

A MESSAGE FROM MIKE GARLAND

Board Chairperson, YFCNZ June 2007

Involvement with YFC is woven through four decades of my life. Many of you will have similar stories - for some, the impact of this ministry goes much deeper - the service to it - much greater.

Right now we are at a place where the changes we have made are greater than at any other time in YFC's formidable 50-year history in NZ. In the early stages of the change process, we went all over the world to observe other missions and consult with their leaders. We also looked deep within to hear what we sensed God would have us do - to stay "geared to the times" and "anchored to The Rock". Some commentators have said that what we are doing is very risky, and it seems that such significant and far-reaching change has seldom been done before. All of them are watching with interest as many wrestle with the same issues that we face in our westernised, materialistic "post" post-modern culture.

In YFCNZ we have faced up to the brutal facts. The methods of the past and the programmes that we have used to reach young people are no longer working the way they used to. Generation X and Y are savvy, energetic, insecure, saturated with options and just as challenging, if not more so, than any generation previously. They are compulsive consumers who see the emptiness and futility of more stuff - but cynically go after it anyway. To this generation, everything is relative - and Christianity can look like just another product on offer. What would seem to us as intolerable contradictions in lifestyle barely twinge the collective "Gen XY" conscience.

In response -we have radically restructured YFCNZ from a youth organization of Christian youth workers, into a "Mission Order" of committed missionaries. Our goal - retake our place as an edgy, prophetic mission focussed on reaching genuinely unchurched young people. We are not selling out to the mainstream, nor are we becoming "Church" or cult. We are passionate about being followers of Jesus, building His Kingdom inviting young people onto a journey into a costly and radical faith. We are saying 'come and look at our lives, participate in our practices and values, and demonstrate with us a radical devotion to God and a concern for people and the world we live in'.

As we move toward a name change to reflect the significant changes we have made, we are not succumbing to faddism or abandoning our roots in the worldwide movement of YFC. Rather, we are wanting to reflect the essence of what we are becoming in this next phase of the mission. We invite you to sit up - take a fresh look at what we are doing and ask: - is this a mission that I want to - need to - be part of?

To finish, I am reminded of the words of martyred missionary, Jim Elliot, who said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose".