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NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025

YAYA CONNECT

Authentic Ministry - Intentional Learning - Resource Giving



CREATING HEALING SPACES SUPPORTING YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In light of the recent terror attacks in New Orleans and the Cyber Truck bombing, our youth and young adults may be wrestling with profound feelings of grief, anger, fear, and even hopelessness. These events challenge us as leaders to embody Christ's radical love and justice by creating spaces that center healing, belonging, and the voices of those impacted.

Start by cultivating environments where young people feel safe to name and explore their emotions without judgment. Acknowledge their pain and affirm their feelings, reminding them that grief and anger are deeply human responses to injustice and tragedy. Introduce scripture like Psalm 46:1-2, which reassures us that God is present as our refuge and strength, even in the darkest times.

Encourage open dialogue through small group discussions or healing circles, using inclusive language that reflects the diversity of their experiences. Emphasize that the church is a collective body, standing together in solidarity, care, and action. Equip leaders with trauma-informed approaches and partner with mental health professionals to provide ongoing support.

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Suggested Conversation Flow:

1. **Opening Grounding:** Begin with a brief moment of silence or breathing to acknowledge the weight of the conversation. Follow with an inclusive prayer, lifting up the emotions and needs present in the space.
2. **Share & Affirm:** Allow youth to share their thoughts and feelings. Use active listening and affirm their emotions without offering quick fixes.
3. **Faith Connection:** Introduce scripture or spiritual reflections that highlight God's presence in times of struggle.
4. **Explore Together:** Discuss collective actions the group can take, whether writing prayers, hosting a vigil, or reaching out to support affected communities.
5. **Close with Hope:** Conclude with words of hope, focusing on resilience, community, and God's unshakable love for all people.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- How have the recent events impacted your faith or understanding of the world?
- What emotions are you sitting with, and how can we, as a community, hold space for them?
- How can our faith inspire us to take action for justice and healing in our world?

By holding space for healing and guiding these conversations with care, we can help our youth and young adults see that even in the face of tragedy, they are not alone and that together, we are agents of God's boundless grace and transformative love.

ADDING BREATHING EXERCISES INTO YOUTH WORSHIP:

Creating a space for mindfulness and intentional breathing can help young people center themselves, manage stress, and become more present in worship and community. Checkout the steps below:

1. Set the Tone

- Begin with a brief explanation: "Breathing exercises help us slow down, connect with our bodies, and invite God's peace into this space."
- Normalize mindfulness as a spiritual practice that aligns with rest, renewal, and presence with God.

2. Choose a Simple Exercise

- **Box Breathing:** Inhale 4 seconds, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4.
- **Breath Prayer:** Inhale with a phrase like "Be still," exhale with "and know that I am God."

3. Integrate it Into Worship

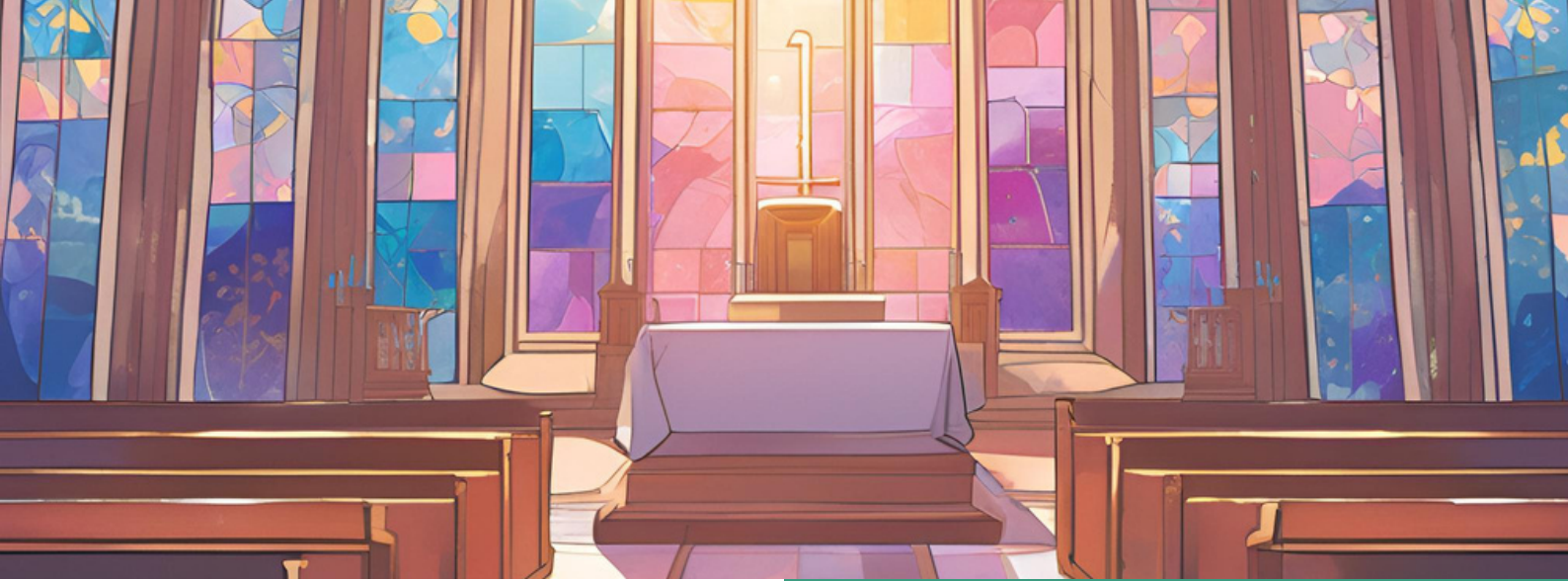
- Begin meetings with 1-2 minutes of guided breathing.
- Use breathwork before prayer or scripture reading to create a sense of calm and focus.

4. Reflect and Discuss

- Ask: "How did that feel?" or "How can breathwork help you feel more connected to your faith?"
- Reinforce that breath is a gift from God, a reminder of divine presence in every moment.

FEBRUARY BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Love, Auntie: Parables and Prayers for Sacred Belonging** by Shantell Hinton Hill offers heartfelt reflections, prayers, and modern-day parables that nurture a sense of sacred belonging and radical love in faith communities.
- **Organizing Church** by Tim Conder & Dan Rhodes explores how churches can embrace grassroots organizing principles to create justice-centered, community-driven faith spaces that reflect the transformative power of the Gospel.



TERM OF THE MONTH: SACRED

The word sacred comes from the Latin *sacer*, meaning “set apart” or “holy.” Something sacred carries deep spiritual significance—it is more than just special; it is consecrated, revered, and connected to the Divine.

In faith spaces, sacredness is not limited to physical places like churches or altars but extends to moments, relationships, and actions that reflect God’s presence.

Sacred faith spaces are where people feel safe, valued, and spiritually nourished. They are spaces of worship, community, justice, and healing—where the Spirit moves, and love is at the center.

Whether a sanctuary, a quiet moment in nature, or a circle of friends in deep conversation, sacredness is created when we intentionally make space for God’s presence.

Suggestions for Sacred Faith Spaces:

- Create environments of radical hospitality and inclusion.
- Encourage deep listening, reflection, and prayer.
- Engage in acts of service and justice as sacred work.

Discussion Questions:

- What does sacred mean to you?
- Where have you experienced a sacred faith space?
- How does sacredness connect to justice and service?
- What role does community play in making a space sacred?

GRADUATING TO LIFE: IDENTITY

The Crisis of Identity: Who Am I in Christ Amidst Societal Expectations?

Navigating young adulthood comes with immense pressure—society tells us who we should be, from career paths to relationships and even personal values.

The world glorifies success, status, and conformity, often making it difficult to remain true to our identity in Christ. When we chase external validation, we risk losing the deeper, God-given purpose within us.

But Jesus calls us to something different. Romans 12:2 reminds us, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Our true worth is not in job titles or social status, but in God’s unconditional love.

Suggested Practices:

- Spend time in prayer and Scripture to affirm your identity in Christ.
- Surround yourself with a supportive faith community.
- Embrace the unique gifts God has given you instead of societal molds.

Discussion Questions:

- What societal expectations have challenged your faith and identity?
- How can we create a culture where Christian identity is prioritized over worldly success?
- What does it mean to have an identity rooted in Christ, and how do you live that out daily?