

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

addendum



Family Coordinating Committee, 2021-2022

This year's general focus was trying to invite families to resume a more active life in the church as the church sought to reopen and reconnect after the extended time of separation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021.

To this end, in the Fall from September-October, Family Coordinating Committee (FCC) worked with other leaders in the church to support the "Mending Church" initiative. All church members including families were invited to participate in a shortened worship time in the sanctuary followed by participation in one of three activities each week: a reading and discussion group, a quilting project, or outdoor games. FCC took responsibility for gathering materials and volunteers to run the outdoor activities area each week. To support families with small children during the sanctuary-based portion of the worship service, we planned and assembled "Worship Bags" for each child with a variety of art supplies and activities to try to keep children busy.

In October there was a desire by families to have a resumption of Faith Workshop. We decided not to solicit volunteers to teach as we have done in the past as we felt that there was a lot of uncertainty per what format would work going forward and we wanted to experiment before looking for assistance. Initially, we tried to do several "one room schoolhouse" style lessons in the Parish Hall and it became apparent that we had too large of an age spread. The older kids were helpful, but not being well served by this format as we

had to make lessons accessible to the very young. In November we returned to the classrooms downstairs and split into two groups: PreK-5 and youth aged. The younger group adjusted well to this, though we still need to be mindful that PreK and 5th graders have different outlooks and we try to plan engaging activities to keep the older kids interested. The liturgy-based Faith Workshop style lesson + discussion still wasn't meeting the needs of the older group, however.

We hoped to transition to a Faith Workshop format based on new curriculums for children and youth with volunteer leaders in January, but the COVID surge after Christmas caused us to change plans. We put in-person Faith Workshop on hold and tried to focus on other ways to engage families while we were apart again. A program begun by Will this year, Family Dinner Church, has been a fun way to reach out to families not ready to be in-person or families with Sunday conflicts to connect with church on a different day. Each Wednesday evening, he and Leslie Dooley provide kids with prayer, stories, discussion, and song in the span of half an hour. It has been well received by families; the most difficult aspect has been finding an evening during the week that works for the most families.

Family dinner church continued even once we made a push to restart in-person Sunday morning programming in March. Mailings went out at the beginning of Lent to encourage families to attend Easter service and try to engage however they could for the rest of the church year. Deacons helped reach out to families via phone calls to check-in. Youth started working on a Sunday morning book study with Will and Greg. The younger children took part in a Lent-based Faith Workshop curriculum prior to Easter and will work with a Peace themed curriculum through June. We are trying to engage the Junior Deacons again this Spring as well, though this will happen more in earnest in the Fall.

Youth Group has continued to be a vibrant part of family ministries. Sometimes meeting in person, sometimes virtually, the youth and their leaders carried on throughout the year. Highlights included:

- Service projects such as setting up a giving tree in December to help Mama Junior's family recover from a fire that destroyed their home in Tanzania and shopping for Timothy's Toy box at the holidays.
- Contributing to church life by baking goodies and stuffing eggs for our Easter celebration after worship.
- Fun events like snow tubing, ice skating, paint night, and online mystery games

FCC continued to support past annual events and worked on some new programs with other groups within the church.

- We worked with Women's Fellowship on restarting our Trunk-or-Treat event around Halloween that was fun for all ages.
- We held an outdoor Christmas pageant, moving around the church experiencing each scene. The evening culminated with cocoa while enjoying a mobile petting zoo.
- We hosted an intergenerational St. Patrick's Day fellowship event after church with music, games, and snacks.
- We worked with Women's Fellowship on an egg hunt after service on Easter.
- We prepared Children and Youth Sunday in May, focusing on the theme of Peace.
- Will continues to encourage camperships for families with Pilgrim Lodge in Maine

We continue to try to maintain our partnership with the Africa Exchange Group to help the children engage in our relationship with Aisha and her supporters in Tanzania. We continue to collect children's offering to sponsor Aisha's education. Our cultural exchange has not been as vibrant as in past years, but the Youth Group's fundraiser in support of Mama Junior's family once their home was destroyed by fire was a success.

Contributing factors to this year's successes include:

- Leadership and support from Family Life Pastor, Senior Pastor, and Children's Music.
- Volunteers and parents who stepped up to help us with events and youth group.
- Engagement by other groups within the church to support families, youth, and children.

Ongoing challenges that remain are:

- Continuing uncertainty about if and when families will re-engage with in-person programming in light of the pandemic
- Trying to use uncertainty as an opportunity to revisit traditional events and think about how we can modify them to be more flexible under current circumstances.
- Visioning how we might engage with families in other ways outside of Sunday morning

FCC looks forward to another strong year ahead as we continue to discover how we can best support our families, youth, and children in their ministry.

The following handouts are not intended to be included
in the 2021 Annual Report.

DRAFT Racial Justice Statement

May 22, 2022

Background Statement

Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others.

Racism and racial injustice have persisted throughout our society for centuries, often despite our very words and intentions to the contrary. It will require concerted effort, education, wisdom, love, humility, and commitment to overcome racism. To attain the Beloved Community, we all must aspire to advancing the Racial Justice implicit in the Christian faith.

Our Intent

- Participate in a collective of community partners working to understand and apply this understanding to eradicate racism, bigotry, and all forms of hate against Black, Indigenous and all People of Color (BIPOC) in Framingham and beyond

Our Institutional Commitments

- Require ongoing anti-racist training for our staff, governing board, and leadership team
- Work to develop a comprehensive understanding of the various layers of racism (internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural).
- Identify a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) consultant to provide part-time support and training.
- Provide education and support to our congregation and invite community residents of all ages to join organizations working to create an anti-racist world.
- Establish safe and supportive places within our organizations through the use of affinity groups.
- Establish clear and measurable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals that are aligned and embedded within our church's strategic plan, including a specific commitment to diversify our leadership.

This draft statement for the Plymouth Church Racial Justice Team was inspired by Framingham Together – a broad-based coalition of Framingham institutions, including MetroWest Health Foundation, Framingham State, Mass Bay, Advocates, Boys & Girls Clubs, SMOC, United Way, Wayside, Chamber of Commerce, the Y, and several houses of worship.

Gathered in 2020, Framingham Together aims to set goals for racial justice and equity and hold community leaders accountable. Many of the member organizations have already written and submitted similar statements as a part of their participation in Framingham Together.

Here is Framingham Together's preamble:

A collective of stakeholders and community partners who are committed to actively engaging in rooting out the causes of racism at the individual, institutional and systemic levels of our organization and community. As institutional leaders we hold ourselves accountable for acknowledging that justice will not be achieved until inclusion is viewed as a right and not a privilege for every member of our community. As leaders in this work we commit to the following:

- We name racism, anti-semitism, white supremacy, colorism and anti-Blackness.
- We name that these operate at the individual, institutional, cultural, and systemic level.
- We acknowledge the significant impact racism has had and continues to have on Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities.
- We acknowledge the significance and importance of intersecting identities and the additional hardship it causes individuals who identify as BIPOC as well as Women, LGBTQIA+, immigrants and individuals with disabilities.
- We acknowledge that racism is not relegated to one part of the country but built into the fabric of our nation and present here in Framingham and in the MetroWest community.
- We acknowledge the labor that BIPOC leaders in our community continue to shoulder in these efforts.
- We call on white community members to take the lead on dismantling white supremacy
- We believe that equity begins with empathy and humanity. By working through a lens of justice, using a language of love, we can rebuild a culturally inclusive and equitable community.

Commissioning Liturgy

One: Members of the Transformation Team, you have been called to serve by the members of this congregation. While you are engaged in this work with them, do you promise to perform it with diligence, devotion, humility, boldness, humor, and a wild sense of adventure?

Team: We do, with the help of God.

One: Members and friends of The Plymouth Church, you bestow this group with sacred work: to discern with you Christ's will for this church. Do you promise to support them with prayer, gratitude, and curiosity, with open hearts and open minds, trusting in their leadership and wisdom?

All: We do, with the help of God.

One: Members of this team – Meg Doucette, Jane Fadden, Nancy Miskowiec, Al Rapoza, Rob Schadt, Laraine Snooks, Vernon Turner, and Dan Van Hook – receiving the love and faith of this congregation, receive also our blessing:

Almighty God, you called Moses out of the mountains, Jeremiah in his youth, Ruth for her devotion, Mary for her solidarity, Peter from the shore, and Paul off the path. Throughout every generation you have chosen and selected the most unexpected people for the most awesome tasks. You bless each with grace and power. Today, we ask that you bless your servants once more, that your Spirit rest mightily on our Transformation Team.

We call upon you, Eternal God, to give each of them a spirit of adventure, spring up from within them fountains of joy and courage, bless them with faithfulness to our past and ambition for our future. Guide them in their work; and this congregation, also, that we might be made ready to receive their wisdom and follow their lead.

As stewards of this church, in this season, may we all be up for the challenge and glad for this opportunity. In the name of and in the spirit of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Transformation Team Covenant

As the duly appointed Transformation Team, we covenant with God and each other to explore and discern the mission of The Plymouth Church in Framingham to meet the challenges, changes, and opportunities of the world around us. We commit to...

- ❖ listen with open hearts and minds, and speak for ourselves, only;
- ❖ demonstrate respect for each other's differences, and acknowledge everyone's value;
- ❖ provide comfort & support to one another through self-monitoring of our expressions and share the time and space when we come together;
- ❖ prepare and participate fully in our deliberations and explorations with honesty, confidentiality and boldness.

As The Covenant of our church calls on us to '...strive to be doers of the Word and not hearers only...' we collectively strive to engage in this transformative work and lead the Plymouth Church congregation to more fully realize our role as God's church.