

THE DIVISION ON YOUTH MINISTRIES

The Division on Youth Ministries began a busy 2008 year with six Spiritual Life retreats in January and February...2 at Lake Junaluska and 4 at Springmaid Beach. Over 2000 youth and adults attended these Spiritual Life weekends that contained dynamic speakers and awesome music. These Spiritual Life weekends connected youth and youth workers together from around the conference helping them to understand what it is like to be a part of a connectional church.

A confirmation retreat led by Chris Hughes was held in January at Springmaid beach. In March and April many of our South Carolina confirmands participated in confirmation retreats at Lake Junaluska.

The 31st annual State Basketball Tournament was held the weekend of March 7-9 at Buncombe Street United Methodist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. The Reverends Jerry Temple and Jerry Hill lead the communion worship service for the participating teams. Over 750 youth participated in the three day tournament with over 2,000 youth and adults in attendance to support their teams.

June of 2008 brought a change of leadership to the Division of Young Peoples Ministries. After more than 28 years Mrs. June Willson retired from her position as staff person overseeing the youth programs of South Carolina. During the 2008 Annual Conference Mrs. Willson was recognized for her many years of service to this conference and this conference's youth. "Mrs. June", as she was affectionately called by the teenagers of the conference, touched the lives of many youth during her years of ministry. Many of those teenagers are now participating in some form of ministry in our local churches because of her influence on them.

A diverse group of teenagers from around the conference went to Washington D.C. in June for the Washington Seminar. Each year this group of youth explore a social justice theme that can bring information back to our local churches for education and ways to make effective change in our world.

June 24th was the beginning of camp for the Spirit Singers, which is a group of auditioned teenagers in grades 8-12 that perform in concert at churches around the conference. Auditions were held in March in Summerville, Marion, Greenville, and Columbia. The Spirit Singer which are comprised of 31 youth and perform under the direction of Kathy Jo Long. This group of youth spends a week at Spartanburg Methodist College learning a full service of music and then goes on tour to churches around the conference for four days. The Spirit Singers then perform at churches through out the year. In 2008 the Spirit Singers performed at the Methodist Oaks, Methodist Manor of the Pee Dee, Manning UMC, First UMC/Marion, and several other United Methodist churches across the conference.

The highlight of the Spirit Singers in 2008 was a trip to Italy, June 9-18. This group performed at St. Peter's Basilica, St. Angelo Spirito Methodist, and Duomo de Firenze in Florence, among other places in Italy. The Reverend Joe Long led Spiritual Growth Study, "Faith Journey-Italy" and the group did some site-seeing in such places as Rome, Florence, Sienna, Pisa, and Venice.

Youth Annual Conference was held at Spartanburg Methodist College July 7-11. 350 youth and 40 adults attended the week long event which included family groups, workshop, games, and worship. The Reverend Tiffany Knowlin brought an inspiring message to the teenagers each morning of the conference. The 2008-2009 Youth Network was selected through an interview process at Youth Annual Conference. Thirty- eight teenagers from across the conference were selected to serve on the Youth Network Committee. Candice Dennis of St. Mark UMC in Taylors was elect Chairperson of the Y-Net for the 2008-2009 year. The Youth Network group met in August at Ashland UMC in Columbia to plan for the 2008-2009 year. During this one day meeting the Y-Net planned for the upcoming Spiritual Life retreat for 2008-2009.

The Division on Youth Ministry is in the process of enhancing the ministries for youth in the upcoming year and looking at ways we can better connect and equip local churches for youth ministry. This July the event formerly known as Youth Annual Conference will become "Breeze" and will focus on discipleship for our teenagers in South Carolina. January 2010 will see the Spiritual Life retreat move from Springmaid beach to the Columbia Convention Center the weekend of January 22-24. This move will allow our teenagers to connect and experience powerful worship in one place.

The Youth Network group looks forward to the ways we can continue to share Christ to the World and to the youth of South Carolina in the year ahead.

Candice Dennis, Chair, Y-Net