



MASSANETTA
MIDDLE
SCHOOL
CONFERENCE
2024

SMPC YOUTH
REFLECTIONS

june 25-28, 2024

MASSANETTA SPRINGS, VA

From Rev. Lindsey Odom

Associate Pastor of Youth and Missions/Outreach



We had so much fun at Massanetta Springs Camp & Conference Center. The theme this year was to “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near” from Philippians 4:4-8. From this letter written by the apostle Paul, we learned that even in difficult times and situations, we as Christians, should try to keep calm, rejoice, and pray. This letter helps us understand what it means to be faithful and what it means to be the church within our world today. There are many different ways we can rejoice, keep calm, and pray. Throughout worship, encounter groups, and workshops, middle schoolers learned various ways to rejoice with their heart, soul, body, mind, and spirit. They also learned different ways to pray that they can apply to their life of faith.

As Christians, Paul teaches us that we will face difficulty, injustice, and sufferings on our journey, but we should not be dismayed or discouraged and instead, rejoice in God’s love and share it with others. We are to let God’s peace guard our hearts and rejoice and give thanks to God for all that God has blessed us with and for the person and ministry of Jesus Christ that sets the example and teaches us how to live. Jesus is always with us and walks alongside us in every time, season, and place. Because of this, we are taught to take comfort and have peace in our hearts knowing that Jesus is always with us and is working to change things and create a world where everyone lives together in love, communion, and fellowship. Thus, we must rejoice and give thanks! So, what does your rejoicing look like? How can you still rejoice in God, even when life gets hard or difficult? I invite you to reflect on these questions as Massanetta taught us and showed us how rejoicing, specifically rejoicing in God, has a multifaceted meaning and can take shape in a variety of ways.

We not only learned what it meant to keep calm, rejoice, and pray, but we had a lot of fun through free time activities such as pool time, canoeing, porch chair rocking, and spending time together. We also had so much fun during water recreation games, the dance party, the glow party, the slip n’ slide, and energizers (dances) and songs played during worship. One of my favorite parts of my Massanetta was watching our middle schoolers grow closer to God and to each other and go out of their comfort zones to make friends with youth from other churches within their encounter groups. It made me so happy to see their communion and fellowship with one another and the ways in which their faith grew through worship, encounter groups, workshops, back home time, and bible study. Lastly, one of things that stuck with me from worship and that I found particularly powerful was the benediction that our music person by the name of Rev. Casey Carbone personally wrote so I would like to share it with you all:

My friends, go in peace,
May your beauty never cease,
Go forth full of grace
From this thin and sacred place
Walk in love
With blessings from above
Don’t dismay; keep calm, rejoice, and pray!

I had the most fun at Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center. It was my first year and it did not disappoint. I'm already looking forward to next year. During Massanetta, you get put in an encounter group with a high schooler who is called an advocate and youth from different churches. My encounter group was an amazing experience. I enjoyed everyone in my encounter group and Chance, who was my advocate. I met so many friends in my encounter group and got their phone numbers so we can stay in touch even after this retreat is over. It meant so much to me that we could all bond and learn from each other. I really enjoyed all the energizers and songs during worship as they helped me connect with God. Our church even swayed to some of the songs as they moved us and reminded us of God's constant presence and love for us. Another thing I learned was how to include God more in my life and how to rejoice in God even during difficult times. During one of my workshops, it allowed me to experience the gift of God's creation in a new way as we got to walk through a garden that had wildflowers in it and find peace and stillness within creation. I grew a lot closer to God and to my church group and look forward to next year

Hannah Angerer



My experience at Massanetta taught me how to grow closer to God, how to rejoice in God, and how to keep calm and find peace, even during difficult times. The encounter group I was in helped me to realize that I can step out of my comfort zone. My advocate (high school leader) of my encounter group and Lindsey helped me to gain comfort and trust in God. The workshops taught me about a variety of things such as different ways to pray, how God sees us as God's own beloved children, how we were created to rejoice and spread joy, and how to cope with anxiety and be calm. I also was able to experience my sister, Caroline Guy, serving as an advocate while I was there and helping teach other middle schoolers about what it means to rejoice in God, pray, and find peace, which was really cool. Overall, Massanetta has been such an amazing experience that allowed me to not only connect and grow closer with God but also with each other in my church group and in my encounter group. I look forward to next year.

Natalie Guy





At Massanetta Springs, we had so much fun. It was such a good experience to learn and grow in my faith and experience God in new ways. The theme of our retreat was “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near” from Philippians 4:4-8. I really enjoyed the various workshops I attended that discussed the theme in further depth. One of them taught me lots of coping strategies when facing anxiety, worry, or doubt so that we can learn to find peace and calmness in God. The schedule was packed with fun activities of all sorts such as water games, slip ‘n slide, lawn recreation, worship, keynote, encounter groups, workshops, free time, energizers, and more. It always kept you engaged, gave opportunities to meet new friends, and allowed you to have fun!! I loved Massanetta and look forward to next year as it allowed me to meet new friends in my encounter group, grow closer to God, learn new energizers and songs, and learn what it means to rejoice in God, find peace in God, and pray when times get tough.

Livi Bates

During Massanetta, I learned a lot about the theme, which was to “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near.” I learned that God is always with us and because of this, we do not have to be worried or anxious, but instead can have peace in our hearts, keep calm, pray, and rejoice in God. I had so much fun at Massanetta during free time and recreation time where we played together, participated in water games, did the slip ‘n slide, and got to bond with people from SMPC and meet new people from other churches. I really enjoyed keynote and worship as they helped my faith grow and get closer to God. Overall Massanetta was so much fun and I am so glad I went.

Nolan King

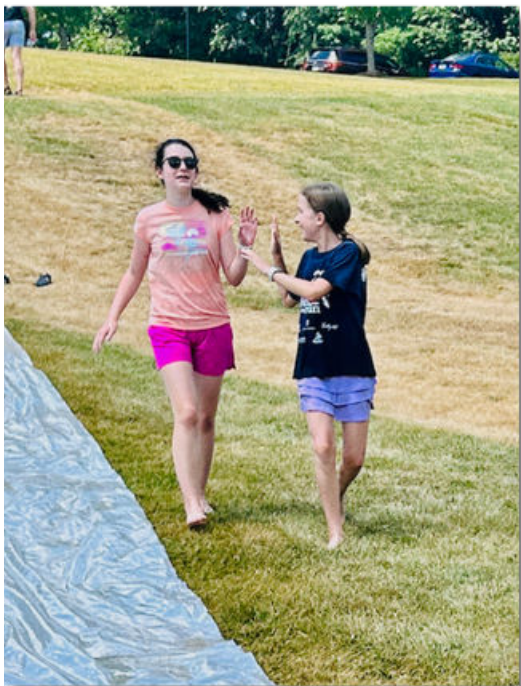
*Keep Calm
and Rejoice
the Lord
is near*





During my time at Massanetta, I learned a ton about the theme, which was to “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near” from Philippians 4:4-8. I learned that there are so many different ways to pray, connect with God, and experience God. I also learned about ways to keep calm, rejoice, and find peace in God, even when we are anxious, worried or stressed. While learning about Philippians 4:4-8, I also had plenty of fun playing Gaga ball, going canoeing, playing in the pool, and going down the slip n slide numerous times. If you are unsure about going to Massanetta, I would highly recommend going and fully investing yourself. It’s such a fun time and you learn so much about your faith and God!

Luke Estes



At Massanetta, I experienced God in multiple ways. One way I experienced God was through Vespers and the candlelight worship service underneath the stars. I had a lot of fun during all the fun activities such as lawn recreation, the dance, and the ice cream party. I really enjoyed getting to know my advocate and everyone in my encounter group! I also really liked all the fun energizers we got to do during worship as a group. I loved the theme as it was very relatable and taught me about God’s constant presence and love for us so that we can rejoice and tell others about God. It was such a fun and amazing week.

Siena Carr

During Massanetta, I learned lots of things, but the one that stuck with me was how you can find peace in God anywhere and how God is always listening to us when we pray and knows what we need before we even ask. I felt God most during vespers (the candlelight service) because we were all gathered together in a big circle underneath the stars with candles in our hand. It showed me the power of community and how we have all journeyed from different places to experience God and know that God walks with us. I met so many new people from different churches and enjoyed getting to know them and become friends with them. I loved how everyone cared for each other, was not mean, and encouraged each other to remember they are loved and are a child of God. It was a very affirming and positive experience. At first, I was a little nervous about coming to Massanetta and nervous to be in a small group with youth from other churches, but it was the best experience and my advocate was amazing. I grew and learned so much that I can share and take home with me and had so much fun.

Caroline Stephany

**And the peace of God,
which surpasses all
understanding, will
guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ
Jesus.**

Phil 4:7



Massanetta was one of the best experiences I have ever participated in. I got to meet new friends and become closer with youth from SMPC and in my encounter group. I also grew closer to God and learned a lot that helped my faith. The theme, which was to "Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near" from Philippians 4:4-8, really stood out to me and taught me to stay calm and find peace in God, even when times get hard. It also taught me about rejoicing in God and various ways we can show thanks to God for all that we are blessed with. I felt closest to God on the last night during our vespers service where we all lit candles and stood in a big circle with each other. I loved all of the music and skits during worship as well as the keynotes and energizers. My time at Massanetta was absolutely amazing and I will definitely be coming next year

Adeline Bayer

Massanetta was a great experience because I was able to rejoice in God and with each other during all the activities, games, worship, keynote, and with my encounter group. I learned that you can find peace in God anywhere and anytime as long as you go to God and pray. God is always listening to our prayers and helps us. Some of my favorite activities were the pool, nine square, the game called spud, and the various workshops. I also learned that you can pray in a variety of ways and will be applying them to my faith. My advocate was amazing and allowed my group to bond with each other, experience God, play games together, and have a great time. I will definitely be coming back next year.

Colin Lee

My experience at Massanetta was a great experience. It was my first time and was so much fun. This experience brought me closer to God and helped me learn more about myself. I learned how to pray and rejoice in God as one of my workshops taught us different ways to pray and be thankful in God. I had a lot of fun in my encounter group and during lawn rec time, water games, the ice cream party, and the dance.

Ben Stephany

Massanetta was a very fun and educational experience. One of my favorite parts was making new friends and meeting new people. Some things I learned that there are many different ways to pray, that we can find peace and rejoice because of God and Gods constant presence with us, and that we are all Gods children created to live into God’s call and purpose for us. I loved all the energizers and songs during worship as it allowed me to grow closer to God and to my friends in my church youth group. Overall Massanetta was so much fun and I learned so much. I am going to miss it so much next year as I go off to high school.

Elise Ullman

I had an amazing time at Massanetta. I loved hanging out with my favorite group of girls from our church and meeting new friends through my encounter group. Through the theme, which was to “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near” from Philippians 4:4-8, I learned that God is always with us and we are never alone. I also learned that when we seek God out, we can find peace and present our requests, worries, and concerns to God in prayer. Even in hard or difficult times, we can still find peace in God as God calms us and allows us to always experience peace in Christ. When we pray, we connect with God and grow closer to God. Prayer takes many different forms and looks different for everyone. Besides worship, keynote, and encounter group time, I loved all the games I got to play with my advocate and encounter group as well as the canoeing and slip n slide. I met some really nice people at Massanetta and really connected with my advocate leader. I also had a blast at the dance and water recreation activities. I am so sad this is my last year at Massanetta as I loved it so much.

Emery Hicks



Over the past 3 days here at Massanetta, I have learned that peace can be found in many different ways. One way you can find peace is through praying to God and having a conversation with God. God is always with us and always hears us. I felt the presence of Jesus Christ the whole time I was at Massanetta whether it was through worship, keynote, workshops, encounter groups, or recreation time. I loved meeting new people and hanging out with the girls from SMPC. I am also so glad my cousin, Hannah Angerer, went and I was able to go to Massanetta with her my last year of middle school. Massanetta is such a special place to grow closer to God and meet new people. Everyone at Massanetta cares about you and looks out for you. They want you to grow and experience God in new ways. Over the past 2 years during my time at Massanetta, I have grown in my faith a ton and made so many memories that I will never forget.

Katherine Kuzmar



Over the past 3 days at Massanetta, I really enjoyed everything about it, especially my encounter group and my advocate whose name was Anne Riley. She is so sweet and fun, and she taught me that you can rejoice and find hope and peace in God in many different ways. I also loved that my sister Haley was one of the advocates at Massanetta and that I got to see her in that role helping other middle schoolers to grow in their faith and that I got to spend time with her. I loved the workshops that I attended as they reminded me that we can experience God anywhere even in nature and that God walks alongside us on our journey, blessing us and helping us to experience peace. I also loved the energizers and songs during worship. I cannot wait to attend next year and hope that next year is as good as my experience this year.

Dylan Davis



I loved Massanetta. With the theme, which was to “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near” from Philippians 4:4-8, I learned that God is always at work in our world and protects us. Even when we face difficult times, God provides us with peace and allows us to rejoice and experience the blessings of our world around us. Praying is important as it can be whatever you want it to be and help calm you as you talk to God. There are so many different ways to pray and Massanetta taught me many different ones. You can pray aloud, you can pray silently, you can pray by yourself or with a group, you can pray during worship or outside, and you can pray with family and friends. What I also learned from Massanetta is that God is always with you and helps you to live into your call and be the best version of yourself. The thing that I had the most fun doing at Massanetta was with the water recreation games, the slip ‘n slide, and meeting a friend within my encounter group who I became close with.

Jake Zagora



When I was at Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center, I felt the presence of God everywhere. I especially felt the presence and movement of God during evening vespers where we all lit candles and stood in a large circle with each other in a field. It allowed me to see the light of Christ and that we are called to reflect God’s light and love with our words and actions. I found peace during our times of worship with the skits, songs that were played, and the keynote. I felt gentle and calm during all of the energizers as they allowed me to move and feel the presence of God at work. God calls us outward and that is part of what it means to rejoice in God and the many blessings we are given. I felt joy the entire time I was at Netta and learned what it means to rejoice and spread joy. I also learned more about prayer that I can apply to my everyday life and teach others different ways to pray. I had so much fun with the slip n’ slide, canoeing, the pool, playing in the spring, and during water recreation activities. It was truly amazing.

Charleston Bates

Massanetta provided the best experience during my time as an SMPC youth. I have never felt so close to God in my life. I grew a lot in my faith and found new ways to pray and stay peaceful, even in the midst of difficult times in my life and in our world. I also made new friends at Massanetta. This year’s theme was to “Keep Calm and Rejoice, the Lord is Near” from Philippians 4:4-8. As the trip went on, we learned about peace, prayer, rejoicing, and what it means to have a gentle and loving heart. Massanetta is such a caring place that my initial anxiety about going slipped away. There was a moment during evening vespers when everyone had their candle lit and were singing together that I just thought “wow.” I was amazed at how pretty it was and how I could feel the presence of God as we all stood together in community with one another. During my time at Massanetta, we also had so much fun as we got to dance, sing, run, laugh, and play. I am so grateful for this experience and look forward to next year.

Tuuli Ritchie