

## YOUTH PROGRAM 2008

Each year the youth program grows and changes, along with the children it serves. Last summer the youth team was restructured to form what is known as CYCOL, **Children and Youth Circle Of Learning**. Each member has a well defined role, making it easier to focus and succeed. Anne Wolf serves as the administrator, making sure everyone stays informed and on task. Denise Thomsen oversees the program for the younger children, while Nancy Feeley keeps the program for the older children on track. Cathy Rahll is the special events coordinator, flyer designer, costume sewer, etc. She has many hidden talents coming to light this year! Leading the team is Gail Meloy, serving as support for the team members who do the work keeping the programs alive.

As in the past, **church school** is for one hour, beginning at 9:45. By starting at that time, the leaders are able to give the children a full hour for their program before they join their families in church for the eucharist. There is no church school on the last Sunday of every month so that families have an opportunity to worship together. The service on that day is extra "children friendly", including a sermon prepared especially for them.

**Godly Play** has made a big comeback this year. In the past this curriculum was used for only the younger children. As is done every summer, the team looked at the number and ages of the children who would be in our community for the upcoming year. The available curricula were reviewed and the decision was made to bring back the Godly Play program, this time using it for all ages. The program is quite unique, using storytelling with props, wondering questions and art to creatively bring to light the stories of the Bible. Some would think that having children ages four through ten in the same group would not work. However, the Godly Play program fosters a real sense of community amongst the children. In this setting, it becomes perfectly natural for the older children to be mentors for the younger ones. It just happens without any adult intervention! To see the faces of the younger ones as they look up to the older children would warm your heart!

We always **welcome visitors** any time so come spend a Sunday morning with us downstairs and see the program in action. This program provides the opportunity for service, no matter what your "participation comfort level". Training is provided for those serving as a Storyteller or a Door Person. (There would be no program without the dedication of Barb Hottle, Ana Niehenke, Cathy Rahll, Kim Farrell, Denise Thomsen, Anne Wolf and Gail Meloy, all of whom serve as trained team members.) In addition, volunteers from the congregation are needed to help with the snack and art segments of the program. There is no special training or artistic ability needed for these positions. Volunteers sign up for once a month or just once, making it easy to choose your level of participation. Many thanks go to all of the people who help with this part of the program. To see who they are look at the sign up sheet in the narthex. While you are there feel free to add your name to the list!

The **Middle School** class is using the **Rite-13** curriculum, as they have for several years now. Great appreciation goes to Cathy Siperko and Nancy Feeley for their hard work, as they face the challenges of leading this group, beginning with the fact that they are the only leaders. Working without the benefit of a special events coordinator or an additional leader, they do it all. Another challenge they have met is modifying the curriculum to accommodate the fact that many of their students assist in the service as acolytes and youth choir members, therefore sometimes missing class. Additional volunteers are necessary for this program to grow stronger. Do you feel called to help?

This year the **Middle School Youth Group** has been reborn, thanks to a determined group of people, including Kathryn Wajda, Jennifer Fryer, Ashley Thomas, Gilbert Spencer and William Hardisky. The Middle School Youth Group meets every Sunday from 4:30-6:00.

Thanks to this same group of people the high school youth of our church has not been overlooked. After several years with no real program for our high school youth, things are looking up! Along with the rebirth of the Middle School Youth Group is the revival of the **High School Youth Group**, which meets every Sunday from 5:30-7:00. Both groups have already begun outreach and fund raising projects. This is an excellent beginning of the rebuilding of a strong program for our older youth. We are so thankful to Kathryn, Jennifer and their team for their commitment to this mission. Look for more to come and listen for ways in which you can help make things happen!

**Outreach and special events** continue to be an important part of building a strong youth community. This year's events included an Easter egg hunt for the little ones, pizza parties and movie nights. Among the outreach projects was our annual hosting of the MDA Holiday party. The last event of the calendar year was the Christmas pageant, enjoyed by all in attendance. The script was simple enough for all of the youngest children to participate, but needed the reading skills of the older ones, making it possible for everyone to be a part of it. With her creativity and sewing ability, Cathy Rahl spruced up the old costumes and everyone looked great. There are also ongoing ways for our youth to contribute to the life of the church. They are encouraged to participate as youth choir members, acolytes, bread bakers and breakers!

We believe that it takes the involvement of the whole church community (young and old) to make a whole church.

*Many thanks go to all of the people who are dedicated to fostering the spiritual growth of our youth!!*

*Gail Meloy*