



## YOUTH MINISTRY & FAITH FORMATION ASSESSMENT REPORT

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**United Church of Chapel Hill  
Chapel Hill, NC  
November 4, 2018**

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### BACKGROUND

United Church of Chapel Hill (UCCH), part of the United Church of Christ denomination, was founded in 1910. According to the church's online witness, UCCH is "a community of faith that seeks to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed." Its mission is to "covenant to God and one with another, to deepen our love and understanding of God, to invite others into this life and ministry, to be a light to the world by living as one people, to equip ourselves for God's service, to be the body of Christ, a disciple, God's servant in our world, to act upon Christ's resurrection." UCCH members described their church family as "welcoming," "safe," "affirming," and "social justice-oriented."

The membership of the church is 884 members and on an average week, 341 people attend one of the church's three Sunday worship services. The first service begins at 8:45 AM with two other services meeting at 11 AM. One of the 11 AM services occurs in the Sanctuary and the other service, La Mesa, occurs in the Fellowship Hall. Uniquely, La Mesa integrates Spanish translation through the service.

Currently, there are about 139 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 42 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship, choir, or youth group. Other special events include Confirmation, mission camp, social justice rallies, retreats, choir camp, Youth Speak Outs, and lock-ins. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as a "respectful" and "non-judgy" place, while others say it is a "community" and "open" ministry.

The church has a 2018 budget of \$965,000 of which approximately \$45,212 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program budget as well as the salary and benefits for the staff, consisting of the youth minister and a youth choir assistant. There are about 12 adult volunteers

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

Cameron Barr, Senior Pastor, began serving the church in 2018. The youth ministry is led by Ian McPherson, UCCH's Minister of Youth and Young Adult Initiative, who has been at the church since late June 2018. There is also an active youth committee which meets monthly to review and plan ministry events. In addition to the youth minister, UCCH's youth have received a continuity of service through the music department by Jenny Anderson, Director of Music, and Gillian Fields, Youth Choir Assistant.

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) meets occasionally to check-in regarding post-youth ministry event experiences. Though there is a Youth Board that has been tasked to work with the youth minister, they have not met regularly and have not been utilized to their fullest potential.

The youth ministry members have use of various spaces within the church. There are dedicated spaces such as the middle and high school meeting rooms. The youth ministry also has access to the Assembly and Fellowship Halls when needed.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 65 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.

## **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 being paid. In a week, 42 youth consistently attend the Sunday worship, Sunday school, choir or youth group. This year, Confirmation has had remarkable attendance with 22 participants.

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

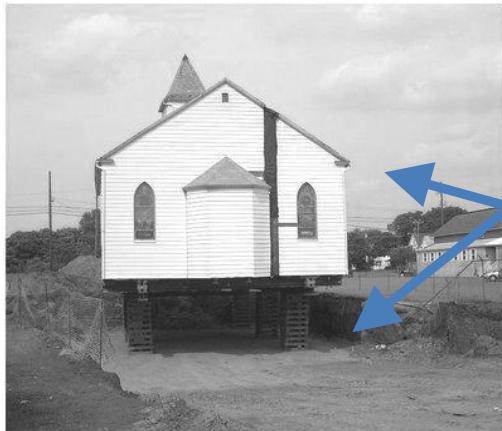
This rent appears to be paid. Youth and parents raved and requested more mission camps, retreats, Youth Speak-outs, social justices rallies. Youth described the need for a larger space to accommodate youth group on Sunday morning.

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

The consistent youth group engagement, increased Confirmation participation and the progressive desire for faith formation, this rent is being paid on time.

As the leadership of the youth ministry develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.” In this sense, the youth ministry faces parallel challenges.

Ministry Architects pictures 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 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:

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**1) 10% of the Worshiping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 341 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 34 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 42 youth is right on target for a church of this size what could be expected from the ministry.

**2) 20% Ceiling**—Ministry Architects has also discovered that in many churches, the youth ministry has difficulty growing beyond a level that equals 20% of the weekly worshiping congregation.

Very few youth ministries seem to be able to break beyond this 20% level. UCCH might keep in mind, then, that the expected ceiling for this youth ministry is around 80 youth. The road to that level of participation is dependent on increased staffing, volunteers and budget.

**3) \$1,500 per Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$45,212 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, UCCH has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 42 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.

**4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including (*list of relevant positions*), UCCH has the equivalent of 1 full time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, UCCH has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 50 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration is aligned well to the current needs of the ministry, however, does not allow room for much more growth. In order to see the kind of growth the church is excited about, more staffing may be needed.

**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 12 weekly volunteers, UCCH is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 3.5 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 60 youth weekly. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future. However, if the church wants to expand its impact, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

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## 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 UCCH 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. A distinct person serving as the Architect would allow for the Minister of Youth and Young Adult initiatives to utilize his gifts of ministry event planning and to continue build relationships among the UCCH youth.
- Sometimes paid staff are not given the time or training to do their important work as the “general contractor” of a complex ministry. Given the Minister of Youth and Young Adult Ministry works 30 hours a week, the role of General Contractor pull him away from other needed work.
- The staff is often expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout. While some members feel that staff is “stretched.” Some staff stated that the church moves at a “frenetic” pace.
- 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.

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## **ASSETS**

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

#### **Church Vision Reflected in Mission-Minded Youth**

The UCCH's mission permeates the youth ministry. One parent shared that the church affirms that "to believe is to care and to care is to do." UCCH's emphasis on loving one's neighbors, extravagant welcome, caring for the poor and social justice priority serves as call which the youth have accepted. Last year, the well-informed and spirited youth were compelled to deliberate the impact of gun violence in their community and the nation. A group of youth gathered to travel to Washington, DC to participate in the "March for Our Lives" rally. Also, the youth unanimously expressed their joy towards meaningful action saying, "I'd like to do more of that."

#### **Strong Feeder System through Children's Ministry**

Among those in focus groups, there was an across-the-board consensus that the children's ministry is well attended, nurtures a strong community, and provided foundation lessons for spiritual growth. There was a healthy appreciation for the consistent and compassionate leader and teachers. Adult leaders and parents reported sentiments like one parent's, "I am excited that my child participates in the children's ministry."

#### **High Caliber Staff**

The selection of the stellar staff is appreciated by the congregation. Relationships with the youth are developing well. One youth commented that the youth ministry leader is "positive, hardworking, and exciting." The youth appreciate his willingness to discuss and engage in "real world problems."

#### **Available & Willing Parents & Volunteers**

Through participation in the choir, UCCH youth have the opportunity to build relationships with adults and observe models of mature Christian adulthood through choir camps and regular fellowship. Shared meals after rehearsal allow for meaningful conversations and hospitality. The members of the youth ministry are affirmed as young disciples of Jesus Christ. Parents provide regular transportation (e.g. drop-offs and pick-ups) for youth. On occasion, parents have provided meals and have served as chaperones and spiritual guides for trips.

#### **Affirming Youth Voices**

UCCH's youth have an opportunity to discuss, explore, and exercise their faith toward current and relevant social issues topics through youth group, Youth Speak Out and social justice rallies. Youth-determined forums make the youth feel respected, heard, and encouraged. One youth said, "There's a smiling face around every corner." Another young person shared, "I feel encouraged to participate and I can make a difference."

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### **Engaging Choir**

"My child is excited about attending the choir," affirmed a parent. The choir leaders desire to see spiritual transformation and growth in the youth participants. Choir members are provided occasions and tools to build upon their efforts and to exercise their gifts. The teens who recently attend the choir expressed excitement and those who could not attend express a longing to return.

### **Confirmation**

"We have a huge turnout for confirmation this year!" stated a parent. Another parent said, "Confirmation has been our favorite thing that the youth ministry does!" Confirmation class provides an occasion for youth to experience faith development and peer-to-peer fellowship. This is a foundational and indispensable element of UCCH for the youth to have intentional instruction in developing a consequential faith.

### **Great & Sacred Space**

There are gorgeous, comfortable, and safe meeting spaces on the UCCH campus. In the past, events like Sunday School, youth group, Youth Speak Out a to name a few, have enjoyed. Regarding the youth lounge, one youth affirmed, "I have fun there with my friends." A youth leader joyfully expressed, "I love that we have a dedicated space for youth!"

## **CHALLENGES**

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

#### **If You're Changing, We're Panicking**

Change is hard! There has been a ton of transition at UCCH, and this has left people a little weary and a little wary. One person said, "When something is changing, it's like it's up for grabs. It's like it's a signal that there's a chance to get more power." There is a sense of a desire to let the healing begin, but as the ministry moves forward, everyone will need to be aware that folks are tired and have earned the right to be cautious in their optimism. "It's not that our new staff is changing less than our last pastors," noted one parent. "It's just that we could usually guess what our last pastors were going to do because they'd been here so long. We can't guess what the new staff is going to do." Patience, love and incremental successes will win the day, but it will take some time. As two different congregation members in different listening groups named (in the same words), "When we see change coming, we panic." This season of church life will require more patience than many are used to, as well as reminders to give grace even before it has been asked for. Change can be hard, but it's easier when it's navigated together.

#### **Perceived Understaffing**

Though the numbers indicate that the staffing in the youth ministry area is adequate for the number of youth currently active, concerns about staffing were heard repeatedly. Concern exists specifically for Ian as he splits his time and attention between all of his assigned duties. "We

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love Ian, but we think he might be stretched too thin," said one of the adults in a listening session. In general, the consensus is that the staff is taxed beyond what they can manage.

Various observations were shared:

- "We used to have someone who could send postcards, but she's busy now."
- "Our program staff are run ragged because they don't have clearly defined roles."
- "The staff is so busy running that they don't have space to evaluate and dream."
- "Our newly hired staff have a mind-boggling amount of expectations to try to meet."
- "Not only are our staff over worked, but there's less and less of them. I'm concerned because we value diversity but we're about to lose our female representation at the ordained level."

In the area of youth ministry, concerns were evident about Ian's long-term ability to juggle all the job responsibilities. The concern was also voiced numerous times about his expected lack of longevity with UCCH because of the pace that he's being asked to run at. This is of particular concern because (as one person put it): "Ian is so talented and we just can't seem to keep a youth director. I don't know why he'd stay if we keep pushing him so hard." A sustainable staffing structure must be put in place with a continued pursuit of diverse representation that reflects the values of the church.

### **Super Sunday...Every Sunday**

"It's a lot for one day." Such was the common sentiment in listening groups regarding the intense Sunday schedule for youth, depending on their level of involvement. For those committed to youth choir and youth group, a typical Sunday involves choir rehearsal at 8:00 AM, singing in the early worship service, skipping Sunday school at the 10:00 AM hour, youth group at 11:00 AM (if the choir isn't performing twice), choir obligations after church, and Confirmation on Sunday evening for 8th graders. For those on YLT, another meeting is also added into the day at least once each month. Such a schedule raises questions about sustainability and best practices for cooperation between two strong ministries with youth. It's not that making youth choose what they want to do is a bad thing, but students and families haven't been given permission or the vocabulary to navigate that choice. As one adult said, "I don't think our Sunday morning options need to change. I think the way we talk about our Sunday morning options needs to change."

### **Committee Connection Confusion**

Many congregation members seemed bewildered and confused by the way in which the church's various boards and committees relate to each other (or, in some cases, avoid relating with each other). One long-time member noted, "I know where the church council fits in, but I can't keep track of all of these boards." Another said, "If I'm not on a board, I don't know what's going on and, then I only know what's going on with that ministry!"

Without a consistent onboarding process for boards, with specific orientation to church values, governance, and how the boards relate to each other, members are forced to guess at what the

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expectations are. “I didn’t even know I was on a board until I came home from vacation,” stated one church member. A leadership structure that doesn’t understand how it relates to itself will continue to run into hurdles instead of navigating them together.

### Terminal Uniqueness

Many of the parents in the listening groups suffered from a perception disorder that Ministry Architects calls “terminal uniqueness,” focusing intensely on the “unique” challenging factors facing this youth ministry:

- “We’re a commuter church. Some families drive 30 minutes to church.”
- “Our kids are so busy with school, they don’t have time for church.”
- “The pressure on kids in our community is greater than any other place in the country.”
- “When our kids get to high school, they’re too busy for church.”
- “I used to force my kid to go to church, but I can’t anymore. So, they won’t come.”
- “People just don’t understand. Parenting teenagers in our town isn’t like it used to be.”

It’s not that these aren’t significant issues that the church faces. The fact is that none of these challenges are even remotely unique to this church. Since the majority of these factors are present in almost every successful suburban youth ministry in our country, the church can make the decision to keep their thinking about youth ministry off the dead-end streets of explaining away their program decisions by pointing to these factors.

### Invisible Kids

Though the youth have the opportunity to attend church with the adults, there were many in the listening groups that wished they saw students involved in worship outside of just being in the youth choir.

- “We love the Sundays that the youth lead church. Could we do that more often?”
- “I love hearing stories about how faith is impacting our students’ lives. I wish we could hear more of that.”
- “I feel like the young people in our church are invisible.”

Throughout our sessions, two things were clear: 1) This church loves and respects the students who call UCCH home and 2) The adults in the church want to see the youth more involved in the worship services.

### Widen the Net: Getting New Volunteers

As part of the desire to instill a faith that sticks by surrounding youth with all ages of people of faith, it would serve the youth ministry well to widen the net it casts for volunteers. However, the pathway into serving seems to be missing.

- “I don’t know how the youth ministry gets new volunteers.”
- “I’ve been serving in the youth ministry for years and I’ve never trained anyone to do my job alongside me.”

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- “We are encouraged to use our gifts, but we don’t know where.”
- “The youth ministry seems to be fine. They have Ian, why do they need us?”
- “Things go better when the staff lead. They don’t need volunteers.”
- “I wish we had more chances to be intergenerational, but I don’t know where that would happen.”
- “We have no pathway into volunteering here. It’s the same people doing everything.”
- “I’m afraid to show up to things because they’ll just pull me in and make me volunteer. I haven’t been asked what I want to do, they just tell me I’m in charge.”

### **Counting the Sheep**

Attendance is not being recorded after youth ministry events. This makes it very difficult to track the attendance patterns of individual youth. It also exposes the church to some easily avoided liability and risk. The staff and volunteers have a pretty good idea how many kids were at activities, but they cannot specifically say who has been coming to these activities after they’ve turned in their sign in sheets. Numbers are important to track, but numbers are not as important as people. Not having a roster-based check in process makes it difficult to spot a new attendee and nearly impossible to quickly follow up with youth that have stopped coming. As the UCCH youth program grows this will only become more difficult and more detrimental.

### **Can We Talk?**

Many in the church indicated that they would like to see better communication across the board, though it was stated that they weren’t sure what it should look like. One clear example of this dynamic was seen in the fact that at least one of the church’s email addresses sends an immediate message back to the sender telling them that “this inbox is not checked regularly.” When congregation members feel like they can’t be heard by those in leadership, they often take their complaints and observations laterally to other congregants. Though communication triangles are bad, horizontal lines of unresolved complaining and gossip can be even worse for a church. One member who has been at the church for over 20 years shared that, “I love that I’ve been listened to this weekend, but I don’t know who will listen to me after this.” Another said, “I don’t even know who to take anything to. I am told ‘yes’ by someone and then ‘no’ later by someone else. It makes me want to quit serving when I don’t know who’s leading me.”

### **What About the Adults?**

A number of focus group participants spoke about the incomparable power that adults in the church have in the faith formation of the youth of the church. Many voiced concerns that if they serve in the church on a Sunday, they have no way to experience discipleship and Christian formation. “I stopped volunteering because I needed something for me and I can’t wake up and get to a 7am Wednesday Bible study,” one person shared. Another agreed, “I’m starting to wonder if this church wants me to read a Bible. I’m busy serving on Sundays, so there’s nothing that works for me.” Churches with healthy youth ministries have adults who are being spiritually nourished as well. UCCH will need to figure out how to continue investing in the youth of the

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church while making sure that they adults setting an example for them have avenues for Christian discipleship as well.

### **What is our Purpose?**

Parents voiced their uncertainty about the purpose and goals of some of the programs in the youth ministry area. They asked, "How does our Sunday morning youth group program blend with our Sunday school program? And does anything fit with the Youth Choir or is it on its own?" They wanted to see a way that all the programs could be tied together in an effort to meet a common goal of Christian formation for the children.

There's a value in having the youth group time focus on current events. "I love that we get to talk about what's going on in real life," named one student. Yet, because the programs don't work in tandem with each other, students tend to get different messages on any given Sunday morning, leaving them without a clear "next step" coming out of the weekend.

Another area where folks asked for direction came from Sunday school teachers. A teacher asked "What is my goal for my class for this year? When they go to the next grade what do they need to know? What are my objectives during the year? I think I'm getting them ready for the class they'll go to next, but I don't know what they need to know by then."

### **Rites of Passage**

Presently there is only one clear rite of passage, Confirmation, for the young people of UCCH. Rites of passage provide opportunities to empower the youth and to remind them of their importance in the life of the congregation. It seems the logical time to have a rite of passage for the youth would be 1) when they step into the youth program, 2) when they move from the middle school program to the high school program, and 3) when they graduate from high school. One parent stated, "There is a barrier between middle and high school; I want us to bridge it." Multiple parents shared a similar sentiment that students drop off after Confirmation. Rites of passage would provide just such a bridge and create visibility of the youth in the life of the church, without adding additional programs to an already full calendar.

### **Fuzzy Calls to Action**

The current staff, volunteers, parents, and youth are passionate about changing the world around them; they want to see marvelous things happen, and they are willing to work, and work sacrificially, to do so. But a large number of those who were asked seemed to talk about how the Biblical study that could accompany that work was lacking. From adults to students, the people of UCCH are asking for more Biblical teaching to go along with their call to Gospel-work in the community. They want to be called to sharing more than just words with their community but, at the same time, the words of Scripture matter to them. Specifically, listening group participants said asked, "are we trying to build more Bible-based knowledge or just have fellowship?"

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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, target May 2020 as the date when the youth ministry renovation will be complete.
2. Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
3. Present this report to the church council, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
4. Establish a Ministry Renovation Team, made up of at least three non-anxious, goal-oriented volunteers and Ian McPherson 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 children's, youth, and adult ministries as the church transitions toward having a thriving and sustainable faith formation strategy (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. Partner with Ministry Architects to take responsibility for
  - I. Managing the renovation process, working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline
  - II. Assisting the youth ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of renovating the youth ministry.
6. Address the current pressure points facing the youth ministry:

**Pressure Point #1: Communication Rhythms & Norms** – Create trust and a sense of togetherness by establishing normative processes for effective and timely communication between the congregation and its leadership utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the church's website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.

- Create, test, and evaluate communication norms within the youth ministry, ensuring communication between staff, volunteers, students, and parents.
- Establish a task force to determine how to synchronize the various communication methods that are used by the other ministries of the church, using the youth ministry communication plan as a guide.
- Set up a series of benchmarks to determine the effectiveness of the communication plan(s) and create a preventative maintenance calendar to ensure clear communication lines will continue moving forward.

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**Pressure Point #2: Develop a Sustainable Staffing Plan** – Keeping the Ministry Architects “architect,” general contractor,” and “laborer” analogy in mind, develop an appropriate long-term staffing model including the professional and volunteer components, that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of children, youth, and adults. Within this staffing model, determine which role is the best fit for the Minister for Youth & Young Adult Initiatives and develop volunteers around that person in the other roles. As a future staffing structure is developed, ensure that diversity in leadership is representative of the church’s values. While doing this, teach the current staff how to move from being a team of “geniuses” to being a team of “genius makers.” Liz Wiseman’s book *Multipliers*, offers useful tips for making that shift.

**Pressure Point #3: Create a Christian Formation Pathway** – Gather a team for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing curriculum, milestones and special programming.

- Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
- Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the children’s, youth, and adult ministry programming.
- Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
- Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
- Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.

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

- **Host a “Quick Start” Summit:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and 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 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.”
  - Meet with staff and council members for communication training.
  - Draft the following documents for the youth ministry, finalizing them within no more than two weeks after the Quick Start Summit:
    - A finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events for the youth ministry through May 2019.

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- Results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry. The job descriptions cover all current positions and also include additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- A clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
- A broad “fishing pond” list of at least 40 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).
- Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through May 2019 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
  - A ministry mission statement
  - A statement of how the church’s values are expressed in the youth ministry
  - A set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks
  - An organizational structure for the ministry

**Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission trip”).

- **Compliance Documents:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and all adults working with any youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth activities and develop an attendance system that allows for easy access to weekly participation numbers.
- **Building Utilization:** Conduct a usage study for the church’s indoor and outdoor spaces. Space and timing are issues surrounding Sunday morning programs. Assess the building’s creative use and consider new ways to leverage this valuable resource. Give various groups an opportunity to take part in this study as well as any creative design work.

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- **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.

**Schedule:** Evaluate the weekly schedule for corporate youth group activities. There is a desire for families to be in church together without sacrificing Youth Group. There is also a desire for youth choir programming to come alongside the rest of the youth ministry. Families are hesitant about moving any programs to another day outside of Sunday, which means that creative scheduling may be needed.

- **Youth Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, a 12-18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major youth ministry event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2019. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.
- **Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach:** Invite Ministry Architects to play the “coach” role during this renovation period. Ministry Architects would offer experienced direction for the building of an infrastructure for the youth ministry and provide ongoing coaching for the lead pastor, the youth ministry staff, as well as the Renovation Team.
- **Strategic Staffing:** Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan, including the professional and volunteer components, for the youth ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth.
- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each youth ministry staff member develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.
- **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

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complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 50 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.

- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities for Youth:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for youth involvement in the adult worship services. 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 workers at the beginning of each school year.
- **College Ministry:** Develop a game plan to reach out to the youth who have graduated from the youth program. Establish ongoing communication with them throughout the school year and when home from college for breaks.
- **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).
- **Welcome Squad:** Recruit, train, and deploy 5-10 youth at each program with the task of creating a welcoming environment for new youth. Teach them how to meet new youth and to guide new youth into the program. Use this as an opportunity to help the welcome squad follow-up with new youth who come to programming and provide a relational engagement into the ministry.
- **Magnetic Justice:** Build on the desire expressed by many youth to make a difference in the world as well as their local community by providing a well-publicized calendar of mission initiatives for youth and families. Invite all age-appropriate visitors and first-timers to participate in these initiatives, recognizing that the social-justice DNA of UCCH may be the most natural plug-in point for many outsiders.
- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth and parents to make a difference in the world, as well as their local community. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as, regional, and possibly international missions. Evaluate the current mission trips for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **Integration:** Develop a strategic plan for helping the youth become an integral part of the whole church, weaving the youth ministry into the fabric of the entire church.

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- **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
- **Spiritual Depth:** Develop a plan to intentionally take youth deeper in their faith through teaching and discipleship in varied environments. This plan may include small groups, serving projects with intentional teaching moments, and gifts-based service teams.
- **Retention Plans for the Youth Ministry:** Create game plans for
  - Keeping youth involved in the youth programs after Confirmation
  - Continuing to engage youth who have gotten their drivers' license
  - Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them with the life of UCCH.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
  - Welcome and connect the new 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  - Welcome and connect the new 9<sup>th</sup> 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

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## **PROPOSED TIMELINE - NOVEMBER 2018**

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

### **November 2018**

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

##### **Outcomes:**

- This report has been presented to the church council for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the church council has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for December.
- The Renovation Team for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Summit.
- A fishing pond of 50 potential volunteers in the youth ministry has been created.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the youth ministry. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline.
- Any immediate volunteer needs for the 2018-2019 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- The church has partnered with Ministry Architects to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

### **December 2018**

#### **Focus: Quick Start Summit, Summer Calendar**

##### **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 youth ministry renovation process.
- Create, test, and evaluate communication norms within the youth ministry, ensuring communication between staff, volunteers, students, and parents.
- After reading Liz Wiseman's book *Multipliers*, the Minister for Youth & Young Adult Initiatives and Senior Pastor have re-tooled the Minister for Youth & Young Adult Initiatives' job description to spend more time in the roll of an architect and general contractor, nurturing the staff and the volunteers for front-line ministry.

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- A Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for 2019. The summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2019.

## **January 2019**

### **Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Training, Communications, Attendance Tracking, Participation Goals**

#### **Outcomes:**

- 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.
- A Christian Formation Retreat has been scheduled for March and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- Work has begun on the 2019-2020 youth ministry calendar.
- The summer 2019 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented in the youth ministry.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth ministry programs has been created and implemented.
- The 2018-2019 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2019 including a Fall Kick-off.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2019 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.

## **February 2019**

### **Focus: Christian Formation Summit, Calendars, Volunteer Recruitment, Compliance**

#### **Outcomes:**

- All programs have adhered to the Safe Church policy as laid out by the church.
- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe church policy.

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# The **Ministry Architects** Team Serving United Church of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC)



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Anthony Prince is a husband, dad and pastor – in that order. Anthony currently serves as the Executive Pastor at Real Life Church of LA, a growing church plant in the foothills of Los Angeles, CA. He is a graduate of Fuller Seminary, with an M.A. in Global Leadership and an emphasis in Youth, Family & Culture. Anthony is a sought-after speaker on the topics of children & family ministry, strategic church leadership, and volunteer recruitment. He is also a contributing author to two books: *What Matters Now in Children's Ministry* (2011) and *Sunday School that Works!* (2014).



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John has more than 15 years of experience in Youth Ministry and presently serves as Youth Minister at the First Mount Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries, VA, Co-President of the Prince William County Ministers Association (VA) and Professor at the University of Valley Forge. John is a graduate of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (NY), St. Mary's Seminary and University's Ecumenical Institute of Theology (MD) and Lincoln University (PA) where he earned his Master of Divinity, Certificate of Advanced Study in Theology and Bachelor of Health Science degrees respectively.

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Annette fell in love with children's ministry in the 1980s and has never looked back. After graduating from Bible college in 1991 with a certification in children's ministry, she earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University, and a Master's from SMU. Over the years, she has consistently served in various roles and in various settings as either a staff member or volunteer team member. In recent years, Annette served as a director for a rapidly growing children's ministry, and has been a member of the Ministry Architects team since January of 2012. She is a conference speaker for both Children's Pastor's Conference and Group's KidMin Conference. She lives in McKinney, TX with her husband Kevin, and their two children, and enjoys traveling, cooking, and writing.

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