AYME

Association *of* Youth Ministry Educators

A COMMUNITY OF CHRIST-CENTERED SCHOLARS

Reimagining Youth Ministry From The Margins

28th Annual Conference

Marriott DFW Airport, Dallas, TX

October 15-17, 2021

www.aymeducators.org

Our Plenary Speakers

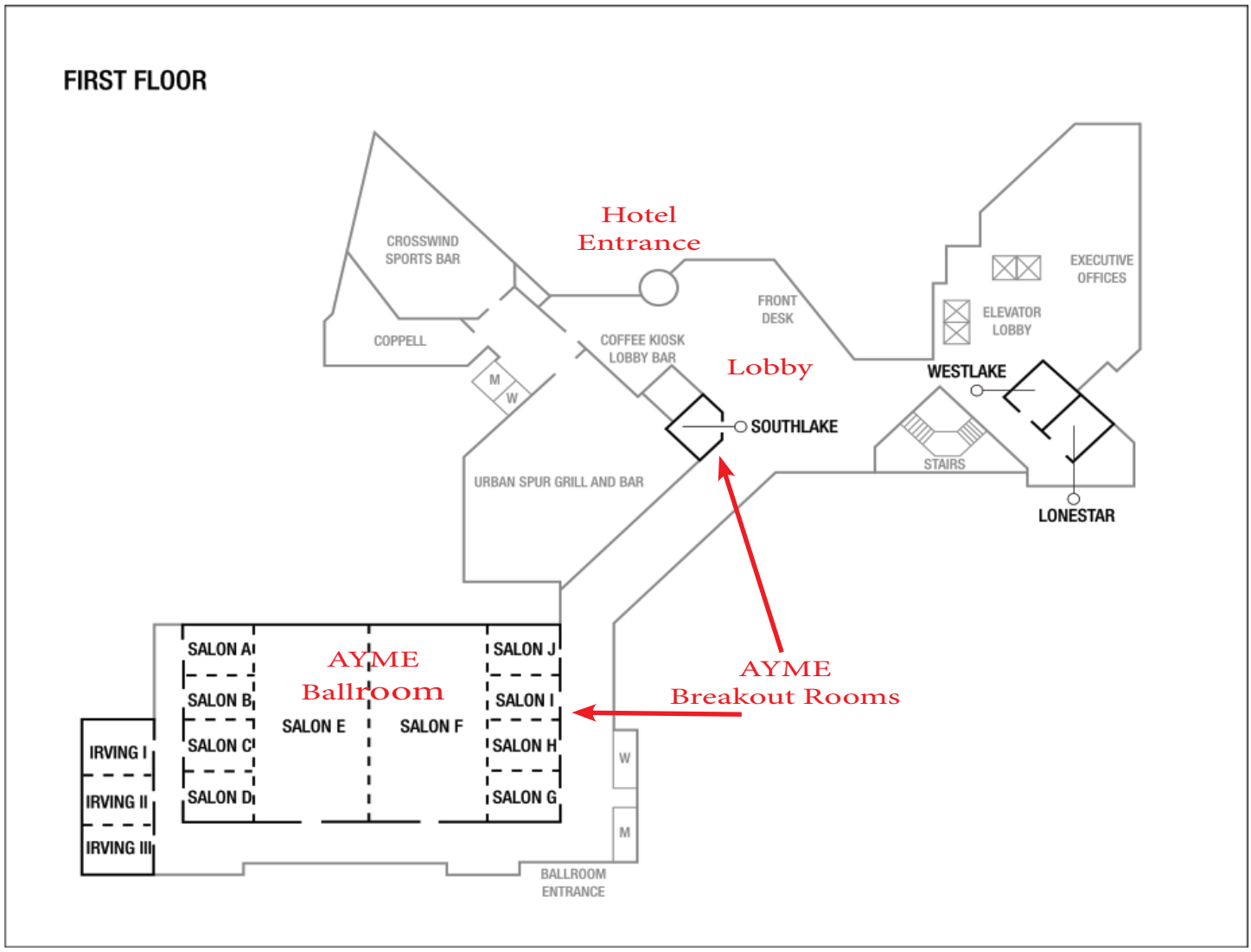
Dr. Almeda M. Wright
Associate Professor of Religious Education
Yale Divinity School

Dr. Almeda Wright (PhD Emory University) focuses her research on African American religion, adolescent spiritual development, and the intersections of religion and public life. Prior to her appointment at Yale, she served as assistant professor of religion and youth ministry at Pfeiffer University. Professor Wright's publications include a book she coedited with Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Children, Youth, and Spirituality in a Troubling World*, and an issue of *Practical Matters Journal* that she edited. She delivered the keynote address at the Children, Youth, and a New Kind of Christianity conference in Washington, D.C., in May 2012. Professor Wright is an ordained minister of the American Baptist Churches and has been on the ministerial staff of several churches, including Union Baptist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Victory for the World United Church of Christ in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Dr. Patrick B. Reyes
Senior Director of Learning Design
Forum for Theological Exploration

Dr. Patrick Reyes (PhD Claremont School of Theology) serves on the staff of the Forum for Theological Education (FTE) where he provides oversight for organizational learning and resource development around vocational exploration, leadership and innovation. He also manages the FTE's doctoral initiatives. Patrick's primary work is that of identifying, supporting, and placing the next generation of scholars and theological educators who are going to transform the academy, the church, and local communities. He is the author of *The Purpose Gap: Empowering Communities of Color to Find Meaning and Thrive* and *Nobody Cries When We Die: God, Community, and Surviving to Adulthood.* He is the host of the Sound of the Genuine podcast and serves on several boards in education and the non-profit sector supporting the next generation of BIPOC leaders and educators.

Marriott DFW Airport Hotel Floorplan



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Reimagining Youth Ministry
From the Margins

Daily Schedule

FRIDAY, October 15, 2021

5:00-6:30pm Registration, Welcome Reception, and Exhibitors Open
6:30-8:30pm Dinner Banquet & Plenary Session (Salon E/F Ballroom)
Featuring Dr. Patrick Reyes, Forum for Theological Exploration
8:30-9:30pm Exhibitors Open & Free Time to Connect
9:00-10:00pm Late Night Conversation on *The Future of Youth Ministry Education in Higher Education*
Hosted by Dr. Rich Griffith (Salon G)

SATURDAY, October 16, 2021

7:00-9:00am Complimentary Breakfast in the Urban Spur & Exhibitors Open
9:00-9:45am Breakout Presentations 1 (Salons G, H, I, J, and Southlake)

9:45-10:00am Break & Exhibitors Open
10:00-10:45am Breakout Presentations 2 (Salons G, H, I, J, and Southlake)

10:45-11:00am Break & Exhibitors Open
11:00-11:45pm Breakout Presentations 3 (Salons G, H, I, J, and Southlake)
12:00-2:30pm Lunch, Business Meeting, and Plenary Session (Salon E/F Ballroom)
with Dr. Almeda Wright, Yale Divinity School
2:30-3:00pm Break & Exhibitors Open
3:00-3:45pm Breakout Presentations 4 (Salons G, H, I, J, and Southlake)
3:45-4:00pm Break & Exhibitors Open
4:00-4:45pm Breakout Presentations 5 (Salons G, H, I, J, and Southlake)
5:00-5:30pm Break & Exhibitors Open
5:30-9:00pm Dinner & Networking at Dave & Busters
(Bus leaves from hotel entrance at 5:30pm)

SUNDAY, October 17, 2021

7:00-9:00am Complimentary Breakfast in the Urban Spur & Exhibitors Open
9:00-10:00am Community Worship (Salon E/F Ballroom)
10:00-10:30am Break & Exhibitors Open
10:30-11:45am Plenary Dialogue (Salon E/F Ballroom)
12:00pm Conference Closes — See you in San Diego for AYME 2022!

DTS
DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Academic Presentations

Academic Presentations #1 Saturday, 9:00—9:45AM

SALON G

"Diversity and Inclusion for Christian Camping"

***by* Muhia Karianjahi, Wheaton College**

Each year, millions of young people around the world encounter the transforming presence of God through Christian camping. Minority populations are, however underrepresented at camps in the USA, and don't reflect general population demographic trends towards more diversity. This paper proposes some barriers that might lie behind this apparent marginalization of minority youth at Christian camps. It offers possible strategies that could lean Christian camping towards the diversity idealized in Revelation 7:9-10.

SALON H

"Pornography and Moral Incongruence Among Young Men in the Western Church"

***by* Ryan Hewitt, Johnson University**

Moral incongruence theory posits that moral disapproval is a primary factor leading to perceived pornography-related problems and distress for those from religious contexts, potentially to greater degrees than actual pornography usage. This research explores the correlation between pornography and moral incongruence among young Christian men, a demographic at the convergence of three high risk indicators (age, sex, and religiosity) and caught between the opposing moral frameworks of younger generations and the Western Church.

SALON I

"Author Dialogue – Pain, Joy & Narrative in Youth Ministry"

***by* Angela Williams Gorrell, Truett Theological Seminary & Montague Williams, Point Loma University**

Theology can be done in a way that welcomes the storied pain and joy of young people's lives. In this session, Montague R. Williams & Angela Williams Gorrell will reflect together on how they did this in their recently released books *Church in Color: Youth Ministry, Race, and the Theology of Martin Luther King Jr.* and *The Gravity of Joy: A Story of Being Lost and Found*. This session will be full of meaningful conversation.

SALON J

"The Holy Spirit, the Image of God, and Generation Z"

***by* Thomas Bergler, Huntington University**

Members of Generation Z struggle to cope with the challenges of life, resulting in fear, anxiety, depression and loneliness – all exacerbated by excessive screen time. Recovering the biblical teaching on the personal, dynamic, creative work of the Holy Spirit in transforming believers into the image of Christ can help the members of Generation Z experience hope and freedom in the very dimensions of their lives in which they feel the most hopeless.

SOUTHLAKE

"Queer Theology and Youth & Young Adult Ministry"

***by* Art Canales, Marian University**

This article is an invitation to Christian youth & young adult educators and ministers to be more understanding of queer theology and to discern its place within ministry to and for young people. The article examines the term "queer," queer theology, and the placement of queer theology in youth & young adult ministry. Finally the article provides queer pastoral and pedagogical strategies and methods for integration into youth and young adult ministry.

Academic Presentations #2 Saturday, 10:00—10:45AM

SALON G

"Barriers and Benefits for Learning Disabled Students in Digital Learning Environments"
***by* Bryan Barrineau, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and First Baptist Enterprise, AL**

Digital Learning Environments are now ubiquitous both inside formal education landscapes, as well as the church. Neurotypical students struggle to learn through mediating technology, but this struggle has been magnified for students with learning disabilities. However, the news for students is not all bad; there are specific benefits to DLEs for those with learning disabilities. God has called Christian educators to teach students, no matter their disability or the delivery method of the educational experience.

SALON H

"Wisdom's Pedagogy: Engaging Wisdom Literature with Young People"
***by* Lauren Calvin Cooke, Emory University**

This project examines the use of Wisdom Literature in youth ministry, analyzing its treatment in youth curricula and exploring the ways in which the Wisdom Literature's own pedagogy can cultivate wisdom and discernment in youth. In contrast to many popular youth curricula, the Wisdom Literature resists easy answers, instead inviting the reader to wrestle with ambiguity. The paper concludes by suggesting practices for engaging the wisdom literature that are consonant with its own pedagogy.

SALON I

"Youth Ministry and the Pandemic"
***by* Megan Brown, University of Northwestern--St. Paul**

Crisis and chaos are not uncommon terms associated with youth ministry. Youth ministry professionals are trained to handle a wide variety of crises; however, managing the demands of youth ministry in the middle of a global pandemic is uncharted territory . . . until 2020. This presentation focuses on how (select) youth ministries operated, reached out to youth, and cared for youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Practical application alongside challenges and joys will be addressed.

SALON J

"Countering the Criminalization of Youth:
A Denominational Strategy for Developing a Holistic Ecclesiastical Approach"
***by* Richard Griffith, Toccoa Falls College**

The United States still has the largest number of incarcerated juveniles in the industrialized world. These juveniles come from challenging foster care backgrounds. With a significant number of ACE's, many of these youth face both juvenile and adult incarceration due to youth-focused institutions not being adequately trained to deal with youth coming from traumatic backgrounds. The Church has an opportunity to become The Church AS Family to minister to marginalized foster children and youth.

SOUTHLAKE

"Designing for Belonging: Youth ministry Formation in Light of Willie James Jennings"
***by* Theresa O'Keefe, Boston College**

In his book *After Whiteness* Willie James Jennings argues persuasively that theological education is designed to promote and protect the interests of whiteness. It marginalizes most, mal-forms all, and miss-prepares ministers for the work of the gospel, especially among the marginalized. Responding to Jennings' critique of the "design" of theological education, this paper offers recommendations that design for belonging. These practices better engage youth ministers as full persons in theological inquiry and ministerial practice.

IRVING III

Burnout Among Christian Youth Workers: A Cross National Analysis
***by* Mike Severe, Taylor University, Len Kageler, Nyack College, Faith Argeropolis, Nyack College**

The subject of burnout has received a great deal of popular and academic attention, as the issue is a common problem and experience in both the United States and United Kingdom context. This paper, after a representative literature review, presents and discusses findings about burnout among Christian youth workers. Youth workers (123) in the US and the UK were surveyed in 2020 on youth ministry burnout.

Causes of burnout, recovery and prevention are discussed. This research will be of interest not only to youth ministry practitioners, but also denominational leaders and youth ministry educators.

Lifeway students

Academic Presentations #3 Saturday, 11:00—11:45AM

SALON G

"Rites of Passage Revisited: Reimagined, Reenvisioned, Recalibrated"
***by* Richelle B White, Kuyper College**

This research study asks the question, "What can a reimagined, reenvisioned, recalibrated rites of passage and mentoring ministry look like for a new generation?" This question revisits and explores the heart of the award-winning Sisters in the Spirit Rites of Passage ministry for African American young women. This study uses Sankofa Methods to critically examine past programs, curricular practices and relationships. Sankofa is a spiritual philosophy and symbol of learning from the past to build the future.

SALON H

"The Sexual Abuse Crisis: Its Effect on Catholic Youth Ministry and a Way forward Through Relational Ministry"
***by* Chris Miller, Notre Dame de Namur University**

A sexual abuse crisis has rocked the Catholic Church in recent years and one unintended casualty has been the relationship between adult leaders and youth. This article provides a short history of the abuse scandal and discusses the repercussions of reforms on adult leaders and youth. Discussion will include ways to incorporate the five aspects of the Developmental Relationships Framework into youth programs, including: expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, and expanding possibilities.

SALON I

"Engaging Students in Disciple-Making Youth Ministry in a Post-Covid-19 World"
***by* Gord Nickerson, Josiah Venture / Briercrest College**

Engaging Students in Disciple-Making Youth Ministry in a Post-Covid-19 World. As I worked on turning my doctoral thesis into a book it became apparent that any book on engaging in global youth ministry would now not be complete without a conversation about the effect Covid-19 has had on disciple-making youth ministry. I have been interviewing Canadian youth pastors to discover lessons learned amid Covid-19 and how they imagine youth ministry looking post-pandemic. This presentation will explore and address significant findings thus far.

SALON J

"Identity, Belonging, and Purpose: New research on 3 big questions that change every teenager."
***by* Kara Powell and Brad Griffin, Fuller Youth Institute at Fuller Theological Seminary**

This presentation will explore current research into adolescent narratives about identity, belonging, and purpose. Qualitative research included three interviews of up to two hours each with 27 diverse teenagers from across the country. Additional survey data were analyzed from over 2,200 high school students, as well as an extensive literature review focused on Generation Z and cross-disciplinary research. Our presentation will combine statistics with qualitative insights and offer implications for youth ministry educators.

SOUTHLAKE

"How the Church Treats the LGBT Community"
***by* Dudley H Chancey, Oklahoma Christian University**

A review of literature connecting church with the LGBT community, with qualitative interviews with members of the LGBT community discussing their interactions with the church. While the qualitative interviews produce some negative views about God and church, there were interviews that were positive, with the LGBT members being thankful for their church and its response to their orientation. Eight themes emerged and are discussed with bibliography.

GORDON CONWELL
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Academic Presentations #4 Saturday, 3:00—3:45PM

SALON G

"From Change to Transformation: Living Synodality in ministry education with young people"

***by* Tracey Lamont, Loyola University New Orleans**

Pope Francis is calling on Catholic ministry leaders to embrace a more synodal church, a way of journeying with one another, however; research reveals young people have yet to experience this way of being church. This essay proposes a need to transformation rather than change ministry education with young people to embrace a postmodern curriculum framework rooted in a theology of synodality aimed at cultivating prophetic, transformative, communal experiences of the divine in the world.

SALON H

"Embracing the Secular Age: Cultivating Faith through Social Entrepreneurship"

***by* Jason Lief and Kurt Rietema, Northwestern College and Youthfront**

As youth ministry focuses on the spiritual and moral lives of young people, it fails to address their lived experience. How might youth ministry engage young people with the fullness of the gospel by cultivating agency and helping them become signs of God's transformation? This paper explores how a partnership between social entrepreneurship and youth ministry might help young people develop an embodied spirituality. Our argument is based on theological reflection and examples from Kansas City and Chicago.

SALON I

"Can a Simple "Backbone Habit" Re-Align Relationships?"

***by* Dave Rahn, Fuller Youth Institute/Arbor Research Group**

In spring 2021, 24 busy youth ministry thought leaders – including 12 professors – pilot tested the perceived value of sharing very brief weekly times with an explicit Jesus-centered focus. Triplets were arranged to engage four different 30-minute Zoom meetings. Asserting that the focus of biblical faith-as-grit is dynamic companionship with Jesus Christ, this paper explores substantial positive feedback from participants in order to understand and encourage innovative practices that re-norm otherwise formal organizational relationships around faithfulness.

SALON J

"An Ecclesiology of Adolescent Spiritual Discernment: Utilizing Richard Osmer's Approach to Practical Theology to Help High School Students Develop Missional Practice for Lubbock Christian University's Vocati Program"

***by* Jeremy D. Smith and JoAnn Long, Sunset Church of Christ and Lubbock Christian University**

This paper seeks to present qualitative observations from Lubbock Christian University's Vocati program which utilizes the practical theological approach of Richard Osmer to help students discern their spiritual calling by crafting missional practices. As an ecclesiology, we are suggesting that Vocati's missional practice may be a framework that could be modeled in youth ministry programs as a way to guide students in the spiritual discernment process.

SOUTHLAKE

"The Apophatic Predicament in Emerging Adult Faith Formation: teaching the mystery of God in highly digitized kataphatic learning contexts"

***by* Sam Baker, Corban University**

Christian institutions in the West have favored kataphatic approaches to faith formation. Many have neglected apophatic perspectives in emerging adult learning contexts. Furthermore, this predicament has witnessed increased forms of digital instruction as part of the dilemma. Apophatic attentions, which move away from trending approaches, remain formidable. This paper utilizes a fourteen-year study demonstrating this predicament. Additionally, the paper maintains digital distraction is a stimulus to the lack of apophatic emphases in faith formation.

josiahventure

Academic Presentations #5 Saturday, 4:00—4:45PM

SALON G

"Africa's Upwardly Mobile and their Holistic Development: The Need for Balanced Curriculum among Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches"

***by* Ebenezer Hagan, Talbot School of Theology**

Pentecostal/Charismatic churches (PCCs) prove attractive to young Africans. PCCs deploy several interventions to develop these youth. In the urban context, the design of interventions is influenced sometimes by the urge to be innovative, and to go ahead of other players in a multi-party 'church contest' without recourse to how those interventions assure holistic development. This case study research evaluates these interventions, implying the need for balance in youth ministry intervention deployment among PCCs.

SALON H

"Character-Forming Discipleship: An Analysis of the Discipleship Practices of Ministry Leaders Across the United States"

***by* Tyler Greenway, Fuller Youth Institute, Fuller Theological Seminary**

This presentation will describe the discipleship practices of 96 youth leaders from various theological traditions, ethnic and racial groups, and sized churches. We will connect those practices to character and virtue development and discuss implications for building character-forming youth ministries. We will also highlight the unique strengths youth ministries have for character formation, how youth leaders can build on those strengths, and how youth ministry educators may prepare these leaders for such work.

SALON I

"The Youth Ministry Arenas Survey: Leader Perceptions of Effectiveness in Three Arenas of Youth Ministry"

***by* David Odom and Sara Robinson, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary**

The Youth Ministry Institute at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary conducted a study on youth ministry practices called The Youth Ministry Arenas Survey. Researchers invited leaders to tell what they were doing in three arenas of youth ministry: teenagers in the youth group, teenagers in families, and teenagers in the congregation. This paper includes the survey design overview, insights from the quantitative survey data, qualitative thematic analysis of follow-up interviews, and initial online assessment results.

SALON J

"Integrating Public, Private, and Homeschool Students into a Cohesive Youth Ministry"

***by* Michael Cunningham, Grace Church**

Pastors tend to be ill-prepared for the unique dynamics families bring to the church from diverse school settings. This paper will examine methods for assimilating public, private, and homeschool students into a cohesive student ministry where they can retain their identity, be enriched by other students' experiences and, most importantly, be united by their faith in serving Christ in their student ministry and in the greater church body.

SOUTHLAKE

"It Really is a Different World: An exploration of Spiritual Engagement among Black College Students"

***by* Sharise Wigfall, Fordham University**

Amidst a sea of concurrent transitions, college students are prioritizing their engagement in spiritual practice that aligns with their shifting worldview, intellectual curiosity, and self-image, to name a few. This study will center the experience of black students who lean into spirituality as a transformative, regenerative and uplifting space. Additionally, this study will measure the influence that engagement in spiritual practice has on behaviors, academic accomplishments and their overall lives.

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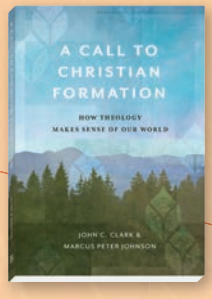

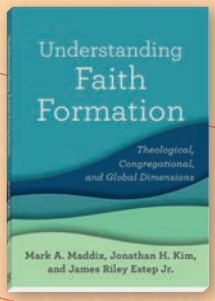

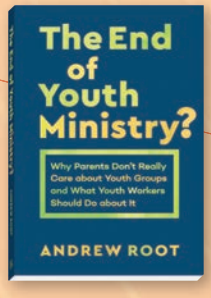

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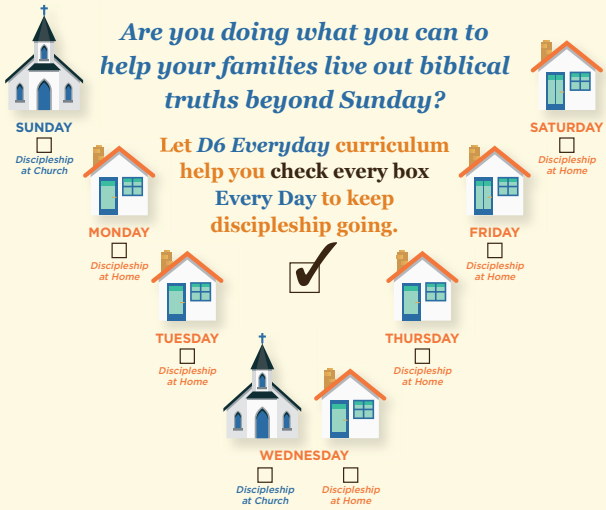

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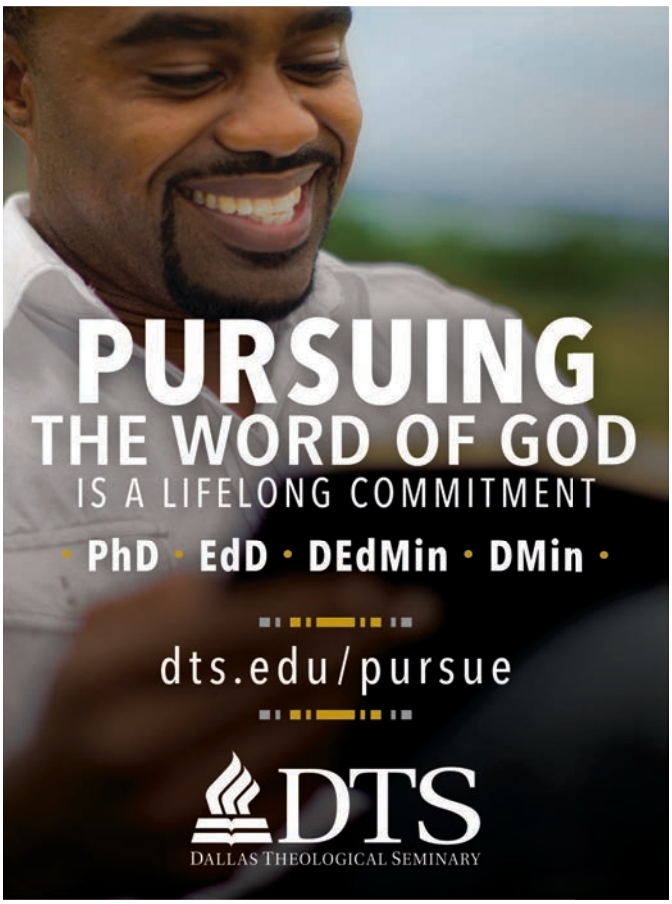

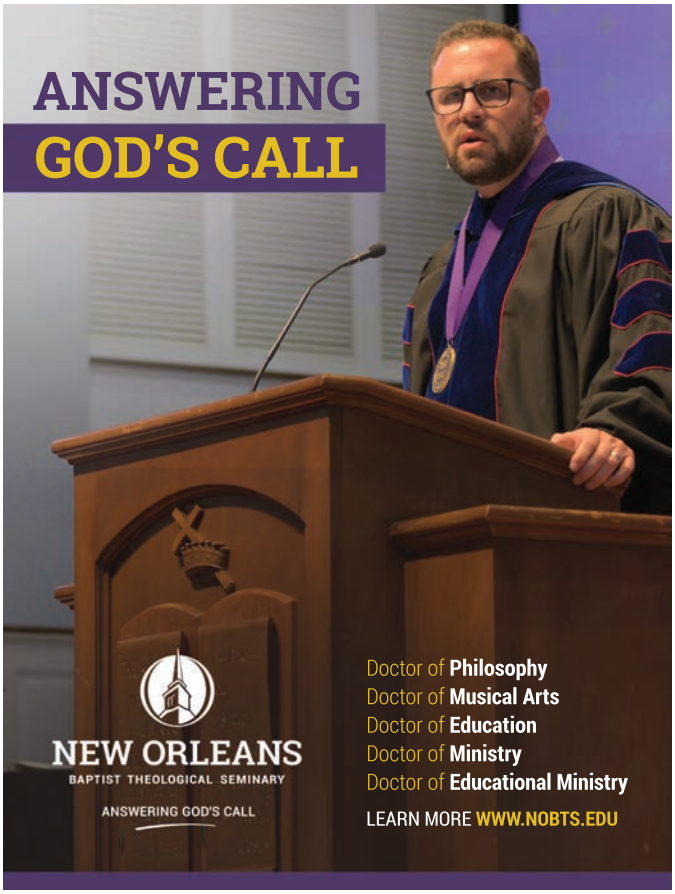

2022 AYME Conference

Engaging Youth Ministry's Collaborative Frontier of Discipleship

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