

# Child Protection Month

April 2017



## Prayer for Our Children

Leader: Creator God, we pause to raise a prayer of thanksgiving for our children.

**People: You have entrusted the miracle of life to us.**

Leader: Open our eyes to see your image in them.

**People: Open our ears to hear the needs of their hearts.**

Leader: We renew our commitment to our children.

**People: We dedicate ourselves to their care, nurture, and protection.**

Leader: As you show love, patience, and compassion to us,

**People: Give us love, patience, and compassion for them.**

Leader: Help us by your Holy Spirit, Loving God.

**All: Amen**



[www.DovesNest.net](http://www.DovesNest.net)

*Empowering and equipping faith communities to  
keep children and youth safe in their homes,  
churches, and communities.*

## No, No, Antonio!

“Antonio, how many times have I told you to sit down?  
You **HAVE** to sit down!”

“Antonio, stop scribbling! You need to color between the  
lines. All the other children are coloring between the lines.  
Your picture is **RUINED!**”

“Antonio, you are **NOT** going to get a cookie today if you  
don’t behave.”

The Sunday school teacher had planned the lesson. The Bible story was memorized. All the materials for the craft project were carefully prepared. A beautiful basket sat holding a delicious home-baked snack.

But the children didn’t hear the prepared lesson that Sunday. They didn’t learn about the love that God freely gives to everyone. Instead they learned:

“God only rewards people who are ‘good,’ those who do what they are told, those who act like everyone else.”

Antonio left the building in tears. He told his mother he didn’t want to go to church anymore. His mother, who needed all the support she could get, wasn’t sure she wanted to go to church anymore either.

It wasn’t really abuse. No laws were broken. It probably didn’t even violate the church child protection policy. There was nothing to report. And yet Antonio and all the other children in the class were harmed.

Our children learn more about God from how they are treated than from what we try to teach them.

Placing the well-being of children above all else is not just a policy, it is God’s will—for them and for us.

Written by David Orr, pastor of St. John’s United Church of Christ in Holgate, Ohio, and a Dove’s Nest board member.

**Dove’s Nest helps congregations  
develop a culture of caring for children.**

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