The Original Challenge:

Rev. Mary Caucutt admonished our Young Adults in the Church to demonstrate leadership: “One of the central points of Young Adults in the Church is to have the Young Adults take on leadership in the congregation. When we have talked about this in the past it has been to wonder how they might take on a project they would lead and include others in the congregation. I wonder how they might use this trip to Washington DC as a springboard to involve the congregation in mission, not just have the congregation support their youthful formation by sending them to DC, which is wonderful in itself, but have the group challenge the congregation to do something that would be connected with this. I don’t know what issue is front and center for this group, and how to easily help them engage the congregation around mission and ministry – but I encourage you all to consider this.”

The Enthusiastic Response:

Three members of the current YAC group had participated in a hands-on, project-based trip to the Crow Reservation in Montana as “Journey to Adulthood” members in 2015. Two others of the current YAC group participated in a learning and camping experience at the Shoshone Episcopal Mission on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming as their first mission trip for their YAC program one year ago. The clear outcome of those experiences was to take on a broad and deep exploration of “the other in our midst.” This became the theme and the challenge for their gatherings and learning during the 2017-2017 school year.

The YAC Mission/Learning Trip to Washington DC:

After an entire school year of YAC gatherings which included visiting “The Bridge” art exhibit at Northwest College in Powell, visiting the Interpretive Center at Heart Mountain Relocation Camp, and accomplishing a QPR Suicide Prevention Training*, exploration of social justice as it relates to “the other in our midst” was clearly underway. The group planned its Mission/Learning Trip to DC to emphasize the new National Museum of African American History & Culture, the new National Museum of the American Indian, and the National Cathedral. Actually, much more came to be thanks to gifts from many sources including the February 2017 grant from the Foundation for the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming. Meetings of prayer and conversation during the trip would bring to light a multitude of thoughts and feelings about social justice in our nation. This was a transformative experience for these young adults.

* YAC also visited the police/sheriff facility in Cody, the Fire Department, West Park Hospital, Cody’s substance abuse treatment program, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, the Park County Courthouse, and the home of retired Senator Alan Simpson and his wife, Ann, among other places.
Here is a summary of what transpired on the DC Learning/Mission Trip along with comments by each of the youth participants:

Saturday, April 8, 2017:
- 3:00 pm, Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana (as an alternative to visiting the National Cathedral – our connecting flight from Minneapolis to DC was cancelled forcing us to spend the afternoon and night in Billings. Consequently we missed visiting the National Cathedral.)
  - Alannah Gee, 15: “Seeing the Jane Quick-to-See exhibit (“In the Footsteps of My Ancestors) showed me how the policy of “kill the Indian to save the man” was used in American history. White people succeeded in oppressing the Indian.”

Sunday, April 9, 2017:
- Arrive Washington DC late afternoon
- 7:30 pm, “A Raisin in the Sun,” Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theatre
  - John Williams, 17: “Raisin in the Sun- This play was amazing for the first 3 minutes nothing was said but the actions on stage were captivating. It was well worth our time and the gift of the tickets was great.
  - Finn Jackson, 17: “Raisin in the Sun is a valuable play to have seen. It opened my eyes to what an African American home may have been like during the civil rights movement. Little freedom existed among African Americans and families would be stuck in society unable to live on as did white citizens. The play showed me what that may have been like.”
  - Lucille Sax, 17: “This play shed a lot of light on racism in its “smallest” and “most harmless” ways. The play was light hearted and fun while also deep and melancholic. I appreciated the balance of light and dark in the play.”

Monday, April 10, 2017:
- 9:00 am, walking tour of the National Mall including the Lincoln Memorial and Vietnam Memorial
- 12:00 pm, timed passes for the National Museum of African American History & Culture
  - Alannah Gee, 15: “Often in current society people of a different race, religion, gender or sexual orientation are discriminated against because they are labeled as different. People who are labeled as different are silenced and oppressed. Those seen as different are marginalized. Our prayer is for equality for all and that we not be the ones to marginalize those who are different and rather that we become the ones to help them be seen. Our nation still perpetuates injustice because it often does not discourage discrimination and even takes actions (such as the travel ban) that harm those who have already faced injustices such as becoming a refugee of war. Discrimination harms, both physically and emotionally, based on race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. I believe it is possible
to achieve equal protection under the law globally but it will take a lot of time and will not necessarily be a straightforward journey.”

- Finn Jackson, 17: “This is an extremely valuable collection. This museum showed me how far and how much African Americans have contributed to our society. From music and sports, to politics and even fighting for their freedoms, African Americans have come so far throughout history.”
- Lucille Sax, 17: “This museum hurt my soul. The layout of the deepest, darkest pains of African Americans being in the bottom tugged at my heart. This museum really made me think about all the scars African Americans have in their history.”
- John Williams, 17: “This museum was interesting and I learned that the history of African Americans in America is a very sad and long one.”

- 6:00 pm, evening music/art/dance show at Millennium Stage, Kennedy Center
  - Finn Jackson, 17: “This was a nice break in our trip – a nice breath. Some light-hearted, happy, show tunes were a great way to take our minds off the heavy exhibits and sights we were exploring.”
  - Lucille Sax, 17: “A light-hearted treat of show tunes after a rough day at a heavy-hitting museum.”
  - John Williams, 17: “I thoroughly enjoyed the concert and listening to the music of Richard Rodgers and friends. I recognized many of the pieces that were played.”

Tuesday, April 11, 2017:

- 10:00 am, visit the National Museum of the American Indian
  - Lucille Sax, 17: “Beautiful would be the first word to describe it. The layout of the information was amazing. Again, it showed me the scars of history, but also the beauty of today.”
  - John Williams, 17: “I enjoyed this a lot. I could have spent all day in there. I loved how Native Americans acknowledged the white man screwed them over, but don’t really care because they are very proud of who they are and of their heritage and culture. I really enjoyed the photography exhibition of Horace Poolaw. Side note: at the restaurant there I had the best buffalo steak ever.”
  - Finn Jackson, 17: “This was a great way to relate what African Americans have been through to Native Americans. In other words, both museums presented challenges of racism and even religious discrimination in our society. It gives one the idea of what Native Americans and their culture are based around.”

- 2:00 pm, arrive at “Little Lights After School Program,” 760 7th Street, for orientation and training
- 2:30 pm, tour site of “Little Lights” ministry – Little Lights serves the public housing communities of Capitol Hill. Homework assistance is accompanied by a meal.
- 3:00 to 6:00 pm, help with pre-K through 4th grade Homework Club at “Little Lights.”
- John Williams, 17: “Little Lights DC was awesome! I loved being there and working with the kids. Also getting to just hang out and play the Wii with them was fun too. I want to go back and spend more time there some day.”
- Finn Jackson, 17: “Little Lights was a necessity for our trip. We’d been given a huge privilege to go to Washington DC and adventure around the city. This was our way of giving back. It was our job during the trip. Helping with Little Lights was a fun experience for the group, and for some, showed us what kids across the country are like in terms of their characteristics and how they are raised.”
- Lucille Sax, 17: “An eye-opening experience for small town Wyoming kids. The lives these kids live is scary and intense and to brighten their day was a gift.”

The Ordination of Roxanne Jimerson-Friday at Our Father’s House, Ethete, May 26, 2017:

Our YAC youth invited Roxanne to visit Christ Church in Cody and not only preach for the two services, but to present to the congregation after church on her journey growing up on the Wind River Reservation and ultimately preparing for the priesthood. It was a moving presentation and many in the congregation pledged to go to Ethete to attend her ordination.

On May 26th the YAC group traveled to the Reservation, made camp at St. David’s Episcopal Church at the Shoshone Mission in Fort Washakie, and drove back to Ethete to attend Roxanne’s ordination. An additional nine people from Christ Church, Cody, attended. The experience was just incredible with the combination of Native American setting and music, and the Episcopal liturgy for ordination. The following day, Jason Baldes, Executive Director of the Wind River Native Advocacy Center guided the group on a tour of the recently reintroduced buffalo on the Reservation. A short video of that tour is made part of the electronic version of this final report narrative.

The experience on the Wind River Reservation actually concluded the Mission/Learning Trip to Washington DC and its context in Wyoming. The YAC group did, indeed, lead the congregation of Christ Church in a powerful ministry. The YAC group is enormously grateful to the Foundation for providing a high percentage of the dollars needed to offset the costs of the experience.

The prayer that guided us throughout our trip was the following:

Prayer for Equality

By Kira Kowalczyk, 2015

Dear God,

We pray for all those in our world suffering from racism, sexism and religious discrimination. For the individuals who are silenced for expressing their beliefs.
For the people who feel marginalized within society.
Please help them remain positive despite physical and psychological strife.
Help them to forgive those who persecute them or who fail to treat them with respect.
Forgive us, Lord, if we consciously or unconsciously share in the conditions or in a system that perpetuates injustice.
Please enlighten all Your disciples that discrimination does not only come in the form of lowering others but it demonstrates itself in the process of granting of privileges to select groups of people as well.
Guide lawmakers and those at the head of government to make decisions that grant all individuals equal status under the law. Amen.