✧ Each day begins with worship. Girls share a meal time, hear Biblical teaching, and participate in small groups.
- ✧ High school and college girls serve as counselors.
- ✧ Talented volunteers assist in project rooms, giving women of all ages the opportunity to serve together.

For more information, visit:
createdforapurpose.org

With this Biblical mandate as our foundation, Created for a Purpose Ministries develops spiritual curriculum and project instructions and shares these resources at our annual Training Workshop, where interested churches are equipped with the tools they need to host Created for a Purpose.

Our prayer is that through this ministry, God would draw ladies both young and young at heart to himself. Will you consider opening the doors of your church to host Created For A Purpose?



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Teach Us
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