



# BONUS Episode: Staff Meeting

## Part One—Gathering

**Megan DeWald:** Welcome to Disrupting Ministry, a podcast from the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary. I'm Megan DeWald, Associate Director of the Institute for Youth Ministry and host of this podcast, where we bring you stories of faith communities who are disrupting the status quo in the Church by developing innovative forms of ministry with young people. In today's very special bonus episode, I am inviting our listeners into an IYM staff meeting. And so, joining me in real time today is the Rev. Abigail Visco Rusert, Director of the IYM. Hi, Abigail.

**Abigail Rusert:** Hi

**Megan:** Who is also eating a cupcake while we're on this call.

**Abigail:** Oh, no shame. Okay.

**Megan:** And Carmelle Beaugelin, Program Coordinator of the Log College Project, which is the initiative from which we've been featuring stories this first season. Hi, Carmelle.

**Carmelle Beaugelin:** Hey, Hey, I do not have a cupcake... and I'm sad about it.

**Megan:** You know, right, it—I mean, look, I appreciate and support; I'm pro cupcake. I just, I think it's something that you should have, you should have thought to share with us beforehand, before getting on a video call with us so that we just have to watch you enjoy this (*I know, pink frosting*). It's the whole package, just like you guys, the whole package. And that's what everyone is getting today. The whole package of the Institute for Youth Ministry (*The Trinity*). You know, as I said in our previous episode, um, you guys made the mistake of putting me in charge of this project. So, I get to make my dreams come true by recording one of our staff meetings. Except, of course, under ordinary circumstances in our normal staff meetings, Abigail is, uh, at the helm, um, leading us through our agenda. But today I have an agenda. And so, we're going to dive into that agenda. Um, right now. Are you guys ready for it?

**Abigail:** We're ready.

**Carmelle:** Yeah.

**Megan:** All right, let's do it.

## Part Two—The Agenda

**Megan:** So, of course, this has been our first, um, pilot season of the podcast. And, um, there were a lot of stories we've heard, a lot of different themes and things have emerged from that. And one of the phrases that I included in every episode where we featured a church that's been in the Log College Project was this phrase around research and why we're doing it. I said, "we've been conducting research by listening to the stories and perspectives of the people in these churches, hoping that the patterns and



themes that emerge might provide insight for other faith leaders who are passionate about youth ministry.” So, um, I mean, very pithy, catchy phrase I've added into every episode, but I think it accurately described what we were trying to do. What I'm wondering from, um, y'all now is—what are the patterns and themes that you've seen emerging from the stories of the churches, um, that we've featured in the season? And what are some of the insights that these patterns and themes have provided for you about youth ministry in the 21st Century?

**Carmelle:** I guess I'll go first.

**Megan:** Please do.

**Carmelle:** One of the most enjoyable pattern that I've seen listening to this podcast has been the theme of pastor as person, and the reality that, you know, we lead these projects and we are ministers and we're doing all this work, but we are people doing work with people and alongside people. Uh, two great examples I can think of off the top of my head of this is Eliseo's story of working, um, at Esperanza Viva alongside these young people, as they navigate their third culture identities, while himself is navigating his third culture identity. It's, it's a wonderful point of connection that he has with his young people. You see this as well with Beth Royalty, with Calvary, and her podcast episode largely dealing with navigating the tension between honoring the history of ministry at Calvary, but trying to pastor her community towards new things and new ways of thinking and moving beyond the nostalgia of the past. But her herself being an older Rector and recognizing herself as such, navigating that kind of tension as she thinks about what it looks like to do youth ministry. So, these examples of stories that we've been hearing from the Log College Project so far with the podcast are not just stories of projects or stories of congregations. Those are included, but they're also stories of individual people and leaders, and I've, I've loved listening to every minute of it.

**Abigail:** So, I love this way that you're talking, Carmelle, about pastor as person, and the, the ways in which we're seeing the contextual essentially arise from each of these leaders who, where you've been working with, um, in our churches. And I think that's almost an analog for what we, anybody in youth ministry, watches happen in their ministry over time. There's something about that which emerges, right? Whenever we take on a project, and in our project and what this podcast has been talking about is innovation, trying to help youth ministry dream outside of the boxes that it's been in in recent years.

And the thing that we're finding, um, that the things that matter in the midst of that are the things that emerge, naturally, organically. It's never the first idea that somebody had, right? That they ended up sticking with, that ends up being the thing that defines whatever new, um, program or ministry a congregation is trying to launch or a leader is trying to launch. Uh, I think we've, we've been paying attention to the ways that we've seen leaders, um, sort of unearth what God is doing in their context, which is important and it's subtle. A lot of times when we get into ministry, we place the pressure on ourselves to be the ones who, who make the change, who bring about something new. When, um, in fact, if we just remembered that God is about that work of doing something new already, then we get to actually watch what's emerging through the Holy Spirit's work and in a context. So, I think that's, I love how the podcast has given us glimpses into that emerging work of the Holy Spirit. And it kind of takes, it pops the pressure, I think, for anybody who is a leader in ministry. It's not about you generating the best idea in the room. It's about you unearthing what God's already doing. Um, the new thing that God's already doing in your context.

**Megan:** Yeah, and I think going along with that, one of the things that we did with some intention for this first season, uh, was to have a mix of different types of leaders who were the Design Fellows for these projects. So, um, we had a youth director and we had an associate pastor and we had two senior pastors and we had, um, a first lady and a volunteer. Uh, so, so people who may not necessarily, um, come to mind immediately in that role of, you know, quote-unquote youth minister. Uh, nevertheless, I, I think I see emerging in youth ministry and in leadership today, this sense that the Holy Spirit isn't confined to our, um, job descriptions or the particular, um, titles that we give to, to people who work in our various contexts. Uh, and if we are really striving to be attentive to where the Holy Spirit is, is moving and active, it may look like someone you don't expect. Or it may look like someone who, um, who, who has these gifts or passions for things that you don't yet know of and aren't trained to really look for. Um, and that was really one of the things that struck me the most, I think, was just walking away, as you said, Carmelle, and just seeing all of these, these pastors, whatever their title is, they were pastors as, as people. Um, and as people leading people.

I'm wondering if, um, you know, we, we really restricted ourselves, uh, so as to engage our, our listeners the best way we could, to keep these episodes between about 30 and 40 minutes. Um, of course we had much more recording, uh, and much more, many more stories that we could have told and ways that we could have, um, shaped these differently. But inevitably there were patterns and themes that didn't get airtime in the midst of, um, of all of the episodes that we have. I'm wondering if there are some themes, uh, that didn't get airtime that come to mind for you, um, and how did they show up in your work with these churches?

**Abigail:** I guess, um, this is a really hard question, Megan, because it it's, it's not just about telling the story, like on the other side of having these churches being, having, like the podcast moment. You know, it's not just this moment of putting together this podcast and being able to kind of grab onto the story, but there's these, I just think God works in the, in the little in-between spaces and in those accidental emergent ways, right? And it's, um, so I don't know if this is going to make any sense, uh, to share, but the things that I wish our listeners could hear would be, 'Gosh, I wish you were with me when I was walking with, um, Michelle Robinson, from point A to point B on the first morning of an on-campus event we had called the Design Lab where she was, uh, resonating with a sermon that was preached.' And, uh, she was resonating with, with it so deeply that she was naming. And it was about, um, Eli and Samuel and the sort of youth ministry moment that we find in that biblical text, and one of the things she felt so convicted by was that Samuel, um, had gone to Eli time and time again, and Eli hadn't always, didn't realize that it was the voice of God who was speaking to Samuel. And she was sort of 'Rolodexing,' if I can use that as a verb. Does anybody even know what that is anymore?

**Megan:** Hashtag, we're old.

**Abigail:** That really betrays my age. Um, she was going through the list in her mind. There you go.

**Megan:** I liked the idea of a Rolodex though. I think we should bring it back. You can bring it back.

**Abigail:** Sure, perfect. Um, I'm old, it's fine. Uh, no ageism allowed in this youth ministry space.

**Megan:** No, like, what did I tell you the other day? We were just aging like wine baby.

**Abigail:** Exactly

**Megan:** We are just getting better with each year.

**Abigail:** Oh my word. Um, so yeah, Michelle was kind of going back in her mind through all the times that she had had interactions with the different young people who were on her team, and she felt convicted that maybe she had played that role, that role of, of Eli, um, not really being able to hear the voice of God time and time again. But I think what was so beautiful about that is, um, and, and what the preacher from that event was pointing out is that there's this intergenerational thing that's necessary, um, sometimes in order for us to hear the word of God. So, it actually took her, um, listening well, it took that young person being able to speak up, and it took this third space, um, and this engagement with the Bible, for her to be able to begin to hear afresh the voice of God coming through the young people in her context. So, that was a really long story, but it's those little moments that I wish our listeners could walk into with us. You know, I wish you could have been on that walk. I wish you could hear, Eliseo talk about, um, his experience in the restaurant industry and how that's influenced his youth ministry and young adult ministry. I wish you could hear Lisa, um, I wish Lisa could give you advice about what it's like to navigate church politics and staff dynamics. I think she's really good at it. You know, little things like that. Um,

**Megan:** Yeah. Yeah. I, I'm hearing you say that, and it's calling to mind this moment at the Design Lab, which we did talk about on some of our episodes. Um, maybe all of them, uh, who's to say? Who wrote those? I don't know. Uh, but, um, this, this moment where I recall you, um, getting a, a young person from the congregation in our worship space, and you, uh, you did this sort of real-time, reenactment of really the whole thing that you were trying to drill down during the Design Lab, excuse me, which was that we, that youth ministry isn't necessarily ministry to young people, but ministry with young people. And so, you did this whole thing with the pulpit in Miller Chapel when you had her on the pulpit, and you down below and saying, 'Okay, this isn't what I'm talking about. She's not the one that's necessarily directing me or telling me what to do.'

And then you reversed roles and said the opposite—'You aren't necessarily telling her what to do,' but rather you both got up into the pulpit and you said, 'This is what I'm talking about, you know, and signaled to both of you, that 'Together, we are working together, um, to, to develop these new initiatives and, and this new understanding of what youth ministry is.' Um, and I think about, you know, this, this idea that youth ministry, um, is also the ministry of young people, uh, ministry with young people. Um, and, and that's another moment that I wish I could have, like, bottled up and encapsulated and told in, in a really compelling way so that people could understand really what, again, that's a theme, I think, that has emerged, um, that we're really learning. That's, that's really what we're talking about here.

**Carmelle:** Megan, to jump in there with Abigail's illustration with that young person at the Design Lab, the most, one of the most compelling parts of that for me was the example that Abigail used of this ministry that was looking for something to do with their young people. And they ended up going to, doing something with the local nursing home and, you know, the adults and the young people went together to the nursing home and would go there and just interact with the residents and, you know, have a good time. And that became their youth ministry. And just that image alone, oftentimes when we think about wanting to do something new in youth ministry, we're still thinking about the to. We're still thinking, 'what can we make that the young people can come to and do these things? What can they come to?' But that ministry example that Abigail shared at the Design Lab with that young person—the idea of, okay, our youth ministry is the adults and the young people going to this community of older folks and hanging out with them and being their companions and listening to them. That's our youth ministry, full stop. That doesn't s— that, it's hard to wrap your mind around that when you have been conditioned through seminary, ministry conferences, youth ministry podcasts, similar to this one, that, okay, if you want to do

a cool new thing in ministry, you're just creating another form of a pizza party, package it up, and make it with cooler things and cooler people. And that's the new form of youth ministry. So I loved this idea that if it's ministry with young people, it's youth ministry.

**Megan:** Yes. Abigail was snapping along with this. So, go on.

**Abigail:** I muted myself. I muted myself while I was snapping, so it wouldn't be annoying, but, um, you know, I think, I think, Carmelle, I, I love that example of, I mean, the pizza party is sort of like the age-old, especially like in mainline circles example that we do,

**Megan:** Right—and I think we should just, we should say at the outset, we, um, you know, we shot down pizza parties a lot, uh, over this season. I want to just come down on the side of pro-pizza. I am pro-pizza, I am pro-parties. I am pro-pizza-parties.

**Abigail:** Well, right, and it's an analog for basically just gathering young people together. And which is a very important part of youth ministry. I don't think we're necessarily suggesting that you need to completely do away with that. (*Right, right*) But what we're naming is that, um, you know, I've seen it, I've seen it reversed, too, where adults in a congregation go to young people. What do you want to do? And then it just sort of becomes around. I don't know that the, that the, that the chief end goal of youth ministry is around fun or something? Or meeting desires of young people, which isn't very, um, that's pretty spiritually innocuous, you know, like theologically vapid, you know, that, and all of us know that the discipleship happens in those in-between spaces, in those gray areas, in the van on the way to the retreat, not even like during the worship service that you planned at the retreat, right?

(*Right*) But I think, and honestly, it probably took me a year and a half of doing the project to be able to stand up at that event and pull that young person in and like almost wrap my own head around it. Oh, I think, um, well insert, random young person here, we'll call her 'Hillary.' You know, so I think, you know, if Hillary is passionate about, um, acts of service or acts of justice—and it's something like 88% of the churches who applied to work with us, that was a spiritual practice that really resonated with the young people in their pews—Um, I like that should say something to us. If young people are passionate about acts of service and justice, if that's what this young person is passionate about, how can we come alongside that passion and together, um, discern what it means to be disciples of Christ as we enact that passion out in the world?

Right? And, and so then it no longer becomes, 'Let's hold an event where the, all the Hillarys can come, and they together can do an act of justice. No, let's work with Hillary to design what that may be, and maybe who Hillary wants to engage as our co-conspirators are, um, the retirees, because they're available on Saturday morning, and maybe Hillary alone is working with a group of retirees, and that's youth ministry, because we're doing that work of discipleship in the in-between spaces, and we're talking about the why. Um, and we're pointing out where we see the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit. That's what makes it youth ministry.

**Megan:** One of the themes that has emerged for me and for us in our work internally, we've been talking about this for many years now, and I think we're kind of circling around this, uh, slogan that we've developed, um, yet again, even in this conversation, is this idea that the job of youth ministry—the job description, the, um, you know, the trappings, all the trappings of the job of youth ministry—doesn't match the work of youth ministry, the actual, like calling, vocation, sense of how to engage young people, um, and, and do this thing with them. Um, so this idea of the job not matching the work, and in the

episode on Esperanza Viva, I did, I suggested two potential responsibilities for this new job description that I'm imagining, we're creating as we do this work, and that aligns with what we think is the actual work of, of youth ministry. Um, those two items were I think, uh, one that we become the best students of our contexts. Um, so that was something certainly that I felt like we got in, in many of our Design Fellows that we feature this past season and that I named explicitly in Eliseo. And then, um, the second was that we develop the skills of being a translator in those contexts. We know the context really well, and we learned the people, the players, the places, and we learn how to be a translator in those spaces. I'm wondering what are one or two responsibilities that each of you would name that you would add to that emerging job?

**Carmelle:** I think one of the things, you know, I think maybe it's because of the things that I've, you know, being the program coordinator for this project, for the Log College Project has put me in close contact with many of the Design Fellows in ways that maybe some other cohort opportunities programs may really focus more on the larger, the team. So, I was able to have a lot of individual conversations with them, and that has influenced my, like, advocacy of this idea of pastor as person, which then will influence what I'm going to say. Um, but I think this idea of personal development, um, that is a buzzword because everyone is self-helping everywhere, but I have found that, in many of my individual conversations with some of the Design Fellows, there is still a process of vocational discernment happening.

And the tension that I heard in many of the conversations is that, how do you do that faithfully and innovate and be the expert of youth ministry in your context? Because as much as you may come to an Institute for Youth Ministry or be part of a program to learn, you are hired, oftentimes because the assumption is that you will be the expert, full-stop. Even though we all know that that isn't true, there is the sense that you will be the expert in youth ministry, and that oftentimes means that you will be in the expert in curing my young person of whatever social ailments, issues that they have, or curing our attendance problem. And that those pressures, coupled with—the process of innovation not only changes your ministry, it changes you as a leader, and watching so many of our Design Fellows evolve, shift, change as leaders and how they do any of their ministry, endeavors, activities. Mind you, we had youth pastors, we had lay individuals, we had lead pastors and senior pastors and rectors as part of our program. Being just a part of this changed the way they did ministry, ministry, period. All of the ministries that they were touching and involved in, even if it wasn't directly linked to Log College Project was affected by the learnings and if it affected them. So, what I've seen with, in other contexts, when there is an assumption, there are some churches that are doing this, um, some, some call committees and, uh, different things that are creating job descriptions. I've seen it where one of the things that they built into it is this idea that you will evolve. And so, they do allow you to have personal development time, retreat, time, they build in sabbatical for you, they build in that, there was one I've even seen that actually built in counseling references for you. Um, particularly if your work, um, deals with traumatized, young populations, that you getting that kind of collateral damage of working with them, um, what would it look like to have a youth ministry job description in which the youth minister is seen as a person?

**Abigail:** I hear echoed in what Carmelle's saying, this, um, commitment to practicing and teaching rest and Sabbath. (Yeah) Uh, it's kind of on the edges of what you're saying around personal development, but it's there. And I think, I think rest is a pretty radical concept (yeah) and I think it's, it's true rest, true Sabbath is a pretty radical thing to bring into a ministry. And one of the things that working on another project in my current role has taught me, another podcast actually, where we interviewed just countless

ministry leaders and ask them about their experiences in the midst of COVID-19, and, um, one of the things we took away from that is people are exhausted. And even if you went in and this is so, it highlights our work in the Log College Project. We went into the Log College Project having, obviously, no clue that there would be a global pandemic. So, we were talking about innovation and trying to lead people into conversations and practice around innovation. And then everybody turned into an innovator, whether they wanted to be or not, by virtue of needing to completely reimagine the way that they do ministry, their methodology, in the midst of COVID 19. And I, and one of the things I just have heard echoed time and time again, is how exhausted people are. And I think we're scared to talk about it. (*Yes, exactly*) Yeah, we're scared to talk about it in certain spaces because it's, people are also losing their jobs left and right, also youth ministry has always been a siloed thing in a congregation. And so, if congregations are looking at where they're going to trim their budgets, um, you know, despite the fact that a lot of youth ministry professionals have these kitchen-sink job descriptions that are like, 'please save our church and increase our atten--

**Megan:** Other, other duties as assigned,

**Abigail:** Yeah, other duties as assigned, you know, increase our attendance, and here's some, uh, part-time salary, like great, good luck feeding your family. Um, and so, yeah, I think, listen, we could have a whole podcast episode on what it would mean to introduce the concept of Sabbath and rest, both in practice and in, um, you know, practices of discipleship themselves. Um, I also want to deepen, Megan, I want to go back to something you said about being a student in your own context, and I want to bring in a couple approaches that I would take to that if I were fixing a job description, or if I were interviewing somebody for a youth ministry position, I would be looking for these things. Um, I think that a great minister is somebody who's paying attention to the history of the ministry they're called into leading. (*Yeah*) So, and this is something we've done really hands on in the Log College Project. We asked all of our congregations to go through and look at the history of innovation in their church, discern the points where you had to innovate to get to where you are now, thereby convincing yourself, 'This is not the first time we've done a new thing!' You know, we've been innovative. Somebody had to innovate for this church to be planted, for it to exist. And then I think sort of the side hustle in that, um, in being a student of the history of your context is you're paying attention to what the Spirit has done before. You're listening to that. You're saying, 'Oh, God called us to be this kind of a people in this season. What would it, who is God calling us to be in this new season now? Um,

**Megan:** Yeah. What has changed in the ecology and how are we attending to that change and retooling and being creative yet again, as a people, as God's people in this space.

**Abigail:** Amen. And then this also echoes, um, again, just deepening things that both of you have already said, this echoes something that Carmelle was talking about. But I think, uh, the other qualification I would list on a job description is to be a practiced prototyper. So, I want somebody another way of saying this, a less attractive way of saying this is like somebody who's willing to fail, right? Because the whole concept of prototyping inside of the design thinking process is that you build, you build something and then you test it. You see if it, if there's parts of it that break, and you actually are paying attention to the parts that break, you kind of want to figure out those broken spots so that you can iterate on it, basically redo it and try it again. Right? So, when that comes, in ministry, that would look like, okay, we want to, oh gosh, can I use an example from one of our churches? Sure! Abiding Presence, great example. Pre-COVID, right, they had this whole plan. They were going to, they were going to do a space thing. They were going to say, not like outer space,



**Megan:** They were partnering with Elon Musk and they were,

**Abigail:** Listen, if you Elon Musk invests in your ministry, then you know,

**Megan:** Look, I don't, I don't feel comfortable with that name being on our podcast. I'm going to edit this out. So they were doing a space thing.

**Abigail:** They were doing a space thing where basically, they were just, they discerned that part of their project was going to be this dedicated youth ministry space in their, in their sure, in their building. And then COVID hit, not an option anymore, not an option. And so, they (*not a safe option anyway*), right, not a safe option anyway. So, they had to reimagine, well, this isn't a good example because it's not really like building on a prototype, is it Carmelle? It's like, I can, my Carmelle-angel on my shoulder is like, okay--

**Megan:** I think it is. I think it is because part of what they wanted to do in that space was to create, um, foster the kind of, uh, connection between the young people themselves and between adults and young people in that space, in something of a mentoring may not be right word. I mean, that's an direct quote from Meredith Keseley, but that, that there is some kind of a relationship of, of mutuality, but also this sort of iron-sharpens-iron, um, space and what they, they did with that. They never let go of that seed of an idea. They just pivoted in such a way to say how—

**Abigail:** Parking lots. (*What?*) They pivoted to parking lots; that became their space. But then they introduced a whole new layer, too, which I think is the most dynamic part capitalizing on the passions that young people have for, um, how, how they would deem or where they would deem the church place its energy and its resources, right? That the young people would be kind of leading with their passions. And then in the parking lot, they're doing the vocational discernment work (*Exactly*). They're reading the Howard Thurman and the Martin Luther King Jr. And that's—

**Megan:** So there's still that, that mutuality and mentorship piece, that's still going. They're required to meet with the pastor, to be partnered with other ministry leaders to have that, that component. Um, so that that's still there. It's still a thread that has woven throughout their ideas. They just found another way to do it. What is it, Abigail? We have our friend and colleague Elan, uh, Babchuck, who, um, is, uh, I hope, uh, just a, a lifelong friend from, from here on out with some of the engagement we've had with him. But one of the things he said in a program that I have been doing with him, uh, that has just captivated my heart is that you have to fall in love with the problem, not the solution. And I think what that means in this sort of iterative, innovation space is we have to rethink what we fall in love with.

We tend to, in the church, fall in love with our, our babies, our programs, our ideas, um, our, our methodology for, for accomplishing things. And we lose sight of what we're actually trying to do. What are we actually trying to address? What's the problem? What's the opportunity? Um, the COVID sort of had a way of accelerating and forcing everyone to say, 'wait a minute, how do we do the thing we've always been trying to do? Um, and, and do it in a, in a new way?' And in doing that, I think a lot of congregations have been surprised that it is possible to change, radically, the, the look and feel of your quote unquote program, you know, your, your program, your baby, your worship service, whatever it is. Um, and, and to do something in a, in a new way that still has that thread of what they, they want to be about and what they want to care about, but it looks different.

## Part Three—The Post-Script





**Megan:** I really appreciate you guys taking the time today to have this conversation with me. It was really nice to not just be alone in my closet, talking into a microphone, but to get to see your faces throughout this. Um, one of the things I really like when I listened to a podcast is when the, um, the host asks questions that may or may not have to do with the subject matter at hand to their guests. And though you are not my guests, you are my colleagues, you're just as big a part of this as, as I am. I, um, our listeners have heard my voice a ton over this, uh, these past few episodes, and I would love for them to learn a little bit more about you. So, do y'all mind if I ask you some questions in a rapid-fire style? Okay. We're gonna start with you, Carmelle. Um, so, so let's go. So this is, uh, this is Disrupting Ministry's Rapid-Fire Questions: Carmelle Beaugelin, take one.

**Carmelle:** Oh, my!

**Megan:** Okay. Carmelle, what is your favorite book to give to someone else and why?

**Carmelle:** *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, and it's his journey of discernment, and it has all the mystical things that I love, and there's a little bit of a allegory to scripture in it. It's just a great thing about finding yourself and finding your call.

**Megan:** Awesome. Second question. What is your go-to karaoke song?

**Carmelle:** Uh, anything Selena, but I will go with Bidi-bidi-bom-bom.

**Megan:** Wait, you mean, old school Selena, right? For our, for our listeners.

**Carmelle:** Not Selena Gomez. No offense to her. She's great, but definitely the old-school,

**Megan:** The OG. Okay. And what was the song?

**Carmelle:** Bidi bidi bom bom?

**Megan:** Yes. Bless. All right. Who would you want to play you in your bio pic?

**Carmelle:** Oh my gosh. Janell Monae.

**Megan:** Oh, that hit me deep. That's perfect for you, and I have a lot of feelings about that. Um, okay. Number four. Um, if you came with a warning label, what would you say?

**Carmelle:** Warning: may self-destruct at any point.

**Megan:** Oh God, I love you. All right. And final question. If 16-year-old Carmelle met you today, what's the first thing she'd notice about you?

**Carmelle:** Oh, okay. I guess I'm still kind of cool. Is that such an Enneagram-3 thing to say?

**Megan:** It's so great. Yeah. I'm like, should we out our Enneagram numbers here? Or is it like plainly obvious? It's already out there. I love it. Well, thank you so much, Carmelle.

Okay. Abigail, I'm asking you the same five questions, so that our listeners can get to know you better. And I, I was, um, I did do the kindness of letting Carmelle go first. So, you have, you have a minute now to, to have been forewarned. This is like your favorite thing. (*I hate this*) I know! (*I hate it so much*), I know, but I love you, and so, so to our listeners and, uh, we, we want them to get to know you better. So here



we go, Abigail Visco Rusert, the one and only, uh, what is your favorite book to give someone else and why?

**Abigail:** It's like from rapid-fire to molasses-fire? Um, uh, gosh, I just don't give people books.

**Megan:** You know, I know that that's not true because when I first started working for you, there was, my office had two things on the desk. One was the ridiculous inside joke. (*Ew, don't bring that up*) One was a book.

**Abigail:** Was it The God-bearing Life?

**Megan:** No, it was another Kenda book, though.

**Abigail:** Oh, Practicing Passion?

**Megan:** And I just remember, no, actually it was two books. No, it was, um, Practicing Passion.

**Abigail:** How did... youth ministry, the change one?

**Megan:** Right, exactly. Exactly that. We're big fans. (*You should edit this*) And the second one, the second one was the book on, um, science, like how science tells us, you know, reveals the glory of God. And one of the first things you told me was, 'you're going to be writing for this science symposium.' And I thought, did she, did I put on my resume that I know anything about science? Like, what on earth. But yeah...

**Abigail:** Really, some of the best writing I read on, on a regular basis is *Frog and Toad* with my children. Um, my two-year-old's really into like counting to 10 in books when possible right now, but *Frog and Toad* have this great, uh, yeah, just, just a great window into how best to live your life. So, any *Frog and Toad*.

**Megan:** I think that's a solid answer. Um, children's books are some of the best, so second question. What is your go-to karaoke song?

**Abigail:** I haven't done karaoke in about 10 years. Um, so you're going to need to help me get there. Cause I, I do have a go-to song, but it's uh, oh gosh, this is so embarrassing. Oh no. Before He Cheats" by, um, that country singer.

**Megan:** Okay. Well, I will not know unless it's Dolly Parton, who you're talking about.

**Abigail:** No, she won American Idol that one time... She's blond?

**Megan:** Still, you are saying nothing that is resonating with my lived experience.

**Abigail:** I can't, there's, I mean, (*I don't know the only*) Oh, no, no, no (*You got it. Okay. What, what, what?*)

**Abigail:** Uh, it's a Paula Abdul song. (*That's still not an answer!*) but I can't remember what it's called.

**Megan:** Cold-hearted Snake

**Abigail:** No. Um, oh, that is a good one. No. Opposites Attract? No. (*Ooh, Opposites Attract was a good one.*) Yeah, but it's a different one though. But anyway, it's a Paula Abdul song.



**Megan:** That is not an answer. Okay. Look, I have on video, you lip singing incredibly well to Mariah Carey. Is there no Mariah Carey in the mix? (*I mean*) Are we also dating ourselves, like, very clearly? (*No, I'm going to go with Paula Abdul.*) Listen, children, Paula Abdul used to sing.

**Abigail:** Straight Up Now Tell Me! That's what it is Straight up, straight up [terrible singing] That's it. That's it. (*Uh, what was the name of it, was that Straight Up?*) No, it's called Straight Up Now Tell Me

**Megan:** Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo. (*It's literally called that*) Okay. I believe you. I know. I knew it. I knew it from, from what you said, I just don't know if I buy that it's the title. Okay. These are not very rapid-fire. Here we go again. Who would you want to play you in your biopic? (*No, that wasn't the next one.*) Yes, it was. I'm looking at the questions that I wrote; it's the next one.

**Abigail:** Jennifer Lawrence. (*Oh, obviously, yeah*) I don't look at anything like her, but I want to.

**Megan:** You have the same, you have the same, you have a similar vibe, especially that meme of her (*That's like best compliment that anyone's ever given me.*) Yeah. Well, you know, I love you. And so that's, I, I see you. I love you. I affirm you. I do. Okay. Um, next question. This is when you're really dreading, but I'm going to ask it anyway. Abigail, if you came with a warning label, what would you say?

**Abigail:** Needs many snacks.

**Megan:** That's good. That's good. (*It's true*) All right. Last but not least of this very slow rapid fire. (*Sorry, I hate this*) Abigail, If you were 16—if 16-year-old Abigail met you today, what's the first thing she noticed about you?

**Abigail:** My hair.

**Megan:** What about it?

**Abigail:** She'd probably be like, Ew!

**Megan:** That's good. Okay. You know, I gave you in Carmelle both plenty of advanced warning, and I told you, if you wanted to, you could rapid-fire-question me, and you didn't come up with anything, did you?

**Abigail:** Oh, well I'm happy to. I'm also afraid to generally.

**Megan:** Yeah. That's the safe, I think mostly our listeners have gotten, you know, I, I have this, I have a very studious, professional side of me that can come out when very, very well-practiced. Um, but most of me is this...

## Part Four—Conclusion and Credits

Well, friends, this episode brings us to end of season one of *Disrupting Ministry*. Whether you're an old friend and follower of the IYM's work or a new friend finding your way to the IYM through this podcast, we are so grateful for you and look forward to continuing to build this community. We're taking a break for a few months to get some feedback on this podcast and to dive into conversations with the leaders from the remaining churches in the Log College Project, and we will be back later this spring with more stories of faith communities who are disrupting the status quo in the Church by developing innovative forms of ministry with young people.



Special thanks to Abigail Visco Rusert and Carmelle Beaugelin for today's episode and to my partner in craft and creativity this season, Nii Addo Abrahams, who has edited many of these episodes into the wee hours of the night and has produced such beautiful work. You can follow him on various social channels @\_nickyflash\_, and I recommend you do because he will make you laugh and think, and you'll become a better person. To learn more about the Institute for Youth Ministry, visit our website at [iym.ptsem.edu](http://iym.ptsem.edu)-- or send us an email [iym@ptsem.edu](mailto:iym@ptsem.edu). Be sure also to check out our mothership, Princeton Theological Seminary, at [ptsem.edu](http://ptsem.edu). Until we meet again!