

2016 Annual Report – Faith Formation Team

-from Kevin Brown, Faith Formation Team, Chair

"The Faith Formation Team of the Minnesota Conference listens to God's still speaking voice, to discern a vision of how best to equip, empower, advocate, resource and evaluate faith formation in local churches, the Minnesota conference, and the wider church."

The above statement of purpose provides the lens through which the Faith Formation Team of the Minnesota Conference engages our work to support local congregations in their ministry with children, youth, and the adults who nurture them.

This has been a year of transition and change, as we said goodbye to the Wade Zick in his role as the Associate Conference Minister for Faith Formation for Children and Youth. We are so grateful for the strong, visionary, and forward-thinking ministry Wade provided during his years in this role. We will miss his many gifts and entrepreneurial spirit, but we are also very grateful for the competent and enthusiastic leadership Garth Schumacher is providing in his interim role. It has been a pleasure for the team to work with Garth this year. We have established a new collaborative partnership between the team and conference staff, and look forward to developing this relationship in the months ahead.

In October members of the team met with Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister, for conversation about requirements and revisions to the position description for the Associate Conference Minister for Faith Formation for Children and Youth (or the next iteration of this role). Shari invited the team members to share their hopes and expectations for this role moving forward. The conversation was open, honest, and hopeful regarding this critically important leadership role.

In November, the team met jointly with the Pilgrim Point Camp Committee to discuss programming, maintenance needs, and other issues of joint interest between the two groups. The groups decided to request excess Ashley funds to help offset the cost for needed roofing and insulation for the lodge at Pilgrim Point. We also had preliminary conversation about summer faith formation programming for children and youth held at Pilgrim Point. The Faith Formation Team also met separately for a conversation about going deeper with the Faith Forming Five.

In January, the Faith Formation Team held a winter retreat at Camp Courage. The weekend was a time to deepen relationships as a team, dream together about ways to broaden support for congregations in the Minnesota conference, and begin to establish ministry and programmatic priorities for the team. The team agreed to begin exploring the development of a web-presence for faith formation resources, and began the conversation about how best to provide support for congregations to help families and other folk support at-home spiritual practice and faith development. We reviewed the Faith Forming Five and how to help conference congregations live more fully into this initiative – not only for children and youth

but for all-ages formation. We continued budget conversations concerning the best stewardship of the Ashley endowment and what recommendations we would make to the board regarding programming initiatives and wider church support.

In early April, six members of the team attend the Faith Forward conference in Chicago. This was an opportunity to connect with congregational leaders from a variety of denominational contexts and theological traditions to explore the leading edges of progressive faith formation ministries with children and youth. This was a rich time for the team to hear from engaging speakers, learn and experience new practices, and continue conversations from earlier in the year about our work together as a team.

Our conference is blessed to have so many gifted and experienced Faith Formation advocates. It has been a privilege and pleasure to serve alongside these good people.

Team Members: Kevin Brown (chair), Tom Ewald, Nathan Holst, Julia Kwam (secretary), Aaron Lauer, Sheri Nelson, Leah Springer, ex-officio Garth Schumacher (staff)