

By Beth Fender
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The 3rd-8th grade youth of Eldorado UMC presented the play “Cricket County Cousins” on Sunday, June 1, 2008. What is unusual about this production is that it started with a discussion about discipleship.

The Sunday evening women’s Bible study group, led by Rev. Julie Allison, began this discussion last fall. Rev. Allison led the group in a study of several chapters of the New Streams workbook, *Charting the Course of Christian Discipleship*. The ladies discussed the mission of the church, and reflected on what it means to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

A new adult Sunday school class was formed out of the discussion. The Bible study group also started to consider the idea of a metaphor for disciple formation based on Jacob’s Ladder – each rung being a step closer to God.

As the study went on, God spoke in a dramatic way to one member of the group. “The Lord woke me up in the middle of the night,” says Phyllis. She and a friend had previously discussed starting a prayer ministry that would go beyond the existing telephone prayer chain, and God seemed to be telling her that the time was right to move ahead. She visited each Sunday school class to enlist volunteers, each of whom agreed to pray for one hour on their assigned day.

“We all pray differently,” Phyllis explains. Some pray for an hour-long block, while others pray at various times throughout the day. Volunteers pray at the church, at their homes, or even in a local park. Some incorporate scripture in their prayer time.

Some of the volunteers started praying for the youth of their church – specifically, for God to send them at least ten youth. The church had three junior high youth in the confirmation class, and one of the confirmation mentors agreed to teach a Sunday school class for these students. After some discussion with their pastor, a decision was made to offer a prize for the youth who invited the most friends.

Before long, the church had considerably more than ten youth attending. “And they’re still coming!” the ladies report. The congregation hired a member to serve as a part-time youth director, and soon they decided to present a spring play – which brings us back to where this story started.

And the ladies? They are now involved in *Companions in Christ*, but they say they may come back to the New Streams materials in the future. They report that their experience with New Streams helped them to grow – a little bit. Reflecting the Jacob’s Ladder metaphor, one member exclaimed, “Maybe we’re on the first rung!”