

FIRST PLYMOUTH YOUTH NEWS

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How welcoming are we?

First Plymouth makes a big deal about being welcoming to everyone. We are Open and Affirming, which means that we extend our welcome to anyone, regardless of whatever labels society as a whole might place on them. No matter what your race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, appearance, or ability, we accept you.

That's what we say, anyway. But how do we act? How often do we measure up to the lofty goal we set for ourselves by our words, and how often do we fall short? Think about this: if you were a visitor to our youth group, would you feel welcome? Would you feel like you belonged? What if you weren't white? What if you were in a wheelchair, or gay, or just going through a really awkward phase in your life? Would you always feel unconditionally accepted?

I'd like to say that my answer would always be yes, but sometimes I think we do fail to live up to our own ideals. Sometimes I can see that we don't do a great job of welcoming people, either new visitors or those who have been with us for a long time. We need to do better. Remember—it's not our youth group, it's God's youth group, and it's not our place to keep people out.

So next time you're at youth group, pay attention to how you're treating other people. If you find yourself talking to the same two or three friends you always talk to, try talking to someone else. Find someone whose name you don't know, and introduce yourself. Show the new person around the Loft. Find a way to make someone else feel welcome. If we all do that, we can truly live up to the ideals we set for ourselves.

See you Sunday!

Eric



SENIOR HIGH MISSION TRIP

The voters have spoken! We took a poll, and a majority of senior high schoolers wanted to return to New Orleans for our 2009 mission trip! The Senior High Mission Trip will be held at the Westside Christian Church in New Orleans July 5-16, 2009.

The trip is open to rising 9th graders through rising college freshmen. The cost will be \$300 plus participation in fundraising activities. We'll spend most of our time in New Orleans with a couple of day trips outside the city.

Parents and youth should have received an e-mail with all the details on December 15. If you have any questions or need that e-mail re-sent, please let me know!

VALENTINE'S DAY FUND RAISER

Valentine's Day is on a Saturday this year, which makes it the perfect date night. But chances are that people's usual babysitters will already be booked or on dates of their own. That's where we come in!

The youth of First Plymouth are having a special Valentine's Day Parents' Night Out. We'll have the nursery and CE Center open from 5 until 9 p.m., and for a donation we'll hang out with the kids, keep them safe, and entertain them while their parents go out on the town!

We need as many volunteers as we can get to handle all the kids! If you can help out, let Eric know. We'll see you on Valentine's Day!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Here are a few events on the horizon:

- Attention 8th graders (and anyone older who is interested): our OWL retreat will be February 29 to March 2. Location TBA!
- Please keep your eyes peeled for more information about Conference Retreats!
- Youth Sunday is February 8! Mark it on your calendars!

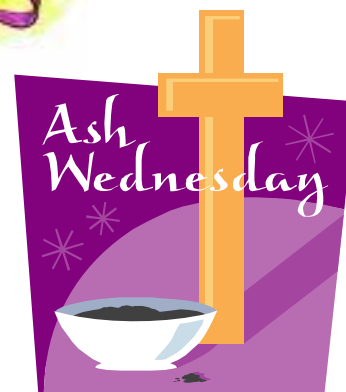
REMINDERS

- Parents! If you have not filled out a blanket permission slip for your child to participate in youth activities, you should do that ASAP to be sure that your child can continue to participate in off-campus trips!
- Parents and youth! If I don't have your e-mail address, please give it to me as soon as possible! If you gave it to me, but aren't receiving my weekly e-newsletters, then I probably have it wrong, and your e-news is stranded somewhere in cyberspace. Please check with me to make sure I have it right!

THANK YOU!

The First Plymouth youth program takes hard work from many different people! Here is a list (incomplete, of course!) of those who have lent a hand recently:

- Thanks to all the parents who have prepared dinner for the youth groups last month!
- Thanks to the youth mentors who have helped with youth group so far this year: Dave Kroll, Amy Smith, Brian Eley, Ben Westlund, Greg Verzosa, and Julie Bennett!
- Thanks to the parents who are helping with our fundraising efforts, *especially* those who have taken on a leadership role! Your help is invaluable!



CALENDAR

Stuff coming up you won't want to miss

February 1	Youth Group
February 7	Youth Sunday Rehearsal <i>(details via e-mail)</i>
February 8	Youth Sunday Youth Group
February 14	Valentine's Day Fundraiser
February 15	Youth Group
February 20-22	Conference Confirmation Retreat at La Foret
February 22	Youth Group
February 27 -March 1	OWL
March 1	Youth Group

