

## Youth and Teen ministry

Since the last Friends of Latvia gathering the youth and teens have had several opportunities to attend varied events and become involved as helpers for the events to succeed. After these events the conclusion is that there are youth and teens in UMC in Latvia, but we need to find a way for them to become involved and form closer ties with other members of the church.

July 11 to 15 the teens had an opportunity to attend a teen camp, the program was planned out together with a group from Alabama, USA. 40 teens attended the camp, which included Sunday school, teen and youth ministry members, and also some who are not attending church on regular basis and some how are un-churched. We set up a camp where teens could learn how God works in their lives and how they can be the light to this world. We spent a week together, filled with fun, jokes and worship. The youth had a chance to become involved in the program as group leaders, which helped them improve their leadership skills.

The youth had an opportunity to get involved with children's camp program activities (July 11-16) and to be small group leaders which helped them to learn responsibility, caring, patience and other important traits needed for young leaders. Also, to form relationships with younger God's seekers which is an important staple of mutual cooperation between generations of children and youth.

July 26 to August 4, nine Latvian youth had an opportunity to attend an international camp in Berlin, Germany, where youth from Germany, Lithuania and Latvia participated. It was not only an opportunity to visit another country and do sightseeing in Berlin, but also to form international fellowship between youth, which allows them to practice foreign languages, see and compare how youth work in other countries.

In November, 2016, the youth council restarted, it currently has 6 representatives from varied congregations of UMC in Latvia. Such council allows participation in varied teen and youth events on a different grounds than just by attending such events, it lets them express their opinions and to be heard, also – to form new, active and responsible youth leaders in the Methodist church.

The first event organized by the council was youth and teen Winter Weekend "Camp" on February 3-5, at Riga First UMC. This year the participation was 20 teens and youth. Such event allows teens and youth in winter not only to be in fellowship, but

also to listen to prepared lectures to be able to strengthen their faith together with fellow youth.

#### Future plans

- The closest future plans include uniting of generations – becoming involved in planning and programming of lay camp together with laity. The mini camp will take place on May 5 and 6. Participation in planning will help the youth cooperate with other generations, forming fellowship and learning from each other.
- Planning the teen camp to reach the existing teens and to invite their friends. This will give an opportunity for the youth council to improve their management and leadership skills. Summer camp season is the time when we can form closer ties with teens while being as their friends, supporters and motivators.
- Motivate and encourage the youth to attend European Youth Camp in Germany, organized by European youth and children' council. This camp will offer opportunities for international fellowship, as well to hear how teen and youth work is going on in other countries.

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