

# Youth Reports (Younger Youth and Teen Youth)

Submitted by Pastor Bryan

## Youth Programming In 2022

I am thrilled to be able to say that I think our youth programs have had a fantastic 2022! We have well over 20 younger youth (roughly 12 and under) who are active now, and there are a solid 8-10 youth in our teen (or close to teen) group. We also have a wonderful Confirmation Class of 6.

The Younger Youth met monthly throughout the year. Our biggest challenge was just that everyone is busy and it's hard to get them all to show up at the same time. We met the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month at 5:30 p.m. and enjoyed games (hide and seek in the building is the obvious favorite!), crafts (thanks to Melissa Pfohl, Erin Gelhausen, Hillary Cheever, and Sheryl Rowe), Bible stories, and pizza. We decided in November to move our meeting time to the second Sunday of the month, and so that's what we'll be doing for the foreseeable future. I have conferred with parents from time to time to see if there is interest in meeting more often or even on Sunday mornings, but the obvious preference at this point is to keep things as they are in terms of frequency and timing. A huge thank you to Erin, Hillary, and Sheryl for helping out with some of the leadership, and especially to Sheryl for the amazing Advent crafts and messages she offered throughout Advent. It is always wonderful to see more kids in church on Sunday mornings, and we hope to have several fun ways for kids to participate (crafts, a possible kids choir, and things like Easter Egg hunts) on Sunday mornings that will be particularly fun and meaningful for them.

The teen group started almost from scratch last year and we have been meeting with youth from Lake Edge UCC. This combined group has been great and we've done a bunch of fun things together (bowling, Sky Zone, Devil's Lake, and Schuster's Farm on Halloween). We've also had some great conversations about God and spirituality and we're now exploring some ways to do service projects and also to take a trip of some kind for service and fun and adventure sometime in the summer of 2023. Thanks to Judy Emmrich and to Heather Reekie for helping out at several meetings and for being "on call" to help some more as needed in the year to come. The Confirmation class also attended the Wisconsin Conference "Knock Knock" retreat in November and had a great time getting to know each other better and exploring the spiritual themes of the retreat. We'll take another retreat together in the Spring of 2023 as part of the Confirmation Class experience, and God willing, these young folks will share a Service of Confirmation in June, 2023.

Youth Ministry is gathering significant momentum at McFarland UCC and I am really excited about this. We have some AMAZING young people in our midst who will teach and bless us all in the years to come. This is going to be lots of fun, and as I've often said, what our youth need most when they come to church is to enjoy themselves and to know that they are loved in a very special and authentic way by God and by their church. Everything else tends to take care of itself when these two things happen consistently.