

Kids Meet Christ Report WDC Annual Assembly 2026 Grace Parker Sutter, Program Director



Kids Meet Christ is a five-year worship initiative through Western District Conference focused on empowering congregations to reimagine worship to better engage children and deepen relationships across generations.

Since launching the program in February 2025, we have engaged with multiple congregations and gotten to know many people both within and outside the WDC community. It has been a season of listening, experimenting, and learning. We have witnessed God working within your communities as you discern what your future holds and what it might look like for children to participate fully in your life together.

The following report highlights several key features of Kids Meet Christ and the impact of the work in the last year.

Program Staff: The program staff includes Grace Parker Sutter as Program Director, Jennie Wintermote as Administrative Assistant, and Absalon Calix as Event and Social Media Coordinator in Texas. It is supported by WDC Associate Conference Minister Kathy Neufeld Dunn and the WDC Resource Commission.

Events: We hosted several events in the past year to introduce WDC congregations to the program and begin the conversation about children in worship. These events have been in both Kansas and Texas, have been offered in English and Spanish, and have included virtual options. See below for more about each event.

- In the fall, we hosted events in San Antonio, TX, and in Wichita, KS, on the theme “Preparing the Way for Children in Worship.” Each event drew almost 70 participants including a mix of children, parents, congregational leaders, and pastors. You can find the workshops led by Melissa Florer-Bixler and Michele Hershberger on [our YouTube page](#).
- In the spring, we visited Houston, TX to connect with the congregations there and hosted an event at Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero. You can read more about this visit [here](#).
- We facilitated a virtual book study from January to March on the book *Woven: Nurturing a Faith Your Kid Doesn't Have to Heal From* by Meredith Miller, which concluded with a [Q&A with the author that you can watch here](#).
- We co-sponsored the KS Ministers’ Retreat in May with the Ministerial Leadership Commission. The retreat focused on nurturing secure relationships through worship.

Grants & Scholarships: We established two sub-grants and one scholarship available to all WDC congregations: a Worship Technology Grant, a Worship Consultation Grant, and a Coaching Scholarship. We created the procedures for processing applications, including setting up an

application review team from WDC's Resource Commission, collaborating with the Ministerial Leadership Commission on the coaching scholarships, and creating a rubric for evaluating the efficacy of each application. We have awarded 13 grants and scholarships **totalling \$76,500**. We look forward to sharing more in the future about these congregations' projects. The next application deadline is September 1, 2026 and you can [find all the applications at this link](#).

Resources: Kids Meet Christ provided resources for children in worship in a variety of formats this past year. We prepared Advent resources that were available at our fall events and distributed Lent/Easter kits to 24 congregations who requested them. We have also expanded library resources for children in worship, including materials to use for interactive biblical storytelling or playgrounds that [you can check out here](#). Additionally, there is up to \$250 available for congregations to request for these types of resources. We will collect feedback on these resources and find creative ways to offer new resources in the coming years.

Communication: In August 2025, we began a [monthly newsletter](#) offered in English or Spanish with program reflections, updates, and an idea for children in worship. This spring, we launched social media pages on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#). We also communicate directly with congregational leaders and continue to promote the program in the WDC weekly newsletter.

Partnerships: Kids Meet Christ has collaborated with several programs in the broader Mennonite Church USA community, including the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, *Conectere*, *Shine Everywhere*, and The Soil and the Seed Project. By coordinating our efforts across the denomination, we are able to learn from and share our findings with each other.

Looking Ahead: We are eager to see how this program will continue to evolve and support congregations in the year ahead. [Our next event is on September 12th at First Mennonite Church in Hutchinson, KS and is for EVERYONE, including families with young children! Talashia Keim Yoder from Goshen, IN will lead us in a participatory experience on the theme *Art, Improv, and Lego are Worship, Too!*](#) In November, we will co-sponsor the ministers' retreat in Dallas, TX for Spanish-speaking credentialed ministers.

Thank you to all those who have engaged with Kids Meet Christ so far! I am amazed by the faithful dedication and openness to new ideas that I have experienced throughout the last year. We look forward to seeing what other experiments are tried and dreams are fulfilled in doing the work of welcoming children as Jesus modeled for us.