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"...that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love..."
Colossians 2.2 (NIV)

May 2020

A CHANGE IN PLANS

Cancelled. Postponed. To be announced. To be determined. Plans are in progress. These are words we've all heard or said these last several weeks. We are cancelling, changing, and postponing many of the faith milestones that mark our spiritual journeys. And we face new challenges. What do we replace the cancellation with? Do we offer a virtual experience, or something in person as much as guidelines allow? Do we combine virtual tools with other experiences to create a hybrid learning opportunity?

How do we respond faithfully to circumstances and make the right decision for our ministry setting?

The one thing faith formation leaders and Christian educators hold in common is the heartfelt desire to make sure we still celebrate the faith or life milestone, to honor the moment while equipping people of all ages to grow in their faith. The marking of time has changed dramatically. We are experiencing disruptions in the ways we do things. We figure out one step or learn a new technology; then quickly we have to learn another new way to teach or lead.

We may be using Zoom, Facetime, Facebook Live, and YouTube and others more than ever. The flat screen may remind us of what we are missing. The in person conversations we have at church are now on a screen, the chance encounters in the hallway are not happening. The once in a lifetime moments that we have planned as faith communities are being rescheduled or done in different ways. Times of disruption can be times of creativity. I am grateful for the way faith formation leaders have responded and created new ways of being together. We are still the Body of Christ, even though we are not gathering in person. We are still the church, even though we are not in our buildings.

The ELCA Christian Education Network selected the theme "Learning Strategies for Intergenerational Ministry Through the Seasons" many months ago. The theme resonates during this time, because we are equipping all ages for faith even when we are not together in person. The Network exists to share learnings with each other, curate resources for faith formation, and encourage one another as faith formation leaders. The resources for this month focus on the changes in milestones, in June we will focus on the changes in summer programming.

Diane McGeoch, Deacon
Board Member, Christian Education Network of the ELCA