

YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time

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West End United Methodist Church of Nashville, TN

August 9-11, 2015

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BACKGROUND

West End United Methodist Church is an open, highly educated and well-established congregation that values diversity. The community is described by members and staff as "welcoming," "traditional with a modern feel," "vibrant" and "busy."

West End is an urban church, across the street from Vanderbilt University, attracting members from many different zip codes in and around Nashville and drawing youth from over 17 high schools and junior highs. The membership of the church is around 2,443 and on an average week, 650 people attend one of the church's two worship services. Since 2010, West End has been led by Senior Minister, Michael Williams. He is known for his incredible storytelling abilities, capturing the attention of youth and adults through his preaching each Sunday morning.

The church has a 2015 budget of \$2,451,536.00. For the year 2015, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$95,311.00 including staff salaries & benefits. The

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staff consists of a full-time youth minister, one part-time youth associate, and additional administrative assistance for about 5 hours per week.

There are about 135 7th through 12th graders on the rolls of the church. During an average week, 60 youth attend West End youth events. 50 of those youth participate in Sunday morning programming (9:30AM) and Sunday evening small groups (5PM). Another 8-10 youth attend a Sunday worship service or participate in hand bells.

The West End campus is located in a central area of Nashville. The campus consists of one main building which houses the main sanctuary, all the ministries, a year round preschool, and offices of the church. The youth room consists of three areas: a recreation room, an "eating" room, and a room for worship. The walls are beautifully and neatly decorated with photos of youth involved in activities and attending special events. Professional posters along the walls highlight upcoming events and information for the current season. The rooms are very well kept and have a comfortable, youthful feel to them without seeming too "over the top."

Youth that attended the listening groups describe their youth group as "a place to have friends outside of school and other things." They also love that their youth group is a "positive" and "fun" environment. Many of the students met in the West End UMC preschool and have known each other ever since. In fact, many of the parents met when their kids were preschoolers and ultimately joined the church and continued to invest in their friendships through church small groups and Sunday school classes over the years. One student commented, "We are a close knit community. We know each other. If anyone was to get into trouble, we would definitely come and help them."

There are a number of special events that the West End youth enjoy. The Mystery Trip, truly a mystery up until the very moment they arrive at the site, has included events like parasailing, indoor skydiving, and caving. The mission trips, for junior high and senior high include experiences for students in local, regional, national and international settings. "These trips really connect us with our community and help us to see how important it is to reach out to others." Both the students and the staff recognize the importance that mission plays in the emotional and spiritual development of the youth.

The ministry is led by a Youth Minister, Sean Williams and a Youth Associate, Caroline McReynolds-Adams. Sean has been at West End since 2009 and Caroline joined the staff in March of 2013. There is also an active Youth Council, made up of adults and youth which reports to the youth minister and meets monthly to assess, brainstorm and plan for the youth ministry. There are about 15 adult volunteers involved each week in Sunday morning and evening programming. Others help out at special events, trips, or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The youth minister and the associate youth minister are both leaving West End UMC this August 2015. Because of the upcoming transition, Ministry Architects was invited to help assess the current ministry and strategize about how God might be calling this ministry to new things. Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth

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ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 74 individuals in 9 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

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 being partially paid. The parents and students that are actively involved in the youth ministry are happy with the youth ministry as it is, however some listening group members wished that more students would be invited and intentionally welcomed into the fold.

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 appears to be paid. There are two Sunday youth programs and multiple special events and mission trips that are recognized and celebrated by the larger congregation.

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.

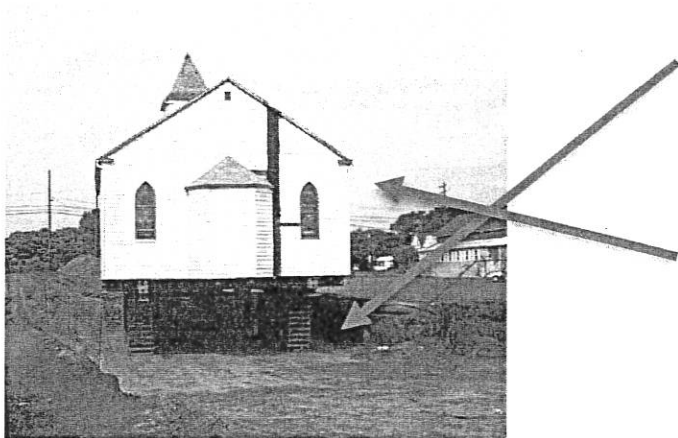
The enthusiastic participation and commitment of the students, youth leaders and the parents suggest that this rent is being paid on time.

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, five 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 650 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 65 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 60 youth is slightly below what could be expected from the ministry.

2) \$1,200 per Youth—With a budget of approximately \$95,311 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, West End UMC has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 79 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 60 youth 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 the youth director, the youth associate, and administrative hours, West End UMC has the equivalent of just over 1.5 full time staff. According to this rule of thumb, West End UMC has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 75 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for growth in the ministry.

5) 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 15 weekly volunteers West End UMC Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 4 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 75 youth weekly. The weekly youth ministry programs are well supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future. However, the mission trips and special events are often in need of additional leaders to drive, supervise and relationally invest in the students.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

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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 West End UMC 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

Communication Within the Youth Ministry: One thing that was consistent throughout all the groups, parents and volunteers alike, was the fact that communication with leaders and parents is exceptional. Parents welcome the weekly emails, texts, Instagram, and Facebook communication. Parents loved being able to have more than enough updates, information, and notices about youth programming, activities, and events. Volunteers found it helpful in order to keep up with all the details of upcoming events. When the parents were asked if they received enough communication they all responded with a resounding "YES!"

Organizational Pieces are in Place: Organization is not a hallmark of most youth ministries. In fact, it's rare that Ministry Architects comes into a church where one of the biggest strengths is the logistical and programmatic organization. "Sean doesn't leave

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much to chance," shared one parent, "And because of this, things typically go well." Because of the DNA of the leaders, organization and planning for this ministry is exceptional. Many of the administrative and organizational pieces are in place within the youth ministry, so it will serve a new youth team well when they begin their job.

Fun, Vibrant, Balanced Ministry: The youth ministry at West End is fun, vibrant, and meaningful for the youth. "Sean is really fun," shared one student, "like one of the kids. But he also can get serious too." One of the older youth said, "Sean and Caroline do a good job of balancing when it's time to be fun and serious. Sean can be funny and sarcastic. I like when we focus on social media. They both do a good job of connecting on our level." Most all agreed that the level of creative learning is very healthy. They also agree that youth are interested and engaged in the Sunday night small group ministry. The youth sincerely value the conversation, energy and humor.

- "We chuckle...a lot."
- "No one tries to impress each other."
- "Here I have friends from all different grades, not like at school."

When youth were asked about the spiritual component of youth group they all greatly appreciated how the leaders lead them into deeper thought and discussion.

- "Our small groups get really deep."
- "We have a deep connection. Our talks are meaningful, especially on trips."
- "Although Sunday evening are a little less structured, we still get a lot of time to talk through things. I like that."

One parent said, after volunteering as a trip leader, "I didn't realize how deep the kids get in their time together. It is clear that something goes on in their group on Sunday that really opens them up."

Space: One marker of a healthy youth ministry is the space that is dedicated to the ministry. West End has amazing space dedicated to their youth! Youth describe their space as "cozy and comfortable." With three distinctive spaces dedicated to recreation and relaxation, eating and fellowship, and worship, the youth at West End are in a place where they can connect, grow, and learn in a safe and comfortable place.

One of the eye-catching features of this space is the large photos that greet you as you walk in. The pictures capture the special moments and beautiful faces of the youth from recent activities and events. These large pictures add a sense of identity to the room and the group. It screams, "This is YOUTH space!"

Many times youth rooms are dark, dirty, and in the basement. But, at West End the youth rooms are clean, well lit, nicely decorated, and located in a central part of the building. It shows the commitment and care that the church has to making sure that youth feel welcomed and loved.

Mission Trips...Mission Accomplished: The mission trips and service opportunities are a big hit. There was overall praise for the local, regional and international trips that have been offered during the summer months. A unique way of organizing the trips has been to offer a different type of mission experience each year. It functions as a rotation process, where each summer will be one of three types of trips: local, regional, or international. This keeps the youth interested in participating each year so that they get a

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chance to experience all the different types of mission trips. The mission trips are a highlight that the youth look forward to each summer. The mission trips get a lot of praise, but it is the experience of local service projects that seem to really resonate with the teens. One student shared, "I like how different organizations are involved." One of the local service projects with Nashville Food Project has helped the youth, each month, to be more aware of the needs in their community. While the regional and international trips have broadened the horizons of the youth and exposed them to a world beyond their own.

Memory Makers: There are many events and programs available to the youth of West End. The calendar is filled with trips, special events, and service opportunities. The youth have Sunday morning and Sunday evening programs to choose from as well as a variety of trips and off-site adventures.

- Sunday Night Small Groups- "One of the favorite memory makers of Sunday nights has been the use of technology and media as a way to connect students to a theological understanding of the world."
- 30 Hour Famine- "This event helped my daughter to fully engage in the youth ministry and it helped her to create independence."
- Nashville Food Project- Each week students served food off local food trucks to the homeless. An adult volunteer loved the idea that the youth dedicated a part of their week to reaching beyond the church walls into the community.
- Mystery Trip- This unique type of trip is a youth favorite! The idea of not knowing where you will end up adds a certain excitement for the youth.
- Food Nights- This seemingly small project provides a big memory maker for youth. Food nights give youth the chance to make a dessert together and then hand deliver it in a way to create a sweet kind of community beyond the walls of West End.

Parent Engagement: As evidenced by their participation in listening groups, there is a core group of adults who care deeply about West End and who have a great passion for its youth ministry. This is a group that understands first-hand the unique challenges that families face today and understands clearly the difference that a strong connection to God and church can make for youth and families. As many parents expressed, "there are so many opportunities for youth today" and they want to make sure their youth learn to make their faith and their faith community a priority.

The parent's commitment is evidenced by the fact that most of the volunteer opportunities for the ministry are filled on a weekly basis. In addition, the parents have strong relationships through the friendships in their own Bible Studies. The parents of teens at West End are "all in" and willing to step in where needed to make sure that their teens receive the best discipleship, care, supervision, and direction. They see the value of what youth ministry brings and are devoted to maintaining and supporting youth programming at West End.

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Something To Build On- Although there is anxiety about the youth staff transition at West End, it is clear that because of the dedication and hard work of that staff, there is a solid foundation to be built upon as the ministry grows and changes. A member of the church said, "After years of the youth ministry limping along, it was great to have leaders who had a vision and a plan." Another parent shared, "My daughter wants to be here. She feels safe." One youth echoed what many other youth said, "youth group gives us a chance to meet others outside of our church...out in the real world. And, that helps us to understand more." Many students and parents have an understanding of what a healthy, vibrant youth ministry look like and this will serve the church well as they search for a new team.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

The Kids Are Not Alright: Change is difficult, especially when it involves younger people who have become accustomed to a certain pattern, style, or habit. For most youth (and adults), times of transition bring an overwhelming amount of anxiety. It may cause people to want to "put the walls up" and protect what they have. It can make them believe that any change will destroy what they have built and enjoyed over time. As we listened to the adults and youth of West End we heard a lot of expressed fear regarding the future. Questions like, "who will be our next leaders?" and "will they be fun?" When asked how they felt about the upcoming transition one student bluntly stated, "I don't want things to change...at all. I like our traditions and I am afraid that they will change for the worse." If this fear is not addressed in some way, it could cause great distress in the transition and even infect the coming season of ministry with new leadership.

Upcoming Transitional Challenges: The upcoming leadership transition will bring many organizational challenges for West End UMC. Because the current staff is so well organized, communicate well, and connect with the youth, they will be greatly missed. The biggest thing to recognize here is that it is highly likely that these current leaders will take many of their systems with them. If there is no plan in place to capture and retain these important strategies, the ministry will begin fail families in all of the ways that it is serving them currently.

Lack of Spiritual Support for Parents: It is clear that the parents of West End are investing in the youth of the congregation, however, at this point, there doesn't seem to be enough of investment in supporting parents in their God-given role. Evidence from the National Study of Youth and Religion, the Exemplar Youth Ministry Project, and the Sticky Faith Initiative indicates that parents are still the number one spiritual influencers of their children. Therefore engaging parents and partnering with them in the spiritual development of youth is a valuable component. Yet, a central question not being addressed at West End UMC is "how are we effectively walking alongside and empowering parents in the spiritual formation of their youth?"

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With a disposal income, a full travel schedule, a long list of school and sporting requirements and a commute to church, most families are not going to become “less busy” any time soon. So how can West End UMC do the important work of equipping, supporting and encouraging the family for this important work?

Siloed Ministry: Marathon runners will tell you that having a running partner can make all the difference in the world. Running together creates energy, momentum and support. The children’s, youth and adult ministries of West End UMC will never reach their full potential by operating in silos and in isolation from each other. In many ways the youth ministry of West End collaborates well with parents, key volunteers and staff within the department. But we also heard a cry for increased collaboration with other staff members. One staff member expressed, “The youth seem to do their own thing. The department seems very insulated.” Another staff shared, “I want our youth to benefit from the wisdom of our adults, but I also want our adults to benefit from the many insights of our youth. But I don’t know how that can happen, especially when we don’t talk to each other.” Others shared their desire for the children’s ministry to become more connected with the youth ministry, sharing an overarching understanding of its vision and discipleship process.

Moving from Children’s Ministry to Youth Ministry: There was a common thread from the rising 7th graders, their parents, and the current high school students about the “not so smooth” transition from 6th grade to 7th grade (from children’s ministry to youth ministry). Even outside of church, the transition from elementary school to junior high can be stressful and overwhelming if not handled with care, sensitivity and intentional support.

A number of students talked about the stress of moving from confirmation (6th grade) into an established group of older youth. “When you go from confirmation to youth group - it is awkward,” shared one 7th grade student, “because you don’t know anybody and you don’t feel like you fit in.” The rest of the room quickly agreed. Even the 10th and 11th grade students agreed that it can be tough to receive the younger students. “It’s hard for the rising 7th graders to feel like they fit in. Especially because we have known each other longer and we have been on trips with each other. But after a year or so you start to feel like you belong. You have to keep trying and hang in there until a special event or a trip.”

Although there have been some attempts made at connecting 7th graders with an older “buddy” in the youth, students still expressed that it felt forced and awkward. At a time in their life when students need to feel important and included, this transition can send youth running in the opposite direction.

Outsiders on the Inside: There are many entry points into the youth group of West End. A student can be a part of Sunday mornings, Sunday evening small groups, mission trips and various special events. The space is welcoming, the food is good and the doors are open, however, we heard listening group members share about how difficult it could be to assimilate into the group regardless of your age, especially if one is new to the group.

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One parent shared, "My child was asked the first time they showed up for youth group, 'What are *you* doing here?'" Another parent said that her child "has tried many times to come and feel a part of the group, but she hasn't had much luck. So she has given up." Although participation is a two-way street, there is a need for an intentional plan to train student leaders to reach out, warmly welcome and connect new folks into a web of opportunities and caring relationships.

Invisible Kids: There seemed to be an expressed desire among volunteers and parents alike that "we want to see the youth in worship more often." We also heard comments like, "The church needs to know what's happening with our youth. I only see them in worship when they need money or when they report on a mission." One parent shared, "It's like a light under a bushel. We know they are doing something great, but we never get to see it."

The youth ministry of West End is alive and vibrant, but not everyone is aware of it. "There are so many ways that this congregation could learn from the youth and in turn remind them that we are listening to them and we love and value them," stated a listening group member. The youth ministry is missing an intentional plan for connecting the youth to the rest of the church through celebration, service, prayer, worship leadership and more.

New Leadership Questions: When asked about challenges that faced the youth ministry, there was a feeling of angst as parents and leaders talked about this next year. "We are happy about where the youth ministry is right now, but we are so nervous about what will be," shared one parent. "I have been here for a long time, through the ups and downs of multiple youth directors and I don't want to see us hire someone who is a bad fit. Been there, done that." It is clear that many listening group members are worried about the upcoming transition and want to be assured of a clear path forward.

We Are Missing Some Students: While most students and parents were satisfied with the current programming and special events, some indicated that there were plenty of students who were not participating in youth group activities. "Of the 135 youth on the rolls, we are only seeing about 50", said one parent. "We have a lot of kids that are not feeling connected right now. And we have room to include them."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target December 2016 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.

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- 3) Present this report to the Ministry Table, 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 senior pastor/youth minister. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the interim staff and eventually the new 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.
 - 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 interim and new 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,
 - Assisting the Search Team and the SPRC with the search process to fill the youth 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: Host a "Quick Start" Retreat - Invite the Renovation Team, interim youth staff and key volunteers 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 interim youth staff (the programmatic and the logistic coordinators) to identify any current challenges that have surfaced in the wake of the former Youth Ministry Director and Youth Ministry Associate's absence.
- Assist the interim youth staff as they identify and discuss the status of the pressure points and recommendations from the assessment report in order to create next steps for the renovation team.
- Orient the Renovation Team to the job ahead.
- Clearly discuss and assign next steps to the Renovation Team regarding who will supervise what recommendations/pressure points.

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- Lay out a communication plan between the Renovation Team, the interim/new youth staff and the youth council so that all parties feel they're "in the know."

Pressure Point #2: Divide the Workload – With the upcoming transition, it is important that leadership roles are clearly defined. This will also help ensure that the same quality of ministry continues through the transition.

- Clearly define the roles of the interim staff members.
- Assign members of the youth council to fill certain support roles through the transition, such as,
 - Hospitality and visitor follow-up
 - Communication
 - Sunday school coordinator
 - Small Group coordinator
 - Event coordinator
 - Missions coordinator
- Provide job descriptions for each of these support positions.

Pressure Point #3: Ensure the Continuation of Established Programs and Events – Form a Student Advisory Group of 5 or 6 students and task them with becoming the keepers of the traditions of the youth ministry at West End.

- Build a list of the traditions that make this youth ministry special.
- The details of each tradition will be documented by this team, and placed in a notebook.
- Each traditional event has been assigned a "keeper" who will work with the youth council and major event coordinators to ensure that their tradition will survive the transition into new leadership.
- When new leadership is established, this team will meet with the new leadership to communicate the importance of these traditions and ensure that they will continue under the new leadership.

Pressure Point #4: Transitional Communication Plan – One of the best ways to allay anxiety is to communicate well. Therefore, it will be important to build a comprehensive communication plan so that parents and students are informed throughout the search and transition process and feel as though they continue to have a voice in this process.

- Consider some town hall meetings for parents, volunteers, and students.

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- Provide updates on the process through email, Facebook, text, and Twitter.
- Allow mechanisms for members to ask questions and offer suggestions through the transition process.

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

- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
 - A ministry mission statement
 - A statement of values
 - A set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks
 - An organizational structure for the ministry
- **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 youth ministry programming.
 - Assess the need for West End UMC to use an integrated curriculum plan that is coordinated with the Sunday school morning and evening programming.
 - 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 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 a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth activities and develop an attendance system that allows for easy access to weekly and special event participation numbers.

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- **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, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.
- **Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach:** Invite Ministry Architects to play the "coach" role during this season of staff transition and amidst the 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 Team.

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.
- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **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.
- **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 50 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

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- **Worship Leadership Development:** The Youth Council develops a written worship leadership game plan *in order to encourage participation and shared leadership in West End's Sunday worship services.*

DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **A Transition Team from Children's Ministry to Youth Ministry:** Create a team whose primary task is to develop and execute an intentional game plan to welcome and celebrate youth who are transitioning from 6th to 7th grade.
- **Supporting/Educating Parents:** Assemble a team of invested parents in children's and youth ministry who will identify and plan key parenting opportunities that address pre-adolescent and adolescent development, current issues facing parents and the emotional and spiritual nurture of one's kids.
- **Welcome Squad:** Recruit, train, and deploy 5-10 youth at each program with the task of creating a welcoming environment for new youth. 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 program and provide a relational engagement into the ministry.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming youth and their friends and family to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- **Retention Plans for the Youth Ministry:** Create game plans for
 - Keeping youth involved in the youth programs after Confirmation
 - Continuing to engage youth who have gotten their drivers' license
 - Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them with the life of West End UMC.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

PROPOSED TIMELINE - AUGUST

The following provides West End UMC 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 18-month transition, we are available to help.

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August 2015

Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Ministry Table for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the Ministry Table has given full support of this plan.
- Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
- 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.
- A Quick Start Retreat has been scheduled for October.
- Any immediate volunteer needs for the youth ministry have been determined and slots have been filled.
- A Leadership Training has been scheduled for September for the volunteers in the youth ministry.
- Mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff and key volunteers have been provided.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

September 2015

Focus: Calendars, Volunteers, Quick Start Retreat, Fall Kick-off, Curriculum

Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Retreat.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the youth ministry.
- Work has begun on the 2016 youth ministry calendar
- All volunteer needs for the 2015-2016 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Training that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The Safe Sanctuaries Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- Parents and youth alike are introduced to a youth ministry format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants felt energized and enthusiastic

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about the coming year's programs.

- Curriculum has been chosen for the current school year and distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they are trained to implement the curriculum.
- 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.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

October 2015

Focus: Budget, Communications, Visioning Promotion, Compliance

Outcomes:

- 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.
- Roles for the youth council have been clearly defined and job descriptions written to ensure a smooth transition with minimal changes.
- A comprehensive transitional communication game plan has been drafted and implemented. This plan includes mechanisms for communication to parents, students, and volunteers as well as mechanisms for receiving questions, concerns, and suggestions from them.
- A youth leadership team has been established and tasked with documenting important traditions while working on a regular schedule with the youth council and interim staff.
- The roles of interim staff members have been clearly defined and incorporate the relationships with members of the youth council, and the youth leadership team.
- All programs have adhered to the Safe Sanctuaries policy as laid out by the church.
- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- The 2016 youth ministry calendar has been completed.
- Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for January 2016 (or for when the new staff arrives).
- 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.

Ministry Architects Option: 2 day onsite, 1 day offsite

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