

Renovation Team Report to Church Council

(**bold typeface** indicates documents that are available upon request)

Prior to Pastor Ian's arrival at United Church, Acting Youth Director Katherine Henderson reached out to the consulting firm Ministry Architects for an initial assessment of the youth ministry's sustainability. Katherine wisely knew that in the face of so many leadership transitions within our church, Ministry Architects could resource the incoming staff leader for greater success. After Ian's arrival in June 2018, he picked up this conversation with Ministry Architects, and thanks to a generous gift to the congregation, United Church contracted with Ministry Architects for a 12-month consulting process beginning November 2018.

This engagement included ongoing training for Ian and 3 site visits from consultants Anthony Prince and John McNeill. The first visit included several congregational listening sessions, which were reflected within an **Assessment Report** presented to the congregation. The report outlined three "pressure points" to address: communication norms, sustainable staffing, and the congregation's overall vision of Christian Formation. Following this visit, a prayer team was assembled to support the process and a "Renovation Team" was recruited to execute the sequenced tasks outlined in the Report. This Team included chairs from all three Boards of faith formation: Jeff Hall (Adult Ed), Millie Brobston (BYYAM), and Christine Harding (Children's Board) as well as their staff liaisons, Ian McPherson and Anitra Grove.

While contracted to assess faith formation as a whole, Ministry Architects focused initially on youth ministry as a laboratory of innovation. Changes within this ministry area, these consultants argued, would become a model for other parts of the system to follow. With this in mind, youth, parents, ministry leaders, and other stakeholders gathered for a Visioning Summit to articulate **the mission, values, and goals of youth ministry**, which has become the lodestar for the work of the BYYAM and other youth ministry leaders. A later Christian Formation Summit gathered participants from throughout the congregation to articulate our approach to faith formation as a whole. This gathering produced the raw material for a scope and sequence of (congregationally-sourced) **learning objectives**, which will create a coherent faith formation pathway throughout the lifespan. (Special thanks to Barbara Hall for taking on the first part of this gargantuan task!)

In the meantime, Anitra joined the inaugural Sustainable Children's Ministry cohort with author and Ministry Architects Lead Consultant Annette Safstrom. The cohort consisted of 10 children's ministry leaders from across the country. There were several one-on-one coaching calls that were specific to work at United Church. There were also webinars where the cohort learned from experts about volunteer recruitment, connecting with families, and volunteer training. Anitra has noted that this process was valuable for the work of children's ministry at United Church, as was the opportunity to be a part of a cohort of professionals working toward a common goal.

The accomplishments of the Renovation Team are numerous and far-ranging. Each site visit with Ministry Architects held a mirror to our congregation, helping us to reflect on United Church's values, priorities, and dreams for Christian formation. In addition to these rich insights for our congregation (particularly as we have undertaken strategic planning for the whole system) there are specific impacts and ongoing projects worth briefly noting here:

- Within the youth ministry, the Renovation Team has worked to improve systems of communication, volunteer recruitment, attendance tracking, and event planning.
- Jeff Hall created a **comprehensive communication plan** for church leadership.
- Efforts are underway to reassess and maximize use of our building's rich resources.
- All three faith formation Boards are now engaged in conversation about our congregation's central rites of passage (throughout the lifespan).
- Anitra and Ian have led the entire staff in reflection on (and the publication of) their sustainable weekly rhythms at work.
- Perhaps most importantly, there is a team (including Pastors Mary Elizabeth and Ian, Anitra Grove, Kati Ruark, Christine Harding, and Saritha Vermeer) currently working to update and significantly bolster our church's **Safe Conduct Policy**.

The BYYAM is already shifting toward a more sustainable model of ministry focused on increasing the number of youth ministry leaders and fostering deeper connections with young people. In late February, a "UCCH Youth Leader Summit" brought together BYYAM members, volunteers, parents, and other adult leaders to facilitate conversation about the future of youth ministry and foster greater cooperation among these different stakeholders. Anitra and Ian are currently facilitating similar conversations with the Children's Board, which is reading through Annette's book, *Sustainable Children's Ministries*.

While there have been many tasks accomplished, the most meaningful and impactful work of the Renovation Team has been more difficult to quantify. The improvement of teamwork by having the faith formation leaders of UCCH in one room every month for over a year and a half has created benefits that are still revealing themselves. The single greatest thing that this team has done is to reinforce the importance of cross-ministry communication within the church. As a team, we look forward to building on these connections as we think more deeply about how to best structure our boards and ministries to meet the rapidly changing and dynamic needs for faith formation at United Church of Chapel Hill.

Submitted by:

Millie Brobston, Anitra Grove, Jeff Hall, Christine Harding, and Ian McPherson