



YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time

www.ministryarchitects.com

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

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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 being the historic downtown parish reaching out to serve the community as the city developed around it. St. Mark's is very much a generational church. Current members include descendants of founding members. Church members describe their church family as "warm," "inviting," as well as one student commenting, "St. Mark's is a place that is safe for 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 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

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with transition in staff including a new rector in 2014.

The membership of the church is around 1337 and on an average week, 405 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, youth and families; making them a priority as the church moves forward. This has been most recently evident in the financial campaign for and subsequent hiring of The Rev. Matthew Wise as the Associate Rector for Outreach, Family Ministry, and Parish Life. The clergy staff also includes Rev. Carol Morehead joined St. Mark's in 2013 and serves as associate rector.

Currently, there are about 110 6th through 12th graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 25 of them participate in either Sunday school, confirmation, worship or Wednesday night. Each year the youth ministry participates in several retreats and lock in's including a Summer Mission Weekend and Christmas to the Street. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as a "warm" and "accepting" place, while others say it is a "chaotic" and "unintentional" ministry "that lacks focus."

The church has a 2016 budget of \$2,709,938. For the year 2016, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$88,596 including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of a part time director, part time assistant director and an intern.

There are about 3 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.

The ministry is led by a part time director of youth ministry who has been at the church since 2008. While there is a part time assistant position it has been vacant since December and the intern role has just recently been filled.

St. Mark's youth meet in a clean, well-equipped large room. The couches, smaller seating areas and massive flat screen give it a relaxed living room type of feel. It is a versatile and spacious room this is designed to serve multiple purposes. Attached to the room is a smaller breakout room that also serves as the director of youth ministries office.

Ministry Architects was invited in by the rector as a part of a larger vision and initiative to strengthen both the children's and youth ministries in the church. Ministry Architects began this process by doing a 3-day assessment in October of 2015 with the children's ministry and providing them a blueprint with how to move forward in creating sustainable ministries at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The process has continued with the launch of this assessment of the youth ministry, which will also make recommendations about how St. Mark's might move strategically forward.

Ministry Architects met with 37 individuals in 10 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

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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 not being paid. While many were very happy with the community and individual relationships that were found in the youth group the broad consensus was that there were not enough students participating in the ministry each week.

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

This rent also appears to be due. Inconsistent programming, lack of leader training and little long term planning have all resulted in a less than stellar perception of the programming that comes from the youth department.

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.

Low numbers, frustrations about programming and a general feel of stalling out, suggest that this rent is not being paid on time. While no one could completely identify the reason there was a sense that the energy and passion did not seem to be evident in the weekly programming of the youth ministry.

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:

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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 405 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 41 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 25 youth is below *what could be expected from the ministry*

2) \$1,300 per Youth—With a budget of approximately \$88,596 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, St. Mark's has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 68 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 25 currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded for continued growth.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including a youth director, assistant youth director, intern and associate rector support, St. Mark's has the equivalent of a little over 1 full time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, St. Mark's has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 60 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth.

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 3 weekly volunteers, St. Mark's Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 8 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 15 youth weekly. In other words, the team is too small to attend to the relational needs of the 25 youth who currently attend. The volunteer pool will need to expand if the church wants to sustain its impact with youth.

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BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

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

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

Each of these roles is important as St. Mark’s 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

“The Youth Group is a Safe Space”

Not only did we hear this in each listening session with youth but their parents echoed it as well. Over and over students told us of how “St. Mark’s is a place where I can be myself” and “I can talk about anything here without anything to fear.” One parent shared, “my daughter has a place where she can come and talk about things that she might not feel as comfortable talking with me about.” This sort of youth ministry has created a deep and protective nest for the students of St. Mark’s where they feel free to engage in

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personal and meaningful conversations about their everyday life without the fear of judgment or repercussion.

Relational Youth Ministry

A natural by product of the safety that is created within the youth ministry at St. Mark's is a deeply relational community. One student explained, "I have school friends and I have church friends and my church friends are the ones who are there for me in the tough times." Another youth spoke about the group saying, "We are all really close; it is a tight knit group." One youth did offer a word of caution saying, "We are so, so close and I know that is good for us but realize that it can be tough for someone to break into the core group." While this can be a problem the benefits of this highly relational community formed within the youth ministry cannot be denied. Students attributed a lot of this to the meaningful relationships they have with the youth staff at St. Mark's.

Youth Choir

The choir program at St. Mark's is second to none. With the prestigious Royal School of Church Music qualifications this top notch program has attracted a large number of youth into its ranks. It not only serves to provide excellent music and musical education, it has also become a very important part of the youth ministry. One student said, "We are at choir three times a week; that group has gotten really close to each other." Another youth commented on the fact that "there are many youth who, even when they do not come to youth they still make it to choir." And a parent commented, "My kid does not miss choir, she loves it." This program has become a mainstay in the life of the students and, coupled with the acolyte program, provided a real place in the weekly worship of St. Mark's.

Heart for Outreach and Service

When we asked the youth to talk about what are some of the great things that go on in the youth ministry, time after time, they continued to go back to their strong desire and love for outreach and mission. Whether it is their annual Mission Weekend or the Christmas to the Street food ministry, their passion ran deep for helping the world around them. When asked about a recent mission project one youth said, "It was amazing going out and serving after the flooding, you see it on the news but when you are there you really understand it." A church member told of the youth's visibility by saying, "Our kids are most visible when they are serving and doing outreach." Parents agree not only of the importance of the outreach but just how ingrained it is in the fabric of the youth ministry. One mom shared; "Service is just a part of who we are, It is not something I would even mention because it is just a given here."

Parental Communication

Good parental communication is often a rarity in youth ministry but at St. Mark's the parents are well informed in a timely manner. Comments like, "the information is always there, it is detailed and organized" and, "we know what all is going on at least 6 months out" are both helpful to students and comforting to parents. Further questions revealed that it is not just logistical information that is disseminated but also say, "each week we get an email with what the kids are learning so at least we know what is going on with

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their Sunday School class if we want to talk about it.” This type of communication not only helps with retreats and weekly program participation it is also a way for parents to be able to more intentionally engage their youth’s spiritual development.

Willing Adults

While there are very few actual adult volunteers, there are more than enough adults who gladly and willingly put their names forth to help. The willingness and even enthusiasm among many of the adults was incredibly encouraging. One adult reminisced about why adult volunteers are so important saying, “I had some important adults who were there for me in youth group, that made youth group good for me, and now I can do that for our kids.” As we explored the lack of adults the answer was very simple, they had not been asked. One parent told us, “I would love to help out with the youth, I just need to be asked and told what I need to do. I am just excited they would want me there!” It is very evident that the resources are plenty and with some intentionality, recruiting, training and support St. Mark’s can have an incredible adult volunteer ministry with its youth.

Healthy Supportive Staff

There have been a lot of staffing changes in the past two years at St. Mark’s. From all indications the deliberative nature and intentionality in which the changes were made and the creative ways the staff has been restructured has resulted in a very healthy and supportive staffing structure. Parents and youth alike were aglow with the new Rector and the recent addition of the new associate rector who will be working with children, youth and families. One parent, speaking about the church as a whole said, “This place has some real momentum; I cannot wait to see what is going to happen at St. Mark’s.”

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

Lack of Easy Entry Points

The kids who are regulars at youth group really seem to love each other and desire to spend time with one another. Part of the reason that they care for each other so much is that they have a long history together, and while that is wonderful, it can also pose some problems. One youth identified the challenge when they said, “We have all been here since we were little, and it is really hard to come in and be part of the group if you didn’t grow up here.” While it seems there is no intention of excluding anyone, there is also no intentionality in inviting new youth to come and be a part of their happy little family, and it was said that, “You are either in or you are out. There is no middle ground.” Without a plan in place for welcoming and following up with visitors and newer members, there is little chance to become a part of this wonderful, loving group.

Choir/Youth Group Gateway

In theory, the choir and youth group at St. Mark’s are two, unique ministry offerings for youth to be involved in. However, almost all of the youth who are engaged in the youth program are also active in the choir. A consequence of tension has developed for youth

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who wish to only participate at youth group. One youth, who is active in both programs, was aware of this dynamic and claimed that, “there are kids that are not in choir and they are feeling alienated.” One parent expressed great frustration and said, “Music just doesn’t really speak to my child, but he would like to be a part of the youth group and it’s just hard if you don’t do both.” Currently, the two programs are designed to be distinctly unique. However, because youth feel socially penalized when they are engaged in one and not the other, the gateway to meaningful participation in the ministry has come with ultimatums. Meaningful and ultimatums do not work well together in healthy ministry.

Maturity Mix

Older youth feel like they need more time away from the younger groups. One high school student summed it up perfectly when they said, “We like the junior high kids and all, but sometimes we need a space to talk about more serious things that are more our age.” While there was a recent youth leadership retreat for the oldest group of youth, there appears to be no consistent times for the high schoolers to come together for learning and fellowship without the presence of their younger counterparts. A single, annual gathering is not substantial enough to meet the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of this enthusiastic group.

No Clear Vision

The staff, parents, and youth are passionate about the youth ministry; they are excited about what they have and would like to have an even richer and more meaningful experience. But when asked to “dream big” and articulate a clear picture of what they envisioned for youth ministry, most mentioned vague dreams that came from their past experiences with the group. One parent claimed, “I know what’s on the schedule, but I’m not sure if I can tell you why we are doing the things we have planned.” It seems as though little effort has been made to cast a shared vision in which everyone can rally around. Trying to run a program without clear goals is like going on a road trip without stating your desired destination. You can get in the car and burn a lot of gas, but at the end of the day you may not have arrived at a more desirable location. Determining some clear goals will be critical in moving forward towards a stronger youth ministry program.

Undivided Attention

The overwhelming majority of youth and parents agreed that the current youth minister has a wonderful rapport with the kids. One youth said, “I wouldn’t change Todd. Todd is a really cool guy. I can tell him things,” and another simply said, “Todd is the best!” The Parish of St. Mark’s has someone they really love... they simply want more! Most parents strongly expressed an interest in having someone available on a full time basis, someone, “who has time to grow and strengthen the program.” With the pool of kids that the church has to pull from, having a full time youth minister on staff is completely justifiable, and will be necessary for the ministry to grow to its full potential.

Lack of Intentional Spiritual Formation

There is no doubt that the youth ministry deeply shapes the individuals who participate in it. In regards to relationships and community, St. Mark’s youth ministry has a very strong presence in the lives of its students. While its presence is strong relationally many

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believe that it is very lacking in engaging the students in intentional Christian formation though learning, theology and biblical study. When asked about a plan for how the youth learn or a long-term goal most came up at a loss. One parent told us that they “are worried that [their student] will not receive a well rounded spirituality in the program at St. Mark’s.” One youth said “I am not sure there is really a plan for what we learn.” Another added, “It is very inconsistent, and sometimes feels like it is decided a few minutes before Wednesday night starts.” Parents and youth both expressed concern over the lack of intentionality in regards to an agreed upon plan for spiritual formation.

Lacking Structure

The youth love their time together and repeatedly referred to the group as a “safe place” where they can be authentic. They did, however express some disappointment in the fact that there often isn’t much structure to their time together. One youth used the word “chaos” to describe their time in the youth suite, and another said that on Sunday morning, they get lemonade and doughnuts and the hour is like a “cage match.” Surprisingly, most of the youth seemed really excited when we used the word “organization” to describe what they were lacking. They were thrilled by the prospect of some organization and intentionality in their gatherings. Parents also claimed that their kids are busy and when they come to youth group, “the kids want to know that they are going to receive something of substance, otherwise they will just feel like they missed an opportunity to knock out some homework.” While free, fun time is important; we cannot neglect the need and desire of youth to talk about real life issues in relationship to their faith.

Semi Dependent Ministry

Oftentimes when a church has a very strong area of ministry that does not fall directly under the umbrella of the youth ministry, it and the youth ministry can have a symbiotic relationship with a mutually beneficial coexistence. If however the youth ministry begins to falter and is not as healthy it can and will begin to default its identity and energy to the stronger of the two ministries. This appears to be happening between the youth and choir ministries at St. Marks. The choir ministry is not in competition or harming the youth ministry, rather its success makes the lack of enthusiasm in the youth ministry more pronounced. In the case of St. Mark’s youth ministry it has caused much of the attendance to seem to depend on the choir program and its success. One parent noted “If we were to remove the choir ministry right now it would cause the collapse of the youth ministry.” Unless the youth ministry defines its identity and clarifies its unique mission, not in contrast to the choir but as mutually beneficial, then it will continue down this precarious path.

Confirmation is a missed opportunity

In many ways, the confirmation program seems set up for success: they have leaders that are committed and described as “amazing,” there is a history of a mentorship program, and the class does a service project. However, the elements of the program are a bit haphazard and certainly not leveraged to their full potential. When asked about the goals of confirmation, one parent said, “the goal is to get them confirmed- that’s it.” The confirmation leaders even seemed puzzled when asked about their objectives and

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said, “I don’t know. We weren’t given a clear job description.” In order for the confirmation program to be successful, there needs to be a clearly defined purpose with programmatic elements designed to achieve those goals. The youth and families are willing to commit to a nine-month program that does not capitalize on the time. The fruit is hanging low for St. Mark’s to give the youth a more meaningful and rich experience in their faith formation.

Broken Volunteer Culture

- With the exception of a small handful of volunteers that manage the confirmation program, there are no adult volunteers that participate in the youth program on a regular basis. All youth group gatherings are managed by paid staff members and it was stated that the staff, “doesn’t really call on the parents to help.” The lack of adult participation is unfortunate and robs the youth of valuable relationships. St. Mark’s volunteer culture seems to be lacking in the following ways:
 - **The Parent Trap:** Parents and youth seem to understand the only way for youth ministry to be successful is to not have parents as volunteers, and this is simply not the case. It is true that adults outside of the parent realm are needed as advocates and stakeholders in the ministry, but avoiding parents in the paradigm is costly and unnecessary.
 - **Volunteer Recruitment:** Volunteers are not seen as a consistent, necessary, and meaningful part of the youth ministry program and are only turned to as a last resort. As a result, there is no clear system in place for recruiting adult volunteers to invest in the life of the youth.
 - **Volunteer Training:** The volunteers that are in place do not appear to be receiving any form of training or clear direction. They are being handed materials and are then left to their own to figure out the rest. One leader said, “I like to do things well, but I haven’t felt prepared. I don’t feel like I have done a very good job.” It’s no surprise that volunteers who have no training or guidance will lack the kind of impact they want to have. If you throw someone in a pool who has never even touched water before, they are probably not going to be an Olympic swimmer. In fact, they may even drown. The volunteers need to be given some clear guidance on how to navigate the “waters” of youth ministry effectively.

We’re Losing Control

There are several very important systems and documents that are missing from the youth ministry at St. Mark’s. Youth ministries struggle to grow when an adequate framework has not been provided to support that growth, and can lead groups to feel like they are flying by the seat of their pants. The following items and systems are currently missing:

- **Attendance Tracking** – roster-based attendance is not currently being taken at youth ministry activities. Leaders have a vague estimate of how many kids are attending, but cannot verify which youth have been coming from one week to the next. This makes it difficult to follow up with missing youth. It also creates some easily avoided liability.

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- **MIA and Guest Assimilation Process** – in addition to keeping track of attendance, there needs to be structures in place that include a regular check in system for youth who have been missing in action, as well as welcoming and following up procedures for guests.
- **Major Event Notebooks** – Hallmark events, like Christmas to the Street, have are deeply rooted in the DNA of the ministry but have now gathered, accessible portal of information that supports the planning and execution of the event. The lack of such accessible information has made events more time consuming than necessary to repeat and more difficult to pass on or apprentice other leaders.
- **Youth Ministry Manual** – the budgets, game plans, calendars, job descriptions, and curriculum plans may be in existence, but the information is not centrally located for easy access. Keeping these basic items together can help save some future headache.

Where's the Bridge?

In all churches, we find that there needs to be an intentional plan for how children are moved from the children's ministry into the youth ministry. Regardless of which grade is determined to be the best place to make this transition, it is essential that kids and their families know how the progression takes place and are educated as to what new responsibilities and opportunities come with the move into youth. The step from being considered a "child" to being a "youth" is significant in the life of a young person, and if not handled proactively, can also be the place where a young person (and their family) walks away from the church (and sometimes the faith). This was phenomenon was evident thorghout the listening groups as a large number of parishoners described the real difficulty of traversing the gap between the children's and youth ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target July 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 Vestry, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
- 4) Establish a Youth Ministry Renovation Team, made up of four to five volunteers who report regularly to the Associate Rector for Family Ministries. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation Team focuses 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.

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- 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: Develop a Strategic Volunteer System– Start the hard, but rewarding work of changing the volunteer culture by doing the following:

- **Identifying** each of the weekly programmatic ministry volunteer needs
 - These should be based on guidelines established in Safe Guarding God's Children
 - Should also be based on a 1:5 adult student ratio
- **Recruiting** the necessary volunteers to fill those positions. This can be done by:
 - Making a list of immediate volunteer positions that need to be filled.
 - Using the church photo directory to create a list of potential volunteers.
 - Dividing up the list of potential volunteers and begin calling them personally, joyfully inviting them to be a part of the ministry.
 - Go back to step one until all positions have been filled.
- **Train and Equip** the new volunteers with the tools for a successful ministry. These tools should include:
 - Safeguarding God's Children training
 - A clear job description
 - The curriculum they will be using and training on how to use it
 - A calendar that reflects the usage of the curriculum, leads for each gathering, and other applicable information
 - A roster for the group they will be responsible for
 - A clearly defined system for reporting to the youth minister about concerns and things to be celebrated
 - Straight forward guidance on appropriate and meaningful ways to be in relationship with youth
- **Preserve** the volunteer system by:
 - Publically thanking them for their commitment to the ministry
 - Annually checking in with volunteers to gauge their effectiveness and satisfaction in the role
 - Maintaining a fishing pond of 40 potential volunteers.

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Pressure Point #2: Weekly Program Ministries Plan– Develop a diverse, purposeful, exciting and appropriate plan for weekly youth programs at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church for the 2016-2017 school year.”

- Diversify programming
 - Sunday School
 - Adopt a uniform curriculum for each class that is age and stage appropriate.
 - Plan for enough volunteers to keep youth separated by age groups.
 - Train volunteers on how to most effectively lead classes and use the curriculum (i.e. 10-12 min segments etc.)
 - Continue to keep parents and youth up to date with what is being taught through a weekly communication plan.
 - Wednesday Night Youth Group – Upgrade the structure of the evening to protect the purpose and impact of the program. Consider the following schedule:
 - 5:30- 6:00 – Dinner
 - the youth minister meets with the member of the youth leadership team who will be leading the Gospel reading for the FOLLOWING week, allowing for coaching time.
 - 6:00- 6:05 – Travel to youth space
 - 6:05-6:10 -- Announcements
 - 6:10- 6:20 - Intro game, activity, etc that encourages fellowship and settles them for discussion.
 - 6:20-6:25 – Youth Leadership Team member presents the Gospel reading and shares the some personal insight, without presenting all the questions.
 - 6:25 – 6:35- small group discussions
 - Present questions related to the Gospel reading
 - 4-5 students, including a leader
 - Jr. and Sr. high separated
 - 6:35- 6:45 – return to larger group
 - closing thoughts from youth minister or leader
 - 6:45- 6:55 – compline
 - dismissal
 - Special Fellowship/Outreach Opportunities – Build up the schedule to include extra times of fellowship and/or outreach among the youth every 4-6 weeks.

Pressure Point #3: Confirmation Plan – Develop and implement a confirmation plan for 2016-2017 school year that represents what the parish desires for this major milestone of spiritual development.

- Identify and address the pitfalls of the current model.
- Document what worked well in the previous incarnations of the confirmation process.
- Determine requirements needed for someone to complete the confirmation process.

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- Involve clergy and staff in the resourcing and staffing the new confirmation plan
- Commit to an agreed upon resource as the basis of the confirmation process and train all leaders in this new curriculum.
- Clearly communicate the new process, requirements calendar, schedule, trips and retreats of the confirmation program to the rising confirmation students and their parents.
- Develop an appropriate, family and church wide rite of passage (confirmation ceremony) that not only recognize the confirmands in their peer groups and families but also does so in the sight of the entire parish.
- Reevaluate the process after confirmation is completed, with parents, staff, clergy and youth and make any adjustments necessary for the following year.
 - Areas to Evaluate
 - Leaders
 - Curriculum
 - Time
 - Requirements
 - Mentorship Involvement
 - Publicity
 - Communication
 - Milestones
 - Trips
 - Attendance before, during and after confirmation is finished
 - Parental engagement

Pressure Point #4: Increase the Staff Position – Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan for the youth ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to grow the program. We suggest these steps in transitioning to a full-time position:

- Developing a strategic staffing plan that addresses current and future needs of the youth ministry program.
- Create results-oriented job descriptions for any positions identified in the strategic staffing plan.
- Decide if the youth director will fill the “architect”, “contractor” or “laborer” role.

Pressure Point #5: Cast a Vision – Casting a vision for the youth ministry will provide a clear and unique identity. In order to set a direction and cast a trajectory for the ministry, invite stakeholders of youth ministry (youth, parents, volunteers, priests, and invested members of the parish) to participate in a multi-session, on campus process of visioning for youth ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents:

- **A Ministry Mission Statement** that will drive the programs and hold the calendar accountable.
- **A Statement of Values** that will name the spirit in which St. Mark’s Episcopal is committed to approaching youth ministry.
- **A Set of Three-Year Revolving Goals** that will rally the team and harness the heart for new initiatives.

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- **An Organizational Structure** for the Ministry that will provide clarity for staff, volunteers, and parents.

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

- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission weekend”).
- **Compliance Documents:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and all adults working with any youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth activities.
- **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 12-18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major youth ministry event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2016. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, welcome new comers, 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 Teams.

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DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading, and seminars.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each youth ministry staff member develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.
- **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

- **High School Opportunities:** Develop an intentional strategy for ensuring that the high schoolers have regular opportunities for learning and fellowship away from the younger members of the youth group.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2017 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- **Welcome Squad:** Recruit, train, and deploy 4-8 youth at each program with the task of creating a welcoming environment for new youth, or those who are less involved. Teach them how to meet new youth and to guide new youth into the program. Use this as an opportunity to help the welcome squad follow-up with new youth who come to programming and provide a relational engagement into the ministry.
- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth and parents to make a difference in the world, as well as their local community. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as regional, and possibly international missions. Evaluate the current service projects for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **Youth Contact:** Develop and implement processes for ensuring that all youth feel welcome at youth events -- 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.

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- **Dividing One Youth Group into Two Youth Groups:** Consider the possibility of splitting the youth group into middle school and high school groups starting in September 2017. If a decision is made to split, the following should be in place by June:
 - Recruit at least two volunteers for each group.
 - Recruit a core group of high school youth (three to five) who would be willing to commit to “leading the charge” for the new high school program.
 - Regular fellowship time for the volunteers and core youth to be together over the summer.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** 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 8th graders and their parents to the Confirmation program.
 - Welcome and connect the new 9th graders and their parents into the high school ministry.
 - Launch the church’s high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they are surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults.

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