

HOLY WORK WITH CHILDREN

MAKING MEANING TOGETHER

TANYA MARIE EUSTACE CAMPEN

Children are theologians with the ability to recognize and respond to God's presence in their lives.

Listening to the stories of children helps us to understand how children make meaning out of God's presence and reveals tools that children use as they claim their faith. With this knowledge, adults can then better promote and encourage children's spiritual growth.

Offering a theology of childhood, *Holy Work With Children* values the child's role in the Body of Christ and God's transformative work. Dr. Campen invites readers to consider:

- How does listening to children teach us about God and faith formation?
- What wisdom and insight do children offer to all of us by how they seek understanding of God and God's presence in their lives?
- How can we guide and support the children in our communities in this work?

Drawing on direct research with children as they think theologically, this book extends both theological and educational research. *Holy Work With Children* offers practical examples for how congregational leaders, parents, and those who journey with children can encourage and guide them as they make theological meaning and discover ways to respond to God's grace and love making a difference in their communities and the world.

"A must-read for ministry leaders! Campen thoughtfully weaves together both theological framework and practical tools to create space for children to experience the work of the Holy through wonder and listening."

—**Kathy Pittenger**, children's initiatives coordinator, Michigan Conference, United Methodist Church

"Theologian, qualitative researcher, and religious educator Tanya Campen invites readers into educational ministry that will both enliven children's awareness of God and help them to articulate those experiences. If we accept her premise that God is at work in children, then we must ask, how do we respond? Campen answers, 'Hold the space open.' Their theological insights are rich and compelling. Teachers will learn how to partner with children in holy conversations. Campen skillfully weaves theology, developmental theory, and pedagogy in among delightful holy conversation with the children who were part of her research."

—**Margaret Ann Crain**, Professor Emerita of Christian Education, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

"*Holy Work with Children* is a must-read for everyone who cares about children and their spiritual lives. The book is filled with Tanya's wisdom, insights, and practical ideas for accompanying children on their journey with God. On every page you will experience her love, respect, and appreciation for children and their stories, experiences, and questions. Her fourfold approach to children's meaning-making—engage with the faith tradition, recognize the presence of God, claim their own experience, and respond—provides practical direction for every faith community."

—**John Roberto**, president of Lifelong Faith Associates

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TANYA MARIE EUSTACE CAMPEN is an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church and holds a doctorate of philosophy in Christian education and congregational studies from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. Her research focus is children's spirituality. Tanya teaches, speaks, and writes regularly on issues concerning children, families, and intergenerational ministry. Tanya's ministry seeks to help all persons discover and live in response to God's grace and love.

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