

## EMT Report to Voters

March – August, 2021

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13:8*

Change and decay in all around I see; | O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

— Abide With Me (LSB 878, stanza 4) —

The theme in ministry these last six months has continued to be change and adaptation, but our unchanging God has been faithfully abiding with us through it all.

We saw some significant staff changes in this time period. Debbie Ferrante, our Preschool Director moved to South Carolina and Kathy Figini, our Office Manager retired. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we had a small celebration dinner with staff and Debbie and Kathy's families. We were able to bless them both with a generous gift from the congregation. On May 3, 2021, Jordan Barna began her ministry among us as our new Office Manager and Laura Horn began on August 2 as our new Preschool Director. In addition to these new hires, Jen Florio joined our team as Director of High School Ministry, moving from an "interim" status. She will begin online classes through Concordia University in Irvine, California for a masters in Theology and Director of Christian Education certification through our national church body, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Worship saw some changes in this time period as well. The *Journey through Good Friday* worship experience happened online because of COVID. In June 2021, the government lifted COVID restrictions and we returned to worshipping without masks in all services. We were able to introduce some new elements to our traditional services, drawing from our many diverse orders of service in the hymnal, as well as some custom elements. We continue to use cantors on Sunday morning for our livestream and sang some portions of the liturgy. Contemporary services are diverging from the traditional, as well. We are using new and different words than at traditional services. In the summer, all three services—as well as our outdoor Park and Praise worship series—have concluded with the common doxology as we face each other. This was a new practice to help us connect with our fellow worshippers. Dominic Florio led Park and Praise which incorporated some new musicians again this year. We've experimented with some different ideas, even adding a mini-carnival for children at the last one of the season.

Some of our summer ministry staples returned this year as well. Vacation Bible School returned to in-person as we hosted 165 kids this summer. COVID forced us to limit the total enrollment, but we were still able to serve many families. We're grateful for the large number of volunteers who serve and donate towards VBS each year! We leveraged our online streaming resources from the pandemic to stream VBS opening, Bible Adventure, and the closing for those who couldn't join us in-person. In addition to this, our youth Workcamp returned. However, rather than travelling out of state, we served locally. Over 20 youth plus many adult leaders served during the week. One nice benefit of being local was that people who couldn't commit to a full week away could still come and help on some days. Several of the youth invited their friends to come along, as well.