In this first week of Advent, where we seek hope, I am fortunate to continually find myself in awe of the wisdom that springs forth from the young people in our midst.

It is a tremendous joy to not only work with youth in a local church, but to also facilitate the interaction of youth from UCC churches across the state of Michigan

During Youth@Annual Meeting...I read *We Pray for Children* by Ina Hughs (a copy of which can be found here: https://buildfaith.org/a-prayer-for-children). I then asked the 22 youth from 9 churches in attendance -

"How are the children?"

This was their response:

Not innocent
Searching
In poverty
Diverse
Tired
Stressed
Misunderstood
Anxious
Worried
Unheard
Dreaming
Sad
Hopeful
Fearless
Afraid
Underestimated
Angry
Underrepresented
Powerless
and Hungry.

I then asked the follow-up question -
"What are the children hungry for?"

And this is what they said:

Hungry for help
Hungry to fit in
Hungry for education
Hungry for food
Hungry for change
Hungry for love
Hungry for justice
Hungry for action

They spoke from their own hearts, recognizing the struggles of their own lives, people they know, and struggles they have only learned about from other sources.

This list that they generated in less than 5 minutes is filled with power.

These youth are keenly aware of injustice and inequity. They only know a world interconnected with technology. They have an inclusive global mindset, and they are poised to change the world if we stand alongside them.

Asking about the well-being of children is a brilliant indicator of community health. This list shows many areas where we can help the community, and many places we can find hope. I wonder how we might consider new ways to "feed" and care for our children and youth so that they might continue to hope.

~ jenn

Youth@Annual Meeting 2018

Youth@Annual Meeting 2019