



ENGAGING ZOOMED OUT YOUTH

Meeting teenagers where they are in the midst of a global pandemic.

INTRODUCTIONS



SARAH LEER

Youth Director
Doctoral Student

- Sarah Leer (she/her/hers)
 - Director of Youth and Their Families, First Presbyterian Church of Dallas
 - Served churches in Arkansas and Austin since 2014
 - Doctoral student in the Doctorate of Educational Ministry program at Columbia Theological Seminary
 - Practical Theologian and Educator who works for justice and liberation
 - Road trip enthusiast, world traveler, podcast junkie, Presby nerd
 - Teaching Energizers to children and youth since 1996

YOUTH INTRODUCTIONS



Douglas is a senior in high school who loves to play basketball and hopes to play in college, along with that he loves the close connection he has with his church family.



Hi! My name is Lydia and I love playing with my sweet dogs!

YOUTH INTRODUCTIONS



Hi everybody!! My name is Sarah and I am a sophomore at a school in Irving, TX.



My name is Angela and I am an 8th grader in Irving Texas.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ...



- Mid-March 2020: We learn about COVID and our church moves to virtual worship
- We cancel immediate in-person youth events, move PYC (youth group) online, and move high school Sunday School to Thursday nights over Zoom
- Questions:
 - What was your reaction during this time?
 - How did you feel about moving online?

AND THEN ... WE JUST STARTED TRYING THINGS

Bible Study: moved to Thursday nights, started with Sabbath Keeping, then Psalms

- **Q:** Even though we were on Zoom, what made you keep coming back, week after week?

Games: Scavenger Hunt, Trivia, Chopped

- **Q:** What was your favorite “rec” thing we have done?

Youth Sunday planning: We planned our youth Sunday service (May 3rd) over the span of 3 weeks in April, all digitally.

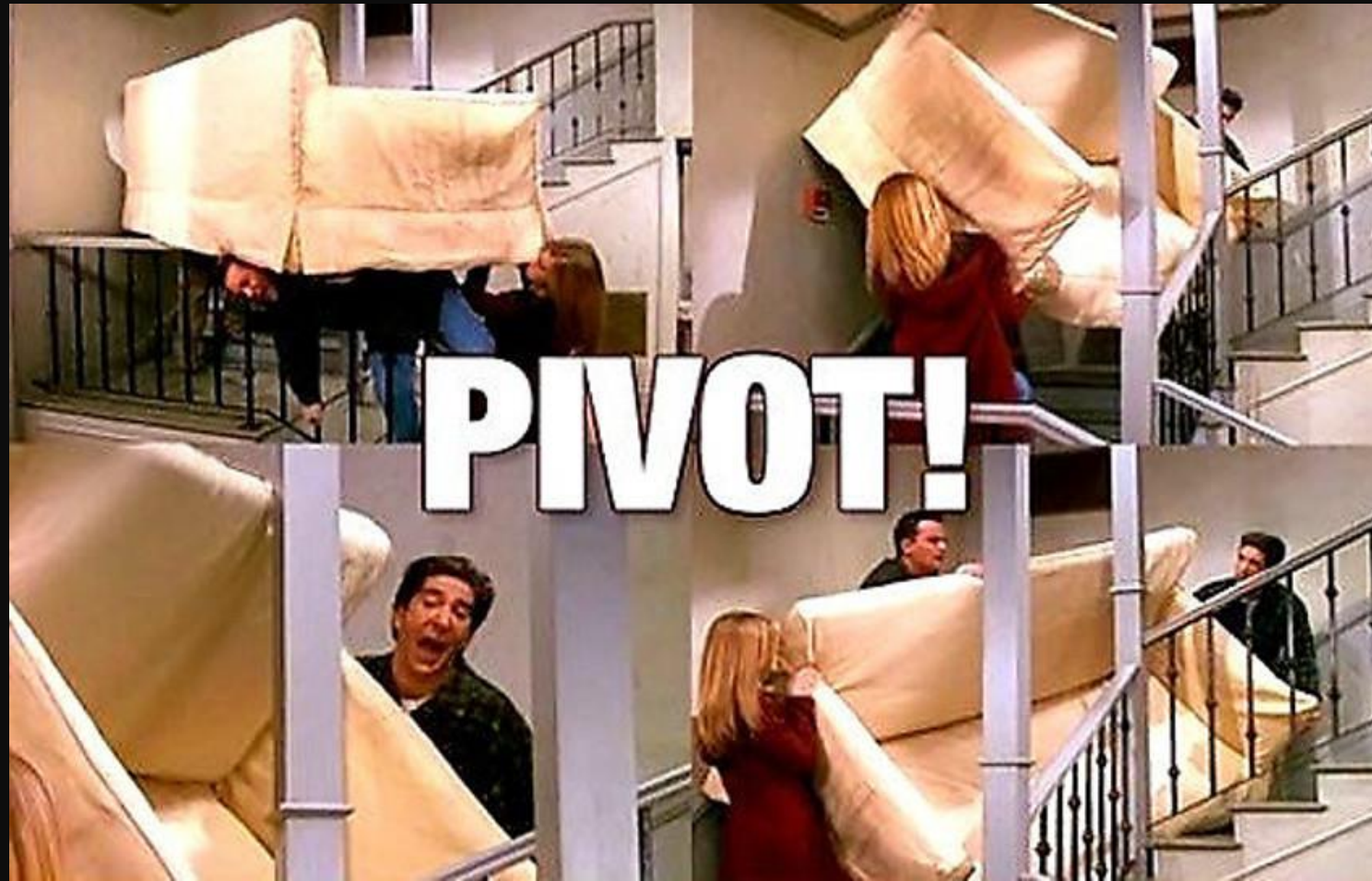
- **Q:** What was your experience of planning Youth Sunday as a group, even though we were apart?





HONORING THE SENIORS

Senior Parade
May 30, 2020



SUMMER OF 2020

Responding to the moment or
PIVOT, PIVOT, PIVOT

JUNE & JULY 2020

PLUS: Youth participated in leadership by recording themselves for VBS.

Summer Storytelling Series

- Guest speakers (centering Black voices, people of color, and queer voices throughout the summer)
- Invited to tell their story and how their calls connect to justice
- All were offered an honorarium for their time and expertise

Q: What did you like about this series?

Q: What would you want to do differently?

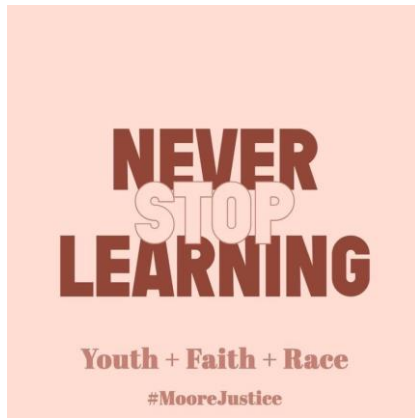
Prophets + Anti-Racism

- Each week I sent a few resources (mostly videos about racism, anti-racism, and the current movements for justice in our country) and then we read prophetic texts & Gospel texts that were connected
- We modeled conversations about racism with my colleagues Natarsha Sanders (FPC Kerrville) and Jeremy Wilhelmi (Univ. of the Ozarks)

Q: What did you like about this series?

Q: What would you want to do differently?

SHIFTING OUR FOCUS & INTENTION IN AUGUST



AMERICA &
MOORE
DIVERSITY EDUCATION, RESEARCH & CONSULTING



21-Day Youth,
Faith, Race &
Moore

21-Day Challenge for youth* (compiled by our friends at Myers Park Presbyterian) (analog + digital)

- Took the 21-Day Challenge, and the youth committed to engaging with one resource each day, Aug. 2-23
- We downshifted our twice-weekly schedule to meeting once a week, on Sunday afternoons for discussion about the Challenge
- Q: What did you learn/ how did you grow during this challenge?
- Q: What did you appreciate about a change in format & schedule for August?

* <https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21-day-youth-faith-race-moore>

“ANALOG” OR NON-DIGITAL STUFF WE ARE DOING / HAVE DONE

- Car parades (HS grads, 6th graders, cross-generational to visit our older church folks)
- Drive Thru Back to School Blessings
- Porch drop-offs
- Word Teaser boxes for families
- Drive thru flu shots and a blood drive
- Messages of love and hope (cross-generational)
- Delivered bound Letters to HS grads
- Yard signs!



WHAT DO WE DO NOW? (GREAT QUESTION)

What's new this Fall? Mix of digital and analog

Kick-Off: Scavenger Hunt

Youth Group: Justice Curriculum, Speakers, Games/ Art

High School group on Thursday evenings: "Stamped" Book Study + Work of the People

Confirmation: Justice focus, digital engagement with other faiths/denominations, Group art project ?

Drive thru Flu shots & Blood Drive: serving our FPC community

STUFF I'M WAITING TO IMPLEMENT ...

We can't gather just yet (wear your masks, Texans!), but when we can...

- Movie night in someone's yard – spaced out groups/ family units
- Small group art project (rising 6th grade youth + Confirmation)
- Small group service projects
- age-group gatherings (picnics at a park)
- Confirmation retreat at camp

Q: What do you want to try?

THEMES FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

- Be ready to PIVOT
- Keep changing it up, even if it is by topic area
- Ask the youth
- Be bold
- Context counts: It's good to borrow ideas from colleagues, but their church isn't YOUR church
- Talk about what is happening in the world + connect it.
- Keep it short, respect their time
- Don't be afraid to fail
- Use this time to engage people digitally who live in different parts of the country / world
- Break out of the youth ministry silo
- Take Zoom breaks