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NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2025

# YAYA CONNECT

*Authentic Ministry - Intentional Learning - Resource Giving*



## **2025: A YEAR FOR BOLD, TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE**

In a world that can feel overwhelming and unjust, what if you focused on deeper transformation centering love, justice, and faith?

Romans 12:2 calls us to resist conformity to the systems of oppression in the world and embrace the renewal of our minds. What does that look like in 2025? It's rethinking success by asking: How can I uplift marginalized voices in my workplace? How can I heal from generational trauma while helping others heal too? How can I use my faith to build spaces where everyone belongs? Transformation isn't about striving for perfection; it's about creating a more equitable, inclusive world where your faith and actions align.

### **2025 Self Challenge Questions:**

- What does rest and healing look like for you this year, especially as an act of resistance to burnout culture?
- How can you help make your school, community or workplace more inclusive and supportive?
- What systems of inequality do you want to challenge in 2025, and how can your faith help?

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## MENTAL HEALTH & RADICAL BELONGING IN FAITH SPACES

Let's be real navigating mental health as a young person is tough, especially when the world tells you to hide your struggles or "tough it out".

But let's make one thing clear: the church should never be another space where you feel silenced or unseen.

Faith spaces have the power to be radically transformative when they prioritize belonging and healing for all. Even Jesus felt deep sorrow (Matthew 26:38) showing us that vulnerability is sacred.

So why do so many youth feel like they have to mask their emotions in spaces meant to reflect God's love?

It's time for a shift. Churches must become sanctuaries for mental wellness, breaking the stigma and creating spaces where everyone feels valued, affirmed, and safe.

That means having open conversations about mental health, offering tangible resources, and standing in solidarity with those navigating challenges.

Healing isn't just holy work—it's justice work.

### Action Steps:

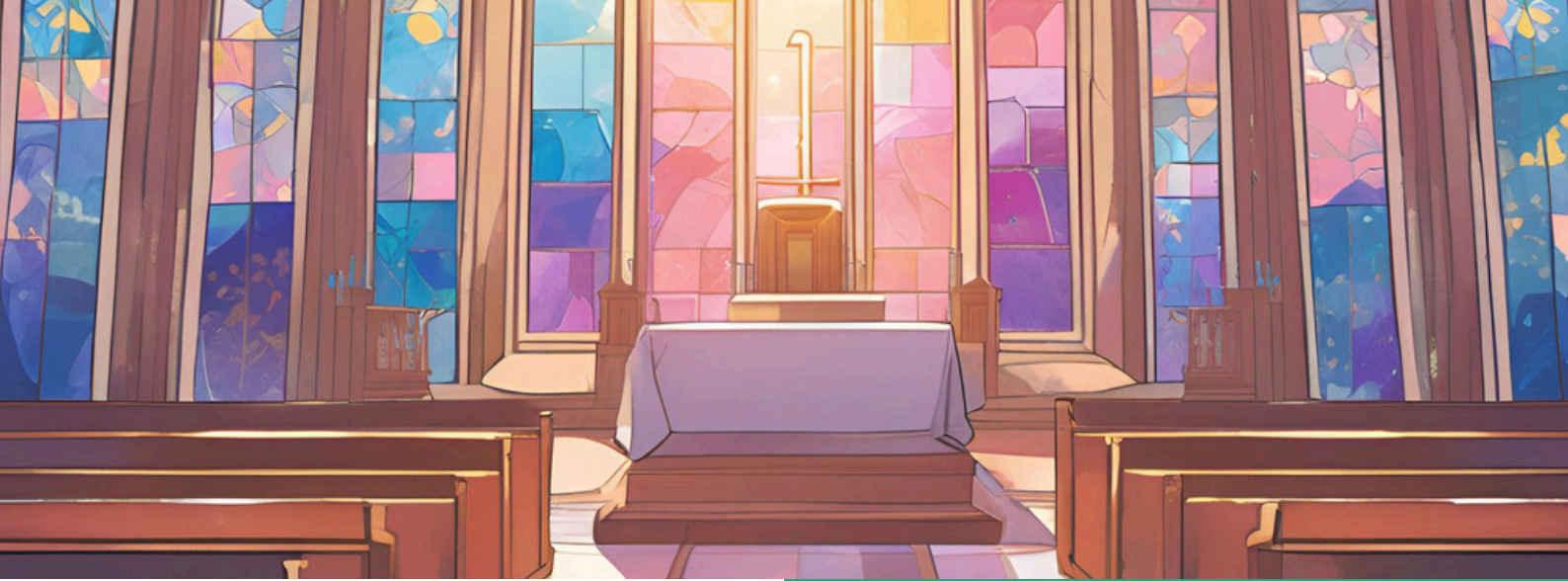
- Start a mental health awareness campaign in your youth group with inclusive messaging.
- Advocate for church leaders to receive mental health training and trauma-informed care practices.
- Create peer led support circles where youth can share, connect, and heal together.

Belonging in faith spaces means being seen, heard, and supported just as you are. Together, let's build churches that honor every person's journey toward wholeness.



## JANUARY BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical** by Shane Claiborne this book encourages leaders to embrace a faith that challenges injustice and builds intentional community
- **Sacred Self-Care** by Chaneque Walker-Barnes. This book serves as a compassionate guide, offering inclusive practices to nurture faith, wellness, and justice in everyday life.



## TERM OF THE MONTH: INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality, is a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how different aspects of a person's identity such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability overlap and interact to shape their experiences, particularly in systems of oppression and privilege. It emphasizes that these identities are not experienced in isolation but as interconnected, often creating unique challenges and opportunities for individuals.

### Why It Matters in Faith Spaces

In faith communities, intersectionality invites us to see each person as beautifully complex and made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). It challenges us to move beyond surface-level inclusion and consider how our ministries, programs, and teachings can serve the diverse realities of our congregants. For example, the experiences of a Black queer young adult differ from those of a white cisgender one, and a one-size-fits-all approach to community care can unintentionally marginalize those already at the edges. By embracing intersectionality, faith spaces can become more just, compassionate, and welcoming, reflecting the inclusive love of Jesus. It pushes us to ask: Who are we leaving out? How do we center voices that often go unheard?

### Using it in Faith Spaces

- Design ministries that meet diverse needs (accessibility, cultural relevance).
- Elevate stories of those with intersecting identities.

### Reflection Questions for Youth or Young Adults:

- How can we honor the diverse identities in our community?
- Who isn't included in our ministry decisions, and how can we change that?

Intersectionality isn't just a term—it's a call to action for creating radically inclusive faith spaces.

## GRADUATING TO LIFE: REST

Society's relentless "on-the-go" mindset impacts our well-being and challenges our ability to prioritize rest. The glorification of overwork often stems from systems that prioritize profits over people and productivity over human dignity. For young adults, particularly those from marginalized communities, navigating the demands of an "on-the-go" culture can make embracing the importance of rest feel like an impossible challenge.

The concept of Sabbath, as laid out in Exodus 20:8-11, reminds us that rest is not only a gift but also a demand for justice. It's about creating space for everyone—ourselves, our families, our communities, and even the earth to breathe and flourish.

Rest isn't indulgent; it's essential. It challenges the systems that dehumanize us, disrupts cycles of exploitation, and restores our sense of self-worth.

Rest is especially vital for those carrying the weight of systemic oppression. Saying "no" to burnout culture, setting firm boundaries, and embracing rest as sacred is a revolutionary act of reclaiming your humanity.

### Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

- How has society's "on-the-go" mentality shaped your perspective on rest?
- What boundaries could you set to protect your time and energy in 2025?

### Action Steps:

- Start a young adult Sabbath circle to explore rest as a spiritual and justice practice.
- Incorporate mindfulness practices, such as journaling or meditation, into your daily routine to intentionally create moments of stillness.