

All-State Youth Choir, Orchestra perform across the state

*By Tony Martin
Associate Editor*

The Mississippi Baptist All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra wrapped up its 2023 schedule June 19 at First Church, Madison, capping off a week of touring and ministering across the state.

In addition to First Church, Madison, the choir made stops at Hardy Street Church, Hattiesburg; Tylertown Church, Tylertown; First Church, Gulfport; First Church, Laurel; and First Church, West Point.

The choir and orchestra, which this year totaled 73 students and 22 adults who volunteered to help lead the tour, also held a two-day rehearsal camp prior to the tour at Baptist-affiliated William Carey University in Hattiesburg.

“The week has been great,” said choir member Samuel Hollis. “I think we have all learned a lot, really. Being able to grow together and make friends has been awesome.”

Slater Murphy, director of the Worship Ministries Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and the choir’s director, said, “It was an absolute joy to collaborate in worship leadership with this year’s group of students, who represented every area of our state.

“They served in unity, demonstrating a depth of spiritual maturity through their single-minded focus on glorifying the Lord Jesus, from the first moment of rehearsal camp to the final ‘amen’ of the last night’s worship concert,” he said.

The annual choir and orchestra program began in 1991 with a God-given vision in the hearts of the late Graham Smith, at the time director of the MBCB Church Music Department (now the Worship Ministries Department), and the late Susan Clark Luttrell, youth music/drama consultant for the department at the time.

Graham and Luttrell set a goal that carries forward today of musically and spiritually strengthening high school students who attend Mississippi Baptist churches and providing them with a way to share their love for Christ throughout the state and across the country.

“The Mississippi Baptist All-State Youth Choir has through the years produced worship leaders all across the state of Mississippi, and that’s why I’m committed to its ministry in Mississippi,” said Shawn Parker, MBCB executive director-treasurer, who attended the final concert at First Church, Madison.

“Last night’s concert at First Baptist Madison was a beautiful expression of worship to God and a great encouragement that the younger generation is engaged in discipleship. I’m thankful for the support of Mississippi Baptists through the Cooperative Program in this effort,” he said.

Auditions and interviews are held each September and October in several locations around the state. Students in grades nine through 12 who are active members of music ministries in their Mississippi Baptist churches are eligible to audition. Both vocal and instrumental auditions are offered.

“This week is teaching me through exhaustion, worrying, anxiety, and whatever is happening to just praise the Lord,” said Hope Nanney, a high school senior.

For more information on the Mississippi Baptist All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra program, Murphy may be contacted at smurphy@mbcb.org.