

FOCUS ON YOUTH WORK AT CCE

There is a strong focus on youth work in the Eastern Circuit, underscored by a co-operative spirit, and a collective will to support it as a priority. This is the encouraging outcome of the AGM of the Circuit Conference East held at St. John's Dawn on 5 October 2002.

The chairman, Mr Erholdt Grieb, reported that the full-time Senior Youth Leader, Ms Yvonne von Elling, had taken up her duties in May and was "already very popular with the youth". A youth group from the Western Cape participated in a ten-day program in East London in July, which was "a tremendous success". Further, attendance at the various youth functions had nearly doubled. This was "most encouraging." A youth band had also been formed and played for the first time at a CCE Combined Youth Service at St. Crucis on 25 August 2002.

The chairman also reported a "sense of change" among some of the pastors, who "seem injected with new energy" after attending a conference on church growth earlier in the year. Strategies already introduced include informal evening services with the aim to reach out to the senior youth and young adults. The informal services are held twice monthly, alternating between St. Crucis and St. Andrew's, and are "popular with the younger generation" while attendance by the older generation was "also improving".

A talk on Understanding Teenagers was presented by Ms Carol Johnson, a social worker of FAMSA. She referred to the strains, uncertainties, confusions and challenges the young people have to cope with today, and dealt with their main needs: **love** which is stable, continuous, dependable; **security**, that is, consistent attitudes and behaviours in a stable family relationship; praise and **recognition** to build self-esteem; a level of independence and personal freedom to develop **responsibility** in a safe, supportive environment; guidance and support to help them find **direction** in life – and set goals for themselves. She made various practical suggestions and concluded by saying: "We need to rediscover a sense of community, and we must ensure that the youth learn good values which they will carry with them through life. We must realise that every time we threaten, humiliate, or hurt someone unnecessarily, or dominate or reject another human being, we become forces for the creation of pathology. But every person who is kind, caring, helpful, warm and accepting is a therapeutic force. Never underestimate your ability to influence and mould our youth who will be the adults of tomorrow."

The meeting decided to support youth work by releasing funds from accumulated earmarked savings, and to commit new funds by means of a continuation of the 1% contribution levy.