

Your Pledge Makes It Possible: Youth Ministry

The first in a series of articles on the mission and ministries of the Episcopal Church in Southern Virginia.

Youth Ministry in Southern Virginia is thriving. In the past year, clergy and youth leaders from 22 parishes have taken advantage of training and networking events, like the annual Youth Leader Gathering at Chanco in January and the Open Planning and Strategy Workshop for Youth Leaders in July, as well as strategic consultations with parish youth teams. Four of our nine convocations have hosted joint youth events. Hundreds of youth have had opportunities to grow in faith through EYC weekends, Happening and the Chanco Chaplain program. Young leaders have been encouraged and challenged as members of the EYC Board, Happening Staff, and as pages at Annual Council.



Amid concerns over declining membership and lackluster involvement from youth in mainline churches, our diocesan youth programs experienced increases in participation in the last year. As we move into the next program year, the department of Youth Ministry will continue to focus on quality programs, excellent communication, leadership development opportunities for youth and their advisors, and collaborative partnerships in our convocations.

The total diocesan budget for Youth Ministry in 2012 was \$25,900. With these funds, we have together been able to support parish leaders and teens as they grow into young leaders in the Church. Imagine what we could accomplish with a little more funding: enhanced support for partnerships in our convocations, greater connection to the wider church through participation in provincial and national events, top-notch conferences and training opportunities for adults who work with youth, dedicated scholarship funds to support young

people who would like to attend one of our life-changing youth events, additional resources for parish youth teams, and so much more. Let's dream big.

Listen to what some of our youth have to say about our programs:

- "Happening has changed my perspective about the ways that God moves in our lives." - Becky Shock, St. Luke's Powhatan
- "These programs taught me that I was worth something, that I had friends that love me, and that God will always love me." - Carson Merritt, St. Andrew's Norfolk
- "It allowed me a place to grow in multiple ways- in my personal life, my faith, and my leadership abilities- without having to be worried about making a mistake and being judged." - Julie Worley, St. Paul's Norfolk
- "Happening made me feel love that I've never felt before. It's amazing how you can meet everyone on Friday, and love every single one of them unconditionally, bawling at the thought of leaving them on Sunday." - Alex Puleo, St. Paul's and St. Andrew's Kenbridge
- "It showed me that God has a plan for each of us and that there are surprises in life that prove to us that he's watching over and protecting us no matter the situation we may find ourselves in." - Amanda Brandenburg, Ascension Norfolk
- "EYC is my home away from home. It's where I can let go and just be me." - Holly Waide, St. Aidan's Virginia Beach

