

2nd Annual Young Leader Formation Workshop
Sunday August 28, 2023
Camp Johnsonburg

On Sunday August 28, 2023 the Young Leader Formation team held the second annual YLF Retreat at Camp Johnsonburg. We were blessed to have 24 people in attendance. We began our day by breaking the ice with a ‘get to know you’ bingo game. Our youth leaders had fun getting to know each other. Being blessed with beautiful sunny weather we then took the opportunity to reflect, connect or explore the grounds.



We were very lucky to have Megan DeWald, the Director of the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary as our workshop facilitator. Through interactive activities, group collaboration and an impactful presentation, Ms. DeWald inspired our youth leaders to think about how to respond to the needs of our youth.

Workshop: Designing Youth Ministry...for Now

Megan discussed the fact that the “youth group” is not synonymous with “youth ministry” and that it is important for church leaders to enter a process of discernment when it comes to the needs of youth within their churches and in the community outside the church walls. There is not a one size fits all model.

She walked us through some history and research around how the “youth group” model became dominant, how it has not always been effective in developing life-long disciples of Jesus Christ, and how there may be other ways to consider and develop youth ministry as mission within and beyond the church space and community.





Megan encouraged youth leaders to consider engaging in a process of design thinking when it comes to youth ministry. Rather than starting with programming that you hope youth will attend, go through these important steps:

- 1) Empathize – pay attention to the needs of youth in church and in the community
- 2) Define the problem or primary need to be addressed
- 3) Ideate (brainstorm, consider possibilities for action that address the problem/meet the needs)
- 4) Prototype (bring the idea to action – don't be afraid to fail!)
- 5) Test (notice what is working and not working – go back to earlier steps in the process to revise and refine as much as is needed)

She emphasized that if we “fall in love with the problem” rather than “fall in love with our solutions or programs,” we will be more open to letting go of what isn't working to make room for new ways of addressing the problems and needs of youth.

The workshop concluded with an inspirational activity using Hatch Cards from Ministry Incubators, which described many amazing missional youth programs happening around the country that address a range of needs and challenges, including providing job training, housing and other basic needs, community connection, after school support and many others. We ended our day with the opportunity to hear what Camp Johnsonburg has to offer to aid us in our ministry, a time of worship and a delicious meal.