

This morning's collect speaks of taking care of ourselves "both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls". This self-care is exactly what I have learned to embody at Youth Pride. For me, YPI helped develop the activist inside of me. I enhanced my public speaking abilities and developed a vast knowledge base of issues that impact the LGBT community. I became a true activist and educator, and have enjoyed every minute of going out into the community and working with a vast array of people regarding these issues. As I developed at YPI I noticed that my ministry within the Episcopal Church began to grow and expand. I began have more and more conversations with my clergy and colleagues both lay and ordained around the country about what outlets there are in the church to work around LGBT issues. Shortly after being elected a deputy to General Convention, I got in touch with the various LGBT leaders in The Episcopal Church and quickly got involved in the movements heading towards Anaheim, California. Each step of the way, I took all that I learned from Youth Pride with me to better enrich the life and ministry of The Episcopal Church.

At General Convention; I told my personal story, testified at hearings and in the House of Deputies, I even had the opportunity to write legislation that would eventually pass. I became one of the first openly transgender deputies to openly serve in the House of Deputies, and I could not have done it without Youth Pride. It is not just Youth Pride that has inspired me in my ministry but rather my ministry that has inspired me to become an activist and advocate. The central core of my faith is the core of my activist work . . . The Baptismal Covenant.

“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons loving your neighbor as yourself?”  
“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” Every time I go to a rally, every time I march in a parade, go to a speaking gig with YPI those two questions run through my head. It is through this advocacy work, this involvement at Youth Pride that I feel I truly am able to live out my Baptismal Covenant.

Without YPI, I would not be here today. My ministry and life have enriched with the work and time spent at Youth Pride. I have learned, through this important ministry, that you don't need to be in a church building to be the church. In fact the best place to be the light of the world and salt of the earth is out in the world.