



Hamilton Conference

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YOUTH FORUM INFORMATION

To: High School Age Youth (Grade 9 through 19 years)
Ministry Personnel, Presbytery Chairs & CD Chairs, Presbytery Secretaries

Date: January 2, 2008

From: Debbie Johnson, Minister for Faith Formation and Leadership Development

Subject: Youth Forum 2008 – New Gathering and Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference

Greetings to all as we begin a new year! This memo is to advise you that in response to discussions with past participants and with leaders in other Conferences, Hamilton Conference is embarking on a new, two year pilot project regarding the **Youth Forum** program.

This year's **Youth Forum** gathering will take place separately from the *Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference*. On **Friday, April 25, 2008 beginning @ 7pm through to Sunday, April 27th after lunch**, High School age Youth are invited to gather for **Youth Forum 2008 @ Camp Ganadaoweh (www.ganadaoweh.ca)**. This gathering will be held apart from the *Annual Meeting* to provide **Youth Forum** participants with a longer, more dedicated time to connect with one another, discuss issues, grow in faith and develop their leadership skills. In the past, the **Youth Forum** program has run concurrently with the *Annual Meeting*. While Youth are still invited to be present at the *Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference*, it is hoped that this weekend will encourage more High School age Youth to attend the **Youth Forum** gathering and that from their midst the youth participants will choose a **minimum** of 10 persons to attend the *Annual Meeting*.

Some of the hoped for outcomes of this weekend are opportunities for High School age Youth from across Hamilton Conference:

1. to meet and celebrate their diversity;
2. to discover, develop and strengthen their leadership skills and gifts for use in the mission and ministry of their home congregations, the wider church and world;
3. to have fun, develop and grow deeper in their faith and relationships and to share ideas to strengthen the mission and ministry of The United Church of Canada through the churches of Hamilton Conference;

4. to discuss some of the issues to come before the *Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference* including the President's Theme and select from within their midst, a minimum of 10 delegates to attend and participate in the *Annual Meeting* in Fergus, in May, 2008;
5. to select a minimum of 5 participants to form a planning team for the 2009 **Youth Forum** and *Annual Meeting* gatherings.

There will be some **Youth Forum** participants who will be unable to attend the weekend in April, but who will want to participate in the **Youth Forum** gathering at the *Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference*, to be held in **Fergus, May 25-27, 2008**. While there will not be a concurrent **Youth Forum** program as in past years, the **Youth Forum** participants at the *Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference* will have a couple of opportunities to gather together to discuss and debrief the issues that come before the *Annual Meeting*. There will not be separate billeting arrangements and **Youth Forum** participants will be registered and participate in the same fashion as other delegates. Those registration forms will be going out to the presbyteries under separate cover later this month.

In support of this new initiative, I am seeking the support of local congregations and presbyteries to encourage a minimum of **10 High School Age Youth**, from **each** presbytery, to apply to be part of **Youth Forum 2008**. For this year, an application process will still apply. In the second year of the project we may change this to a nominations process, but that decision will be made by the **2009 Planning Team**. In order for each presbytery to be represented by at least 10 delegates, the application deadline is **March 15, 2008**. I will share the names with each Presbytery by the deadline to see if further recruitment is necessary. Attached you will find documents which you are encouraged to photocopy and share as widely as possible:

1. **Youth Forum 2008 Flyer** for posting in your church and for sharing with youth groups/leaders, etc.
2. **Youth Forum 2008** application form (for April 25-27, 2008 weekend)
3. **Youth Forum 2008** application for **Home Group Leader** (for April 25-27, 2008 weekend), with job description attached.

Youth Forum has long been a venue for High School age Youth to gather and be engaged in the ministry of Hamilton Conference. It is hoped that this change in format will only encourage and deepen that participation through an intentional program of leadership development. It is often said that youth are the future of the Church but in fact they are an active, present and necessary part of the Body of Christ, **now**. Please support the ministry and leadership development of High School age Youth through encouragement to be part of **Youth Forum 2008!**