



# YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## *Christ the King Lutheran Church Richmond, Virginia*

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### **BACKGROUND**

Christ the King Lutheran Church has served Christ and the Richmond area for just over a half-century. Church members describe their church family as “warm,” “un-intimidating,” and “spiritual.”

The church is committed to being a witness around the corner and around the world. This core value is reflected in the congregation’s work with a nearby food bank, the CARITAS program, and the Virginia Supportive Housing program. And, in 2015, members traveled to El Salvador to work side by side with their brothers and sisters at Cristo Rey Lutheran Church.

The membership of the church is around 690, and on an average week, 220 people attend one of the church’s two worship services at 8:30 or 11:00. Worship is joyfully liturgical with Holy Communion celebrated in both services. Sunday school is available between the two services.

The church is led by co-pastors Randy Lohr and Chris Carr. Pastor Lohr has served since 2009, and Pastor Carr recently joined the church in late 2014.

Nine-year pastor Stephen Bohannon left to serve another church in late 2013, and although the congregation loves him and misses him, the transition has been fairly smooth.

Many families say that one of the things that drew them to Christ the King was its strong commitment to children, youth and young families. All three pastors in recent history have a passion for youth ministry. Currently, there are approximately 55 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>



graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 16 of them participate in one or more of the major programs: Sunday school, worship, youth group or Confirmation. Throughout the year, the youth participate in a number of popular Synod events and retreats. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as “tight” and “a fun place where you can learn,” while many of the same people say it is “inconsistent” and “unfocused” and “restarting.”

The church has a 2015 budget of \$616,000. The youth ministry has a program budget in the neighborhood of \$5,000. In addition, a portion of time is invested by both pastors and Christian Education Coordinator Renée Ballentine, bringing the total investment in youth ministry closer to \$30,000.

There are usually three adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year. A youth planning team of parents and volunteers meet about every other month to discuss youth issues.

The youth spend their time in many places throughout the church, including the sanctuary, the outside grounds, fellowship hall and the education wing. (They are listed here in descending order of eye appeal.)

The church is in a time of clergy transition and is entering its Jubilee Year time of reflection and planning. Because of that ideal timing – and because the youth ministry has seen a slow decline in attendance over the past five years or so – the church leadership decided to take a closer look at the youth ministry.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 46 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.

## YOUTH MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding youth ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” Youth ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. Those youth ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

It has been Ministry Architects’ experience that though these three rents, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, they are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by youth, parents, staff, and the congregation at large.

**Rent #1: NUMBERS**—A significant percentage of youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church’s ministry. It is important for this target number to be clearly agreed on by the church leaders and the staff. Ironically, when target numbers are not



established, the youth ministry is typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

The consensus is that this rent is not being paid. Students and adults alike agree that attendance is “too small.”

**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.”

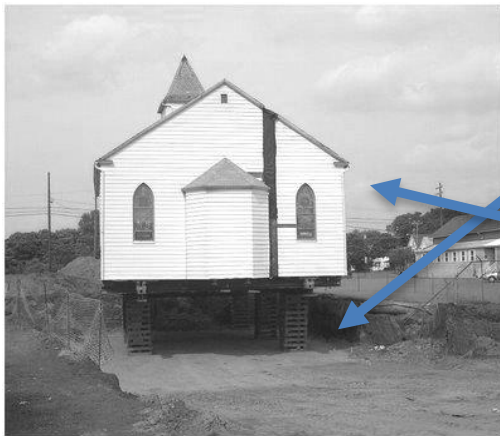
This rent appears to be partially paid. Middle school Sunday school recently lost focus, youth group seems to be getting some traction, while high school Sunday school is a steady presence, and confirmation appears to be a home run.

**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.

This rent might also be categorized as partially paid. There’s lots of hope, and the regular attenders love their programs, but there is also a sense of uncertainty and confusion that muddies the waters.

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

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:



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

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

**1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshipping



congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 220 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 22 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders per week. Or in the case of Christ the King, the norm might be better stated as 19 or so 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders per week. The current weekly attendance of 16 youth is slightly below what could be expected from the ministry. About a third of those 16 students only attend the corporate worship service.

Note, this also means that in the Golden Days when youth group had 20-30 students, it was often exceeding what a church this size can typically sustain.

**2) \$1,200 per Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$35,000 (mostly in the 10-hours-each that the pastors typically invest in youth ministry each week) Christ the King is making a significant investment in youth ministry. Typically, a youth ministry with a target of about 22 youth would spend closer to \$26,000.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including the pastors and the Christian Education Coordinator, the church has the equivalent of a 20-hour per week staff person. According to this rule of thumb, Christ the King has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 25 youth on a weekly basis. So the current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth – up to about 25 youth.

**4) 1 Volunteer 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 three weekly volunteers, Christ the King is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 5.3 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 15 youth weekly. The current team seems to be the right size for the current ministry of 16 youth. However, if the church wants to expand its impact, it will need to recruit 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 team 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.

Christ the King has an exceptionally strong line-up of world-class Laborers. Even the pastors invest much of their time in this role, when it comes to youth ministry. The church will benefit greatly from naming a person or team to be the architect, and also tapping someone to act as the General Contractor.

## **ASSETS**

### ***Strengths to protect in the current youth ministry***

#### **Commitment From the Top**

Youth ministries all over America wish they had the level of clergy support that Christ the King enjoys. Both pastors love to spend time with youth, and the students know it. They feel the love, and they love their pastors right back. Here are some of their comments about Pastor Randy:

- “Whatever happens he doesn't get upset.”
- “He laughs a lot, which is nice. And he plays the guitar which is cool.”
- “He asks you how you are, and he asks everybody’s opinion.”
- “If you asked him to say something bad about someone else, he wouldn’t do it, even if you paid him a million dollars.”

And they already love Pastor Chris, too:

- “He's fun.”
- “He's upbeat.”
- “He has his own spin on games.”
- “He keeps things active and interesting.”

What’s more, the church is blessed with a beloved Christian Education Coordinator. Here’s a sampling of what parents said about Renée:

- “She has loads of energy.”
- “I like that she comes from an education background.”
- “She’s so warm and optimistic.”
- “She’s sweet. So sweet.”

#### **Fantastic Leaders**

Maybe God just likes you guys better, because this congregation is loaded with talent. The volunteer leaders are committed and capable. They are kid magnets who also know how to guide the students closer to Christ. And in addition to the volunteers who are active, the church has lots and lots of capable adults who are currently on the bench (both veteran players and prospectives). These are adults who have terrific skill sets and the self-confidence to make a difference. The students rave about their advisors.



Artie, Marina, Nate, and Tom all got multiple shout-outs from parents and youth. They bring a combination of fun and seriousness that students love and parents trust. Christ the King is blessed.

### **And, Wow, Terrific Youth**

These students are smart and kind. Warm and inviting. And they come to church, not just for fellowship, but to learn more about their relationship with Christ. Many of them are very articulate about their faith. When asked what Christians do and believe, here's what they said:

- "It means you believe that Jesus died on a cross to save us, and we will have eternal life."
- "You have to ask for forgiveness."
- "They help the greater community."
- "They do fun things."
- "They forgive people – even if they don't ask for it."
- "They try to act the way Jesus would act or at least how Jesus would want them to act."

Parents, be proud.

### **A Strong Synod Partnership**

In most youth ministries, the leaders spend a large piece of their time planning big, blow-out events that will engage teens and bring them closer to God. But Christ the King is blessed with a strong set of youth events at the Synod level, so the youth advisors and clergy can focus on the weekly programs and personal relationships with students. Students look forward to these events all year.

### **Family-Friendly Vibe**

As many congregation members will attest, Christ the King has a Family-friendly feel to it. The way the church welcomes families is more than the sum of its parts, but includes the way families are included in the newsletters, brochures and bulletin boards. It's the fresh look of the sanctuary. It's in the friendly faces of other young families as well as the retirees. "We were attracted to this place by the other families we saw," noted one parent.



## **Great Instincts**

The various leaders of the youth ministry have a strong handle on how to do youth ministry – from the clergy to the volunteer advisors, they have the skills that would make them the kind of youth ministers that many churches would be eager to hire to run the show. They know how to engage young people, they instinctively know what the students need, and they have great ideas. The church doesn't need any more "good ideas." Christ the King is already sitting on a gold mine.

## **A Commitment to Family Ministries**

More and more churches are recognizing that the best and deepest Christian Education happens at home. Multiple studies have shown that mom and dad are the biggest influencers of a child's spiritual journey. Christ the King is taking steps toward supporting those parents. The Family Nights that Renée organizes and the Parents-With-Small-Children small group are both great moves toward connecting parents so they can learn from each other, support each other, and simply do life together.

## **The Ninth Grade Bubble**

There are several factors that explain the large youth group of six years ago. One of them was certainly the large, well-bonded senior class. Here's the good news: the freshman class at Christ the King is also pretty big – 13 on the rolls. And most of them are joyfully and deeply engaged in the Confirmation experience right now. That represents a terrific opportunity for growth and momentum.

## **Confirmation**

The pastors made a large commitment of time – and invested some political capital – with this year's changes in Confirmation. The schedule changes got mixed reviews and things have been a little confusing in the transition. But here's the good news: It's paying off. Confirmation is the most popular program among the students – evidence that the Gospel can be compelling to teenagers.

- "They gave us a nice learning Bible.
- "And they're motivating us to use it!"
- "They are actually teaching us stuff."
- "I don't learn well if you just talk to me, but Confirmation isn't boring at all."
- "Pastor Randy and Pastor Chris – I like them both a lot. It makes you want to go more because they're fun."



## CHALLENGES

### *Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward*

#### **Who's in charge?**

When adults were asked, "Who's in charge of the youth ministry?" they would look left, look right, then grin a thin grin:

"Well, that's a good question," they'd say.

"I don't know," they'd say.

"Marina, maybe?" someone would guess.

"Well, I think maybe we all are," said another.

"There are so many different hands, but no point person," observed one parent.

The clearest need in the youth ministry – the root challenge that gives birth to many of the other concerns – is that no one is sure who is in charge. The buck needs a place to stop.

Most youth ministries this size have a staff person who works about 15-20 hours per week, acting as the General Contractor for all the willing Laborers. This staff person "equips the saints for the work of ministry" as Paul says in Ephesians 4. The leader recruits and equips volunteers, makes sure that there's a plan for success and that the team is working that plan.

Until Christ the King designates a staff person to be the point person, all the great ideas, great volunteers and amazing students will be like the proverbial rocking chair: plenty of motion but not a lot of forward movement.

#### **"It's Confusing"**

That's a phrase repeated often in the listening groups. Students said it when they described the youth group schedule changes – like the Mystery of the Disappearing 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class. Parents used it to describe the organizational chart. Leaders used it to describe surprising changes in the calendar.

The ministry is suffering from a condition that might be called "Change Fatigue."

"Why did we change that?"

"I don't actually know."





“It’s confusing.”

There are a number of causes for all these changes. One is the normal result of clergy transition. Another is the heartfelt desire to make the programs better – so new Great Ideas keep popping up.

Another cause is that this an accommodating church – it still has the small church desire to make everybody happy. So, to use a football analogy, midway through the play, someone “calls an audible,” and dates are changed, times are altered, and the system is tweaked. That sort of quick change is easier to pull off in a single-pastor, small church. Christ the King has grown to a point where sticking to the plan is going to be more and more important, at least in the short term. Even if it means disappointing a few families or students.

“It would just be better if in September, they said, ‘This is what we’re going to do’ - instead changing it week to week.” (These wise words came from a middle school student.)

### **Communication Breakdown**

Communication is a challenge for all churches, and with the additional confusion at Christ the King, it’s no surprise that the frustration level is a little high. Some of the communication issues will take care of themselves as a point person is named, plans are made further ahead of time, and fewer changes are made. Still, it will be worth noting that communication is a little like tossing a ball: there are two parts – the throw and the catch.

As the church re-evaluates its “throw” strategy, it will need to face the frustrating reality that we now have to communicate the same message several ways. Some people will see it on Facebook or Instagram, some by text, and others by email. And that list of media will change every couple years.

Meanwhile, the congregation will need to take responsibility for the “catch.” Most church staff members can tell you stories about the many times they’ve asked for a response and heard nothing back. It’s just not fair to say, “I never heard about the meeting,” when what we mean is, “I rarely open those emails you send me.”

### **Killing the Golden Geese**

Christ the King is blessed with fantastic volunteers.

And they are tired.

“I would never do it again,” said one disenchanted ex-volunteer.

“We are set up for the burn-out of our volunteers,” said another, noting that there has been a cycle of superheroes who are applauded, and who then leave.



Meanwhile, there are additional volunteers ready to work behind the scenes and directly with the students. “If you don’t ask for assistance, you don’t get it,” said one parent matter-of-factly. Of course it’s more complicated than that. Every church leader has stories of asking four people for help and getting four “no” answers. However, after working with over 700 churches, Ministry Architects has never found a church where the right number of volunteers weren’t already in the congregation. If someone will cast a compelling vision and assure them that each person is only going to carry a manageable load, the team can be rebuilt.

“I’m willing to help if they ask,” said one parent. “You know, I should probably just go up and tell them that.”

If you do, you’ll get a nice warm hug.

### **Lots and Lots of Ideas**

That sounds like an asset, not a challenge, right? But there are a few problems attached with all the great ideas (and they really are great).

- People are confused about who has the privilege or responsibility to approve a good idea.
- There are more good ideas than one church this size can execute well.
- Currently, the church has trouble designing strategic steps to accomplish its great ideas. The church gets an A+ in Idea Generation and a C+ in Idea Execution.
- The next great idea often drowns out the great idea that we were just starting to execute, so momentum dies on the old idea.

Until the ministry has a clear leader, a clear vision, and a clear plan for selecting and executing the great ideas, they will simply be a pile of beautiful pearls without a string to tie them together.

### **Fuzzy Vision**

Christ the King doesn’t have a clear, unified vision for what “success” means for its youth ministry. Until there is a shared vision, the youth ministry will continue to struggle with a “stop and start,” “we tried this once” hit-or-miss approach to what might work.

I don’t have a good sense of what the church expects from its youth,” observed one parent. “They went to Winter Cel, and people say, ‘They’re active.’ Is that active?”

In fact, most people in the listening groups had a hard time articulating what they wanted for the youth ministry – beyond stability, leadership and more attendance. Once those



corners are squared, perhaps the students, parents and leaders will be ready to dream about God's big plans for this ministry.

Without a clear destination, it's like planning a family vacation: everyone gets on the bus but nobody's decided where to go... so the minivan never leaves the driveway.

### **Lack of a Critical Mass**

Several parents and students indicated that many youth choose to stay away because they are relatively certain that "no one" their age will be there. And in fact, more than a few students can tell about days when "I was the only one in the class." "You're almost scared to come back because you feel so disconnected," observed one parent. The irony, of course, is that if all the students who think no one is coming – would come, then they would certainly see a nice-sized group. Still, it's a very real marketing challenge and a barrier to fellowship for several students.

### **Missing Infrastructure**

In transitioning ministries, where so much is changing, it's more important than ever to get organized and stay organized. A number of adults expressed their deep desire to create a stronger infrastructure and get things into place.

Missing ministry tools include:

- A Child Protection policy
- Volunteer job descriptions
- Attendance records for every program
- Up-to-date student database
- Volunteer recruiting needs list
- A Fishing Pond of potential volunteers
- Game plans for following up with newcomers and MIA
- 12-month calendar of all upcoming youth events
- A separate calendar /checklist of all the behind the scenes tasks required to execute and maintain the programs
- A Youth Ministry org chart
- A 3-to-4-year Scope and Sequence plan that outlines what topics students will learn in Sunday school and youth group
- Major Event Notebooks that collect and retain the planning documents for events that happen year after year

### **An Untapped Resource**

Leadership opportunities are some of the best ways to retain students as they get older. The students at Christ the King say they are ready to take on some responsibility for the



youth ministry. Recognizing that they are busy people, they still said they would like to take on the challenge of creating a more welcoming, more inviting youth group that reaches out to other students. They just don't have a structure for having that impact. Yet.

### **Can We Talk about the Education Wing?**

Just about everything at Christ the King says that youth are a priority. Everything but the youth space, itself. "It does smell like my Granny's basement," said one parent. Another added: "We get a lot of visitors to VBS, and as a parent, I would look in there and go 'ewwww.'"

The parents recognize that there are budget constraints, but they would like some assurance that there is a specific solution on the horizon for this mildewy space with the broken roof.

Let's switch things up," suggested one parent. "Put the kids in the conference room and send the adults into Allergy Alley. I bet we get a solution pretty quickly."



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target June 2016 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the youth ministry knowing that incremental successes will be seen throughout the renovation.
- 2) Invite the Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
- 3) Present this report to the Church Council, 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 one of co-pastors. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff, teachers and advisors 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 for three months to ensure that the process launches well:
  - Work with the Renovation Team to build momentum. Use Ministry Architect's experience and large vault of documents to shorten the learning curve.
  - Assist the pastors in developing an effective team and basic processes before Pastor Randy's summer sabbatical.
  - Help the youth ministry overcome the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the youth ministry.



## RENOVATION TEAM TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points

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

**Pressure Point #1: Name the Leader** – Bring stability and clarity to the youth ministry by asking the co-pastors to decide which of them will be the point person for youth ministry at Christ the King. Both pastors would continue to have a relational role in the ministry – it’s in their blood – but one of them would step up as the General Contractor who

- Recruits and coaches the volunteers
- Makes sure that calendars and plans are developed with input from leaders and participants well in advance and then shared with everyone.
- Is the go-to person for questions and decisions about the ministry
- Facilitates and casts a shared vision

Some of those functions could eventually be shared by volunteer partners, but at the end of the day, the pastor would still be responsible.

**Pressure Point #2: Communicate the Schedule** – Create a one-sheet flyer – suitable for sticking to a refrigerator – that explains the dates and times of all the programs and events through the end of the school year. Email it, hand it out, put it on Facebook and Instagram – and then stick to it.

- Note: This will require that a decision be made about the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school class. Ministry Architects recommends that those students continue to meet with the high school class through the end of summer. Leaders can then take time to determine the best plan for the upcoming school year.

**Pressure Point #3: Fortify the Team** – Name March and April as the annual Volunteer Recruitment Season. The season includes the following activities:

- **Job Clarity:** Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry.
- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team. Some will do relational ministry with youth while others work behind the scenes.
  - Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs.
  - Create a broad “fishing pond” list of at least 40 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions.

**Pressure Point #4: Give the advisors the summer off.** Reframe youth group as a series of 4 or 5 House Parties for the summer months, each one hosted by a different youth family. Of course the advisors are welcome to come hang out, but they have no official duties.



**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:***

**FIRST PRIORITY: BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND STABILITY**

- **Host a “Quick Start” Retreat:** Invite the Renovation Team clergy and interested volunteers to participate in a six-hour Quick Start Retreat in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The retreat also jump-starts any tasks that need to take place in the first three months, and builds momentum for the youth ministry renovation process.
- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish a 12-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission trip”).
- **Compliance Documents:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and all adults working with any youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth activities.
- **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. Consider using the IFTTT.com to communicate through several media by only hitting the send button once.
- **Marketing:** Establish clear church-wide marketing processes that allow parents, youth, leaders, and the broader church to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.
- **Youth Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, a 12-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major youth ministry event.
- **Planning Ahead:** Declare March as the month when – every year – youth ministry leaders and interested participants get together to plan ahead. The annual exercise should include:



- A fresh look at the mission, values and goals of the youth ministry
- An evaluation of the ministry's recent events and current programs, based on the mission and goals, Decisions about what programs and events should be part of the next school year.
- Creating a calendar of events and programs for the next school year.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2015. Use that event to cast the vision, share the calendar, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.
- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry, 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
- **Christian Formation:** Gather a short-term team for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished:
  - Develop a set of core competencies that the church would like students to have before they graduate.
  - Determine a Scope and Sequence for what will be taught over a 3-to-4-year cycle in order to accomplish the learning goals.
  - Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.

## NEXT PRIORITY: DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **Solidify the Tradition of “Volunteer Recruitment Season”:** Ensure that the steps described in Pressure Point #3 of this report become part of the annual Spring-time rhythm of the youth ministry.
- **Rewrite the Christian Ed Coordinator’s Job Description:** Acknowledging that the Christian Education Coordinator’s hours have been cut in half, rewrite the job description to allow her to focus nearly all her ten hours on Children’s Ministry and Family Ministry.





- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each ministry staff member develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.
- **Student Leadership Development:** Develop a written game plan for harnessing the passions and gifts of the students who want to have an impact on their youth ministry. As you consider their mission, steer away from creating an elected body of legislators; instead, lean toward a team of students with a specific mission and impact.

A few of the Christ the King youth already expressed an interest in increasing the “Welcome Factor” in youth activities. They believe that will increase stability and attendance.

- **Volunteer Engagement:** Create a rhythm of meetings and one-on-one sessions that allow the pastor to learn from and train the volunteers. For tips on this process, see the free video on Ministry Architects: “Equipping Your Volunteer Team” and consider the book “Youth Leader Training on the Go” by Dunn-Rankin and DeVries which offers 24 shareable videos.
- **Who’s in Charge, the Sequel:** After researching the best practices at other co-pastored churches and after developing the processes and communication systems that have allowed one of the co-pastors to be the point person for youth ministry, determine ways to replicate that process in the other ministry areas of the church.

## FINALLY: DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Sunday School Plan:** Develop a Sunday school strategy for the 2015-16 school year that takes into account the needs of the 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. A short-term team of leaders and parents should consider:
  - The Synod system of organizing its special events for 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> graders, 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> graders and high schoolers.
  - The current 5<sup>th</sup> grade class is a large bubble of 10-plus students.
  - The oldest students in any class will always wish they were in the next-oldest class.
  - With a youth group of 10 to 20 people, there is always a tension between these two truths:



- Students prefer to be with others students their own age, and it's easier to teach age-appropriate topics when middle school and high school classes are separate.
  - Most youth who come to a class with just two students won't come back. And a class that averages four students will often have weeks where only two students show up.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- **Youth Contact:** Develop and implement processes for ensuring that each youth on the rosters receives an encouragement by mail, email, text or social media from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a quarter.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- **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 Christ the King.
- **Facilities:** Explore the possibilities for a renovation or complete rebuild of the Education Wing. Create a reasonable timeline, based on the church's current budget and level of indebtedness. Propose options for the above to the Church Council for revision or approval.
- **Family Ministry:** Plan one or two family events throughout the year focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.



## PROPOSED TIMELINE

*The following timeline provides Christ the King Lutheran Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for a sustainable, deep-impact youth ministry. Please give yourselves permission to only think about one month at a time. Step by step, the changes will come.*

### February 2015

#### Focus: Starting Right

#### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Church Council, and they have been asked for their full support of this plan for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry.
- The church's Prayer Team has a copy of the Assessment Report and has been invited to undergird this entire process with prayer.
- A "Quick Start Retreat" has been scheduled for March. All Renovation Team members, clergy, youth volunteers and other strategic thinkers have been invited to participate.
- The Youth Ministry Renovation Team has been recruited, and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place prior to the Quick Start Retreat.
- Work has begun on the 2015-2016 youth ministry calendar.
- To help bring stability and clarity to the youth ministry, the co-pastors have decided which of them will be the point person for youth ministry at Christ the King. This General Contractor is the one who
  - Recruits and coaches the volunteers
  - Makes sure that calendars and plans are developed with input from leaders and participants well in advance and then shared with everyone.
  - Is the go-to person for questions and decisions about the ministry
  - Develops and casts a shared visionSome of those functions could eventually be shared by volunteer partners, but at the end of the day, the pastor would still be responsible.
- There is a one-sheet flyer – suitable for sticking to a refrigerator – that explains the dates and times of all the programs and events through the end of the school year. It has been emailed, handed out, put on the bulletin board, Facebook and Instagram.
  - Note: This will require that a decision be made about the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade



Sunday school class. Ministry Architects recommends that those students continue to meet with the high school class through the end of summer. Leaders can then take time to determine the best plan for the upcoming school year.

- Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect and coach for the first three months of the renovation process, ensuring a firm launch and building momentum before Pastor Lohr's sabbatical.

## **March 2015**

### **Focus: Quick Start Retreat, Job Clarity**

#### **Outcomes:**

- The Church Council has endorsed the Strategic Timeline presented in this Assessment Report.
- The Christian Ed Coordinator's Job Description has been rewritten to acknowledge that her hours have been cut in half. The new job description allows her to focus nearly all her ten hours on Children's Ministry and Family Ministry.
- The Renovation Team held its first meeting, and they have been oriented to their unique role.
- A Quick Start Retreat has taken place in which the Renovation Team, clergy and some key volunteers launched the renovation process and addressed the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report. The retreat jump-started the items in the first three months of the timeline.
- Before the Quick Start Retreat, there is a written proposal (including days and times) for all weekly programs and major special events from September 2015 through August 2016. (Refer to the recommendations listed under "Sunday School Plan.")
- The following documents are developed during the Quick Start Retreat, and within two weeks after the Quick Start Retreat, they are finalized:
  - There is a finalized version of the Calendar for all weekly programs and major special events from September 2015 through August 2016 including an intentional strategy for how Sunday school classes will be divided in the 2015-16 school year.
  - There are results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry. The job descriptions cover all current



positions and also include additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

- There is a clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
- There is a broad “fishing pond” list of at least 40 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
- Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.

## **April 2015**

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

#### **Outcomes:**

- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2015-2016.
  - The volunteer Needs List and the potential volunteers Fishing Pond list has been merged and top draft picks have been determined.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to youth ministry.
  - A small team of staff and lay people have been trained in how to recruit well, and the “smile and dial” process of recruiting.
- A written Communication Plan has been developed 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. IFTTT.com was one of the tools considered.
- A Fall Kick-off for the youth ministry has been scheduled for September. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off. The Kick-Off is designed to launch the new school year with excitement and also share important information so families can plan ahead.



**May 2015**

**Focus: Compliance, Database**

**Outcomes:**

- Work on the youth databases has begun, collecting the most recent information for families and youth. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families and youth. Each youth has been classified in the following categories:
  - **Active Youth** are the ones whose families are members of Christ the King 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 youth directory.
  - **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 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.
- A Safe Sanctuaries Policy has been adopted and work has begun to ensure that all youth activities adhere to the policy.
- The regular youth advisors have been given the summer off, and youth group has been reframed as a series of House Parties, each one hosted by a different youth family. Every family has received a schedule of those House Parties.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the youth ministry.



## June 2015

### Focus: Database, Volunteer Recruitment and Thank You

#### Outcomes:

- The database of all youth and their families has been compiled, and each person has been “tagged” with a category.
- All volunteer needs for the 2015-2016 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- A thank you event for all youth volunteers has taken place.

## July 2015

### Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers Matriculation, Curriculum

#### Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team has met monthly.
- 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.
- A volunteer application, an application process, and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and 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.

## August 2015

### Focus: Contact Plan, Leadership Launch

#### Outcomes

- A process has been implemented to ensure that each youth or youth parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a month
- 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 youth of Christ the King.



## September 2015

### Focus: Compliance, Major Event Notebooks

#### Outcomes

- A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the youth ministry that welcomed 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.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy.
- Copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained. Permission slips for each offsite event in addition to standard medical release forms for the entire year have been created.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each youth event.
- One or two of the church-wide family events have designated to have activities or themes that are particularly engaging for families of 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. The dates and activities have been selected and discussed by the Christian Education Coordinator and a representative from the youth ministry.

## October 2015

### Focus: Budget, Rhythm, Facilities

#### Outcomes:

- A detailed 2016 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- The Pastors and the Christian Education Coordinator have created a Rhythmic Week including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans). Inquire with Ministry Architects or see “Sustainable Youth Ministry” for more details.
- A small group of 4 to 8 youth have been recruited, trained, and charged with the task of creating a welcoming environment for new youth. They are led by a volunteer coach and have been trained on how to meet new youth and to guide new youth into the program.





- A short-term team has begun meeting with the appropriate church committees to explore the possibilities for a renovation or complete rebuild of the Education Wing to better serve the children and youth.

## **November 2015**

### **Focus: Marketing, Welcoming Youth, Major Event Notebooks**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A game plan has been written and implemented for welcoming new and MIA youth to the youth ministry so that they feel warmly welcomed. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- Major event notebooks for each major youth event have been completed.
- Clear marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.
- A Visioning Retreat has been scheduled for February, and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families.

## **December 2015**

### **Focus: Give Fruitcake to Your Pastor**

#### **Outcomes:**

- Relax.... Breathe...

## **January 2016**

### **Focus: Database**

#### **Outcomes:**

- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- A game plan has been written and implementation has begun to
  - Keep youth involved in the youth programs after Confirmation
  - Engage MIA youth who have gotten their drivers' license
  - Intentionally reach out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them with the life of Christ the King.



- The Church Council has received a reasonable proposal and suggested timeline, based on the church's budget and level of indebtedness, for the renovation or complete rebuild of the Education Wing.
- After developing the processes and communication systems that have allowed one of the co-pastors to be the point person for youth ministry, the pastors have proposed to the Church Council a way to replicate that process in the other ministry areas of the church.
- Promotion of the Visioning Retreat has begun.

## **February 2016**

### **Focus: Calendars, Vision Retreat**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A Visioning Retreat with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the youth ministry:
  - Mission statement
  - Core values
  - Three-year goals
  - Organizational structure
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- The summer 2016 calendar has been updated and shared with all families in a variety of ways..
- Work has begun on the 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar

## **March 2016**

### **Focus: Planning Ahead, Volunteer Recruitment**

#### **Outcomes:**

- For the second year in a row (woot!) March has been recognized as the month March as the month when youth ministry leaders and interested participants get together to plan ahead. The annual exercise included:
  - A fresh look at the mission, values and goals of the youth ministry (which in this case, were just created a month ago).



- Based on the mission and goals, an evaluation of the ministry's recent events and current programs. Decisions about what programs and events should be part of the next school year.
- Creating a calendar of events and programs for the next school year.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
  - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
  - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
  - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2016-2017 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
  - Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2016-2017.

## **April 2016**

### **Focus: Youth Ministry Manual, Reflection and Re-assessment**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A manual for the youth ministry 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 and minutes for the Renovation Team.
  - Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year (This will be created in June 2016.)
  - Budget and other financial documents
  - Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
  - Compliance documents
- Volunteer recruitment has continued.



- 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 these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum. All participants have received a Save the Date notice.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth ministry. (Available for free from Ministry Architects.)

## May 2016

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

#### **Outcomes:**

- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall youth programs.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance. It includes many of the same items as this Assessment timeline.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- There is a written game plan that spells out the rhythm of meetings and one-on-one sessions that allow the pastor to learn from and train the volunteers. For tips on this process, see the free video on Ministry Architects: “Equipping Your Volunteer Team” and consider the book “Youth Leader Training on the Go” by Dunn-Rankin and DeVries which offers 24 shareable videos.

## June 2016

### **Focus: Christian Formation Retreat, Volunteer Thank You, Benchmarks, Major Event Notebooks**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- All volunteer needs for the 2016-2017 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the youth staff to pass along to the next year’s coordinator.



- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth has been updated with that new information.
- With the most recent information on 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.
- Interested staff, volunteers, and parents gathered for a Christian Formation Retreat to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished. At the retreat, the team
  - Developed a set of core competencies that the church would like students to have before they graduate.
  - Determined a Scope and Sequence for what will be taught over a 3-to-4-year cycle in order to accomplish the learning goals.
  - Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.

## July 2016

### Focus: Sustainability

#### Outcomes:

- 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.
- The Renovation Team has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the youth volunteers and focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- 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.
- The staff and Renovation Team have celebrated what God has done with their 18-month investment.





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