



**CHILDREN'S/YOUTH MINISTRIES  
ASSESSMENT REPORT  
*St. Patrick's Episcopal Church*  
*Atlanta, Georgia*  
**March 8, 2015****

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**BACKGROUND**

St. Patrick's Episcopal Church is nestled in a lovely suburban area of Atlanta. Down the street is a beautiful middle school, and a popular city park sits across from the church parking lot. The surrounding neighborhood is in its second bloom with the original inhabitants aged and moved away. Now the 2<sup>nd</sup> owners are families with children. In the middle of it all is St. Patrick's.

Church members describe their church family as "loving," "welcoming," and "warm." One parishioner summed it up, "Everyone fits in here, no matter what stage of life you're at. You're loved."

The membership of the church is around 404 and, on an average week, 164 people attend one of the church's three worship services at 8:00 AM or 10:30 AM on Sunday, or 12:15 PM on Wednesday. The Rev. P. Richard Game, Rector, has been serving since 2010. The Rev. Sarah Fisher, Associate Rector, came on staff in December 2014 along with The Rev. Julia Rusling as Priest Associate. Both were called as part of an initiative for family ministry development, funded from a significant gift made to the church for such work.

Currently, there are approximately 35 children, birth – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, on the rolls of the church and, during a typical week, about 10 of them participate in Sunday school, worship, the music program during worship, or the nursery. The children's ministry also hosts other special events like the yearly Christmas pageant and Vacation Bible School/Day Camp. The children's ministry is described by parents and other church members as a "loving" and "welcoming" place, while others say it is a "dwindling" and "ignored" ministry.

The ministry is given oversight by the Director of Children's Ministry who was hired for eight hours a week. Currently serving in that role is Victoria Schwartz who came on staff in 2012. She is serving 8 hours a week. There is also an active children's ministry committee, which reports to the director.

The church has a total 2015 budget of \$616,388. The children's ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$12,481.00, which includes the program expenses and salaries for the staff (children's director and nursery workers).

There are four adult volunteers involved each week in the major children's program, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (some call it Sunday school; other call it CGS). Other volunteers help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

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The youth ministry at St. Patrick's has 40 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church and, during a typical week, about 30 of them participate in either Sunday school and/or worship. The youth ministry is described by youth and parents as "loving," "family," and a "welcoming" place, while others say it is a "drifting" and "searching" ministry.

For the year 2015, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$26,600, which includes the program budget and a proposed salary of \$25,000 for the youth staffing position. There are six adult volunteers involved each week in the Sunday school program. Others help out at special events, like the mission trip, Big Canoe, or behind the scenes throughout the year.

In the absence of a paid staff person, the ministry is being given oversight by the associate rector. There is also an active youth committee, which reports to the associate rector and meets quarterly.

The youth and children have plenty of space (with great signage!) to meet each other. Each age-level has a dedicated classroom for each age-level group. In addition, there is a youth room ready for ministry and relationship building.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's and youth ministries by the church's clergy and the youth/children's committees to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 41 individuals in nine 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.

## **CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES IN CONTEXT**

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

**Rent #1: NUMBERS** - A significant percentage of children and 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 children's and youth ministries is typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

The consensus is that this rent is paid in the youth ministry but with dwindling attendance by children, the rent is not being paid in the children's ministry.

**Rent #2: PROGRAMS** - In order to "earn the right" to experiment with changes, the children's and youth leadership needs to provide the church with a few visible, effective

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children's and youth programs that give both children, youth, and parents "something to talk about."

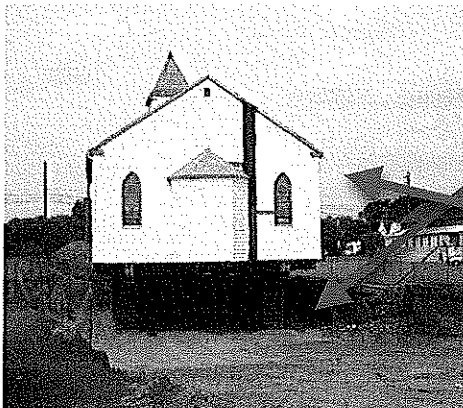
This rent appears to be paid, though there is a significant amount of disagreement about the winsomeness of the children's ministry programming.

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

The current state of "what's next?" in the parish suggests that this rent is behind in payment, but there's light ahead.

As the leadership of the children's and youth ministries 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 and youth ministries faces parallel challenges.

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:



1. **Laying the Foundation:** Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the children's and youth ministries' *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,
2. **Continuing to Do Ministry:** Maintaining the *current* children's and youth ministries 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 164 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 24 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 10 children is far below what could be expected from the ministry.

**2) \$1,000 per Child:** With a budget of approximately \$11,575 (including program budget, staff salary, and nursery workers) dedicated to the children's ministry, St. Patrick's has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 12 children in some aspect of the church's life. With 10 children currently participating every week, the ministry is right

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on target for its current reach. However, it is not likely that the ministry will be able to do more to reach the children on its rolls without more of an investment.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 75 Children:** The current staff configuration at St. Patrick's has the equivalent of a 1/4 time staff person (not including paid babysitters or nursery workers). According to this rule of thumb, St. Patrick's has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 18-19 children on a weekly basis which leaves room for numerical growth in the current ministry.

**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. With 4 weekly volunteers, St. Patrick's is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 2-3 children, while giving the ministry a capacity for 20 children weekly. The current team seems to be the right size for the current ministry of 9 children as well as giving room to expand. However, if the church wants to expand its impact beyond 20 children, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers and utilizing them in ways other than as CGS leaders.

Ministry Architects has also observed the following youth ministry norms:

**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 164 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 16 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 30 youth is over and above what a church of this size could normally expect to see. Celebrate!

**2) 20% Ceiling:** Ministry Architects has also discovered that in many churches, the youth ministry has difficulty growing beyond a level that equals 20% of the weekly worshipping congregation.

Very few youth ministries seem to be able to break beyond this 20% level. St. Patrick's might keep in mind, then, that the expected ceiling for this youth ministry is around 32 youth. The road to that level of participation is dependent on increased staffing, volunteers and budget. St. Patrick's is already there!

**3) \$1,250 per Youth:** With a budget of approximately \$26,600 (including program budget expenses and staff salaries) dedicated to the youth ministry, St. Patrick's has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 21 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 30 currently participating every week, the ministry is under-funded to retain even the currently attending youth. In order to maintain the ministry at its current rate, it would be wise to consider how to give the ministry the resourcing it needs.

**4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth:** St. Patrick's currently has no dedicated youth staff, but the Vestry has plans to hire in 2015. According to this norm's rule of thumb, and based on the 30 youth currently attending, St. Patrick's should consider hiring someone for 20-25 hours weekly but this estimation does not

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include reaching out to other youth not attending. If St. Patrick's wants to grow, then it will have to create a plan for increasing those hours.

**5) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth:** Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of "spans of care," recognizing that most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With 6 weekly volunteers, St. Patrick's has the capacity to effectively minister to about 30 youth. The current team seems to be the right size for the current ministry youth. However, if the church wants to expand its impact, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

## **BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF**

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

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

Many churches hire, as their children's or youth director, someone who may have gifts in a single area-- for example, someone to manage a program like Catechesis of the Good Shepherd or can plan and take youth on a mission trip, but who simply doesn't have the experience base or the skill set to oversee the complex components of a ministry of 40 children and/or youth. The result in these situations can be a pattern of unrealistic expectations for the staff, which can lead to "scapegoating," particularly in settings in which a sustainable infrastructure for ministry has not been established.

In terms of St. Pat's, the church serves as the "architects" in the form of the children's and youth committees, as does the Vestry. The Vestry has named children's ministry its top priority for 2015. The problem? There's no set of blueprints to build upon and no broad-based buy-in on what to build.

The children's ministry is blessed to have a general contractor in its Director of Children's Ministry. The youth ministry needs to fill this position to continue to execute the "on site" plans. In regards to "laborers" there are wonderful people who have stepped up to use their tools, and others are waiting to be asked to be a part of the renovations.

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## **ASSETS**

### ***Strengths to protect in the current children's and youth ministries***

#### **Healthy Youth Numbers**

All the lab work is in: The youth ministry is in a healthy state! All norms and numbers are right where they should be. The youth attendance and participation in the life of the church is right on target or even beyond! This provides a great base to grow to the next level. The healthy numbers (and the doughnuts) has led to excitement that can be felt on a Sunday in the youth area rooms and hallways.

#### **Hungry for More**

The fact that 9 middle and high school students participated in their focus group to talk about all things youth ministry is a sign that students care deeply about the future effectiveness of this program. The youth spoke with enthusiasm about their love for various aspects of the youth and children's ministry and for their parish. Listen to the words the students listed when asked to describe their church and ministry: awesome, quirky (in a good way), loving, welcoming, warm, fun, amazing, home-like, stellar, authentic, original...and the list goes on. Big pats on the back for everyone, St. Pat's!

#### **Dedicated Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program Team**

The children's ministry department has continued its excellent commitment to the long history of CGS at St. Patrick's. The passionate and loyal teachers have spent 30-90 hours of personal time invested in training so they can help children in self-discovery of God. The church is also blessed to have a children's director who is a nationally recognized trainer in CGS. A big round of applause to the children's team for faithfulness!

#### **Diocese-Connected**

St. Patrick's youth ministry is proving its willingness to spread its connectional wings by being very active in diocesan activities like Camp Mikell, Happening, New Beginnings, The Hunger Walk, a summer mission trip with two other Episcopal churches, etc. Plus they occasionally go to just hang out with other Episcopal youth groups! This connectedness has allowed St. Patrick's to build a youth ministry beyond what it could on its own, giving the youth a more rounded faith-building experience.

#### **Deeply Loved Children**

Children (birth through 18) are valued at St. Patrick's and their faith development is a high priority for the church family. There is a core group of parents and volunteers who care deeply and have a great passion for St. Patrick's children and youth. They have firsthand knowledge of the unique challenges of busy, fragmented family life and the difference that a connection with the church and God can make in the lives of young people. Their life experience will be a valuable asset as it informs the ministry renovation project.

Even the Vestry is on board. It has made a full commitment to the children and youth of the church, making them their number one priority. The theme, "Radical Hospitality for Children" has been taken on as the banner for the next year's work.

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### **Collegial Clergy**

With three priests now serving the congregation, the people are truly blessed. But the blessing doesn't end there. It's obvious that the clergy have a respect and love for each other. Collaboration seems to be the *modus operandi* among the three.

### **Clarity of Need**

Repeatedly heard from the people in the focus groups was concern about the lack of involvement of children. This common lament is a good thing! It is why the Vestry is working so hard to creating a sustainable plan. The need was also indicated in the good turn out at listening groups. When there is clarity in knowing that "something's not quite right," it becomes possible to work together to create a new, positive reality.

### **St. Patrick's People**

The greatest arrow in St. Patrick's quiver for forward movement? The parishioners themselves. St. Patrick's has rightly earned its reputation for targeting all who enter with warmth and welcome.

Here is a direct quote from a high school student about the people of St. Patrick's when asked about the youth (and children's) ministry's greatest strength: "St. Patrick's as a whole. Within the youth, I think each one is supported by a huge loving community. The people of our church have a great passion for loving and supporting each other."

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***Obstacles to moving the children's and youth ministries strategically forward***

#### **Who's Counting the Sheep?**

Just like The Shepherd knew every sheep, St. Patrick's wants that same "knowing" for its ministry but doesn't have that system in place. Coming to a consensus of how many children and youth are on the rolls of the church proved to be very difficult. Clergy, staff, and volunteers all reported different numbers. The ideal system is one that is cloud-based with the ability for an electronic check-in system, accessible children's and youth contact information, nametag printing ability, and an efficient way to update information.

#### **Communication**

"We just don't communicate things well around here," said one parent. This concern was expressed in one form or another by numerous listening group participants. When a solid organizational structure is missing, along with a well laid out communication plan, expectations aren't met and train wrecks begin to happen. Critical mass is lost or never gained. Excitement dwindles and folks begin to go somewhere else for their news and eventually their allegiance.

#### **The Church Bus**

Imagine this scenario: The St. Patrick's bus is in the parking lot gassed up and ready to go. Church members hop on and are ready to travel! Everyone's excited. But one critical conversation didn't happen first – where to go and what to do when the bus gets there.

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Discussion ensues, disagreements arise, and dissension follows. The riders all assumed different results from the trip and so what happens? The bus never leaves the parking lot. Nobody goes anywhere.

The current staff, volunteers, parents, children and youth are passionate about the children and youth ministries of the church, and are willing to help them do well. However, when asked about the purpose for the children's or youth ministry, varying ideas were expressed, and some felt as though their direction seemed arbitrary.

An example of this was in the discussion about why there was not a weekly youth group gathering. One youth said, "Why don't we have youth group? It seems like EVERY church has youth group," and another youth shared, "It is really difficult to have a connected community without a youth group gathering time." A clear cut set of blueprints for the children's and youth ministry haven't been determined, 3-year goals haven't been set. Without distinct direction setting for the children's and youth ministry, both are in danger of drifting aimlessly and won't be ready for the future growth headed to the area.

### **Missing Christian Formation Plan**

The ministry to children and youth is operating without a well-defined scope and sequence for its Christian educational path. In other words, not only have hands-on goals not been set, neither have spiritual goals. One parishioner expressed concern by saying, "You can accept or reject the Christian faith, but you have to at least present it!"

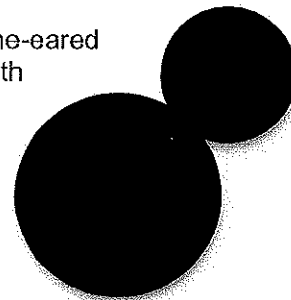
The church needs to determine what it wants its children & youth to know, feel and do with their Christian faith upon high school graduation before sending them off into parts unknown. Missing from the children and youth ministries are

- A set of core Christian educational competencies
- A scope and sequence of curriculum for birth to 18-years old
- Purposes for each program piece with a spiritual formation component
- Chosen Rites of Passage that happen consistently and reliably

Currently, St. Patrick's has no widely communicated process in place to ensure a well-rounded, comprehensive plan for what curriculum topics are being taught over the course of a student's journey through the ministry. Such an approach can lead to haphazard planning; the risk of skipping key spiritual teaching, lost milestones and faith anchors, and missed opportunities for parental engagement in conversations of faith.

### **One Eared Mickey Mouse**

Often churches and their separate ministries will function like a one-eared Mickey Mouse, meaning that the church and the children and youth ministries are largely two separate entities only connected by a small piece, which is usually finances, and facilities. Typically when this occurs, there are few opportunities for meaningful, intergenerational interaction.



A perfect illustration of this phenomenon took place at a recent Advent celebration that was designed to be a parish-wide event,

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allowing for all the different age groups to come together for fellowship. However, the execution of the event fell short in accomplishing its goals because the groups naturally separated: the adults socialized in the Parish Hall, the youth hung out in the Youth Room, and the children did crafts on their own in the hallway. Essentially no one was together!

Another reflection of this comes in the fact that about half as many youth attend Sunday morning worship services than they do Sunday school. There are likely a variety of reasons for their lack of participation in worship, but ultimately they do not see their presence in those services as vital to the larger life of the parish. One parent summed it up perfectly when they stated, "It would make sense to not have such an impenetrable firewall between the CGS and youth ministry."

### **No Farm Team**

Picture the youth ministry at St. Patrick's like a Major League Baseball team. They've got great youth on their team. There are dedicated adults filling the coaching roles. Church members are in the stands cheering the team on. As each year passes, "team members" (youth) will retire (graduate) and move on, so new players will be called up from the farm team (younger children aging up). The problem? The farm team bench is feeling a bit empty.

In other words, as classes in the St. Patrick's youth ministry graduate over the next few years, there aren't an equal amount of children in the church to replace even the current numbers, much less reflect any growth. Without an intentional plan in place to attract families with children into all that St. Patrick's has to offer, the youth ministry will be seeing a great decrease in numbers in the next few years.

### **Cracks in the Foundation**

One of the largest threats to the future sustainability of any ministry is a lack of a clear and workable structure for developing and maintaining the growth of the ministry. Some key organizational management pieces are missing from both departments.

In order for each ministry to develop, careful attention needs to be paid to the foundation and infrastructure, which will hold it together. Some of the critical pieces include:

- 18-month ministry calendars.
- Well-defined and functioning youth and children's committees.
- A children/youth/volunteer/parent Directory.
- Volunteer and committee job descriptions with expectations, objectives and resources.
- Clear policies and procedures.
- Major event notebooks that provide direction and structure for each event
- An organizational chart.
- Three-year revolving ministry goals with one-year benchmarks and succinct next steps.
- Solid, dependable and accessible database with attendance tracking.
- A system for quickly updating contact info.

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### **Missing Youth Ministry Volunteer Training**

While the children's ministry volunteers receive extensive training for the classroom, it appears as though the youth ministry volunteers receive almost no intentional guidance at all. Many of the volunteers have had success in developing relationships with the youth, but with proper training, their impact could be far more reaching and sustainable. In addition, having a proper training system in place will allow for new volunteers to better assimilate into the youth culture of the church.

### **Polarizing Tension Around the Children's Curriculum**

Varying different opinions were expressed about the CGS program. While some parishioners described the CGS offering as "dynamic," "enriching," and claimed that it was "life changing" for them as well as the kids, others described the experience as "pitiful," "boring," "isolated," and "rigid." One person said, "It doesn't encourage community formation," and a CGS graduate claimed, "It was Jesus school, but not in a good way and with no grades so you don't even know how you are doing." One thing that was true of everyone who spoke of the CGS program is that they had a very strong opinion of it! This inevitably leads to some tension around the program.

It is also worth noting that the majority of strong complaints about the program arose out of the Level III experience. For example, one parent claimed, "The younger level is fun, but older level is dry, and there is no fun built into it. It doesn't encourage any community formation. They didn't learn Bible stories."

### **Staffing Anxiety**

Whenever there's a transition in staffing, there's worry and concern over what happens next. St. Patrick's recently lost its youth minister to seminary and a full time position. Adults and youth alike are concerned about attracting the right person for their ministry. "We read *Sustainable Youth Ministry* and now we know what we were doing wrong," said one adult. Other adults expressed concern about whether the church would be able to attract someone for the financial package being offered. Another conversation centered around which should come first: the renovations or the hire. All to say, anxiety exists and a staffing plan is greatly needed.

### **Wanting Some Wiggle Room**

St. Patrick's offers a full morning for its parishioners! If families participate in Sunday school and attend one of the two worship services, they will be on campus for about three hours. While providing a full morning can be viewed favorably, it is important to make sure that the time is suitable for families with young children. Conversations with some younger families revealed that the length of time is just too great for their children, especially given the fact that there is little opportunity for the younger kids to get out some of their physical energy and do some wiggling! One of the phrases shared about the CGS program is that, "It is work, not play." The services are also lacking in intentional ways for the children to physically participate. The parishioners of St. Patrick's are a fun group of people and there are very likely so many ways for them to insert playful activities into their Sunday morning schedule to better engage their youngest members!

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal setting and infrastructure building for the children's and youth ministries. Target August 2016 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the children's and youth ministries 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 and youth ministries.
- 4) Establish a Children's and Youth Ministries Renovation Team, made up of four to five volunteers who are appointed by and report regularly to the Associate Rector. 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 children's and youth ministries 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 and youth ministries in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the children's and youth ministries.
  - Assisting the Renovation Team and Personnel Committee 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: Children and Youth Membership Tracking

Develop and implement a system for tracking the children and youth on the rolls at St. Patrick's. This system should be present for every youth and children's program and provide for:

- The ability for an electronic check-in system.
- Accessible children's and youth contact information.
- Nametag printing ability.
- An efficient way to update information.

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### **Pressure Point #2: Communication**

Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, children, youth, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the children's and youth pages of the church's website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc

### **Pressure Point #3: Christian Formation Plan**

Hold a Christian Formation Retreat to develop a well-rounded, comprehensive plan for what a child's discipleship path looks like over the course of a student's journey from birth through graduation. The plan should include:

- A set of core Christian educational competencies
- Birth to 18-years old scope and sequence
- Purposes for each program piece with a spiritual formation component
- Chosen rites of passage that happen consistently and reliably
- Memory Makers/Milestones
- Ages and Stages
- Curriculum Core Comparison charts
- Topical/Subject Calendar

### **Pressure Point #4: Outreach Events**

Intentionally plan and execute several visible, multi-generational outreach events that will be appealing to non-members in the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as parishioners who are not fully engaged in the life of the parish. These events should be widely advertised to the surrounding community, and allow both youth and children to exercise and experience Radical Hospitality. In addition, each event should have a planned system for tracking and following up with visitors. Some ideas for possible events might include:

- **An exciting and dynamic VBS program** for children that utilizes the youth as volunteers. This may even include a way for the children to present at Sunday worship at the end of the week, giving non-members a good reason to visit and experience what St. Patrick's has to offer on a Sunday morning.
- **A parking lot Trunk or Treat event** that provides a safe environment for children in the community to come in costume, get candy, and have their costume blessed! Visiting parents are all entered in a raffle for a fun prize, and all they have to do to enter is leave their email address so they can be contacted if they win!
- Hold **a Blessing of the Animals event** to celebrate the feast of St. Francis. Animals from the neighborhood can be blessed and given a tag for their collar that says, "I was blessed at St. Patrick's!"
- In the weeks prior to Christmas, and in lieu of the Christmas Pageant, look for a way to celebrate the birth of Christ in a way that is more visible and appealing to the surrounding community. One idea might be to arrange for **a Living Nativity Scene**, complete with luminaries, hot chocolate, and an intentional invitation to attend Christmas Eve services.
- Consider some fun and visible ways to **celebrate St. Patrick** on or near his feast day!

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- Offer a spring time event to the surrounding neighborhood. Perhaps something like an **Easter Egg Hunt!** When parents leave their contact information, they also receive a prize egg, filled with anything from a prayer for springtime, a fancy piece of chocolate, or a visit from a maid service for a good Spring-cleaning!

**RENOVATION TEAM TASK #2:** *Establishing a consensus for the direction of the children's and youth ministries 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 and youth 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 and youth ministries renovation process.
- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the children's and youth ministries 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
  - An organizational structure for the ministry
- **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 children and youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Children's and Youth Ministries Manual:** Develop a Children's and Youth Ministries Manual, including the most recent children's and youth directories, 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 and youth ministries event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the children's and youth ministries in

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the fall of 2015. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.

## **DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS**

- **Filling the Staff Void:** Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan for the youth ministry, including the professional component that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth. We suggest filling the staffing void by:
  - 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 hired youth minister should fill the “architect,” “contractor,” or “laborer” role.
  - Engage Ministry Architects in the search and hiring process as well as to support the success of the interim youth leader.
- **Leadership Development:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the children’s and youth ministries 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 and youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 25 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer children’s and youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

## **DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES**

- **Create More Wiggle Room:** Determine ways to insert opportunities for playful activities into the Sunday morning schedule to better engage children.
- **Weekly Youth Group Gathering:** Explore the opportunity for a weekly, afternoon youth group gathering that would allow for the youth to continue to build on their already strong sense of community.

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## **PROPOSED TIMELINE**

The following provides St. Patrick's Episcopal Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term children's and youth ministries.

*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.*

### **March 2015**

#### **Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins,**

##### **Outcomes:**

- This report has been presented to the Vestry for the strategic renovation of the children's and youth ministries and the Vestry has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Retreat has been scheduled for April.
- The Renovation Team for children and youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Retreat.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the children's and youth ministries. They have received a copy of this report and timeline.
- Immediate volunteer needs for the children's and youth ministries have been determined and slots have been filled.
- Mechanisms for monthly on-going education and coaching for the children's and youth ministries key volunteers and staff have been provided.
- Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.

### **April 2015**

#### **Focus: Renovation Underway, Quick Start Retreat, Calendars, Volunteers, Attendance Tracking, Pressure Points**

##### **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 children's and youth ministries renovation process. The Renovation Team for children and youth has held their first meeting and understood their role for the next 18 months.
- A Christian Formation Retreat has been scheduled for June. The retreat will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how

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these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum. "Save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families.

- Work has begun on the 2015-2016 children's and youth ministries calendar.
- A fishing pond of 25 potential volunteers in children's and youth ministries has been created.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the children's and youth ministries.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2015-2016.
- Pressure Point #1 has been addressed: Systems for tracking children and youth have been established and implemented.
- Discussion of possible multi-generational outreach events that will be appealing to non-members in the surrounding neighborhoods are being researched and considered.

#### **May 2015**

#### **Focus: Database, Communications, Fall Kick-off, Calendar**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Work on a cloud-based children's and youth databases has continued, collecting the most recent information for families, youth, and children. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families, youth, and children. Each child and teen has been classified in the following categories:
  - **Active Children and Youth** are the ones whose families are members of St. Patrick's and have attended at least once in the past year – plus visitors who have become a regular part of the group. They should show up in your printed children's and youth directories.
  - **Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you'll want to regularly pursue these children and youth, whether they ever show up or not.
  - **Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.
  - **Visitor Inactive** are the ones who may have visited, but you are confident they will never become a regular part of the group. This group requires no follow up. But you'll want to keep their information for the occasional big event to which you'll want to invite everyone you know.
  - **First Timers** refer to visitors who have attended a program for the first time. You'll want to have a process for capturing their information on their first visit and follow up with them within one week of their visit.

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- Pressure Point #2 has been addressed: Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.
- Promotion of the Christian Formation Retreat has begun.
- The 2015-2016 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed.
- Pressure Point #4 has been addressed: A calendar for multi-generational outreach events that will be appealing to non-members in the surrounding neighborhoods has been completed.
- A Fall Kick-off for the children's and youth ministries has been scheduled for August. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.

#### **June 2015**

#### **Focus: Christian Formation Retreat, Compliance, Database, Volunteer Thank You Outcomes:**

- Pressure Point #3 has been addressed: Interested staff, volunteers, and parents have gathered for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum. At the retreat, the team has determined
  - A set of core Christian educational competencies
  - Birth to 18-years old scope and sequence
  - Purposes for each program piece with a spiritual formation component
  - Rites of Passage
  - Memory Makers/Milestones
  - Ages and Stages
  - Curriculum Core Comparison charts
  - Topical/Subject Calendar
  - Discipleship Path Plan (including the Rites of Passage & jumping off/on points)
- A database of all children, youth, and their families has been compiled and each person has been "tagged" with a category.
- All pressure points have been addressed.
- A thank you event for all children's and youth volunteers has taken place.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the children's and youth ministries.

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## **July 2015**

**Focus: Volunteers, Calendars, Compliance, Participation Goals, Curriculum**

### **Outcomes:**

- All volunteer needs for the 2015-2016 school year for the children's and youth ministries have been filled.
- All children's and youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2016 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The effectiveness of this past year's curriculum has been reviewed and decisions have been made for any necessary changes for the upcoming school year
- The 2015-2016 children's and youth ministries calendar has been distributed to all children, youth, and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church's calendar.

## **August 2015**

**Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers, Curriculum, Leadership Launch, Fall Kick-Off**

### **Outcomes:**

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly.
- A volunteer application, an application process, and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year and has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and, equips them to serve the children and youth of St. Patrick's. The Safe-guarding God's Children Policy has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the children's and youth ministries that welcomed children, youth, and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about, and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants felt energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.

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- A Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for November and “save the date” cards have been sent to all families.

### **September 2015**

#### **Focus: Directory, Communication, Strategic Staffing**

##### **Outcomes**

- Communication methods currently being used to promote the children's and youth ministries and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- The collection of updated information from each child, youth, and family has been completed and the database for the children's and youth ministries has been updated with that new information. Every child and teen has been “tagged” with a category.
- A strategic staffing plan is being developed and implemented with the youth minister search committee.

### **October 2015**

#### **Focus: Compliance, Major Event Notebooks, Budget**

##### **Outcomes**

- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the Safeguarding policies.
- 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.
- A detailed 2016 budget for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each children's and youth event.

### **November 2015**

#### **Focus: Visioning Retreat, Attendance, Playful Activates, MIA Children and Youth**

##### **Outcomes:**

- The processes for tracking and recording attendance in all children's and youth programs are continuing to be implemented.
- A Visioning Retreat with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the children's and youth ministries (mission statement, core values, goals, and structure).

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- MIA children and youth have been systematically contacted.
- Opportunities to insert playful activities for children on Sunday morning are being explored

#### **December 2015**

##### **Focus: Summer Calendar, Benchmarks, Catch Up, Playful Activates**

##### **Outcomes:**

- Relax...Breathe...
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2016.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- Playful activities for children on Sunday morning have been decided upon and implemented into the programming.

#### **January 2016**

##### **Focus: Calendars, Major Event Notebooks, Volunteer Training**

##### **Outcomes:**

- Major event notebooks for each major children's and youth event have been completed.
- Work has begun on the 2016-2017 children's and youth ministries calendar.
- The summer 2016 calendar has been completed.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers have received support and training in their specific roles. A "check-in" with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.

#### **February 2016**

##### **Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Youth Group**

##### **Outcomes:**

- The 2016-2017 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2017 including a Fall Kick-off.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
  - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.

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- Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
- All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2016-2017 school year.
- The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
- Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the children's and youth ministries.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2016-2017.
- The possibility of having a weekly, afternoon youth group gathering is being explored.

#### **March 2016**

##### **Focus: Database, Youth Group Decision**

##### **Outcomes:**

- The collection of updated information from each child, youth, and family has been completed and the database for children and youth has been updated with that new information.
- The decision has been made about whether or not to add a weekly, afternoon youth group gathering to the schedule. If it has been accepted, a youth group calendar for the 2016-2017 school year has been determined.

#### **April 2016**

##### **Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Manual**

##### **Outcomes:**

- Volunteer recruitment has continued.
- A manual for the children's and youth ministries has been completed, including
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
  - Volunteer directory
  - Volunteer training agendas and notes
  - Attendance records
  - Annual calendar
  - Results-based job descriptions
  - Game plans and new initiatives
  - Meeting agendas/minutes for the Children's and Youth Committees.
  - Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
  - Budget and other financial documents
  - Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the

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- year
- o Compliance documents

#### **May 2016**

##### **Focus: Directory, Reflection and Re-assessment, Volunteer Thank You**

##### **Outcomes:**

- With the most recent information on children, youth, and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers have been created to be distributed at the Fall Kick-off.
- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the children's and youth ministries.
- Current pressure points have been named.

#### **June 2016**

##### **Focus: Compliance, Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Curriculum, Fall Kick-off**

##### **Outcomes:**

- All children's and youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall children's and youth programs.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the children's and youth ministries that will help regularly deal with on-going "behind the scenes" ministry maintenance.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.

#### **July 2016**

##### **Focus: Strategic Staffing, Benchmarks, Major Event Notebooks**

##### **Outcomes:**

- With the changes in the children's and youth ministries, the staffing to meet the size and scope of the children's and youth ministries has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped

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and new one-year benchmarks have been established.

- All volunteer needs for the 2016-2017 school year for the children's and youth ministries have been filled.
- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the children's and youth staff to pass along to the next year's coordinator.

### **August 2016**

#### **Focus: Sustainability, Leadership Launch, Curriculum**

##### **Outcomes:**

- A timeline for the next 12 months has been created that included game plans for the current pressure points and items from the online diagnostic.
- Game plans have been put in place to sustain the processes and procedures during the renovation
- Ongoing coaching has been secured and a sustainability plan has been put in place.
- The staff and Renovation Team have celebrated what God has done with their 18-month investment.
- The Renovation Teams has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the children's and youth volunteers and focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The Safe-guarding God's Children Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.

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## THE MINISTRY ARCHITECTS TEAM SERVING ST. PATRICK'S



**Stephanie Caro - Senior Consultant:** Stephanie Caro has been involved in ministry to children, youth and adults in the local church for 34 years. Her humorous, straightforward style keeps her busy presenting and coaching at conferences, training events, camps, mission trips, retreats, churches, etc. Her best-selling book was released in 2010, "Thriving Youth Ministry in Smaller Churches," published by Group/Simply Youth Ministry. Her next book, "99 Thoughts for the Smaller Church Youth Worker" came out in Jan 2011. She is also a contributing author to numerous ministry

resources and curriculum including Children's Ministry Magazine and a regular column, "Smaller Church Youth Ministry," in Group Magazine. In addition, Stephanie is Senior Consultant for both the children's and youth ministry divisions of Mark DeVries' Ministry Architects out of Nashville, TN. Check out her blog at [www.morethandodgeball.com](http://www.morethandodgeball.com), part of the Simply Youth Ministry blog network. Stephanie and her husband, Steve, live in Houston, TX. Their 7 kids are all grown and mostly gone!

**Katie McRee - Staff Consultant:** Katie has had a passion for helping young people find their identity in Christ since she was a teenager herself, so after graduating from the University of Florida with a degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, youth ministry was an obvious fit. Katie is the Youth Minister at St. David's Episcopal in Roswell, Georgia where she has been serving since July of 2004. She heads up all things around the middle and high school students and loves every bit of it! She teaches and shares about the things she's most passionate about, creates adventures, and works with an amazing team of volunteers who have a passion for the Lord and students. After being at the same church for 10 years, Katie has come to learn that every year holds its own challenges and blessings. In addition to her ministry, Katie enjoys movies, a good book, being active, and is a little bit of a dancing machine! She is married to an amazing man named Jeremy who is an integral part of the youth program, and has two young children: Rollins and Harlow.



**Jeff Dunn-Rankin - VP of Consulting** Jeff has been Director of Youth at Christ United Methodist Church in Venice, FL since 1998. He has consulted with large and small youth and children's ministries from California to Florida and is a frequent speaker at events from the Group/Simply Convention to KidMin.

He is a regular columnist for Group Magazine, and In 2011, Jeff wrote two books, Before You Hire a Youth Pastor and The Indispensable Youth Pastor (Group Publishing), both co-authored with YMA President & Founder, Mark DeVries. Before beginning church ministry, Jeff was managing editor of the *Charlotte Sun* newspaper. Jeff is a graduate of the Sewanee: The University of the South and has a Masters in Business Administration from Vanderbilt University. He currently lives in Venice, Florida, with his wife Mary Lou, and two children, Matthew and Katie.

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