

20



26

SOCAL EVENT GUIDE

EVENT SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

MONDAY- March 23, 2026

Event Times: 2:15 PM to 9:00 PM (Pacific Standard Time Zone)

- 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM New 2 Ministry Pre-Conference
 - Register for this as part of your YPS Registration. Space is limited.
- 2:15 PM – Registration
- 2:30 PM – Doors Open
- 3:00 PM – Mainstage Session Block One
 - [Kate Downing](#), Courage Over Fear: Leading with Faith When Fear Is Loud
 - [Justin Knowles](#), Leading the Team That Leads the Next Generation
 - Worship with For All Seasons
- 5:00 PM – Dinner break on your own
- 6:30 PM – Mainstage Session Block Two
 - [Samaritan's Purse](#) Testimony
 - [Dr. Kathy Koch](#), 8 Great Smarts: Seeing Students the Way God Does
 - Worship with For All Seasons
 - [Joshua Broome](#), The Who You Are Created to Be
- 9:00 PM – Conference Dismissed

TUESDAY- March 24, 2026

Event Times: 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM (Pacific Standard Time Zone)

- 8:00 AM – [Youth Ministry Booster](#) Coffee Fellowship for Early Risers
- 8:30 AM – Registration/ Doors Open
- 9:00 AM – Mainstage Session Block Three
 - Worship with For All Seasons
 - [Dr. Sean McDowell](#) – Ethical Gospel Leadership in a Rapidly Changing Culture
- 10:40 AM – Leadership Lab Session A - see topics below
- 11:40 AM – Leadership Lab Session B- see topics below
- 12:30 PM – Lunch provided by event sponsors
- 1:15 PM – Mainstage Session Block Four
 - Worship with For All Seasons
 - [Brent Crowe, Ph.D.](#), Crossroads: Leading with Clarity When Every Decision Shapes a Generation
 - [Dr. Ed Newton](#), God's Mission: The Winds of Revival
- 3:30 PM – Conference Dismissed

EVENT OVERVIEW

Youth Pastor Summit is a two-day conference that brings together student pastors, educators, and volunteers into one room to foster **collaboration, community, and soul-care**. It is a direct response to the growing need for people to pour into this generation.

As Student Leadership University trains up the next generation, we increasingly recognize the exponential impact that the leaders have on these students. YPS gathers thousands of leaders from across their regions of the country from 30+ denominations and movements. Each YPS includes mainstage sessions and leadership labs. This year, we will host spring YPS events in SoCal, Dallas, Nashville, and Raleigh and YPS National in Orlando, Florida in November.

We bring in some of the world's best student ministry minds, communicators, and practitioners to address four foundational and ever-present questions:

1. **Spiritual Formation:** Who are we becoming?
2. **God's Mission:** What story is God telling?
3. **Ethics:** How should we think?
4. **Leadership:** Why and how do we influence?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Venue:

SADDLEBACK CHURCH, THE REFINERY BUILDING
1 Saddleback Pkwy, Lake Forest CA, 92630

Saddleback has multiple campuses in the area so make sure to arrive at the Lake Forest Campus. If heading south on the 241 toll road, be sure to get off at the 2nd Portola exit. **YPS will be located in their Refinery building in the Auditorium at the Saddleback Lake Forest Campus.*

What to Pack: Make sure to pack a Bible, pen, notebook, & a bottle of water for you to have during the conference.

Meals: Dinner on Monday is on your own. Take advantage of restaurants close to the church as traffic could get bad around 5, and you will want to make it back in time our evening session! Lunch will be provided on Tuesday. Make sure to stop by our sponsor tables and say thanks! If you have food allergies, you may want to consider packing an alternative.

Registration: In order to expedite your registration and to minimize gathering in the lobby, please bring a copy/screen shot of your registration in one of the forms below. Having one of the options above will ensure a smooth check-in for you and your team the morning of the event. **Registration Proof (any of the options below will work):**

- Printed Copy or Screen Shot of your Registration Email
- Printed out or/Screen Shot of your registration account with YPS Southern California Listed – you can access this from here:
<https://events.circuitree.com/studentleadership/Account/Login/?returnUrl=%2Fstudentleadership&skip=False>

Wristbands: You will receive a YPS wristband when you check in. You must wear this for the duration of the event as it is your access into all sessions and meals.

TUESDAY LEADERSHIP LAB DESCRIPTIONS

Leadership Labs (breakout sessions) are designed to inspire and equip you and your team. We encourage every participant to take full advantage of the practical and relevant training sessions the labs will provide. Make sure your group splits up and attends as many lab sessions as possible on Tuesday.

10:40 AM Leadership Labs

Lab 1 in The Refinery Theater

[Dr. Sean McDowell](#), *Author, Professor & Worldview Expert*

Asking Good Questions: The Most Underrated Skill in Youth Ministry

A practical and thought-provoking lab that equips leaders to ask better questions, spark deeper conversations, and guide students through complex cultural and spiritual issues with wisdom.

Lab 2 in The Gym

[Dr. Kathy Koch](#), *Founder of Celebrate Kids*

Evangelize and Disciple to Meet the Core Needs of Faith

A practical and transformative lab equipping leaders to disciple every student more effectively by understanding their unique God-given design

Lab 3 in The 2nd Floor Classroom

[Shane Kenney](#), *State Director for First Priority of America*

The One Thing: Stop guessing how to reach your community, learn how to intentionally build meaningful bridges between your youth ministry and local schools to create real, lasting impact

Lab 4 in The Diner

[Dr. Jonathan Denton](#), *Professor of Christian Studies/Student Ministry at CSU*

3 Principles for a Disciple-Making Strategy: A clear and practical framework to help leaders move beyond attendance-driven ministry and build a disciple-making strategy that produces real, lasting transformation.

11:40 AM Leadership Labs

Lab 1 in The Refinery Theater

[Will Cumby](#), *Director of Church Engagement at Fuller Youth Institute*

Gen Alpha: The Research and the Realities

A forward-thinking exploration of the emerging generation, equipping leaders to understand the data, discern the trends, and respond with intentional, relevant ministry. and creating environments where identity, belonging, and spiritual growth come alive

Lab 2 in The Gym

[Dr. Jeff Wallace](#), *CSO of SLU*

The Leadership Ecosystem: A strategic deep dive into creating a healthy leadership culture where vision, values, people, and systems align to develop and sustain thriving leaders.

Lab 3 in The 2nd Floor Classroom

[Tommy Nixon](#), *President and CEO of Urban Youth Workers Institute*

Leading Like You Were Made To: A compelling call to lead with authenticity and purpose by embracing incarnational ministry that moves beyond programs to build trust, establish credibility, and create lasting gospel impact in urban communities.

Lab 4 in The Diner

[Kayla Fowler](#), *Lifeway Hifi Team Lead*

Beyond Discussion: Growing Gospel-Centered Small Groups That Form Students:

A practical and vision-driven lab equipping leaders to transform small groups into gospel-centered environments where students are known, challenged, and shaped through meaningful, Christ-centered conversations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the New 2 Ministry Pre-Conference Gathering at YPS?

Get what you need before the conference even starts! A special pre-conference session designed for those who are New2Ministry (2ish years or so) in mind! This is a roundtable session that is wildly practical, conversational, pro-active, and specifically tuned to set up you and your team, a new-ish youth ministry leader, with an action plan for how to better build a healthy ministry. Our friends at Lifeway Students want to connect and equip you with the strategy and stuff you need to lead well now. You can sign up for this as part of your regular YPS registration. ****Space is limited.****

Who should attend YPS?

Youth Pastor Summit is geared to all youth pastors and key youth leaders (staff or volunteers). It is also open to Christian educators. **All attendees must be 18 years or older.**

Can my spouse attend?

Of course! We love when couples do ministry together. Make sure you register them so that they are guaranteed a spot. Each attendee of YPS must be registered for the event and each attendee must register with their unique email address.

I have a small child; can they attend with me?

We think families are great and time together is important. However, this event is **only for those who are 18 and older** and who have graduated high school. We want everyone to have the best experience possible at this event, so please make arrangements to leave your children at home or arrange childcare outside of the conference.

Can I transfer my ticket to someone else?

If you are registered as a group, we will do a one-time transfer of any of your participants, without penalty. Transfers are not available on individual registrations. This one-time transfer must occur a minimum of ten business days before the event. To make a transfer on your account, email us at yps@studentleadership.net from your group leader's email indicating the individual(s) you are canceling and the name, email, and DOB of the new registration(s). We will only make a transfer(s) on each group registration one time, and once you have made a transfer, your group is then finalized.

2026

