



YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time

www.ministryarchitects.com

Central Christian Church Lexington, KY August 30, 2015

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BACKGROUND

Central Christian Church (Central) is located in the heart of downtown Lexington. Built in 1816, Central was the cathedral church for the Disciples of Christ denomination in Lexington for many years and today it continues to serve as a welcoming place for not only members of the congregation but members of the community as well. As a downtown church, Central prides itself on being an outreach focused church and houses and operates many community ministries during the week such as God's Pantry food kitchen, a childcare center, a thrift store, and subsidized housing for veterans. Church members describe their church family as "welcoming" and "inclusive." One staff member describes the congregation as "gracious and good people who want to give of themselves to create vibrant ministries."

In 2013 Central created an overall church Strategic Plan and continues to navigate through the implementation of the recommendations from that report. Over the last couple of years there have been several transitions within the staff and in August 2014 Central called a new senior minister. While "finances seem to be on a lot of people's mind" due to the debt owed from the new building, focus group members talked about a renewed energy, hope and excitement in the air with the arrival of new leadership. As one member stated, "things are just getting started."

The membership of the church is around 704 and on an average week, 350 people attend one of the church's two worship services. Rev. David Shirey, the senior minister, is supported by two full-time associate ministers. Since 2001, Rev. Chad Snellgrove has been serving many roles and most recently he is serving as Minister of Faith Formation overseeing children, youth, and adult ministries. Rev. Elizabeth King has been at Central since 2007 when she first served as a Resident for two years and then in 2011 she returned to Central to serve as Minister of Pastoral Care.

Currently, there are about 35 active 6th through 12th graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 25 of them participate in Sunday school, worship, youth group or TeenSing. For many youth, annual summer mission trips are the highlight of the ministry. During worship youth are seen serving as acolytes, junior deacons, and worship leaders. Some youth and parents describe the youth ministry as having a "strong ministry presence" that "introduces kids to service," while others say it is a "sporadic ministry week to week."

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The church has a 2015 budget of \$1.17 million. For 2015, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$37,000 including both the youth program budget and the youth portion of the salaries and benefits for the Minister of Faith Formation. There are about five adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

Rev. Chad Snellgrove, who has been at the church since 2001, leads the youth ministry. While a specific Youth Ministry Area team has met in past years, a new Faith Formation Ministry Area, including children's, youth and adult education, has been formed for the coming year. The Faith Formation Ministry Area will be led by Diane Ballard and will meet monthly for planning and development.

Prior to 2007, the youth met in a separate, poorly maintained building a block away from the main church campus. A recent renovation has provided a beautiful space, complete with a kitchen, meeting room, and gathering area, for the youth to gather. Perhaps even more important than the new furnishings, is the implicit message that the move brought: the youth are a valued part of the congregation and that there is space for them, literally and figuratively.

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 26 individuals through focus groups, one-on-one meetings, and written communication. 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 partially being paid. While youth are regularly participating in leadership of worship, there is not a clear idea of how many youth to expect at Sunday school or youth group events so a sense of dropping numbers is the prevalent mentality.

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." While there is great enthusiasm about annual mission trips, apathy and a general lack of knowledge about weekly programs in the congregation at large leaves this rent only partially paid.

Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM—The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the staff, volunteers, and the youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents. While there is deep appreciation for the pastoral care for youth, the lack of critical mass and inconsistent direction leave this rent unpaid.

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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:



1. Laying the Foundation: Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the youth ministry’s *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,
2. 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, four rules of thumb – “youth ministry norms” – will be helpful to keep in mind. These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences:

1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 350 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 35 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 25 youth (participating in worship, TeenSing, Sunday school or youth group) is below what could be expected from the ministry.

2) \$1,000 per Youth—With a budget of approximately \$37,000 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Central has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 37 youth in some aspect of the church’s life. With 25 youth currently participating every week, the ministry is funded for continued growth. However, it is important to consider the amount of pastoral, relational and programmatic expectations currently placed on the staff member overseeing youth ministry. As the ministry plans for sustainability, consideration needs to be given to how the areas of responsibility are accounted for.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth—Considering all the ministries the Minister of Faith Formation oversees, Central has the equivalent of one-third of a full time staff person devoted to youth ministry. According to this rule of thumb, Central has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 17 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration seems inadequate to sustain the needs of the ministry. Ordinarily, in over-capacity youth ministries, the youth staff is set up to be unable to fulfill all the expectations placed on them. The natural result is a climate of criticism and burn out.

It should be noted that these hours do not include the leadership of TeenSing, to which an average of five hours a week are volunteered in prep and on the ground.

4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth— Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church’s Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With five weekly volunteers, Central has a ministry capacity for about 25 youth weekly. The current team seems to be the right size for the current ministry, however, if the

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church wants to expand its impact in either breadth or depth, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

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 Central pursues a more sustainable model of youth ministry. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

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

ASSETS

Strengths to protect in the current youth ministry

Dedicated Space: With the recent renovation, Central has done a great job providing updated ministry space for the youth. The dedicated youth area includes several classrooms, a large meeting area, and a kitchenette. “I really like the big room with the windows,” said one youth. The inclusion of the youth area in the new building, instead of a separate building a few blocks away, testifies to a tremendous commitment to the youth ministry on behalf of the church.

Pastoral Care: Over and over, we heard about the depth of pastoral care at Central, particularly from Chad. “Every Sunday when we come to church, my son asks ‘Is Mr. Chad going to be here?’” said one parent. Another said, “Chad is a significant part of my daughter’s support system.” Youth and parents agree that in both day-to-day life and in times of great crisis the ministerial staff at Central Christian can be counted on for love and compassion. Adjectives we consistently heard about the pastoral staff were “outstanding,” “selfless,” and “very supportive.”

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Hope Floats: There is a sense of hopeful anticipation that God is doing something new at Central. One person said, “There is a sense of excitement about a new chapter. “With the arrival of a new senior minister, the attitude of hope is evident among parents, staff, and youth.” Another person said, “If anything happened to this church I would be heartbroken.”

Heart for Missions: Central has a rich history of outreach to the community. The congregation is proud of local efforts such as God’s Pantry, the thrift store, the childcare center, and Room in the Inn that happen in and around the church. In keeping with that ethos, participants in focus groups agreed that mission trips were one of the most successful programs in the youth ministry. “We all learn something and we have a lot of fun,” said one youth. A parent commented, “Our son has social justice awareness and empathy for others because of the youth program.”

Even beyond the annual mission trip, there seems to be a sincere desire for the youth to do outreach projects on a more regular basis. The youth, parents, and leadership all place a high value on missions and service and would like to see even more outreach opportunities in the future.

Desire to Go Deeper: Teens come to youth group for many different reasons, but the youth of Central expressed a deep desire to grow in their faith. From all the youth we heard, “We want to have faith and grow in our faith.” One student said, “I really enjoy the devotionals [on the mission trips]. It helps to have some guidance in my faith.” Another reported, “Our youth group doesn’t need more money or more things, we just need deeper faith and deeper connections with each other.” These are not students who are just looking for more social activities, they are longing for genuine encounters with the living God in the context of trust-full relationships with peers and adults.

Investment in the Ministry: Among those in focus groups, there was an across-the-board consensus that the youth ministry is ready to move to the next level. There is a healthy appreciation of the youth ministry of the past but a clear desire to do more. Participants also appreciate the investment from the staff in the youth ministry reporting that sermons occasionally highlight the importance of all members caring for the children and youth at Central.

Youth in Leadership: There are multiple opportunities for youth to be involved in leadership roles in Sunday morning worship and throughout the life of the church. Children and youth regularly read Scripture and pray on Sunday mornings, acolyte, and serve on the Administrative Board and as Junior Deacons.

TeenSing: The youth choir program, TeenSing, is a powerful aspect of the church’s ministry to its teenagers. Often, the TeenSing program is the setting at which the largest group of youth gathers at one time. One parent said, “I would say that KidsSING and TeenSING are their favorite parts of Central. It is so much more than rehearsing music.” Teens report that they love the amount of input that they are allowed in choosing musical selections.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

Cracks in the Infrastructure: Though Central incorporates tools to help support its youth ministry, there are some important components not being fully maximized or are altogether non-existent. Some of the following components are currently missing or not being best utilized at Central: results-based volunteer job descriptions, standard attendance tracking and recording procedures, major event notebooks, youth ministry directory, and a youth ministry manual.

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Lack of a Critical Mass: The number one thing that attracts kids is other kids. Both the youth and the adults voiced concern over the small number of youth who participate in youth activities. It is clear that the youth who are active have a strong desire to broaden the size of their group and would like to see the high school students remain involved.

Volunteer Recruitment and Development: While there are a few highly committed volunteers in both youth group and TeenSing, many other places of the youth ministry are under-supported by adult volunteers. Simultaneously, there is no clear plan for training and retaining current or future volunteers. This can lead to frustration or burnout among even the most committed volunteers, causing them to suddenly step down from their commitment. In addition, current volunteers do not recall having a working job description to provide clarity of the role or the freedom to experiment wisely, which could not only provide clearly defined expectations, but also create a level of accountability. Many voiced their desire for a process that will recruit potential volunteers, equip leaders, and celebrate the team's successes—elements that are vital in building a healthy team for ministry.

Additionally, we heard a desire to continue to provide opportunities to develop relationships with adults beyond their parents. "My dream is that once our youth graduate, they have relationships with people in our church across the age span."

Wishy-Washy Christian Formation Plan: Though there is evidence of decent curriculum being used and/or developed for the youth ministry, a clear-cut spiritual overview is missing. Without an overarching Christian formation plan for what Central wants their youth to know, feel, and do upon graduating from the ministry, they run the great risk of a hit or miss approach rather than giving their youth all that God intends for them to have. Without a clearly expressed, well-known set of spiritual developmental milestones/rites of passage and an understanding of when youth will reach those markers, the possibility strongly exists that the students could miss the significant key points within their Christian education. One listening group member commented, "Whenever a biblical theme or story comes up, it seems like the youth don't know it." Another parent said, "I feel that there needs to be a little more emphasis on how the Bible relates to Christian living."

Another risk of working without a scope and sequence is that the staff or key volunteers may be left with the responsibility of choosing their own version of what *they* think the youth should know. While this works sometimes, often it leads to fuzzy spiritual planning. At worst, it can lead youth down a spiritual path the church was not prepared for its students to go. It will also often lead parents and other adults who care about youth to criticize what they feel may be missing.

Fuzzy Vision: Overall, listening group participants were unable to articulate a common vision for the youth ministry. There are also no measurable markers of effectiveness to determine how well the ministry is meeting the needs of those it serves. Without specific goals in mind, the definition of success is wildly different from household to household. As one parent stated, "If I had to use one word to describe the youth ministry, I would say sporadic."

Communication Breakdown: Though most parents reported that Central does a good job of communicating the whens and wheres of youth programming, some parents shared their desire to know more of what's going on. For instance, one mom shared, "I just wish there was a way we knew how we could help reinforce the lessons our youth are getting in youth group and Sunday school at home."

Sunday Morning: There seems to be a tension between students' desire for Sunday morning learning opportunities, lack of Sunday morning teaching volunteers and the trouble in being motivated to roll out of bed early for Sunday school. Every one wants a great Sunday morning opportunity but there is a lack of clarity and

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consensus for what that should or could look like for Central's youth ministry. Comments from focus group members included:

- *Attendance at Sunday school is worse than youth group.*
- *Finding and keeping teachers for Sunday school has been a real challenge.*
- *They redid the kids program and focused so much on that and then kinda of forget about us (youth)*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 17 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target January 2017 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the youth ministry knowing that incremental successes will be seen throughout the renovation.
- 2) Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
- 3) Present this report to the Administrative Board requesting that they endorse an 17-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
- 4) Out of the Faith Formation Team, establish a Renovation Task Force of at least three to five members who report regularly to the Minister of Faith Formation. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the task force members focus on the recommendations below. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
 - I. Work with the youth ministry leadership to **address the immediate pressure points** facing the ministry as they transition toward sustainability.
 - II. Establish a consensus for the direction of the ministry and take responsibility for **implementing the strategic, long-term changes** recommended in this report.
- 5) Engage the services of Ministry Architects to take responsibility for:
 - Working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline,
 - Assisting the youth ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the youth ministry.

RENOVATION TEAM TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points

(Accomplish these urgent tasks first to create a healthy climate conducive to change.)

Pressure Point #1: Build and Support the Team – Recruit enough volunteers to ensure that all bases are covered for the next two months.

- Make a list of immediate volunteer positions that need to be filled including major event coordinators for upcoming special events.
- Using the church photo directory create a list of at least 35 potential volunteers.
- Divide up this list of potential volunteers and begin calling them personally.
- Go back to step one until all positions have been filled.

Pressure Point #2: Evaluate Staffing Structure – Determine a sustainable staffing model to support the youth ministry with consideration being given to the importance of both relational and administrative support.

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Pressure Point #3: Sunday Morning Overhaul- The reality is Sunday school programs across the country are declining. Thinking creatively about ways to engage middle and high school students during the Sunday morning hour will be critical in retaining and regaining youth who are currently not participating. Even if it means outside the box thinking, like the 3rd- 5th grade mission ideas, the youth ministry will also need to establish a new norm for what Sunday school looks like at Central.

Pressure Point #4: Attendance Tracking- In order to best care for all of the youth at Central, it is vital to know who is a part of the flock. A thorough examination of the church rolls needs to be accomplished, age groupings be identified clearly, and all youth should receive a direct contact from the church as soon as possible.

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

RENOVATION TEAM TASK #2: *Establishing a consensus for the direction of the youth ministry and the creation of its infrastructure, including the completion of the following tasks:*

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND STABILITY

- **Host a “Quick Start” Retreat:** Invite the Renovation Task Force, key volunteers, and staff to participate in a Quick Start Retreat in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The retreat tackles the items that need to be done first, and builds momentum for the youth ministry renovation process.
 - Meet with staff to review the report and identify current status of challenges and recommendations to create next steps for the Renovation Task Force.
 - Renovation Task Force meet to orient themselves to the job ahead.
 - Renovation Task Force take the next steps from the staff and assign who will supervise over what recommendations/pressure steps.
 - Calendar dates involving Renovation Task Force are scheduled.
 - A plan for concrete communication between the Renovation Task Force and staff are determined so that all parties feel they’re “in the know.”
 - The following documents are developed during the Quick Start Retreat, and within two weeks after the Quick Start Retreat, they are finalized:
 - There is a finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events from September 2015 through August 2016.
 - There are 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.

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- There is a clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
- There is a broad “fishing pond” list of at least 35 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 August 2016 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 children and youth ministries with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
 - A children/youth ministry mission statement
 - A statement of values
 - A set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks
 - An organizational structure for the children and youth ministries
- **Christian Formation:** Gather a team for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
 - 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 and youth ministry.
 - Assess the need for youth group to use an integrated curriculum plan that is coordinated with the Sunday school classes that follow.
 - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
 - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish a 12-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission trip”).
- **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 the 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.
- **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.
- **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, youth, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the youth page of the church’s website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
- **Youth Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, a 12-month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents,

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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 children and youth ministries in the fall of 2016. 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 youth ministry staff members as well as the Renovation Task Force.

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **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.
- **Leadership Development:** Review and revise the results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry annually 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 complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 35 possible volunteers to call on for volunteer positions.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to integrate the youth into the outreach that is already happening out the door at Central. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies particularly those run by Central. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the youth to missions throughout the year.
- **Climate Control:** In an effort to 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).
- **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.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- **Dividing One Youth Group to Two Youth Groups:** Consider the possibility of splitting the youth group into middle school and high school groups starting in September 2016. If a decision is made to split, recruit at least two volunteers for each age group.
- **Family Ministry:** Plan one or two family events throughout the year focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.

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- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** In addition to the rite of passage for graduating seniors, develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
 - Welcome and connect the new 6th graders and their parents into the youth ministry
 - Welcome and connect the new 9th graders and their parents into the high school ministry

PROPOSED TIMELINE AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

PROPOSED TIMELINE - SEPTEMBER

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

Many churches choose to use the services of Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this infrastructure-building process. If the church would like Ministry Architects to provide more specialized consulting in certain areas, particularly for the 17-month transition, we are available to help.

September 2015

Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Administrative Board for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the Administrative Board has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Retreat has been scheduled for October.
- The Renovation Task Force for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Retreat.
- Brainstorming begins for a new Sunday morning Sunday school option for youth.
- 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.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The Child Protection Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- The 2015-2016 youth ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates are on the church's calendar.
- A Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for November/December and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families.
- Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.

Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite

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October 2015

Focus: Volunteers, Quick Start Retreat, Curriculum, Budget, Staffing Structure, Database

Outcomes:

- A fishing pond of 35 potential volunteers in the youth ministry has been created.
- Work on the youth ministry database and attendance tracking has begun for all youth ministry events.
- The leadership has begun the conversation as to how to address the need for a more sustainable staffing structure for the youth ministry.
- A Quick Start Retreat has taken place in which the renovation process was launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed. The retreat tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the youth ministry renovation process:
 - Meet with staff to review the report and identify current status of challenges and recommendations to create next steps for the Renovation Task Force.
 - Renovation Task Force meets to orient themselves to the job ahead.
 - Renovation Task Force takes the next steps from the staff and assign who will supervise over what recommendations/pressure steps.
 - Calendar dates involving the Renovation Task Force are scheduled.
 - A plan for concrete communication between the Renovation Task Force and staff are determined so that all parties feel they're "in the know."
- The following documents are developed during the Quick Start Retreat, and within two weeks after the Quick Start Retreat, they are finalized:
 - There is a finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events from September 2015 through August 2016.
 - There are 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.
 - There is a clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
 - There is a broad "fishing pond" list of at least 35 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 August 2016 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- Promotion of the Visioning Retreat has begun.
- New ideas are introduced into the Sunday morning Sunday school hour.

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- All volunteer needs for the 2015-2016 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the current school year and distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they are trained to implement the curriculum.
- A detailed 2016 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.

Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1 day offsite

November 2015

Focus: Communications, Compliance, Attendance Tracking

Outcomes:

- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented for the youth ministry.
- All programs have adhered to the Child Protection policy as laid out by the church, including a volunteer application and background checks for all weekly, hands-on volunteers.
- Copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained. Permission slips for each offsite event in addition to standard medical release forms for the entire year have been created.
- Work continues on a new Sunday morning model.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth ministry programs has been created and implemented.
 - Update the church roster to accurately reflect the current families with youth, including grade level and all pertinent contact information.
 - Identify each youth as Active Member, Inactive Member, Active Guest, or Inactive Guest.
 - Create an attendance tracking document/process so as to identify more clearly the actual persons attending each aspect of the ministry.
 - A personal phone call is made to every youth in the newly created directory with an invitation to the next program or event.

Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite

December 2015

Focus: Pressure Points, Calendar, Participation Goals, Visioning

Outcomes:

- A Visioning Retreat with all major stakeholders has occurred producing visioning documents for the children and youth ministries (mission statement, core values, goals and structure).
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- A new model for Sunday morning Sunday school is ready to soft launch in January 2016.
- A sustainable staffing structure has been determined for the youth ministry.

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January 2016

Focus: Calendar, Communication, Volunteer Training

Outcomes:

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2016.
- The Renovation Task Force has met at least monthly and decided how often they will continue to meet for the remainder of the renovation period.
- Communication methods used for promoting upcoming youth ministry events and sharing the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers received support and training in their specific roles. An individual “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- Work has begun on the 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar. A Christian Formation Retreat has been scheduled and promoted for March 2016. The retreat will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.

Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite

February 2016

Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteer Recruitment, Splitting

Outcomes:

- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
 - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
 - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
 - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2016-2017 school year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
 - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2016-2017.
- Summer volunteer needs have been determined and a list of potential volunteers has been drafted.
- The Renovation Task Force has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments necessary to improve the work being done.
- The summer 2016 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.

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- A small team has begun to study the opportunities and challenges of splitting the youth group into middle school and high school groups starting in September 2016. Once a decision is made, the team develops a timeline for implementing any changes.
- Promotion for the Christian Formation Retreat continues.

Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite

March 2016

Focus: Christian Formation Retreat, Major Event Notebooks

Outcomes

- Interested staff, volunteers, and parents have gathered for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum. At the retreat, the team
 - Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
 - Developed a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for children and youth ministries.
 - Assessed the need for Sunday morning programming to use an integrated curriculum plan that is coordinated with the Sunday school classes that follow.
 - Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
 - Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each youth event.

Ministry Architects Option: 3 days onsite, 1/2 day offsite,

April 2016

Focus: Marketing, Calendar, Recruitment

Outcomes:

- The 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar has been completed through May 2017 including a Fall Kick-off.
- One or two family events have been calendared for the upcoming year. They have been focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.
- Building on the desire of youth and parents to make a difference in the world and their community, a clear, well publicized calendar has been created for involvement in local agencies, particularly those run by Central.
- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established and implemented that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.
- Volunteer recruitment for 2016-2017 has continued until all positions are filled.
- Summer volunteer recruitment has continued until all positions are filled.

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May 2016

Focus: MIA, Volunteers

Outcomes:

- A volunteer thank you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all youth volunteers.
- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- Volunteer recruitment for 2016-2017 has continued until all positions are filled.
- All summer volunteer positions have been filled.

Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite

June 2016

Focus: Database, Volunteers, Major Event Notebooks

Outcomes:

- A collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth ministry has been updated with that new information.
- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- All volunteer needs for the 2016-2017 school year for youth ministry have been filled.
- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the youth staff to pass along to the next year's coordinator.

Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1 day offsite

July 2016

Focus: Fall Kick-off, Benchmarks, Youth Ministry Manual, Climate Control,

Outcomes:

- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited to begin planning for the start of the fall youth ministry programs.
- In an effort to harness the desire of the youth to have a friendly and welcoming environment, the staff has recruited and begun training a team of youth who are committed to creating a climate of welcome and friendship in the ministry (Thriving Youth Groups by Jeanne Mayo would be a good "cookbook" for the group).
- The Youth Ministry Manuals (both hard copy and digital) have been completed, including
 - Visioning documents
 - Directories
 - Volunteer directory
 - Volunteer training agendas and notes

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

Ministry Architects Option: 1/2 day offsite

August 2016

Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Directory, Leadership Launch, Curriculum, Missions and Outreach

Outcomes:

- Major event notebooks for each major event for the youth ministry have been handed out to this year's event coordinators.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The Child Protection Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- With the most recent information on youth and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers has been created to be distributed at the Fall Kick-off.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

September 2016

Focus: Compliance, Fall Kick-off, First-Timers

Outcomes:

- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- All youth programs have adhered to the Child Protection policy.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed children, youth and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants feel energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.
- A game plan has been written and implemented for welcoming new families, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.

Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1/2 day offsite

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October 2016

Focus: Reflection and Re-Assessment, Budget

Outcomes:

- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth ministry.
- Current pressure points have been named.
- A detailed 2017 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

November 2016

Focus: Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Contact Plan, Rites of Passage

Outcomes:

- A process has been implemented to ensure that each youth or youth parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month.
- A game plan has been established for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges that have:
 - Welcomed and connected the new 6th graders and their parents into the youth ministry
 - Welcomed and connected the new 9th graders and their parents into the high school ministry
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

December 2016

Focus: Strategic Staffing, Summer Calendar, Benchmarks, Volunteer Training, Summer Calendar

Outcomes:

- With the changes in the youth ministry, the volunteer staffing to meet the size and scope of the youth ministry has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- Work has begun on the 2017 summer calendar.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers received support and training in their specific roles. A “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- The summer 2017 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

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January 2017

Focus: Sustainability, Volunteer Recruitment, Calendar

Outcomes:

- A timeline for the next 12 months has been created that included game plans for the current pressure points and items from the online diagnostic.
- Game plans have been put in place to sustain the processes and procedures during the renovation.
- Ongoing coaching has been secured and a sustainability plan has been put in place.
- The staff and Renovation Task Force have celebrated what God has done with their 17-month investment.
- The Renovation Task Force has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the youth volunteers and focusing on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- Work has begun on the 2017-2018 youth ministry calendar.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
 - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
 - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
 - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2017-2018 school year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
 - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.

Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1/2 day offsite

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