

## **Massanetta**

**Lillie Chilton**

Hi, I'm Lillie Chilton. For those of you don't know, Massanetta is a middle school youth conference held just outside of Harrisonburg, Virginia every year. It feels like a vacation from the real world as you learn about Christ while having lots of fun.

I would like to first thank you all for your support and the church for allowing me to go to conferences like these. I would also like to thank Pastor Berry French for organizing this trip and our chaperones Jamie Munn, Caroline Patton, and Andrew Bowman.

At Massanetta, every morning for four days, we would go and enjoy breakfast, after which we would all gather in the Hudson, a sort of casual, open sanctuary, and do energizers. Energizers are exciting, crazy dances that go along to music that you dance to get your blood pumping and get you ready for whatever comes next. After the energizers, came music, and then Keynotes, one of my favorite parts of Massanetta, where we would listen to a kind of mini sermon that related to the theme, and built off of the previous keynote.

This year the theme was Beyond the Manger – almost like a Christmas in July. Our keynoter was Shasta Bode-Brown. We talked about the coming of Christ, how to prepare, and what to do after we receive Christ.

During the first Keynote, we talked about “paving the potholes” for Christ's arrival, and what that meant to each of us, along with Black Friday and over-commercialism.

My favorite Keynote was one of the last ones, which focused on re-gifting. Shasta started the Keynote by asking why we thought that re-gifting had a bad reputation. Answer after answer was how most people saw re-gifting as cheap and unthoughtful, until one girl replied that she thought that re-gifting wasn't really that bad. Then the next few answers agreed with the girl's answer, and then Shasta stopped calling on people.

She went on to talk about how re-gifting wasn't a bad thing at all and she compared re-gifting to how once we receive Christ, we need to re-gift him to others and spread the good news that Christ is born. To me, this seemed like one of the most important parts of Christmas, because even though celebrating Christ's birth is important, it's what you do with the gift of Christ that affects the world.

Over all, Massanetta is an amazing trip that I am lucky to have been able to go on and I look forward to being able to go next year. Thank you Black Mountain Presbyterian Church for your support of us, your youth. We are grateful.

# Massanetta Conference

Michael Gun

Hello, my name is Michael Gun and I am an eighth grader in the middle school youth group. This summer I took my first trip to Massanetta. I had been to several other retreats and camps with the youth group, but none of them were anything like this one.

I have to admit that when I was going, I felt a little uncomfortable knowing that I wasn't going to spend time in small groups without anyone from our youth group. I was also unsure about my not having such a strong relationship with God. But as the days went on, I felt like I was really meant to be there.

The two biggest highlights for me were the amazing keynotes and wonderful people. Each keynote had a different way of demonstrating how Christmas is becoming over commercialized, and that it's not all about receiving presents, but it's a time to celebrate the birth of Christ. It just made you think of it in an entirely different way. Through every keynote, I could understand the true meaning of Christmas more and more. My other highlight was getting to meet so many people. Every single person I met was kind, outgoing, welcoming, and extremely energetic. By the end of the week, everyone in our group was arguing over who had the best small group.

I'd also like to take this time to thank the advisors who helped us on the trip. Each one contributed to my experience in a different way; Andrew Bowman for the amazing car rides and supporting us throughout the week; Jamie Munn with his never ending enthusiasm and his spoon game; and Caroline Patton for keeping me updated with the World Cup scores. I'd also like to give a big thank you to pastor Berry French for putting it all together.

So after a week of amazing keynotes, wonderful people, and surprisingly good food, my relationship with God had the Massanetta glue on it that was needed to make it even stronger than it was before. That was truly an experience I won't forget, and I am really looking forward to going again next year.

Thank you Black Mountain Pres.