

Charge Conference Report for Children's Ministry and Discipleship
December 18, 2022
submitted by Kate Fields

In post-pandemic ministry, I am seeing shifts in the ways that we used to do ministry. This past year, in the events that offered fun, low barrier entry into the life of the church, we had the greatest participation and numbers of Belmonsters and visitors. These are events like our carnival, Easter egg hunt, Advent Family Craft Night, picnic and folk music at Sevier Park, Food and Faith class, etc. I strongly believe that offering these sorts of gathering opportunities next year will be absolutely critical to nurture our relationships and get folks back in terms of involvement in the life of Belmont UMC, as well as provide great spaces for new Belmonsters to get to know folks. We have to do events that make this place feel like home to folks.

We have had an exciting year in Children's Ministry as we were able to come back to meeting in person. This summer found us doing multiple service opportunities in South End Garden, making disaster bags, talking about food waste through our Chopped Jr. game, and exploring how music provides therapy for healing. Our Sunday School classes teach children the stories of the Bible and God's love. Children's choirs continue to lead us in worship on Sunday mornings and the Feast of Lights and teach children about God's love through music. This year has seen us hosting a carnival, Easter egg hunt, Blessing Breakfast, Shrove Tuesday Pancakes, teacher training, Valentine cards for kids, Advent Family Craft Night, Lent bags, Advent bags, Christmas Eve bags, Kindergarten Prayer Friends, and 3rd grade Bible presentations. Our childcare workers continue to provide wonderful care to our youngest Belmonsters as we consider childcare as the front porch of Children's Ministry where parents develop trust and relationships with representatives of Children's Ministry. We are also thrilled that Mrs. Cooper, Director of Children's Music Ministry and Mrs. Perkey have started coming to childcare to sing with our youngest Belmonsters in Baby/Toddler music!

Belmont discipleship has seen multiple gatherings seeking to deepen our faith as followers of Christ. Adult Sunday School classes met every week, discussing relevant topics to culture, exploring the lectionary texts, hosting multiple speakers, and journeying together through Bible studies and spiritual practices. We have hosted several book groups during the year who gather to read and discuss books, relating topics to spiritual matters. We have gathered around a fire for an Easter vigil and gathered in the round for a Maundy Thursday foot washing service. Written Field Guides were provided for the congregation and shaped our Lenten and Advent experiences. This fall, we hosted a Food and Faith class where we connected our discipleship to caring about our local food system, food insecurity, and food apartheid. We visited farms and gardens, discussing how Eucharist connects us to the farmers around us and how we are to care about hunger and supporting the farmers who grow our food. We ended the course with a 100-mile dinner where we ate dishes with ingredients that came from within 100 miles or less of Belmont. We have had a few gathering experiences which were meant to deepen community such as our picnic at a local park where we ate together and sang folk and protest songs! We were able to return to our All-Church Retreat at Beersheba Springs Assembly this fall and were led by Rev. Becca Stevens about how love heals the world. This has indeed been a full and great year in the life of Belmont UMC discipleship!