

National Youth Event (NYE) a Great Success

On July 22nd 34 North Dakotan Youth and Adults of the Northern Plains Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) gathered at Plymouth Congregational Church a United Church of Christ in Fargo, North Dakota to get ready to attend the UCC's 2008 National Youth Event in Knoxville Tennessee. These 28 youth & 6 adults were from six of our 55 churches and the churches they attend are found all across our state. Those that participated came from our local churches located in Bismarck, Fargo, Valley City, Wahpeton, and Wishek. The trip lasted from July 22nd to July 30th. Within those days, there were 5 days of bus travel involved with the sleeping in great UCC churches in Fargo ND, Chicago, IL, Columbia MO, and Kansas City MO.

As United Church of Christ (UCC) youth prepared to come together in Knoxville, Tenn., for the National Youth Event, the Rev. Stephen Sterner, the denominational acting executive minister of Local Church Ministries, asked for denomination-wide prayer. In a statement released July 21, Sterner said: "Over 3000 youth, young adults, and leaders are gathered for National Youth Event in Knoxville, Tenn. This is an exciting opportunity for education, fellowship, worship, and transformation for all who attend. It is an experience that can help shape future leaders for the church and the world. We invited prayers for the participants as they travel to and from Knoxville as well as during the four days of the National Youth Event."

This event carried on the tradition first established by the youth groups of two UCC predecessor bodies, the Pilgrim Fellowship of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Youth Fellowship of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. 2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the first joint meeting of the two youth groups in the then-fledgling United Church of Christ. Between June 20 and 27, 1958, some 300 youth delegates of the "PF" and "YF" gathered at Union Theological Seminary in New York to worship together and discern the path their groups might forge together.

This year's event was a time indeed of fellowship, bridge building, and networking. Friends were made, renewed and enriched by the experience. Speakers to the youth included the Muslim Eboo Patel who is the founder of Interfaith Youth Core, Julia Butterfly Hill, famed environmentalist as well as the five leaders of the United Church of Christ denomination. Every night those who came had the chance to experience and hear a band called, "Lost and Found." They rocked the house and also gave us music that spoke to the youth and all who heard them.

The event drew to a close on July 27th, and the youth and chaperones arrived safe and sound back to Fargo, North Dakota on July 30th. During the three days it took to return home the group stood atop the gateway arch in St. Louis and got soaked at Oceans of Fun in Kansas City. They came back energized in spirit from our "Still Speaking God that accepts us no matter where we are on life's journey" as well as victorious with multiple awards in sand volleyball and checkers, and memories to treasure forever, or at least until four years from now, when this event occurs again.

Submitted by the

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Photo taken in front of our Richards Transportation Bus at Columbia UCC, Columbia
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