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YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

**First Presbyterian Church
Charlottesville, VA
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BACKGROUND

First Presbyterian Church has a long history of serving Charlottesville, VA and Albemarle County. This deep heritage has provided a place for roots and wings and a variety of opportunities exist to serve in the church, community and beyond. There has been and continues to be a great sense of the potential present and a belief in the gifting and talents yet untapped. Church members describe their church family as “healing,” “resilient,” “passionate,” “reinvigorating,” “anxious,” “well intended,” and people who are “invested.” Several people said “It is my home.”

The roots of FPC go all the way back to 1819 when Presbyterians in the area joined together to form South Plains Presbyterian Church. Over time, the area and the church expanded, eventually becoming in 1955 what is now First Presbyterian Church. This church has continued to the present day as a strong presence in the community serving in an impressive number of ways.

The church is currently being pastored by Interim Rev. Gavin Meek. He, alongside Associate Pastor Rev. Kim Wells, oversees many aspects of ministry here at FPC. They, along with a committed group of parents and congregants, are excited to welcome needed change and growth in all areas of youth ministry. Included among those who have been instrumental in serving youth over recent years are Colleen Plitt, Elaine Knight, and Ashley Shower.

The membership of the church is 1,290 on the rolls with 961 considered active. On an average week, 350 people attend one of the church’s three worship services; Chapel, Contemporary and Traditional as well as a fully graded Sunday school program for all ages. There are 101 7-12th graders on the roll and 38 5-6th graders. During a typical week, 13 attend Sunday school, 12-13 attend Senior High Youth group on Sunday nights, and 15-20 9th graders attend



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confirmation. An irregular occurrence also merits mention in the attendance of 5 mid-highers to special activities throughout the year. This all occurs with no single individual serving as the point person for leading youth ministry. If counted once, 30 youth come through the doors of the church weekly for worship, Sunday school, youth group or Confirmation.

Currently, Rev. Wells shoulders the responsibility for the Senior High ministry and Colleen Plitt watches over the Middle High ministry. This has been the most recent organization after nearly ten years of regular changeover since the last consistent youth pastor. The church also currently employs one intern, Emma, with an average of 10-15 hours per week whose main focus is youth ministry.

The youth ministry is described by some students and parents as “well intended,” “a sense of camaraderie” “youth with positive attitudes” and one youth commented, “There is good fellowship going on.” The youth ministry program is also described as “uncertain,” “anemic,” “scattered,” “inconsistent,” “non-existent,” and “lacking confidence.”

First Presbyterian Church currently has a budget of \$1.1 million. For the year 2010, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$52,000, including the \$17,500 youth ministry program budget, the portions of salaries devoted to youth ministry and includes \$12,800 in benefits.

There are currently 3 adult volunteers who lead the senior high Sunday school class and 2 adult volunteers who shepherd the mid-high Sunday school. There is one volunteer who helps lead mid-high youth group. There are no volunteers helping to lead the senior high group. In addition, there are 3 teachers consistently leading Confirmation. Others help out at special events, on trips or behind the scenes as needed.

Youth Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. We met with 43 individuals in 9 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.



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YOUTH MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens we like to use for understanding youth ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” It has been our experience that though these three rents, in and of themselves, do not insure an effective or faithful ministry, they are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by youth, parents, staff and the congregation at large.

Youth ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. And those youth ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing and discouragement.

Rent #1: NUMBERS—A significant percentage of youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church’s ministry. Although youth ministry is about more than numbers, people always want to know “how many are coming?” Rather than chase a hundred different numbers from a hundred different people, it is important for this target number to be clearly agreed on by the Session 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. Based on dissatisfied comments from parents and students, this is a rent that is “left owing.”

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, and consistent youth programs that give both students and parents “something to talk about.” Other than Confirmation, there is confusion about exactly what the current programming is and each segment’s purpose. This leaves this “rent past due.”

Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM—The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the youth staff, volunteers and the youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents. This also is a rent that is not paid and in fact, is significantly owing.

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





1. Laying the Foundation: Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the student ministry's *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,
2. Continuing to Worship on Stilts: Maintaining the *current* student ministry in a way that builds the enthusiasm of students, their families, the staff, and the church at large.

As the youth ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, four rules of thumb—or what we call “youth ministry norms”—will be helpful to keep in mind:

1) \$1500 a student based on cost of living in this community—With a budget of approximately \$64,800 dedicated to the youth ministry and a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 students in some aspect of the church's life, the ministry is well funded. In fact, it has room to grow to about 35 students.

2) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth—According to this rule of thumb, First Presbyterian Church is budgeted to effectively minister to 25 youth on a weekly basis with two staff dedicating a $\frac{1}{4}$ of their time. With an average of 30 different youth coming through the doors weekly, the youth ministry is already understaffed, and this doesn't take into the additional 70 youth on the rolls who are not being served.

3) 1 Adult Volunteer for Every 5 Youth— We like to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of and build relationships with more than about five students on an ongoing basis. With 6 volunteers serving each week, the youth ministry program at First Presbyterian Church would appear to be functioning at adequate levels of supervision. However, this is not the case in each segment of programming. For example, SH youth group is significantly under-volunteered for developing solid relationships. In addition, the current number of volunteers offers no room for healthy growth in youth attendance.



4) 10% of the Worshiping Congregation—In a typical church, the size of a healthy youth ministry tends to begin at a number around 10% of the worshiping congregation. With an average worship attendance of 350, a starting target number of youth involved in the youth program is around 35 youth present weekly.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE YOUTH STAFF

When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a single staff person, instability is a predictable result. We have 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 Construction Foreman:** A person who manages the flow and sequencing of work, manages the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of “laborers” is in place for each stage of the project.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. In youth ministry, a laborer might have particular skills in relating to youth, or particular skills in planning and managing events, or particular skills in teaching.

Many churches hire, as their lead youth director, someone who may have gifts in a single area—for example, working with youth, managing a facility—but who simply doesn’t have the experience base of the skill set to oversee the complex components of a ministry of 50 or more youth. The result in these situations can be a pattern of unrealistic expectations for the staff, which can lead to “scape-goating,” particularly in settings in which a sustainable infrastructure for ministry has not been established.

So to apply this to FPC, with no consistent youth ministry staffing, there is no architect and two part-time construction foremen (Colleen and Kim) and very few laborers (volunteers). It leaves the ministry and everyone involved spread too thin and as such, the youth ministry is only minimally served. At this time, since there is no one serving as the architect, there is also not a clear set of blueprints or delineated organizational chart. Even with “drawings” in hand, there is no one to easily step into the role of short-term architect for any necessary renovations.



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ASSETS

Strengths to Protect in the Youth Ministry

Here Am I

As evidenced by their participation in focus groups, there are already invested parents able and wanting to volunteer. They have a great passion for youth ministry and care deeply. They simply are waiting to be asked. This is a group that understands first-hand, the unique challenges fragmenting young families today and the difference that a vibrant relationship with Christ can make. They recognize their own limits in time and training but are longing to serve with someone who can lead well.

Clarity of Need

There was an across-the-board consensus in our focus groups that the youth ministry is not all that it could be. Adults, parents, youth, and church leaders all described the youth ministry program as “disjointed,” “inconsistent,” and “lacking focused leadership.” There was also a great sense that while it is held as highly important, it has been neglected in the wake of several years of struggle within the congregation as a whole. There was a stated desire amongst all groups to see a change within the current youth ministry program.

This is a good thing! It means that no one has their head in the sand about how things currently are in the youth ministry. Everyone seems to be on the same page that “we’re not where we should be, but we’d like to do what it takes to get there.”

Memory Makers

Parents and youth give FPC high marks on several shared experiences, particularly the impact of Urban Plunge, Montreat, Youth Sunday and the summer mission trips. Urban Plunge was repeatedly mentioned as *the* event that bonded the confirmation class and consequently the youth for the duration of their time in the youth ministry at FPC. One student said when asked what they would NOT want to change, “SW Virginia. I mean the week-long mission trip, don’t make it shorter.” Another student said “Youth Sunday is cool. It’s where we get to show what God is doing in us.” A parent said “Montreat was a significant turning point.”



Confirmed

Hands down, this is what is considered to be the highlight of all youth ministry experiences possible at FPC. One parent exclaimed "My daughter loves Confirmation." The overall assessment from parents, adult volunteers and students includes a strong confidence in Confirmation and an understanding that it is "...seen as a good, quality program. They go places together, they have a retreat together." It was suggested on more than one occasion that the elements present in Confirmation be what all of the youth ministry needs to model. There is a great fondness and respect for Ashley Shower and a deep appreciation of his consistency and stability. He received much credit for the success of the program.

The Worship Connection

The youth have a tradition of sitting together in the Sanctuary for worship, a practice that is welcomed joyfully by the vast majority of the church members. The fact that more youth attend worship on any given week than attend any other single program of the youth ministry is an indication of how well the youth are connected to the total life of the church, not just to the youth ministry. This integration of youth into the life of the total church was evidenced as well through the positive experience and connection with the Praise Team. While this was not the original intent, it seems to be "becoming part of the youth ministry." One parent stated that "music became the place to connect when there was no other place." This positive feel was confirmed by a student who talked of Praise Team being a place to participate.

Ah, Kim

People could not say enough good things about Kim. She is respected, liked and appreciated. There is an acute awareness that she wears many hats and a desire from leaders and youth that she could be freed up to be more focused. This was stated always in the sense that she is so good at what she does that each person longed for her to be able to pour fully into their area. Kim was described as "amazing," "gifted," and "straightforward yet loving."

Give and Take

The youth are ready for more! They both want and are able to offer a great deal to the church. One parent speaks of her daughter's view of being asked to serve on a committee as "a high honor to be taken seriously." Whether through art, music, reading scripture or leading younger children, youth are wanting to give what they can in connection with the church as a whole.

On the other side of the coin, youth are ready to receive in deeper ways from the church. One youth said "It would be cool to have prayer partners with the old people of the church." Another said when it came to talking about God, she



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wanted to talk about the connection “with the stuff in my daily life.” Finally, in discussing sin, one student said “I also want to hear what we do right” balanced with a comment immediately after stating but “if we never talk about what we do wrong, we might forget.” Youth at FPC are clearly ready to engage more frequently and at deeper levels.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to Moving the Youth Ministry Strategically Forward

Programmatic Depression

With the extended length of the rollercoaster ride of “recent unpleasantness” in the life of the church, there is a general “anemic attitude” which has trickled down to the youth ministry. In general, the students and parents are not excited about what the program has to offer. In fact, there is seems to be a disconnect from a clear awareness of current youth happenings, leading to a depressed feeling overall. One result? It’s been an easy leap for even “on the fringe” inactive church youth, and their friends within the community, to have the impression that FPC’s youth program is not a priority to the leadership of the church and that “no one goes anyway.”

One parent said, “Our leaders seem to care more about spending money on our church building. Don’t they know that the church is the people and not the building?” to which several adults chimed in with agreement.

The overall depression around the program is fairly solid, especially among the middle high youth. “If we’re doing anything as a mid-high group, then I didn’t get the memo. We never do anything.”

More Meat!

Students expressed a desire to talk more about their lives in relation to the Bible and how the Bible fits into their lives. “I would love to be a part of a small group Bible study.”

7th and 8th grade Sunday school took an especially hard hit in this regard:

- “It’s the only program we have and we do coloring projects!”
- “We meet with 1st graders. What do I have in common with a 1st grader?”
- “It seems to me the middle high youth do too many artsy-craftsy projects.”
- “We want to talk more about how the Bible applies to our lives.”



A Spirit of Paralyzing Anxiousness

Every listening group talked about the long-reaching aspects of the current “transitional” period in the church and its search for a senior pastor. There was a lot of intense, negative emotion reflected in those conversations. A spirit of playfulness is easily consumed by heavy anxiety and a critical spirit, making it hard to dream or even to create a fun, attractive environment.

The leadership may be under a false assumption that the youth are oblivious to the divisive issues being batted about.

Youth comments on current church struggles:

- “I feel like our whole church is made up of a big argument” (Several youth said “Uh-huh!”)
- “I feel like when something goes wrong, our church holds a grudge for like 3 years. Then someone brings it up, and they start all over again.”
- “There’s been a lot of fragmentation going on. Then people left. Then we didn’t have enough money to pay for a youth person.”
- “What’s the big deal about the screens? I feel like some people make a big deal because screens weren’t in the Bible...but I say get over it because the Bible wasn’t always printed in book form, either. Things change.”
- “Sometimes when our parents get involved and then they come home and talk about it, it kinda makes me want to hate the church. Well, not really ‘hate.’”

Here is what parents had to say about how the leadership upheaval within the church has affected the youth ministry:

- “It’s all related to the turmoil of the church. It makes it hard on the youth.”
- “I had the benefit of going to Montreat with the youth. They opened up and shared the pain of how they were feeling. They decided that they really didn’t want to be a part of our church. What they were telling us is that they don’t want to be a part of organized religion.”
- “It’s an ongoing systemic problem.”

Missing Infrastructure

One of the largest threats to the future sustainability of this youth ministry is the lack of a clear and workable structure for maintaining a youth ministry of this potential magnitude. The current staff, volunteers, parents, and youth are all passionate about the youth ministry. They want to see marvelous things happen; they want to see lives transformed for Christ. But there was general agreement that infrastructure is not a current hallmark of the youth ministry at FPC.



As the youth ministry develops, careful attention needs to be paid to the foundation and infrastructure which will hold it together:

- The vision and goals for the church (which have recently been completed in an in-depth study) have not yet been clearly tied into the vision and goals of the rest of the church. In fact, there appear to be no youth ministry vision and goals.
- Major events have not been calendared ahead 12-18 months at a time.
- There is a lack of consistent articulation of the current youth ministry programming outside of Confirmation.
- "What about the curriculum?" "What are our kids studying?" "I have no idea."
- Child Protection Checks
- Updated FPC youth web page (last update was July 2010).

Missed Opportunity with the Volunteers

Although a large number of adults expressed a willingness to volunteer, it appears there is a lack of coordination of recruiting volunteers with a comprehensive approach to youth ministry. One parent said, "No one ever asks us." Another said, "Youth don't want us there, do they?" With the youth ministry in its current stage, it has not had the opportunity or experience to spend the necessary quality time on recruiting effective adult/parent youth ministry volunteer leadership teams.

There is also a need for equipping, and encouraging the volunteer team. Once a full team has signed up, leaders might mistakenly assume that the church is already asking a lot of the volunteers and then decide that expecting them to participate in a training program would be asking too much. However, until that team is intentionally nurtured and developed, the youth ministry will not be able to handle even its current load of students, much less be prepared for the hoped-for future growth.

The Slow Fade

For the past several years, there's been an overall decline in attendance in the youth ministry, with the occasional peaks after shorter successful periods. Parents and other adults in listening groups expressed this decline in various ways:

- "My kids just don't want to come any more."
- "We've lost families with teens because other churches have better programs."
- "Instead of connecting to this church, kids are connecting somewhere else like Young Life or that other Pres Church (insert name here)."



- “Things are just too inconsistent and unpredictable. Plans change at the last minute!”
- “My child won’t come anymore. I can’t make him/her.” (Repeated several times.)

Here are reasons the youth gave for the decline in attendance.

- “We’re just too busy!”
- “We have other stuff we’d rather do. If there was something to come for, I would.”
- “I started going to another youth group.”

Some spoke with a resignation regarding the trend that can be described as fatalistic; others felt the trend could be turned around.

Where There is No Vision, the Youth Group Perishes

Some of the mushiness around how to articulate what to dream and hope for from a good youth ministry stems from a lack of cohesive vision. The current staff members, volunteers, parents, and youth are passionate about the youth ministry; they want to see marvelous things happen, and they are willing to work to make it happen. But most seemed unable to paint a clear picture of what the youth ministry would look like if it were thriving.

In most listening groups, nostalgic waves would wash over several participants about how things used to be “back in the good ol’ days” when “Super Youth Pastor was here.” In discussing the success of previous programs, most parents talked with fondness about a particular time, place, event, or persons in the youth ministry.

But, when asked to “dream their dream,” focus groups seemed to become easily mired in terminal vagueness. Though there were a couple of people who could clearly formulate their personal hope for the ministry, on a broad scale – no sense of forward movement or direction was heard. This typically leads to a shotgun approach to youth ministry programming: Just hoping something will hit the target by coincidence.

Calendar Crisis

Focus group participants—especially parents—do not feel there is adequate advance communication about youth events. At best this leads to a sense of frustration around programs and events; at worst, it breeds a desperate perception that the ministry is not under control. Though emails are plentiful, receiving the calendar a month at a time is not allowing for good preparation and



may also explain the less-than-successful attendance numbers at youth events. Youth, just like their parents, need to plan well in advance.

Comments included:

- “We’ve got to know now what’s happening next summer.”
- “We need to be on the same page.”
- “I don’t ever know what’s going on.”

Idea Overload

Throughout the listening process, we heard a wide variety of ideas voiced. Many of them were spoken with the kind of passion that assumes that if only these changes were made, all youth ministry problems would be solved.

The truth is that few, if any, of these ideas hold the key to ensuring a sustainable, high-impact youth ministry. But for the sake of information (and entertainment), we have included a list of some of these recommendations, directly quoted below from our conversations with students and parents:

- “Our youth program should be like Young Life.”
- “Our youth program should be nothing like Young Life.”
- “We need a youth leader.”
- “We don’t need a youth leader.”
- “We need a leader who is dynamic and engaging.”
- “We need a leader who knows how to relate to kids.”
- “We need a leader who is theological.”
- “The leader MUST be able to play Ultimate Frisbee.”
- “The leader should do things other than just Ultimate Frisbee.”
- “We make whoever comes learn to play Ultimate Frisbee.”
- “My kid hates Ultimate Frisbee and won’t come.”
- “They need to have more fun.”
- “They can have fun other places.”
- “Our kids need more Bible.”
- “Our kids need more than just Bible.”
- “Our kids crave more spiritual depth.”
- “Our kids are too busy to do church.”
- “Our kids don’t have enough offered to them at church.”

Until a clear plan for purpose, value, target and direction for the youth ministry specifically is agreed upon by a broad base of people, set into motion and communicated to everyone, this overload of opinions will continue to grow and not in a good way.



Missing Curriculum Plan and Discipleship Pathway

Parents, volunteers and staff expressed a concern about what is being taught (or what isn't being taught) and the lack of an over-arching Biblical thread in the youth program. Parents and adults shared similar sentiments like, "I have no idea what my child is studying." "My teen isn't getting ANY Bible teaching." "I never thought of having a six-year plan."

Currently, FPC has no process in place to ensure a well-rounded, comprehensive plan for what curriculum topics are being taught over the course of a student's six-year journey through the youth ministry from start to finish. The danger of this is 1) No accountability plan leads to the risk of missing key spiritual teaching and 2) Lack of a plan can lead to poor planning and a potential for dangerous theology if left unchecked.

Who's in Charge Around Here?

There appears to be an unclear organizational, leadership structure for the youth ministry. The vast majority of listening group participants were either unable to name the committee within the church overseeing the youth program or were not able to name who the leader is. Several adults asked about the Youth Ministry Committee (a currently non-existent committee). One asked who the current Youth Elder to the Session was, which a non-existent role is also.

"I feel like when we had the three pastors, Kim had the time to focus on the youth program, then Doug did. Now there's nobody."

Heard loud and clear is the desire for a full-time youth director. The consensus is that there is no need to wait till a senior pastor is hired; parents, youth and volunteers want consistent, non-revolving leadership now.

It was also discussed in the same conversation that FPC tends to be too staff-dependent and that "We can't just hire someone and expect them to do it all. We have to get involved."

Terminal Uniqueness

Many parents and adults in the listening group were operating under a perception disorder called "terminal uniqueness," focusing intensely on the "unique" challenging factors facing the FPC youth ministry:

- Multiple schools make it difficult for kids to feel connected.
- Youth with packed schedules are unable to participate regularly.
- Youth are attending schools that demand high levels of performance.
- They have too much homework.



- Since it's a multiple zip code church makes it difficult and people here don't want to drive their kids to church beyond Sunday mornings
- Being a church full of dual income adults who don't have time to volunteer

The truth is that none of these challenges are even remotely unique to this church. The majority of these factors are present in almost every successful suburban youth ministry in the country. Too often, a church will use these excuses to explain away a less-than-effective program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reframe the next 19 months (through May 2012) as a time of direction setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target May 2012 as the deadline date for a ministry that has sufficient infrastructure and support to provide long-term stability.
2. Present this report to the Session requesting that they endorse a 19-month strategic re-design process for the youth ministry.
3. Establish a prayer team of at least five "prayer warriors" who will undergird the youth ministry through the renovating process.
4. Establish a 5-person Renovation Team, appointed by Pastor Kim Wells and who will also report to her. Charge the Renovation Team with two overarching responsibilities:
 - Work with the parents, youth, staff, and adults to remove the immediate pressure points in the youth ministry.
 - Establish a consensus for the direction of the youth ministry and develop its infrastructure.

TASK 1: ADDRESS THE IMMEDIATE PRESSURE POINTS FACING THE YOUTH MINISTRY WITHIN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS AFTER THIS REPORT

Pressure Point 1: Build the Team

- Clarify expectations from the current youth staff, including up-to-date job descriptions for any staff member connected to the youth ministry.
- Begin the search process and shoot for hiring a full-time youth director or family ministry director within the next 6 months.
- Recruit at least two more adult volunteers for Senior High Sunday nights, 1-2 more for Middle School Sunday afternoons.
- Provide youth ministry resourcing through training events, youth ministry books and magazine, and clear lesson plans well in advance.



Pressure Point 2: Curriculum/Discipleship Path

Schedule a 3-day Discipleship Path planning retreat to develop an overarching 6-year bird's eye view plan for how each youth ministry program connects and interweaves with each other. Create an intentional, month by month plan for choosing curriculum and themes, based on what FPC wants the youth to "know, feel, do."

Pressure Point 3: Revamp the Middle High Ministry

Step One: Create a calendar of middle school youth group events through the end of the school year. Publicize the calendar and recruit the necessary volunteers. Some will be a consistent presence while others might be one-time hosts or coordinators of special events.

Step Two: Plans should be in place by February for a Middle High ministry overhaul to begin either at the beginning of the summer or at the start of the school year. Here are several possible scenarios for the Renovation Team to consider:

- 1) Move the 6th graders in with the 7/8th graders and develop a regular, knock-it-out-of-the park weekly program.
- 2) Create separate "knock it out of the park" youth group programs for the 5/6th graders and the 7/8th graders.
- 3) Create a "knock it out of the park" youth program for 6/7th graders, move Confirmation to 8th, thus setting up the entire high school program for even greater success.
- 4) Regardless of which choice of 1, 2, or 3 – the 7/8th graders must have their own age-appropriate Sunday school class created for them separate from the children's rotational model.

Pressure Point 4: Establish Consistent Leadership

In addition to the Renovation Team, create (or use a current appropriate committee) to discuss viable options for providing consistent youth ministry staff leadership. This role will provide the missing connecting point for building a team of adults and relationships with students. Pastor Kim should oversee that this process moves along in a timely manner.



TASK 2: ESTABLISH A CONSENSUS FOR THE DIRECTION OF THE YOUTH MINISTRY AND CREATE ITS INFRASTRUCTURE BY ACCOMPLISHING THE FOLLOWING TASKS OVER THE NEXT 19 MONTHS:

Count the Sheep

- Develop a roster of every student who is from a church member family or has participated in the youth ministry three or more times this past year
- Include grade, address, email, phone, and parent/guardian information for each one
- Distribute the directory to volunteer leaders, parents, youth, and staff members

Infrastructure Tasks That Build Stability

- Visioning: Discuss how the youth ministry can interweave into the church's Mission Statement, Values, and Core Activity. Develop a set of 3-year Revolving, Measurable Goals, as well as a clear structure for the youth ministry.
- Control Document Development: Develop a Youth Directory, an 18-Month Calendar, volunteer applications process, and Major Event Notebooks.
- 6-Year Intentional Discipleship and Curriculum Plan: Create an integrated template for curriculum, including a design for youth group, Sunday school, and Confirmation.
- Compliance Documents: Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, that an application and screening process for volunteers is in place, and that a sexual abuse/child protection policy is adopted and affirmed by all adults working with youth.
- Facilities: Develop a strategic plan for giving more "ownership" of the church's spaces to the youth and their leaders by making welcoming, warm and inviting places available.
- Attendance: Create a central attendance database and begin entering attendance weekly for any FPC activities that include young people.
- Marketing: Establish normative processes for celebrating the successes of the youth ministry throughout the church and ensuring that participation targets are reached for each program sponsored by the youth ministry.

Developing and Nurturing Staff and Volunteers

- Strategic Staffing: Propose clear, appropriate short and long-term staffing plan 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 present and future youth ministry staff.



- 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.
- Leadership Recruitment: Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of whom will do relational ministry with youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 30 possible volunteers to call on.
- Leadership Launch: Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year (but kicking off the first one in January 2011.)

Developing Clear Strategies and New Initiatives

- Friendship Epidemic: Leveraging the open, friendly environment of the youth group, charge the leadership students to develop a “friendship epidemic.” Train and support them as they create a climate of welcome and friendship for the youth ministry, a climate that is effectively focused beyond comfortable friendship clusters and reaches out to the whole Charlottesville youth community.
- Missions: Continue to leverage the desire of students and parents to make a difference in the world, as well as the proven popularity of special trips. Begin to include the middle school youth on the trip.
- The Blueprint: Create and publicize a deliberate plan that allows youth and parents to understand where students are in their spiritual lives. Determine what programs and ministries will meet their individual needs where they are in today’s culture.
- Play Book: Develop a strategic plan for helping youth move from one step in the process to another. These strategies to weave the youth ministry into the fabric of the entire church could include:
 - Shepherding – adults who take responsibility for engaging 4-8 students.
 - Special events – designed to help youth discover other aspects of the church.
 - Moments of Decision – Intentionally include several moments a year when students are given the opportunity to commit their lives to Jesus or dedicate themselves to deeper levels of discipleship.



PROPOSED TIMELINE AND CONSULTING PROPOSAL

The following timeline provides First Presbyterian Church with a blueprint for the strategic launch of a sustainable, long-term youth ministry. Many churches choose to use the services of Youth Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this process. Following each month's listed outcomes is an estimate of how much time it would require Youth Ministry Architects to join FPC and its youth ministry team to take responsibility for managing the renovation.

November 2010

Outcomes:

- Renovation Team has communicated this process to the entire church through a variety of media and has actively begun to address the pressure points.
- Core prayer warrior team has been recruited by Pastor Kim and has begun praying for the infrastructure work.
- Event coordinators have been recruited for events through May 2011.
- The Renovation Team and youth staff begin receiving twice monthly phone coaching as the groundwork is laid for the implementation of the youth ministry renovation plan.

YMA Option: ½ day (off site)

December 2010

Outcomes:

- Weekly programmatic structure for January through May of 2011 is established by the youth staff and Renovation Team. Structure is ratified by a group of invested students and parents—and has been communicated to all parents and youth through multiple mediums.
- In-depth discussion has begun on restructuring the Middle High Ministry.
- Members of the Renovation Team and staff begin receiving monthly coaching and troubleshooting support.
- YMA Discipleship Path Retreat is calendared for February.

YMA Option: 1 day (off site)

January 2011

Outcomes:

- Volunteer needs have been established, and a master list of adult leaders has been developed, along with job descriptions for their roles.



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- At least 6 more volunteer leaders have been recruited for all weekly programs through May 2011.
- Discussion and information gathering continues on the future revamp of the ministry for 6-8th graders.
- Big Spring event planning begins (such as a retreat, lock-in, etc.), beginning the process of instilling confidence in parents and the youth ministry stakeholders that the youth ministry is headed in the right direction, can be trusted and will help re-build enthusiasm.
- Work on control documents has begun (18 month major event calendar, youth directory and leader directory, volunteer job descriptions).
- Bridges have been built with the First Presbyterian Church Prayer Ministry so they can begin to undergird this renovation process and each of the youth with prayer.
- Attendance database has been created, and leaders have begun taking attendance at every function, including Sunday worship and Sunday school, MS and HS meetings, Confirmation and any special events.
- Coaching with the youth staff and Renovation Team continues.
YMA Option: 1 day (off site)

February 2011

Outcomes:

- Big Spring event has been communicated to all students and parents and planning is almost completed.
- The dates, costs, and fundraisers for all major youth ministry trips and retreats have been established through August 2011.
- Sign up forms for all major 2011 trips (including summer trips) and events have been completed, posted online, and are ready for distribution at Big Spring Event.
- A Discipleship Path/Curriculum Retreat has been completed, and a draft of a curriculum planning template has been completed for all weekly gatherings. A deliberate discipleship plan has been developed that allows youth and parents to understand where students are on their spiritual journeys and determine how the youth ministry programs can help meet their individual needs where they are.
- Monthly coaching with any youth staffing and the Renovation Team continues to while YMA is onsite for the Visioning Retreat. Other necessary document writing and timeline work will happen while YMA is on site

YMA Option: 3 days x 2 consultants (on site) ½ day (off site)



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March 2011

Outcomes:

- A short of list of key practices has been developed that will help the youth ministry develop a new culture of friendship and enthusiasm among youth and positive stories among the parents, volunteers and the congregation.
- Event coordinators have been recruited for events through December 2011.
- Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for May.
- All hands-on volunteers through December 2011 have been recruited.
- Plans are begun and set in place for a Kick-off-the-Summer event that infuses energy and allows students to re-engage in the youth ministry.
- The dates of all major youth ministry trips and retreats have been established through December 2011.
- The Renovation Team continues to attend to the key practices for re-culturing the youth ministry.
- Coaching continues with the youth staff and Renovation Team.
YMA Option: 1 day (off site)

April 2011

Outcomes:

- A programmatic structure for the 2011-2012 school year has been determined
- All support volunteers (cooks, drivers, retreat and trip chaperones, etc.) have been recruited through December 2011
- A fall kick-off planning team has been recruited.
- A list of all volunteer needs for through May 2012 has been completed.
- A Big Spring event has taken place, engaging at least 40 students.
- Monthly coaching continues with the youth staff and Renovation Team while YMA consultants are on site.
YMA Option: 1 day (off site)

May 2011

Outcomes:

- Visioning Documents for the youth ministry (Mission Statement, Values, Goals, and Structure) have been completed at a visioning retreat.
- Curriculum resources have been identified and are in place for 2011-2012 school year.
- All pressure points identified in this assessment have been effectively addressed.



- A youth leader potential list has been developed with at least 4 times as many potential leaders' names as there are slots to be filled.
- A Volunteer Training Event has been calendared for August.
- A game plan is in place for the accomplishment of each one-year benchmark by the end of December 2011.
- Coaching continues with the youth staff and Renovation Team.
YMA Option: 2 consultants x 3 days (on site) ½ day (off site)

June 2011

Outcomes:

- A game plan is in place for “marketing” the youth ministry to parents, youth, the larger community and the entire church, including a coordinated use of web resources, newsletters, emails, calendars, bulletin board, etc.
- Compliance documents are in place (volunteer applications, music and video copyright licensing, etc.).
- Control Documents have been completed (18-month major event calendar—including all 2012 summer trips—a youth directory, and leader directory) ready to be distributed to youth families at the Back-to-School Kick-off.
- A member of the Renovation Team (and/or YMA coaches) has met with each of the youth ministry volunteers to provide coaching, individual support, troubleshooting, and redirection (as necessary).
- The Renovation Team completes a mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and makes corrective action to address those components of the strategic plan that may be floundering.
- Coaching continues with the staff and Renovation Team.
YMA Option: 1/2 day (off site)

July 2011

Outcomes:

- Applications have been received and background checks have been completed on all volunteers working on a weekly basis in the youth ministry.
- A draft of the youth directory has been completed and distributed to youth and their families for corrections.
- Begin exploring physical space issues, from repurposing existing space to reshuffling other groups, to new building possibilities.
- All key youth ministry volunteers for the 2011-2012 school year have been recruited.
- Coaching continues with the youth staff and Renovation Team
YMA Option: 1/2 day (off site)



August 2011

Outcomes:

- Intentional structure for student leadership “contagious friendship culture” training is in place for the “Core Team” of high school students, and monthly coaching for the volunteer adult leaders has begun from the youth director. (*Thriving Youth Groups: Secrets for Growing Your Ministry* by Jeanne Mayo would be a good “cookbook” for this group)
- An engaging fall kickoff event has taken place, with at least 50 youth families participating.
- Before the fall kickoff event, all volunteer leaders have experienced a ½ day inspiring “leadership launch” event that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith, and equips them to serve the youth of the church, leaving them eager and well-equipped to serve in the coming year.
- Strategic plans are in place for reaching the “lost sheep” and “the least of these.”
- The structure of a volunteer database has been created and a potential volunteer survey has been distributed to parents and returned by at least 25 parents at the fall kick-off.
- Monthly coaching continues for the youth staff and Renovation Team.

YMA Option: 1 day (off site)

September 2011

Outcomes:

- Major event notebooks have been drafted for each major event, and each major event coordinator has received coaching and direction about his or her individual project.
- The key volunteers in the new youth ministry structure receive specific coaching to ensure that systems are in place to maximize the investment of each volunteer giving time to the youth ministry.
- Each paid staff member and hands-on adult volunteer has a professional development plan in place for continued education.
- Each paid staff member and hands-on adult volunteer has a mentor and/or prayer partner actively supporting him or her in personal faith development and ministry effectiveness.
- Coaching continues

YMA Option: 2 days x 2 consultants (on site) ½ day (off site)



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October 2011

Outcomes:

- Staff members, volunteers, and student leaders have developed the habit of tending to challenges that arise in ministry in a joyful and solution-focused way.
- The majority of the youth ministry's one year benchmarks have been accomplished
- Student leaders have developed a culture of friendliness that is contagious and attractive, and they have "owned" the process of not only establishing a welcoming "friendship epidemic" in the youth ministry but instructing younger youth on how to replicate it.
- Coaching continues

YMA Option: ½ day (off site)

November 2011

Outcomes:

- Work on control documents continues (18 month major event calendar, youth directory and leader directory, volunteer job descriptions).
- Bridges have been built with FPC Prayer Ministry so they continue to undergird this renovation process and each of the youth with prayer.
- Unexpected challenges in the youth ministry have been addressed with playfulness and proactive creativity.
An alignment check has taken place to ensure that all processes for re-culturing the youth ministry are functioning and that plans are made to re-establish those practices on which things have not been followed through.

Coaching continues

YMA Option: ½ day (off site)

December 2011

Outcomes:

- Enjoy the kids
- Enjoy the adults
- Enjoy the staff
- Enjoy the season
- Enjoy the Christ-child
- Avoid the fruitcake



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January 2012

Outcomes:

- Unexpected challenges in the youth ministry have been addressed with playfulness and proactive creativity.
- An alignment check has taken place to ensure that all processes for re-culturing the youth ministry are functioning and that plans are made to re-establish those practices on which things have not been followed through.
- Nearly all benchmarks have been completed.
- Coaching continues

2 days x 2 consultants (on site) ½ day (off site)

February 2012

Outcomes:

- The youth ministry major event calendar for 2012-2013 has been drafted and presented to the church council and staff.
- The 2013 one-year benchmarks from the 3 year revolving goals have been reviewed and new 2015 goals have been set.
- Monthly coaching continues.

YMA Option: ½ day (off site)

March 2012

Outcomes:

- A draft of the complete youth ministry manual is in place, including the visioning documents, job descriptions, church policies, the youth directory, the youth ministry budget, volunteer applications and processes, and the youth ministry calendar, 6 year scope/sequence and discipleship path.
- Clear participation targets for all youth ministry programs and events for the 2012/2013 school year have been established and reasonable mechanisms are in place for the reaching of those targets.
- Monthly coaching continues.

YMA Option: ½ day (off site)



April 2012

Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team, in conjunction with the supervising pastor and youth staff, completed a one-year progress report on the completion of this timeline.
- The Renovation Team continues to attend to the key practices for re-culturing the youth ministry.
- A game plan has been written for transitioning from the 19-month interim structure for the youth ministry to a structure that can sustain the youth ministry for the long-haul, including parent teams, student leadership teams, and nomination/rotation processes for a Youth Ministry Committee along with a Youth Elder on the Session.
- Structure for the permanent Youth Ministry Committee is in place with a team recruited.
- Monthly coaching continues.

YMA Option: ½ day (offsite)

May 2012 **Focus:** Transition to Permanent Structure and Final Defrag

Outcomes:

- The structure document for the youth ministry has been updated and revised.
- The key players in the new “permanent” youth ministry structure have been oriented to their roles and are enthusiastic about serving as a part of the First Presbyterian Church Youth Ministry Committee.
- Current youth ministry volunteers participate in an “end of the year” event that allows them to celebrate what God has done in the previous year, to affirm each other, and to make recommendations for the coming year.
- Plans are in place for a momentum-building summer kickoff event for the youth ministry that will engage more than 25 of the youth families in the church.
- The work of the Renovation Team has been appropriately celebrated.

2 days x 2 consultants (on site) ½ day (off site)



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

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October 23, 2010

THANK YOU!

Thanks for inviting us to First Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, and for letting us be part of your church community this week. We love to watch God in action. We're excited about what will happen once the children ministry has the firm underpinnings it deserves.

Now that you have clarity and consensus about where the ministry is and where you want it to go, the month by month guide should help you get there. We have created these custom "blueprints" for many other churches around the county to help them plan this important "renovation" year for their youth ministry. Most have found it helps to have a "site supervisor" to support and coach the church's team as they do this important and challenging work.

Youth Ministry Architects would love to provide you with the help you need to make these changes successfully. Based on the timeline suggested in this assessment, we're proposing a 3-person team to support you every step of the way. We would like to help you build the "dance floor" before you hire the next "dancer."

This 33.5-day proposal includes monthly on-going phone and email coaching for the staff and key volunteers. It also includes 5 onsite visits to help you at key moments in the process, including a volunteer training, visioning retreat and a discipleship planning retreat. In addition to coaching and guiding, we do a lot of heavy lifting to make sure you are building a deep-impact youth ministry that will last for years, even through any future changes in personnel and leadership.

The total investment for us to spend 33.5 days overseeing this transition is \$21,200. This cost is spread across 2010-2012 fiscal years.



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2010: 1.5 days offsite, – \$1,200

2011: 7.5 days offsite, 8 days onsite - \$14,000

2012: 2.5 days offsite, 4 days onsite - \$6,000

There is typically an additional \$1,100 (per visit) in travel expenses for a total of \$26,700 over 19 months.

Details of our rates and your YMA team are on the following page.

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The *Youth Ministry Architects* Team serving First Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA



STEPHANIE CARO – Lead Consultant

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- ❖ Stephanie Caro has been involved in ministry to children, youth and adults in the local church since...a long time.
- ❖ Her humorous, straightforward style keeps her busy presenting and coaching at conferences, training events, camps, mission trips, retreats, churches, etc. Her latest book was released in 2010, "Thriving Youth Ministry in Smaller Churches," published by Group/Simply Youth Ministry. She is also a contributing author to several ministry resources in addition to her column "Smaller Church Youth Ministry" in Group Magazine.
- ❖ Check out her blog at smallchurchoyouthministry.com, part of the Simply Youth Ministry blog network. Her other blog is for Group Publishing and is geared for anyone who leads a small group. Find it at www.smallgroupsministry.com.
- ❖ She and her hubby, Steve, live in Houston, TX. All seven kids are grown and out – praise God!

AMY JACOBER– Staff Consultant



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- ❖ Amy Jacober started in youth ministry while still a youth. Over 20 years later, she is still there! Currently she spends much time teaching practical theology and youth ministry at Truett Theological Seminary.
- ❖ Amy holds her PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary as well as MSW, Miv and MACSS (Master's in Church Social Services) She continues to serve at camps, conferences and in missions around the world focusing on youth.
- ❖ Amy shares life with her husband, Cory Peacock.. They have one beautiful daughter and another on the way. You can find them on hikes, playing games, spending time in the kitchen, and occasionally attempting a run, which looks more like a good long talk and a slow jog.



JEFF DUNN-RANKIN– Senior Consultant

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- ❖ Jeff has been Director of Youth at Christ United Methodist Church in Venice, FL since 1998. He had been an active youth volunteer for more than a decade with church and para-church organizations, including Young Life and First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN.
- ❖ Before beginning church ministry, Jeff was managing editor of the *Charlotte Sun*, the country's fastest growing newspaper.
- ❖ Jeff is a graduate of Sewanee: The University of the South and has a Masters in Business Administration from Vanderbilt University.
- ❖ He currently lives in Venice, Fla., with his wife Mary Lou, and two children, Matthew and Katie.



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