

Ministry Report, Ministry Developer of Children and Youth, Diocesan Convention, November 2023

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.

I have been in this role part - time since January '23 and full - time from June '23. One highlight has been visiting and connecting with so many churches and communities in the Diocese. Since January I have visited or had significant conversations and partnerships with over 27 of these communities, including ministries like the Racial Reconciliation and Social Justice Ministries, Gun Violence Prevention ministry, the LGBTQIA+ Ministry Development and Episcopal City Mission.

I loved creating an intergenerational worship resource with Debbie Nelson Linck, based on her book, *Pauli Murray: Shouting for the Rights of All People*. This digital and concrete curriculum was sent to 14 different communities and attracted attention from other dioceses as well.

I began connecting children and youth ministers across the Diocese through an email chain as well as through a quarterly newsletter called *The Collaborative* (goes out to over 50 readers). Many collaborations have happened in the last year including the Rite 13 Initiative with Holy Communion and others, the LGBTQIA+ online Youth Group, Love + Serve (collaboration with LifeWise, the Diocese and Emmanuel Episcopal Church, which included youth from 6 churches across the Diocese), youth groups meeting *together* for momentum and community, being able to attend the Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry, the Forma at VTS annual conference, and helping to build the network between Children and Youth Diocesan ministers across Province 5.

My colleague Mtiye Koggani and I chaperoned 3 youth from 3 different churches to EYE 23 (Episcopal Youth Event) in Baltimore in July. I have gathered a group of 10 lay and ordained individuals from across the Diocese to participate in the Camp Phoenix Leadership Team; we meet monthly and are planning a retreat for October '23, a new location for Camp Phoenix '24, and gently discerning how to bless children and young people in the Diocese through a summer camp experience and by carrying on the treasured legacy of Camp Phoenix.

Next year ('24) will be filled with exciting discipleship opportunities for children and youth in the Diocese. To name a few: children and youth presence and events at the Revival, Love + Serve project, General Convention presence, Camp Phoenix relaunch, a continued exploration of a youth connection with our companion Diocese of Puerto Rico, continued LGBTQIA+ Youth Group and in person retreat, ongoing consultancy and visiting with parishes in the diocese, continuing to build the Collaborative Community, and the creation of more helpful discipleship-focused resources.

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/>

