



Melinda Einander, Director of Family Ministries
Annual Report, June 2020

This has been a year of significant changes and challenges, and also a year of possibilities and growth for our congregation (and for all of us). One major shift for me has been handing off the role of Growth and Learning lead to Susan Aigner in January, allowing me to focus instead on how children, youth, and families engage in all areas of church life. This year my primary work has been engaging in shared ministry as we adopted the model of monthly themes for worship, small group ministry, and religious education. Church-wide themes encourage staff and lay leaders to work collaboratively, as together we plan worship, educational, and community-building offerings for all ages.

After many years of wishing there were more connection between what our children learn, what our adults learn, and what we experience in worship, theme-based ministry provides tools to make these connections happen regularly. In the fall and winter I offered a class for families, with hands-on activities introducing each month's theme, and provided resources on our website and the Lighthouse bulletin board for all ages to explore the themes. I wrote lessons for our classes for children and youth expanding on the time for all ages in worship. In the fall and winter, I collaborated in planning multigenerational worship services exploring several themes, and since our transition to online worship, contribute to planning worship each week. I also provide ideas and resources to families for exploring the theme at home in weekly emails and our online parent Facebook group.

Another focus this year has been expanding the support I provide for parents and families for faith formation at home. Last year's family listening session highlighted needs our families have in managing stress, supporting teens, and connecting with one another. Our monthly family class, parent Facebook group, and online parent support group provide parents and families with tools to use at home and a way to connect, and continue to do so since our transition to online church. In addition, in the fall and winter, I offered a class to parents of teens to companion our Our Whole Lives class for adolescents, providing specific support for parenting teens both in the area of sexual development as well as other concerns for this developmental stage.

Last summer and fall, much of my time was dedicated to preparing our Lighthouse space for our new tenant, Planting Flowers Learning Center. This required sorting and purging items that we no longer needed for our program, and reexamining our priorities both for our use of the space and for what we offer in our classes for children and youth. It also

allowed the possibility of dedicated space for our Family Ministries library in an adult meeting room, to provide better access to these resources. I hope to make more of these resources available online as well, as we continue to not be able to access them physically. I want to thank the many people of all ages in our congregation who gave of their time to help clean, move furniture, sort through materials, and finding new homes for many things.

Since March, my job has changed considerably. I've been more involved in weekly worship planning, providing technical support for Zoom, and supporting families in new and different ways. I find that online church provides some folks better access without the same constraints of geography and time, while limiting access for others. For many, family stress has increased, and the types of support needed continues to change. At the same time, this transition to online church requires us to think differently about our priorities and how we offer faith formation. I am excited to see in the coming year what we can develop together.