

Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church Receives National Recognition

Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia has recognized Crawfordsville's Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church and their New Light Ministry as one of eight outstanding, innovative congregational ministries within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Wabash Avenue's New Light Ministry, which encompasses both the New Light Singers and Players, received the Katherine Hawes Congregational Leadership Award, which "recognizes effective youth ministries that engage youth in all areas of the church's mission and extend beyond the church into the community and the world." In addition, the New Light Singers and Players were awarded a \$1,000 grant to advance their work and ministry.

In preparing the application for Union's Congregational Leadership Grants, the parent of two New Light performers Jill Rogers commented about last year's production of *Godspell*: "During rehearsals, the actors grew to know Scripture; through character development exercises, they discussed the motivations and feelings of their roles. How did the prodigal son's Father react to his son's homecoming and receive grace? What must Mary and the disciples have felt at the crucifixion? This production allowed the youth to gain a deep understanding of Bible figures rather than simply reading about them in a book."



New Light Singers

Commenting on the group's dynamics, Jill noted: "The Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church's New Light Ministry is not exclusive. Participants do not need to be a member of Wabash Avenue; they are simply required to commit to the group. The older children hold leadership positions and mentor the younger ones; the more experienced musicians help teach theory and vocal/acting technique. Mostly, they must demonstrate Christian values in their interaction with one another... In a recent meeting, parents shared with one another what New Light Ministry has done for their child. The responses were poignant. Parents uniformly expressed that their child felt safe in this ministry, where their child could learn music in a supportive Christian home."

In her letter of support, Wabash Avenue member Anne Bost wrote: "This evangelistic effort of our church is in its infancy but is rapidly growing. The idea is simple: Build a small, tight-knit Christian youth group by engaging young children and teens together in energetic music and theater. Then use that group as a ministry outreach, by inviting community members both to watch and to participate in New Light-sponsored theater productions. Our goal is to present Christ's love in unconventional ways to those who wouldn't typically attend "normal church" functions, and minister to Christians (adults and youth) in our local community."

Dr. John Van Nuys, pastor of Wabash Avenue, was thrilled that the group was recognized: "The New Light kids and parents have all worked so hard - and have had so much fun. They are a blessing to all of us who have enjoyed their performances and grown in our faith as a result. All of this is possible thanks to the New Light's Director John Blair whose creative talent, vision, and energy are amazing."

The New Light Ministry's next production will be Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat on Friday April 27 and Saturday April 28 @ 7:30 p.m. and Sunday April 29 @ 3:00 p.m. at Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church, 307 S. Washington Street, Crawfordsville, IN. \$5 tickets will be available at the door. Sunday morning worship at 10:40 a.m. on April 29 will be a Joseph-themed worship service. For more information, call 765-362-5812. All are welcome.