

Living River Report the Presbytery
August 2017

What do quilting, poetry and summer camp have in common? Perhaps your first thought is Living River. For sure that it is a commonality. Yet, as the 2017 summer camp theme proclaims, "Connecting Through Christ", connections are needed for life, for growth, for becoming closer to God.

Quilting is about making connections, putting fabric together to make a beautiful, unexpected design. And that is what the middle school campers of Creative Camp made with Tee Shirts donated from around the Presbytery. In a matter of 2 hours, 18 campers designed unique blocks from the tee shirts-cutting, ironing and pinning their own designs. With the help of 3 special volunteers, Pat Goodman, Janet Nebrig and Lauren Allred (pictured below), these multiple blocks were connected and fashioned into two quilts that will hang in the Living River Dining Hall. These quilts are something for the campers of summer 2017 to stay connected to Living River and future campers that come after. Connections are important.



At **Living River's 2017 summer camp**, connections were important. Campers became connected to each other, connected to the 9 summer staff as well as connected to volunteer pastors and educators who served as the 19 Spiritual Formation Directors to form a strong bond of community. Campers from Gulftreat days connected their traditions with those of the thin space known as Living River to form new traditions, new connections, and new ways of being. A total of 184 campers were served on site over 4 weeks. With the new schedule that had multiple camps present at one time, connections were made between age groups. Summer camp also brought connections with churches in Montgomery-Immanuel and Wetumpka and for a second week in Livingston. Each week of daycamp served 40 children along with the volunteers who fed and housed the Living River Summer Staff. And through it all as our summer theme described, "Connecting Through Christ", we learned that by abiding and remaining connected to Jesus the Vine who is Jesus, each of us can bear fruit for the kingdom.



Fruit, like that when two middle school boys with different backgrounds shared their God given gifts, one of sports, one of music and in the sharing learned about their own patience. Fruit, like when 2 campers initially had a disagreement about touching the other's chair, learning they had so much in common that they played fish together every morning before breakfast. Fruit, like 5 high school girls performing acts of service in Montevallo that even the mayor recognized their work in gardening and environmental care.

Much more is happening at and through Living River. Recently, the **Board of Directors**, chaired by Lee Walthall adopted a new mission statement that will guide our ministry and help us to stay connected with each other and the world.

*Living River shares Christ-like hospitality,
fosters stewardship of creation,
nourishes faith –
for the transformation of the world*

The **Cahaba Environmental Center** is gearing up for an active fall season after sharing about God's creation to 1,122 day and overnight students in the spring season. The CEC is connected to school students from around central Alabama as well as universities and non-profits. Stay connected by joining along for the Cahaba Connection Conference on August 4-5, 2017 at Living River. The conference will bring together academic institutions, government agencies, environmental organizations and citizens interested in the future of the Cahaba. Held on the Cahaba River at the new Living River retreat and environmental education center, the conference will both celebrate the river and tackle some of the challenges it faces. The CEC was just awarded a grant from the National Conservation Corps to have 5 volunteers come to Living River early this fall to work on improving our trail system! Hallelujah!

Living River remains connected to the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley through its covenant of agreement and common ministries of equipping and nurturing disciples, while also reaching out to those who need Jesus in elementary, middle and high schools as well as colleges and universities. Small and medium size churches as well as large churches are connected to Living River through **year round retreats**. A few spaces remain for this fall, so please get a group together and come out.

Please stay connected yourselves and your church and your community to Living River:

- Prayer for us. Prayer is powerful. Please prayer for the permanent staff, the facilities, and the seeds that were planted and watered during summer camp with campers and counselors
- Retreat, Sabbath and Build your Community by using Living River for day, week end or mid-week retreats.
- Support Living River financially by fulfilling a previous pledge, making a new contribution or helping secure grant monies from a foundation you are affiliated with.

Poetry can keep us connected by the beautiful images and memories it can help us create and remember. Rejoice in poetry written recently by Dr. Daniel Potts, specifically about Living River:

Many are hurting. Many are alone. Hearts ache. Let's go down to the river and pray...

*Take us down to the river,
to a churchyard of Oak and Beech,
where the singing shoal of an ancient Soul
wraps each heart within its reach.
Bend our knees to the water
by the weight of a world forlorn,
that in bowing low in its healing flow
we may rise as ones reborn.
There's a spark inside each eddy,
dancing fire within each wave,*

*and this flaming flood lights our living blood
like a fountain from a grave.
This world needs us to come here,
to be silent, still, and stay
as we take a hand and we understand
and our spirits join to pray.
Raise us up in the river
with a hope that will never die,
as we look above to the Face of Love
found forever in the sky.*



Let's stay connected through Christ as we do ministry together in partnership!