

**Missouri Mid-South UCC Covenanted Youth Ministry Team
Annual Report
2016-2017**

The Youth Ministry Team is comprised of Pastors, Youth Directors, Christian Educators, and Lay Leaders who are active in youth ministry throughout the Conference. We are guided by The Five Mission Imperatives of the Conference which can be seen through our events and monthly meetings. We cultivate relationships with conference youth leaders by providing opportunities for them to connect. Congregations are strengthened by our intentional planning of youth events to provide programming for all youth and youth leaders in the conference. We provide an avenue for youth leaders to receive resources and support. Communication is enhanced through e-mail, mail, web meetings, and the conference youth website. We continue to include mission and justice opportunities at our conference wide youth events.

National Youth Event

Twelve Missouri Mid-South Conference Churches participated in the National Youth Event (NYE) in Florida July 26-30 (with over 3,000 total NYE participants). The theme of NYE was Believe: believing in what we cannot see (Hebrews 11:1). The conference youth leader team chartered a bus for MMSUCC participants. Ten of the twelve MMSUCC churches had participants on the bus. Thanks to support from the Conference and Eastern, Western, and St. Louis associations, we were able to provide affordable transportation for all NYE participants in the Missouri Mid-South conference.

Conference Middle School Event

The Conference Middle School Event for 6th-8th grade youth was held at Camp MoVal November 18th-19th. Cathy Pettibone and Alysha Petry led this event with the help of many adult leaders. The event themed "Don't be a Goat", was inspired by Aidan Thomas Hornaday, one of the speakers at National Youth Event. The scripture focus was Matthew 25:31-46 with discussions on how we treat the least of these defines us. A total of 95 participants (73 youth/22 Adult) from 14 congregations in the conference participated.

Conference Youth Event

The Conference Youth Event for 9th-12th grade youth took place at camp Mo-Val the weekend of Feb. 18th-20th. Cindy Birkner led this event with the help of many youth and adults assisting. A total of 89 participants from 12 congregations in the conference participated. Discussions revolved around the theme "This is God's World". Participants gathered for three sessions to talk about different aspects of what we should be concerned about in the world around us. The first session took us into a discussion of how we look at God's people who are far away from us. In doing so, we had a college student come to talk about his work with digging wells in foreign countries to bring in fresh water. He talked about the conditions of these communities and how it felt to get to be a part of giving them such a gift. The second session took us into a discussion on how we are called to love and care for those in our own communities. We did a simulation on poverty for the youth to experience firsthand how easy it can be to get in this kind of situation. We talked about trying to be more understanding of those who have less

than we do and how we might be able to help. The third discussion revolved around our need to take care of ourselves. We had a speaker come to talk about the suicide of her daughter. Her discussion revolved around the idea that in order to face the tough challenges that life throw at us—we need to “bubble wrap” ourselves in faith so that we can endure the tough times. Sprinkled throughout the weekend were active choice times, the annual dance, a prayer path and a powerful bonfire worship

Website

We have been working with Nia Chandler, the communications director of the conference, to develop a new website for the conference youth. The team has been guiding the process of the design throughout the year and plan to have the website live by the annual gathering.

Regional Youth Event Planning Team

Three of our conference youth leaders, Stephanie DeLong, Craig Matzes, and Alysha Petry have joined the West Central Regional Youth Event planning team. The team consists of youth leaders and Pastors from Missouri Mid-South, South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota Conferences. The Regional Youth Event will be held July 19-23, 2018.

The Youth Ministry Team is eager for the conference to hire a Youth Ministry Coordinator to help connect and lead the youth leaders and youth in our conference. We look forward to seeing how this person can help the youth ministry team grow by providing more connections and resources.