

MASSANETTA.

Middle School Conference 2023



SMPC YOUTH REFLECTIONS

june 27-30, 2023

MASSANETTA
SPRINGS, VA



From Lindsey Odom

Director of Youth Ministry

We laughed, we danced, we prayed & and we played hard while we were at Massanetta!! Most importantly we learned that we are always at HOME with God and with each other and we are called to create a home for all God's people where all are loved and taken care of. For God is our home as God keeps us rooted and grounded and helps us remember who we are and whose we are, which is a beloved child of God. Also, our HOME can be seen and experienced in various places, people, or things. So, where is your HOME? What does HOME look like for you? We invite you to reflect on these questions as Massanetta taught us and showed us how HOME has a multifaceted meaning.

Furthermore, Massanetta helped us remember that God is our shepherd and in the same way that God takes care of the sheep, God takes care of us and we can find love, peace, rest, renewal, and freedom in God. Because of this, we are called to create a home for all God's people where all feel loved, safe, and free. We are also called to go to God and experience rest and renewal, especially when we walk through dark valleys as God promises to be with us and helps us through our fears, concerns, and difficulties. Not only this, but because God is our shepherd, we experience an abundance of blessings and have more than we could ever want or need. Therefore, "we shall not want," but instead respond in a manner of thanksgiving towards God for all that God has given us and all that God continues to give us.

Thank you to Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center for an amazing week.

Thank you to Valerie Glover for chaperoning another year. You are awesome and we are thankful you could attend!

My Massanetta experience was very fun!! Right from the beginning, I experienced love and excitement in the 15-passenger van with our youth director, Lindsey Odom, as we jammed to music and shared some laughs together. When I arrived at Massanetta, I was not really sure what to expect, but saw such beauty in the mountains and was looking forward to the week and the theme for the week, which was "Welcome Home." When we were at Massanetta, we spent the week in Encounter groups with youth from other churches that were led by high school advocates. The advocates were really energetic, fun, engaging, and helped us explore Psalm 23 and what it means to be at home on a deeper level. Things I loved about Massanetta included the playground, my Encounter groups, the food, and being with my church youth group for Back Home Time. The food was top-notch compared to any other camp I have attended. Worship was also amazing as the keynote messages were very relatable and meaningful and we did fun and upbeat energizers or dances together! The theme of our time at Massanetta was "Welcome Home" in connection with Psalm 23. What I learned is that we are always at HOME because God is always with us and that home looks different for every person. I loved being able to hear the advocates talk about what home meant to them and where they feel like they are most home. Because God has given us an abundance of blessings, we all experience what it means to be home in various ways, but can see our home and experience being home in God, God's creation, and in each other.

Ben Bickett, Rising 9th Grader



Massanetta was an amazing experience and I will miss it so much next year as this was the last year I could attend. Each day at Massanetta is so much fun and so tiring all at the same time as we get up before 8 a.m. and are constantly moving, playing, learning, and growing together till 11 or 11:30 each night. But during that time, we are having the time of our lives as we are always surrounded by our Encounter group with youth from other churches or our Back Home group, which consists of youth from SMPC. Within these groups, we experienced fun and fellowship and were able to learn more about the theme, "Welcome Home" in connection with Psalm 23. This theme taught us about what home is as we heard many high school advocates share what home meant to them and how God provides each of us with a home. Massanetta helped me remember that we have a home with God and in God and we are all welcomed into God's home, no matter who you are or what you look like. Because of God's blessings, we know that even in the midst of our busy and chaotic lives, we are at home with God and can find rest in God. This is what Psalm 23 teaches us. Unfortunately this is my last year at Massanetta as I will be in high school this coming year, but if I could, I would definitely come back next year!!

Alec White, Rising 9th Grader



Massanetta was one of the best camps I have ever been to, and I cannot wait to attend it again next year!! Everybody at Massanetta is so energetic and welcoming, and made it feel like home. I enjoyed my Encounter groups with youth from other churches led by high school advocates as it allowed me to make new friends and feel closer to God. The advocates are always there to hype you up and make sure you are having fun and learning and growing closer to God. Their discussion questions after each Keynote message helped me better understand Psalm 23 in connection with the theme, "Welcome Home." One main thing that I learned from each keynote and during worship about Psalm 23 and the theme was that God is our Home because it is in God that we find love, community, and rest. The energizers or dances that we did during worship were also really fun and the skits led by the advocates were really relatable and showed me how we are always at home with God and with each other and that we have everything we need. Overall, Massanetta provided me with an amazing experience and helped me learn more about the theme, "Welcome Home" and Psalm 23. I will miss Massanetta a lot.

Natalie Guy, Rising 7th Grader

At Massanetta this year, I had a ton of fun and learned about what home is to me and what home means for other people. This is because home can be experienced in a variety of ways, but because of who God is and what God does for us, we will always have a home with God. God also provides us with the gift of creation and all God's people to make us feel at home. The theme, "Welcome Home" was explained through studying Psalm 23. Psalm 23 connected with me and taught me that rest is important as well, especially in the midst of our daily lives, and we can go to God to find rest. This is because God restores our souls as God is our good shepherd and forces us to take a break and rest. This is important to me as it helps me remember that rest is important as it can help us clear our mind, reduce stress, and focus more on who God is calling us to be. During our week at Massanetta, we did a lot of fun activities such as energizers (dances), the dance party, singing songs, playing games, outdoor recreation time that included water games, and back home group time with our church group. I always enjoy Massanetta and will miss it a lot.



Will Glover, Rising 9th Grader



Welcome Home



I had a very fun time at Massanetta and was looking forward to it this year. During our time at Massanetta, we studied Psalm 23 in connection to the theme, "Welcome Home." Both the scripture passage and the theme really spoke to me and were very relevant for our lives and the things going on in our world today. They always connected the theme with activities such as games, discussion questions, various workshops, and fun! In one of the workshops we got to paint rocks and I painted the spring of water at Massanetta Springs as that is a special part about Massanetta. I loved being able to reflect on what home looked like and meant for me and have the opportunity to paint it on a rock that was used during worship. My Encounter group with youth from other churches led by a high school advocate made me really happy as it allowed me to make friends outside of my own church group and connect more with God and my leader. The high school advocates were really nice and so full of energy and excitement about us being at Massanetta. They would always pump us up even if we were really tired and they helped to explain Psalm 23 in a very relatable way to our lives. Additionally, I always loved the skits and the energizers. Massanetta is a beautiful place and amazing time, and I would encourage all middle school youth to attend.

Emery Hicks, Rising 8th Grader



I had a lot of fun at Massanetta and learned a lot about Psalm 23 in connection with the theme, "Welcome Home." I learned what home meant for myself and how God provides each of us with a home as God is loving, caring, compassionate, and leads/ guides all of us. I loved the encounter groups with youth from other churches as it allowed me to make new friends and engage further with the theme and Psalm 23. I loved all the fun games and activities we played and the workshops and keynote messages as it allowed me to have fun and learn a lot more about my faith. Everyone is super welcoming and friendly at Massanetta and I would highly encourage every middle schooler to go on this retreat.

Siena Carr, Rising 8th Grader

My trip to Massanetta for the second year was amazing. I met so many nice people and new friends through my Encounter group, which consisted of youth from other churches and was led by a high school advocate. My high school advocate's name was Anne Riley. and she was fabulous as she was so nice, energetic, welcoming, and made Massanetta feel like "home" for everyone in our group. I also loved the theme, "Welcome Home" in connection with Psalm 23 and learned that we always have a home with God and with each other, and that home can mean many different things. It was so awesome to hear what home meant for the high school advocates and it helped me think about what home means for myself. God provides each of us with a home, a place, thing, or person that helps us feel safe, loved, and grounded and we are called to create a welcoming home for all people to experience. I also loved our workshops where we got to engage further with Psalm 23 and make art and do outdoor activities to connect with the scripture passage and grow closer to God. Overall, Massanetta was an amazing experience and is such an awesome and beautiful place where you grow closer to God and to each other. I would encourage any middle schooler to attend.

Elise Ullman, Rising 8th Grader



"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..."

Psalm 23



I will never find a more fun camp or "home" than Massanetta is. During our time at Massanetta, we had so much fun as we learned more about Psalm 23 and what it means to be at home with God and with each other. The theme was "Welcome Home" and helped us remember that each of us have a home with God and can experience rest, love, and an abundance of blessings in and through God, and that we are also called to create a home where all God's people feel loved, safe, and free. The workshops that we attended helped me remember this and helped me grow closer to God and to another as I made a lot of new friends within my workshops and my Encounter groups and got to further engage with Psalm 23. My high school leader of my Encounter group named Elliot was super fun and engaging and welcoming of all. The energizers or dances that we started our day with and ended our day with were super fun to learn and participate in. I cannot wait to come back next year. For middle schoolers who have not yet experienced Massanetta, I promise you will love it so much.

Dylan Davis, Rising 7th Grader

At Massanetta, we learned a lot about our faith and about God and had a lot of fun also. In addition to keynote, worship, energizers (dances), and encounter groups, we also played hard and did fun activities such as outdoor water recreation activities, the giant slip n' slide, and the dance. The theme was "Welcome Home" and used Psalm 23 to explain it. Through the music played during Keynote and during worship, we learned that God is our home and we are home in and through God. We also learned that because we all have a home in and through God that we are loved, safe, and free, and we are called to create that kind of home or place for all God's people to experience. Psalm 23 is very relevant for my life as it talks about walking through dark valleys or places in our lives and encourages us to go to God to find rest, relief, and comfort. We can find peace in God and know that God will take care of us as God is our good shepherd and this connected with my life in a lot of ways. Psalm 23 also talks about the house of the Lord and how we will dwell in the house of the Lord both now and forever and I am very thankful for this. Overall, Massanetta was so much fun and I am looking forward to next year.

Charleston Bates, Rising 8th Grader

I loved being at Massanetta because it made me feel welcomed, safe, and at home. The theme was "Welcome Home" and it connected to Psalm 23. I do not think I have felt as at home at a camp before I went to Massanetta. Massanetta provided me with a lot of fun activities that helped me grow in my faith such as worship, keynotes messages, workshops, our Encounter groups, our back home time as a church, recreation activities etc. I am thankful for all these experiences and had so much fun. The music during worship and keynote was awesome and I found the songs so fun to sing. My Encounter group with youth from other churches and my high school leader also provided me with some very valuable experiences and helped me connect with Psalm 23 more. Everyone is so kind at Massanetta and nobody gets left out. Getting up every morning to experience all that Massanetta has to offer was so much fun and something I looked forward to. I loved Massanetta all around.

Katherine Huzmar, Rising 8th Grader



At Massanetta, we had a lot of fun during all the activities. Each day, we learned more about the theme, which was "Welcome Home" in connection with Psalm 23. Some of the things we learned about included what a Psalm is and the different types of Psalms, that we all have a home in God and we are called to create a home for all to experience, we learned about God's abundance and how God provides us with many blessings, and that God is our constant shepherd who leads us and guides us, especially when we encounter rough times or dark valleys. I also learned a lot more and had fun in my Encounter groups with youth from other churches, which was led by my high school advocate or counselor. Massanetta also allowed us to have a lot of fun through the pool, the giant slip n' slide, and the various outdoor recreation activities. During our free time every day, we could play and I loved being able to play four square and gaga ball with other youth and get to make some new friends. Finally, we did energizers or dances during Keynote and worship that were fun to learn and do. Overall, I loved Massanetta.

Collin Lee, Rising 7th Grader



While I had plenty of fun at Massanetta with the outdoor recreation activities and water games, the pool, the giant slip n slide, and during my Encounter groups, I also learned a lot about Psalm 23 and grew closer to God. Psalm 23 states that Jesus is our shepherd and will lead and guide us throughout every time and place in our lives. It also reminds us that we can find rest in God as God provides each of us with a home and all we have to do is come to God to experience that rest, peace, love, and compassion. Psalm 23 helped me realize that because God is our shepherd, God has provided us with everything we need and we shall not want. The theme was "Welcome Home" and through my encounter groups, keynote, and worship, which explored the theme further, I learned that home does not have to be a physical place, it can also be experienced through other people or things. God calls us to create a home where all are loved, welcomed, safe, and free. I had so much fun while at Massanetta and also learned a lot that I can apply to my life of faith so I am thankful for a place like Massanetta.

Luke Estes, Rising 8th Grader

