



YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Clemson, South Carolina

January 13, 2015

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BACKGROUND

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church is a tight-knit community of disciples who share God's love with the community and the world. A church of rich history, Fort Hill Presbyterian Church was the first church to serve the communities of Calhoun and Clemson College. Beginning with thirty-three charter members, worship services were conducted on the second floor of Bogg's Store (now Calhoun Corners Restaurant) until April 1896, when the congregation occupied their newly constructed building at the church's present site. Church members describe their church family as "transitioning," "friendly," "flexible," and "like home."

After a 27-year long pastorate and a two-year interim, the current head of staff has been in place since 2009. In recent years, the church has grown and begun putting mechanisms and systems in place to support the staff and congregation. Campus ministry remains a primary mission of the church. The church is comprised of local families, students, and retirees new to town that are living "on the lakes". The church feels blessed with people and resources. Since 2009, there has been 100% turn over in staff, which has allowed for new roles to be developed and expanded.

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Renovations and updates to facilities is a driving force in the capital campaign that will be launching in 2015. The architects' plans are being reviewed in "town hall meetings" and the implementation of a four-phase plan for improvements is set to begin this summer.

The membership of the church is around 786 and on an average week, 329 people attend one of the church's two worship services: an early service in Tartan Hall or the late service in the sanctuary at 10:30AM. The pastoral staff is comprised of three pastors: a head of staff, an associate pastor, and a university minister. This Sunday, the Associate Pastoral Nominating Committee was approved by the congregation to search for an additional associate pastor, with an emphasis on youth ministry and mission.

The youth ministry meets Sunday Mornings, Sunday evenings, and the high school group meets additionally on Wednesday nights. There are a variety of mission trips, retreats, lock-ins, and major events throughout the year. Confirmation usually takes place in the eighth grade during Sunday School and also includes retreats and connection with a mentor. The youth play a role in the larger life of the church through serving as youth elders, ushering in worship, and assisting at various events with children. Currently, there are approximately 45 6th through 12th graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 28 participate in either Sunday School, worship or one of the youth programs such as Sunday evening youth group. The youth ministry is described by some students and parents as "awesome" and "my favorite" place, while others say it is a "clique" and "transitioning" ministry.

The church had a 2014 budget of 950,000 and the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of 36,755. This includes the salaries/benefits for the portion of youth ministry overseen by staff.

The associate pastor who was responsible for the youth ministry for 13 years left in August, 2014. In appreciation for the search process, an interim director of youth ministries who has been at the church since August 2014 has been secured to lead the ministry. There are approximately eight 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 church facilities for youth are in the basement and include a rec room, Sunday school rooms, and a gathering space. Recently the church met with an architect as a part of the overall renovation plan to upgrade the youth facilities, a key portion of the upcoming church renovation.

Ministry Architects was asked in after conversations with church leadership who expressed a desire for the Youth Ministry at Fort Hill Presbyterian to grow in both depth and breadth. With an active search for pastoral staff to work with Youth Ministry, and a desire to set infrastructure for new beginnings, Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 83 people 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.

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YOUTH MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding youth ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” Youth ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. Those youth 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, staff and the congregation at large.

Rent #1: NUMBERS—A significant percentage of youth 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 ministry is typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

This rent appears to be paid. Both middle and high school students are actively engaged in the life of the church through Sunday morning worship, Sunday evening youth group, Sunday school and special events.

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

The consensus is that this rent is also being paid. While there is a desire by parents and students to “do more”, there are well established and active youth programs in the church.

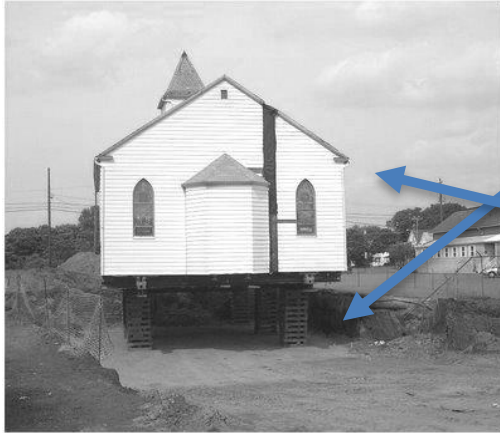
Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM—The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the youth staff, volunteers and the youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents.

The embracing of the interim director, the passion of the youth leaders, and the love that youth have for the church and each other, suggest that this rent is being paid in spades.

As the leadership of the youth 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 ministry faces parallel challenges.

Ministry Architects pictures this parallel challenge this way:

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

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. With an average worship attendance of 329, Fort Hill Presbyterian could expect to see about 33 youth present in the church weekly. The actual engagement of about 28 youth each week 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. Fort Hill Presbyterian Church might keep in mind, then, that the expected ceiling for this youth ministry is around 66 youth. The road to that level of participation is dependent on increased staffing, volunteers and budget.

3) **\$1300 a Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$36,755 (including program budget, staff salary and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Fort Hill Presbyterian Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 28 youth in some aspect of the church's life. Therefore, the church is right on target for its current reach. However, it is not likely that the ministry will be able to do more to reach additional students without additional investment.

4) **1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering the time allocated to the interim youth ministry director, Fort Hill Presbyterian Church has the equivalent of a 70% time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, the church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 35 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration is aligned well to the current needs of the ministry, however, does not allow room for much more growth. In order to see the kind of growth the church is excited about, more staffing may be needed.

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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. Fort Hill Presbyterian is currently at a ratio of one leader for every four youth – counting only the people who have made a weekly commitment to the three major programs.. With eight weekly volunteers, Fort Hill Church is currently at a ratio of one adult leader to every four students, giving the ministry a capacity for 32 students weekly. The current seems to be the right size for the current ministry of 28 students. However, if the church wants to expand its impact (and reach the other 17 on the roles), it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

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.

Many churches hire, as their youth pastor, someone who may have gifts in a single area-- for example, working with youth, managing a facility--but who simply doesn't have the experience base or the skill set to oversee the complex components of a ministry of 50 or more youth. The result in these situations can be a pattern of unrealistic expectations for the staff, which can lead to "scapegoating," particularly in settings in which a sustainable infrastructure for ministry has not been established. It was noted during the listening groups that previous staff have been skilled laborers, with unique and irreplaceable gifts. In order to move towards a ministry of sustainability, it will be necessary to cast a vision for the youth ministry that encompasses the support of the congregation to create a structure that will be protected and pursued by staff, church leadership and volunteers.

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Strengths to protect in the current youth ministry

ASSETS

Clarity of Need - the Right Time

Ministry Architects' visit coincided with the election of the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee charged with finding a new associate pastor for youth ministry and mission. An across-the-board awareness exists that Fort Hill Presbyterian Church is at a critical point in positioning itself for a thriving youth ministry. One participant shared, "I know we need to make a new plan and move forward and that's why I'm here." Demonstrating a commitment to reviewing the past, looking at the present and developing a vision for the future is an investment that will reap significant dividends. One parent summed it up well, "I loved what we had and I am excited to make what is to come just as great. Our youth ministry has always been strong and I know it will continue to be." Another participant echoed the timing, "Change is always going to happen, but we are in a great position to grow."

Priority of and Love for Youth:

The congregation has clearly named youth as a priority and acted accordingly. Many people in listening groups expressed their love for the young people and their desire to provide the best youth ministry possible. "This is my family and I love being a part of this church." The fact that almost ninety people participated in focus groups, taking time to share their input about the youth ministry, reveals a broad based eagerness about continuing to build a strong youth ministry at Fort Hill Presbyterian Church. Hearing that youth feel that the church is their "second home" reflects that the church's love and support is highly regarded. "We want all youth to know that they have a place here. It is a place that they can grow up and come back to..."

The church's dedication to the youth program is clear and speaks in their actions:

- Youth and children are welcome and wanted in worship and actively engaged in the leadership of the service serving as ushers, greeters and lay readers.
- Youth are being trained as church leaders: two are elected annually to serve as elders and serve on the session and related committees; youth are serving on the new APNC; youth sit on Presbytery committees.
- The church committed funds for this assessment process to provide the church with a strategic plan for building a youth ministry with long term sustainability.
- As the church prepares for a capital campaign funds raised will be used to renovate the youth facilities and add new multi-purpose space.

Dedicated and Realistic Parents, Members and Volunteers

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church is filled with parents, members and volunteers who are dedicated to the youth program and want to see it flourish. While parental involvement in the youth ministry was noted by many as, "limited" in the listening groups, parents expressed a desire to become a part of the team and acknowledged there is room to strengthen their partnership. One

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parent explained, “Adults were there for me when I was young. I want to give back like I was given to. I want them [youth] to know I really care about them.” This desire for involvement in the youth ministry was also named by retired members, “Look at this, we are a bunch of old folks in here talking about youth. We really want them to know and love Christ.” Volunteers reflect their love for the youth through their long-term service and enthusiasm. “We all began doing this ten or twelve years ago – we all are still doing it.” They, too, expressed a desire to be more involved in the program, so as to better serve the youth: “I love that my child can look out and see lots of people that can be moms to him”

- One of the great things about our group is that they are awesome kids. People come up to me all the time and tell me, ‘thank you for what you do’ – we have awesome kids. They are all stellar children. They are easy and fun to work with...

-I know you guys hear it all the time, but these are some of the most amazing youth. They love each other and we love them

-I have done this [volunteered] for so long because I learn so much from them. From the itty bitties all the way up – I don’t know if people who don’t volunteer know what they are missing!

A True Treasure - Fabulous Youth

It is clear that Fort Hill Presbyterian Church is blessed with fabulous young people; the middle and high school youth are an impressive group. Throughout the listening groups these youth were engaged, thoughtful, respectful, and insightful; exhibiting a high level of self-awareness. These are busy youth who make church a priority and desire to grow in their faith. They are dedicated to the church and to one another. When asked to describe the youth using an adjective parents and volunteers lit up describing the youth as “kind,” “fun-loving,” and “fiercely loyal.” The youth also find treasure in each other, “When I come we learn about each other and God– every time I have come here I have always felt really happy.” Another noted, “These are the best people I know. If anything ever happens, I know I can talk to them. They are awesome.”

Desire to Go Deeper

There was a consistent desire, by youth, parents and volunteers, to take the youth deeper in their faith. High school youth are excited by the addition of the Wednesday night program which focuses on bible study and helps them delve into exploring their faith. Middle school students are willing to be vulnerable with their youth group peers in the midst of difficult life situations, as was experienced this fall. Both groups of students want to learn how to better apply their faith to their real world lives which was echoed by parents and volunteers. One student put it this way, “I want to learn about my faith and how to live my life like that – how I can ask questions about what is going on and see that through Jesus.” The desire to see young people, and those that lead them, go deeper is a common denominator among every person at the table – and one that will be honored. “We want more than games, but games are fun – like underground church.” “I really do like learning about our faith and different religions too, that is something I really only do here”. A parent expressed, “I want whatever we do to be genuine and reflect Christ. That is what we are about.” That was echoed by another participant, “I want them to be able to make

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decisions about their life and have their faith weigh in and be a part of that”. The pastoral staff echoed this sentiment, “We want youth to know their vocation can be to a Christian, and regardless of the job that they choose, they can embrace that calling.”

The Staff

Almost all focus groups very quickly applauded the current staff for the amazing job they do in all aspects of ministry. One focus group participant shared, “The interim director of youth ministry has done an amazing job stepping in and doing things really well. I am really impressed.” And another, “One thing that is a definite “wow” is that Kristyn has to come into fill the shoes of a pastor that we all loved – she has come in and made time for us and kept us together over the break”.

Participants recognize that it takes support of the congregation and unity around a vision to make staff successful. “The idea is to develop a youth ministry team and try to share (as parents) to provide a support function. We are going to have to step in and share the load”.

The youth named many qualities that would be nice to see in a new staff person: “organized, creative, fun, can be serious, smiles, inviting, knowledgeable, explains things well, listens, communicates, plays games”, etc. It is exciting that the church is saying to itself: “We are not looking for one person with these qualities, but we are building a youth ministry that has these characteristics, lived out in a body of volunteers, led by a pastor who happens to have a few of those qualities, too.”

The Church Down the Road

There are a number of growing programs in the area, such as New Spring, Young Life, Wyld Life, First Baptist and the Methodist Church that are seeking to attract new families and have a very different approach the FHPC. We heard about the topic in most focus groups- but the overwhelming reaction was one that acknowledged the new programs’ incredible systems and approach, then named how Fort Hill differed from it.

The listening groups, young and old, put great perspective around this anxious topic by remembering who they are and how they are a spiritual home.

-I think the reason we don’t go there [to New Spring] is that there are always so many new churches out there. I have my people here and we are all together.

-The whole point of young life is for people to go to church that don’t have churches. We have a church

-I have no idea what goes on at FUSE (New Spring) but like 1000 kids but there are no personal relationships. It’s like a social gathering – which is kind of like how Young Life is at Daniel. The leader is cool but it’s not a religious place at all to me.

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- There are good things that come out of young life, we are just so close [at FHPC] and have been together and bonded.

-Some of the big churches separate children and adults for worship. I love how we are all in church together and youth are helping even though it is sometimes crazy. It is us and I like that.

In order for the youth ministry at FHPC to grow and flourish, the values held at FHPC will need to be closely guarded and continue with it's mission.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

Lacking Infrastructure

There was general agreement among parents, staff and volunteers that organization and infrastructure have not been the hallmarks of the recent youth ministry. The vision and goals are not clear, regular programming feels a little haphazard, and no one individual appears to have responsibility for the key elements of infrastructure of the youth ministry such as compliance documents, safe place policy, and all event attendance tracking. In order to build a sustainable youth ministry, it will be important to put in place some basic elements including a vision for the ministry, measurable markers of effectiveness, an overarching curriculum plan and a Youth Advisory Team.

-Organization is a biggie for us. Investing in local projects for the long term – something other than deciding that night that we are just going to play games in the church would be great. That happens a lot...

-If we hire someone they are going to have to have a lot of time because that is what it will take to keep Wednesday nights, this [Sunday night] and all the summer stuff going

-I don't know what we need to do, but I know we want it to be great. It is great, but I think that we can be better, do more things and learn more about our faith

-We should really talk more all together like we are doing tonight and figure out some really good stuff to do

-Do we have a youth committee anymore or is that just all CE now?

Blurry Vision

In a city that understands the game of football, you know that there are no victory cheers when the team fails because the kicker punts at the wrong goalpost. It was our observation that there are multiple goalposts on the Fort Hill Presbyterian Church field of youth ministry. The interim youth director is kicking at almost all of them, but not feeling like she's scoring key points. Until there is a clear vision with stated goals and a strategic

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plan, the ambiguity will limit successes and breed frustration to be inherited by the new associate pastor. Consider these goal posts:

-The first thing that came to mind to fix would be the system: having independent Sunday School and youth group - there is no connection, what we are learning in Sunday School is not what we do on Sunday nights. We need a cohesiveness and connectedness – connecting everything – like an allied attack on our theology

-I like how everything is separate because some people just like Sunday mornings, others just like Sunday nights... some like everything.

-I would love to see a mission trip that goes to Africa or something— a third world country

- I have a desire for mission and community building to be local. There are a lot of expensive trips that our kids are drawn to through school and other opportunities. Our hope is that there could be mission work here and they serve people that live and work in this area.

-Confirmation is good. I wouldn't change it.

-We really need to change confirmation. A lot of things have dwindled in that area.

-As we move forward, I see intentionally challenging them [youth] as individuals. They have the community thing down better than most of us... I would like to challenge them to grow in their walk with God individually

-I would like to see keeping the tight knit community they have strong. They are so good at supporting each other.

-In recent years, it has been more show up and do games. Occasionally there would be an organized discussion... I don't know why it happened that way, but it used to happen 3 out of 4 Sundays. With our youngest, I don't know if it is 1 out of 4 [Sundays].

-I would like to see the ministry grow in a non-programmatic way and commit some hours to going to be where they [the students] are and support what they are doing

- What I want to see here is a sense of community, strides are celebrated and mistakes are mediated. Working through tough issues leads to sense of community.

Clearly there is a lack of consensus around a unified vision. In the coming months, Fort Hill Presbyterian Church will need to establish a team of leaders to discern a clear vision for its youth ministry. Then the next step will be to look to the Youth Advisory Team to help make that vision a reality. It is likely that some leaders will need to step up, step back or shift around, as the congregation moves forward, committing themselves to a unified vision and the action steps that hang on it.

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Building Bridges

Leaders and parents expressed the importance of incorporating the incoming classes into the youth groups as well as the reality that processes are not in place to do so. An intentional plan for moving fifth graders from the children's ministry into the middle school group and eighth graders into the senior high group is lacking and needed. It is essential that kids and their families know how the progression takes place and are educated as to what new responsibilities, opportunities, and perks come with the transitions. The step from being considered a "child" to being a "youth" is significant in the life of a young person, as is the move to high school. Bridging the transitions well will not only provide key milestones within the ministry but also increases the sense of community and belonging within the groups.

- We get along well, but are just not close. I want to be close like High School...
I wish that we could hang out with High School people more

-I want [my child] to feel like they belong – I'm not sure how to do that other than just trying things over and over again

-We talked about how we can get our fifth graders excited about middle school but they pull back and are shy –

Hospitality Deficit

In spite of the fact that hospitality is one of the core values of the church, many parents reported that their children experience something other than a welcoming environment when they participate in the youth programs of the church. One parent reported "my son is having a difficult time finding a group of peers who care enough." Another parent reported, "We fall short on knowing how to receive and reach out to new kids."

Transportation

The squeaky wheel gets the grease – unless it is sitting in the parking lot without someone licensed to drive it. Certainly it is possible to have an impact on the youth population without wheels, but at times it is significantly more complicated. Transportation is a felt need for families. Several times in the focus groups we heard of youth unable to participate in activities because of transportation issues. "Getting the transportation thing taken care of would solve a lot of our headache. It comes up all the time." Since outreach ministry within the Clemson community is something youth, parents and volunteers agreed should be a priority and transportation could be a deal breaker, this is a matter that needs to be addressed.

Volunteer Development and Training

Part of the missing organizational structure is the recruitment, development and training of volunteers for the youth ministry. Sunday school teachers and youth advisors indicated that they do not meet or communicate with one another on a regular basis and stated a desire for support in the work they do with youth. All involved with the youth ministry would benefit from regular meetings which include training and resourcing. Many of the volunteers have served for several years and a plan is needed for recruiting, developing and training new volunteers on an ongoing basis.

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Measurable Markers of Effectiveness

There is little objective standard by which to evaluate the program or the staff. The youth ministry's vision, mission, and goals need to be clarified and refined so that they are quantifiable and measurable. These also need to be frequently and clearly communicated to volunteers and parents. The youth ministry will benefit from marketing its successes but needs to know what they look like first. One youth addressed this issue well, "I think church has a huge misconception of us [youth]. Sometimes I hear from the session "why is the youth group failing" and I'm like is that because of the numbers? It's not failing. They shouldn't measure it like that. The only way we cannot fail to the session is to go get more people. But that would make it fail in a lot of our eyes because of what we would have to give up."

Another volunteer reflected the same line of thinking, "I don't really know what is 'good' as far as youth programs...I guess that everyone feels loved and supported. But I don't know how you measure that."

Christian Formation Plan

There are lots of plans and expectations for the various programs and for the Christian education for the Fort Hill Presbyterian Church youth – but they are mostly invisible, inside various individual's heads. Without an over-arching Discipleship Plan for what the church wants the youth to know, feel and do with their Christian faith upon graduating from the ministry as seniors, they run the great risk of a hit or miss approach rather than giving their children all that God intends for them to have. Without a clearly expressed, well-known set of spiritual developmental milestones and an understanding of when the youth will reach those markers, there is a strong possibility that the students could miss significant key points within their Christian education.

Another risk of working without a Christian education scope and sequence is that volunteers may be left with the responsibility of choosing their own version of what they think the youth should know. While this works sometimes, often it leads to fuzzy spiritual planning. At worst, it can lead youth down a spiritual path the church is not prepared for its students to go. Working without a defined spiritual theme plan between Sunday school, confirmation, Sunday night youth groups and Wednesday nights leaves the risk of missed opportunity for spiritual growth, repeated topics or missed educational opportunities for the parents and the youth group.

Once plans are agreed upon and written down, accountability, planning and training will become a simpler, more unified task. Everyone from students to parents to volunteers will have a clearer understanding of what is supposed to occur at each program.

Scheduling and Communication Challenges

There appears to be a great need for coordination between scheduling of the programming of various departments. It was noted that Sunday night programming was often usurped by large church events. Coordinated communication both internally and to the larger church can help alleviate the symptomatic lack of coordination and messaging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target June 2016 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the youth 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 and Christian Education Committee of Fort Hill Presbyterian Church, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
4. Establish a Youth Ministry Renovation Team, made up of four to five volunteers who report regularly to the Head of Staff and Associate Pastor for Adult Education. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation Team focuses on the recommendations below. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
 - Work with the youth ministry leadership to **address the immediate pressure points** facing the ministry as they transition toward sustainability.
 - Establish a consensus for the direction of the ministry and take responsibility for **implementing the strategic, long-term changes** recommended in this report.
5. 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,
 - Conducting a visioning retreat within the next few months to establish the direction for the youth ministry which will be used by the APNC in their hiring enhancing their discernment process,
 - Assisting the youth ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the youth ministry.
 - Assisting the Renovation Team and Personnel Committee with the search process to fill the Associate Pastor position.

Renovation Team Task #1: Address the Pressure Points

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

- **Pressure Point #1: Develop a Strategic Staffing Plan** to support the youth ministry and provide critical hiring information to the APNC. Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan, including the professional and volunteer components, for the youth ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth.

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- Assess the specific giftedness of the current staff and volunteers.
- Work with the church leadership to clarify the desired size and depth of the youth ministry.
- Develop a budget for an appropriate level and organization of staffing to reach those goals over next three years.
- Craft job descriptions for the determined positions working in conjunction with the APNC.
- Fine-tune the associate pastor's job responsibilities.

With the recent establishment of the APNC and their task of hiring an associate pastor, it is important to make the shift from the model of the full-time pastor who is the superhero and makes everything happen – to the church model where the pastor equips others for doing the ministry. The pastor becomes an architect and general contractor, nurturing the volunteers for ministry. That is, the director moves from being the “genius” to being the “genius maker.” Liz Wiseman’s book *Multipliers*, offers useful tips for making that shift. This shift will be important for the APNC to take into account in writing the job description, conducting interviews and discerning who the right candidate for this position is.

- **Pressure Point #2: Establish the Youth Ministry Team** – Recruit 4 - 6 individuals representing the different constituencies of the youth ministry to serve a one or two year term on the Youth Advisory Team, including: parents, youth, volunteers, college students, church leaders and staff.
 - Make a list of potential team members seeking diversity within the team, including: areas they represent, age, gender, length of time at the church, etc.
 - Determine the first 2-3 meeting times and dates for the team.
 - Divide the list of potential volunteers up and begin calling asking them to serve on the team and giving them the initial meeting date. Have the team meet to begin discussion of purpose and goals and establish future meeting schedule.
- **Pressure Point #3: Discern the Vision** – Invite parents, volunteers and church members to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning the future for the youth ministry with Ministry Architects. This visioning process will help the church navigate this time of transition, support the work of the APNC, and result in the following documents, which will direct the ministry:
 - **A Ministry Mission Statement** that will drive the program and hold the calendar accountable.

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- **A Statement of Values** that will name the spirit in which FHPC is committed to approaching children and youth ministry.
- **A Set of Three-Year Revolving Goals** that will rally the team and harness the heart for new initiatives with clear strategic game plans.
- **An Organizational Structure for the Ministry** that will provide clarity for staff, volunteers, parents and laity.

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

INFRASTRUCTURE AND STABILITY

- **Pressure Point Retreat:** Invite the Renovation Team, key stakeholders, and youth staff to participate in a Pressure Point Retreat in which the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed and checked off the list.
- **Christian Formation:** Gather a team for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum, milestone programming and special events.
 - Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
 - Assess the need for FHPC to use an integrated curriculum plan that is coordinated with the Sunday school classes, confirmation, youth groups and the Wednesday night high school program.
 - Determine the priorities in selecting curriculum and develop a curriculum review check list.
 - Review and evaluate existing curriculum in relationship to FHPC needs and select a curriculum.
 - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
 - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
 - Review and evaluate milestone programming and special events in order to protect, strengthen or retire as needed for the determined goals of Christian formation among youth.
- **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 comply with the Safe Place Policy and Guidelines.
- **Ongoing 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”).
- **Attendance:** Set up a system for tracking attendance for all youth activities and implement. Use this information to communicate to volunteers which youth are missing

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and to reach out to these youth. This is being done well in some areas, but could use revamping in others. Be able to see across the board at Sunday nights, Sunday Morning, Wednesdays, and special events.

- o **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 (of which there is much!).
- o **Schedule:** Coordinate the overall church calendar with specific program area calendars, i.e. youth and children, to minimize conflicts, allow for youth to attend key all-church events and not ask parents to attend multiple events on the same weekend and/or time and date.
- o **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.
- o **Youth Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, a 12-18-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 ministry event.
- o **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2015. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- o **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- o **Sustainable Pace:** Help the youth 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).
- o **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.
- o **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 25 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions
- o **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement, of all ages, 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 workers at the beginning of each school year.

DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **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. Pay particular attention to the middle school parents entering the youth program for the first time.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through December 2016 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- **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).
- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth and parents 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. Take advantage of the all-church mission events which provide intergenerational opportunities.
- **Integration:** Develop a strategic plan for helping the youth continue to be an integral part of the whole church, weaving the youth ministry into the fabric of the entire church.
- **Personal Connection Plan:** Develop a system for ensuring that every family in the current youth directory is contacted personally at least once a year in order to make a connection, express support, and clarify if there are any parents requesting that their sons and/or daughters be removed from the church’s directory.
- **Youth Contact:** Develop and implement processes for ensuring that each youth or youth parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth advisory team at least once a month
- **Spiritual Depth:** Develop a plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.

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- **Non-parent Recruitment:** Create a game plan to target specific demographics in the congregation when recruiting volunteers, i.e. retired members
- **Facilities:** Explore the possibilities of the renovation of Bethlehem Hall to better serve the youth of FHPC. Propose options for the above to the session for revision or approval.
- **Transportation:** Develop a plan that encompass how to transport youth for weekly outings, special trips and retreats.
- **Confirmation:** Develop a confirmation plan with the assistance of the pastors and input from a key group of parents. Determine the duration of the program, what age it is to take place, etc.
- **Family Ministry:** Plan one or two family events throughout the year focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.
- I. **Rites of Passage (or Bridges):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
 - Welcome and connect the new 6th graders and their parents into the youth ministry
 - Welcome and connect the new 9th 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

PROPOSED TIMELINE AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

The following provides 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 18-month transition, we are available to help.

January 2015

Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the session for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the session has given full support of this plan.
- A prayer team has been recruited to undergird the renovation process in prayer.

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- Immediate staffing and volunteer needs for the youth ministry have been determined: After reading Liz Wiseman's book *Multipliers*, the AP job description has been retooled in the roll of an architect and general contractor, nurturing the staff and the volunteers for front-line ministry.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.
- Youth Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.

February 2015

Focus: Renovation Underway, Calendars, Volunteers

Outcomes:

- Youth Advisory Team is in place and has addressed:
 - Volunteer job descriptions.
 - Names of potential volunteers
 - All volunteer needs for the 2015 - 2016 school year.
 - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2015 – 2016.
- A Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for April and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- The Youth Renovation Team for youth has held their first meeting and understood their role for the next 18 months.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

March 2015

Focus: Database, Communications, Visioning Promotion

Outcomes:

- The Youth Advisory Team has had their first meeting.

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- Work on the youth databases 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 of Fort Hill Presbyterian who 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 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.
 - 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.
- Promotion of the Visioning Retreat has begun.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.
- A game plan has been written and implemented for welcoming new families, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

April 2015

Focus: Visioning Retreat, Pressure Points, Compliance, Fall Kick-off

Outcomes:

- A Visioning Retreat with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced 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.

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- Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through December 2016 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- A database of all youth and their families has been compiled and each person has been “tagged” with a category
- All youth programs have adhered to the safe place policy and guidelines.
- Youth Advisory Team has been charged with using their gifts to support the day-to-day tasks of the Youth Ministry and supporting interim staff.
- A Fall Kick-off for the youth ministry has been scheduled for August. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.
- All pressure points have been addressed.
- The dates for the Curriculum Retreat have been set.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the youth ministry.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

May 2015

Focus: Volunteers, Calendars, Volunteer Thank You

Outcomes:

- All volunteer needs for the 2015 – 2016 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- A written game plan for inviting specific, non-parent demographics in the congregation when recruiting volunteers has been implemented.
- The 2015 – 2016 ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church’s calendar.
- A thank you event for all youth volunteers has taken place.
- A short-term team has met with the appropriate church committees to explore the possibilities for a renovation or redesign to better serve the youth of FHPC. Proposed options for the above have been sent to the session for revision or approval.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

June 2015

Focus: Participation Goals, Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers

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Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The Design Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.
- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- A game plan has been established for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges that have:
 - Welcomed and connected the new 6th graders and their parents into the youth ministry
 - Welcomed and connected the new 9th 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
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

July 2015

Focus: Curriculum Retreat, Directory

Outcomes

- A Christian Formation Retreat has taken place and an integrated template or scope and sequence of faith formation for sixth through twelfth grade has been created, including a design for Sunday Morning, bible study, and youth group.
- 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.
- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for the youth ministry has been updated with that new information. Every youth has been "tagged" with a category.
- One or two family events have been calendared for the upcoming year. They have been focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

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August 2015

Focus: Leadership Launch, Fall Kick-off, Compliance

Outcomes

- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and equips them to serve the youth of Fort Hill Presbyterian. Safe Place Policy and Guidelines has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the youth ministry 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.
- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- A Confirmation plan has been developed with the assistance of the pastors 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.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

September 2015

Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Communication, Compliance

Outcomes:

- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each youth event.
- Communication methods currently being used to promote the youth ministry and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- A written plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments has been implemented.
- 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 deliberate process for equipping youth and college-age young people to experience mentoring and training for future ministry has been established.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored for the youth ministry staff.

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- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

October 2015

Focus: Marketing, Attending, Benchmarks, Budget

Outcomes:

- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- A detailed 2016 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth programs has been created and implemented.
- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.
- A process has been implemented to ensure that each youth or youth parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

November 2015

Focus: Major Event Notebooks

Outcomes:

- MIA youth have been systematically reached out to.
- Major event notebooks for each major event for youth have been completed.
- A plan has been implemented for ensuring that every family in the current youth directory has been contacted personally at least once a year in order to make a connection, express support, and clarify if there are any parents requesting that their sons and/or daughters be removed from the church's directory.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

December 2015

Focus: Catch Up, Summer Calendar

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Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2016 mission trips, Montreat and mission trips.
- 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.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

January 2016

Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Training, Database

Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the 2016 – 2017 youth ministry calendar.
- The summer 2016 calendar has been completed.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers have 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.
- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth has been updated with that new information.
- 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.
- New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

February 2016

Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Calendars

Outcomes:

- The 2016 - 2017 youth ministry' calendar has been completed through August 2017 Fall Kick-off.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.

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- o Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
- o Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
- o All volunteer needs have been determined for the upcoming school year.
- o The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
- o Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
- o Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for fall 2016.
- 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).
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

March 2016

Focus: Manual, Directory

Outcomes:

- 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.
- A manual for the youth ministry has been completed, including
 - o Visioning documents
 - o Directories
 - o Volunteer directory
 - o Volunteer training agendas and notes
 - o Attendance records
 - o Annual calendar
 - o Results-based job descriptions
 - o Game plans and new initiatives
 - o Meeting agendas and minutes for the Youth Advisory Team.
 - o Christian Education has a record of curriculum resources used for the current year
 - o Budget and other financial documents
 - o Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
 - o Compliance documents
- **Parent Support:** An encouraging parent support event has engaged the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.

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- 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.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

April 2016

Focus: Compliance, Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Curriculum, Fall Kick-off

Outcomes:

- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall youth programs.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers is up to date and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- 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.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

May 2016

Focus: Strategic Staffing, Volunteer Thank You, Benchmarks, Major Event Notebooks

Outcomes:

- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- With the changes in the youth ministry, the staffing to meet the size and scope of the youth ministry has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- 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.
- Each staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

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- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

June 2016

Focus: Final Wrap Up

Outcomes:

- The renovation work of the Renovation Team for youth has been completed and mechanisms have been put in place to ensure oversight of a sustainable youth ministry.
- A final wrap up has taken place and control documents have been updated, the Youth Ministry Manual has been updated, the progress of completing the tasks presented in the MA assessment report has been evaluated, and any current pressure points that are affecting the youth ministry have been dealt with.
- 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 focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- 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.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

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