**Opening Session: Living a Better Story**

**in the Midst of a Pandemic**

**Four big questions that (still) shape this project:**

* Q1: What are the current narratives of identity, belonging, and purpose that define young people’s lives?
* Q2: What is the content of a better Jesus centered narrative?
* Q3: What ministry approaches or practices might help churches and families instill these Jesus-centered narratives?
* Q4: How can churches change to begin implementing these new programs, approaches, and practices?

**FYI best practices that are *still true* in the midst of the pandemic:**

1. Honor young people’s agency: How are they invited to lead and serve?

-Empower volunteer leaders & students to help oversee the tech logistics, come up with new ideas, lead Bible study or share devotionals.

-Encourage students to cultivate creative ideas to care for one another.

2.  Practice listening: How do we continue listening?

-Organize lunch hangouts with small groups over Zoom to facilitate conversations.

-Host game nights or fun activities to do online together: at-home scavenger hunt, Bingo, make their own version of IGTV, etc.

3. Respond with empathy:

-Prepare a list of local mental health resources in your neighborhood and share with families.

-Host a night of lament on Zoom. Prepare questions for them to answer in small groups.

4. Encourage intergenerational relationships:

-Organize a virtual cooking class. Invite a family or older individual to share a recipe and teach others to make it. Make sure the family shares the history of the recipe and why it is meaningful to them.

-Host a zoom night for parents of all backgrounds to share the complexities and creative responses they have tried.

5. Be the best neighbors:

-Ask students to share the needs their families may be experiencing. Creating an inventory of needs can lead to creative ways to respond.

-Offer ways to care for the most vulnerable: Food drive, meal drive, a special outreach to seniors, virtually tutoring students, organize a box of free things in your front yard with rice, flour, toilet paper, etc. for folks to take.

6. Make disciples:

-By having church online, all generations can participate together and share together online. How can you make that a space that all generations can participate in?

-Lean into the value of historic Christian practices – but perhaps in a new way.