

Youth Ministries Report to Church Council – 7/15/07

Fresh on my mind tonight is the memory of our participation in Youth 2007. Youth '07 was a global gathering of Methodist youth that happens every four years. This was the first time that White Plains has sent a group to this event and it was fantastic. By turns exhausting and uplifting as many youth events are. While I was there I was enriched personally by attending several workshops and I also had the privilege of leading a closing song at Emily Mill's presentation God's Amazingly Graceful Girls. Emily's class was filled to overflowing and over 150 young women had obviously been blessed and encouraged by their participation in the workshop. In fact the only negatives that we observed around the event were some lapses in organization and communication – for example, because we did not get to pre-register for the workshops another 50 or more girls who wanted to attend Emily's workshop were turned away. Youth Ministry is going great guns and we are gearing up for what should be another exciting year. Since the last council meeting some of our youth officers met for a day long planning session and we hammered out a program schedule that they will implement over the next year. If you're interested that schedule will be available to download from the youth website later this week. Our theme next year is Mission Possible and we've divided the year into three themes – making space, saving grace, and keeping pace. The overall key scripture for the 07-08 school year is Matthew 19:26 in which Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." - youth are told all the time that they can't do this or they can't do that – as a mainline protestant denomination we are being told that we are in decline. Even as a local church we wonder – how can we build programs with limited space and resources – but Jesus answers this firmly in this scripture. So all year expect to hear a lot from our youth about how all things are possible through God – Father Son and Holy Spirit. I could talk a lot more about youth ministry and I'd be happy to do that at any time as most of you know – but I'd rather share a thought I picked up from this past week's conference. I had the privilege to attend a workshop with Ray Buckley called the way of the warrior – Ray is half Scottish and half Lakota and was raised on a native American reservation. He is a wonderful storyteller weaving his native traditions into his Christian faith – he talked in this seminar about how there was no word in Lakota for soldier but there was a word that meant warrior and it translated fully to say the warrior is the one who stands in the gap between danger and the vulnerable. Later tonight you'll hear about our safe sanctuaries policies but Ray's call was not just to the youthworker who comes to the aid of a young person when they are confused by cultural messages – Ray's call of the way of the warrior was a challenge to all Christians that we must live out our faith – that we must seek justice – befriend the widow, the orphan, the alien in our land – these are all scriptural commands and I was inspired and I challenge you to walk that

way of the warrior – to see the danger and who is vulnerable to it and to stand in the gap – however that may work itself out in your life. I’d better close before I get on a roll. This past week I saw 7000 youth save thousands of lives in Africa through a program called nothing but nets where only \$10 can buy a mosquito net for a family to protect them from Malaria – every 30 seconds a child in Africa dies – many have died in that faraway place while I’ve been speaking here. If there’s one thing the youth I saw this week understand is that just because a person or a land is far away from us and our experience it doesn’t mean that person or that situation is far from the heart of God. You’ll hear more about the “nothing but nets” campaign in the fall – if you’re a basketball fan or read Sports Illustrated you may already be familiar with it. But that is just another way to be a warrior for Christ. Thanks as always for your support of the youth – your support allows them to shine and be the leaders of our church that they most certainly are. Thanks –

Respectfully Submitted –

**Rob Phillips,
Director of Youth Ministries**