

Wesley UMC Ministry to Children and Families

Wesley United Methodist Church is a mission church, providing support for families under urban and social attack. The Wesley Church offers a relational ministry to community children. The ministry targets children in East Waco, where the poverty rate is 31%; providing transportation, meals and the love of Christ on Friday evening, Sunday morning, and the third Saturday of each month. Some of the children share their gifts in the WesleyKids Choir and liturgical dance teams.

The family ministries have allowed the Wesley Church to build relationship and provide life coaching, food, assistance with rent, clothing and advocacy. Because the parents trust us, we can often help them cobble together solutions for problems that seem overwhelming. Our relationships with social service agencies and churches facilitate the cobbling together of resolutions that work.

On Easter Sunday 2011, 9 children and youth were baptized. The children of East Waco and the Wesley Church have been blessed by individuals, churches, and organizations that share a love for God's people.

Furaha Friday begins at 6 p.m. and ends at 8:15 p.m. The children enjoy a meal followed by Bible curriculum, crafts, activities and opportunities for growth. Our goal is to provide a safe, loving space for children who have seen, heard and absorbed more than any child should. Historically, the children and their parents have responded favorably. They are faithful in their attendance, and the mothers welcome the respite. Number of children served is typically 32-40.

KingdomKids Church is every Sunday from 1040-1245. The children experience corporate worship with the older members of the congregation and then exit for activities designed specifically for their age groups. Lunch is provided.

Third Saturday begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 1230. The target group for this program is children 13-16. Third Saturday is a new ministry designed to capture the youth at Estella-Maxey Housing Project and East Waco. In our ministry we have observed a high incidence of early sexual activity among the children. We believe an impact can be made through relationship and dialogue. Curriculum focus is on living with integrity and making ethical choices.

The Summer Lunch Program is a partnership with Waco ISD, McLennan County Hunger Coalition, Methodist Children's Home, Restoration Haven, Inc. and Shepherd's Heart Food Pantry to make an impact on hunger in the community. In 2010, 3520 meals were served to Waco area children. In 2011, the program ran from June 12 through August 5. The Baylor Wesley Foundation, Baylor Office of Spiritual Life, Central United Methodist Church and Dayspring Baptist Church were all partners with the Wesley Church. The children arrive at the church at 730 a.m. and leave at 1230.

Overnight Camp is an opportunity for children to experience a first-ever week away from home. Summer 2011 saw the Wesley Church sponsor 9 children for camp at Glen Lake Camp and Retreat Center. This ministry has become more meaningful than we could have imagined. For older siblings forced into being "junior mothers" camp allows them to relax and be kids. One 8 year old had a perpetual worry line in the middle of her forehead. She rarely smiled. What a surprise to hear the camp counselor describe her as a sunny, happy little girl who smiled all the time! We realized the weight she carries as a surrogate mother is just too much for her. A week away from home allowed this child to see there is more to life than drudgery. This project could not have been accomplished without the help of area United Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Bible, and Unity churches.