



December 18, 2025

Dear Partners in Ministry,

The work you do isn't easy—and you know that better than anyone. You desire to walk alongside children and teenagers as they grow, question, and search for a faith that lasts. In a world that moves quickly and often pulls away from the Church, raising the next generation with a living, resilient faith is sacred, urgent, and deeply needed.

For churches with humble—or still-growing—youth and children's ministries, it isn't always clear where to begin or where to go next as we strive to educate, inspire, involve, and pass on the faith we love. But there is hope. Across the nation, young people are seeking Jesus. Even the digital spaces that amplify skepticism are rich with thoughtful apologetics, courageous witness, and honest conversations about God. Teenagers desire purpose, service, and meaning—and God is already working in their hearts.

The **Gulf Coast Youth Ministry Lab** exists to help United Methodist ministry workers take their next faithful step in youth ministry. This gathering is meant for pastors doing youth ministry, volunteer leaders, or churches with a youth staff member—or even no teens yet! Through collaborative brainstorming on topics most important to you, we aim to encourage and equip one another for the work ahead. Topics may include starting from scratch, conference ministry, safety guidelines, curriculum resources, program ideas, volunteers, confirmation, trips, and more. We will conclude with time to calendar a ministry year and set the next season up for success.

I hope you'll join us **March 12–13, 2026 in Baton Rouge**. You can register at the website below. Registration is \$50 and includes meals, evening fellowship, and a guest panel of experienced youth workers; scholarships are available. Thanks to a generous grant from the Louisiana United Methodist Foundation, the first ten out-of-town registrants can have accommodations paid for!

This conference is a reminder that you are not alone. It is a place to connect, collaborate, and envision what God can do—with the youth you have now and with the youth who are yet to come.

Sincerely,

Rev. Kale Wetekamm
Pastor to Children and Youth
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