Teachers of Joy: Grounding Youth Ministry Education in a Theology of Joy

25th Annual Conference
Union Station Hotel, St. Louis, MO
October 27-29, 2018

www.aymeducators.org
Our Plenary Speakers

Dr. Mirislav Volf
Yale Divinity School
Yale Center for Faith and Culture

Dr. Volf is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School and the Founding Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. A native of Croatia, he was educated at Fuller Theological Seminary and the University of Tübingen. He has given many prestigious lectureships around the world and has also been featured on National Public Radio’s Speaking of Faith, Public Television’s Religion and Ethics Newsweekly. He is author or editor of 20 books and over 70 scholarly articles, and, relevant to our conference, principle investigator leading a coalition of scholars for the John Templeton Foundation funded *Theology of Joy and Good Life* project.

Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly
Youth Hope-Builders Academy

Dr. Wimberly is Professor Emerita of Christian Education at the Interdenominational Theological Center. She serves as the Executive Director of the Youth Hope-Builder Academy at ITC, a youth theology program funded by the Lilly Endowment. Her publications include *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church* and *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Dr. Wimberly participated in the *Theology of Joy and Good Life* project and, in her capacity as one of the senior scholars on the *Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing Advisory Board*, recently developed research with Dr. Almeda Wright from Yale entitled: *Finding Joy in Adolescence: African-American Stories from the Past for the Present*.

*Thanks to AYME members Sarah Farmer, Angela Gorrell, and Richelle White for their significant participation in this year’s program. And special thanks to Frank Bell, executive director of Elevate St. Louis, for joining us in our joy journey.*
Welcome from the Conference Director

October 27, 2018

Dear AYME Friends,

Joy! What a theme to work with for a conference! On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to welcome you to AYME’s conference in St. Louis. I’m grateful you’ve decided to join us, and, as research shows, gratitude often correlates with joy. So, thanks again! When colleagues who share the same passion for multiplying well-educated youth ministry leaders gather, we should expect good things to happen.

If this is your first time at AYME, I pray you will find us warm and welcoming. Please don’t hesitate to contact me or any of our board members if you need any assistance while you are here. We hope to make your inaugural AYME experience both fulfilling and memorable. That’s been the legacy of our fellowship for 25 years and we are eager to celebrate our time together with new acquaintances.

Called into youth ministry, we often poke around to find our best fit, eager to offer what we can. AYME offers a home to those who value authentic relationships, enjoy being a bit playful, embrace the scholarly geek within and, especially, love teaching. We hope to cultivate a sense of community among members. We hope to ignite collaboration among colleagues. We can’t wait to see the new contributions coming from AYME original researchers this year because youth ministry gets better as our efforts influence practice. We pray all of us might improve professionally as we serve with Christ and will gain a sweet, heart-enriching benefit as a result of spending three days thinking about joy together in St. Louis. The time and space we will share here is a gift from the Lord, and we want you to enjoy it all.

This year’s conference theme allows us to explore what it means to be “Teachers of Joy.” Our stellar lineup of plenary presenters is headlined by Miroslav Volf and Anne Wimberly. We will get acquainted with some of the remarkable fruit culled by the Yale Center for Faith & Culture from convening hundreds of ‘joy scholars’ over the past four years. Sarah Farmer and Angela Gorrell were in the thick of this journey. Richelle White and Frank Bell have been drawn into an expansive vision of joy that we hope will stir us all, shape our students, and transform thousands of young people as they walk with Christ.

We’re trying a program tweak this year. Stay on your toes as we try to creatively integrate worship throughout our program. Let’s confess that the joy of the Lord is our strength in scholarship, too!

Dave Rahn, Ph.D.
Vice-President and Conference Director


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# Teachers of Joy:
Grounding Youth Ministry Education in a Theology of Joy

## Daily Schedule

### Saturday, October 27
1:00 p.m.  
Registration Opens

2:00 p.m.  
Opening Plenary/Worship Session (Grand Ballroom, First Floor)  
Miroslav Volf, *Becoming Practical Theologians of Joy*

3:30 p.m.  
Break & Exhibitors Open

4:00 p.m.  
Academic Presentation Sessions #1 (Breakout Rooms, Second Floor)

5:00 p.m.  
Academic Presentation Sessions #2 (Breakout Rooms, Second Floor)

5:45 p.m.  
Break & Exhibitors Open

6:15 p.m.  
Dinner/Plenary Session (Grand Ballroom, First Floor)  
Miroslav Volf with Angela Gorrell, *A Conversation About Joy*

8, 9, & 10 p.m.  
Enjoy the *Fire and Light Show* (Lake) and the *3D Laser Light Show* (Grand Hall)

### Sunday, October 28
7:30 a.m.  
Breakfast on your own

8:30 a.m.  
Plenary/Worship (Grand Ballroom, First Floor)  
Frank Bell, *Prevailing Joy—Straddling Adversity and Complacency*

10:30 a.m.  
Break & Exhibitors Open

11:00 a.m.  
Academic Presentation Sessions #3 (Breakout Rooms, Second Floor)

12:00 p.m.  
Lunch and Business Meeting (Grand Ballroom, First Floor)

1:15 p.m.  
Break & Exhibitors Open

1:45 p.m.  
Academic Presentation Sessions #4 (Breakout Rooms, Second Floor)

2:30 p.m.  
Discover St. Louis Together

5:00 p.m.  
Mississippi Riverboat Dinner Cruise—*An Open Mic of Joy!*  
See directions on page 4.

8, 9, & 10 p.m.  
Enjoy the *Fire and Light Show* (Lake) and the *3D Laser Light Show* (Grand Hall)

### Monday, October 29
7:30 a.m.  
Breakfast on your own

8:30 a.m.  
Academic Presentation Sessions #5 (Breakout Rooms, Second Floor)

9:30 a.m.  
Closing Plenary/Worship Session (Grand Ballroom, First Floor)  
Anne Wimberly, Richelle White, and Sarah Farmer, *Mentors of Joy*

**Enhance Your Teaching Drawing** (must be present to win): Apple Watch 4, Bose Bluetooth Speakers, Bose Headphones, Canon Presentation Remotes.

11:30 a.m.  
Conference Ends  
See you in Minneapolis for AYME 2019!
Riverboat Dinner Cruise

5:00 — 8:00 PM Sunday Evening

We invite you to enjoy downtown St. Louis from 2:30-4:30 PM Sunday afternoon as you make your way to the Tom Sawyer Riverboat for our dinner cruise. The boat departs at 5:00 PM and returns at 8:00 PM.

The riverboat is located just beyond the Gateway Arch to the right.

How to get to the Arch and Riverboat
• Walk 1.25 miles along Market Street from the Hotel to the Arch.
• Take an Uber up Market Street for about $8.00.
• Ride the Metro Train from Union Station (located behind the hotel) to the 8th & Pine Station or about $2.50.

Information about riding to the top of the Gateway Arch, touring the Gateway Museum, visiting the Old Court House, etc., may be found at: www.gatewayarch.com.

Note: Map not to scale
• A total of 100,000 square feet of flexible meeting and exhibit space
• The Midway features 43,000 square feet of exhibit space
• 16,200 square foot Grand Ballroom
• 8,000 square foot Regency Ballroom
• Historic venues: The Grand Hall, Gothic Corridor and The Midway
New York Central:
“Rooting African Youth Ministry in a Theology of Joy: A Journey towards Contentment through the Promotion of Indigenous Expressions, the Case of ‘Poetship’ and Appellations in Ghana”
Ebenezer Hagan (The Church of Pentecost & Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana)
The success of youth ministry in Africa is threatened by identity crisis due to the negative influence of Westernization. If hope is anticipated joy as Jurgen Moltmann intimates, then hope is indispensable to youth ministry in Africa. Such hope must bolster confidence in the Christian African identity and assure contentment. This paper promotes a hybridized context of indigenous African traditions with Western approaches in a “glocalized” youth ministry context as a commendable panacea.

Illinois Central:
“Ideas to Paper: Writing and Reviewing for Academic Journals” (Professional Development)
Ben Espinoza (Michigan State University / Journal of Youth Ministry) & Kevin Lawson (Talbot School of Theology / Christian Education Journal)
This workshop is for those seeking some advice and tips on writing up their research as articles for publication and/or on serving as a peer-reviewer of articles or book reviewer for an academic journal. If you’ve been wanting to get your work published, but have struggled with how to get started, or if you have had article submissions rejected, this session will help you better understand how to successfully navigate the writing, reviewing, and publication process.

Burlington Route:
“Embracing Postcolonialism: The Future of Christian Education”
Mark Maddix (Point Loma Nazarene University)
While much of the research and leadership in evangelical theology has historically been dominated by white males from the West, the field of postcolonial theologies and hermeneutics has implications for the church and the future of the field of Christian education. This paper provides an overview of postcolonial studies (liberation theologies, feminist theology, and biblical hermeneutics) and how they are changing the scope of theological and biblical studies.

Frisco:
“Faith Development and Faith Deconstruction: Why Some Churches Help, Others Hinder, and Some Cause Harm”
Rowan Lewis (Whitley College, Australia)
One of the contemporary challenges of youth ministry is to not only resource and encourage young people as they develop their identity in-Christ, but also be a resource for those whose faith identity is deconstructing. One of the findings of this research project was that faith communities are rarely able to do both tasks well, and furthermore, that the ecclesiological structures and theological ‘social imaginary’ of each task may well be paradoxically related. This paper will offer a framework for differentiating various forms of faith community and their relative strengths in responding to either faith deconstruction or faith identity development.
New York Central:
"The Joy of Leaning Forward": The power of biblical eschatological hope
Glenn Russell (Andrews University)
This presentation describes a biblical, eschatological hope that generates joy and purpose for life. Unlike human hope may, which may be nothing more than wishful thinking. Scripture proclaims an ultimate hope, rooted in the resurrection reality of Jesus Christ who will come again. Biblical promises of the future invade the present, calling us to live purposefully and joyfully between the cross and the coming. This hope motivates ethical living and compassionate service. The biblical eschatology of hope is a redemptive paradigm for those who are apathetic, broken, bitter or despairing. “Leaning forward with joy” describes young adults who have discovered forgiveness for the past and God’s hope for the future.

Illinois Central:
Mike Severe (Taylor University)
Adolescents have significant capacity to engage in theological inquiry and extended intentional, theological reflection. What is the result on faith, practices and articulateness of under-resourced youth as they engage in theological inquiry? The research population includes participants of summer theology institutes that engage academic inquiry and practical ministry. This study will explore the relationship between theological inquiry, Christian life practices and articulation of vocation with connections to the National Study of Youth and Religion.

Burlington Route:
“A Biblical Rationale for the Pastoral Position of Student Minister”
Donglyul Lee (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary)
Some scholars have argued that the concept of adolescence is not in the Bible but a relatively recent one. Then, they asserted youth ministry and student ministers are not biblical but secular so that churches should abolish youth ministries and student ministers. However, do youth ministries and student ministers deviate from the biblical principle? The purpose of this paper is to verify a biblical rationale for the pastoral position of student minister by examining historical, theological, and biblical research about student ministers.

Frisco:
“Student Leadership in Youth Ministry Education and Youth Ministry Praxis”
Len Kagle, Celeste Gonzalez, Samantha Applebee (Nyack College), and Marko Requena (Birmingham International Church)
This paper explores the contours of student leadership pedagogical content in the youth ministry education classroom. It also explores the contours of student leadership praxis in two Protestant denominations. The importance of student leadership in youth ministry rests (albeit unknowingly by perhaps the majority of practitioners) on hundreds of peer review social science studies related to youth empowerment. All these studies affirm the notion that giving youth agency has multiple positive outcomes for the student.

Missouri Pacific:
“Joy and Pain: Understanding the Immanent History of Teen Mom Aesthetics”
Joyce Del Rosario Presentation (Fuller Theological Seminary)
Based on focus group research of teen moms and their mentors, this paper will analyze the responses to artistic images of Mary mother of Jesus. Using poetic theology, cross-cultural theology, and urban sociology, this paper focuses on the methodology behind the use of art images to uncover the immanent histories of teen moms. The paper also uncovers how the mentors respond to the same visual art through a more ecclesial tradition, favoring that lens instead.
New York Central:
“Adolescent Moral Development: Effectiveness of Vocati in Engaging Youth in the Critical Appraisal of Theological Content”
Steven Bonner (Lipscomb University) & JoAnn Long (Lubbock Christian University)
Research suggests an acceleration of adolescent physical maturity and a slowing of psychological and behavioral development compared to prior decades. This paper reports the impact of Vocati, a High School Youth Theology Institute on adolescent moral development. Our findings suggest that engagement with youth in the critical appraisal of theological content may promote increased moral development and prosocial concepts linked to positive youth behaviors and well-being.

Illinois Central:
“Sticky Faith Turns 30”
Cheryl Crawford & Daniel Gillooley (Azusa Pacific University)
One aspect of the Sticky Faith research involved in-depth interviews with 15 students during their college years. I continued to follow these young adults until they reached the age of 30 in 2018. This presentation will describe some of the themes identified as they struggled with their personal and faith commitments. In particular, I will rely on case study methodology to describe two very different, engaging young adults’ faith journeys, from adolescence to age 30.

Burlington Route:
“Transformation in Relationships”
Andrew Root (Luther Seminary) & Erik Leafblad (Bethel University)
Transformation is an upending that brings new insight, direction, and sense of being. Social scientific studies have found that a relationship with a coach, teacher, neighbor, or youth worker is positively correlated with both social capital and church retention, but without looking at transformation. This paper will explore whether relationships that are reported as impactful to forming one’s faith have a uniquely transformative shape (which we will describe as hypostasis, kenosis, and theosis).

Frisco:
“Reciprocal Church and Navigating Toward Adulthood” (Book Colloquium)
Sharon Ketcham (Gordon College) and Theresa O’Keefe (Boston College)
The virtue of joy needs to be embodied within the life of the community in order for it to be recognized, experienced, and believed by adolescents. Drawing from themes discussed in their recent books, Reciprocal Church and Navigating Toward Adulthood, Ketcham and O’Keefe concur that Christian community is critical to inviting young people into joyful living even as their approaches are distinct. This colloquium will include dialogue between Ketcham and O’Keefe and invite questions/comments from those in attendance.
New York Central:
Lauren Calvin Cooke (Emory University)
The notion of existential joy found in Ecclesiastes and the eschatological joy of the New Testament deal with injustice and suffering in two different ways, but this paper explores the ways in which the two views complement each other and together provide a deeper understanding of joy in the Christian life, particularly as it relates to adolescent faith formation.

Illinois Central:
“Identity, Belonging, and Purpose as Lenses for Empathizing with Adolescents”
Steven Argue, Caleb Roose, Tyler Greenway (Fuller Youth Institute)
Adolescent exploration is rooted in questions like: Who am I? Where do I belong? What difference do I make? Research investigating adolescents’ quest for identity, belonging, and purpose (IBP) can inform empathic youth ministry approaches. Here, we (1) review social science literature regarding adolescents’ search for IBP, (2) describe findings from the Fuller Youth Institute’s Youth Ministry Innovations project, (3) synthesize findings as lenses for empathy, and (4) illustrate empathic approaches attempted by project participants.

Burlington Route:
“Towards a Balanced Youth Ministry Theology for South Korea: From Solmnity to Joy through Heung”
Eser Kim (Knox College at the University of Toronto)
South Korean youth ministry can be grounded in a theology of joy by examining why joy is underemphasized in these adolescents’ South Korean Presbyterian Church context, by acknowledging how joylessness affects Korean Christians, and by recovering the forgotten but innate cultural sentiment Heung – a uniquely Korean understanding of joy. The transformational, cosmic, and communal traits of Heung offer practical factors that youth educators should consider while restoring joy in their ministries.
New York Central
“The Joys of Scaffolding”
Sean Denny (Dallas Baptist University)
Post-modern students come with a specific local narrative and a suspicion of overarching grand narratives. Contemporary work on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development has created scaffolding concepts in secular education. Youth ministers can struggle with implementing non-churched students into an existing program. Scaffolding techniques can provide a way to integrate these students into the church and an understanding of the grand narrative of God. What a joy it would be to create a path that allows non-churched students a safe-space to understand and discuss faith-based issues and concepts.

Illinois Central
“The Diamond Model of Discipleship”
Christina Sebastian (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary)
Spiritual formation occurs through perseverance of faith through a disciplined life characterized by intimacy with Christ, obedience to God’s Word, and manifested through relationships. In this presentation, The Diamond Model of Discipleship will be explored through man’s interaction with faith, the Trinity’s drawing to intimacy, and the church’s role in relationships. Training objectives will be examined to aid leaders in developing areas of missional living in self and others.

Burlington Route:
“Losing Our Joy: The Impact of Fear on Student Ministries”
Mark Cannister (Gordon College)
Reports of teenagers dropping out of the church, claims of church membership declining, and the increase of those who claim no religious affiliation has created a storyline of fear, which has become the mantra of ministry in the church to youth and families. But are the anxieties valid? Has our ecclesial response to these reports been healthy? This paper analyzes the recent research that has caused a seismic shift in the values of youth ministry.
What good is it to get what you want if you don’t know what’s worth wanting?

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