

ST. LUKE'S STUDENT MINISTRY

Good morning, I am Melinda Elder.

In May of last year, my husband, Scott, and I sat in the congregation and listened as our daughter spoke from the pulpit on Senior Sunday. She described the love and connection she felt by being a part of the Student Ministry at St. Luke's. She explained the turning point in her faith journey – when her parent's church, became her church and when Christ became real to her. This turning point was fostered by her involvement in the Student Ministry

When Scott and I began attending St. Luke's 26 years ago, the first ministry that we became involved with was the Student Ministry. And it was a blast – we went on camping trips, floated down the river, led Sunday school and confirmation. We also held weekend retreats at our house. Being young and newly married, we had very little furniture so there was plenty of space for sleeping bags. We even got to hear stories of the shenanigans of former St. Luke's youth ministers [look over at Tom Pace]. And through serving, my faith grew in surprising ways as I watched these kids getting to know Christ and developing their own, personal faith.

Those students and the student ministers became a significant part of our church family. One of those students was our daughter's first babysitter when she was just an infant. Scott and I knew that when our kids entered middle school, we wanted them to be a part of the Student Ministry here at St. Luke's.

Beginning in their middle school years, Scott and I encouraged and cajoled (as the case may be) our two kids to attend Sunday school, small groups, and other Student Ministry activities. It took time but eventually no encouragement or cajoling was necessary – they made friends with the other students and got to know their parents and the student ministers.

Scott and I have watched as the student ministers, parents, and other student ministry leaders have connected, encouraged, and loved on our kids. They have often spoken truth and wisdom into their lives when we didn't have the right words. After weathering the storm of most of the teenage years together (we still have a couple to go), these parents are some of our best friends.

For our daughter, Student Ministry's impact has come full circle. This past summer she was a Student Ministry intern and worked for Student Minister Brindley Ginn, who was her first babysitter 19 years ago.

The past year has been especially difficult for the 4 of us. Pain can take your breath away. But the phone calls, texts, hugs, listening ears and quiet presence of the student ministers, parents, and students in this church have enabled us to live through this past year with hope and an understanding of God's ever present grace. By being a part of the Student Ministry, my family has witnessed firsthand the living Christ and this has had a lasting impact on our faith journey.