



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Youth Ministry Assessment Report

November 5, 2013

By Sara Bailey, Lead Consultant

BACKGROUND

Westminster Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan is located in the heart of downtown. It was founded in 1861 and remains a very active congregation in the community, intentionally choosing to stay in the downtown area and not move to the suburbs. The church itself is historic but also has a modern style in terms of the design with a large gathering space that is the central hub of the church. From this center, the building branches out to office space, education wings, the sanctuary, and fellowship hall. Church members describe the church as “welcoming”, “inclusive”, “progressive”, “mission/outreach-oriented”, and “committed.”

WPC’s philosophy of welcoming everyone truly speaks to the inviting place that it is. The Westminster welcome or motto is “This is a Christian service. And to our understanding, precisely because it is a Christian service, absolutely everyone is welcome. We do not



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assume or presume you to be Christian. Our hope is that we might be Christian toward you and welcome you into the heart of God, as we ourselves have felt welcomed.”

The membership of the church is around 1,329 and on an average week, 534 people attend one of two traditional worship services offered at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. The church is led by Rev. Chandler Stokes, senior pastor who heads up a staff consisting of an Associate Pastor for Mission and Pastoral Care, Minister for Young Adults, Minister for Communications, Minister for Music, Executive Director of Camp Henry, Minister for Congregational Care, Minister for Christian Education and Family Life, an Administrative Manager, youth staff, several musicians, and administrative staff.

The youth ministry has experienced the longevity of the same youth staff for the past seven years with two staff members overseeing the programs. The most recent youth minister was hired approximately seven years ago along with his wife, each working 20 hours or the equivalent of one full-time staff person. Then the youth minister’s position was moved to full-time while his wife’s position remained at 20 hours. A few years later, her position was increased to full-time hours. A year later, the position was revised again, returning to part-time status.

In an effort for the jobs to be sustainable, some recent changes have been made in the youth staffing structure moving from one full-time staff and one part-time staff member to 1 full-time staff and 2 part-time staff: a full-time Youth Minister (vacant), a part-time (15 hours) Middle School Director, and a part-time (15 hours) High School Director (vacant). A search is currently happening to hire a High School Director and a search is about to begin for a full-time Youth Minister. In the meantime, a part-time Youth Program Coordinator (20 hours) was recently hired to oversee the youth ministry in the interim period.

The focus of the youth ministry is incorporating Christ’s love and teaching into the daily lives of the youth. The mission is “to provide a community where youth feel accepted and loved, where faith can be explored and questioned, and where a broad base of biblical knowledge is learned.” The youth ministry is described by some students and parents as “super awesome” and “a safe place.” One high school youth shared “every day of the week I look forward to Sunday because of youth group.”

Currently, there are approximately 188 youth in 6th through 12th grades on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 70 of them participate in one of the following youth programs:

- Middle School Church School, Sunday mornings, 9:40 - 10:45 a.m.
- Kirk Singers (high school choir), Sunday afternoons, 4 - 5 p.m.
- Middle School Youth Group, Sunday afternoons, 4 – 5:30 pm
- Chapel Singers (middle school choir), Sunday evenings, 6 – 7 p.m.
- High School Youth Group, Sunday evenings, 5:30 – 7 pm



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- Dinner is provided between programs from 5 – 6 p.m. on Sundays
- Weekly Prayer Breakfast on Wednesdays in the East Grand Rapids area and a prayer breakfast on Thursday morning alternating locations north and south of the church to reach the youth in outlying schools.
- Special Events: Mission trips, retreats, Montreat Conference Center, Camp Henry, Youth Sunday, summer traveling tour for choirs, spring musical and Pasta Dinner

It should be noted that Confirmation is not taking place this year due to a change in the age group in which Confirmation occurs. Confirmation has been moved from 8th grade to 9th grade. The program is eight weeks in length and includes a retreat.

The music programs and choirs at WPC are a huge ministry that draws many people to the church. There are several children's, youth and adult choirs that sing on Sunday mornings that are led by the full-time Minister to Music. It was reported that the Minister of Music gives approximately 10 hours each week just to the youth choirs and their special events, including a singing tour combined with a mission experience in the summer, Christmas programs and a spring musical. This year a change in the schedule of children's choir rehearsals took place, moving from Wednesday evenings to Sunday evenings. The Kirk Singers (high school choir) meet at 4 p.m. for an hour, go to dinner and then begin youth group at 5:30 p.m. The middle school youth flip flop and go to youth group first, then dinner at 5:30 p.m. followed by choir rehearsal at 6 p.m. All youth programs begin and end at the same time. Several parents expressed appreciation for the change in the schedules saying that it worked better for their families.

WPC has intentionally built a long-term relationship between the church and Camp Henry and considers it one of their ministries. Camp Henry is located in Newaygo, Michigan on Kimball Lake, about an hour north of Grand Rapids. The executive director has an office at WPC and spends about two days a week in that location with the rest of his time being at Camp Henry. The camp offers summer programs and camps, weekend programs and is moving to be open year-round. Youth spoke highly of their experiences of Camp Henry.

The church has a 2013 budget of approximately \$1.6 million. For the year 2013, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$116,475, which includes the program budget and the salaries/benefits for the staff (youth staff as well as a portion of the Minister of Music's salary and Administrative Assistant's salary).

There are 13 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. There is also a Youth Committee, led by the Youth Elder that is not fully functioning and meets sporadically.

The middle school youth have a designated room for church school on Sunday mornings. Youth group for both age groups takes place in the gym upstairs and the



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adjoining open area and classroom. This space is shared with the weekly pre-school and other groups and is not designated space for the youth. The area where youth group takes place is large, open, and inviting with a check-in/welcome table and a prayer table with a box on it for youth to write down and place their prayer requests in. There is a youth lounge outside the youth ministry offices downstairs but it is too small for any youth program.

In this time of staff transition in the youth ministry, 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 106 individuals in nine 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 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 is fully paid with long-term, strong attendance in the youth programs.

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.”

This rent is also paid in full with the numerous special events such as the mission trip, the Montreat conference, youth choirs, Camp Henry, retreats, and fundraisers such as the Pasta Dinner.

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.



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This rent is partially paid at this time. The youth and the parents are positive about the current and future programs. But there is some anxiety about the unknown and potential changes in the program with the arrival of new leadership. The volunteers are highly committed but a little worn out.

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:



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 534, WPC could expect to see about 53 youth present in the church weekly. With an actual engagement of about 70 youth each week, the youth ministry is above the norm.
- 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. WPC’s ceiling would be about 106 youth.
- 3) **\$1000 a Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$116,475 dedicated to the youth ministry and a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 70 students in some aspect of the church’s life, WPC is investing approximately \$1663 per youth. The youth ministry is budgeted for growth as it is financially prepared to serve 116 youth.



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4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth—WPC is in a time of transition with its youth ministry staffing. So the figures below reflect the current staffing and future staffing if all positions are filled.

Current staffing:

Youth Program Coordinator	20 hours
Middle School Director	15 hours
Minister of Music	10 hours
Administrative Support	5 hours
Total	50 hours or 1.25 staff

Staffed for a group size of about 62 youth.

Future Staffing Structure:

Youth Minister	40 hours
Middle School Director	15 hours
High School Director	15 hours
Minister of Music	10 hours
Administrative Support	5 hours
Total	85 hours or 2.12 staff

Staffed for a group size of about 106 youth.

WPC's youth ministry is staffed to meet the size of the group today and, with the revamped staffing structure, is poised for growth in the future.

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. WPC is very close to that ratio with 13 weekly volunteers – counting only the people who have made a weekly commitment to the major programs. It is right on target with the current number of active youth, but it will need to increase the volunteer pool if the youth ministry grows beyond 70 youth.

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



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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.

WPC’s youth ministry has enough laborers and an interim general contractor but is in need of an architect.

ASSETS

Strengths to protect in the current youth ministry

On the Cusp of Top-Notch

Overall, the youth ministry at WPC is doing extremely well. Unlike the title of Collins’ book, “Good to Great” in which he speaks of companies moving from being “good” companies to being “great” companies, the youth ministry at WPC is already at “great.” The church is ready to make the leap from a great youth ministry to a top-notch youth ministry.

Longevity of Youth Staff

WPC has been blessed by the previous youth minister’s seven-year tenure. While many youth staff often serve approximately three years, WPC has seen the benefits of long-term leadership. One benefit is stability in the youth program – youth and parents know what to expect and it doesn’t get changed often. Another is the ability to build deeper relationships with young people and their families. It is apparent that the previous youth minister and his wife loved the youth and they took the time to really be present with them, opening their home and going the extra mile for a young person. One youth leader said, “Because of the longevity, there are some rock solid relationships with the youth, not just from Nate and Christy but from us as well.”

Collaborative Staff

WPC is gifted with an excellent staff. The majority of the staff participated in a listening group and it was fun to observe the camaraderie among them. They like and enjoy working with each other. There is also an atmosphere of collaboration that is not always found among church staff. But the WPC staff work intentionally to not put themselves or the ministry they serve in silos. They see the value of working together, supporting each other and working toward a common goal. This provides a very positive atmosphere of teamwork and respect for each other.

In this interim period, the senior pastor has stepped in to provide some leadership by attending youth group on Sundays and leading the prayer breakfasts on Wednesday mornings. Most senior pastors of a large church don’t have the extra time to be involved in the youth ministry at that level. But WPC’s senior pastor understands the importance of youth ministry and is stepping in to help. Some youth shared how much they’ve



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enjoyed getting to know the senior pastor. One teenager shared with the group, “Chandler is a good senior pastor; he’s funny and preaches well” and another said, “Chandler knows us.” At the same time, the senior pastor just beams when he talks about how much he is learning from the youth and how grateful he is that he gets to be a part of their daily lives.

The hiring of a part-time Youth Program Coordinator has brought about a great sigh of relief to everyone. She is committed to serving in the position for one year providing even more stability. A new Middle School Director was hired about a month ago as well and the middle schoolers are enjoying getting to know their new leader.

Consistent and Established Programs

Because of the stability of the youth staff, a strong youth ministry has been established that has provided consistency for youth and families as well as traditions that are treasured. The teens like coming to youth group and look forward to it. They enjoy the format of games, energizers, mixers, a lesson, small group discussion, food and fellowship. The volunteers and staff have struck just the right balance of fun and digging deeper. A teenager told the group, “Every week I want to go to youth group.”

In addition to Sunday youth groups, there are several traditions that the youth don’t want to see changed: the Montreat youth conference, singing tours, mission trips, retreats at Camp Henry, the Pasta dinner and the prayer breakfasts.

Exceptional Youth

The young people at WPC are very impressive! Forty-four youth (middle and high school) attended listening sessions and were very open in expressing their thoughts and concerns. The youth are not just looking for the next youth minister to be fun but to also have a serious approach to faith formation and the ability to relate to them as a role model and friend. They value the adult relationships they have formed with the staff and volunteers and recognize how important those adults are in their spiritual formation. They are a fun group of young people who are sincere about growing in their faith.

Very Dedicated Volunteers

WPC is also blessed with an incredible team of youth leaders serving weekly. With the exception of one new couple, all the leaders had been involved in the youth ministry for three years or more, with one even serving for 20+ years. It is apparent that they enjoy working together as a team and the high school team in particular is very close-knit. They love the teenagers and desire to walk alongside them in their journey through adolescence. They take their role seriously and are not just “warm bodies” showing up for youth group. They make the extra time to be with teenagers outside of Sunday’s programs meeting them at Starbucks or attending their sporting events. Fortunately none of them talk about leaving their role as youth leaders. They may be tired but they are committed for the long haul.

Climate



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Given that a much-beloved youth minister recently left his job, the climate surrounding the youth ministry is mostly positive. Parents and youth are thankful for the service of the previous youth minister but they are not dwelling in his departure. There is a healthy approach of looking forward. People are excited about who is to come and a few are a bit anxious about the unknowns that come with that.

Youth Choirs

What a gift it was to hear the Kirk Singers (28 high schoolers) sing “This Little Light of Mine” at the 11 a.m. worship service. They engaged the congregation with their contagious joy and even got them clapping along. It is clear that youth choirs, while a separate program at WPC, are a vital part of the overall youth ministry at WPC. They perform at least once a month, if not more, in the Sunday worship services. The Minister of Music has set the bar at a high standard and is deeply committed to teaching and leading young people.

Prayer Breakfast

One of the more popular youth activities is the weekly prayer breakfasts held before school on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Many youth active in the program come from the East Grand Rapids area which is close to the church geographically. So they meet at Wolfgang’s at 6:30 a.m. on Wednesday mornings. However, a good number of students live further out of the city and it’s difficult for them to come into town before school for prayers and breakfast. Therefore, some of the adult volunteers have committed to leading prayer breakfasts on Thursday mornings alternating between locations. One week they are at Red Hot Inn in the northern part of the city and the next week they are at Panera in the southern part of town.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

Terminal Uniqueness

Ministry Architects has observed that many churches we have worked with initially suffered from a perception disorder we call *terminal uniqueness*, focusing intensely on the “unique” challenging factors facing this youth ministry:

- Multiple schools, making it difficult for kids to feel connected
- Youth with packed schedules, who are therefore unable to participate regularly
- Youth attending schools that demand high levels of performance, including multiple hours of homework each night.
- Competing with Youth Life, sports and other extracurricular events.
- Dual income households

The fact is that none of these challenges are even remotely unique to this church. We know that the majority of these factors are present in almost every successful youth ministry in our country. This is the culture we live in whether or not we like it.



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Missing Framework

While many pieces are in place (calendar, tracking attendance), there are several pieces of infrastructure missing in the youth ministry. Examples include major event notebooks (operating manual for events), a visitor follow up process, and managing and updating a youth database. It's like building a house without all pieces of the framework in place. If those pieces are not there, the structure will not be able to hold up the house. One wall may start collapsing while another remains sturdy.

A crucial piece of this framework is the Child Safety Policy. WPC has a general policy and a document that all youth leaders sign and agree to called the Youth Ministry Relationship Guidelines. While both documents are good, they are not complete and need some updating. For example, there aren't any guidelines for boundaries within social networking. That's how youth mainly communicate these days and there are many gray areas in social networking. Overall, the youth ministry needs to fill in those missing components of infrastructure to create a sustainable ministry.

Destination Nowhere

When a family is planning a summer vacation road trip in an RV across the county, the parents typically map a route, figure out sites to see along the way, locate the bathrooms, and places to sleep. Maps are necessary, along with an agreed-upon destination, to have a successful trip. The WPC family has loaded up in the RV and is ready to go. But there is no map and no one knows where they are going. In all the excitement and anticipation of the trip, no one took the responsibility or time to map the youth's adventure. Without the map, it is predictable that the leaders of the youth ministry will find themselves awash with suggestions, which, even if implemented, will do little to move the ministry forward.

Unclear Roles

The role of the Youth Committee is not very clear at this time. When I met with members of the Youth Committee in a listening group, they were not even sure who all was on the committee let alone know what they are supposed to be doing. It seems that the committee did operate well many years ago, but for some reason, fizzled out. WPC has already begun to address the role of the Youth Committee with some restructuring and connecting with young adult ministries. The current proposal is for there to be a Youth and Young Adult Council with three sub-committees: middle school youth, high school youth and young adults. With clarity on what they are charged with to accomplish, the council and sub-committees can really step into a leadership role in the youth ministry and support the staff. Also people will be more likely to volunteer if they know exactly what is expected of them and there's a timeframe with the commitment. This is a new idea, one that we hope to see come to fruition.

Many church members are also not aware of the restructuring of the youth staff. There's confusion about what the High School Director will do and what will the Youth Minister will do. The staff job descriptions need some tweaking in order to clearly define who is



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doing what and to communicate the new staffing structure so confusion is minimized and expectations are reasonable.

Unrealistic Expectations

In fact, there are unrealistic expectations across the board – of the youth minister to come, of the volunteers to carry the program, and of the new youth staff. One month into their new jobs, the Youth Program Coordinator and Middle School Director are working more hours than they were hired for. One adult expressed their concern, “we need a reality check on how much time it takes to do this job.”

When asked what qualities people are looking for in the new youth minister, there was a wide range of opinions. Here are a few:

- Good listener
- No older than 25
- Someone who is worldly
- Young and wise
- A role model
- Theological
- Is a team player
- Ability to connect with kids
- Background in social justice
- Good communication
- Would like to see a male
- Not someone one year out of college
- Strong mentor
- Feel safe with
- Non-judgmental
- Extremely flexible
- Can manage a bunch of balls in the air
- Playful and good sense of humor
- Has to be able to communicate with parents, youth and the congregation
- Be a member of the church
- Play guitar
- Background or experience with special needs kids
- Energetic, funny and silly
- Be young and remember what it's like to be our age
- Easy to talk to
- Funny but serious
- Godly and Biblically knowledgeable
- Involved in the activities that we do
- Holds confidences
- Will play games with us
- Understands we're not little kids
- A person we could call if we ever needed help



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- Authentic, trustworthy
- Can operate creatively, live in the moment with and yet be highly organized
- Just write “Nate and Christy” down

The list could be twice as long if every quality people are hoping for was listed. The point is these are unrealistic expectations of one person. Everyone will need to keep in mind that whoever is hired is not going to be the previous youth minister nor expect them to be. The next person will be different and will bring his/her own gifts to the ministry. The expectations will need to come out of the clouds in order for this person to be successful.

Tired Volunteers

There are a few challenges that come along with the volunteers even though they were named as an asset. The youth leaders are tired and a bit weary. They’ve been doing this for a long time and need some extra support as well as training. There also isn’t an intentional recruitment process in place right now to bring in fresh volunteers. It was reported that there have been past instances of parents backing out of a commitment at the last minute which has left many people very aggravated. Parents are not as involved as some would like to see them be.

It’s fabulous that the youth leaders are so dedicated to the youth of WPC but WPC needs to give them a little “TLC.” Job descriptions for each volunteer and an intentional recruitment process will need to be established to address these challenges as well as an ongoing training program to offer education and support.

Space

Two issues regarding space rose out of observations on Sunday. First, the youth offices – as nice as they are – are not in an ideal location. Even though there are glass doors and plenty of windows, the offices are isolated from the main stream of traffic during the week. An adult could be mentoring a young person in the youth lounge area without anyone ever knowing.

Secondly, the youth don’t have a room that they claim as their own. At one time, they used to be in the basement of the church. Youth reminisced – “oh yeah... we had our own room down there.” Now they don’t. One young person shared, “I was looking forward to going to a cool space.” The youth lounge is isolated and too small for either group (middle or high school) to meet together. The gym and open areas upstairs are great for youth group but that is shared space with other groups and the Child Development Center. So it’s not really theirs. While this was not an overwhelming concern across all listening groups, it was mentioned by a several folks and would be worth exploring with the teens.

Not Fully Integrated

Youth are pretty visible at WPC given the design of the buildings and the central hub of the gathering space. They do serve in worship on Youth Sunday (which everyone loves) and the choirs sing at least once a month in worship. A young person stated, “Youth



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Sunday is the one Sunday we're involved." The desire to be more involved in leading worship was brought up in several listening groups. The church does a pretty good job of integrating youth into the church but even more could be done. An adult said, "There's a fair amount of interaction (with youth) but I wouldn't say it's strong."

Bordering on Exclusive

While this is not a noticeable problem right now, the youth ministry borders on the edge of being exclusive in two ways. The youth are very close and recognize it might be hard to enter their group if you are a new person. One youth shared, "the new person needs to realize how much we love Nate and Christy and give us some time to adjust." It was also shared second-hand through a session member (brought to his attention from more than one parent) that most of the kids in the youth group attend East Grand Rapids High School and they bring their friends to church. But parents of kids who aren't participating said their teen "didn't feel like they fit in."

Secondly, the youth leaders are a very close-knit group and that might make it challenging for church members to volunteer. Again, this is not a major problem, but there needs to be an awareness of the potential for exclusivity to filter into the youth ministry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target April 2015 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, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
- 4) Move forward with the plan to establish a Youth and Young Adult Council with three sub-committees: middle school youth, high school youth and young adults.
- 5) Establish a Youth Ministry Renovation Team made up of four to five volunteers who report regularly to the Youth and Young Adult Council. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry and work with their sub-committees, 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.



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- II. Establish a consensus for the direction of the ministry and take responsibility for **implementing the strategic, long-term changes** recommended in this report.

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 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 Youth and Young Adult Council in getting established and living into their new roles.

RENOVATION TEAM TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points

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

Pressure Point #1: Balance for the Staff – Help each 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). Evaluate the current job scope of each staff person to ensure that they are all working under realistic expectations.

Pressure Point #2: 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.

Pressure Point #3: Visibility and Integration – Develop a strategic plan for helping the youth become an integral part of the whole church, weaving the youth ministry into the fabric of the entire church. Seek out new opportunities for youth to be more visible in the Sunday morning worship services.

Pressure Point #4: Child Safety Policy Update – Review available safe church policies that are available online and through the Presbytery. Amend and update the current policy to include specific boundaries that adults must work within as they volunteer in the youth ministry.

Pressure Point #5: Youth and Young Adult Council Clarity – Create a job description and meeting schedule for the Youth and Young Adult Council and the three sub-committees. Include a job description for the chairperson and supportive roles such as communications coordinator, secretary, etc. Clarify the role of this team as they relate to the youth ministry staff as well as the weekly volunteers and the Renovation Team.

Pressure Point #6: Youth Offices – Evaluate the location of the youth offices and explore options to move them to a more highly visible location.



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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:*

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND STABILITY

- **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
 - An organizational structure for the ministry
- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 12-18-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:** Continue to track roster-based attendance for all youth activities utilizing data effectively.
- **Spaces and Places:** Gather a group of highly invested youth and weekly volunteers for a fun, creative time of brainstorming new options for a dedicated youth ministry 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:** Work with Minister for Communication to 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 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.



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- **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 ministry and provide ongoing coaching for the youth ministry staff members as well as the Renovation Team.

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **Strategic Staffing:** Propose 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.
- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **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 50 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.

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 2014-2015 school year.
- **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.
- **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.
- **MIA Game Plan:** Develop an intentional plan for reaching out to youth that have been missing from recent youth ministry activities.
- **Curriculum Clarity:** Gather a team for a curriculum retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available or newly purchased curriculum.



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PROPOSED TIMELINE AND CONSULTING PROPOSAL

The following provides Westminster Presbyterian Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of a 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.

November 2013

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.
- Youth and Young Adult Council members have been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled as soon as possible.
- A Renovation Team for the youth ministry has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled for December.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the youth ministry. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline.
- A Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for February and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the youth ministry.
- 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. New worship options have been discussed as a part of this plan.
- The current child protection policies have been reviewed and amended with updated guidelines particularly around social networking.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

December 2013

Focus: Renovation Underway, Volunteers, Communications, Continuing Education and Staff Balance, Calendar

Outcomes:



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- Relax.... Breathe...
- The Youth and Young Adult Council has held its first meeting, understood its role, and has moved forward in empowering the three sub-committees.
- The Renovation Team for the youth ministry has held their first meeting and they have understood their roles for the next 18 months.
- Promotion of the Visioning Retreat has begun.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented with the input of the Minister for Communication.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and calendared for the youth ministry staff.
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2014.
- Each youth staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.
- Ministry Architects has been hired to serve in the architect role for the renovation period.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

January 2014

Focus: Compliance, Visioning, Parent Involvement, Calendars, Youth Offices

Outcomes:

- The location of the current youth ministry staff offices has been evaluated and a game plan is in place to move them to a more highly visible location.
- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers has been reviewed and updated if necessary.
- All programs have adhered to the Child Safety Policy and Youth Ministry Relationship Guidelines as laid out by the church.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2014 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The summer calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.
- Work has begun on the 2014-2015 youth ministry calendar.



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- 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 staff and key volunteers have been provided.

February 2014

Focus: Compliance, Volunteer Recruitment, 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 2014-2015 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2015.
- 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 2014-2015 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 youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2014-2015.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each weekly volunteer.
- A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2014-2015 school year has been written and implemented.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

March 2014

Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Compliance, Attendance Tracking, Pressure



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Points, Volunteer Training, Youth Space

Outcomes:

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- 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 and distributed.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth ministry programs has been evaluated and data has been utilized more effectively to track all youth and visitors.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each youth event.
- 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.
- A group of youth and volunteers have met to brainstorm new options for a dedicated youth ministry space.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

April 2014

Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Database, Integration

Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and has made any adjustments necessary to improve the work being done.
- Work on the youth database has begun, collecting the most recent information for families and youth. All have been categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families and youth. Each teen 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



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

May 2014

Focus: Marketing, Recruitment, Communications, Volunteer Thank You

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 ministry.
- 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.
- Volunteer recruitment has continued.
- A volunteer thank you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all youth ministry volunteers.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

June 2014

Focus: Volunteer Thank You, MIA Youth, Recruitment

Outcomes:

- A volunteer thank you event has taken place for all youth ministry volunteers.
- MIA youth have been systematically reached out to.
- All volunteer needs for the 2014-2015 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.



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- 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 staff and key volunteers have been provided.

July 2014

Focus: Curriculum Review, Database, Manual

Outcomes:

- 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 teen has been “tagged” with a category.
- A Youth ministry Manual (both hard copy and digital) has 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 the Youth Committee.
 - Guideline by Age 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 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 staff and key volunteers have been provided.

August 2014



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Focus: Database, Major Event Notebooks, Leadership Launch, Welcoming Environment, Benchmarks

Outcomes:

- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- 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.
- With the most recent information on youth and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers have been created and distributed at the fall kick-off.
- 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 Child Safety Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- 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.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

September 2014

Focus: Compliance, Curriculum

Outcomes:

- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they are trained to implement the curriculum.
- A "Curriculum Clarity" retreat has been occurred in order to facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- All youth programs have adhered to the Child Safety Policy.
- An intentional plan for reaching out to youth that have been missing from recent youth ministry activities has been developed.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

October 2014

Focus: Compliance, Budget



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Outcomes:

- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- A detailed 2015 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

November 2014**Focus: Volunteer Training, Strategic Staffing****Outcomes:**

- 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.
- A mid-year volunteer training has been scheduled for January.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

December 2014**Focus: Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Summer Calendar****Outcomes:**

- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.
- The 2015 summer calendar has begun to be created.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

January 2015**Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Training****Outcomes:**

- The 2015 summer calendar has been completed.
- Work on the 2015-2016 calendar has begun.



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

February 2015

Focus: Calendar, Volunteer Recruitment, Benchmarks

Outcomes:

- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- The 2015-2016 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2016.
- 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 2015-2016 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 youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2015-2016.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

March 2015

Focus: Participation Goals, Volunteer Recruitment

Outcomes:

- Volunteer recruited has continued.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.



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

April 2015

Focus: Final Wrap Up, Volunteer Thank You

Outcomes:

- The renovation work of the Renovation Team 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 to update control documents, update the Youth Ministry Manual, evaluate the progress of completing the tasks presented in the MA assessment report, and deal with any current pressure points that are affecting the youth ministry.
- 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 and Young Adult Council so this group has taken responsibility for strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- A volunteer thank you event has been scheduled and promotion has been sent to all youth ministry volunteers.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.



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