

# SOUL 2008

We are looking forward to the upcoming summer with great expectation as we begin preparing for all that God is going to do in and through everyone involved with SOUL 2008! We hope that you will join us in prayerful discernment over whether God may be calling you to serve as a staff member for this new and growing ministry.

The SOUL program provides monthly meetings an opportunity to stretch outside the comfort zone of their community and serve others in the name of Jesus Christ, provides our summer staff a unique opportunity to grow in their experience in ministry and leadership, and provides the local community an opportunity for their youth and children to participate in fun, faith-based summer activities that will open doors for spiritual growth and transformation.

As a staff member, you would work both with the local community in Alabama and the visiting groups from NCYM or other yearly meetings. Staff coordinate the plans for the weekly project (VBS, Sports Camp, work projects), lead in morning devotions and evening worship, plan group bonding experiences, train the visiting youth and serve the local community. Staff go through training in May and will begin initial preparations for the summer months in advance. They live onsite in Alabama for 6 to 7 weeks out of the summer.

The following statement has been adopted as the purpose statement for SOUL:

The SOUL ministry program was created to provide opportunities for service and ministry in the name of Jesus for summer staff and groups from monthly meetings in North Carolina Yearly Meeting enabling them to strengthen their relationships with God, neighbors in need and with each other through serving together. We seek to partner with and empower local communities as we work together in the power of the Holy Spirit to build God's Kingdom.

On the back of this page is some general background/historical information on the MOWA Choctaw community.

# MOWA Choctaw Community

The MOWA Choctaw Indians of South Alabama are a segment of the Choctaw Indians who refused to migrate from their homeland during the infamous removal known as the "Trail of Tears."

Very little is known of the MOWA Choctaw Indians between the 1830's and 1890's; few records were kept. There were few non-Indians living in the Indian settlement until the late 19th century. After the enactment of the Trail of Tears, the President issued a degree declaring that the Indians, who in the past owned land, could homestead forty acres on the condition they no longer speak their own language, practice their religion, or call themselves a tribe. Afraid of being forced from their homes, the Indians settled in the most isolated places.

In the early 19th century, the average Indian family was very large. There was little work to be found. It was a struggle to remain alive. The Indians were uneducated, therefore, they had to work with their hands; they logged and cut ties for railroads, but the major occupation for Indians was cutting pulpwood. In the last decades of the 19th century, the isolation of the MOWA Choctaw Indians began to come to an end. There were four main factors that brought about change to the Indian communities.

First, education of native Indians was a gigantic step forward for the MOWA Choctaw Indians. Second, the right to vote played a dramatic role in the Indians' striving to become a people of their own. Third, after the Civil Rights Act, community leaders began to urge local leading industries to hire Indian employees. Fourth, tribal organization has helped the MOWA Choctaw Indians move forward. After a century and a half of literal isolation, the MOWA Choctaw Indians came forth seeking, and getting, official recognition by the state of Alabama. They adopted the name "MOWA Choctaw Indians" to identify the Indians in Mobile and Washington Counties who are descended from several Indian Tribes: Choctaw, Creek, Cherokee, Mescalero, and Apache.

Today, there are nearly 6,000 members of the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians, over 2,500 of whom live in the vicinity of McIntosh, Alabama. All the members are descendants of the original Choctaw Nation who are bound together by a complex network of multigenerational kinship.

The MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians was duly incorporated in 1979 with its tribal office located in McIntosh and purchased 160 acres of land in south Washington County in 1983. There are five officers and fourteen members of the tribe's commission who voluntarily assist the operations of tribal affairs.

Even though the MOWA Choctaw Indians had such a long battle to regain their identity, the hard work of the leaders has made the fight a worthwhile effort. The Indians now have a good self-concept and can be proud of their heritage as Native Americans.

For more information about the ministry of the Friends Center in the community, please visit our website: [www.ncym-fum.org/MOWA](http://www.ncym-fum.org/MOWA).