



## CHILDREN’S, YOUTH, AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES ASSESSMENT REPORT

*Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time*

[www.ministryarchitects.com](http://www.ministryarchitects.com)

### **Palmyra Church of the Brethren of Palmyra, PA** **February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Palmyra Church of the Brethren is a close-knit congregation in the small town of Palmyra, Pennsylvania. The church places high value in living peacefully in their community while showing the love of Christ to those around them. They acknowledge that they are deeply formed by their past, live faithfully in the present, and are looking with anticipation to the future. The pastor affectionately refers to his congregation as “the good folk of Palmyra Church of the Brethren.” Church members describe their church family as, “loving,” “accepting,” and “supportive.”

This year the congregation celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They fondly remember the church’s golden age between 40-60 years ago when attendance was near 500 every Sunday. Though the numbers have subsided, the congregation’s deep value of community and service has remained strong. Several years ago, the congregation made the intentional decision not to move locations in order to build a new facility on the outskirts of town. Instead, they chose to stay at their present location with the intention of engaging more deeply with the community. They will soon complete phase one of a three-phase renovation to their facilities, which has provided a sense of excitement and expectation within the congregation.

The membership of the church is around 459 and on an average week, 151 people attend the church’s intergenerational worship service at 9:00 a.m. The church is led by

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Pastor Dennis Lohr. He is supported by Coordinator of Congregational Care, Bill Cave, Director of Young Adult Ministries and Worship Coordinator, Rachel Witkovsky, Director of Youth Ministries, Bethany Hoffer, Director of Children's Ministries, Missy Thompson, Director of Music Ministries, Jeff Clouser as well as an Office Administrator, Organist, Pianist, Guitarist, Treasurer and Custodian.

The children's ministry of Palmyra Church of the Brethren is recognized as an integral part of the church. Currently, there are approximately 42 children, 0 – 5<sup>th</sup> grade on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 11 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship or Living Out Loud during the week. The annual Easter Egg Hunt invites children from the church and the community to hunt for candy-filled eggs throughout the church building in the dark (with flashlights!) and is a favorite event. Family movie nights and the "In the Lot" nights are also highly regarded. The children's ministry is described by some children and parents as a "bubbly" and "accommodating" place, while others say it is a "well-intentioned" and "loving" ministry.

For the year 2017, the children's ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$14,500 including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of the director of children's ministry.

There are approximately ten adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major children's programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The ministry is led by a director of children's ministry who has been in this role at the church since 2011. There is also an Educational Team which reports to the church board and meets monthly to facilitate learning, support teachers and volunteers in the children's ministry, oversee child protection and safety, and ensure resources are available for the children's teachers. A Children's Partner Team was formed in 2016 in preparation to support the changes that will be needed to develop the ministry further.

The children's facilities are recognizable by the beautiful mural in progress on the walls of the hallway. The mural depicts Old and New Testament stories as well as a pictorial representation of growth from infancy through young adulthood. While the church has been undergoing renovations, some rooms have been combined or become a shared space. There are currently separate areas for nursery, preschool, and elementary aged children. New signage is being created to help families easily find the rooms for their children.

The youth department at Palmyra Church of the Brethren engages those in both junior and senior high school. In addition to offering Sunday School each week after the church service, youth can participate in any of the varied special events such as ski trips, district retreats, workcamp, and fundraisers. Junior high youth are welcome to participate in Connections every Wednesday afternoon after school, and senior high youth can come to After Hours every other Wednesday evening. Both offer a time of fun and fellowship combined with great conversation.

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Currently, there are approximately 22 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about four of them participate in either Sunday school, worship, Connections or After Hours. The service opportunities such as workcamp seem to be a favorite among the youth. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as a “nurturing” and “supportive” place, while others say it is a “struggling” ministry.

The church has a 2017 budget of \$462,691, of which approximately \$36,000 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program budget as well as the salary and benefits for the staff, consisting of director of youth ministries.

There are approximately four adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The ministry is led by the director of youth ministries who has been at the church since 2011. There is also an Educational Team which reports to the church board and meets monthly to oversee curriculum, child protection and safety, and ensure resources are available to the youth teams. A Youth Partner Team was formed in 2016 in preparation to support the changes that will be needed in order to develop the ministry further.

The youth have a space of their own with various fun and engaging activities available such as ping pong, foosball, and indoor basketball. Comfortable seating and access to snacks create a warm and inviting location for the youth.

The young adult ministry of Palmyra Church of the Brethren consists primarily of a core group whose faith began and continues to be nurtured here. Currently, there are approximately 44 young adults on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 15 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship and in various servant leadership roles. Monthly faith and food gatherings are a favorite among the young adults as they provide the opportunity to fellowship not only with other young adults, but also with congregants who are from a different generation. The young adult ministry is described as “easy to assimilate to” by someone who did not grow up there. It was also stated that they “do community well” and a place “without judgment.”

For the year 2017, the young adult ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$15,500 including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of the director of young adult ministries.

The ministry is led by a director of young adult ministry who has been at the church since 2013. A young adult partner team was formed in 2016 in preparation to support the changes that will be needed in order to develop the ministry further.

The church understands that they are in a time of transition. They fondly remember the days when children, youth, and young adults were prevalent throughout their building, and desire to once again see those areas thriving. They have recently seen concern from parents whether the church can truly meet the needs of their families.

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Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's, youth, and young adult ministries and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 46 individuals in 13 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, YOUTH, AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES IN CONTEXT

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

**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 not being paid due to a steady decline in the number of participating children and youth.

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

This rent appears to be partially paid. It seems as though the children who come to the programs are excited and enjoy them. However, youth and young adult programs seem to be lacking in consistency and content.

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

While the volunteers willingly put in hours of preparation for each week, several voiced frustrations with having no children or youth and even young adults to teach, suggests that this rent is also only being partially paid. On the other hand, the youth, parents,

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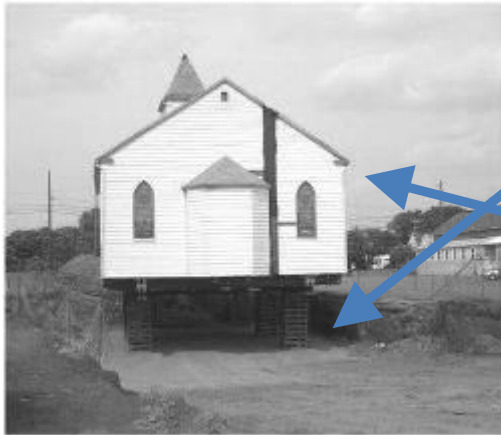
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volunteers and staff have in no way given up on the ministries, and are eager to see them excel.

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:



**Laying the Foundation:**  
Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the children's and youth ministries' *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,

**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 151 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 23 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 11 children is far below what could be expected from the ministry.

**2) \$1,000 per Child**—With a budget of approximately \$14,500 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the children's ministry, PCOB has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 14-15 children in some aspect of the church's life. With 11 currently participating every week, the ministry is right on target for its current reach. However, it is not likely that the ministry will be able to do more to reach the 44 children on its rolls without more of an investment.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 75 Children**—Palmyra Church of the Brethren has the equivalent of a 1/3 time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, PCOB has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 25 children on a

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weekly basis. The current staff configuration is aligned well to the current needs of the ministry, as well as a degree of growth.

**4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Children**— Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church’s Christian nurture of more than about five children on an ongoing basis. With ten weekly volunteers, PCOB is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 1 child, giving the ministry a capacity for 50 children weekly. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future.

Ministry Architects has also observed the following youth ministry norms:

**1) 10% of the Worshiping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 151 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 15 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of four youth is far below what could be expected from the ministry.

**2) \$1,000 per Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$36,000 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Palmyra Church of the Brethren has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 36 youth in some aspect of the church’s life. With four currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded for continued growth.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—PCOB has the equivalent of one-half of a full time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, the church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 25 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth.

**4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth**— Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church’s Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With four weekly volunteers, PCOB is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 1 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 20 youth weekly. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future.

## **BUILDING BLOCKS TO SUCCESS WITH MILLENNIALS** *Observations and Next Steps for the Young Adult Ministry*

As the church begins its reimagined work with young adults, six building blocks to success will be helpful to keep in mind. These are the elements that those who successfully reach young adults most often weave into the fabric of their ministry

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environment. They are not necessarily programmatic solutions; rather, they are driving values that shape how they approach ministry:

**1) Leadership Development**—Most millennials are not content to be “pew sitters.” They are eager to be engaged as the next generation of church leadership. If a church does not intentionally mentor its young adults, they will seek out an institution that will.

**2) Authentic & Intergenerational Relationships:** Today’s young adults are eagerly seeking out relational connections, not only with their peers, but also with older generations. How well a church connects with millennials in these relationships is often more important than whatever programming it chooses. PCOB would do well to evaluate how integrated young adults are with the relational fabric of the whole church.

**3) Access to the Deep End:** Young adults are looking beyond attractional ministry and are longing for a deep spiritual culture. Churches who invest in deep and challenging discipleship with millennials often find the most success. PCOB should consider how they are spiritually challenging young adults in their church.

**4) Missional Living:** Young adults today carry a burden to change the world and will find themselves drawn to groups and organizations that feel the same. PCOB will find success when they look toward activating this generation of young adults into a Jesus-centered mission in their community.

**5) Meaningful Contributions to the Church:** Many churches keep young adults in a “holding tank,” not inviting them to serve or contribute to the overall direction of the church as a whole until they reach a certain age or stage of life. Churches with the most success in engaging young adults find creative and significant ways of drawing millennials into meaningful contributions to the life and leadership of the church.

**6) Investment in the Ministry:** There is no magic bullet to the investment level that makes a young adult ministry successful. However, churches that make a priority of investing staff, finances and volunteers will most often find more success with young adults.

## 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.

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- **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.

Each of these roles is important as the Palmyra Church of the Brethren pursues a more sustainable model of children’s and youth ministries. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

- When staff are expected to serve in all three of these roles, it can become a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- PCOB has been working over the past year to assemble Partner Teams for its children’s, youth and young adult ministries. The teams are in place and poised to function as the architects in the future.
- The paid staff are exploring and beginning to develop their important work as the “general contractor” of a ministry.

## ASSETS

### *Strengths to protect in the current children’s, youth, and young adult ministries*

#### **Theological Curiosity Welcomed!**

Palmyra Church of the Brethren is indisputably a place where children, youth, and young adults are welcome to ask questions about their faith. Instead of a place where their faith is dictated, this church welcomes the opinions and viewpoints of all of their congregants. Several people confided, “I can ask questions and not be judged,” and one person specifically noted he was welcomed openly despite having different theological beliefs. The good folk of Palmyra Church of the Brethren strive to help their people find the words for their faith instead of defining their faith for them. It is a welcome home for those with theological curiosity.

#### **“In The Lot”**

Over and over in the listening groups the warm-weather event aptly named “In The Lot” was praised. A fun, casual event held in the parking lot adjacent to the church building, this serves as a touch point for the community. There one will find the pastor flipping hamburgers and having conversations with congregants as well as neighborhood parents. There is plenty of food, fun, and games for those of all ages who come to the regular event. There are even youth who consider PCOB “my church” because of this

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event, though they don't necessarily participate in any other activities at the church. This is a true representation of the servant's hearts and deeply rooted value for community of this congregation. The church sees that they "have a good thing going" and are being very "welcoming to the community."

### **Staff are the Perfect Fit**

No matter which age group was being addressed, the consensus was that the staff for the children, youth and young adults of PCOB are loved and appreciated. One person noted, "I can tell that Missy, Rachel and Bethany do not do this out of obligation. They do it because they LOVE what they do." Others mentioned that the staff are, "solid," that "there are great things happening here because of our staff," and that staff are "our greatest asset." Each of the staff live out the vision and values of the church, "empowering others to do the same."

### **We aren't done yet!**

Though many of the congregation is reaching later seasons of their lives, they are still very engaged with the ministries of Palmyra Church of the Brethren. Several participants in the listening groups were in their 70's and 80's, and functioning as integral parts of the children and youth teams. The mentoring and guidance that this generation has provided for the congregation has set the tone for what the church continues to desire to be known for. One participant explained, "I still take 2 hours to prepare for my lesson each week, even if don't know if there will be anyone in class." Though many are unable to be as involved as they may have been in the past, they understand that God is not finished with them yet, and are willing to continue to work out His calling in their lives.

### **Treasured Traditions**

From Sunday School to Work Camp to Faith and Food, every age group has developed programs or events that connect deeply. Children are building relationships during Living Out Loud after school on Thursdays. Sunday school is a favorite of the little ones, even a 2 year old who during the week prods her grandmother, "Let's go to Sunday School, Nana." Youth enjoy opportunities not only to connect with each other, but also to participate in service activities that "help others and serve the Lord." Young adults can always be found fellowshiping around a table, whether at a local restaurant for brunch on Sunday, or at a congregation member's home for the monthly Faith and Food gathering. All of these programs serve to deepen the connections and relationships so important to the people of PCOB. A parent told us, "We have good programs here."

### **Wide Open Spaces**

It is exciting to walk through the facilities at Palmyra Church of the Brethren and envision what God is getting ready to do. An aggregation of spaces built over many years as land options were purchased, the current facilities have the church poised for growth. One person told us they feel the church is "wealthy with space." With the first phase of

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renovations almost complete, the facility is primed for the creation of even more opportunities for connection within the congregation. Making the spaces “more appealing to families” is a priority that aligns with the church’s desire to minister to the community.

### **Poised and Ready**

A common theme throughout the time with the listening groups revealed that the congregation is ready for change. As has been the case in the past, the desire is that when someone “walks in the door, there is someone they can identify with.” The people of PCOB recognize that they aren’t where they truly want to be. With that recognition comes the desire to reach new goals, and to do whatever it takes to live out the ministry that God has called them to. It is a church poised and ready for the next season of their church’s story.

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***Obstacles to moving the children’s, youth, and young adult ministries strategically forward***

#### **More**

Throughout the listening groups, one word was heard more than any other: MORE. “We just need to have more young families,” one person said. Another expressed, “If we just had more youth more youth would come.” A children’s ministry volunteer said, “Without more children here, parents may wonder. If they are welcome.” Still, another said, “if we had more numbers, it might be more attractive to each level.” Simply put, there is an expectation that there would be more people involved in each ministry, children, youth, and young adults. However, when asked to describe what MORE would look like, the responses ranged from three to five new people each year to eighty involved now. Until there is clarity about what MORE is, the ministries will continue to feel insufficient for those who are engaged.

#### **Understanding Intergenerational**

While the church is discussing, planning, and engaging in intergenerational opportunities for many participants it’s unclear what being intergenerational means. One person said, “I’ve heard someone say we’re intergenerational, I’m not sure what that meant.” Another person asked, “How can we become intergenerational?” Still others wondered what things would change if the church were to be intergenerational. While there was a general agreement that being intergenerational could be good for the church, there was also a lack of understanding what that means and it should occur in the church.

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## Engaging the Community

As participants discussed the role of this church in the local neighborhood, questions, thoughts and ideas were focused on as one person asked, “How do we have a program that the kids in the community find it worth coming to?” This same well-intentioned sentiment was heard throughout the groups. However, this posture is one of waiting for others to come. It’s unlikely that those in the surrounding neighborhood will be inclined to “come” to the church until the church has extended beyond the walls of the building and into the lives that surround it. Summing it up, one person expressed, “Maybe what we need to do is just reach out to the people.”

Without clarity, reaching the community feels a lot like guess work. “I’m not sure we understand the needs of the local community,” one volunteer mentioned. Another added, “While their kids come, I’ve never met any of their parents.” And a parent wondered if summer programming might be a good resource the community. While there’s clearly a genuine concern for the local neighborhood and a desire to serve those who live there, absent is the understanding of what needs the community has that the church can meet. Without understanding the needs of others, programming, plan, and offerings for the local community will remain to be a hit or miss.

## Marketing of the Ministry

When it comes to communications, clearly people are finding out about the opportunities related to children and youth. However, a clear plan for marketing these ministries seem to be missing. People shared stories about the renovation process, Living Out Loud, and In the Lot. Each time a story of the church was told others around the table had not yet heard those stories. Realizing this one parent said, “We don’t celebrate our wins.” While there are obviously good things happening in the church; youth and adults connecting while digging a ditch in the basement, a friend in the neighborhood claiming the church as their own, and volunteers who faithfully prepare to teach, it’s unclear when and where these stories are intentionally being told. Until an intentional plan is in place to tell the good stories of the children, youth, and young adult ministries the excitement and enthusiasm that the church has for these ministries will continue to wane.

## Missing Elements of Faith Formation

The ministry to children and youth is operating without an over-arching discipleship path for birth through age 18. A well-defined scope and sequence for its Christian educational path is missing. In other words, not only have hands-on goals not been set, neither have spiritual goals.

While PCOB has determined its curriculum for children, it will need to determine what it wants its young people to know, feel, and do with their Christian faith prior to graduation. Without that plan, how can the church be expected to meet spiritual expectations reflecting the personality of the church?

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Missing from ministries are:

- A set of core Christian educational competencies
- Birth through 5<sup>th</sup> grade CM scope and sequence covering all program opportunities
- 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade YM scope and sequence covering all program opportunities
- A one year curriculum plan for young adults
- Strategically developed milestones
- A stated purpose for each program piece with a spiritual formation component
- Topical/Subject Calendar

Currently, there is no clear process in place to ensure a well-rounded, comprehensive plan for what curriculum topics are being taught. 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.

### **Missing Rites of Passage**

Through the process of growing from being a child to becoming an adult there are significant moments that the church can acknowledge and celebrate. For PCOB, some rites of passage were previously intact while others have not yet been planned for. A children's ministry volunteer said, "We used to always give away third grade Bibles. Do we still do that?" Another group of volunteers talked about 5<sup>th</sup> graders who participate during Live Out Loud and shared a concern of helping them connect to the youth ministry program. Others that seem to be missed are the transition into high school and a graduation celebration.

Not only are these life stage transitions a significant moment for each child and youth, they can be a significant reminder to the church of the young people that it has been called to serve, develop, and connect with in a deep meaningful way. It seems that these moments of celebration are a thing of the past.

### **Embracing Relationships**

It's pretty clear that this is a church that values relationships and developing deep meaningful connections with each other. It's this very thing that has created a legacy of leadership in the church. We heard from various generations that people have grown up in this church and now are serving in this church. This should be celebrated!

While it's still expressed as a value of the church, it may not be strategically planned for. Children, youth, and young adults connect to a church because of the connections they make with God and with others in the church. The programs and events that have thrived in the past and continue to thrive (Live Out Loud, college ministry dinners with youth advisors of the past) have adults who are engaged on a regular and committed basis. While, as one person stated, "having a rotation of volunteers is easier," it will not produce the ongoing relationships that sustain participation in a ministry program. Yes,

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young people will meet a varied number of adults from the church, however they will make connections with very few. Another person shared, “We work hard at programs, but I think teens are more about relationships.” While a program may be a draw or sound attractive, only through developing relationships will PCOB begin to see the type of participation that the church is hoping for.

### **Supporting the Vision**

Children, youth, and young adult ministries have all developed vision statements for their ministries. The destination is clear. Now, it is time to take the next steps and decide how we will travel to the place we plan to go.

A clear set of values that determine the spirit in which these ministries take place will need to be developed, embraced, communicated, and lived in to. Three year revolving goals that will steer the work toward achieving our vision also appear to be missing.

Without these important pieces in the vision process, it is much like driving across the country without a map, GPS, or a plan for your route. You may eventually arrive where you intend to go, however and just as likely you may end up disappointed having never arrived, or you may never leave at all.

### **Volunteer Processes**

While there is a great team of volunteers that have been built, the structure volunteers are recruited for and training or equipping volunteers seems to be a little haphazard.

When asked how one becomes a volunteer, the answer was pretty simple – “The staff ask you when they need something.” Yet, the process appears to be insufficient as another adult said, “We often don’t have enough helpers to allow us to split the age groups of children like we should.” As the church prepares for the future of the ministry, it will need to consider further developing the important pieces to volunteering. A volunteer needs list, a volunteer fishing pond, and volunteer job descriptions will help round out a more intentional plan for incorporating volunteers in the ministry.

In addition, the majority of volunteers felt less than equipped to perform the tasks that they’ve been asked to do. A young adult shared, “I was asked to be a part of a committee that I knew nothing about.” A children’s volunteer said, “We used to have a meeting that reviewed the curriculum and helped the teachers understand how to use it.”

### **Cracks in the Foundation**

As PCOB focuses more of its attention on their children, youth, and young adults ministry, there are some foundational documents and structural framework that will lead toward greater sustainability and happy families.

Currently missing from the ministry systems:

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- Attendance Tracking: Cloud-based system for tracking individual attendance records at each program. If there's no tracking system, then 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors and those missing-in-action may not be followed up on like they should be. Without this, growth doesn't happen; instead, decline ensues.
  - First Timer Event Process: A process for collecting contact information for from first time guest when they participate in community events such as "In the Lot." Without a clear plan for how visitor information is collected and then how visitors reached out to, it can create a setting and environment for people to explore and miss out on being invited back.
  - MIA Follow-Up: A system that outlines when and how we will reach out to those who have been absent or are no longer active. While reaching out to those you have missed communicates that they are loved, cared for, and belong here. The opposite is also true. While having a clear plan for follow-up doesn't guarantee attendance, it does demonstrate that developing meaningful relationships are a priority.
- Marketing Plan: A system for telling the good stories of the ministry seems to be missing. While it's clear that each age group is communicating the details of what is happening, it seems that a plan for sharing stories is missing.

## Children Specific Challenges

### Where are the Parents?

A common theme from the advisors and volunteers of the children's ministry was the missing presence of the parents. One noted, "The kids we do have are primarily brought by grandparents," and another mentioned, "the kids are excited to be here, but they can't bring themselves." Despite recognizing the lack of young families in the church, few attempts have been made to engage with the missing parents. It is generally acknowledged that parents are the key to sustaining a meaningful children's ministry, but the church lacks clear paths of involvement for these parents.

### Schedule Limbo

While there are volunteers who faithfully prepare to teach Sunday School to the children each week, inconsistencies in the schedule have created a confusing expectation for what the hour will look like. There have been periods of time in the past where the children all gather to sing before going to class. That season never officially ended, but no longer happens consistently, either. The supervisor of the children's department was caught by surprise when a teacher announced, "Oh, I sang with them this week" during a listening group. Lack of communication between the volunteers and the staff and supervisor creates an environment of frustration, as some weeks teachers feel their time is cut short when music is included before teaching times. On the other hand, the weeks that the teachers expect the music portion to happen and it does not, they are frustrated by the extra time to "fill up however we can."

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## Youth Specific Challenges

### The Missing Link

During this season of life, youth are desperate to make connections and forge deep, lasting relationships. While there have been groups of teens in the past who have created “forever friends” during their time in the youth ministry, that is no longer the case. Volunteers lamented that “it’s harder to relate to them now that they come from different backgrounds”, and “I’m not sure how to connect with them.” It is the personal relationships with volunteers that will create the foundation that draws a youth back once they become a young adult. Lack of connection with volunteers translates into lack of connection with other youth as well. There is no opportunity to create the lasting peer friendships that are desired by the youth if they are not attending programs and events due to lack of connection to the volunteers. The church has a deep desire toward connection and relationships, but the link with the youth is currently missing.

### Young Adult Specific Challenges

#### Clumsy Communication

The young adults expressed feeling like they are “always guessing” about when events are going to happen. Though the event may be on the church calendar, in the bulletin, and the newsletter, often the young adults don’t see those communication pieces, and only hear directly about the event 2 -3 days prior. This is causing frustration with the young adults as they admit to very busy lives and the need to plan their week more in advance. A few events are held consistently, such as Faith and Food on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month. However, more events are scheduled around the assumed availability of some of the college-aged young adults. Those events may not be revealed until close to the event date, resulting in half of the young adults not being able to assimilate the event into their schedules. Sunday School is another source of frustration, as many weeks young adults are present, but no class has been prepared for that week. The young adults in the listening groups were able to identify at least seven other young adults who would be able to attend Sunday School if it were offered consistently.

#### Attracting Young Adults

While there is a solid core group of young adults, affectionately referred to as “the core four,” there seems to be difficulty attracting additional young adults to the ministry. The lack of consistently offered programming and events make it difficult to invite and welcome additional people to this group. Many of the congregants who fit into this age group, which encompasses a wide range from 18-35 years, struggle to connect fully. It was mentioned that those in the younger age range “don’t want to talk about marriage and the things the others are talking about,” while the older age range feels the age gap heavily. As a result, both groups end up feeling like the group is not quite the right fit.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reframe the next 17 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the children's and youth ministries. Understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the children's and youth ministries, target July 2018 as the date when the children's and youth ministries renovation will be complete.
2. Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
3. Present this report to the church board, Christian education team, and partner teams requesting that they endorse an 17-month strategic design process for the ministries.
4. Engage the children's, youth, and young adult partner teams to serve together as the Ministry Renovation Team, made up of five to seven non-anxious, goal-oriented volunteers and the children's ministry, youth ministry, and young adult staff who will work closely with Ministry Architects to ensure that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
  - I. **Addressing the immediate pressure points** facing the ministries as they transition toward thriving, sustainable children's and youth ministries (e.g., keeping the trains running on time)
  - II. **Implementing the strategic, long-term** recommendations of this report (e.g., building a new railway system)
5. Partner with Ministry Architects to take responsibility for
  - I. Managing the renovation process, working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline
  - II. Assisting the ministries in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise during the renovation process.
6. Address the current pressure points facing the ministries:

**Pressure Point #1: Clearly Define How Many More is More** – In conjunction with staff and partner teams agree on the number of children, youth, and young adults that should be participating and establish a goal of how many from each age group we could reasonably expect to grow into this year.

- o Develop reasonable participation goals for each children's ministry program and event.
- o Develop reasonable participation goals for each youth ministry program and event.
- o Develop reasonable participation goals for each young adult ministry program or event.
- o Develop a gameplan that will assure the slow and steady growth to this goal in 2017.

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**Pressure Point #2: Clarify and Plan for Intergenerational Opportunities –** Communicate what it means to be intergenerational and clearly plan for how the various age groups will intentionally be engaged together throughout the life of the church.

- o Define what intergenerational means to PCOB
- o Communicate what it means to be intergenerational. Consider using the bulletin, the Envoy, website, church Facebook page and a sermon series to express the deep desire that exists for children, youth, and adults of all ages to be one church.
- o Hang pictures of children, youth, and young adults around and throughout the worship space.
- o Plan two to four wildly successful intergenerational events throughout the year.
- o Building on the desire to see children and youth in worship, plan weekly opportunities to engage both age groups.
- o Adopt *Single Digit Youth Groups* by Marcey Balcombe as the youth ministry handbook for the remainder of 2017.

**Pressure Point #3: Intentional Planning to Be Relationship Focused:** Take the steps necessary to prioritize relationships over and above our programs.

- o Develop a plan for the staff and volunteers to foster a relational atmosphere and build incarnational relationships with children and youth for deep & long-lasting impact in the ministry.
- o Strategize volunteer involvement in children and youth ministries so that there is always someone present who was also present the previous week. Consider using a four-week rotation that includes a two-week overlap.
- o Develop a personal connection plan to be in contact with each youth in the church at least once a quarter.
- o Develop a gameplan to a host young adult Sunday school class on a weekly basis. This should include curriculum plans, leadership schedule, and a start date.
- o Assure that attendance tracking is in place for each class and program for all three age groups.
- o Develop a gameplan for MIA follow-up that outline when a child, youth, or young adult will be reached out and what the tone of that contact should be.

**Pressure Point #4: Equipping Volunteers:** In order for volunteers to have the resources they need and feel prepared to lead, develop an ongoing plan for training and equipping the team with the tools they need to do their job well.

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- o Review, update and develop job descriptions for each volunteer position in the church. This should include committees as well.
- o Ask church leadership to read *The Equipping Church* by Sue Mallory as a tool to understanding the church as a priesthood of all believers.
- o Outline an annual training plan for children's ministry and youth ministry volunteers which includes understanding the vision, values, goals, best practices for ministry, intentional practices for developing relationships, and opportunity to share what we're learning in the field.
- o Schedule two one-on-one check-in calls between staff and each volunteer serving their ministry, one in the fall and one in the spring each year.

7. Build the long-term infrastructure required for long-term, sustainable children's and youth ministries.

- o **Host a "Quick Start" Summit:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and children's and youth staff to participate in a Quick Start Summit in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The Summit tackles the items that need to be done first, and builds momentum for the children's and youth ministries renovation process.
  - Identify any progress in implementing the recommendations of this report.
  - Orient the Renovation Team to their specific responsibilities.
  - Assign Renovation Team members responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report.
  - Calendar the dates involving Renovation Team.
  - Create a plan for communication between the Renovation Team and the church to ensure that all parties feel they're "in the know."
  - Calendar the dates for all major events and two to four intergenerational event for the 2017-2018 year.
  - Draft the following documents finalizing them within no more than two weeks after the Summit:
    - o Results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the children's and youth ministries. 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.
    - o Reasonable participation goals are established for all children's, youth, and young adult ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events are established.

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- o **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of building on the vision for the children’s, youth, and young adult ministries with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
  - o An affirmed ministry mission statement
  - o A statement of values
  - o A set of three-year revolving goals
  
- o **Christian Formation Summit:** Gather a team for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing curriculum, milestones and special programming.
  - o Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - o Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the children’s ministry programming.
  - o Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
  - o Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - o Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
  
- o **Control Document Development:** 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”).
  
- o **Marketing:** Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, children, youth, leaders, and the broader church to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children’s and youth ministries.
  
- o **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with young adults utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the young adult page and calendar on the church’s website, Facebook, texting, e-mail, etc.
  
- o **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.
  
- o **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 2017. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.

- o **Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach:** Invite Ministry Architects to play the “coach” role during this renovation period. Ministry Architects would offer experienced direction for the building of an infrastructure for the children’s and youth ministries and provide ongoing coaching for the children’s and youth ministries staff members as well as the Renovation Teams.

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

- o **Sustainable Pace:** Help each children’s and youth ministries 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).
- o **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**

- o **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the neighborhood parents whose children are involved in the ministry in some way during the 2017-2018 school year.
- o **Young Adult Non-College Ministry:** Develop a game plan to engage the young adults within PCOB, independently of those young adults who are still in college.
- o **Missions and Outreach:** Build on the desire expressed by youth and young adults to make a difference in the world as well as their local community by providing a well-publicized calendar of mission initiatives for youth, families, and young adults.
- o **Integration:** Develop a strategic plan for helping the children and youth become an integral part of the whole church, weaving the children’s and youth ministries into the fabric of the entire church.
- o **Personal Connection Plan:** Develop a system for ensuring that every family in the current children’s directory is contacted personally at least twice a year in order to make a connection and express support.
- o **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children, youth, and young adults to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- o **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that includes:
  - o **First Steps Milestone**

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- Purpose: introduces the congregation to a few of the youngest members and makes both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminds both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
- **Welcome to Worship**
  - Purpose: intentionally extends the welcome mat to children and their parents. It also introduces children, and the adults who care for them, to worship and worship space.
- **Third Grade Bibles**
  - Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.
- **5<sup>th</sup> graders moving into the junior high ministry**
  - Purpose: To welcome the rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the junior high ministry.
- **8<sup>th</sup> graders moving into the senior school ministry**
  - Purpose: To welcome the new 9<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the senior high ministry.
- **12<sup>th</sup> graders graduating from the youth ministry and moving into young adult ministry**
  - Purpose: To launch the church's high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they are surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as young adults.

## PROPOSED TIMELINE

### AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

*The following provides Palmyra Church of the Brethren 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 17-month transition, we are available to help.*

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## March 2017

### Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

#### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the church board, Christian education team, and partner teams for the strategic renovation of the children's, youth, and young adult ministries and each group has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for April.
- The Renovation Team for children, youth, and young adults has been formed and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Summit.
- 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.
- The church has partnered with Ministry Architects to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
- Church leadership has been asked to read *The Equipping Church* by Sue Mallory.
- *Single Digit Youth Groups* by Marcey Balcombe was adopted as the youth ministry handbook for the remainder of 2017.
- Mechanisms for monthly on-going education and coaching for the children's and youth ministries key volunteers and staff have been provided.

## April 2017

### Focus: Renovation Underway, Calendars, Volunteers, Pressure Points

#### Outcomes:

- A Quick Start Summit has taken place in which the renovation process was launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed. The Summit tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the children's, youth, and young adult ministries renovation process.
- Reasonable participation goals for each children, youth, and young adult ministry program and event have been developed through August 2017.
- Job descriptions for each volunteer position in the church have been reviewed, updated, and developed.

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- Work has begun on the 2017-2018 children's, youth, and young adult ministries calendar.
- A gameplan to assure the slow and steady growth to achieve the participation goals has been developed.
- What it means to be intergenerational at PCOB has been defined.
- A gameplan to a host young adult Sunday school class on a weekly basis was developed and included include curriculum plans, leadership schedule, and a start date.

## May 2017

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

#### Outcomes:

- Work on the children's and youth databases has begun, 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 PCOB 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 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.
- Communication norms for young adult ministry have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.

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- The 2017-2018 children's, youth, and young adult ministries calendar has been completed.
- A Fall Kick-off for the children's and youth ministries has been scheduled for September. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.
- Weekly opportunities for children and youth to be engaged in worship were planned through August 2017.
- What it means to be intergenerational at PCOB has been communicated to the church and used every communication tool available.
- A plan for including the topic of intergenerational in a sermon series was developed.
- A personal connection plan to be in contact with each youth in the church at least once a quarter was developed.

## June 2017

### Focus: Compliance, Database, Volunteer Thank You

#### Outcomes:

- A database of all children, youth, and their families has been compiled and each person has been "tagged" with a category.
- A plan for two to four wildly successful intergenerational events was developed.
- A thank you event for all children's, youth, and young adult volunteers has taken place.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the children's, youth, and young adult ministries.
- A location for pictures of children, youth, and young adults to be hung around and throughout the worship was identified.

## July 2017

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

#### Outcomes:

- All volunteer needs for the 2017-2018 school year for the children's and youth ministries have been filled.

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- A Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for September. The Summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- 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 2017-2018 children's, youth, and young adult ministries calendar has been distributed to all children, youth, and young adults. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church's calendar.
- Reasonable participation goals for each children, youth, and young adult ministry program and event have been developed through December 2017.
- A plan for the staff and volunteers to foster a relational atmosphere and build incarnational relationships with children and youth for deep & long-lasting impact in the ministry was developed.
- Volunteer involvement in children and youth ministries was coordinated so that there is always someone present who was at a minimum also present the previous week.

## August 2017

### Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers, Curriculum, Leadership Launch

#### Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team has met monthly.
- 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, youth, and young adults of PCOB.
- Weekly opportunities for children and youth to be engaged in worship were planned through November 2017.
- Attendance tracking procedures are in place for each class and program for children's, youth, and young adult ministries.

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- A gameplan for MIA follow-up that outlined when a child, youth, or young adult will be reached out and what the tone of that contact should be has been drafted and implemented.
- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's, youth, and young adult ministries.

## September 2017

### Focus: Christian Formation Summit, Directory, Communication, Fall Kick-off

#### Outcomes

- Interested staff, volunteers, and parents have gathered for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum, milestones and special programming. At the Summit, the team
  - Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Developed a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the children's and youth ministries programming.
  - Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
  - Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- 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 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, teen, and young adult has been "tagged" with a category.
- 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.
- An annual volunteer training plan for children, youth, and young adult volunteers has been created and the first training has taken place.

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- All pressure points have been addressed.

## October 2017

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

#### Outcomes

- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the protection policy.
- A detailed 2018 budget for the children's, youth, and young adult 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, youth, and young adult event.
- Fall check-in calls between children, youth, and young adult staff and each volunteer serving their ministry have taken place.
- A game plan for welcoming new families, children, youth, and young adults to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed has been implemented. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.

## November 2017

### Focus: MIA's, Worship Engagement, Young Adults

#### Outcomes:

- MIA children, youth, and young adults have been systematically contacted.
- Weekly opportunities for children and youth to be engaged in worship were planned through February 2018.
- A Visioning Summit has been scheduled for January 2018 and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families
- A game plan has been written to engage the young adults of PCOB, independently of those young adults who are still in college.

## December 2017

### Focus: Marketing, Summer Calendar, Benchmarks, Catch Up

#### Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals for each children, youth, and young adult ministry program and event have been developed through May 2018.

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- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2018.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has begun.
- A plan has been implemented for ensuring that every family in the current children's directory has been contacted personally at least twice a year in order to make a connection and express support.

## January 2018

### Focus: Vision Summit, Calendars, Major Event Notebooks, Volunteer Training

#### Outcomes:

- A Visioning Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the children's and youth ministries (mission statement, core values, goals, and structure).
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- Work has begun on the 2018-2019 children's, youth, and young adult ministries calendar.
- The summer 2018 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.
- Each children's, youth, and young adult ministries staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

## February 2018

### Focus: Calendars, Gameplans

#### Outcomes:

- The 2018-2019 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2019 including a Fall Kick-off.

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- A process for engaging the neighborhood parents whose children are involved in the ministry in some way during the 2017-2018 school year has been written and implemented.
- Building on the desire expressed by youth and young adults to make a difference in the world and their community, a calendar of mission initiatives for youth, families, and young adults has been well publicized.
- A strategic plan has been created for helping the children and youth become an integral part of the whole congregation, weaving the children's and youth ministries into the fabric of the entire church.
- Major event notebooks for each major children's, youth, and young adult event have been completed.
- Weekly opportunities for children and youth to be engaged in worship were planned through May 2018.

### March 2018

#### Focus: Check-in Calls, Rites of Passage,

#### Outcomes:

- Spring check-in calls between children, youth, and young adult staff and each volunteer serving their ministry have taken place.
- A Volunteer thank you event has been scheduled for May.
- A plan for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges has been launched that includes:
  - **First Steps Milestone**
    - Has introduced the congregation to a few of our youngest members and made both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminded both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
  - **Welcome to Worship**
    - Has intentionally extended the welcome mat to children and their parents. It has also introduced children, and the adults who care for them, to worship and the worship space.
  - **Bibles to third graders**

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- Has invited children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.
- **5<sup>th</sup> graders moving into the junior high ministry**
  - Has welcomed the rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders into the Jr. High ministry.
- **8<sup>th</sup> graders moving into the senior high ministry**
  - Has welcomed the new 9<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the senior high ministry
- **12<sup>th</sup> graders graduating from the youth ministry and moving into young adult ministry**
  - Has launched the church's high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they have been surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as young adults.

## April 2018

### Focus: Manual, Major Event Notebooks

#### Outcomes:

- Major Event Notebooks have been completed and are prepared to be distributed to event coordinators.
- 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.
- A manual for the children's, youth, and young adult 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 and minutes for the Partner Teams.
  - Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
  - Budget and other financial documents

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- o Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
- o Compliance documents

## May 2018

### Focus: Directory, Volunteer Thank You, Fall Kick-off

#### 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 Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall children's and youth programs.
- Reasonable participation goals for each children, youth, and young adult ministry program and event have been developed through May 2019.

## June 2018

### Focus: Compliance, Reflection and Re-assessment, Curriculum

#### Outcomes:

- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year in line with the plans developed during the Christian formation summit.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the children's and youth ministries.
- Current pressure points have been named.
- 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.

## July 2018

### Focus: Benchmarks, Sustainability

#### Outcomes:

- All volunteer needs for the 2017-2018 school year for the children's and youth ministries have been filled.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.

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- 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 17-month investment.
- The Renovation Team has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the children's, youth, and young adult volunteers and focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.

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## The *Ministry Architects* Team Serving Palmyra Church of the Brethren (Palmyra, PA)



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Bryant began working in youth ministry in 1996. His ministry has been noted with building and supporting volunteer teams. He has been worship speaker for summer camps, taught seminars for youth workers, and written curriculum for the Florida United Methodist Camping programs. He currently hosts The Sustainable Ministry Show podcast as well as blogs at thepostlu.de.



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Heather's passion for children's ministry, building teams, and developing volunteers keeps her energized and expectant of what God wants to do in and through people. She sees the best in people and strives to help them reach their potential in ministry and in everyday life. There is nothing more exciting to Heather than to watch a child develop their relationship with God, or a volunteer to realize the eternal impact they can have every day. She has served as a volunteer or paid staff in children's ministry for over 17 years and currently serves as the Freedom Kids Campus Director for Freedom Church in Acworth, Georgia.



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Jeff Dunn-Rankin is the Director of Family Ministry at Christ United Methodist Church in Venice, Florida, where he also served as the Youth Director for 16 years. 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. Jeff is a regular columnist for Group Magazine, and has co-written three books with Mark DeVries: *Before You Hire a Youth Pastor*, *The Indispensable Youth Pastor*, and *Training on the Go* (volume 2) (Group Publishing).

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