



An Introduction to *The Haven* at First Church

Hannah Sachs, Director of Creative Ministries

"For you are God, my only safe haven." Psalm 43:2 (NLT)

"Wow, look how intense the storm is! I'm so glad we came inside."

I followed my wife Renata to the window, and much to my surprise, I saw the wind whipping about large tree limbs as though they were delicate twigs. Flashes of lightning illuminated the sky and we felt the rumble of nearby thunder deep in our bones. Just a few minutes before all had appeared calm, yet in just a moment's time, ominous, dark clouds moved in, drenching our neighborhood in torrents of rain.

I'd be lying if I told you that we felt completely at ease as this massive storm raged around us. Still, as we sat together in our warm, cozy apartment watching the drama unfold, we began to see beauty in the chaos. From our safe haven, we marveled at the howling wind and the way streams of water raced through the dips and divots in the ground below. The storm's power was clearly on display, yet secure in our home and supported by one another, we knew that we did not have to fear the rain.

In this season of life, most of us are longing for a safe place to weather life's storms. We may feel anxious and exhausted from the frigid winds of sorrow and the ceaseless downpour of injustice. For young people in particular, the bizarre reality of physical distancing means that many teens are enduring powerful storms alone, separated from their normal communities and support systems.

Scripture tells us that though we may face storms of all kinds, we can always trust that God is our safe haven. As the Church, we are also empowered and called to be a safe haven for all who want to navigate life's storms in a loving community. This is exactly why we have launched *The Haven* at First Church, a new, exciting ministry for middle and high school youth!

The Haven is not a place where kids go to retreat from the world or its storms--it is a safe community for young people to engage the reality of life together. The Haven is a community that is committed to fostering authentic relationships, holistic justice, and resilient joy. The Haven is a place to encounter God together and experience the abundant life that God offers us all.

The Haven officially launched at First Church on August 18th, and last week 15 members of The Haven explored faith, partnered with local nonprofits like [JUMP](#) and [COTS](#), and encountered service through YES 2020. We are off to a great start and The Haven at First Church has many more exciting gatherings and special events planned for the coming months! We'll be going to the beach, having a movie night, playing games, supporting social justice work, deepening our faith through a retreat, and so much more. To make our gatherings as accessible as possible, we will be alternate between in person gatherings (physically

distanced with masks) and Zoom gatherings. Our [Haven event calendar](#) can be found in this newsletter and you can follow The Haven at First Church on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) for regular updates as well.

If you, or someone you know is in middle school or high school, we want to warmly invite you (or the young people in your life) to join us for The Haven at First Church! While this is a community based here at First Church, our desire is that this will grow to be a safe haven for any and all local young people who are seeking community and a place to explore life with Jesus. Youth are invited to bring friends to our events, and all are invited to share information about The Haven widely!

Like all of us, I have had to weather numerous storms and I can still feel overwhelmed by the chaos that so often surrounds us, but thanks to many formative experiences in church youth groups, I have always known that I can call out to God when I'm in need of a safe haven. It is truly a joy for me to be launching this new community for Burlington's young people and hope that it will be a positive, transformational space for them as well. Though the storms of life range on, we are so excited to see what God is going to do through The Haven at First Church. We hope that you all will keep this ministry and our young people in your prayers.

In Faith,

Hannah

[Hannah Sachs](#), Director of Creative Ministries

If you have any questions about The Haven at First Church or would like to be involved, please contact [Hannah Sachs](mailto:hsachs@firstchurchburlington.org) at hsachs@firstchurchburlington.org