



## **YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT**

*Healthy Systems. Innovative Change. For the Future of the Church.*

[www.ministryarchitects.com](http://www.ministryarchitects.com)

### ***Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church of Greensboro, North Carolina***

**10/17/18**

By Stephen Ingram, Lead Consultant and Mike Crain, Lead Consultant  
[Stephen.Ingram@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:Stephen.Ingram@ministryarchitects.com) [Mike.Crain@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:Mike.Crain@ministryarchitects.com)

#### **Background**

Founded in 1832, Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church has been a staple of the McLeansville community for many years. Described by church members as “caring,” “generous,” and “traditional,” Mt. Pleasant UMC is a community of faith that strives to represent the love of Christ in the community and beyond.

Mount Pleasant UMC is situated between the bustling cities of Greensboro and Burlington, and there are congregants that live in each of those communities. The makeup of the communities near Mt. Pleasant UMC is diverse: 57% African American, 30% Caucasian, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. The demographics of the church do not reflect the diversity of the community.

Over the past 20 years, the church has experienced a fairly dramatic decline in membership and attendance. Though many factors influence this decline, a few specific instances of turmoil and upheaval have led to certain moments where families have departed the church in mass.

The membership of the church is 828 and on an average week 222 people attend one of the church’s two worship services. Mt. Pleasant features a Traditions worship service at 9:00 AM and a Generations worship service at 11:00 AM.

---

[www.ministryarchitects.com](http://www.ministryarchitects.com)

877.462.5718

The church is led by Senior Pastor Andrew Brown. A North Carolina native with many years of experience serving United Methodist Churches in the state, Pastor Andrew was appointed to Mt. Pleasant in July 2016. He is the only clergy on staff; the church staff also includes directors for children's ministry, congregational care, and music ministry as well as a business administrator and administrative assistant.

Mt. Pleasant UMC has had an active youth ministry program dating back to the 1970s. Most recently, the structure of the youth ministry has focused around a Sunday night youth group gathering as well as a class specifically for youth during the Sunday school hour.

Currently, there are 94 sixth through twelfth graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week when youth group was meeting weekly, eight of those youth would participate in either Sunday school, worship, or Sunday night youth group. Over the course of the year, youth also participate in an annual out-of-state mission trip, a denominational retreat called Spiritus, and the Cars at the Crossroads fundraiser. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as a "loyal" and "nostalgic" place, while others say it is a "disconnected," "dwindling" ministry.

Through June of 2018, the ministry was led by Mick Raynor, Youth Minister, who had been at the church since 2015. Mick departed in July 2018 to take a call as a senior pastor at another church. Since the youth minister's departure, the ministry has been led by volunteers. There are four volunteers involved in the youth ministry on a weekly basis. Three adult volunteers lead the Sunday night youth program and one volunteer teaches Sunday school on a weekly basis. A myriad of other adults helps out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year. The Sunday night youth group has not been meeting regularly so far this fall, but youth Sunday school has continued every week.

The church has a 2018 budget of \$535,421 of which \$26,000 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program expenses as well as the salary for a part-time youth director.

Overall, Mt. Pleasant UMC has beautiful and well-maintained facilities and grounds. The youth ministry facilities are no exception. The youth at Mt. Pleasant have a designated youth room and also have access to a full basketball gym at the church. The youth space is up-to-date, well-furnished, comfortable, and inviting.

In response to the dwindling number of youth and the growing sense of urgency around finding a new youth minister, 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 23 individuals in 5 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. The youth ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

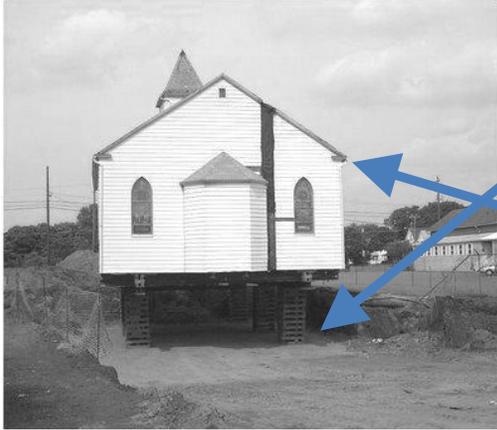
It has been Ministry Architects' experience that though these three rents, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, they are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by youth, parents, staff, and the congregation at large.

**Rent #1: Numbers-**A significant percentage of youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church's youth 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. The consensus is that this rent is not being paid. Youth group attendance numbers have declined significantly in recent years and current youth group attendance is below ten students. Also, only one student regularly attends youth Sunday school.

**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 fact that the youth group is not currently meeting on a consistent weekly basis and the limited number of special events offered for youth suggests that this rent is not being paid on time.

**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. This rent is currently not being paid. The disappointment of declining numbers and frequent youth staff transitions over the past several years has quelled the enthusiasm about youth ministry.

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.



Laying the Foundation: Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the youth ministry's *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,

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, four rules of thumb – “youth ministry norms” – will be helpful to keep in mind. These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences:

**1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation:** In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 222 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 22 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 8 youth is below what could be expected from the ministry.

**2) \$1,500 per Youth:** With a budget of \$26,000 dedicated to the youth ministry, Mt. Pleasant UMC has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 17 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 8 currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded for continued growth. However, the ministry is not funded to support the involvement of 22 students on a weekly basis, which would be in line with the 10% norm.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth:** Mt. Pleasant UMC currently has no staff persons devoting time to the youth ministry. Thus, according to this rule of thumb, Mt. Pleasant UMC has the capacity to sustain the engagement of zero youth on a weekly basis. However, the church is planning to hire a youth ministry staff person. If the person hired devotes 10 hours per week to the youth ministry, then the ministry will be positioned to support the engagement of 13 youth on a weekly basis. In that case, the staffing will be aligned well to the current needs of the ministry, however, it would not allow room for much more growth. On the other hand, if a person is hired to devote 20 hours per week to the youth ministry, then that will sustain the engagement of 25 youth. That number is very close to the 10% norm of 22 youth based on the church's current average attendance.

**4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth:** Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With 4 weekly volunteers, Mt. Pleasant UMC is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every

2 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 20 youth weekly. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future.

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

Each of these roles is important as Mt. Pleasant UMC pursues a more sustainable model of youth ministry. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

- At Mt. Pleasant UMC, there is currently no person or group serving in the role of the general contractor.
- The architect role is also currently vacant. For a few months in early 2018, a youth committee filled this role, but without a clear general contractor, plans were not clearly passed on to laborers and those participating in the ministry. A perception of disconnection between the architect and those engaged in the ministry developed quickly, and the youth committee is no longer serving the youth ministry.
- A few dedicated laborers serve regularly in the youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC, but without regular training there is not much opportunity for them to hone their skills.
- A staff person is often expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout. As Mt. Pleasant UMC prepares to hire a new youth minister, they should expect that person to primarily serve in only one or two of these roles, which should include the general contractor role.
- Some churches hire a laborer who is skilled at leading singing, playing games or teaching a Bible lesson. These laborers often mature into an architect or a general contractor, but only if they are given permission, time, and training. Mt. Pleasant UMC is currently in need of an architect or general contractor more than another laborer.

## **Assets**

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

#### **A Great Group of Youth**

Around the country churches often lament that their kids are not committed to the youth ministry. Mt. Pleasant UMC bucks this trend. The current group of active youth are dedicated to this youth ministry and to one another. A parent shared, "My daughter is committed to the program. She will always be here." Students love the youth group because it is a safe place to be open and transparent with one another. "It's like a big ol' family," exclaimed one teenager. Another youth immediately responded, "Yeah, we are."

Additionally, these students crave having ownership in the youth ministry. They also want to reach out into their community. Adults have noticed this longing. "They like to do things for people," one adult said. Another person observed. "They have a heart. They have passion." Yet another commented, "I love their spirit." Mt. Pleasant has a core group of committed youth who long to be active in their church and their community.

#### **Committed Volunteers**

A youth ministry cannot survive, and certainly cannot thrive, without the support of people beyond paid church staff. Mt. Pleasant UMC is blessed by the tireless and faithful efforts of committed volunteers. This is especially true right now while Mt. Pleasant UMC is without a youth pastor. Youth exclaimed, "We wouldn't have a youth ministry right now if it were not for Robin and Janet." Other youth explained how Carmen is faithfully present every Sunday to lead youth Sunday school. Furthermore, the youth lauded Vance Lowe saying, "He feels like a cool grandpa." Additionally, there are lots of people that help on an occasional basis. The youth noticed, "A lot of people will cook dinner for us." The youth sentiment can be summed up by one student's comment: "We have great volunteers."

#### **Clarity of Need**

Among those in listening groups, there was an across-the-board consensus that the youth ministry is ready to move to the next level. There was a healthy appreciation for the diligent work of volunteers but a clear desire to do more. There was an agreement among listening group participants that the youth ministry needs greater stability. People agreed on the need for more active students and for a staff person to help lead the ministry. "It's very hard to hold a small youth group together," reflected one adult. Another person added, "We have so few people that we can't even do anything." Parents, youth, volunteers, and staff people also all expressed a desire for a new youth minister.

#### **Hope Abounds**

The youth, parents, volunteers, and staff at Mt. Pleasant UMC aren't giving up. Though everyone agrees that there are problems to be addressed, the stakeholders in the ministry share hope for better days to come soon. With great confidence, a youth

proclaimed, "I think we are going places. We may have fallen down, but we are getting back up."

Listening group participants showed acute awareness of the potential that exists for this youth ministry. "I like the heart and the passion that is still there. There is still a fire burning, but it needs to be stoked," shared a hopeful parent. Another parent shared, "My daughter still wants to come and has the dream that it will get better." The staff shares the same perspective as the parents, saying, "There is potential there, so much potential." With expectant hope, stakeholders remain committed to the ministry.

### **A History of Youth Ministry**

The journey from nothing to the first inklings of something can be long and arduous. Luckily, Mt. Pleasant UMC does not have to travel that road, because they have a long history of youth ministry going all the way back to the 1970s. Though the size of the youth group and the types of activities have varied during different eras, there has been organized youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC continually for 40-plus years. The church's persistent commitment to youth ministry has endured through changes in youth culture and youth ministry staff.

### **A Pastor that Cares**

Pastor Andrew seems to really care about the youth ministry. One volunteer was pleasantly surprised, and incredibly touched, that Pastor Andrew and his wife invited the youth and the youth volunteers to their home for dinner. Pastor Andrew has been integral in organizing the Ministry Architects support, and even organized a "pre-listening group" meeting for youth, parents, and interested church members in order to galvanize support for this assessment. A parent observed, "This pastor cares about youth ministry."

### **Well-Funded**

Financially, the youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC is well funded. In addition to having an adequate amount of money dedicated to youth ministry in the church budget, the people of the church take an active role raising additional funds to support the youth ministry. A listening group participant shared, "People are willing to support the youth." For example, the men of the church recently sold 88 smoked pork butts to help fund the assessment process. Furthermore, the Cars at the Crossroads car show is a particularly successful fundraising event. This event has attracted great involvement from inside and outside the church and has raised significant funds for the youth ministry. People had a lot to say about the car show:

- "That was fun last year."
- "A lot of the members from the church come to that, and a lot of people from the community, too."
- "We raised a lot of money through the car show."
- "It gets a lot of people involved."
- "It's a really big event."

**Facilities**

The youth ministry is blessed with having plenty of space to utilize within the church. The designated youth room is definitely large enough to support this group of youth, even as the group grows. Additionally, the space is well maintained. The paint, furniture, and decor are up-to-date and tasteful. Additionally, the students have a full-size gym that is available to them during Sunday night youth ministry, giving them a place where they can run and play.

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***Obstacles to moving the children's and youth ministries strategically forward***

#### **Rotating Door**

Over the past several years, the youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC has experienced a great deal of turnover with their youth staff. While there has been significant turnover, much of it has been by design as the church chose to use leaders from the Duke intern program. Each of these leaders would serve the church eight months at a time per their enrollment in the program. When asked, a student said, "We just want someone to stay a while, to be consistent." Another said, "I want a youth minister who is reliable and consistent, who stays." There was broad consensus that there is a great desire for a youth minister who will be at the church, in relationships, leading the ministry for the long haul.

#### **Volunteer Disempowerment**

Despite having a few faithful volunteers, the youth ministry has struggled to build a broad and well-empowered volunteer pool. This deficit has not only put a strain on the current volunteers and leadership, it also deprives the youth of important and meaningful adult relationships with which to build a strong and sustainable ministry. In its current state the volunteer pool is not equipped for the desired level of youth ministry. "We have a couple of volunteers, two moms who do so much for us." While this is a treasure in and of itself, it will have to be multiplied substantially in order to provide the continuity and longevity longed for by the church.

#### **Critical Mass**

Currently the youth ministry is experiencing an issue of critical mass. While the current students are faithful and love the group, they realize and have expressed the fear of an ever-shrinking core group. "We just do not have as many kids as we used to, even a couple of years ago." Another student said, "A lot of the youth graduated and now we are pretty much just a high school group." One parent said, "We are in a place where we do not know if we will even have youth this Sunday. Will anyone even be there?" In recent years, the church has had difficulty transitioning students into the youth ministry from the children's ministry. While the youth ministry is not in a dangerous place yet, it is in a borderline situation that could quickly become critical.

#### **Children's Cliff**

With all of the transitions in the youth ministry staffing and programming, the youth ministry has come up lacking in being a draw for children coming from the children's ministry. Usually a church with such a strong children's ministry has a great built-in feeder into the youth group. However, when the youth ministry feels like a step down, it becomes a cliff to jump off of rather than a launching pad into the ministry. One parent said, "My daughter is the only 6th grader. A year ago, she was not the only 5th grader." When they come from the children's ministry there is nothing to look forward to." This dynamic becomes a huge liability, and finishing the children's ministry becomes an exit point not only for children, but also for families from the church.

### **The Burden of a Legacy**

Each of the listening groups talked about the important and impactful ministry named The New Wineskins. For many people in the church, the mention of this former group brings memories of “50 to 60 kids,” “a great ministry that made a difference,” and “success.” It is definitely a group that represents a golden age of the youth ministry. While it is important for churches to have and celebrate these markers, they can also be a double-edged sword. Many listening group participants talked about the goodness of this ministry but felt like significant portions of the church can only understand success if it looks like The New Wineskins. One youth said, “They want it to go back to The Wineskins. We do not want to do that; we want to go into the community to serve.” Another youth said, “Everyone wants to go back. That is not what we want; we want more people but not the Wineskins.” It is clear to both parents and youth, in order for the ministry to move forward into its next iteration, it will have to reimagine what success looks like for the students at Mt. Pleasant UMC today.

### **The Youth Group Silo**

Staff, parents, and students alike expressed a concern about the youth ministry functioning in a silo in relation to the church. There was concern about the gap between the children and youth ministry. There were also broader concerns of a disconnect between the youth ministry and the whole church. The youth talked about a lot of decisions that have been made about them without taking into consideration what they want and hope for in the ministry. “It is like we do not have a vote,” one youth said. Another parent said, “There have been times where people have tried to come in and support them but on several occasions the ‘help’ came in ways that were not as helpful.” While it is agreed that these efforts have been given with the best of intentions, there seems to be a disconnect between what the youth and parents and what others in the church think that the ministry should be.

### **Sparse Youth Calendar and Program**

Youth and parents alike expressed a longing for more consistent youth programming. This desire is reflected both in weekly ministry and in the programmatic year. As of this report, the youth have met only once for youth group in the two months they have been back in school. One youth said, “We just want to meet and have youth group again.” A parent said, “These kids want to go deep in their faith. They want to do meaningful things.” It is clear that the youth want to be together and have meaningful programming. They also want to do programs that not only impact themselves, they want to be an impact on others in their community and world. One parent said, “When I look at that blanket with all of the past trip t-shirts, it makes me sad because in the past three to five years we should have had enough shirts to make another quilt. But we do not and it makes me so sad.” It is clear that there is a great desire to do more but no great plan.

### **Communication**

The listening groups each talked about the lack of communication in the church. This ranged from communication about youth events to communication between the youth

and the church. There is a major lack of continuity in the messaging between each of these groups. This failure in communication has led to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and a discontinuity among those involved in the youth ministry. Many of the issues the youth ministry has faced recently could have been averted with better communication structures. One volunteer said, "I really do not know what is going on. The kids will come to me to ask and I just feel like I am in the dark." Another parent said, "I am not sure how decisions get made or who I should talk to in order to get something done." This lack of reporting will continue to undercut the good efforts of the youth ministry.

### **Lack of Vision**

There is no clear vision for the youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC. While there are several narratives for how success was achieved in the past, there is no consensus on how to move the youth ministry forward into what God is calling it to next. One parent said, "The church has been adrift." Another said, "There is great growth all around us in the community. We need to be ready for it." In order for long lasting sustainable growth to take hold in the youth ministry, there will need to be agreed upon mission, values, and goals that drive the ministry, helping it focus on its role in the life of the church and the community.

### **A Problem of Ownership**

There is no doubt the youth ministry is a beloved and cherished part of Mt. Pleasant UMC. It has a long and storied history, and many people feel attachment and ownership to the ministry. Unfortunately, this has played out in starts and stops regarding the leadership, decision making structures, and direction of the ministry. There have been several well-meaning attempts over the years to give direction and opportunity to the ministry, each never reaching their real potential because they lacked the full buy-in of the students, parents, volunteers, and other church members. These attempts, while with the best of intentions, have caused frustration and exacerbation among many who are involved and have led the ministry to stall out in recent months.

### **Cracks in the Foundation**

There are several important systems and documents missing from the youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC. Ministries struggle to grow when an adequate infrastructure has not been provided to support the ministry. The following items and systems are currently missing:

- **Attendance Tracking:** Cloud-based system for tracking individual attendance records at each program (not just Sunday school). If there's no tracking system, then 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors and those missing-in-action may not be followed up on like they should be. Without this, growth doesn't happen; instead, decline begins.
- **Database:** A cloud-based system so that student contact information can be accessed at any time for outreach and relationship building, like visits to school events, cards and notes, follow-up after key events, etc.
- **18-months Calendar:** An online calendar where events are always 12-months out "in pen" with another 6-months beyond that "in pencil." This way, parents, youth, volunteers, staff, and church members can have the opportunity to say

“no” to other things and “yes” to youth events. The farther out the calendar, the farther out the organizational process, and the better the critical mass when the event comes.

- **MIA & First Timer Follow Up:** A system for following up with visiting youth and checking in on those who are missing in action, to be sure no one falls through the cracks and goes unnoticed.
- **Major Event Notebooks:** For annual special events and programs, information and data should be gathered to enable new volunteers to run these in the future. It’s all fine and good to leave the information in the head of a staff person...until that staff person leaves and the event information leaves with them.
- **Youth Ministry Manual:** Budgets, game plans, calendars, job descriptions, curriculum plans, and visioning documents all located in one place.
- **Communication Plan:** Mt. Pleasant UMC does not appear to have a normative process for communicating about the various programs being offered for youth. A comprehensive plan using several different types and styles of communication should be developed.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs for each semester, in order to measure the effectiveness of the ministry’s impact.

## Recommendations

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the youth ministry. Understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the youth ministry, target May 2020 as the date when the youth ministry renovation will be complete.
- 2) Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
- 3) Present this report to the Church Council, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
- 4) Establish a Youth Ministry Renovation Team, made up of three to five volunteers. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation Team ensures that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved.
- 5) Engage the services of Ministry Architects to take responsibility for:
  - Chairing and leading the Renovation Team during the 18-month period of momentum building.
  - 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 Search Team with the search process to fill the youth director position.
- 6) Address the current pressure points facing the youth ministry.

**Pressure Point #1: Volunteer Training and Recruitment** – “Enter into a recruitment process for the 2018-2019 school year insuring that the appropriate number of volunteers have been recruited and trained for all youth ministry programming.”

- Make a list of immediate volunteer positions that need to be filled.
- Using the church photo directory create a list of potential volunteers.
- Divide up this list of potential volunteers and begin calling them personally.
- Go back to step one until all positions have been filled.
- After all positions have been filled enter into a training season for all volunteers making sure that all have been trained and are up to date with Safe Sanctuaries certification and background checks.
- Make sure that all current volunteers have current background checks (within the last 3 years)
- Make sure that all current volunteers have been trained in Safe Sanctuaries.
- Create a database system to make sure that all background checks and Safe Sanctuaries trainings are up to date from year to year.

- Integrate this into how volunteers are recruited insuring that no volunteer ever steps foot into a classroom or on a trip without having gone through these two measures first.
- Make sure that all classrooms have at least 2 adults who are not related present at all times.

**Pressure Point #2: Solidify Programming and Calendar** – “Reexamine current programming options for children and youth ministries for effectiveness and meaningfulness.”

- Evaluate current program offerings through conversations with parents, and youth to determine the effectiveness of each program.
- Begin a process of determining the programs that will need to be kept as is, bolstered or replaced.
- Find new curriculum and develop new flows for the appropriate programs in the children and youth ministries.
- Pay special attention during this process to the development of Sunday night youth group programming.
- Evaluate the current calendar offerings through the end of the Summer of 2019.
- Determine quarterly small events for the youth group in addition to the mission trip and Spiritus.
- Also, determine a local monthly youth mission project that the youth can be involved in creating change in their world.

**Pressure Point #3: Cracks in the Foundation** - “There are several important systems and documents missing from the youth ministry at Mt. Pleasant UMC. Take the necessary steps needed in order to create strong and sustainable systems and structures in the ministry. The following items and systems are currently missing”

- **Attendance Tracking:** Develop a cloud-based system for tracking individual attendance records at each program (not just Sunday school).
- **Database:** Create a cloud-based system so that student contact information can be accessed at any time for outreach and relationship building, like visits to school events, cards and notes, follow-up after key events, etc.
- **18-months Calendar:** Build an online calendar where events are always 12-months out “in pen” with another 6-months beyond that “in pencil.” This way, parents, youth, volunteers, staff, and church members can have the opportunity to say “no” to other things and “yes” to youth events.
- **MIA & First Timer Follow Up:** Implement a system for following up with visiting youth and checking in on those who are missing in action, to be sure no one falls through the cracks and goes unnoticed.

**Pressure Point #4: Bridging the Gap from Children’s Ministry** – “Develop a robust onboarding program for rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders that will transition them into the youth ministry and maintain a very high retention rate through their first year in the youth group.”

- Evaluate the current transition process for strengths and weaknesses.
- Determine what the retention rate for transitioning the 6<sup>th</sup> graders into the youth ministry has been for the past 3 years.
- Develop a multi-month onboarding process that begins in January of their 5<sup>th</sup> grade year and continues through October of their 6<sup>th</sup> grade year.
- This process should focus on:
  - Creating strong relational connection points in the youth ministry with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.
  - Providing several cross over events where the students will get to know the staff and volunteers in the youth ministry.
  - Show that the youth ministry and children’s ministry are partners and that the youth ministry is a continuation of the children’s ministry and not a place to disengage from the church.
  - Develop a “handoff” retreat that is run by both the children and youth ministries that will help hand off the 5<sup>th</sup> graders to the youth ministry in a significant and meaningful way.
  - Create materials and orientation meetings for parents of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students that will create buy in for the ministry and aid in the parents’ transition into the youth ministry.

7) Build the long-term infrastructure required for long-term, sustainable children’s and youth ministries, including the following tasks:

#### **Building Infrastructure and Stability**

- **Host a “Quick Start” Summit:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and youth staff to participate in a Quick Start Summit in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The Summit tackles the items that need to be done first and builds momentum for the youth ministry renovation process.
  - Identify any progress in implementing the recommendations of this report.
  - Orient the Renovation Team to their specific responsibilities.
  - Assign Renovation Team members responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report.
  - Calendar the dates involving Renovation Team.
  - Create a plan for concrete communication between the Renovation Team and staff to ensure that all parties feel they’re “in the know.”

- Draft the following documents, finalizing them within no more than two weeks after the Quick Start Summit:
  - A finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events through December 2018.
  - Results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry. The job descriptions cover all current positions and also include additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
  - A clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
  - A broad “fishing pond” list of at least 40 volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people sure to say yes, and it includes people that will never say yes (but hope they will one day).
- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
  - A ministry mission statement.
  - A statement of values.
  - A set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks
  - An organizational structure for the ministry.
- **Christian Formation Summit:** Gather a team for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing curriculum, milestones and special programming.
  - Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
  - Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
  - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- **Control Document Development:** 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”).

- o **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 child and youth protection policy.
- o **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth activities.
- 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.
- 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, email, and other social media.
- o **Youth Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, a 12 to 18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major youth 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 2019. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.
- o **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**

- o **Strategic Staffing:** 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.
- 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 clear and complete list of volunteer needs. Create a "fishing pond" list of at least 40 volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.

- o **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.
- o **Student Leadership Development:** Develop a written game plan for combining the church's current student leadership opportunities into a system that gives increasing load-bearing responsibility for mentoring and ministry leadership to youth.

### **Clear Strategies and New Initiatives Developing**

- o **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2018-2019 school year.
- o **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 international missions. Evaluate the current mission trips for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- o **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.
- o **Family 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.
- o **Youth Contact:** Develop and implement processes for ensuring that each youth in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month.
- o **Spiritual Depth:** Develop a plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments.
- o **Ownership:** Create a game plan to encourage a culture where everyone feels valued and equally regarded. Foster a culture that all adults, regardless of their station in life, feel passionate about raising and supporting youth in their Christian faith.
- o **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
  - Welcome and connect the new sixth graders and their parents into the youth ministry.
  - Welcome and connect the new ninth 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:**

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

### **November 2018**

#### **Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins**

##### **Outcomes:**

- This report has been presented to the Church Council for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the Church Council has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for December.
- The Renovation Team for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Summit.
- 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.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.
- A detailed 2019 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- The church has partnered with Ministry Architects to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
- Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.
- Pressure Point 4 has been completed.

### **December 2018**

#### **Focus: Renovation Underway, Quick Start Summit, Visioning, Database**

##### **Outcomes:**

- A Visioning Summit has been scheduled for March and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- A Quick Start Summit has taken place in which the renovation process was launched, and pressure points outlined in the assessment report have been addressed. The Summit tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the youth ministry renovation process.

- Pressure Point 1 has been completed

## **January 2019**

### **Focus: Visioning Promotion, Volunteers, Calendar**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2019.
- A fishing pond of 75 potential volunteers in the youth ministry has been created.
- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has begun.
- Pressure Point 2 has been completed

## **February 2019**

### **Focus: Pressure Points, Communication, Calendar**

#### **Outcomes:**

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices are being implemented.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the youth ministry.
- Work has begun on the 2019-2020 youth ministry calendar.
- The summer 2019 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed
- Pressure Point 3 has been completed

## **March 2019**

### **Focus: Visioning, Calendar, Compliance, Recruitment**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Volunteer recruiting season 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 2019-2020 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.

- Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2019-2020.
- The 2019-2020 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2020 including a Fall Kick-off.
- A Visioning Summit 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.
- A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2018-2019 school year has been written and implemented.

## **April 2019**

### **Focus: Volunteers, Compliance, Mid-Course Evaluation,**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A mid-course visit from Ministry Architects has been scheduled for June
- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented.
- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is compliant with the Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- Copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained. Permission slips for each offsite event in addition to standard medical release forms for the entire year have been created.
- All programs have adhered to the Safe Sanctuaries policy as laid out by the church.
- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments necessary to improve the work being done.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and calendared for the youth ministry staff.

- A volunteer thank-you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all youth volunteers.
- 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 international missions. Current mission trips have been evaluated for their effectiveness.

## **May 2019**

### **Focus: Attendance Tracking, Christian Formation Summit, Participation Goals, Database, MIA**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for the fall of 2019. The Summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth ministry programs has been created and implemented.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2020 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- 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.
- 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.

## **June 2019**

### **Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Marketing, Communication, Volunteer Thank You, Curriculum, Midcourse Visit**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each youth event.
- A midcourse visit has been completed with Ministry Architects
- A volunteer thank-you event has taken place.
- 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.
- The effectiveness of this past year's curriculum has been reviewed and decisions have been made for any necessary changes for the upcoming school year.
- A 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.

## July 2019

### Focus: Fall Kick-off, Manual, Database

#### Outcomes:

- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth ministry has been updated with that new information.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited to begin planning for the start of the fall youth ministry programs.
- All volunteer needs for the 2019-2020 school year for youth ministry have been filled.
- The Youth Ministry Manuals (both hard copy and digital) have been completed, including:
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
  - Volunteer directory
  - Volunteer training agendas and notes
  - Attendance records
  - Annual calendar
  - Results-based job descriptions
  - Game plans and new initiatives
  - Meeting agendas and minutes for the Renovation Team.
  - Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
  - Budget and other financial documents
  - Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
  - Compliance documents

- A process has been implemented to ensure that each youth in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month.

## **August 2019**

### **Focus: Volunteers, Leadership Launch**

#### **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.
- 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 Safe Sanctuaries policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- All volunteer needs for the 2019-2020 school year for youth ministry have been filled.
- A written plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments has been implemented. This plan has included

## **September 2019**

### **Focus: Benchmarks, Compliance, Fall Kick-off**

#### **Outcomes:**

- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is compliant with the Safe Sanctuaries policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- All youth programs have adhered to the Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed youth and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants feel energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.
- A game plan to encourage a culture where everyone feels valued and equally regarded has been created and implemented. It has fostered a culture that all adults, regardless of their station in life, feel passionate about raising and supporting youth in their Christian faith.

## **October 2019**

### **Focus: Curriculum, Major Event Notebooks, Budget**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.
- A detailed 2020 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Major event notebooks for each major event for the youth ministry have been handed out to this year's event coordinators.
- A game plan has been established for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges that have:
  - Welcomed and connected the new sixth graders and their parents into the youth ministry.
  - Welcomed and connected the new ninth 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.

## **November 2019**

### **Focus: Game Plans**

#### **Outcomes:**

- All game plans that have been launched in last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- 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.

## **December 2019**

### **Focus: Reflection and Re-Assessment, Preventative Maintenance Calendar**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going "behind the scenes" ministry maintenance.
- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth ministry.
- Current pressure points have been named.

## **January 2020**

### **Focus: Calendar, Participation Goals**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2020.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2021 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.

## **February 2020**

### **Focus: Benchmarks, Calendars, Mid-Year Training, Strategic Staffing**

#### **Outcomes:**

- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- Work has begun on the 2020-2021 youth ministry calendar.
- The summer 2020 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers received support and training in their specific roles. A “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- With the changes in the youth ministry, the volunteer 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.

## **March 2020**

### **Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Calendars**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Volunteer recruiting season 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 2020-2021 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and renew their commitment to the youth ministry.

- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2020-2021.
- The 2020-2021 youth ministry calendar has been completed.

## **April 2020**

### **Focus: Sustainability**

#### **Outcomes:**

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

## The *Ministry Architects* Team Serving Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church



### **STEPHEN INGRAM – LEAD CONSULTANT**

[stephen.ingram@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:stephen.ingram@ministryarchitects.com)

Stephen is a dad, husband, and foodie. He has served in churches for 19 years and also serves as a lead consultant with Ministry Architects. He lives in Birmingham with his wife Mary Liz and their three kids Mary Clare, Patrick, and Nora Grace. Stephen speaks at conference all around the country as well as leading training events, intentionally spiritual parenting workshops and retreats for youth ministries. Stephen is a contributing author to several blogs including [youthspecialties.com](http://youthspecialties.com). He blogs and podcasts regularly at [www.stepheningram.org](http://www.stepheningram.org) and [www.thisonegoodlife.com](http://www.thisonegoodlife.com). His books include *Hollow Faith: How Andy Griffith, Facebook and the American Dream Neutered the Gospel*, *ExtraOrdinary Time*; *365 Ordinary Moments with and Anything But Ordinary God* and *Organic Student Ministry*.



### **MIKE CRAIN – PROJECT MANAGER**

[mike.crain@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:mike.crain@ministryarchitects.com)

Mike began serving in youth ministry in 2001. From 2008-2014, Mike was the youth pastor and children's pastor at the Van Buren, AR campus of Community Bible Church, and then he served on the staff of Church at the Red Door in Palm Desert of California until August of 2018. Mike graduated from Abilene Christian University with a bachelor's degree in Youth and Family Ministry and continued his education with a Master of Divinity from Bethel Seminary. He and his wife, Ashley, live in Indio, CA with their daughter, Adeline.



### **STEPHANIE CARO- SENIOR CONSULTANT**

[stephanie.caro@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:stephanie.caro@ministryarchitects.com)

Stephanie Caro has been involved in ministry to children, youth, and adults in the local church since...a long time. Her humorous, straightforward style keeps her busy presenting and coaching at conferences, training events, camps, mission trips, retreats, churches, etc. She is Senior Consultant for Ministry Architects, which allows her to help churches assess, vision, and formulate their ministry game plan.

Her books, *Thriving Youth Ministry in Smaller Churches* and *99 Thoughts for the Smaller Church Youth Worker*, were published by Group/Simply Youth Ministry. Her latest book, *Smaller Church Youth Ministry: No Staff, No Money, No Problem*, was published by United Methodist Publishing House in December of 2016. Her next book, *Ten Solutions (to 10 Common Mistakes in Small Churches)*, comes out summer 2017. Stephanie is a contributing author to several ministry resources like YouthWorker Journal in addition to her regular column "Smaller Church Youth Ministry" in Group Magazine. Check out Stephanie's blog, part of the #1 read youth ministry blog network, [youthministry.com](http://youthministry.com) from Simply Youth Ministry/Group Publishing. She also blogs for [youthspecialties.com](http://youthspecialties.com), Princeton Theological Seminary, and others. Stephanie and her husband, Steve, live in Houston, TX. Their 7 children are all grown!

---

[www.ministryarchitects.com](http://www.ministryarchitects.com)

877.462.5718