

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light blue t-shirt and jeans, is sitting on a light-colored carpeted floor. She is surrounded by several young children, also sitting on the floor. The children are looking towards her, and she has her hands open in a gesture of listening or speaking. In the background, there is a blue round table with some colorful objects on it, and a white table with art supplies. The wall behind them is decorated with colorful paper flowers and trees.

CENTERING CHILDREN IN OUR CONGREGATION

Workshops designed to nurture children's faith formation

WELCOME

APRIL 25, 2026

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Encouraging and equipping the Church
to shape the faith of the next generation

TODAY'S PROGRAM

- 9:10 AM Welcome**
Carlos Huerta, Carolina Mueller
- 9:15 AM Opening Prayer**
Pastor Launa and Jeff Grunau
- 9:20 AM Theology of Children**
Adam Ghali, Ph.D.
- 10:10 AM Breakout Sessions**
1 - NOH 132: Learning Styles & Disabilities in Ministry
2 - NOH 123: Transmitiendo la Fe a los Niños
3 - NOH 124: Child Development & Parenting
4 - NOH 125: Understanding the New Generation
- 11:15 AM Conversational Lunch**
- 11:45 AM Announcements**
- 12:00 PM Closing Prayer (Oración)**
Pastora Teresa Corona

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

- 3 **Today's Program**
- 4 **Theology of Children**
- 6 **Understanding the New Generation**
- 8 **Learning Styles & Disabilities in Ministry**
- 10 **Child Development & Parenting**
- 12 **Transmitiendo la Fe a los Niños**
- 14 **About CCT**

Please take a moment to scan the QR code and fill out our survey evaluation. Your input will help us improve our workshops. Thank you for your participation!



THEOLOGY OF CHILDREN - JESUS AND HIS MODEL OF CARE

PRESENTER



Adam Ghali, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy
FPU Biblical Seminary

✉ adam.ghali@fresno.edu

SESSION SUMMARY

This session explores the biblical and theological significance of children through Jesus's example and teachings. Drawing from key Gospel passages, the session challenges adult-centered assumptions and presents children as full bearers of God's image, active participants in the Kingdom of God, and essential voices in the life of the Church. Attendees are invited to rethink how faith communities understand, value, and care for children—not merely as future believers, but as the Church of the present.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Children are central to the Kingdom of God:** Jesus intentionally placed children at the center, presenting them as models of humility, faith, and openness to God.
- **Children possess inherent dignity and spiritual depth:** As image-bearers of God, children are fully human, spiritually receptive, relational, creative, and capable of deep experiences with God.
- **Childhood has theological value:** Children are not simply “adults in the making,” but meaningful participants in God's work here and now.
- **The Church is called to listen and learn from children:** A theology of childhood challenges adult-centered structures and invites genuine integration of children's voices and experiences.
- **Caring for children is a theological and pastoral responsibility:** Following Jesus's example includes protection, justice, intentional care, and recognizing ministry with children as missional and formative for the whole community.

“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”



Mark 10:14–16

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW GENERATION

PRESENTER



Emily Avila
Ministry Administrator
Youth for Christ
✉ emily@yfcnow.org

SESSION SUMMARY

This session explores the cultural, social, and spiritual realities shaping Generation Z and Generation Alpha, with particular attention to Hispanic children and youth in the United States. Participants examine how technology, postmodern thinking, the COVID-19 pandemic, family dynamics, and digital culture influence how young people learn, relate, and engage with faith. The session offers practical insights to help churches and ministry leaders communicate the gospel in relevant, relational, and context-aware ways that foster belonging, trust, and lasting faith.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Generations are shaped by their cultural “vase”:** Gen Z and Gen Alpha have been formed by constant digital exposure, postmodern skepticism, global insecurity, and the realities of life after COVID-19.
- **Family and home matter deeply:** Especially within Hispanic contexts, family—particularly parents and grandparents—remains a primary influence on faith, identity, and emotional security.
- **Young people seek safe, non-judgmental adults:** Trust grows when adults listen with curiosity, create space for questions, and resist quick judgment or easy answers.
- **Faith is becoming hybrid:** Spirituality for today’s youth often exists both online and offline, calling churches to engage digital spaces as meaningful contexts for discipleship.
- **Belonging precedes belief:** Whether churched or unchurched, young people are more open to faith when they experience authentic community, mentorship, and consistent care.
- **There are real opportunities among the “nones”:** Many youth who identify as non-religious remain spiritually open and are seeking meaning, guidance, and connection.

RESOURCES



Youth for Christ - Fresno/Madera

Youth for Christ empowers young people and their leaders with innovative research and resources to support their growth and faith development.



Fuller Youth Institute

The Fuller Youth Institute equips young people and their leaders with innovative research and resources to foster growth and faith development.

TOP HIGHLIGHTS OF GENERATION ALPHA

THE FYI REPORT ON GEN ALPHA & FAITH | 2026 FULLER YOUTH INSTITUTE



Generation Alpha refers to young people born from 2010 to 2024 (The oldest turns 16 in 2026)



Gen Alpha is the most diverse generation in race and ethnicity to date, yet they're coming of age just as adult polarization and politicized rhetoric are remarkably high

Gen Alpha is the first generation to **come of age in our post-pandemic world.**



Lower reading and math scores



Social-emotional gaps



Chronic school absenteeism indicates that educational impact lingers



Pandemic deepened family bonds for many children who are now becoming teens

Big trends in the **national religious landscape** may impact this generation's experiences.



The decline of religious affiliation seems to have leveled off in the US



Social-emotional gaps

While younger generations of adults are the least religious, they report openness to religion and spirituality, and specifically to Jesus.



Get the Full Report

Scan the code to view the full report by The Fuller Youth Institute. The report examines Generation Alpha's characteristics, potential future, and the importance of adapting faith communities to engage effectively with them.

LEARNING STYLES & DISABILITIES IN MINISTRY

PRESENTER



Launa Grunau
Associate Pastor
Action Community Church
✉ launa@actioncc.org



Jeff Grunau
Co-Facilitator
Action Community Church

SESSION SUMMARY

This breakout session equips ministry leaders, educators, and caregivers to better understand how children learn and how disabilities impact spiritual, social, and educational development. Participants explore diverse learning styles, sensory processing, and different theological and cultural perspectives on disability, with a strong emphasis on a biblical vision of dignity, inclusion, and belonging. The session offers practical tools and ministry strategies for removing barriers, supporting children with disabilities, and creating church environments where every child and family is welcomed as a valued part of the body of Christ.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Children learn in diverse ways:** Understanding auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and cognitive processing styles helps ministries teach more effectively and inclusively.
- **Disability does not define a person:** A biblical perspective affirms that every person is created in the image of God and possesses inherent worth beyond diagnoses or behaviors.
- **Inclusion goes beyond access to belonging:** Moving from exclusion or mere integration toward true belonging requires intentional relationships, respect, and community support.
- **Barriers are often environmental, not personal:** Physical, social, and attitudinal barriers within churches can unintentionally hinder participation and faith formation.
- **Practical supports make a difference:** Tools such as visual schedules, sensory supports, calming spaces, clear communication, and flexible teaching strategies promote engagement and safety for all children.
- **The Church is called to prepare the house:** Faithful ministry follows Jesus's example by removing barriers and making space so that everyone can come fully into God's presence.

RESOURCES



Joni & Friends
A ministry offering support, resources, and inspiration to individuals and families affected by disabilities.



Disability Ministry Books
An Amazon list of books to equip you and your team for your disability ministry.



Moody Bible Institute
A one-year online certificate program to equip you for disability ministry.



Awe & Wonder
Bible Curriculum designed specifically for special needs/disability ministry and home discipleship.

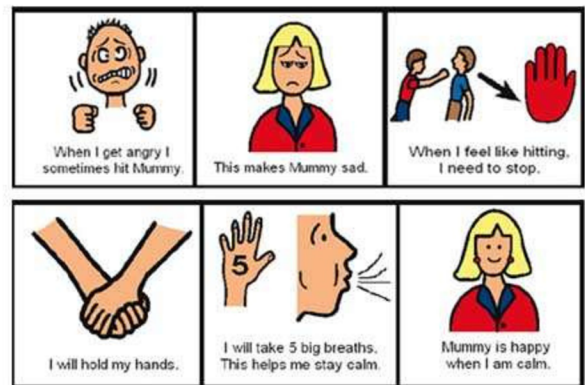
HELPFUL TIPS & TOOLS

- Use **“first-then” statements** to reduce anxiety, provide clear communication, and motivation (e.g., “first, we are going to wash our hands, then we will have a snack.”) Using a visual “first-then” board can make it feel more concrete and easier to understand.
- **Limit choices to two or three options** to encourage independence, reduce stress, and foster self-confidence.
- **Prompt peer interactions** to create an inclusive environment and develop social skills.
- Use **visual timers** to support transitions, which will reduce anxiety and help children better understand the concept of time.
- Use **simple, concrete language** to increase comprehension and engagement.
- **Create an individual spirit plan** for each child to foster collaboration between parents, leaders, and other stakeholders.

Calming Room



Social Stories



Sensory Support Kits



Visual Agenda



Calming Corner



Sensory Supplies

An Amazon list of items that can help accommodate all abilities in your classroom.



Sensory Overload Video

This animation gives the viewer a glimpse into sensory overload, and how often our sensory experiences intertwine in everyday life.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT & PARENTING

PRESENTER



Adam Ghali, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy
Fresno Pacific University

✉ adam.ghali@fresno.edu



Sesión con
Traducción

SESSION SUMMARY

This session offers parents, caregivers, and ministry leaders a holistic framework for understanding child development and parenting through psychological, spiritual, and relational lenses. Participants explore how children grow across key developmental stages—from infancy to adolescence—and how parenting is shaped by caregivers' own formation, anxieties, and spiritual lives. Rather than providing quick “behavior fixes,” the session emphasizes reflective, developmentally informed, and spiritually grounded parenting that nurtures healthy identities, emotional regulation, faith formation, and belonging.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Parenting shapes and is shaped by the caregiver’s inner life:** Effective parenting begins with self-reflection, emotional awareness, and spiritual formation of parents and caregivers.
- **Children develop holistically across multiple dimensions:** Healthy growth involves biological, cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual development working together.
- **Each developmental stage has unique needs and tasks:** Understanding age-specific growth (infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence) helps adults respond with appropriate expectations, limits, and support.
- **Parenting is a formative spiritual practice:** Everyday interactions—discipline, listening, play, boundaries, and emotional attunement—shape both children’s development and parents’ growth in virtues like patience, humility, and self-control.
- **Warmth and structure foster healthy development:** Parenting that combines emotional responsiveness with clear limits best supports self-regulation, moral development, resilience, and faith formation.
- **Community matters:** Families thrive when parenting is supported by relationships, shared responsibility, and faith communities that walk alongside parents and children.

RESOURCES



Little Steps Big Faith, Dawn Rundman Ph.D.

In this book, early childhood expert Dr. Dawn Rundman navigates the research to arrive at surprising insights about how very young children experience God, and how parents can use science to teach faith.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

INFANCY: 0 - 18 MONTHS

During infancy, babies are learning whether the world is safe and whether caregivers can be trusted. Their brains and emotional foundations are shaped through consistent care, touch, eye contact, and responsiveness. In this stage, nurturing faith begins through loving presence, dependable care, and reflecting God's comfort through everyday interactions.

- Respond consistently with warmth and gentleness
- Create peaceful routines with prayer, songs, and affection



TODDLERHOOD: 18 MONTHS - 3 YEARS

Toddlers are developing independence while still needing a strong sense of security. They test limits, explore constantly, and experience intense emotions without yet knowing how to regulate them. Parenting during this season calls for calm guidance, loving boundaries, and patient nurturing as children begin learning trust, obedience, and self-control.

- Keep clear, loving limits and stay calm during tantrums
- Offer simple choices and model gratitude, prayer, and kindness



PRESCHOOL: 3 - 6 YEARS

Preschoolers are imaginative, curious, energetic, and increasingly aware of emotions and relationships. They ask many questions and often think in concrete ways. This is a rich season for faith formation through stories, play, routines, and guidance that shape empathy, truthfulness, and love.

- Teach through Bible stories, play, songs, and routines
- Use consistent correction while nurturing empathy and connection



MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: 6 - 12 YEARS

Children in middle childhood grow in logic, responsibility, and awareness of fairness and belonging. They want competence, meaningful roles, and approval from trusted adults. Caregiving in this stage includes coaching character, building responsibility, and helping children connect faith to choices, friendships, and daily habits.

- Give responsibilities and celebrate effort, growth, and helpfulness
- Discuss character, friendships, and wise choices through a faith lens



ADOLESCENCE: 12 - 18 YEARS

Adolescents are forming identity, values, independence, and purpose while navigating peer influence and growing autonomy. They often question beliefs and seek authenticity. Guidance during these years shifts from control toward relationship, mentoring, and helping teens develop an owned and lived faith.

- Prioritize listening, trust, and honest conversation
- Invite responsibility, mentorship, and meaningful service opportunities



NURTURING FAITH IN CHILDREN

PRESENTER



Carolina Mueller

Ministry Program Director
FPU Center for Community Transformation

✉ carolina.mueller@fresno.edu



Sesión en
Español

SESSION SUMMARY

This session invites parents, caregivers, and ministry leaders to reflect on how faith is transmitted to children through everyday relationships, intentional example, and age-appropriate discipleship. Grounded in child development, learning styles, the teaching model of Jesus, and the realities facing the new generation, the presentation emphasizes that children do not learn faith only through words, but through what they consistently see, experience, and receive from caring adults. Participants are encouraged to take practical small steps that create environments where faith is lived with love, patience, presence, and authenticity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Children develop in stages and need age-appropriate guidance:** Understanding emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual development helps adults nurture children with wisdom and realistic expectations.
- **Children learn in many ways:** Kids learn through movement, visuals, listening, relationships, repetition, play, and sensory experiences. Effective ministry adapts to diverse learning needs and abilities.
- **Jesus modeled a powerful pedagogy:** Jesus taught relationally, creatively, through questions, and by calling people to action. His example offers a strong model for teaching children today.
- **Today's generation faces unique challenges:** Generation Alpha is growing up in a constantly changing world shaped by technology, shifting family dynamics, and emotional pressures, yet still deeply needs love, guidance, presence, and hope.
- **Faith is modeled more than taught:** Children often learn what adults truly believe by observing daily habits, attitudes, prayer life, forgiveness, consistency, and love in the home and church.
- **Small daily actions build lasting faith:** Simple routines such as prayer, Bible conversations, kindness, patience, and grace-filled responses can have a lifelong spiritual impact.

RESOURCES



Generational Leadership, Lucas Leys

This book focuses on enhancing spiritual formation and discipleship for children, teens, and young adults through new insights in neuroscience and Biblical missiology. It's an essential resource for pastors, youth leaders, and Christian educators.



CONNECT. EMPOWER. TRANSFORM.
Empowering community impact for sustainable transformation.

ABOUT CCT

At CCT, we operate at the intersection of faith, purpose, and action. Rooted in the belief that cities should reflect God’s peace, prosperity, and wholeness, we dedicate ourselves to fostering community resurgence. We champion the idea that real change starts from within, not from the outside. Hence, we partner with local leaders in the sectors of Education, Business, Church, and Non-Profit to ensure community-driven results. Today’s workshop is part of our initiative *Centering Children in Our Congregations*, created in response to the needs expressed by ministry leaders who serve children in our communities.

- 📍 1717 S Chestnut Ave, Fresno, CA 93702
- ✉ carolina.mueller@fresno.edu
- ☎ (559) 453-2319
- 🌐 cctfresno.org

**MAY
11**

DESIGN LAB

A space for leaders to refine and launch ideas for their children’s ministry program.

The Design Lab is a practical workshop designed to help pastors, leaders, and volunteers develop an idea to address a need in their church’s children’s ministry. Participants will have the opportunity to shape a ministry idea and submit a proposal through our mini-grant application.

Submitted proposals will be reviewed for possible funding, with awards ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 to support a church-based children’s ministry project.



SPANISH DESIGN LAB - Online

Session 1: May 11, 2026 | 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Session 2: May 18, 2026 | 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Free Registration | Online via Zoom

ENGLISH DESIGN LAB - In Person

Friday, May 29, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Free Registration | Lunch Included

Fresno Pacific University, BC Lounge

4812 E Butler Ave, Fresno, CA 93702



SCAN TO REGISTER

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

Your feedback encourages us to keep offering workshops like this! Tell us what you thought: scan the QR code and complete our short evaluation survey.



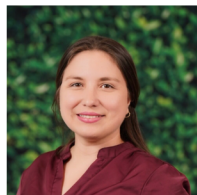
Lilly Endowment Inc.
A Private Philanthropic Foundation



 1717 S Chestnut Ave, Fresno, CA 93702
 certificado@fresno.edu
 (559) 453-2302
 cctfresno.org/nurturing-children



Carlos Huerta, MBA
Executive Director, CCT
carlos.huerta@fresno.edu
(559) 453-2374



Carolina Mueller
Ministry Director, CCT
carolina.mueller@fresno.edu
(559) 453-2319



Yetzanit Amador
Program Assistant, CCT
certificado@fresno.edu
(559) 453-2302



July Canas
Program Coordinator, CCT
july.canas@fresno.edu
(559) 453-2310



Melissa Chavez
Administrative Assistant, CCT
cct.intern@fresno.edu
(559) 453-2318

