



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time

www.ministryarchitects.com

St. Mark's Episcopal Church of San Antonio, TX

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By Stephen Ingram, Lead Consultant and Kathy McCarron, Staff Consultant

Stephen@ministryarchitects.com

Kathy@ministryarchitects.com

BACKGROUND

St. Mark's Episcopal Church is a historic church located in downtown San Antonio, Texas. Established in 1858 in frontier San Antonio, St. Mark's has a rich history of proclaiming the gospel and serving the community as the city developed around it. Generations of families have been and continue to be a part of the life of the church and current members include descendants of founding members. Church members describe their church family as "welcoming," "loving," as well as a "diverse special community." As one participant shared, "It's home to me."

St. Mark's has endured the challenges of being an old church in a downtown area. Major renovations have kept the facilities updated while keeping the beautiful historic feel to the building. The downtown area around it is growing and developing, including the revitalization of Travis Park across the street from the church. Changes have occurred within the church with transition in staff including a new rector in 2014. The vision for St. Mark's and the church's mission and work is illustrated in The Core Vocation:

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Feeding San Antonio with the Bread of Life

- Feeding the hungry with actual food
- Feeding those hungry for knowledge and meaning
- Feeding those hungry for beauty and creativity

The membership of the church is around 1525 and on an average week, 460 people attend one of the church's six worship services. The Rev. Beth Knowlton is rector and has been at St. Mark's since August of 2014. She's described as "wonderful," "smart," and "accessible." Participants appreciate that she "listens and acts" and that she acknowledges the importance of children. The Rev. Carol Morehead joined St. Mark's in 2013 and serves as associate rector.

Children's ministry includes formation on Sunday morning as well as Children's Chapel. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Godly Play, and 212 Ministry make up the classes for 3 year olds through 5th grade. Special events such as VBS, Wonderful Wednesdays, the Christmas Pageant, and the Easter Egg Hunt are also included in the programming for children. A Parents Day Out is offered during the week for young children. In addition, nursery care is also offered during the week to support worship and programming.

Currently, there are about 229 children, 0 – 5th grade on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 20 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship or one of the children's programs. The children's ministry is described by some children and parents as a "wonderful" and "loving" place, while others say it is a "disconnected" ministry and that their children will not participate.

The church has a 2015 budget of \$2,590,744. For the year 2015, the children's ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$93,528, including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of interim children's ministry director, children's ministry assistant, and children's choir director.

Amanda Quisenberry, as the interim children's ministry director, has led the ministry since August 2015. There is also a newly formed children's committee that is formulating their structure and purpose. There are about 15-20 adult volunteers involved on a rotating basis on Sunday mornings. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The children's facilities are updated and well equipped. The walls are beautifully painted and the rooms are supplied as needed for all ages and programming. The formation rooms include the resources for Catechesis and Godly Play while a room for the Children's Chapel is also set aside and ready for Sunday.

St. Mark's has seen transition in their children's ministry staff and as a result transition in the programming. Concerns about low numbers, staff issues, and inconsistency in programming were expressed as well as the need to address the response of the ministry to the changing community around the church.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 58 individuals in 16 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What

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follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding children's ministry is the idea of the "three rents." Children's ministries that "pay these rents" tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. Those children's 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 children, parents, staff, and the congregation at large.

Rent #1: NUMBERS—A significant percentage of children 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 children's 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 not being paid. Time and again participants discussed numbers and shared concern around class sizes being so small..

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

This rent appears to be paid in part; the balance due is pretty steep. While there are wonderful events that are well loved such as the Easter Egg Hunt and the Christmas Pageant. Sunday morning programming was described as inconsistent and at times boring. While some parents said their children loved to come, most expressed the challenge of bringing their children to Sunday morning programs.

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

The transition in staff and the lack of effective communication, suggests that this rent is not being paid on time. Parents expressed confusion about the ministry and of folks who are going to other churches. There appears to be a lack of "exciting chatter" about children's ministry.

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

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:

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

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

1) 15% of the Worshipping Congregation—In a typical church, the size of the children's ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 15% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 460 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 69 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 20 children is *far below what could be expected from the ministry*

2) \$1,000 per Child—With a budget of approximately \$93,528 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits but not paid baby-sitters or nursery workers) dedicated to the children's ministry, St. Mark's Episcopal Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 93 children in some aspect of the church's life. With 20 currently participating every week, the ministry is *well-funded for significant growth*.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 75 Children—Considering all the positions giving time to the children's ministry, including interim children's ministry director and children's ministry assistant, St. Mark's church has the equivalent of 70% of a full time staff person (not including paid baby-sitters or nursery workers). According to this rule of thumb, St. Mark's Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 55 children on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration *also allows room for serious numerical growth*.

4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Children—Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than about five children on an ongoing basis. While there are 15 weekly volunteers rotating throughout the program, 9 are needed to implement Sunday morning. St. Mark's Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 2 children, giving the ministry a capacity for 45 children weekly. *The ministry is well supported by volunteers and poised for substantial growth in the future*.

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BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a single staff person, instability is a predictable result. Ministry Architects has found that the most stable approach to staffing a ministry, particularly in the early stages of a rebuild, is to build a staff of three *different* kinds of people:

- **The Architect:** A person or organization that designs the building plan and ensures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.
- **The General Contractor:** A person or team who manages the flow and sequencing of work, manages the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of “laborers” is in place for each stage of the project.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. In children’s ministry, a laborer might have particular skills in relating to children, in planning and managing events, or in teaching.

Each of these roles is important as the St. Mark’s church pursues a more sustainable model of children’s 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 children’s ministry

Easter Egg Hunt

“Our annual Easter egg hunt is the highlight of the year for our family” and “The best thing we do all year for our kids is the Easter egg hunt were common sentiments from each of the listening groups. Parents and kids alike love the annual Easter egg hunt and the festivities that surround it. One mom said “We do it right, there is a whole, almost, carnival that surrounds the hunt, it is great.” It was obvious that events like these not only provided excellent community for the kids but for the parents as well.

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Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is another standard-bearer for the children's ministry at St. Mark's. "My child loves being a part of our Vacation Bible School" said one mom. Another told us "I am so glad that we brought it back to St. Mark's, we had so many kids this year because of it!" Other families told us how the VBS program was a real draw for families from the neighborhoods around the city. It was also a strong opportunity for many volunteers to plug into the children's ministry and serve their church as an on ramp ministry.

Godly Play

St. Mark's church has made a major investment in their Godly Play resources and curriculum, and most parents could not be happier with it. "I love how hands on it is for my kids, they are able to interact with the parts and feel connected to the story." Another parent told us that "my child actually remember what they talked about, which is good because most of the time it aligns with what we heard in church that day." While there were some who made the case for some additional activity time in the session, it was never said in a disparaging way towards the Godly Play program. One volunteer even said "I have learned more through teaching Godly play than I ever could have imagined."

Location

The location of St. Mark's was a mixed bag for many of the participants. While some noted that being a downtown church brought with it some travel limitations and less of a neighborhood feel, most noted it provided a chance for them to be in "relationship with people they otherwise would never know." The church draws from around 8 different school systems, which provides for a large footprint in the greater San Antonio area. Another participant also noted that with the area around the church beginning to be revitalized it provided more and more opportunities for growth and outreach.

Longtime Volunteers

There is a committed core of long time volunteers in St. Mark's children's ministry who have been responsible for the care of the children of St. Mark's for a long tenure. These committed volunteers have been champions of the Godly Play program as well as making sure that each child is cared for and loved. Many parents noted how grateful they were for these long time volunteers and their service and dedication. Others also said that it is long past time for more of their younger generation of parents to step in and begin to take responsibilities alongside these older volunteers.

Facility

In 2008 St. Mark's underwent a major renovation to its parish house making major updates to offices and classroom space. These renovations have made St. Mark's, a historic traditional downtown church into a beautifully modern space that is bright, airy and beautifully kept. The beautiful facility causes St. Mark's to be both attractational and functional for families with younger children.

Music/Choir

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Every single listening group could not stop bragging about the incredible world-class music program at St. Mark's. Many participants noted, "the music program is why most of our children stay engaged in the life of the church." The program boasts 4 different choirs that the children of the parish can participate in primarily based on age. These choirs take their role very seriously and have incredible accomplishments because of their dedication and hard work. One parent said, "our choirs are simply the best, there is nothing that competes with them." Parents and staff alike also sang high praises for the current choir master, to whom much credit is given for these exceptional groups.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the children's ministry strategically forward

No Place to Play

"We are land and space locked at St. Mark's" was a common refrain for many parents who desired some green space and play space for their children. Another told us "while the renovations were wonderful they left out creating a place for our children to play and run." Another parent said that they love the contemplative and serious nature of much of the children's programming but it had to be balanced with places to play and have fun. In order to develop a greater sense of community in and among the children most agreed that something would have to be done to create intentional areas for children to be able to run free and "just be kids."

PDO Purpose

There was much question and confusion as to the purpose of the Parents Day Out. While the PDO is by far the cheapest childcare option in town, it has struggled to attract the participation of a sufficient number of families. In its current form it also does not seem to be playing a role of moving young families into the weekly life of the parish either. When asked many said, "I am not even sure why we have continued this program." The lack of purpose for the program coupled with a significant annual shortfall has put it on the chopping block for many members and those in lay leadership in the church. However, no formal move toward dissolving the ministry has been instituted. The lack of clear next steps has generated concern, confusion, and complaints through the church.

Nursery

From the first listening group to the last, the nursery continued to be a point of serious discussion among the parishioners of St. Mark's. Many long time members harkened back to the days of the abuelas who took care of their children. Since then there has been a very different narrative surrounding the nursery. Most of the participants described nursery workers who "were more concerned with sitting and talking to each other than interacting with the children." Others recounted a now famous event where children were shown a movie for the entire time they were in the nursery. Parents described their desire for "there to be substantive time spent with the children in meaningful play and formation." Some parents even said "I just take my child with me into church now, it makes me not even want to use the nursery anymore." There was a general consensus that the parents were not happy with the nursery and its current

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operation and believe that it could keep others from wanting to become a part of the life of the parish.

Curriculum

While Godly Play is seen as a definite asset there is a definite need for a larger understanding of the scope, sequence and overarching plan for Christian formation in the children's ministry of St. Mark's. Parents spoke of the need to have a more defined plan for Sunday school as well as providing other opportunities for their children. There has also, recently, been some confusion and movement around the older children and which curriculum fits best for them. Many parents talked about the 212 curriculum, but it was determined to not be a good fit while others have varied opinions about the current Whirl approach. For most there was not a clear understanding of the overarching plan in place for the children of the parish in regards to their spiritual formation and development.

Intentional Milestones

Milestones that mark the faith and development progression of children and youth are vitally important to their spiritual growth. This fact is not lost on the parishioners of St. Mark's. On their own without prompting from staff or clergy many parishioners have begun asking for programs that will mark the faith journey of their children. Several opportunities were suggested through the listening sessions including baptism classes for the parents, first communion and worship readiness.

Control Documents

When asked about the process for becoming a volunteer, Safe Guarding Gods Children Policy, background checks, attendance tracking, and a host of other standard documents and procedures the answers were inconsistent at best. While some volunteers had current standings in something they were behind or had never taken others. Without proper documentation, procedures and policies that are being followed the church sets itself, its volunteers and children up in a high liability situation. Database updating is crucial as well to assure the church is aware of the children and their families' current involvement.

Volunteer Equipping and Training

As with the control documents, questions around the volunteer training and equipping had varied answers. While the level of training and equipping differed from person to person the desire for standard procedures in these areas was overwhelming. "I would be a lot more likely to be a repeat volunteer if I felt like I knew better what was being asked of me," said one volunteer. Another noted that many were afraid to be a volunteer because they had heard that "volunteers were set adrift to do what they wanted to in many areas of the children's ministry." It was clear that the desire and need to a structure of volunteer training and resourcing was a great need at St. Mark's.

Lack of Critical Mass

St. Marks children's ministry is teetering on that dangerous precipice of not having a enough children at a time to fill class rooms and create a sense of community in the

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children's ministry. It was clear to the listening groups that unless this changes and a strong sense of momentum and vibrancy are present in the ministry then it will be very difficult to bring in new families to the life of the parish. One parent lamented "It is so sad to see so many empty and half empty areas in the children's facility." Another told us "my child doesn't like to go anymore because you never know if there will be enough people their age to have a class." We also know that when this happens teachers are forced to combine classes therefore creating an environment where it is much more difficult for children to be ministered to on their level.

Strategic Plan

The children's ministry lacks a strategic plan and vision for its ministry. The ministry's vision has been reliant primarily on the children's minister. There has been little to no long term strategic planning or consensus towards a common agreed upon plan. This is much of the reason why the children's ministry has floundered in recent years. Unless a plan is developed and agreed upon by the whole parish, the ministry will continue to flounder and lack a representational buy-in among the whole church. This not only produces less than enthusiastic volunteers and parents but also puts the ministry on a roller coaster every time it has to make a new hire in its children's ministry leadership.

Need for Diverse Programming

"We do a lot of good programs but they all seem to be really serious, I wish we had more time for the kids to just be kids" and "I think we need to have more time for our kids to socialize, with them coming from different neighborhoods and schools they need more time to get to know each other" were very representational statements made throughout the listening groups. While Children's Chapel offers another opportunity on Sundays, it is also more quiet and reflective as the formation classes are. Not only did the parents want varied programs for their children they also wanted more parent ministry and social opportunities for themselves. The parents seemed to sense a real need for unity and community to be the basis of any movement going forward in the children's ministry. Parents also talked about their desire to be poured into more and to be brought together to learn and do life together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the children's ministry. Target March 2017 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the children's 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 vestry, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the children's ministry.
- 4) Establish a Children's Ministry Renovation Team, made up of four to five volunteers who report regularly to the rector. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation Team

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focuses on the recommendations below. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:

- I. Work with the children's 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 children's ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the children's ministry.
 - Assisting the Renovation Team and Personnel Committee with the search process to fill the children's director position.

RENOVATION TEAM TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points

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

Pressure Point #1: Diversify and Develop Programming – Review all programming for children's ministry and assure a balance of age appropriate activities and engagement for learning and growth.

- Recruit a task force of 3-5 people to review Sunday morning programming.
- Review the curriculum and discern where hands on and active learning is taking place.
- Create and implement opportunities of age appropriate activities within the schedule that support the curriculum while providing times of engaging and fun activity to balance the morning for children.

Pressure Point #2: Create Compelling and Excellent Opportunities for Families to Build Community – Schedule 2 special events/programs for the spring that are engagement opportunities for families. Plan them strategically to maximize the opportunity for families to connect with one another in meaningful ways and for parents to understand the church pouring into them.

- Plan one of the opportunities to be a short-term (3 or 4 weeks) program, Family Fun With Faith, designed to engage and equip families with resources for faith formation in the home.
- Plan the other opportunity as a connection event or experience to affirm the hope and desire that families of St. Mark's do life together.

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Pressure Point #3: Nursery Game Plan – Review and address the procedures in the Nursery in order to create a welcoming and professional atmosphere for parents and their youngest.

- Review job descriptions for the nursery staff and provide training that will help the church exceed expectations.
- Determine core concepts that will define the faith formation plan for the littlest ones. For instance: God made me. God loves me. God’s Word is true. Train staff on ways to share/teach core concepts through song, story and activity
- Provide the staff with schedules and age appropriate actives
- Consider procedures and policies to create the experience of a warm yet professional environment.

Pressure Point #4: Control Documents – Assure that background screenings have been done on all volunteers through the Diocesan office as indicated by the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.

Pressure Point #5: PDO Break and Review – Registration for the spring PDO semester is postponed while the leadership reviews the vision of PDO and assures any future potential weekday programming is appropriately created and compliant.

- Parents in the PDO program are notified immediately of the decision to postpone spring registration.
- A task force is created to study the usage of the nursery rooms during the week and the potential benefits of a week day nursery to the work and mission of St. Mark’s Church. Helpful questions to ask during the study should also include:
 - Who does this program exist to serve?
 - Why has this program not attracted larger participation?
 - What is the cost of greater participation? (Will it require a marketing overhaul, additional days and staff, renovation of space, etc)
 - What is the cost of cutting the program?

RENOVATION TEAM TASK #2: *Establishing a consensus for the direction of the children’s 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 Team, key volunteers, and children’s 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 children's ministry renovation process.

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- Meet with staff to review the report and identify current status of challenges and recommendations to create next steps for the Renovation Team.
- Renovation Team would become oriented to the job ahead.
- Renovation Team would take the next steps from the staff and begin to assign who will supervise over what recommendations/pressure steps.
- Calendar dates involving Renovation Team would be scheduled.
- A plan for concrete communication between the Renovation Team and staff would be 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 through August 2016.
 - There are results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the children's 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 children's ministry, including teachers and Sunday morning volunteers, behind-the-scenes, and special event leaders.
 - There is a broad "fishing pond" list of at least 40 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
 - Reasonable participation goals have been established for all children's 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's ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
 - **A Ministry Mission Statement** that will drive the program and hold the calendar accountable.
 - **A Statement of Values** that will name the spirit in which St. Mark's is committed to approaching ministry to youth and families.
 - **A Set of Three-Year Revolving Goals** that will rally the team and harness the heart for new initiatives with clear strategic game plans.

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- **An Organizational Structure for the Ministry** that will provide clarity for staff, volunteers, parents and laity.
- **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’s ministry programming.
 - Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
 - Assess the need for Children’s Chapel to use an integrated curriculum plan that coordinates with worship and supports the Sunday formation 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 an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s Vacation Bible School”).
- **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 children affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all children’s activities.
- **Marketing:** Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, children, leaders, and the broader church to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children’s ministry.
- **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, children, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the children’s page of the church’s website, Social media, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
- **Children’s Ministry Manual:** Develop a Children’s Ministry Manual, including the most recent children’s directory, a 12-18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major children’s ministry event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the children’s ministry in the fall of

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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 children’s ministry and provide ongoing coaching for the children’s ministry staff members as well as the Renovation Teams.

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **Strategic Staffing:** Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan, including the professional and volunteer components, for the children’s ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of children.
- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the children’s ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the children’s ministry and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with children while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 30 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer children’s workers at the beginning of each school year.

DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Personal Connection Plan:** Develop a system for ensuring that every family in the current children’s directory is contacted personally at least once a year in order to make a connection, express support, and clarify if there are any parents requesting that their sons and/or daughters be removed from the church’s directory.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that include some or all of the following:
 - **First Steps Milestone**

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Purpose: introduces the congregation to a few of the youngest members and makes both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminds both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.

- **Anniversary of Baptism**

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

- **Prayer Milestone**

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

- **Bibles to 8 year olds**

Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.

- **Acolyte Invitation to 6th graders**

Purpose: To recognize leadership abilities of young youth in worship.

- **6th graders moving into the middle school ministry**

Purpose: To welcome the rising 6th graders into the middle school ministry.

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