

YOUNGER YOUTH AND TEEN YOUTH

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Submitted by Pastor Bryan

After these first two paragraphs this report is word for word what I shared in the pastor's annual report about youth ministry in 2021. I want to add just a couple of things here. First, a huge word of thanks to the parents and grandparents of the younger youth who made a commitment to making sure their kids could be with us during our bi-weekly zoom meetings in 2021. That was huge and I was thrilled that that went as well as it did! I very much look forward in 2022 to galvanizing and growing this younger group and also to turning over the leadership of it to some of you parents in a more organized and structured way. I hope it's obvious that I LOVE being with the kids (all ages) and that I will continue to be a part of things, but it will all be both more meaningful and more sustainable if I am not the primary leader of things.

Second, I know that trying to offer meaningful virtual ministry for the teens was harder, especially when zoom was our only option. I want to thank Mel Thompson and actually Aaron for leading us in some virtual games, even though I consistently was lousy at them! I also want to highlight the commitment that Skylar Adkins made to serving our congregation so faithfully in 2021. Ever since we began in-person worship outside in June Skylar made the commitment to being our zoom camera man and to helping set things up outside. Skylar never missed a Sunday unless he had a karate tournament or other family commitment and this commitment of service on his part needs to be recognized and appreciated. Thank you Skylar!

YOUTH PROGRAMMING IN 2021

In general I'm feeling great about our progress in youth ministry during 2021. I don't really know exactly how it happened, but our younger youth group in particular grew significantly, even when we could only meet via zoom. The kids and parents and I really enjoyed our twice monthly zoom Bible story and craft times. We now have close to 20 children under the age of 12 who are at least potentially active. We just met again and decided to embrace a Friday evening Family night meeting the second Friday of each month. It was the parents' decision to limit it to one meeting a month for now. They're all busy and involved in lots of things, but we have some committed parents who I think we can count on to stay involved and start sharing the work. So I feel as though we have finally turned the corner this year for this age group and that we've got a great nucleus of young children again. We may not see them in large numbers on Sunday mornings, but that's more a matter of family scheduling and the fact that some parents are still understandably protective regarding COVID. Hopefully that changes for the 5-11 year olds who can get vaccinated now, but it may be a while for some of the parents to feel ready to be inside the building for worship, and as I revise this report during the last week of 2021, the COVID realities are not looking promising at all.

The teen group has been tougher to galvanize, but we're getting there. We have about 5 youth in this age group who are enthused about getting together, but they are busy and active in school and it's hard to find times to meet that work for them. Meeting with other area churches has helped and we'll continue that. We particularly enjoyed having some joint meetings with Lake Edge UCC in late 2021 and we will continue to do things together in 2022 as long as the pandemic does not get in the way. I am very eager to organize some retreats and service trips for this age group and am hoping we will be able to do something along these lines in 2022.