



# FUMC PEARLAND

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## YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

*Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time*

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### First Methodist Church of Pearland, TX

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### BACKGROUND

First United Methodist Pearland is a diverse faith family with a historically strong youth and children's ministry and community presence. They are a people rich in the Methodist tradition, and church members describe their church family as "very caring" and "welcoming."

The church has grown to four worship services on Sunday mornings and has a strong community presence in Pearland through ministries like Upward basketball, the Methodist Children's Program, and GIFTS Camp. The mission of the church is to "Connect all to a greater life in Christ - where God's love is known and shared." This desire to connect all people to a greater life in Christ is evidenced by the variety of worship services designed to reach the many unique individuals and families in the Pearland community. This desire to connect all people is also evidenced in the 2016 launch of Redeemer Church in the Manvel community.

The membership of the church is around 2,500 and on an average week, approximately 700 people attend one of the church's four worship services. FUMC Pearland is led by senior pastor Keith Whitaker. Keith was appointed as senior pastor in June 2008 after previously serving several years as a District Superintendent in the Texas conference.

Currently, there are about 145 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 73 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship, youth praise band, or youth group. The student ministry is described by some youth and parents as a "struggling" and "unwelcoming" place, while others say it is "loving" and "has the potential to be great."

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The church has a 2018 budget of \$2,646,000, of which approximately \$77,445 is dedicated to the student ministry. This includes the program budget as well as the salary and benefits for the staff, consisting of a full-time director of student ministries and a part-time director of M&M's coordinator/youth associate.

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

The ministry is led by a director of student ministries who has been at the church since January 2017 and the M&M coordinator and youth assistant who has been on staff since March 2016.

While there seems to be plenty of space in the youth ministry facilities, the facility and decor could use improvement. The low ceilings and antiquated decor are not in keeping with the rest of the FUMC Pearland campus, which has resulted in some students and parents feeling like the youth ministry is meeting in a leftover space.

Due to the high turnover in the director of student ministries position, First United Methodist Church invited Ministry Architects to do an initial assessment of the student ministry to get a "blueprint" on how to develop a sustainable student ministry and to make recommendations on how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 73 individuals in 9 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

## YOUTH 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.

The consensus is that this rent is struggling to be paid. Many of the focus group members expressed the negative impact that the high turnover in the director of student ministries position has had on the student ministry. Many families and youth are hesitant to engage due to the negative feelings present while waiting for the current director to leave like the others have.

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

While there is consistent programming for the student ministry, the lack of consistency in staff has made it difficult to create programs with intentionality and depth thus leaving this rent being partially paid.

**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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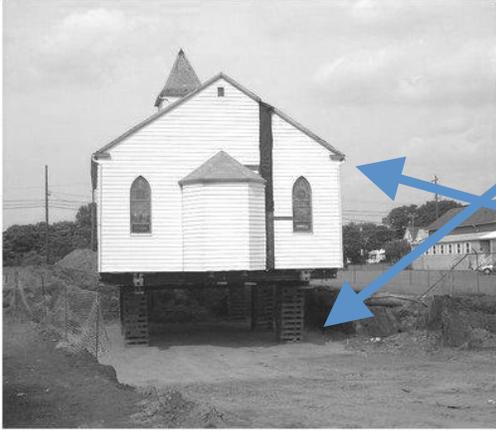
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While it is obvious there is much desire and hope for the student ministry, the lack of consistency in staff has taken a toll on the ministry. The transitions have left many volunteers feeling tired and burned out and many youth hesitant to get excited due to the expectation of another transition on the horizon. These factors suggest that this rent is past due.

As the leadership of the student 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 the parallel challenge this way:



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

**1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 700 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 70 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 73 youth is right on target with what could be expected from the ministry; however, it’s important to note that over a quarter of these students are not engaged in programs outside of worship.

**2) \$1,500 per Youth**—With a budget of \$77,445 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, FUMC Pearland has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 52 youth in some aspect of the church’s life. With 73 currently participating every week, the ministry is under-funded to retain even the currently attending youth. In order to maintain the ministry at its current rate, it would be wise to consider how to give the ministry the resourcing it needs.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering the positions giving time to the student ministry, which include the director of student ministries and the M&M coordinator/youth assistant), FUMC Pearland has a total of 49 hours allocated to the student ministry (7th-12 grade). According to this rule of thumb, FUMC Pearland has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 63 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration seems inadequate to sustain the needs of the ministry. Ordinarily, in over-capacity youth ministries, the youth staff is set up to be unable to fulfill all the expectations placed on them. The natural result is a climate of criticism and burn out.

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**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 8 weekly volunteers, FUMC is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 15 youth. With this ratio, the team is too small to attend to the relational needs of the 73 youth who currently attend one of the worship services or weekly student ministry programs. The volunteer pool will need to expand if the church wants to sustain its impact with 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 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 FUMC Pearland pursues a more sustainable model of youth ministry. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

- In many churches, there is no person or group playing the role of the architect. The ministry simply moves from one event to the next without a clear vision or stated outcomes.
- Sometimes paid staff are not given the time or training to do their important work as the “general contractor” of a complex ministry.
- The staff is often expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- Some churches hire a laborer who is skilled at leading singing, playing games or teaching a Bible lesson. These laborers often mature into an architect or a general contractor, but only if they are given permission, time, and training.

FUMC is currently asking it’s staff to play each of the roles needed to sustain a healthy youth ministry. As the ministry goes through the renovation process, it will need to tend to the current structure that is leading to the burnout of staff and volunteers.

## **ASSETS**

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

**Student Ministry Director:** Across the board, the youth, parents, staff, and volunteers hold the student ministry director in high esteem. When we asked the high school students what kept them coming back, the overwhelming answer was “John!” Parents seemed to share the same perspective. One high school parent put it this way: “We have

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bought into John. He is committed and we believe he is the right person to lead our youth ministry where we want to go.” The people at FUMC like John and want him to stay. He connects well with the students and has been very visible in the community and at schools. The fact that the church is filled with fans of John is a huge asset for the student ministry.

**We Are Not Done Here!** While it’s obvious that FUMC has been through a lot of transition over the years, there is a sense among parents, youth, and volunteers that despite the high turnover, the student ministry is not done.

When we asked the junior high students to describe their youth ministry, one student described it this way. “I think our youth ministry is like tofu. It has potential to be great with a little help and the right ingredients.” Another student shared that “this could be the ultimate youth group with a little work.” Parents talked about the transition, but also expressed belief that they are building something good here.

The fact that 73 students and parents would turn out to talk in focus groups about the student ministry is a sign that the people of FUMC care about the future effectiveness of this program and that there is excitement about what could be and should be.

**“We’re in this for the Long Haul!”** FUMC is dedicated to making the student ministry work for a long-term, sustainable future. The majority of the parents we talked with in focus groups have been at the church for more than ten years, and they are committed to seeing things turn around. As one high school parent put it, “We want to reap the benefits of sticking around.” The staff and volunteers share the same commitment to seeing this through. No one is throwing in the towel or giving up, but instead they are willing to look at what is needed to move forward. This is evidenced by several things:

- 1) Bringing in Ministry Architects to be a part of the student ministry renovation process.
- 2) Good turnout at the listening groups.
- 3) The willingness to share!
- 4) An interest in how to reach new families in the Pearland community.

The observations above represent great steps taken towards a sustainable youth ministry and clearly communicate to families that the church wants to move towards clarifying their student ministry direction by creating a deeper, sustainable model for the future.

**Longing for Substance:** A number of students expressed a strong desire for another layer of discussion and a deeper focus on Bible study and application. Students of all ages want the FUMC youth ministry to be about more than just “fun.” As one junior high student said, “I like youth group, but I expect more from the conversations and want to go to a deeper level.” Parents and students alike expressed a desire for students to address the kind of faith questions that will allow them to own their faith as adults and after youth group.

**Communication:** Quite a few students, parents, and volunteers had good things to say about communication in the Pearland Student Ministry. One junior high student said “Communication here is really easy.” Students and parents alike appreciated getting regular emails about events and how to sign up for them. Speaking of email communication from the student ministry, another junior high student said that “reading the emails has taught me a lot about real world connections.” Parents from all focus groups spoke about receiving communication in a variety of ways and were appreciative of the effort from the staff.

**Student Leadership:** The high school students expressed eagerness about finding more ways to serve in the life of

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the larger church and to own more of the ministry. Many of them mentioned how much they enjoy serving in things like WOW and how they would like more opportunities like this. Participating in things like a youth orchestra, Youth Sundays, and the youth band brought a lot of excitement to the room. As one high school student put it, “We want to be more involved in ways outside of youth band.” Students across the board talked with excitement about finding opportunities to take leadership serving in new ways within the life of the church. Students from both junior high and high school also spoke about a desire to have older students mentor younger students. This is a source of great potential to connect youth at a higher level to the church as a whole.

**Clarity of Need:** It is clear that FUMC is not where they want to be regarding student ministry, but no one is in a state of “panic.” Some parents and staff have reasonable concerns about the student ministry, concerns which, if left un-addressed, could threaten the long-term stability of the group. Instead of waiting for a crisis moment, the staff of the church has chosen to seek outside counsel to navigate the best way forward. Many people we heard agree with the staff member who said, “We want to have a program where students, parents, and staff are willing to do anything to get kids through the door.” Everyone also seemed in agreement with a junior high parent’s sentiment that “we all need to do a better job.”

**Meaningful Relationships:** Teenagers want meaningful relationships with peers and adults that encourage them to grow, and parents crave relationships with their children for safe conversations about faith and life. The importance of relationships was shared in almost every focus group.

- “I want our students to have a sense of belonging and see older students mentoring and walking with younger students.”
- “I want to see my child grow and develop a sense of community and family in the youth ministry.”
- “I would like to see us spend more time together outside of church.”
- “I want the kids to feel excited about coming. To have a place where they belong and want to invite their friends.”
- Both high school and junior high students expressed a desire to “spend more time together” and get to know students from the other age groups.

**Spiderman not Superman:** Both the staff and the parents we talked to agreed that John shouldn’t do everything himself. As one parent put it: “We don’t expect John to be the hero, but we want him to have what he needs to be successful.” One staff member dreamed of a student ministry “with such good volunteers and processes that it could run itself.”

The director of student ministries wants to develop a culture that not only invites but also empowers adults from the congregation to take on a wide variety of significant roles in the student ministry, so that a web of support is created around each youth. Parents and staff want to think “Spiderman,” not “Superman.”

Additionally, parents from all focus groups spoke of a desire to have greater parent involvement and the need to recruit new volunteers into the student ministry to come alongside John in walking with students relationally.

## CHALLENGES

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

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**Chronic Transition:** Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the student ministry at FUMC is its habitual pattern of short-term staff people leading the ministry. The tensions and anxiety resulting from this “revolving door” in student ministry came up in every focus group.

- “People here don’t trust the office of ‘youth pastor’.”
  - “Parents and students have been through so much transition that we are gun shy to get involved. Many of us are asking: how long is he going to stay? It’s made the kids skiddish.”
  - “I’ve had three different youth directors since I’ve been here. It’s just been change after change. It’s nice when you have a constant in your life.”
  - “Every one of our children has been confirmed with someone different.”
  - “It would be nice to have a youth director stay around for more than two years.”
- One staff member heard someone say “If John is still here in the fall...”

**A Climate of Anxiety:** We observed some elements of anxiety or fear rise to the surface in every focus group. Parents of junior high youth expressed anxiety over “losing John” if they didn’t compensate him well or fight to keep him. Parents of high school students were anxious about getting involved and serving with so much transition. High school parents were also anxious about not retaining students and excitement after confirmation. Junior high students shared anxiety about being able to talk transparently in small groups and high school students were anxious about how their friends would respond if they invited them. Anxiety, if not contained, grows and gives way to ineffectiveness. When channeled properly, anxiety and fear can turn into diligence and provide the fuel needed to build a solid infrastructure.

**A Cry for Consistency:** In most of the focus groups, there was a common cry for consistency. As one high school student said, “It’s just been change after change.” Parents of all groups came back to the struggle for consistency over the past few years. When we asked the high school parents what they would like to change about student ministry, the immediately responded, “Continuity.” Consistency in not only a leader, but in programming, volunteers, and training will be an important step to achieving buy in amongst parents and students.

**The Message of Leftovers:** Although the ministry is well staffed, parents and students often expressed, “The youth group is not supported in a way that it ought to be.” When we probed further, the frustration usually could be traced back to the condition of the student ministry facilities. This is likely the result of a budget that is shy of funding the ministry in an appropriate way.

Indeed, the contrast between the children’s facilities and the student ministry building is stark. They feel like they are two different churches. Parents of both groups reference the difference in feel. According to one junior high parent, “The two dumpiest buildings on the grounds are where we put our youth ministry.” A parent of a high school student said, “The best facilities here are for the children. Graduate to student ministry and get the oldest buildings on campus. The least of our facilities are for our students.”

The students have also noticed the facilities discrepancy. Some high school students said they would like for the student ministry building to “be more colorful and less dull,” as well as being updated and having a dedicated youth worship space. An M&M student said he liked the facilities, but they needed to be “renovated definitely.”

In order to communicate the value of student ministry at FUMC and the investment in the program, addressing the facilities for student ministry will go a long way. As one junior high parent put it, “Youth ministry is not a tack on ministry. We would like support for some of these changes to show support for the ministry.”

**Where’s the Excitement?** Parents and students in multiple focus groups brought up the level of fun and excitement in participating in student ministry. Some parents were concerned that participation seemed to wane in high school

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students once they learned to drive. Parents in all focus groups said they wanted their kids to be “excited about going to youth group” and that they desired for the youth ministry at FUMC to be an “engaging environment where their kids wanted to come and bring their friends to.” Some of the words high school students used to describe the student ministry at FUMC were “intimidating,” “pressuring,” and “socially awkward.” When we asked the same students what they want the ministry to be, they mentioned things like “welcoming,” “fun,” “inviting,” and “the place you want to go.”

While the junior high students raved about the fun activities, one student said, “There can be a tense atmosphere in the room. I wish it was more comfortable to be able to talk.” The students all had something they enjoyed about student ministry at FUMC, but there is also a sense of excitement that is missing and in some part affecting participation as students get older.

**Exclusive Environment:** Staff, parents, leaders and students all point to the fact that the environment of the youth ministry can be, at times, less than welcoming. Some parents pointed to cliques as the primary problem facing the current student ministry. One junior high parent said they were “not sure new people would feel comfortable in student ministry.” One high school student said, “I feel like we sometimes close off the world. It makes me scared to invite my friends.” Another student said, “It feels hard to bring people.”

Across the focus groups we were in, parents, students, and staff agreed that they would like for the student ministry to be a more welcoming environment where students could belong and would be comfortable inviting their friends to.

**Where’s the Discipleship Path?** One item that came up often among the student focus groups was the discipleship path and curriculum. Students in both high school and junior high expressed that they wanted to “go deeper” and have more of a choice in curriculum and topics that were applicable to their lives. An M&M student had heard that he wouldn’t learn as much new material when he got into student ministry. The ideas of choice in topics and greater life application came up multiple times across the age groups and stimulated excitement among the students. One junior high boy shared, “I like it when we get a voice and get to choose what it will look like.” A clear and engaging discipleship path seemed to be missing as students spoke about specific curriculums they like and disliked over the years.

**Widen the Net:** As a part of providing a welcoming environment where students are known and valued as they are, more volunteers and adults to be present in their lives will be needed. The desire of the director of student ministries is to have one adult present in the lives of every five students. Adults and students in the focus groups also mentioned a few things that point toward the need to widen the net and recruit more adult volunteers to come alongside of the ministry.

- “There are not enough adult volunteers to handle the distractions and give students extra attention when it is needed.”
- “Sometimes our leaders come unprepared and haven’t read the book.”
- “I don’t really know where I could plug in outside of teaching Sunday school.”
- “We need more parents to get involved in the youth ministry.”

**Finding the Perfect Mix:** One topic that kept resurfacing among students in their focus groups was finding the perfect mix of how and when the different age groups should interact. Both high school and junior high students spoke about not knowing the other age groups as well as they would like and the potential for older students to mentor their younger peers. As one high school student shared, “The upper-classmen don’t include the younger students as well as we could.” Another high school student said, “I don’t feel like we ever get to know the younger students until they get thrown into youth group after confirmation. Then it’s hard to connect with them.” When we asked a junior high

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student what their one wish for student ministry would be, they answered, “I would like to do more stuff with the older kids.”

While both groups mentioned they would like to spend more time together, it was also clear that they wanted to have time with their own age groups. There may not be a clear consensus on what this should look like, but finding the right mix could pay major dividends in the student’s sense of belonging and connection.

**Missing Marketing:** Though communication from John to parents at FUMC is an asset and strength, there was a consensus in the focus groups that there are some missing marketing pieces. Getting student ministry information out to a greater degree among the church and community could help in both connecting new students and recruiting volunteers. One parent expressed, “If you just showed up at this church one Sunday, you would have no idea that we even had a youth ministry.”

Most parents we talked to were grateful for the regular communication from John, but they also had a desire for more. One parent shared, “Communication is good, but sometimes it’s a little last minute.” Another parent said, “There’s good communication, but I would like to know a little bit more about the curriculum my kids are walking through and who their leaders are. I want to continue the conversation when they get home.” Adding in some of these missing marketing elements could provide the potential to communicate to and connect people to student ministry at a greater level.

**Confirmation Frustration:** One high school student said, “Confirmation feels forced and happens too early.” Another said, “I wish confirmation could happen later or on my own time. I don’t remember much of anything from my confirmation. I wish I could do it again now.” More than a few high school students mentioned a desire to move confirmation to an older age group. Their desire was to have a better understanding of their faith and to be able to own their faith at a higher level.

**Youth See, Youth Do:** Focus group members we met with discussed the need for parents to be more involved in the life of the student ministry program. Overall, there was a sentiment that parents modeling student ministry as a priority for their kids could go a long way. Throughout the focus groups, we heard things like:

- “Student ministry is not a priority to parents and students.”
- “A lot of parents aren’t involved in Sunday school or anything outside of worship. If they aren’t involved in other things, why would their kids?”
- “We need more parents to step up and be involved in the youth ministry. It’s been the same people doing this for years. We need more help.”
- “There’s no draw for parents to be here during youth activities We need to have something to make them want to come and set the example.”

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## 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, August 2019 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 at least three non-anxious, goal-oriented volunteers and the Director of Student Ministries who will work closely with Ministry Architects to ensure that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
  - I. **Addressing the immediate pressure points** facing the ministry as it transitions toward a thriving, sustainable youth ministry (e.g., keeping the trains running on time)
  - II. **Implementing the strategic, long-term** recommendations of this report (e.g., building a new railway system)
5. Consider extending the partnership with Ministry Architects to include:
  - I. Managing the renovation process, working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline for the entire 18 month process.
  - II. Assisting the student ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of renovating the student ministry.
6. Address the current pressure points facing the student ministry:

**Pressure Point #1: Build the Team** –Determine all needed volunteer roles through August 2018 and create clear expectations for each volunteer role.

- o Using the church photo directory create a list of potential volunteers.
- o Begin calling them personally.
- o Continue calls until all positions have been filled.

**Pressure Point #2: Count the Sheep and Secure the Pasture**- In order to best care for all of the sheep of FUMC Pearland, it is vital to know who is a part of the flock. An examination of the church rolls needs to be accomplished.

- o Update the church roster to accurately reflect the current families with children and youth, including grade level and all pertinent contact information.
- o Identify each child or youth as Active Member, Inactive Member, Active Guest, or Inactive Guest.
- o Create an attendance tracking document/process so as to identify more clearly the actual persons attending each aspect of the ministry.
- o A personal phone call is made to every youth on the newly created directory with an invitation to the next program or event.

**Pressure Point #3: Communication and Task Management**—Implement a weekly student ministry staff meeting for the director of student ministries and the M&M coordinator/youth associate.

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- o Agenda items will include upcoming events and ministry needs and concerns.
- o Staff members will be assigned specific tasks related to each upcoming event.
- o One staff member will coordinate timely communication with church staff, volunteers, parents, and the church at-large.

**Pressure Point #4: Building Buy-in** - Calendar round table discussions between the director of student ministries and parents to create an opportunity for the director of student ministries to share his heart and passion for the future as well as an opportunity to continue building relationships with parents and volunteers.

**Pressure Point #5: Sustainable Pace**- Help each student 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).

7. Build the long-term infrastructure required for a long-term, sustainable youth ministry.

- o **Host a “Quick Start” Summit:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and student ministry 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:
    - o Results-based, written job descriptions for all volunteer positions in the student 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.
    - o A clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the student ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
    - o A broad “fishing pond” list of at least 75 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
- o **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the student ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
  - o A ministry mission statement
  - o A statement of values
  - o A set of three-year revolving goals

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- o An organizational structure for the ministry
- o **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.
  - o Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - o Evaluate the age Confirmation is being taught
  - o Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the student ministry programming.
  - o Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
  - o Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - o Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- o **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish a 12-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”).
- 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 **Student Ministry Manual:** Develop a Student Ministry Manual, including the most recent student ministry directory, a 12-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major student 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 2018. 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 student ministry and provide ongoing coaching for the student ministry staff members as well as the Renovation Team.

## DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- o **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- 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
- 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 75 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- o **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

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opportunities.

- o **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

## DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- o **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2019-2020 school year.
- o **Parent Support:** Sponsor and execute an encouraging parent support event and create mechanisms for engaging the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.
- o **Climate Control:** Harness the desire of the youth to have a friendly and welcoming environment. Recruit and train a team of youth who are committed to creating a climate of welcome and friendship in the ministry. (Thriving Youth Groups by Jeanne Mayo would be a good “cookbook” for the group).
- o **Youth Contact:** Develop and implement processes for ensuring that each youth or youth parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month
- o **Spiritual Depth:** Develop a plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and
- o **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.
- o **Retention Plans for the Youth Ministry:** Create game plans for
  - o Keeping youth involved in the student ministry programs after Confirmation
  - o Continuing to engage youth who have gotten their drivers’ license
  - o Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them with the life of FUMC Pearland.
- o **Facilities:** Explore the possibilities for a renovation or redesign of the student ministry space to better serve the youth of FUMC Pearland. Propose options for the above to the Church Council for revision or approval.
- o **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
  - o Welcome and connect the new 7<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  - o Welcome and connect the new 9<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the high school ministry
  - o Launch the church’s high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they are surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults

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## PROPOSED TIMELINE AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

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

*Many churches choose to use the services of Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this infrastructure-building process. If the church would like Ministry Architects to provide more specialized consulting in certain areas, particularly for the 18-month transition, we are available to help.*

### February 2018

#### Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

#### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Church Council for the strategic renovation of the student ministry and the Church Council has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for March.
- The Renovation Team for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Summit.
- Immediate volunteer needs for the student ministry have been determined and slots have been filled.
- A fishing pond of 75 potential volunteers in student ministry has been created.
- A weekly student ministry staff meeting for the Director of Student Ministries and the MM Coordinator/Youth Associate has been implemented which includes:
  - Agenda items include upcoming events and ministry needs and concerns.
  - Staff members will be assigned specific tasks related to events
  - One staff member will coordinate timely communication with staff, volunteers, parents, and the church at-large.
- Round table discussions between the Director of Student Ministries and parents are being calendared and tracked.
- Work has begun on the 2018-2019 student ministry calendar.
- The church has partnered with Ministry Architects to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process
- Mechanisms for monthly on-going education and coaching for the student ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

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## March 2018

### Focus: Renovation Underway, Calendars, Volunteers, Pressure Points

#### Outcomes:

- 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 student ministry renovation process.
- An attendance tracking process is in place to ensure the tracking of individual youth at all student ministry events.
- Each student ministry staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.
- 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 2018-2019 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 2018-2019.

## April 2018

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

#### Outcomes:

- Work on the student ministry database has begun, collecting the most recent information for families and youth. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families and youth. Each youth has been classified in the following categories:
  - **Active Youth** are the ones whose families are members of FUMC Pearland 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 directory.
  - **Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you'll want to regularly pursue these youth, whether they ever show up or not.
  - **Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.

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- o **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.
- o **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.
- A Visioning Summit has been scheduled for June and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.
- A Fall Kick-off for the student ministry has been scheduled for late August-mid September. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.
- Round table discussions between the Director of Student Ministries and parents have taken place with all parents in the student ministry.

## May 2018

### Focus: Visioning Promotion, Compliance, Database, Welcoming Climate

#### Outcomes:

- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has begun.
- A database of all youth and their families has been compiled and each person has been "tagged" with a category.
- All student ministry programs have adhered to the Safe Sanctuary policy.
- 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). Consideration is also given to welcoming rising 7<sup>th</sup> graders into the ministry as well.
- All pressure points have been addressed.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the student ministry.

## June 2018

### Focus: Visioning Summit, Volunteers, Calendars, Volunteer Thank You, First Timer Process

#### Outcomes:

- A Visioning Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the youth ministry (mission statement, core values, goals, and structure).
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.

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- 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.
- A game plan has been written and implementation has begun to
  - Keep youth involved in the youth programs after Confirmation
  - Engage MIA youth who have gotten their drivers' license
  - Intentionally reach out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them with the life of FUMC Pearland.
- All volunteer needs for the 2018-2019 school year for the student ministry have been filled.
- The 2018-2019 student ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church's calendar.
- A thank you event for all student ministry volunteers has taken place.

## July 2018

### Focus: Participation Goals, Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers, Curriculum

#### Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all student ministry events and weekly programs through August 2019 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly.
- A volunteer application, an application process, and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- 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 Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for October. The Summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.

## August 2018

### Focus: Directory, Communication, Leadership Launch

#### Outcomes

- 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.

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- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for the youth ministry has been updated with that new information. Every youth has been “tagged” with a category.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and, equips them to serve the youth of FUMC Pearland The Safe Sanctuary policy has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.

## September 2018

### Focus: Compliance, Major Event Notebooks, Student Ministry Space

#### Outcomes

- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church 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.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each youth event.
- A short-term team has met with the appropriate church committees to explore the possibilities for a renovation or redesign of student ministry space to better serve the youth of FUMC Pearland. Proposed options for the above have been sent to the Church Council for revision or approval.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the youth ministry that welcomed youth and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about, and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants felt energized and enthusiastic about the coming year’s programs.

## October 2018

### Focus: Christian Formation Summit, Budget

#### Outcomes:

- Interested staff, volunteers, and parents have gathered for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum, milestones and special programming. At the Summit, the team
  - Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Developed a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministries programming.

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- o Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
- o Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
- o Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- A detailed 2019 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored for the student ministry staff.

## November 2018

### Focus: Marketing, Attendance, MIA Youth, Major Event Notebooks, Rites of Passage

#### Outcomes:

- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth programs has been created and implemented.
- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- Major event notebooks for each major youth event have been completed.
- 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.
- All game plans that have been launched in last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- o A game plan has been established for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges that have:
  - o Welcomed and connected the new 7<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  - o Welcomed and connected the new 9<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the high school ministry
  - o 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

## December 2018

### Focus: Catch Up, Summer Calendar, Benchmarks

#### Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2019.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.

## January 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Training, Calendars, Database

#### Outcomes:

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- Work has begun on the 2019-2020 student ministry calendar.
- The summer 2019 calendar has been completed.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers have received support and training in their specific roles. A “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth has been updated with that new information.

## February 2019

### Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Recruitment

#### Outcomes:

- The 2019-2020 student ministry calendar has been completed through August 2020 including a Fall Kick-off.
- New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.
- 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 2019-2020 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
  - Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2019-2020.

## March 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Manual

#### Outcomes:

- Volunteer recruitment has continued.
- A manual for the youth ministry has been completed, including
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
  - Volunteer directory
  - Volunteer training agendas and notes

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- o Attendance records
- o Annual calendar
- o Results-based job descriptions
- o Game plans and new initiatives
- o Meeting agendas and minutes for the Renovation Team
- o Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
- o Budget and other financial documents
- o Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
- o Compliance documents

## April 2019

### Focus: Directory, Parent Engagement, Reflection and Re-assessment

#### Outcomes:

- With the most recent information on youth and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers have been created to be distributed at the Fall Kick-off.
- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth ministry.
- A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2019-2020 school year has been written and implemented.
- Current pressure points have been named

## May 2019

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

#### Outcomes:

- All youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall youth programs.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- An encouraging parent support event has engaged the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.

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## June 2019

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

#### Outcomes:

- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- With the changes in the student ministry, the staffing to meet the size and scope of the student ministry has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- All volunteer needs for the 2019-2020 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the youth staff to pass along to the next year's coordinator.
- A written plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments has been implemented. This plan has included small groups and gifts-based service teams.
- A process has been implemented to ensure that each youth or youth parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month.

## July 2019

### 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 focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.

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