



# YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time

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## *Covenant Presbyterian Church of Columbus, OH*

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By Devon B. Ducheneau, Lead Consultant and Sean Williams, Staff Consultant

[devon@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:devon@ministryarchitects.com)

[sean.williams@ymarchitects.com](mailto:sean.williams@ymarchitects.com)

### **BACKGROUND**

Covenant Presbyterian Church is a progressive faith community in the Arlington district of Columbus, OH. "The mission of the church is an open, accepting community awakening to God's life-giving love together." Church members describe their church family as "loving," "accepting," "relevant," and "family oriented." One person even said the church is "changing and not stagnant" and "we recognize the world is changing and we are changing with the world."

Established in 1953, Covenant is located in the middle of a neighborhood. Some see this as an opportunity, while others see this as a challenge for church growth. Under the steady and faithful leadership of Tracy Keenan, this talented and hip pastor has brought the peace to a congregation that was in turmoil years ago. Being debt free and finishing a large capital

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campaign (with new carpet, a new roof, and remodeled kitchen) and expanding the outreach opportunities for children's ministry, have offered a new found energy for the congregation. Not only is Tracy a natural leader, she recruits and empowers a wonderful staff around her. In these past 12 years, the church is moving forward, keeping their "plant" in order, and being nurtured in a deeper way of faith. Covenant is in a position to move into the future God is preparing them for. The next 62 years could be a time of much fruit reaped from the rewards of this time period.

The membership of the church is around 615 and on an average week, 250 people attend one of the church's three worship services. Covenant is led by Tracy Keenan as head of staff, Katie Kinnison as the associate for spiritual direction, and Jim Mehler (part time parish associate). The program staff are T. Scot Braswell as the transitional director of youth and young adult ministry, Erin Wise as the director of children's ministry, Shane Spicer as the assistant for children's ministry (and most recently, interim part-time youth director for last year), Cherie Brooks as the music director, and Katie Wynkoop, organist, pianist, and children's choir director. This team works well together to keep everything running at Covenant.

Currently, there are about 47 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 21 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship, or one of the youth programs. The youth group represents 12 different schools between middle and high school. There are many memory makers such as the annual mission trip, Montreat Youth Conference, Confirmation, lock-ins, 30-Hour Famine, and Covenant Café. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as a "intimate" and "growing" ministry, while others say it is a "developing and transitioning" ministry.

The church has a 2015 budget of \$770,000. For the year 2015, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$39,000, including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of transitional director of youth and young adult ministry.

There are about six adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The ministry is led by a transitional director of youth and young adult ministry who has been at the church since August 2015. There is also an active youth and young adult commission that reports to the session. This commission meets monthly to work on the monthly schedule, fundraisers, and to support the youth ministry.

The youth room is located in the basement. Walking down the stairway and the hallway, you eventually find the youth room. Going into this room, you see the bright colored walls, comfortable couches, and gaming tables. The youth feel at home in this room, they know it is their space, and enjoy spending time together.

Currently, there are about 38 young adults (18-30 years old) on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 5 of them participate in either worship, leadership opportunities or Theology Pub. The young adult ministry is described by some young adults as "never been thriving" and a "developing ministry," with "lots of opportunities."

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The church has a 2015 budget of \$770,000. For the year 2015, the young adult ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$6,300, including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of transitional director of youth and young adult ministry.

There is one adult volunteer involved on a regular basis with the young adult ministry at Covenant.

The ministry is also led by the transitional director of youth and young adult ministry who has been at the church since August 2015. Young Adult ministry is included under the umbrella of the Youth and Young Adult Commission. There is also an active commission that reports to the session. The Youth and Young Adult Commission meets monthly to work on the monthly schedule, fundraisers, and to support the youth ministry. The focus with young adults is connected with the college exam boxes.

After the Associate Pastor left in the summer of 2014, the youth and young adult ministry has been holding together by volunteers, interim youth staff, and other staff members. Ministry Architects was invited to help with the transition from interim and transitional staffing and enhance the youth and young adults for the congregation and community.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth and young adult ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 45 individuals in 9 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding youth and young adult ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” Youth and young adult ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. Those youth and young adult ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

It has been Ministry Architects’ experience that though these three rents, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, they are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by youth, parents, young adults, staff, and the congregation at large.

**Rent #1: NUMBERS**—A significant percentage of youth and young adults need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church’s ministry. It is important for this target number to be clearly agreed on by the church leaders and the staff. Ironically, when target numbers are not established, the youth and young adult ministry is typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

The consensus is that this rent is not being paid in youth ministry. Overall people in the listening groups were not sure how many youth were engaged in the life of the congregation. A critical mass for youth ministry is missing.

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Covenant has a large number of young adults and college students on the rolls but a small number of young adults participating in the life of the church. The consensus is that they are visibly absent from deeper participation and that this rent is not being paid.

**Rent #2: PROGRAMS AND REGULAR ENGAGEMENT** —In order to “earn the right” to experiment with changes, the youth and young adult leadership needs to provide the church with a few visible, effective youth and young adult programs that give youth, parents, and young adults “something to talk about.”

This rent appears to be paid for the youth ministry. The Sunday evening youth group, a new Sunday school class for youth, memory makers, mission trips, and fundraisers, programs are talked about.

This rent is not being paid at Covenant in young adult ministry. Though there is a young adult Theology Pub and some other organic opportunities, these are reaching only a small number of young adults.

**Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM**—The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the youth staff, volunteers, and the youth and young adults themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and the parents,.

A majority of the youth love being at Covenant, staff are excited, and parents are either hopeful about the future or love what is happening for their young person.

There seems to be a long-term feeling of “trying to do” young adult ministry, but not doing it well. Many people desire more engagement with young adults and all agreed that the enthusiasm rent is overdue.

As the leadership of the youth and young adult ministry develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.” In this sense, the youth and young adult ministry faces parallel challenges.

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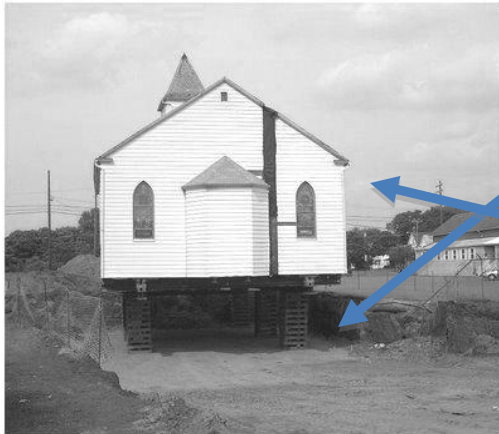
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Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:



1. Laying the Foundation: Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the youth and young adult ministry's *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,
2. Continuing to Do Ministry: Maintaining the *current* youth and young adult ministry in a way that builds the enthusiasm of youth, young adults, their families, the staff and the church at large.

As the youth ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, five rules of thumb – “youth ministry norms” – will be helpful to keep in mind. These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences:

**1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 250 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 25 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 21 youth is slightly below what could be expected from the ministry

**2) 20% Ceiling**—Ministry Architects has also discovered that in many churches, the youth ministry has difficulty growing beyond a level that equals 20% of the weekly worshipping congregation.

Very few youth ministries seem to be able to break beyond this 20% level. Covenant Church might keep in mind, then, that the expected ceiling for this youth ministry is around 50 youth. The road to that level of participation is dependent on increased staffing, volunteers and budget.

**3) \$1,200 per Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$39,000 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Covenant Presbyterian Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 33 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 21 currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded for continued growth.

**4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering the amount of time given to the youth ministry by the transitional director of youth and young adult ministry, Covenant Presbyterian has the equivalent of .375 full time staff. According to this rule of thumb, Covenant Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 19 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration is aligned well to the current needs of

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the ministry, however, does not allow room for much more growth. In order to see the kind of growth the church is excited about, a staffing reconfiguration will be needed.

**5) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth**— Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church’s Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With 6 weekly volunteers, Covenant is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 4 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 20 youth weekly. The current team seems to be the right size for the current ministry of 21 youth. However, if the church wants to expand its impact, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

## **BUILDING BLOCKS TO SUCCESS WITH YOUNG ADULTS**

As the young adult ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, six building blocks to success will be helpful to keep in mind. These are elements of ministry that those who successfully reach young adults and college student most often seem to weave into the fabric of their ministry environment. Later in the report, we will see how these are present in Covenant’s ministry with young adults. Here we will see how they provide a foundation for long-lasting success with this unique demographic.

**1) Leadership Development:** Most young adults are not content to be “pew sitters.” They are eager to be engaged as the next generation of church leadership. If a church does not intentionally mentor its young adults, they will seek out an institution that will.

**2) Authentic & Intergenerational Relationships:** Today’s young adults and colleges students are eagerly seeking out relational connections, not only with their peers but also with older generations. How well a church connects young adults in these relationships is often more important to whatever programming it may choose. Covenant would do well to evaluate how integrated young adults are with the relational fabric of the whole church.

**3) Access to the Deep End:** Young adults are looking beyond attractional ministry and are seeking for access to a deep spiritual culture. Churches who invest in deep and challenging discipleship with young adults often find the most success. Covenant should consider how they are spiritually challenging young adults in their church.

**4) Missional Living:** Young adults carry a burden to change the world and will find themselves drawn to groups and organizations that feel the same. Covenant will find success when they look toward activating this generation of young adults into a Christ-centered mission in their community.

**5) Meaningful Contributions to the Church:** Many churches keep young adults in a “holding tank,” not allowing them to serve or contribute to the overall direction of the church as a whole until they reach a certain age or stage of life. Churches with the most success in engaging young adults find creative and significant ways of drawing young adults into meaningful contributions to the life and leadership of the church.

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**6) Investment in the Ministry:** There is no magic bullet to the investment level that makes a young adult ministry successful. However, churches that make a priority of investing staff, finances, and volunteers will most often find more success with young adults.

## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a single staff person, instability is a predictable result. Ministry Architects has found that the most stable approach to staffing a ministry, particularly in the early stages of a rebuild, is to build a staff of three *different* kinds of people:

- **The Architect:** A person or organization that designs the building plan and ensures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.
- **The General Contractor:** A person or team who manages the flow and sequencing of work, manages the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of “laborers” is in place for each stage of the project.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. In youth ministry, a laborer might have particular skills in relating to youth, in planning and managing events, or in teaching.

Each of these roles is important as the Covenant Presbyterian Church pursues a more sustainable model of youth and young adult ministry. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

- We want to make sure the role of the architect is being played by a person or group. This could be the pastor, the youth and young adult director, or the commission. If an architect is not named, then the ministry could simply move from one event to the next without a clear vision or stated outcomes.
- Sometimes paid staff are not given the time or training to do their important work as the “general contractor” of a complex ministry.
- When a church has not had effective volunteer recruitment and training, has been in a state of transition, and is recreating the plan for the youth and young adult ministry, sometimes the staff is expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- Some churches hire a laborer who is skilled at leading singing, playing games or teaching a Bible lesson. These laborers often mature into an architect or a general contractor, but only if they are given permission, time, and training.
- And with a combined position for youth and young adult ministry, determining the role with each ministry will be essential in building a young adult ministry.

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## **ASSETS FOR YOUTH MINISTRY**

### ***Strengths to protect in the current youth ministry***

#### **Candle Time**

With a majority of youth ministry opportunities, there is typically something the youth love and want to hold onto tightly. The youth of Covenant love “Candle Time.” This is the time at the end of youth group when the youth gather back together and talk about the highs and lows of the week. Also during candle time, they share the things that are hard to talk about and pray for one another. This is a safe space for everyone to share and it is a treasured time. One youth said, “Candle is a rock for me. Whatever is said in candle, stays in candle. You don't feel judged for what you say.” And a youth volunteer said, “Every youth enjoys that, safe time to do this sharing. Gotta have candle time.”

#### **Desire to Dream**

When listening sessions were asked to dream about the future youth ministry program, everyone had a great desire to do so. Dreaming is a huge asset to any ministry. And what was even more wonderful was that the dreams, across the listening groups, were very similar across the generational groups at Covenant. Many people expressed the desire for the youth to have more ownership in youth ministry, to be more involved in local service and mission opportunities, and for the future program to grab the interest of the youth in a way that meets their lives in a constantly changing world. The dreams were about depth, relationships, and hope for these growing disciples.

#### **Financial Support**

Covenant is investing in the lives of their young people. Having a designated staff person to youth ministry is a great start. In addition, the program budget is able to provide for the ministry during the school year. And the congregation supports the annual fundraisers for the summer mission trips with joy and excitement. Covenant Café is an anticipated event by many members of the congregation. The youth recognize how much support they receive from the congregation and are very grateful. Thanks for investing in these amazing young people!

#### **Caring and Dedicated Volunteers**

The youth of Covenant are blessed with caring and dedicated volunteers. These are young adults and adults who are investing in their lives, walking with them on their faith journeys, offering a listening ear for their highs and lows, and loving being present in their lives. One of the youth said the volunteers are “helping us grow as people, it is what they do. They help us grow more confident in our own faith.” These volunteers are also eager to be in a deeper relationship with the youth and impact their faith walk whenever they can. One person shared, “the youth are devoted and the volunteers have large compassionate hearts.” And this team of volunteers really wishes they could do more!

#### **Growing Children's Ministry**

Through the outreach and evangelism efforts of the children's ministry, the children's ministry is growing and welcoming new families into the life of the church. One person said for “the first time in years, the church is growing with young families.” With a growing children's ministry, it is

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an exciting time for youth ministry. One of the areas people mentioned was the childrens' sermons with Puppet (and Jim). One person said, "Puppet is great. Maybe we need other hooks to bring the kids in like Puppet." People are seeing the children come forward for the children's time and are recognizing the need to enhance the youth ministry as these children get older.

### **Special Events and Memory Makers**

Montreat Youth Conference, Youth Sunday, Massanetta Springs, Summer Mission Trips, Cedarpoint, Lock-Ins, 30-Hour Famine, and Presbytery Retreats...to just name a few! In addition to these events and memory makers, members love the Covenant Café to support the mission trip and Adult Forum to learn about the mission trip. Covenant is doing a great job at creating opportunities for their youth that they can then carry with them for life. One youth said, "lock-ins are a chance for us to be together and talk. These are really important as well." Another said, "Everyone who has gone on a mission trip has bonded over different aspects of the trip. The mission trips are amazing." And in reflection of youth groups from previous years, one parent said, "trips raised the camaraderie of the groups and were foundational for living life together. Mission trips were the best time in the youth group."

### **Desire for a Plan**

Planning for the future of Covenant almost seems to be incorporated into the DNA of the people in the listening sessions. Many people talked about the importance of creating a plan and preparing for the future for youth and young adult ministry. One participant said, "Just give me a plan and we can run it." And this summed up the desire for a plan, "we want the youth to know the plan and have a plan." Well said!

### **Parent Involvement**

Parents are a part of youth ministry (and they can always be a greater part of the ministry, too). Whether that means with leading the youth as advisors or behind the scenes, parents and grandparents are involved. The youth might not always want their own parents around, but know their parents are being supportive and engaged in what is happening in their lives and their faith. One youth followed up by saying, "not having parents there is a good thing, but having parents involved on the outskirts would be great." Then a parent said, "I would be willing to volunteer behind the scenes if I am needed, but don't need to be in youth with my child."

## **ASSETS FOR YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY**

### ***Strengths to protect in the current young adult ministry***

#### **Core Group**

What an amazing group of young adults connected to Covenant! Not only do they come to worship, they are in leadership positions, volunteer, and want to grow this ministry. Covenant has such a huge asset for the health of the congregation in the core of these young adults. In addition to this core group, there are many other younger adults who have young families and

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are excited to build relationships with one another and watch their children grow in their faith together.

### **Desire for an Effective Young Adult Ministry**

Creating a young adult ministry is a huge endeavor. And it is one that Covenant wants to really explore. Covenant's core group of young adults are not the only ones wanting young adult ministry. People in every listening group had a desire to discover how to reach out to young adults and create mission and ministry opportunities with and for these amazing people. Creating the college exam boxes is a wonderful way to reach out to the college students. Theology pub is a great way to engage young adults as well. "UKirk at OSU would be great to make sure it is really available to students." One participant shared, "we want young adults to know they are always welcome here and Covenant is a great place to call home." And another person said, "has anyone reached out to the young adults who have graduated from the programs of the church? If not, we need to do a better job at that." One young adult said, "I would love to see it grow from the core of 6 to about 20 people. We could do different things- volunteer here and there, go to events like a gallery hop, wine fest, or volunteer event. Maybe even more social and relational things where we can do things together."

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## **CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY**

### ***Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward***

#### **Staff Transitions and Expectations**

Change is hard! While there has been excellent, long-term leadership for the youth ministry in the recent past, there has also been some significant transition in the past two years. A youth said we've had "lots of transition with the staff" and a church member said "We need someone who's going to be here for awhile." People are ready to move forward but will need to continue to be patient and understanding during potential seasons of change. This has also created the desire for a "superstar" youth minister that will be the solution to all the challenges of the program. An obsessive focus and reliance on staff will not likely empower the staff to be effective. Apart from the development of a long-term infrastructure, commitment from a team of volunteers, and a clear design for future effectiveness, a staff member will not be the answer that many are hoping for.

#### **Volunteer Training and Guidance**

While many of the volunteers are committed and consistently present, it is clear that they have received little equipping, direction, accountability and evaluation. Background and safety checks are being done but, aside from that, there is no training for the volunteer staff. A system for volunteer recruiting is lacking, as well as job descriptions – including time commitments, responsibilities, and sources for support – for new and current volunteers. One volunteer said "There are job descriptions for leadership positions but not volunteers." Another said that "there is no training" offered. Ongoing training for and supervision of the volunteers ensures the safety of all involved in the youth ministry.

#### **Fuzzy Vision**

The current staff, volunteers, parents and youth are passionate about the youth ministry; they want to see marvelous things happen. However, there was no articulation of any kind of vision for the youth ministry in the listening groups – it was a noticeable absence. One parent said "We don't know what's going on in youth group." And the desire for "more about goals, the mission, and plan of the program for the year" was shared by many. Without a clear target, parents, youth, and leaders will become confused and frustrated about what is happening and why.

#### **Control Documents**

The youth ministry at Covenant is lacking the basic documents and systems necessary for the foundation of a successful program. Attendance is not tracked, there is not a calendar of events or youth directory, major event notebooks don't exist – these are examples of the missing systems that help a ministry run smoothly and achieve sustainability. Parents shared things like there is "no annual calendar" and there are "no more monthly calendars." Without this adequate framework it is difficult to provide the support needed for growth.

#### **Missing Pieces of the Puzzle**

There was general agreement among parents and leaders that communication has been inconsistent at best and absent at worst. They didn't seem to have a good understanding of

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what is going on in the youth program. One parent said, “We need good organization and communication.” Communication via “texts, social media and email” are “sporadic.” So while there are email lists, text groups and social media accounts, these aren’t being adequately or effectively used.

## **Moving On Up**

Some parents of a larger class of 6<sup>th</sup> graders are anxious about their children being a part of the youth group at this time, especially in the current format with the middle school and high school combined. One said of the current programming that “some events are more realistic for older youth.” After participation in the effective programs of the children’s ministries there is not a strategic plan to help the children (and their parents) move in to the youth ministry. There is a general sense of confusion and there are no special events or traditions as a part of this important transition. And with large 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes right behind this 6<sup>th</sup> grade class, there is the potential for a large group of new youth joining the program over the next few years, so a helpful and meaningful transition plan needs to be in place. Currently, this should be, but isn’t, an exciting beginning to a new era in their involvement at the church.

## **Separation Anxiety**

It’s hard to find a shirt that fits a 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grader, and the same is true for youth ministry. While seeing value in time for all youth to be together, many listening group participants articulated that it is a challenge to address issues and have age appropriate conversations when the two groups are combined. Comments like “we need to have more separation” and that the youth “don’t need to be together all the time” was echoed by many parents. Realizing that with the current numbers it won’t always be possible to split the group, it will be important to find times and ways for the two groups to have separate discussions, events, and more.

## **Missing Rites of Passage**

The natural transitions in the lives of youth, often marked with ceremony and celebration, seem to be missing or underplayed. At these pivotal points it appears that the bridge is out, including the bridge between children’s ministry and youth ministry, between confirmation and the life of the church, between middle school and high school and between high school and adulthood. One parent simply said that there was “no transition for children to youth group.” It seems that there are other key times of transition as youth progress through the ministry being overlooked. While there are events for confirmands and graduates, neither seem to be particularly meaningful or memorable experiences, and there is the great potential many other celebrations during a young person’s time in the youth ministry.

## **Facilities**

While there is a dedicated space for the youth in the basement of the church, the area is not well maintained, possibly underutilized and hard to find. In response to a question about the room, one youth said “Where is that?” There is nice furniture, game tables and media in the space, but it needs to be cleaned and organized. We heard that there is “cool potential” for the room and for the youth to be involved in the upkeep of and plan for the space. This would give them true ownership and pride in this area of the church that is dedicated to them and their ministry. A church member said they hoped that this could be a “safe space for the youth.”

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## Ownership

There is a strong desire, from youth, parents, leadership and the congregation in general, for the youth to really own their ministry. Many hope that the youth will have opportunities to give input, help make decisions and really feel heard and listened to. And staff said they want “input and ownership from the youth.” This will allow for many of the favorite activities and events to continue but also create opportunities for something new. One listening group participant said that the youth group should “look like something that is their own.” The leadership of the youth ministry also needs to be more involved in dreaming and planning for the program.

## Parental Support

Parents in the listening sessions expressed a strong desire to be in deeper community with each other. There was much discussion about the need for opportunities to meet one another and to develop support communities with one another. One parent simply stated that there is just “not a lot of activities for the parents.” Similarly, another said that while there are “events for other parents” there doesn’t seem to be “anything specific for youth parents.” A clear need exists to create opportunities for the parents to feel better connected and more supported by one another and the church.

## Sunday Mornings

The church and youth ministry is missing an opportunity for fellowship, education and worship with the youth on Sunday mornings. A parent said that “Sunday School is supposed to be happening but there’s nothing for youth right now.” With the lack of a Sunday School time, some youth are attending worship, some are volunteering in unhelpful ways, some are wandering the building and some just aren’t around. Confirmation has been offered in the past but there isn’t clarity on when this happens, who it is for and what is involved. Plus there is no programming for youth not participating in Confirmation when in session. Sunday mornings could be a special time for the youth that are present to be together and grow in their faith, but it just isn’t happening right now.

## Intergenerational Opportunities

There is a longing among parents and the larger congregation for youth not just to be involved in the youth ministry, but also in the larger life of the church. There are some key times each year when the youth interact with the congregation, primarily related to fundraising for mission trips and in worship settings. But this could happen more frequently and in a variety of other ways. One church member shared that “there’s not much programming that mixes everyone together.” And many other listening group participants expressed this need for greater integration and more intergenerational experiences.

## CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

### *Obstacles to moving the young adult ministry strategically forward*

#### Define Young Adults

Over and over again it was stated that “we want more young adults.” But while there is a

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committed core of young adults at Covenant, this group, and the church at large, isn't quite sure who is and/or could be a part of their ministry. Some consider college students in this demographic, some think of graduate students and post college singles as the target and some believe it includes young married couples, either with or without children. It might be one, some or all of these groups, but it will be difficult to move forward without better understanding who Covenant believes is a part of this ministry. And it is difficult to know the best ways to reach out, for invitations and input, to other young adults in the church and community without clarity on who might and could be included.

### Clarity of Direction and Desire

Covenant definitely wants to meet the needs of young adults, but it was the general consensus that "not much is happening." There isn't any clarity on what could be or should be happening. Young adults shared that they want Bible study, they want to serve together, they want fun fellowship opportunities, but they're not sure which to do, or when and how to do it. Young adults and church members alike said that "there's not much geared for young adults" at Covenant. And one young adult said "I don't have something pushing my faith, challenging me." It will be important to take time discern what God is calling Covenant to offer young adults at this time and place.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 20 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth and young adult ministry. Target May 2017 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the youth and young adult ministry knowing that incremental successes will be seen throughout the renovation.
- 2) Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
- 3) Present this report to the Session of Covenant, requesting they endorse an 20 month strategic design process for the youth and young adult ministry.
- 4) Establish a Youth Ministry Renovation Team that will report regularly to the Transitional Youth and Young Adult Minister and Senior Pastor. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the weekly volunteers and staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation Team focuses on the recommendations below. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
  - I. Work with the youth ministry leadership to **address the immediate pressure points** facing the ministry as they transition toward sustainability.
  - II. Establish a consensus for the direction of the ministry and take responsibility for **implementing the strategic, long-term changes** recommended in this report.
- 5) Establish a Young Adult Task Force that will solely focus on the needs and growth of the young adult ministry at Covenant. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will lead and own the young adult ministry, ensuring that they begin meeting often in order to focus on the following:

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- Doing the foundational work of building the new young adult ministry.
- Becoming experts in understanding and working with young adults.
- Building intentional relationships with young adults within their own lives.

6) Engage the services of Ministry Architects to take responsibility for:

- Working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline.
- Assisting the youth and young adult ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the youth and young adult ministry.

## **RENOVATION TEAM TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points**

*(Accomplish these urgent tasks first to create a healthy climate conducive to change.)*

**Pressure Point #1: Create the Youth Renovation Team** – Transition the current Youth and Young Adult Commission in to the Youth Renovation Team.

- Add several non-anxious, goal-oriented people to this team, pulling from other leadership roles in the church if needed, to prioritize helping lead the youth ministry through this process.
- From the existing members of the commission, create a task force for youth fundraising to continue the work of raising funds through the year for youth mission trips.
- Also from the existing members of the commission, and with the possible addition of more members, create a task force for young adults to prioritize the direction and needs of this ministry.

**Pressure Point #2: Establish a Young Adults Task Force** – Form the team from current young adult members of the Youth and Young Adult Commission, and invite other interested and invested young adults and/or congregation members to join. Follow these steps that will provide a **new way forward in ministry** with young adults that draw them deeply into the life and leadership of the church.

**Step 1: Equip a Guiding Coalition:** After recruiting the Task Force, empower them to become the experts for young adult ministry in your church and develop plans for moving forward.

**Step 2: Get to Know the Unknown:** As a Task Force, commit to a strategy of intentional and incarnational connections with young adults.

**Step 3: Identify the Target:** Hold a **Vision Retreat** in order to create a vision for the new reality of the young adult ministry resulting in the following:

- A vision statement for the ministry that will be built.
- A set of core values to guide the future of the ministry.
- Clear 3-year goals with 1-year benchmarks to move the ministry forward.

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- An organizational chart that clearly outlines the approaches to the stage level (not age level) groups. Consider college ministry, singles ministry, and young couples (married, dating, engaged).

**Step 4: Develop Relational Foundations:** Develop a clear strategy that places the foundation for the ministry on relational groupings, rather than scheduled events. Consider a model of Life Groups that are led by equipped leaders and from which other experiences flow.

**Step 5: Invest in Millennial Mission:** Create a missional living game plan that will help the relational groups engage in creative missional living that they can own for themselves. This provides a foundation of activating and sending young adults, rather than focusing on building a program.

**Step 6: Give them a voice:** Gather the Task Force and other stakeholders together to craft plans for integrating young adults into the life of the church resulting in:

- A **Relational Game Plan** for securing intergenerational foundations throughout the church.
- A **Leadership Game Plan** for connecting young adults in key leadership arenas.
- A **Discipleship Game Plan** for helping young adults develop skills and tools for following Christ as adults.

**Step 7: Plan the Next Steps:** Re-evaluate existing plans for effectiveness and focus on the next steps of **Leadership Development** and **Missional Living**.

**Pressure Point #3: Build, Train, and Empower the Team** – Train current youth ministry volunteers, and recruit new volunteers as needed, to ensure that all volunteer needs are covered and individuals are prepared to lead in youth ministry.

- Plan regular meetings to provide training that will empower volunteers to lead confidently; communicate with volunteers and ask them to make this a priority.
- Make sure that all volunteers have completed the church's child protection process.
- Complete results-based job descriptions for all volunteer positions and communicate clear expectations for each position.
- Make a list of any immediate volunteer positions that need to be filled; create a list of 20 potential volunteers and begin calling them personally.

**Pressure Point #4: Communication and Marketing** – Create clear communication (prior to activities and events) and marketing (after activities and events) plans for effective and timely information sharing with the youth, parents, and church at large.

- Make a list of all means of communication that are available at the church and in the youth ministry; note the methods, timelines, etc. in which content is included in each.
- Create a document with all upcoming regular activities and special events, including dates, costs, locations, deadlines and other pertinent details.

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- During regular activities and special events, keep track of successes, highlights and stories that need to be shared and celebrated.
- Be intentional about and consistent in getting all of this information “out” regularly in as many ways as possible.

**Pressure Point #5: Form a Tween Ministry** – Create a ministry specifically designed for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to help with the transition between children’s and youth ministries.

- Gather parents of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to cast vision for this new ministry and get input on programming ideas, as well as best days and times for events.
- Recruit leadership for Tween programs, ensuring that the Children’s director and youth director are collaborating on planning and involved in leading in some way.
- Communicate with the congregation, send invitations to all families of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders and work with the youth ministry on ways for youth to be involved as a means of preparing for the transition from this ministry in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

**RENOVATION TEAM TASK #2: *Establishing a consensus for the direction of the youth and young adult ministry and the creation of its infrastructure, including the completion of the following tasks:***

**BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND STABILITY**

- **Host a “Quick Start” Retreat:** Invite the Renovation Team, Young Adult Task Force, key volunteers, and youth staff to participate in a Quick Start Retreat in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The retreat tackles the items that need to be done first, and builds momentum for the youth and young adult ministry renovation process.
  - Meet with staff to review the report and identify current status of challenges and recommendations to create next steps for the Renovation Team.
  - Renovation Team would meet to orient themselves to the job ahead.
  - Renovation Team would take the next steps from the staff and begin to assign who will supervise over what recommendations/pressure steps.
  - Calendar dates involving Renovation Team would be scheduled.
  - A plan for concrete communication between the Renovation Team and staff would be determined so that all parties feel they’re “in the know.”
  - The Young Adult Task Force would meet to orient themselves to the job ahead and meetings would be scheduled.
  - The following documents are developed during the Quick Start Retreat, and within two weeks after the Quick Start Retreat, they are finalized:
    - There is a finalized version of the Calendar for all weekly programs and major special events from September 2015 through August 2016.
    - There are results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth and young adult ministry. The job descriptions cover all current positions and also include additional, non-

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threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

- There is a clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth and young adult ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
- There is a broad “fishing pond” list of at least 20 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
- Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth and young adult ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
  - A ministry mission statement
  - A statement of values
  - A set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks
  - An organizational structure for the ministry
- **Christian Formation:** Gather a team for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of the youth ministry and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
  - Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
  - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission trip”).
- **Compliance Documents:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and all adults working with any youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth and young adult activities and develop an attendance system that allows for easy access to weekly participation numbers.

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- **Youth Room Update:** Spend time cleaning, updating and defining purpose for the areas in the youth room. Give youth an opportunity to take part in planning for and working on this space.
- **Marketing:** Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, youth, leaders, and the broader church to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.
- **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, youth, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the youth page of the church's website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
- **Youth and Young Adult Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth and Young Adult Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth and young adult directory, a 12 to 18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major youth and young adult ministry event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2016. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.
- **Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach:** Invite Ministry Architects to play the "coach" role during this renovation period. Ministry Architects would offer experienced direction for the building of an infrastructure for the youth and young adult ministry and provide ongoing coaching for the youth ministry staff members as well as the Renovation Team.

## DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth and young adult ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each youth and young adult ministry staff member develop a "rhythmic week" including a Sabbath and "balcony" time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth and young adult ministry and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some who will do relational ministry with youth and young adults while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a "fishing pond" list of at least 20 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

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- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth and young adult workers at the beginning of each school year.
- **Student/Young Adult Leadership Development:** Develop a written game plan for a system that gives increasing load-bearing responsibility for mentoring and ministry leadership to youth and young adults.
- **Develop a Sustainable Staffing Model:** Keeping the Ministry Architects “architect,” general contractor,” and “laborer” analogy in mind, develop an appropriate long-term staffing model including the professional and volunteer components, for the youth and young adult ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth. Within this staffing model, determine which role is the best fit for the current staff member and develop volunteers around that person in the other roles. That is, the current staff member moves from being a “genius” to being the “genius maker.” Liz Wiseman’s book *Multipliers*, offers useful tips for making that shift.

## DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2016-2017 school year.
- **Parent Support:** Sponsor and execute an encouraging parent support event and create mechanisms for engaging the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.
- **College Ministry:** Develop a game plan to reach out to the youth who have graduated from the youth program. Establish ongoing communication with them throughout the school year and when home from college for breaks.
- **Climate Control:** Harness the desire of the youth to have a friendly and welcoming environment. Recruit and train a team of youth who are committed to creating a climate of welcome and friendship in the ministry. (*Thriving Youth Groups* by Jeanne Mayo would be a good “cookbook” for the group).
- **Welcome Squad:** Recruit, train, and deploy 5-10 youth at each program with the task of creating a welcoming environment for new youth. Teach them how to meet new youth and to guide new youth into the program. Use this as an opportunity to help the welcome squad follow-up with new youth who come to programming and provide a relational engagement into the ministry.
- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth, parents, and young adults to make a difference in the world, as well as their local community. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as, regional, and possibly international missions. Evaluate the current mission trips for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **Integration:** Develop a strategic plan for helping the youth and young adults become an integral part of the whole church, weaving the youth and young adult ministry into the fabric of the entire church.

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- **Spiritual Depth:** Develop a plan to intentionally take youth and young adults deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments. This plan may include small groups and gifts-based service teams.
- **Non-parent Recruitment:** Create a game plan to target specific demographics in the congregation when recruiting volunteers.
- **Ownership:** Create a game plan to encourage a culture where everyone feels valued and equally regarded. Foster a culture that all adults, regardless of their station in life, feel passionate about raising and supporting youth in their Christian faith.
- **Confirmation:** Develop a Confirmation plan with the assistance of the clergy and input from a key group of parents. Determine the duration of the program, what age it is to take place, etc.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
  - Welcome and connect the new 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  - Welcome and connect the new 9<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the high school ministry
  - Launch the church's high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they are surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults

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## PROPOSED TIMELINE AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

*The following provides Covenant Presbyterian Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term youth ministry.*

*Many churches choose to use the services of Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this infrastructure-building process. If the church would like Ministry Architects to provide more specialized consulting in certain areas, particularly for the 20-month transition, we are available to help.*

### September 2015

#### Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

##### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Session of the church for the strategic renovation of the youth and young adult ministry and the Session of the church has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Retreat has been scheduled for October.
- The Renovation Team for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Retreat.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the youth and young adult ministry. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The church's child protection policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed youth and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants felt energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.
- The 2015-2016 youth ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates are on the church's calendar.
- A Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for January and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth and young adult ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

**Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite**

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## October 2015

### Focus: Volunteers, Quick Start Retreat, Curriculum, Budget

#### Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the pressure points listed in this report including:
  - The task force for youth fundraising has been organized and set a time to meet.
  - Potential new volunteers have been contacted.
  - A detailed list of all means of communication has been created.
  - Parents of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders have had a meeting to brainstorm how the new tweens ministry will work best.
  - The Young Adult task force has been established, with current Youth and Young Adult Commission members, and new young adults and church members have been invited and joined.
- A fishing pond of 20 potential volunteers in the youth ministry has been created.
- A Quick Start Retreat has taken place in which the renovation process was launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed. The retreat tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the youth and young adult ministry renovation process.
- Promotion of the Visioning Retreat has begun.
- All volunteer needs for the 2015-2016 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the current school year and distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they are trained to implement the curriculum.
- A detailed 2016 budget for the youth and young adult ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Meet with youth, parents, and volunteers interested in updating and cleaning the youth room. Plan a workday sometime in the next two months to implement decisions made.

*Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1/2 day offsite*

## November 2015

### Focus: Communications, Compliance, Attendance Tracking

#### Outcomes:

- Work has continued on the pressure points listed in this report including:
  - The task force for youth fundraising has met, determined the fundraisers for the school year and divided responsibilities amongst the team.
  - Regular communication about upcoming youth events is happening.
  - Plans for the Tween Ministry have been determined and communicated with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade families and the congregation.

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- The Youth Adult task force has met to determine potential members of the ministry and what they would like to do over the next several months.
- All programs have adhered to the child protection policy as laid out by the church.
- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- Background checks (or other screening methods) have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the church's child protection policy.
- Copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained. Permission slips for each offsite event in addition to standard medical release forms for the entire year have been created.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth and young adult ministry programs has been created and implemented.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## December 2015

### Focus: Pressure Points, Calendar, Participation Goals

#### Outcomes:

- Relax.... Breathe...
- Work has been completed on the pressure points listed in this report including:
  - Successes, highlights and stories from youth activities and events are being shared and celebrated.
  - The Tween Ministry has begun.
  - The Young Adults have set a calendar of activities for the next few months and have communicated these with the congregation, have reached out to potential new young adults and have decided on a point person for each schedule activity.
- All pressure points have been addressed.
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2016.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2017 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## January 2016

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## **Focus: Calendar, Communication, Volunteer Training, Visioning**

### **Outcomes:**

- A Visioning Retreat with all major stakeholders has occurred producing visioning documents for the youth ministry (mission statement, core values, goals and structure).
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- Communication methods currently being used to promote the youth and young adult ministry and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers received support and training in their specific roles. A “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- Work has begun on the 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar.
- The summer 2016 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.
- All the work to clean and update the youth room is complete; create an on-going list of other needs and plans for the space.
- Each youth and young adult staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

*Ministry Architects Option: 3 days onsite, 1/2 day offsite*

## **February 2016**

### **Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Calendar, Continuing Education**

#### **Outcomes:**

- The 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2017 including a Fall Kick-off.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
  - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
  - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
  - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2016-2017 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.

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- Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2016-2017.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite*

## March 2016

### Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Christian Formation Retreat, Major Event Notebooks

#### Outcomes

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments necessary to improve the work being done.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and calendared for the youth and young adult ministry staff.
- A Christian Formation Retreat has been scheduled for 2016. The retreat will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each youth event.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## April 2016

### Focus: Marketing, Database

#### Outcomes:

- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth and young adult ministry.
- Work on the youth database has begun, collecting the most recent information for families and youth. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families and youth. Each youth has been classified in the following categories:
  - Active Youth** are the ones whose families are members and have attended at least once in the past year – plus visitors who have become a regular part of the group. They should show up in your printed youth ministry directory.
  - Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you'll want to regularly pursue these youth, whether they ever show up or not.

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**Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.

**Visitor Inactive** are the ones who may have visited, but you are confident they will never become a regular part of the group. This group requires no follow up. But you'll want to keep their information for the occasional big event to which you'll want to invite everyone you know.

**First Timers** refer to visitors who have attended a program for the first time. You'll want to have a process for capturing their information on their first visit and follow up with them within one week of their visit.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## May 2016

**Focus: MIA, Christian Formation, Volunteers**

### Outcomes:

- Interested staff, volunteers, and parents have gathered for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum. At the retreat, the team
  - Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Developed a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
  - Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- A volunteer thank you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all youth volunteers.
- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- Volunteer recruitment has continued.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored for the youth and young adult ministry staff.

*Ministry Architects Option: 3-day onsite, 1/2 day offsite*

## June 2016

**Focus: Database, Volunteers, Major Event Notebooks**

### Outcomes:

- A database of all youth and their families has been compiled and each person is "tagged" with a category

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- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth ministry has been updated with that new information.
- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- All volunteer needs for the 2016-2017 school year for youth ministry have been filled.
- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the youth staff to pass along to the next year's coordinator.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## July 2016

### Focus: Fall Kick-off, Curriculum, Benchmarks

#### Outcomes:

- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited to begin planning for the start of the fall youth ministry programs.
- The effectiveness of this past year's curriculum has been reviewed and decisions have been made for any necessary changes for the upcoming school year.
- A game plan has been created to develop student leadership in the youth ministry. The youth have been given charge of creating a welcoming environment.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## August 2016

### Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Directory, Leadership Launch, Curriculum

#### Outcomes:

- Major event notebooks for each major event for the youth ministry have been handed out to this year's event coordinators.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The church's child protection policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- With the most recent information on youth and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers have been created to be distributed at the Fall Kick-off.
- New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been

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created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## September 2016

### Focus: Compliance, Fall Kick-off

#### Outcomes:

- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- All youth programs have adhered to the church's child protection policy.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed youth and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants feel energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.
- Develop a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan for the youth and young adult ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth and young adults.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## October 2016

### Focus: Reflection and Re-Assessment, Budget

#### Outcomes:

- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth and young adult ministry.
- Current pressure points have been named
- A detailed 2017 budget for the youth and young adult ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- *Insert items pertinent to the church*

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## November 2016

### Focus: Participation Goals, Preventative Maintenance Calendar

#### Outcomes:

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- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2018 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.
- Building on the desire of youth and parents to make a difference in the world and their community, a clear, well publicized calendar has been created for involvement in local agencies, as well as, regional, and possibly international missions. Current mission trips have been evaluated for their effectiveness.
- A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2016-2017 school year has been written and implemented.
- In an effort to harness the desire of the youth to have a friendly and welcoming environment, the staff has recruited and begun training a team of youth who are committed to creating a climate of welcome and friendship in the ministry (Thriving Youth Groups by Jeanne Mayo would be a good “cookbook” for the group).

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## December 2016

### Focus: Strategic Staffing, Summer Calendar

#### Outcomes:

- With the changes in the youth and young adult ministry, the volunteer staffing to meet the size and scope of the youth and young adult ministry has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- Work has begun on the 2017 summer calendar.
- An encouraging parent support event has engaged the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.
- A game plan has been established for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges that have:
  - Welcomed and connected the new 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  - Welcomed and connected the new 9<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the high school ministry
  - Launched the church’s high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they have been surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## January 2017

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## Focus: Benchmarks, Volunteer Training, Calendars

### Outcomes:

- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers received support and training in their specific roles. A “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- Work has begun on the 2017-2018 youth ministry calendar.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- The summer 2017 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.
- A written strategic plan for helping the youth become an integral part of the whole congregation, weaving the youth ministry into the fabric of the entire church, has been created.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## February 2017

### Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Young Adult Manual

#### Outcomes:

- A Young adult Ministry Manual (both hard copy and digital) has been completed, including
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
  - Volunteer directory
  - Results-based job descriptions
  - Game plans and new initiatives
  - Meeting agendas and minutes for the young adult ministry design team
  - Budget and other financial documents
  - Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
- The 2017-2018 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2018 including a Fall Kick-off.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
  - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
  - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
  - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2017-2018 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.

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**March 2017**

**Focus: Youth Engagement, Youth Ministry Manual**

**Outcomes:**

- The Youth Ministry Manuals (both hard copy and digital) have been completed, including
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
  - Volunteer directory
  - Volunteer training agendas and notes
  - Attendance records
  - Annual calendar
  - Results-based job descriptions
  - Game plans and new initiatives
  - Meeting agendas and minutes for Renovation Team.
  - Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
  - Budget and other financial documents
  - Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
  - Compliance documents
- A group of 5-10 youth at each program have been recruited, trained, and charged with the task of creating a welcoming environment for new youth. They have been trained on how to meet new youth and to guide new youth into the program.
- A game plan has been written to reach out to the youth who have graduated from the youth program. Ongoing communication with them has been established throughout the school year and when home from college.
- A written game plan for inviting specific, non-parent demographics in the congregation when recruiting volunteers has been implemented.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

**April 2017**

**Focus: Confirmation, Going deeper for youth**

**Outcomes:**

- A Confirmation plan has been developed with the assistance of the clergy and input from a key group of parents. The plan included the duration of the program, what age it is to take place, and what will be taught.

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- A written plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments has been implemented. This plan has included small groups and gifts-based service teams.
- A game plan to encourage a culture where everyone feels valued and equally regarded has been created and implemented. It has fostered a culture that all adults, regardless of their station in life, feel passionate about raising and supporting youth in their Christian faith.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite*

## May 2017

### Focus: Sustainability

#### Outcomes:

- A two-day onsite reflection and reassessment retreat has occurred with the Ministry Architects staff. This includes several tasks including:
  - A timeline for the next 12 months has been created that included game plans for the current pressure points and items from the online diagnostic.
  - Game plans have been put in place to sustain the processes and procedures during the renovation.
  - The staff and Renovation Team have celebrated what God has done with their 18-month investment.
  - The Renovation Team has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the youth volunteers and focusing on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- Ongoing coaching has been secured and a sustainability plan has been put in place.

*Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1/2 day offsite*

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## The *Ministry Architects* Team Serving Covenant Presbyterian Church



**DEVON DUCHENEAU- LEAD CONSULTANT**  
devon@ministryarchitects.com  
941-525-6671

Devon serves as the pastor at Wintergarden Presbyterian Church in Port Charlotte, FL. She has a passion for working within congregations and ministries seeking to learn where God is calling them next. She has been working with children, youth, and adults since 1993 and loves being with God's people. After graduating from Presbyterian College (Go Blue Hose!) with a degree in Christian Education, Devon spent a year as an Interim Director for Youth and Adult ministry (and dabbled in Children's ministry). After this interim year, Devon attended Columbia Theological Seminary ('06) and University of Georgia ('06), where she received a MDiv and a MSW in Community Empowerment and Program Development. After serving small churches as a redevelopment pastor in West Virginia, Devon relocated to Venice, FL with her daughter Emma and enjoys being close to the beach and the rest of her family within a few miles.



**SEAN P. WILLIAMS**  
sean@ministryarchitects.com  
717-271-1221

Sean began working in youth ministry in 1997 and has served as Youth Minister in United Methodist Churches in Texas, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. He is currently the Interim Director of Youth Ministries at Fourth Presbyterian Church (USA) in Greenville, SC. Sean graduated from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX with a B.A. in Theology, and continues to learn and study in a variety of fields, including leadership, economics, theology and more. Sean lives outside of Greenville, SC with his wife, Jenn, their son Parker and daughter Sybil.



**JEN DEJONG- VICE PRESIDENT OF INNOVATION**  
jen@ministryarchitects.com  
217-691-8673

Jen began working in youth ministry in 2002 as the Youth Program Coordinator at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, TN. She currently serves on the Ministry Architects executive team, overseeing the work with many of our churches. Jen graduated from Vanderbilt University with a B.S. in Cognitive Studies and a minor in Communications. She also earned a M.S. at Vanderbilt in Developmental Psychology with a special emphasis on parental involvement in teenagers' extracurricular activities. Jen currently resides in Springfield, IL with her husband Marc, their daughters Maria and Rose, and their two dogs.

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