



**CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY
ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR**

**GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WINNETKA, IL**

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STEPHANIE CARO, SENIOR CONSULTANT
AND SEAN P. WILLIAMS, LEAD CONSULTANT

www.ministryarchitects.com



Grace Presbyterian Church

Grace Presbyterian Church is a PCA church (Presbyterian Church in America) in the heart of the North Shore of the Chicago metropolitan area. Established in 2001, first elected elders in 2017, and located in affluent Winnetka, IL, Grace Presbyterian is a church where church members describe their fellowship as “welcoming,” “malleable,” and “Gospel-centered.” Fun fact: the family home featured in the first 2 “Home Alone” movies is just a few blocks from the church.

Grace is a church with a clear sense of who it is. Here is its mission statement (which could be recited by multiple participants in the listening sessions):

*The mission of Grace is to **welcome** our neighbors, to **grow** together in Christ, and **serve** God in our community and world. This mission, rooted in Christ's Great Commission and Great Commandment, flows out of our fundamental belief that the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, changes everything.*

The membership of the church is 255 and in an average week, 275 pre-COVID-19 people attend one of the church's three traditional-style worship services either in person or online. The church is shepherded by Rev. Marshall Brown, Senior Pastor, who came to serve in March 2014. In September 2019, Rev. Nick Swan came to serve as Assistant Pastor.

Youth Ministry Information: Currently, there are 79 fifth through twelfth graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, 30 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship, or one of the youth programs like Sunday night middle school youth group or the small groups for high school students and middle school students. The youth ministry has special events like the monthly fun activities, a Confirmation-like program called, “BELIEVE,” and serving at VBS. There are currently no yearly trips or retreats on their planning calendar. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as a “fun” and a “relational” place, while others say it is a “less than it could be” ministry.

The youth ministry is led by Diana Williams, Director of Children's and Youth Ministries, who is full-time with about 30 hours weekly for children's ministry and 10 hours weekly dedicated to the youth ministry. She came on staff in the summer of 2019 to serve the children, youth ministry was added to her job description in January of 2020. Allie Brent serves as the middle school coordinator and there are two wonderful pastoral interns from a local seminary serving the ministry, Chris Reed and Nathaniel Hodson. There is currently no active youth committee but there are 3 adult volunteers involved each week



in one of the youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The church has a 2020 budget of \$1.4 million of which approximately \$96K is dedicated to the youth ministry. This figure consists of program expenses as well as the salary and benefits for the staff mentioned in the above paragraph. The children's ministry has a budget of \$130K for both salaries and expenses.

Children's Ministry Information: Currently, there are 154 children, birth – 4th grade, on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, 72 of them participate in either Sunday programming, the nursery, worship, or one of the other children's programs like the Thursday night ministry, Grace Kids. (NOTE: Sunday morning programming looks temporarily different due to COVID-19 restrictions.) The children's ministry celebrates yearly special events like VBS, Christmas celebrations, etc. The children's ministry is described by some children and parents as a "loving," "creative," and "energetic" place.

As mentioned before, the ministry is led by Diana Williams as the director. There is also a dedicated team of paid nursery workers who serve joyfully. There is no active children's committee ungirding the ministry. There are about 10 weekly adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major children's programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's and youth ministries, and to make recommendations about how they might move strategically forward. The Session expressed a particular desire for focus on the youth ministry as part of their plan to go to the next level of serving the North Shore area with the Gospel; they specifically communicated that the high school ministry is a priority, with a desire to turn this struggling area of the program in to a robust and vibrant part of the ministry. Ministry Architects met with 53 individuals in 10 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.



Children's and Youth Ministry in Context

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding children's and youth ministry is the idea of the "three rents." Rents are defined as core elements of the ministry that must be paid in order to establish a sustainable children's and youth ministry. The rents of numbers, programs and enthusiasm are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by children, youth, parents, staff, and the congregation at large. 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 the most common sources of discontent when people talk about their church's children's and youth ministry.

Ministries that "pay these rents" tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. The ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

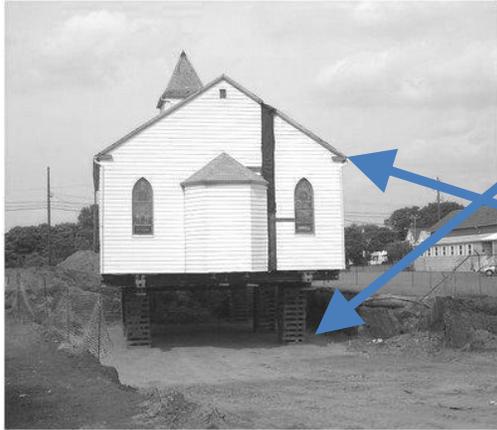
Rent #1: Numbers-A significant percentage of children and youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church's ministries. It is important for these target numbers to be clearly agreed on by the church leaders and the staff. Ironically, when target numbers are not established, the ministries are typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established. The consensus is that this rent is not paid due to two reasons: 1) The church has not set target measurements of success for either ministry and 2) There is considerable concern expressed for the youth ministry participation, especially at the high school level.

Rent #2: Programs-In order to earn the right to experiment with changes, the children's and youth leadership need to provide the church with a few visible, effective programs that give both children, youth, and parents something to talk about. This rent appears to be paid in the children's and middle school program but goes unpaid for the high school.

Rent #3: Enthusiasm-The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the children's and youth staff, volunteers, and the children and youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents. The hopeful and Christ-like input given by all participants suggests that this rent is well-paid.

As the leadership of the children's and youth ministries develop its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these three rents. In this sense, the children's and youth ministries faces parallel challenges.





Laying the Foundation:

Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the children's and youth ministries' future effectiveness, and at the same time,

Continuing to Do Ministry: Maintaining the current children's and youth ministries in a way that builds the enthusiasm of children and youth, their families, the staff, and the church.

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

1) 12.5% of the Worshipping Congregation: In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry, with grades 5th-12th, tends to settle at a number around 12.5% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 275 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 35 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 30 youth is below what could be expected from the ministry and is reflected in the high school participation.

3) \$3,300 per Youth: With a budget of approximately \$96K (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Grace Presbyterian Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 29 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 30 currently participating every week, the ministry is underfunded for continued growth. Keep in mind that this dollar amount can vary widely depending on the cost of living in the church's community and so the figure has been adjusted for Winnetka, IL.

4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth: Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry for about 50 weekly staffing hours, Grace Presbyterian has the equivalent of 1.25 full-time staff persons. According to this rule of thumb, the church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 63 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth.

5) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth: Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of spans of care, recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With 3 weekly volunteers, the church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 10

youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 15 youth weekly. In other words, the team is too small to attend to the relational needs of the 30 youth who currently attend. The volunteer pool will need to expand if the church wants to sustain its impact with youth.

As the children's ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, four rules of thumb –children's 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) 12.5% of the Worshiping Congregation: In a typical church, the size of the children's ministry tends to settle at a number around 12.5% of the worshiping congregation for birth through 4th grades. A church with an average worship attendance of 275 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 34 children per week. The current weekly attendance (pre-COVID) of 72 children is over and above what a church of this size could normally expect to see. Celebrate!

2) \$2,998 per Child: With a budget of approximately \$130K (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the children's ministry, Grace Presbyterian has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 43 children in some aspect of the church's life. With 72 currently participating every week, the ministry is significantly under-funded for continued growth. NOTE: The Winnetka area is the most expensive zip code in IL, so adjustment has been made for cost-of-living, etc.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 70 Children: Considering all the positions giving time to the children's ministry for a total of 36 hours weekly, Grace Presbyterian has the equivalent of one full-time staff person(s). According to this rule of thumb, the church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 70 children on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration is aligned well to the current needs of the ministry, however, does not allow room for much more growth. In order to see the kind of growth the church is excited to experience more staffing may be needed.

4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Children: 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 children on an ongoing basis. With 10 weekly volunteers, the church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 7 children, giving the ministry a capacity for 50 children weekly. In other words, the team is too small to attend to the relational needs of the 72 children who currently attend. The volunteer pool will need to expand if the church wants to sustain its impact with children.



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. As of now since there are no youth or children's ministry teams in place, the staff are currently serving in this role. This report, and the Renovation Team to come from it, will serve as the architect for the 18-month timeline.
- **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. Ideally, this is the paid staff who carry out the design plans from the vision of the church.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. In children's and youth ministry, a laborer might have particular skills in relating to children and/or youth, in planning and managing events, or in teaching. This generally are the amazing volunteers serving a ministry like Grace Presbyterian's children and you.

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

- At Grace Presbyterian, 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.
- The busy staff is having a hard time finding 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.



Assets

Strengths to protect in the current children's and youth ministry

Relationships with Caring Adults

The youth ministries of Grace Presbyterian are blessed by two avenues of relationship-building: the pastoral interns that come through Trinity Evangelical Seminary and students from Northwestern University. From both places have come students who are willing to spend quality time with the middle and high school students not only within the regularly scheduled programming but outside those confines, as well. This is good, life-impacting ministry and a program that should continue.

BELIEVE

The church offers a comprehensive ministry experience of discipleship to its 5th graders through their Confirmation-like program called, "BELIEVE." Students are offered weekly studies on important matters of faith; other pieces are being added such as a weekend retreat and mission opportunities. Each student meets one-on-one with the pastor and is also able to declare their faith as their own at a worship service dedicated to their profession of faith.

Grace Kids!

The children have a mid-week ministry that is all the buzz! Originally created this year to replace Sunday morning Sunday school because of COVID-19 restrictions, several members have said the ministry is a keeper! Parents have found it easier to volunteer for these Thursday nights than Sunday mornings, which required them to miss the worship hour (prior to COVID's 3 services). There's energy, excitement, fun, etc., all while teaching children about the loving Grace of God.

Stellar Staff

From the senior pastor flowing down, it is obvious that Grace Presbyterian takes care to bring good staff on board. Listening groups had positive things to share about all the children's and youth ministry staff: Diana, Allie, Chris, Nathaniel, and the nursery team. Here are just a few of the comments shared:

- "Diana is so creative and loves our kids. She's a real blessing!"
- "She cares so much. Has years of experience and wisdom."
- "Our kids love Allie! She's fun and energetic."
- "Chris and Nathaniel are great, and we're blessed to have them."

As the church considers hiring an additional staff person to cover the high school outreach, there is no doubt that it will be done with prayer and consideration.

Growing in Young Families

From one church member, "I'm an older member and it's so unusual to say that I'm in the minority at our church. There are so many younger families! Most churches are full of old people like me." What a wonderful asset! It's true: most churches are tracking with an



average age of 65-to-70+, yet Grace Presbyterian is full of families with young ones everywhere. No wonder the church leaders have the vision of God's call in planting more satellite churches in the area. Families with children is the primary way a church grows in today's ministry culture.

Youth Small Groups

Both MS and HS student small groups are available, and the youth are participating! This is a strong indication of their desire to go further along the discipleship path God is setting before them. Currently, there are several MS small groups meeting; there is also a HS girls group and a HS guys group gathering together weekly. Studies show that small groups are the highest and best use of time for growth in one's journey into the Gospel.

Success & Dissatisfaction

What a unique asset to name! Grace Presbyterian's youth and children's ministries can celebrate both the fact that its participation numbers are healthy targets in churches today. For review purposes, the children's ministry is running at slightly more than twice the percentage of the national norm of 12.5% of the 260 worship. The youth ministry is just a percentage point or so below the 12.5% mark. So, this amount of attendance would cause a dance of joy in many churches.

At the same time, Grace has determined that there is a healthy and holy dissatisfaction with the ministries, especially for youth. At the same time, study after study shows that the most effective ministry focus for church growth is to focus on children's ministry because they can't come without their parents. When church is a great experience for them, they make sure they express they want to come! The church has a vision for more: more children, more students, more outreach, more Gospel.



Challenges

Obstacles to moving the children's and youth ministry strategically forward

High School

Almost every listening group participant agreed that they want more from the high school ministry at Grace Presbyterian. With a huge high school in the community, and other ministries in the area successfully reaching students there, many are left wondering why the numbers of high school youth active at the church are so low. One individual offered an explanation for this: "The staff transitions over the years have made it really hard for the current high school youth to stay engaged." The resulting decrease of involvement has led to low numbers, which actually makes growth difficult. One individual articulated this by saying, "It's hard to invite friends if we can't reach a critical mass." Youth are clearly valued here and there is a deep longing for youth to continue to be connected to their church during their high school years.

Lack of Vision

Undoubtedly, there are many individuals and families at Grace Presbyterian who care about and have a high investment in the children's and youth ministries, but most are unaware of a clear direction or purpose for the ministry. One listening group participant referenced a mission statement that was written sixteen years ago, and another said, "There is no sense of a long-term vision." Listening group participants also expressed confusion about whether the ministries exist to provide children and youth opportunities to grow deeper in their faith or have fun together and make friends, or maybe both. Without a clear target, anxiousness is often a predictable result, and parents, students and leaders will become confused and frustrated about what is happening and why.

Strategic Staffing

It is evident in a variety of ways that a strategic staffing plan is missing in the children's youth ministries at Grace Presbyterian. The frequent turnover in staff over the last decade has created hurt, confusion, and a disconnect for many. It's unclear if staff are filling the right roles, based on their skills and gifts, and the needs of the ministry. One listening group participants asked, "How do we best use and deploy our staff?" Another wondered, "How is our staffing model?" Clearly there is a desire to be intentional the staff's organization and responsibilities. There is also a desire for staff to stay at the church longer, but there are currently not the support systems in place that are needed to help them set goals, find balance, prioritize time, receive training in areas of need, and, ultimately, set them up for long term success.

Volunteer Recruitment

Currently, the work of the children's and youth ministries at Grace Presbyterian is primarily done by the staff and a committed, energetic group of volunteers, and the children, youth, and parents love them. However, the turnover of volunteers and commitment level required is hindering the impact that caring adults are able to have in the ministry. Regarding children's ministry, many volunteers are serving infrequently, and listening group participants voiced concerns about this. One commented, "It's just



hard to create consistency and build relationships.” Another stated, “There is a lack of continuity since we have different teachers every week.” Some re-culturing of the church’s expectations for volunteers - which are currently not clear - is needed. In the youth ministry, volunteers primarily come from local universities and seminaries, which means there will naturally be regular attrition of these volunteers, often to the detriment of building long term relationships with youth. One current volunteer said it plainly, “We have a transitional supply of volunteers.” The ministry is failing to build a core of volunteers from within church community, and there doesn’t appear to be any type of systematic plan in place to recruit these volunteers.

Volunteer Equipping

While the faithfulness of the current team of volunteers is commendable, the team is lacking the guidance they need to serve with excellence. There is some training offered, curriculum is provided, and staff check-in, but none of this appears to happen in a strategic way. Volunteers need access to educational materials, regular coaching, and opportunities to connect with and support one another, all to help them succeed in their roles and avoid frustration and burnout. One volunteer said, “Some of us are struggling and we need more direction.” Another said shared, “It would be nice to have more time together to brainstorm and create a team environment.” There are also no job descriptions for current volunteers, and thus expectations are unclear both in terms of what is expected of them and what to expect from the program/ministry they serve.

Parent Equipping and Engagement

There are many parents supporting the children’s and youth ministries in different ways, but in general parents want to know more about what’s going on and how to be involved. One parent said, “I want to be able to have a discussion and ask questions at home with my kids after they’ve been at church.” A church member said, “I hope that our church would focus on the home and provide support for parents to disciple their children.” Another listening group participant remarked directly, “Youth Group cannot replace parents.” With a clear desire, from parents, to raise the expectations of and for parents, the church is not currently providing the training and resources necessary to help make this a reality in families’ homes.

Tell Me More

A large number of parents expressed the desire for more communication, and consistent communication. Emails are inconsistent and text messages are helpful but sporadic, giving the impression that there isn’t a comprehensive communication plan in place. In addition to a desire for more information about the content of programs, the timing of communication about events is also a challenge. One parent said, “By the time we know about events, there’s not enough time to plan to be a part of and build momentum for it.” Without advance planning and timely, regular communication, the ability of families to participate in the children’s and youth ministries will continue to vary wildly.



Missing Memory Makers

Grace Presbyterian is offering quality weekly programming for children and youth, but there is a noticeable absence of the consistent, memory making events each year that all individuals and families either look back on with fondness or forward to with anticipation. A listening group participant said, “We need events that are easy to come to, and easy to bring friends to.” Many expressed a desire for retreats, camp experiences, special summer programming, and more social gatherings to be part of the annual offerings of the ministry. A hope for more missions was a consistent refrain in the listening groups. One participant said, “We want to help the kids develop a servant’s heart.” Another said, “Service components are simply missing from this ministry.” The lack of these types of special events is making it difficult to grow and build the community, and hindering children, youth, and families from experiencing the excitement that keeps them coming back for more.

Moving on Up

After participation in the effective children’s programs at Grace Presbyterian, there isn’t a plan to help families move into and through the youth ministry, and thus there is a drop off of involvement following both the transition to middle school, and to high school (and especially in the latter). A listening group participant expressed it by saying, “We need to figure out how to keep our children and youth engaged as they move from fourth to fifth grade, and from eighth grade to ninth grade.” The lack of a plan means that the church is missing out on the celebrations and traditions surrounding these exciting beginnings to a new era in the youth’s involvement at the church.

Discipleship Pathway

There is a hunger from parents and other church members at Grace Presbyterian for an overarching spiritual plan for children and youth as they move from being infants all the way through high school graduation. While this has been given some consideration, there is currently not an all-encompassing discipleship pathway for what the church wants their children and youth to know, feel and do with their Christian faith upon graduating from the ministry as seniors, which creates the risk of a hit or miss approach rather than giving their young people all that God intends for them to have. An important piece of this plan are the rites of passage that mark key points in their Christian journey and, aside from Confirmation and graduate recognition, there don’t appear to be any other milestones recognized and celebrated. As one listening group participant shared, “The church needs to help spiritually develop our children and youth at specific times, ages, and transitions in their lives.”

What is Success?

Most of the listening groups were asked what success looks like in the children’s and youth ministries at Grace Presbyterian and there was a wide array of responses. Some hoped for numerical growth and while others expressed concern about that. One individual asked, “Will we think we’ve failed because we’re small?” Some described success as excitement about being part and a desire to invite others, while others leaned into the ideas of spiritual growth and depth of community equaling success.



Common ground and language about success is missing and will be needed in order to achieve it.

Cracks in the Foundation

One of the things that keeps ministries from crashing and burning during times of transition is a strong infrastructure of systems and processes that undergird the ministry and programs of the church. When asked about these pieces, like attendance tracking, the annual calendar, and a current directory, listening group participants indicated that these either didn't exist, or didn't know if they did. It is clear that these key components are a missing piece for the children's and youth ministries of Grace Presbyterian, which will continue to keep the church from maintaining strong and coherent ministries through staffing transitions, and other changes and challenges that arise.

Currently missing/under-utilized from the ministry systems:

- Attendance Tracking: Cloud-based system for tracking individual attendance records at each program (SS, worship, Thursday nights, youth group, children's/youth special events, etc.). If there's no tracking system, then 1st 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 busy adult volunteers can access children and student contact info at any time for outreach and relationships 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 children's and youth events. The farther out the calendar and the farther out the organizational process, the better the critical mass when the event comes. Parents mentioned that too many youth events changed at the very last minute making it hard on their busy family.
- Major Events Notebooks: For special events and programs that happen each year, 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 info in the head of a staff person or long-term volunteer...until that person leaves, and the event info captured in their head leaves with them.
- Website Communication: The main system for getting "what parents want to know when they want to know it" is a missing key ingredient. Families shop for churches by the church's website. The children's and youth ministry info on the current church website is incomplete; there's no mention of high school ministry at all.
- Social Media and Other Technology Communication: Advertising youth and children's events has to happen in more than just the weekly bulletin. Families who are busy want several places they can instantly go to find the info they want when they want it. Making a weekly bulletin the main source of dispensing news



is no longer effective for families with children and youth. (Printed sources are fine; they just also have to be sent electronically as well.) Weekly emails, monthly emailed newsletter, Facebook pages, group texting systems, Instagram posts, etc., are all part of spreading the good news about what's happening at the church.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the children's and youth ministries. Understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the ministries, target April 2022 as the date when the ministry renovations will be complete.
- 2) Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
- 3) Present this report to the Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the children's and youth ministries.
- 4) Establish a Youth and Children's Ministry Renovation Team, made up of four 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.
 - Ministry Architects has been hired to be responsible for the following:
 - o Monthly coaching for the Renovation Team chair throughout the contract providing accountability and resources to ensure that the team is equipped to accomplish the recommendations from the assessment report.
 - o Working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline.
 - o Assisting the children's and youth ministries in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the children's ministry.
- 5) Address the current pressure points facing the children's and youth ministries. These tasks will be a priority for the newly formed renovation team and will be accomplished in the first four months of their work.

Pressure Point #1: High School Ministry

Immediately prioritize the development of a more robust ministry for the high school students at Grace Presbyterian Church in order create larger community of youth – both from within the congregation and from the community – who are connected to the programs and leadership of the church.

- Evaluate the current offerings for high school youth and determine changes and/or additions that need to be made in order to create more opportunities for a critical mass of youth at programs and events.
- Directly contact all high school youth and parents, ensuring that this includes those who were once active in the ministry but are no longer, to check-in, and ask for feedback on their needs and the ministry.
- Based on the evaluation and feedback, create and launch new high school programming for a trial period of six months, as a way to re-engage the high school community, and in order to determine best long-range plans for the high



school ministry. Personally invite all high school youth and parents to upcoming programs and events.

- Reach out to leadership at other churches, YoungLife, National School Project, and other parachurch organizations who are doing successful high school ministry in the area and begin a conversation about collaboration and partnerships that might be possible, and mutually beneficial.

Pressure Point #2: Strategic Staffing

Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan, that intentionally assigns roles and responsibilities to current staff based on their skills and gifts, and the needs of the ministry. Also, determine additional staffing needs and put into place the support systems that will help set the staff up for long term success.

- Meet with current staff to discuss responsibilities, skills and gifts, desires, and needs of the ministry. Propose a realignment of roles needed and present to the pastor and Session.
- Review and update current job descriptions as needed, and create any missing job descriptions, as well as job descriptions for new positions that will be needed.
- Create a game plan for the ongoing ways that staff will be supported and developed, including annual evaluations, continuing education, goal setting, balancing of time and responsibilities, and training in areas of need.
- Ministry Architects would suggest that the church gives serious consideration to hiring a high school director as a match to the middle school director. The current Director of Children and Youth would give supervisory oversight and would be both the MS and HS directors' direct report.

Pressure Point #3: Develop a Shared Vision

Invite parents, staff, and volunteer leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the children's and youth ministries 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

Pressure Point #4: Communication

Develop and implement a clear communication strategy that will allow for timely, regular, and consistent communication to all youth and parents at Grace Presbyterian Church, ensuring that dates and details for programs and events are provided in enough time to give families the ability to choose to participate.

- Document and evaluate all communication methods currently being used and determine any that need to be added.
- Create a children's and youth ministries calendar for January through the summer of 2021 with dates for all programs and events, and as many details as possible.



- Create a communication game plan which will detail the types of communication that will be used, the schedule for each, what will be included, and who is responsible for each.
- Determine the best system to organize contact information for all youth, parents, and volunteers, and begin work on checking and updating as needed.

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

Building Infrastructure and Stability

In building a ministry there are key pieces to creating a solid foundation. Those key pieces to building infrastructure and stability are the following items:

- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like "September: nail down the date for next year's VBS").
- **Organizational Chart:** Create a clear organizational chart for the children's and youth ministries that outlines the responsibility of the staff as well as volunteers. This clear presentation of roles and responsibilities helps provide accountability and equipping for leaders in the ministry.
- **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 and children affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Children's and Youth Database:** Work on the youth and children's ministries databases has begun, collecting the most recent information for families, youth, and children. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on First-Time Guest and MIA families, youth, and children. Children/youth have been identified with appropriate tags so that targeted communication for one-time visitors to long-time members is streamlined and effective.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth and children's activities in one cloud-based, electronic system.
- **Marketing:** Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, youth, children, leaders, and the broader church are exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's and youth ministries.
- **Youth and Children's Ministry Manuals:** Develop a manual for the youth and children's ministries, including the most recent youth and children's directories, 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 children's or youth ministry event.



- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth and children’s ministries in the fall of 2021. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.
- **Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach:** Continue the partnership with Ministry Architects, serving in the “coach” role throughout the renovation. Ministry Architects will offer experienced direction for the building of an infrastructure for the youth and children’s ministries and provide ongoing coaching for the ministries’ staff members as well as the Renovation Team.
- **Parent Engagement:** Create ongoing mechanisms for parents to know more about the content of programming the church is providing children and youth, and ways for parents to continue these conversations at home and have further opportunities to disciple their children.
- **Discipleship Pathway:** Gather a team to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing curriculum, milestones, and special programming. This process might include:
 - Evaluation of the curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
 - Development of a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth and children’s ministries programming.
 - Development of a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
 - Determination of how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
 - Determination of what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth and children’s ministries and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of whom will do relational ministry with children and youth, while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least three times the number of volunteers needed possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth and children’s workers at the beginning of each school year.
- **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2021-2022 school year.



- **Plan for Special Events:** Evaluate current special events and determine other regular/annual special events that need to be added to the yearly calendar for children, youth, and families.
- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth, children, and parents to make a difference in the world, as well as their local community. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as regional, and possibly international missions. Evaluate the current mission trips for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **Personal Connection Plan:** Develop a system for ensuring that every family in the current children's and youth directories 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.
- **Spiritual Depth:** Develop a plan to intentionally take youth and children deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments. This plan may include small groups, gifts-based service teams, or other ways to develop formational growth.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children, 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.
- **Retention Plans for the Youth Ministry:** Create game plans for:
 - Keep children involved as they move into the youth ministry.
 - Continuing to engage youth who have moved from middle school to high school.
 - Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them in the life of the church.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that includes:
 - **First Steps Milestone**
 - Purpose: introduces the congregation to a few of the youngest members and makes both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminds both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
 - **Welcome to Worship**
 - Purpose: intentionally extends the welcome mat to children and their parents. It also introduces children, and the adults who care for them, to worship and worship space.
 - **Anniversary of Baptism**

- o Purpose: Reminds those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It is an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.

- **Prayer Milestone**
 - o Purpose: To encourage the congregation to keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children learn they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.

- **Bibles to 8-year olds**
 - o Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.

- **4th graders moving into the middle school ministry**
 - o Purpose: To welcome the rising 5th graders into the middle school ministry.

- **Blessing of the Backpacks**
 - o Purpose: To mark the passage of summer and to help children and adults transition back into the fall schedule, reminding the children that Jesus is always with us.

- **Key Middle/High School Transitions**
 - o Purpose:
 - To welcome and connect the new fifth graders and their parents into the youth ministry.
 - To welcome and connect the new ninth graders and their parents into the high school ministry.
 - To 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 Grace Presbyterian Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term children's and youth ministries.

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.

December 2020

Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins, Calendar

Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Session of the church for the strategic renovation of the children's and youth ministries and the Session of the church has given full support of this plan.
- The Renovation Team for children and youth has been recruited and the team orientation, led by Ministry Architects, has been scheduled for January.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the children's and youth ministries. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline.
- An evaluation of the current offerings for high school youth has occurred, and changes and/or additions that need to be made in order to create more opportunities for a critical mass of youth at events and programs have been determined.
- A Vision Summit has been scheduled for February and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- A meeting with current staff to discuss responsibilities, skills and gifts, desires, and needs of the ministry has occurred, and a proposal of any realignment of roles has been presented to the pastor and Session.
- A calendar for January through the summer of 2021 with dates for all programs and events, and as many details as possible, has been created.



January 2021

Focus: Renovation Underway, Volunteers, Calendar, Mid-Year Training

Outcomes:

- A Renovation Team orientation has taken place in which the renovation process has been launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed.
- Current job descriptions for staff have been reviewed and updated as needed, and any missing job descriptions and job descriptions for new positions that will be needed have been created.
- Direct contact with all high school youth and parents has been made, ensuring that this includes those who were once active in the ministry but are no longer, to check-in, ask for feedback on their needs and the ministry, and invite to upcoming programs and events.
- Communication methods currently being used have been documented and evaluated, and any that need to be added have been determined.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the children's and youth ministries.
- A fishing pond of three times as many volunteers needed in the children's and youth ministries has been created.

February 2021

Focus: Vision Summit, Attendance Tracking, Calendars

Outcomes:

- A Visioning Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred producing visioning documents for the children's and youth ministries (mission statement, core values, and goals).
- A game plan for the ongoing ways that staff will be supported and developed, including annual evaluations, continuing education, goal setting, balancing of time and responsibilities, and training in areas of need has been created.
- A communication game plan which details the types of communication that will be used, the schedule for each, what will be included, and who is responsible for each has been created.
- Outreach to leadership at other churches, YoungLife, National School Project, and other parachurch organizations who are doing successful high school ministry in the area has been made and a conversation has begun about collaboration and partnerships that might be possible, and mutually beneficial.



- 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 2021-2022 school year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
 - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the children's and youth ministries.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all children's and youth ministries programs has been created and implemented.

March 2021

Focus: Pressure Points, Communication, Database, Calendar

Outcomes:

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- Work has begun on the 2021-2022 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2021 including a Fall Kick-off.
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices are being implemented.
- Work on the children and youth database has begun, collecting the most recent information for families, children, and youth. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families, children, and youth. Youth and children have been identified with appropriate tags so that targeted communication for one-time visitors to long-time members is streamlined and effective.
- 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.



April 2021

Focus: Compliance, Volunteer Thank You, Participation Goals

Outcomes:

- The 2021-2022 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2022 including a Fall Kick-off.
- 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 in compliance with the Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- A volunteer thank-you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all children and youth volunteers.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2022 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- Each children's and youth ministry staff member have created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

May 2021

Focus: Continuing Education, Database, Compliance, Volunteer Thank You

Outcomes:

- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and calendared for the children's and youth ministries staff.
- A database of all youth, children, and their families has been compiled and each person is "tagged" with a category.
- 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.
- A volunteer thank-you event has taken place.
- A plan to intentionally take youth and children deeper in their faith through



teaching and discipleship in varied environments has been created. This plan includes small groups, gifts-based service teams, other formational growth.

June 2021

Focus: Timeline Progress Report, Volunteer Recruitment, MIA, Curriculum, Fall Kick-Off, Leadership Launch

Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month timeline progress report 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 timeline.
- MIA children and youth have been systematically contacted.
- All volunteers for the 2021-2022 school year have been recruited.
- New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.
- 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 Fall Kick-off team has been recruited to begin planning for the start of the fall children's and youth ministries programs.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August and initiations have been sent to the volunteers

July 2021

Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Communication, Parent Engagement

Outcomes:

- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each children and youth event.
- A team has gathered to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing curriculum, milestones, and special programming. This process included:
 - Evaluation of the curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
 - Development of a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth and children's ministries



- programming.
- Development of a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
- Determination of how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
- Determination of what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- Communication methods currently being used to promote the children's and youth ministries and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2021-2022 school year has been written and implemented.

August 2021

Focus: Database, Leadership Launch, Compliance, Curriculum

Outcomes:

- The collection of updated information from each youth, child, and family has been completed and the database for children's and youth ministries has been updated with that new information.
- 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.
- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.

September 2021

Focus: Marketing, Major Event Notebooks, Fall Kick-Off, Directory

Outcomes:

- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's and youth ministries.
- Major event notebooks for each major event for the children's and youth



ministries have been handed out to this year's event coordinators.

- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed children, 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.
- With the most recent information on youth, children, 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.

October 2021

Focus: Game Plans, Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Benchmarks, Budget, Missions

Outcomes:

- All game plans that have been launched in last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the children's and youth ministries that will help regularly deal with on-going "behind the scenes" ministry maintenance.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- A detailed 2022 budget for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- An encouraging parent support event has engaged the majority of parents in the youth and children's ministries in some way.
- Building on the desire of youth, children, and parents to make a difference in the world and their community, a calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as regional, and possibly international missions has been well publicized. Current mission trips have been evaluated for their effectiveness.

November 2021

Focus: Ministry Manual, Summer Calendar, Welcome Plan, Rites of Passage

Outcomes:

- The Children's and Youth Ministries 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 Children’s and Youth Ministries Committee/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
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2022.
 - A game plan for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed has been implemented. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
 - A plan for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges has been launched that includes:
 - **First Steps Milestone:** Has introduced the congregation to a few of our youngest members and made both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminded both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
 - **Welcome to Worship:** Has intentionally extended the welcome mat to children and their parents. It has also introduced children, and the adults who care for them, to worship and the worship space.
 - **Anniversary of Baptism:** Has reminded those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It was an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.
 - **Prayer Milestone:** Has been a way a congregation can keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children have learned they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.
 - **Bibles to 8-year olds:** Has invited children into the community’s practice of reading scripture together.
 - **4th graders moving into the middle school ministry:** Has welcomed the rising 5th graders into the middle school ministry.

- **Blessing of the Backpacks:** Has marked the passage of summer and helped children transition back into the fall schedule and has served as a reminder that Jesus is always with us.
- **Welcome and connect the new fifth 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.

December 2021

Focus: Reflection and Re-Assessment, Summer Calendar

Outcomes:

- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the children's and youth ministries.
- Current pressure points have been named.
- The summer 2022 calendar for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and distributed.
- A game plan has been written and implementation has begun to:
 - Keep children involved as they move into the youth ministry.
 - Engage MIA youth who have moved from middle school to high school.
 - Intentionally reach out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them in the life of the church.

January 2022

Focus: Participation Goals, Compliance, Directory, Mid-Year Training, Calendar

Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through January 2023 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.



- 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.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- A plan has been implemented for ensuring that every family in the current children’s and youth directories 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.
- All children and youth programs have adhered to the Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- Work has begun on the 2022-2023 children’s and youth ministries calendar.

February 2022

Focus: Benchmarks, Volunteer Recruitment

Outcomes:

- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- A game plan for inviting specific, non-parent demographics in the congregation when recruiting volunteers has been created.
- 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 2022-2023 school year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
 - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the children’s and youth ministries.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2022-2023.



March 2022

Focus: Calendar, Strategic Staffing

Outcomes:

- The 2022-2023 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed.
- With the changes in the children's and youth ministries, the volunteer staffing to meet the size and scope of the children's and youth ministries has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.

April 2022

Focus: Compliance, Volunteer Thank You

Outcomes:

- 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.
- A volunteer thank you event has been scheduled and all volunteers have been invited.

May 2022

Focus: Sustainability

Outcomes:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 children and 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 Grace Presbyterian Church, Winnetka, IL



STEPHANIE CARO, SENIOR CONSULTANT
stephanie.caro@ministryarchitects.com

Stephanie Caro has been involved in ministry to children, youth, and adults in the local church (both large and small) since...a long time ago. Her humorous, straightforward style keeps her busy presenting and coaching at conferences, training events, camps, mission trips, retreats, churches, etc. She is now Senior Consultant for Ministry Architects, which allows her to help churches assess, vision, and formulate their ministry game plans. 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 book, *Smaller Church Youth Ministry: No Staff, No Money, No Problem*, was published by United Methodist Publishing House. Her next book, *Ten Solutions for Smaller Churches*, comes out in 2020. Stephanie is a contributing author to several ministry resources like YouthWorker Journal and Group Magazine. Check out Stephanie's blogs at youthministry.com, youthspecialties.com, Princeton Theological Seminary, and others. Stephanie and her husband, Steve, live in Katy, and their 7 kids are grown.



SEAN P. WILLIAMS, LEAD CONSULTANT,
sean.williams@ministryarchitects.com

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



JEFF DUNN-RANKIN, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
jeff.dunn-rankin@ministryarchitects.com

Jeff Dunn-Rankin is a 19-year veteran of youth and family ministry at Christ United Methodist Church in Venice, Florida. As executive vice president of Ministry Architects, he has consulted with large and small youth and children's ministries from California to Florida and is a frequent speaker at events from the Group/Simply Convention to KidMin. Jeff co-wrote three books with Mark DeVries: *Before You Hire a Youth Pastor*, *The Indispensable Youth Pastor*, and *Training on the Go (volume 2)* (Group Publishing). Before beginning church ministry, Jeff was managing editor of the Charlotte Sun newspaper. Jeff is a graduate of the Sewanee: The University of the South and has a Masters in Business Administration from Vanderbilt University. He lives in Venice, Florida, with his wife Mary Lou, and they have two grown children.

