

Special Edition: Connecting With Hope Innovation Hub Tips Amid COVID-19

A Newsletter of the Youth Hope Builders Academy, and Connecting With Hope Innovation Hub Sponsored by The Interdenominational Theological Center

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Words of Encouragement from Dr. Wimberly:

The song rings in my soul in these trying moments: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. May God bless us this day with abounding hope, joy, and visions of the journey forward in Jesus' name!"



In the midst
of a crisis!!

KEEP IN TOUCH:

Throughout the churches who wrote about ministry in the throes of COVID-19, the intent has been to find and act on ways to keep in touch with young people in their ministries. **Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, senior pastor at the Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur, Georgia** reported that the FUSE Young Adult Ministry has made a special point of keeping in touch through a GroupME that has 67 members. They have held a ZOOM meeting with 10 to check in with one another, as an occasion for joking and laughter, affirming their love for one another, sharing new happening in their lives, and ways could work together.

Rev. Hodari Williams at **New Life Presbyterian Church in Atlanta**, also emphasized the importance of staying connected. He wrote that the **THRIVE Young Adult Ministry** has stayed connected through a GroupMe that consists of 39 members. Rev. Williams highlighted the ministry's being consistent in checking up on the members, letting them know that they are thought about and how they are doing during this time of crisis. He told of responses from the young people who said that they are just trying to stay safe as well as getting adjusted to the unfamiliar schedule of staying in and not being out. The key closing thought was simply this: "We are continuing to stay connected with one another. . ."

CREATE OCCASIONS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT:

In another location, young adult leader **Dionne Allen, who heads the Compass Ministry at Temple of Faith Church of God in Christ in Atlanta, Georgia**, initiated weekly 15 minutes morning prayer conference calls where different individuals lead the prayer. The importance of prayer was further emphasized in Ms. Allen's statement that, during the prayer time, "Some young people are essential workers and still travelling to work and we are sure to cover them in our prayers".



Social media initiated prayer and encouragement are further highlighted by Crystal Gibson, the young adult ministry leader at **Grace Temple Christian Church in Decatur, Georgia**.

Moments of connecting with resources of the Christian faith have also occurred in Bible study fellowships on Thursdays and youth Bible study on Wednesdays via Zoom as part of the **Go First Young Adult Ministry** at the **Kenyan American Community Church in Marietta, Georgia**, led by the ministry team including Pastor George Gitahi, Michelle Kaimenyi, Alvin Mugur, and Simon Nderi..



COVID-19

Times of crisis evoke questions of faith, concerns that rock our very being, and uncertainty about the future. During these times, there is need for encouragement and affirmation of our faith. **Rev. Tavares Stephens, the leader of the church's ministry entitled the FUSION Young Adult Ministry at St. James United Methodist Church in Alpharetta, Georgia** wrote a letter to the young people. In it, he said: Greetings Fusion Family, In this time of altered norms caused by COVID-19, I send thoughts of grace and peace to you. . . Continued on page 2



A new normal since

Rev. Stephen Letter continued ...

Know that our church family has you in our prayers daily; and we want to remind you that God's love is still infinite – even in these times.

Explore with me 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

As we navigate through this season of well-placed concerns about work and health, homeschooling for our children and ourselves, and the thought of what employment, normalcy, and simply being looks like in the coming days, I want to encourage you to be encouraged. In the book of 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul encouraged the church in Thessalonica to rejoice, pray unceasingly, and remain thankful to God as they waited for God to move in a time of amazing uncertainty (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). His message was intended to inspire hope in those who were waiting for certain prayers to be answered and certain situations to change – but the change had been long in coming. It was meant to inspire people to be sensitive to how they all might be answers to someone's prayers, as well as, find joy and hope in being part of the beloved community of God. It was also meant to be a reminder that our ultimate source of rejoicing and the impetus of our prayers and thanksgiving is the grace and love of Jesus Christ – and the communion with God and one another that comes through that grace and love. As we navigate through this season of well-placed concerns about work and health, homeschooling for our children

Living out Paul's words of encouragement

So, today, wherever you might be, take time to text or call someone you love. Take time to email someone who cares for you. Take time to read, watch, or meditate on things, people, and ideas that inspire you and remind you that hope and prayer and thankfulness for God's presence are rivers of living water that never run dry. Know that God is faithful even in this time; and let nothing stop us from seeking and being the light even in this uncertain season. And know that love will prevail.

This week, as we all prevail, let the music and lyrics of "Good and Loved" by Travis Greene and Steffany Gretzinger serve as a source of inspiration.

Be on the lookout for ways we will be connecting virtually through online studies over the next several weeks as we explore God's word together.

Peace and Blessings

Pastor Stephens



Of particular note are the repeated descriptions of worship experiences carried out through multiple platforms from streaming to Facebook, YouTube, Zoom and video. **One instance for viewing is shared by L.I.F.E. Young Adult Ministry at Central United Methodist Church in Atlanta, Georgia**. This video posted by Ministry Team Members Sherreen Kanory, Angela Johnson, Michael Browning, and Scherrie Simon is accessible on <https://youtu.be/9RVdYDuMuOM>

LOOK FORWARD:

We are reminded in Kirk Franklin's gospel song, "My Life is in Your Hands," that we don't have to give up, no matter what comes our way. Rather, we know we're going to make it when our hands are in God's hands and, we are thus assured as the psalmist says, "Joy comes in the morning." The anticipation of the future resounds in the messages from leaders of young adult ministries in the Connecting With Hope Innovation Hub. This view is expressed in the words of the **Central U.M.C. L.I.F.E. leaders**: "Make plans for gathering with anticipated post-pandemic dates (e.g., Make plans for July, August, September). **The God First Young Adult Ministry at Kenyan American Community Church** has already begun planning for their first two events of reunion including a Welcome Back Bash and Screen on the Green Movie Night.

TIPS TO TRIUMPH OVER TROUBLE.

L.I.F.E. Ministry at Central UMC set forth 10 Tips to Triumph Over Trouble:



- Adhere to the faith and wisdom of God.
- Be patient with your members as everyone is processing the pandemic differently.
- Stay in touch with those connected to ministry via text, telephone, Zoom, Google Meets.
- Make plans for gathering with anticipated post-pandemic dates.
- Engage weekly as a Hub.
- Think of fun and engaging ways to reach those in your ministry as well as the church as a whole (e.g., challenges, Zoom parties, etc.).
- Be honest with your feelings and reach out for help if you need it.
- Do not overwhelm your members with multiple tasks.
- Make provisions to be a financial blessing to members experiencing grief or celebrations during this time.
- Stay home and go out only when necessary.



The Compass Ministry

Temple of Faith COGIC Church share these topics of interest:

- Started a FB page devoted to cooking (What Y'all Cooking)
- Offered free webinars (Learn How to Thrive While Social Distancing) from MinkLife Motivation)
- Offered help to parents with teaching their children and homework assignments.
- Started a Live workout session on FB using household items.