

The Faith Formation Ministry of St. Andrew Lutheran Church

Recently, the Faith Formation Committee had an opportunity to collaborate with Pastor Pauline and Pastor Eric at a retreat at the home of Chad and Jeana Butler. The Faith Formation Committee consists of Jeana Butler, Faith Formation Council Chair; Liza Hawkins, Director of Youth and Children's Ministries; Jen Roberts, and Wayne Higbe. The purpose of the retreat was to define the values and goals of the committee, as well as plan ahead for future faith formation events. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our new pastors' vision for St. Andrew as a whole.

The day started by reading Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, the parable of the sower. In this parable, a farmer sows many seeds, seeming to scatter them carelessly across four different types of ground. Ultimately, the seeds that grow in the fertile soil represent people who hear the message and live it in their lives, even when things are difficult. While we all strive to be these "ideal Christians," the truth is that we fall short. We are usually somewhere else on the path, more closely represented by the seeds that struggle to grow properly. The good news is, that's okay, and it simply means we're human. God is always planting seeds in our lives. Faith Formation at St. Andrew aims to plant seeds for individuals and families that allow for growth and renewal in your spiritual lives.

To that end, you may see us planting a variety of seeds in a variety of locations, so to speak. We're excited to try new things that we've never done before. We're also more than willing to try things from the past that weren't successful, maybe in a new way. And, of course, if something is working, we definitely want to continue to plant seeds in that location. We have a tendency to only plant seeds where we know something is growing and flourishing, but the willingness to try new things may provide us with the ability to grow beyond our current spiritual position in life.

Below are the values and goals for the Faith Formation Ministry at St. Andrew that were developed with Pastor Pauline, Pastor Eric, and the committee.

VALUES...

1. **Asking the "Why?" question:** "Why do we do what we do?" will be our starting and guiding question when it comes to decision making around all faith formation activities.
2. **Content that is theologically progressive and current:** Use of resources and curriculum that are current and with theologically progressive content, in keeping with the vision of the ELCA, is necessary for a successful faith formation program.
3. **Faith that is formed in the home (and congregation):** Lifelong faith formation begins and continues in the home. The mission of the congregation's faith formation ministry is to equip homes (families and individuals) with tools and resources to support faith formation for everyday life.
4. **Streamlined Communication & Resource Sharing:** Technology is to be used to its fullest potential as an additional and necessary means for equipping and supporting families with faith formation resources.
5. **Maintaining a Welcoming & Safe Place for All God's Children:** St. Andrew is to be a welcoming community for all people without exception; a community that is physically, spiritually, and emotionally safe. All faith formation ministries and activities will be designed with the visitor, neighbor, non-member in mind.
6. **Congregational Collaboration & Unity of Focus:** We believe there is great benefit in the congregation as a whole focusing together around a seasonal theme or central message. In this way the efforts of each ministry area supports and builds upon the others leading to greater unity of vision and mission.

GOALS...

1. Better define what faith formation is at St. Andrew, asking the "Why?" question to inform our evaluation, decision-making, and planning processes related to all faith formation ministries.
2. Improve technology, including the use of a church application to better serve our families with their faith formation in the home.
3. Improve our use of a hybrid model (both in-person and/or online) for faith formation activities with the outcome of greater inclusivity and ease of access.
4. Develop cross-generational opportunities as part of faith formation at St. Andrew.
5. Collaborate with other ministry areas to develop seasonal themes to connect faith formation messaging with the message of our congregation's other ministry endeavors.
6. Continue to update safety procedures and protocols, utilizing technology, when possible, to streamline safety practices.
7. Promote all church activities to the community, with more congregation-wide special events taking place.
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We now have a solid foundation to grow this ministry which will positively impact all members of St. Andrew and assist us in welcoming new members. If you have ideas or "seeds" to share, please reach out to Jeana Butler or any member of the Faith Formation Committee. We would love to hear from you!

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