It started on Jan. 11, the first youth group gathering of the new year. Eighteen of our youth gathered as they do on Sunday nights. This time, however, they had brought Bible passages with them – to suggest as foundational texts for Youth Sunday. After a lot of sharing and pondering, Micah 6:1-8 (what does the Lord require of you?) and 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 (power is made perfect in weakness) emerged as our two choices. Then, they did what they always do: studied these passages, wrote liturgy and chose hymns based on their understanding of them, created a bulletin cover that speaks to them, and wrote sermons based upon them. Folks signed up to read, to usher, and to play instruments, too. So, the ushers learned to ush from an usher trainer. The musicians practiced their pieces on cello, tuba, trumpet, and trombone, with the guidance of our minister of music. Every single element was chosen, written, created, or prepared by our youth. This is how Youth Sunday happens.

But it started before that. It really started years ago, when their families made Sunday morning faith formation and worship a priority. When parents drove back to downtown for youth group. When our youth invited their friends to join them, for fun or for the emotional safety of already having a familiar face in the room. When they made space for a summer trip in a busy season or missed an event to go on a weekend retreat. When a parent said, “Go be with your people” to that youth on the couch. This is how Youth Sunday happens.

But it started before that. It started when a member of the Christian Education Committee called to recruit faith formation teachers, and not just from the stepparents and parents of those in the class. When potential teachers were asked to be there on Sunday mornings at 9:45 am, to teach and love these kids. Or when I called. (And oh, do I call.) When I called about being a youth advisor, or a summer trip adult, or a weekend retreat leader. Or when an 8th or 9th grader asked an adult to be their confirmation friend in faith. And that adult – maybe it was you? – that adult said “yes,” even if they were nervous, or uncertain, or busy. This is how Youth Sunday happens.

But it started before that. It started when the family stands up there with a tiny baby, or a little kid, or a completed confirmand. It started at the font, with the water poured and blessed, when the elder turns to the congregation and asks, “Do you, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture this child by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be a faithful member of Christ’s church?” And you say, “yes.” This is how Youth Sunday happens.

Grace & Peace,
John