

6-1-2023

A Overview of the 180° Symposium

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jayyam>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2023) "A Overview of the 180° Symposium," *Journal of Adventist Youth and Young Adult Ministries*: Vol. 1, Article 3.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jayyam/vol1/iss1/3/>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jayyam/vol1/iss1/3>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Adventist Youth and Young Adult Ministries* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 180° SYMPOSIUM

IT STARTED in the Fall of 2008 at Andrews University—the first 180° Symposium. The Center for Youth Evangelism (CYE) initiated this under the leadership and vision of Ron Whitehead and Japhet De Oliveira.

Youth ministry tends to be fun, energetic, provocative, impactful, relational, dynamic, and transformational. But it can also be boring, unstable, manipulative, problematic, predictable, and even toxic. With some notable exceptions, leadership tends to be sporadic or stuck. Events often drive the ministry with little or no thought given to purpose. With the next event bearing down on the calendar, no thought is given to evaluating the past or improving the present or the future. Sometimes the attitude seems to be, “Let’s just get through this.”

The purpose of the 180° Symposium is for those in youth ministry (and young adult ministry and even children’s ministry) to take a moment to stop and make a 180—to turn around and look back. This provides the rare opportunity to reflect on the past, dialogue, study, evaluate, and learn. Once that is done, make another 180 as you return to the flow of ministry with insights and focus for improved ministry.

Over the years some adjustments were made, including hosting at different academic institutions. Leadership changes have affected who gathers and why. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, like so many other gatherings, the 180° Symposium went dark, and then emerged as a hybrid event.

The obvious topic coming out of the pandemic was, “What now?” While many churches had to face this existential questioning, we would expect youth ministry to be on the cutting edge and provide vision as well as being the first out of the gate. Taking a positive approach following the devastation, the topic for 2022 seemed obvious: “A New Opportunity: Youth and Young Adult Ministry Through COVID-19 and Beyond.”

The gathering took place May 10-12, 2022, as a hybrid event with in-person participants gathering at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University, and hybrid participants joining through Zoom and Slack.

The CYE continues to be the organizer of this gathering, with the North American Division Youth and Young Adult Ministries Department adding funds as a sponsor with the CYE. AdventSource publishes the hard copy of the papers and the three focus groups’ work. And the Andrews University Digital Commons posts the papers online for future access around the world.

The first day of the 180° Symposium considered prepared papers, with the opportunity for feedback from participants. On the second day the group took a running start with the topic by drawing on the papers presented the previous day, plus each person’s education, experience, and thoughts on the topic. Participants self-selected their engagement in one of three groups: academicians, administrators, and practitioners. Brainstorming led to exploration and, by the end of the day, synthesizing the key points

for the group and also recommendations. On the third day each focus group reported its work to the larger group, with feedback and revisions.

The published work you hold contains the papers and also the work of the three focus groups. By the time you read this, the COVID-19 pandemic is probably a thing of the past. But, as any historian would tell you, “Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it.” Hopefully we will do better now, and in the future, because we looked back, and then forward at the 180° Symposium.