

Ministry Report, Ministry Developer for Children and Youth Diocesan Convention 2024

This purpose of the role for Ministry Development for Children and Youth is (1) to support church leaders (lay, ordained, paid, volunteer) who serve children and youth to provide the best care and discipleship for young people, (2) to create discipleship opportunities for children and young people (pilgrimages, events, conferences, camp, online groups), and (3) to work with Jillian Smith to uphold the Safe Church, Safe Communities protocols, training and expectations in the Diocese.

During this program year (September 2024 - Summer 2025), I am strategically working with these projects: 1.) This Young Church Project is a residency program where I am supporting four churches in the Diocese to identify a goal and help them to succeed in accomplishing it! Currently, the churches are Trinity, Kirksville; St. John's, Tower Grove; St. Francis, Eureka; and All Saints, Farmington. 2.) Called is a youth leadership program which is meeting throughout the program year with youth and mentors from across the Diocese, exploring what it means to be called by God to be a leader, in or outside the church. The theme is listening, through the life and call of Samuel. 3.) Much of my time will go to having the first Camp Firebird camp; renamed by campers during the relaunch of our diocesan camp this summer. And 4.), the unique thread running through all of these initiatives is an emphasis on *Safe Church, Safe Communities*; because, in order to ensure meaningful discipleship and faith experiences with children and youth, we have to ensure their safety in all of our events and gatherings. Jillian and I, with the leadership of the Bishop, are working to a goal of 100% SCSC compliance for all our clergy, and following that, for our parishes over the next year. 5.) I continue to put out a quarterly newsletter called The Collaborative, as well as run a Facebook Group for DioMO Children and Youth practitioners and families. 6.) This office continues to help support and fund other groups run programs like Rite 13 and Godly Play training.

Looking over the past year, there is much to celebrate! I have had the pleasure of visiting the majority of parishes over the past year and have received the most wonderful hospitality and fellowship. A group of volunteers met monthly for our LGBTQIA+ online youth group, which is currently going through a season of discernment. However, the biggest win of the past year is the relaunch of Camp Phoenix in the beginning of August, held at the Wyman Center in Eureka. With 20+ volunteers and helpers, and 48 campers, we explored the theme of "New Name" - God names who God loves. Camp Phoenix was a beautiful expression of diversity, creativity and Christ-centered love in the Diocese of Missouri. We played, worshiped, sang, chanted silly songs, got to know our cabin groups, prayed, had a bonfire every evening, swam in the pool and did many outdoor adventures together. So many individuals and churches helped this camp happen! Camp Phoenix culminated with a new name chosen by the campers - Camp Firebird; and a Eucharist on Friday where we had close to 50 clergy and parent visitors.

We have a lot of work to do; we have so much to learn about God's Kingdom through the little ones around us. We owe them our extravagant attention and our faithful love.

Please contact Erin for more information: epickersgill@diocesemo.org or visit the Children and Youth Formation page on the Diocesan Website: <https://www.diocesemo.org/children-and-youth-ministries/>