

Youth Ministries 2016

We continue to thrive with the incredible dedication of 35 adult volunteers as well as strong youth commitment. We serve almost 100 youth in grades 7-12 who participate in Sunday morning and evening programs. It is not our goal to teach youth *what to think*, but to teach them *how to think* and give them the tools to connect with God and understand the world using concepts such as the Wesley Quadrilateral. We also strive to offer a balance of activities to help students Know God, Love Others, and Serve the World and apply the concepts of “Sticky Faith” so that their spiritual journey continues beyond graduation from high school and our programs. Engaging families and offering intergenerational experiences help support these goals.

New Things We Tried This Year

- 👉 In July a group of about 40 went to Toledo to see a MudHens baseball game.
 - 👉 We launched a LGBTQ youth support group in October. The group chose to call themselves “Rainbow Youth” and it meets weekly.
 - 👉 Intergenerational relationships play a key role in “Sticky Faith,” that is, faith that sticks to youth beyond high school and youth group. To this end, we worked with Ann Hanton and Dee Chapell of UMW to create a new event, Threads of Faith. On a Saturday in November, a group of about 25 youth and adults met to upcycle tshirts into tote bags to donate to Ozone House.
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Additional Highlights

- January: Sunday morning Sol Café 2nd semester began, with a continuation of Explorers class for students working toward confirmation. Youth served a JOY Luncheon to congregation senior citizens.
- February: The Souper Euchre Bowl fundraiser raised over \$1,000 toward summer mission trips. We visited the Chelsea Retirement Center at the end of winter break in February to fellowship with residents.
- March: The Explorers class (7th & 8th grades) visited St. Mary Student Parish Catholic Campus Ministry for Sunday worship. We held the Spring SoulFull retreat at Lake Louise UMC Retreat Center with 59 youth and 17 counselors.
- April: Sol Café 3rd semester classes prepare youth for mission trips. Youth led both Saturday Green Wood and Sunday downtown worship services. We invited the 6th graders to visit the Explorers Sunday school class to help prepare them for the transition to youth group in the fall.
- May: Academy Awards spring banquet celebrating 14 graduating seniors and our numerous adult volunteer leaders. Sixth graders visited UMYF in preparation for joining youth group in the fall. We celebrated the end of the year with a picnic at Burns Park
- June: 48 high school youth and 20 adults went to Appalachia Service Project in Tennessee. 25 youth and 8 counselors went to L'anse, Michigan to lead a Vacation Bible School at the Zeba Indian Mission for about 40 local children. 2016 marked the 21st Anniversary of the Zeba trip.
- July: 29 youth and recent youth group alumni served as crew leaders and assisted with stations at Vacation Bible Camp.
- August: Preparing for the new program year, we hosted a leadership meeting/picnic for the incoming senior class, a get-to-know-you picnic for the incoming 7th and 8th grade class with parents, and a half-day retreat for 15 adult counselors that included a speaker who informed us on LGBTQ issues.
- September: Sol Café classes began and UMYF Fall Kickoff was held at Burns Park for 82 youth, supported by 17 counselors and several Parent Council members. Melanie and Wendy attended the Why

Christian? conference in Chicago led by Rachel Held Evans and Nadia Bolz Weber. Parent Council chair Adele Roy and UMYF counselor Carrie Throm attended as well.

October: A parent orientation was held highlighting information for all youth group parents. We had a Hunger Awareness program and gathered close to \$600 to donate to CROP Walk. Fall Retreat was held at Judson Collins UMC with 72 youth and 14 counselors.

November: 24 youth and 6 adults volunteered at Cass Community Social Services on Nov. 8, when the Ann Arbor Public Schools were closed for elections. The Explorers class (7th & 8th grades) visited a Sunday worship service at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church.

December: 7th & 8th grader parents host a Christmas Banquet for youth and High Schoolers have a project night for local missions. Youth Christmas Theater fundraiser, "Cruising on the S.S. Beth L'hem," continues to be a church-wide Advent favorite

**All fundraisers support 2017 youth mission trips*

Continuing Successes

- We continue to track youth participation in service projects and fundraisers throughout the year. Each year we award a "Heart of a Servant" award to the youth who is the most active volunteer. These activities provide youth with experience serving others to help prepare them for their summer trips. They also help build and strengthen community within the youth group family and intergenerational experiences also help build "sticky faith". This also gives them an opportunity to participate in raising funds for their trip, thus keeping them invested in the process and the outcome.

Youth Service Project Options in 2016:

- ✓ CROP Walk
 - ✓ Service Day at Cass Community Center in Detroit
 - ✓ Serving communion on Family Worship Sundays
 - ✓ L.O.V.E. Thy Neighbor project
 - ✓ J.O.Y. Lunch
 - ✓ F.i.S.H. FRI.
 - ✓ Vacation Bible Camp crew leaders at FUMC
 - ✓ Summer Mission Trips
- We continue being intentional about including youth in congregational worship. Our goal is to have youth feel comfortable and engaged in a traditional worship service so that when they graduate and visit other churches, it feels familiar. We are doing this by having them serve communion and read scripture on most of the Family Worship Sundays.
 - Volunteer training began its sixth year this fall, with volunteers on a three-year renewal cycle. We continue to work closely with the children's ministry department to review, update, and deliver our training.

Faithfully submitted,

Melanie Snook, Director, and Wendy Everett, Associate Director