

2022 Annual Report

Associate Conference Minister of Faith Formation for Children & Youth (ACMFF)

The 2021-2022 program year has been a time of significant challenge, creative experimentation, profound grief, and abundant grace. I have been continually amazed by the resilience and faithfulness of our local congregations and their leaders, as they have been required to transition quickly and unexpectedly – over and over again – to rapidly changing circumstances and contexts. I am also grateful to be part of the creative, collaborative, and supportive staff, with whom I have the privilege to work alongside each day.

As we began the previous program year, we had hoped (like so many) that we would be able to offer robust in-person programs and gatherings. Like so many of our local congregations and other institutions, we were required to pivot frequently and maintain flexibility in our planning and programming. Once again, many of our programs shifted to online spaces throughout fall 2021 and winter/spring 2022, and we made the difficult decision to cancel several of our in-person retreats and gatherings. Following are some of the programs we offered during 2021-2022:

- We hosted 6 online 4th Thursday gatherings for faith formation leaders. We hosted in-person 4th Thursday gatherings in April & May, our first in-person gatherings since before the pandemic. We will continue to offer options for joining these events via Zoom, as we continue to reimagine these gatherings throughout the summer and into the next program year.
- Beginning in January 2022, the Conference launched a new Circles of Trust peer support cohort series for faith formation leaders. The 13 participants in the program gathered via Zoom for an opening retreat series and will continue to meet monthly for eight months in small group cohorts facilitated by our partners from the Center for Courage & Renewal.
- We are partnering with the Wisconsin Conference to offer a large regional Our Whole Lives training in the summer of 2022, which will be the first in-person training event since before the pandemic.

The Minnesota Conference continues to have abundant resources to equip individuals and congregations for the work of nurturing faith for all ages. We continue to use our resources to develop innovative and creative partnerships with individuals and organizations from around Minnesota and beyond to continue to be a national leader in progressive faith formation. Following are a few examples:

- Ongoing sponsorship of the Ministry Lab at United Seminary, which provides no-cost support to our local congregations and leaders, including curation of a broad range of physical and digital resources, innovative worship and justice-focused ministry tools, and point-of-need consulting for a wide range of ministry areas.
- Funding and support for the 2022 ConNext Summit, an ecumenical gathering of faith formation leaders from around Minnesota and beyond.
- Offered two series of online family toolkits to support at-home and congregational family faith formation Advent/Christmas, and Lent/Holy Week/Easter. The toolkits were developed in partnership with the Conference's Outdoor Ministry, the Ministry Lab, Keren Gudeman Design, Doing Good Together, and a variety of musicians, and local congregational pastors.

The information listed above provides only a snapshot of the past year. As we move into the coming year, we will continue to support many of these existing program initiatives, hope to return to many of the programs that were interrupted during the last year, and will continue to explore new ministry opportunities and partnerships.

Grace and peace for the journey ahead.

Rev. Kevin Brown