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Sunday, November 9, 2008\*\*\*  
Standard~Speaker D1ARTS CALENDAR  
BOOKS/GAMES  
PUZZLESD2  
D5  
D6*etc.*

SECTION

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JAMIE PESOTINE/Staff Photographer  
Young participants raise their hands at a chance to help out on a science experiment held at Church Alive on Saturday as part of their Slime Time event.

# It's not Nickelodeon — it's church

## New methods, new attitude as churches look to appeal to teens

By JILL WHALEN  
Staff Writer

Rock music, trips to the beach and chunky green slime are not the fundamentals of religion. Or are they?

Some area churches are designing activities — from concerts to oozy events — to keep youths involved in faith and to provide them a safe haven.

The Rev. Jane Hess, pastor of Faith United Church of Christ, said young people are as much a part of the Hazle Township church as their elders.

"They are full-voting members, so they serve as ushers, greeters and lay readers," she said. But unlike adult members, youths can participate in activities that are just plain fun. There are choirs to join and a youth group to travel with.

"The Blind Faith Youth Group is quite active in service to the community," Hess said. Blind Faith holds overnight "lock-ins" at the church, where youths complete a church service project. While there, they do a fun Bible-related activity.

"There's also a New Jersey retreat, where the group stays at a UCC church near the beach," Hess explained of the five-day trip. Attendees participate in religious activities based on a theme; last year's was music, and participants analyzed popular lyrics.

There have even been concerts by a Christian rock band, and teens also help during weekly bingo games and with the church's sound and video systems during services.

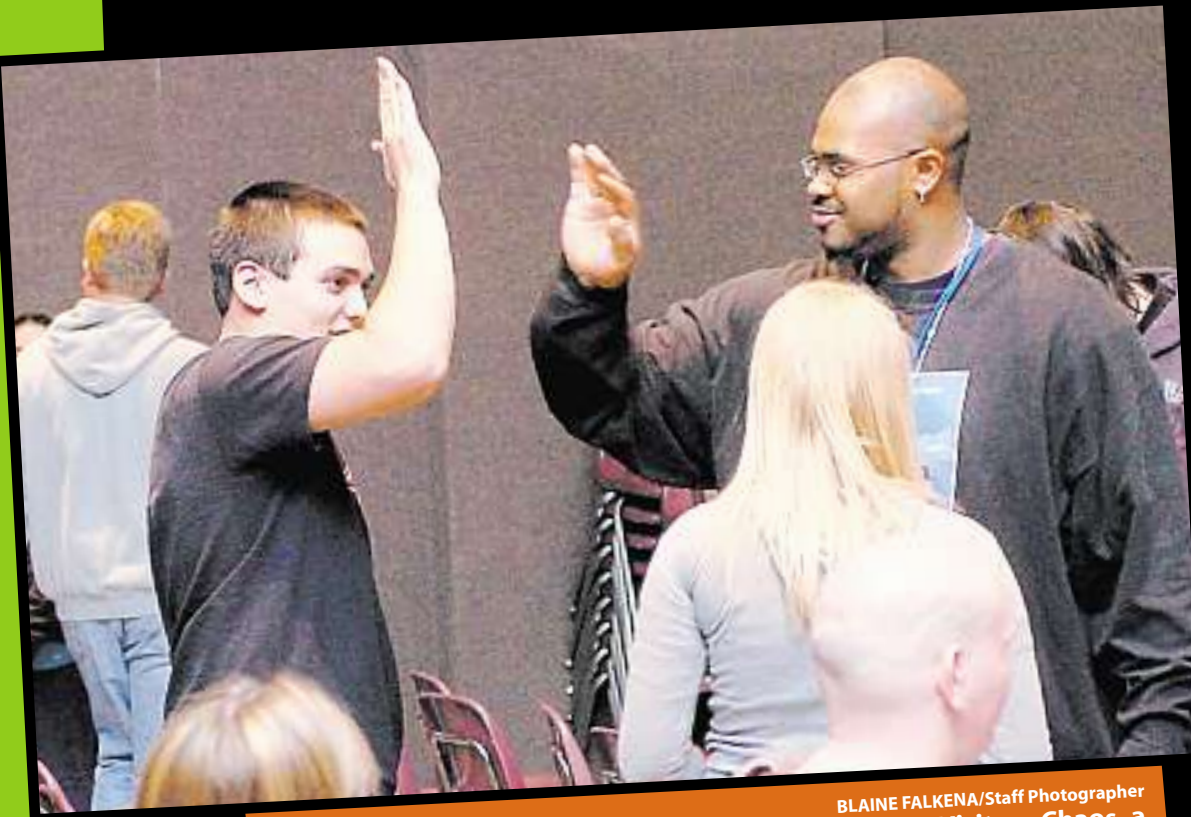
"People often say that youth are the future, but for us, they are an integral part of today," she said. Getting the kids involved at an early age, she said, seems to be working. For example, former youth group members who have gone away to college return home and attend Faith UCC.

"They even come without their parents," Hess said. It's also just not about Sunday school at Faith Assembly of God church, Sugarloaf Township.

From Kingdom Kids to Brazen Youth Group, the Rev. Rodney Murphy, pastor, said the church has activities for all ages. "Being a family is one of our core values," he said.

Murphy said the church tries to teach youths "the values that are missing so much in today's world — things like kindness and compassion."

See CHURCHES, D3



BLAINE FALKENA/Staff Photographer  
Angel Salas, left, high fives Xavier Wofford during Visitors Chaos, a chance for attendees at Brazen Youth to greet each other and meet new people Wednesday evening at Faith Assembly of God church.



BLAINE FALKENA/Staff Photographer  
Josh Gascott plays the drums during a time of singing at Brazen Youth Wednesday evening at Faith Assembly of God church.

