

## CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES ASSESSMENT REPORT

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### ***First Congregational Church of Oshkosh, Wisconsin*** **March 23, 2018**

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#### **BACKGROUND**

First Congregational Church is a progressive faith community in downtown Oshkosh, Wisconsin whose goal is to “embody the life of Christ in all that we do as we learn and fellowship together, and especially as we serve our community and world.” Church members describe their church as “It looks traditional, but our theology is very inclusive.” The congregation feels a strong call to social justice ministries.

For 27 years, the church was led by co-pastors and, following their retirement, the church entered a season of transition led by an interim pastor. In 2017, Rev. Nancy Taylor was called to serve as pastor.

The membership of the church is around 457 and on an average week, 131 people attend the one 10:00 AM traditional worship service. Regular children’s programming at FCC includes Sunday school at 9:00 AM on Sunday mornings for preschool-5<sup>th</sup> graders and Angel Choir for Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Childcare is available for young children on Sunday mornings and during meetings and special events as needed. Currently, there are approximately 78 children, 0 – 5<sup>th</sup> grade on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 15 of them participate in either church school, Angel choir or childcare. Beloved events in which children also participate include Halloween caroling, Servapalooza, and the Christmas pageant. The children’s ministry is described by some children and parents as a “nurturing place” and “in a state of change”, while others say it is “disappointing,” “boring,” and “disjointed.”

For the year 2018, the children’s ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$44,785 including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of the teaching and learning ministries coordinator and the angel choir director.

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There are approximately 5 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 Sandie Miller-Schreiter, the full-time Teaching and Learning Ministries Coordinator, who has been a member of FCC since 1990 and serving the church in a vocational capacity since 2003. There is also Jacob Nault who works 2.5 hours weekly as Angel Choir director. Historically there has been a children's ministry group at FCC, however with only two people currently serving on that team, activity is sporadic.

The youth ministry at FCC offers regular church school programming for youth on Sunday mornings in the youth room. Currently, there are approximately 18 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about six of them participate in either church school or worship. Confirmation is offered to 10<sup>th</sup> graders on Wednesday nights and is led by the pastor and teaching and learning ministries coordinator. In the summer, there is a tradition of youth going on a mission trip. About monthly, youth group is offered as well. The youth ministry is described as having "really kind teachers" by some youth, while other youth and parents as "nonexistent," "confusing" and "unappealing."

The church has a 2018 budget of \$325,000, of which approximately \$14,799 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program budget as well as the salary and benefits for the staff, consisting of the teaching and learning ministries coordinator.

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

The ministry is led by Sandie Miller-Schreiter, the full-time Teaching and Learning Ministries Coordinator, who has been a member of FCC since 1990 and serving the church in a vocational capacity since 2003. Historically there has been a youth ministry group at FCC, however with only two people currently serving on that team, activity is sporadic.

The children and youth ministries have access to ample classroom and facility space. On the main level are two childcare rooms. The Toddler Room is used regularly, but one congregant said, "I've never seen anyone use the Infant Room." On the second floor are nine classrooms dedicated for church school, however only two rooms are occupied on a Sunday morning. Rooms are highly decorated and art supplies are easily accessible.

Following a successful capital campaign, Ministry Architects was invited to First Congregational Church to do an initial assessment of the children's and youth ministries and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 61 individuals in 12 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

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## CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES IN CONTEXT

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

It has been Ministry Architects’ experience that though these three rents, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, they are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by children, youth, parents, staff, and the congregation 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. Over the last several years, the number of children and youth participating in weekly programming and special events at FCC has been declining. Listening group participants expressed that several young families have left during the past three years or are not engaging in the life of the church.

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

With little variety in programming and special events, this rent appears to be not paid.

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

While it is clear that the desire is there to provide children and youth with a spiritual grounding and have meaningful and formative relationships, there is not much excitement about jumping in to make sure that happens. This suggests that this rent is not being paid on time.

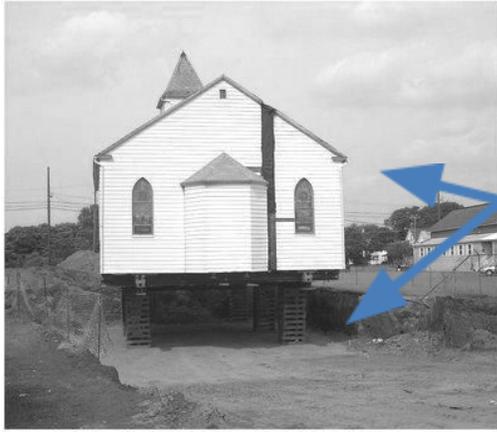
As the leadership of the children’s and youth ministries develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.” In this sense, the children’s and youth ministries faces parallel challenges.

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:

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**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 131 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 19 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 15 children is slightly below what could be expected from the ministry.

**2) \$1,000 per Child**—With a budget of approximately \$44,785 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits but not paid baby-sitters or nursery workers) dedicated to the children's ministry, First Congregational Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 44 children in some aspect of the church's life. With 15 currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded to reach more children than are currently engaged.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 75 Children**—Considering all the positions giving time to the children's ministry, including 30 hours per week of the teaching and learning ministries coordinator and the Angel Choir director, the church has the equivalent of one full time staff person (not including paid babysitters or nursery workers). According to this rule of thumb, FCC Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 75 children on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration should be providing room for significant numerical 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 five weekly volunteers, FCC has a capacity to reach 25 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:

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**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 131 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 13 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of six youth is below what could be expected from the ministry of FCC.

**2) \$1,000 per Youth**—With a budget of approximately \$14,799 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, First Congregational Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 14 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With seven currently participating every week, the ministry is currently funded to reach more students.

Keep in mind that this dollar amount can vary widely depending on the cost of living in the church's community.

**3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including 10 hours a week from the teaching and learning ministries coordinator, First Congregational Church has the equivalent of 1/4 full time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, FCC has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 13 youth on a weekly basis.

With seven youth participating each week, the staff configuration provides plenty of room to impact more students than the church is currently reaching.

**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, First Congregational Church has a capacity for 20 youth each week. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future.

## **BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF**

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

- **The Architect:** A person or organization that designs the building plan and ensures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.
- **The General Contractor:** A person or team who manages the flow and sequencing of work, manages the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of "laborers" is in place for each stage of the project.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for

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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 First Congregational Church 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:

- At FCC, there is no person or group playing the role of the architect. The ministry simply moves from one event to the next without a clear vision or stated outcomes.
- There is an understood expectation that staff is often expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- If FCC wants a laborer in a staff position, it will be important to build highly functioning ministry groups to surround staff, including its teaching and learning ministries coordinator and Angel Choir director. Staff laborers often mature into an architect or a general contractor, but only if they are given permission, time, and training.

## **ASSETS**

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

#### **Clarity of Need**

Among those in focus groups, there was an across-the-board consensus that the children and youth ministries are ready to move to the next level. Congregation members and staff alike expressed a feeling of dissatisfaction. This word may seem strange to have listed under the assets section. However, dissatisfaction in this case will be an extremely important component in initiating or renovating these ministries as well as a strong motivation to stay committed to keeping it running. This type of dissatisfaction can best be described as an eagerness for change.

#### **Financial Resources**

Just a quick glance at the children and youth budget will give you signs that this ministry is supported well financially. In addition to the staff salaries and operating budget, the church designated a significant portion of the income from the recent capital campaign to be used for the development of sustainable children and youth ministries. In reference to those funds, one member said, "When we were looking at how to spend this money, we wanted to invest in the future of the church." Financial investment is one way to assess the level at which the church values and prioritizes its children and youth. Based on the current investment, FCC is saying "We love young people at our church!"

#### **Desire to Go Deeper**

When asked about the spiritual "climate" of the children and youth programs, it was clear to us that the people of FCC are grounded in faith. One parent said the children and youth are "not told what to believe but encouraged to explore and have their own relationship with God." One volunteer said he loves teaching church school because he has "a passion for passing on the Christian faith." The children in one session explained they actually want to go beyond surface meaning of stories and sacraments to wrestle with more complex themes

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of our faith. This desire to go deeper is worth embracing and celebrating. More Jesus? Yes, please!

### **Inclusion and Leadership in Worship**

First Congregational Church is doing a wonderful job with youth and children in worship. We heard over and over how much people enjoy the activity table. An older member said, “We sit where we sit in church to be close to the activity table. I love seeing them enjoying themselves. That’s what church should be about.” As part of the worship service, the pastor and teaching and learning ministries coordinator lead a children’s time each week targeted at young children. A parent shared, “Children’s time is good stuff. Kids love it.” Children and youth have the opportunity to serve as acolytes, light the peace candle, and read scripture. These leadership opportunities are not only formational, they’re fun! Additionally, the angel choir performs in worship on a monthly basis and most people describe FCC as being family friendly.

### **Space: The Final Frontier**

The children and youth ministries are supported by an expansive facility including several large classrooms, comfortable furniture, and ample storage space. The two childcare rooms are prominently located on the main level making Sunday morning drop off easy for parents. The church school classrooms are dedicated solely for church school use, which allows the ministry leaders to be creative and make the space inviting for children. There is also plenty of space for attendance to grow significantly.

### **Tiny Communion Table**

If you want to see someone at FCC light up, ask them to describe what happens at the coffee table in The Lounge each Sunday during the fellowship time after worship. Children gather around the table, eating and talking with one another. One parent said, “For both of our kids, the highlight of Sunday is sitting around this table having snacks. Our three-year-old is so excited to get his plate and go to the table!” During one listening group, three parents of young children met for the first time but could each talk about their children eating together at that table. This is a sweet time that is fostering organic relationship building for the children sharing a holy meal with one another.

### **Inclusive and Proud of It**

Inclusion, welcome, and social justice were on the lips of most all listening group participants when asked to describe their church. One person said, “The roots of this church are because of inclusivity. It’s a beautiful and thoughtful church. I don’t want to ever lose those roots and become something different.” When naming a perceived trend over the past few years of new young families joining FCC, another participant said, “Young families are joining because of the inclusivity.” Another said, “One of the things that’s brought some of these families into the church is the fruit of our becoming open and affirming. The families that I’m thinking of are heterosexual parents... but it’s important for that generation to have that understanding that we’re not checking people at the door.”

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That feeling of inclusion seems to extend to newcomers and families who are already part of the flock. As someone noted, “We don’t attend as regularly but I still feel included when we are here.”

### **Desire for Relationship**

If there was one thing that bridged the various generations represented in listening groups, it was the desire for relationship. Children, youth, parents, and volunteers all seemed to be seeking connection—some desiring it for themselves while others longed for young families to experience the kind of life-giving and life-long friendships they’ve been able to nurture at FCC. Families of both children and youth expressed a strong desire for connection through fellowship activities and “living life together.” One parent said, “I’ve made more friends with daycare parents than I have with church families. I want to know church families.” While brainstorming possibilities for fellowship, one participant said, “All I want is simple, simple, simple...anything that we’re already doing in our lives and can do together and be the church, let’s do that.”

Other people lifted up the gift of the intergenerational relationships that are already in place. Several people lifted up Cathy and Art, who have taught church school at FCC for 13 years and have rock star status among the youth and parents! Several other participants talked about the meaningful relationships that result from faith partners during confirmation. People remembered connecting moments that have happened during events in the past. One person said, “The intergenerational things that were more frequent years ago are great for the kids. One time, a former Angel Choir director organized a square dance in fellowship hall. My 5-year-old daughter was dancing with an 80-year-old man. It was great!”

The desire to be connected is not just an added benefit to being part of FCC, it’s often the reason people who visit decide to stay. When a long-time member was talking about a conversation with a new family, she said “One woman told me she didn’t join this church because she was looking for friends...she joined because she was looking for community.”

## **CHALLENGES**

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

#### **Spiderwoman not Superwoman**

The expectation of the church seems to be focused on the staff position solving all the problems. But a ministry built upon the staff person is a ministry which sets itself up for instability. Some of the people we interviewed recognized that instinctively, when they said things like: “She has been asked to do so much, very often with very little. She is a constant positive in our kids’ lives and she deserves nothing less than our gratitude. She simply wears too many hats and needs a much larger tool box!” The church needs to rethink its current model and develop a new culture that not only invites but also empowers adults from the congregation to take on a wide variety of significant roles in the children and youth ministries, so that a web of support is created around each child and youth. Think “Spiderwoman,” not “Superwoman.”

#### **Where’s the Leadership?**

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There is a complex system of ministry groups at FCC. Many attendees of our listening sessions currently serve on at least one or more of these teams. We learned, “The buildings and grounds ministry group has eight or nine people” and yet, for various speculated reasons, there are only three people currently serving on the children and youth ministry groups. This seems to indicate that there is not enough ownership by the church lay leadership in this vital ministry. When asked how members are recruited for the ministry groups that support children and youth, we heard “I’m not actually sure how that works. Does the ministry council do that?” Without critical mass or clarity of role in this volunteer team, the church will struggle to provide effective and necessary leadership. Ministries without strong lay leadership are often overly staff dependent and lack congregational buy-in.

### **Fuzzy Vision**

As evidenced by the turnout of people in listening groups, there are many people of FCC who are passionate about seeing success in their children and youth ministries. However, most seemed unable to articulate a clear picture of the current vision of the children and youth ministries and, when asked to envision what the ministry would look like as a thriving ministry, they were even more puzzled about naming a future vision. One participant said, “We don’t have a vision of what we want for our children,” and another added, “We need something different, but I don’t know what it is. We need a clear process for moving forward.”

Even when asked to “dream their dream,” focus groups seemed to become easily mired in terminal vagueness or were painting the picture of the youth group of his/her youth. When asked about purpose and vision for the youth ministry, one parent said, “I want to turn it around before they get so old that they’re totally disconnected when they start confirmation.” Another listening group participant said, “We’ve tried different curriculum, rotation model, and had intergenerational events. We still don’t know where we want to go next. Nothing seems to take root.”

### **What’s on the Menu?**

Parents with school-aged children have their weekly routines down. They know which day of the school week their child has art or music. They know what time they eat lunch and which classroom they’re in. It becomes second nature to anticipate these “knowns.” That feeling does not exist surrounding the “menu offerings” of the children and youth ministries since Sunday mornings for FCC families are not clearly defined. People who are confused about which room their child should be in and are unsure about the curriculum used for church school. We heard participants saying things like, “I’m not even sure what we are teaching our kids” and “Where’s the spiritual depth? Are they learning the stories?” Others have questions regarding the break-down of ages. One person said, “Our daughter feels like she’s getting taught as if she was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. There’s not an increase in the depth of the curriculum. It’s all the same because they’re combining grades.”

Added to the frustration surrounding a lack of definition is the lack of consensus regarding the way Sunday morning is programmed. Some families like being able to worship as a family in addition to church school, while other say, “I like church school during church

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versus coming an hour before. I think it's harder for families. It would work better for me for it to be during church rather than the time before."

While several people agreed that there are good opportunities available for children and youth in worship, it wasn't seen as part of the children and youth ministries. Without an intentional plan to name those opportunities as one of many layers of the ministry, people talked about it as if worship was in one silo and church school was in another.

### **More Milestones**

While many good things occur throughout the life of this church, there is minimal culture in place to celebrate key milestones. Even the birth of a child seems only to be celebrated on a "hit or miss" basis and not recognized as an across-the-board gift within the church. The natural transitions in the lives of children and youth, often marked with ceremony and celebration, seem to be underplayed. Presently there are four clear milestones or rites of passage for children and youth; rosebud, baptism, 3rd grade bible, and confirmation. It seems other logical times to have a rite of passage could be 1) when they enter kindergarten, 2) when they become an acolyte 3) when they step into the youth program, 4) when they move from middle school to high school, and 5) when they graduate from high school. It's important to complement children and youth ministry programs with carefully placed milestones throughout childhood and adolescence. Milestones provide opportunities to empower young people and to remind them of their importance in the life of the congregation. As an added bonus, they also help retain engagement of students as they grow into those busy high school years.

### **Communication Vacuum**

FCC does not have a normative process for communicating about the various programs being offered for children and youth. A comprehensive plan using several different types and styles of communication has not yet been developed. The church newsletter is a reliable source of printed information. However, young families are more likely to visit the website or social media for event information.

Across the board, in all focus groups, there was confusion and lack of understanding about the children and youth programs and activities occurring at FCC. Some didn't know when events were occurring or what the programs or classes were called. The "Involvement Center" only promotes candle lighting and does not communicate any other signs of life in the children and youth ministries. These communication and organizational challenges seem to have left some parents and youth with the perception that details are not under control.

Parents expressed a strong desire to be able to go look up what's happening with their kids and what they're learning so it can be discussed at home. Beyond the parents, church members especially felt this communication crisis. They didn't seem to have knowledge of what is going on in the youth program. One participant said, "As someone without kids, I have no idea about what's going on." Opportunities to celebrate key youth moments have gone unpublicized. Listening group participants mentioned that they were always very much "in the know" about the annual mission trips. One person said, "I love hearing about the

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mission trip! The kids do a presentation and it's fun. We know what's going on, so we support that."

### **Numbers Do Matter**

We observed an obvious confusion about exactly what FCC would consider a successful children and youth ministry. The summer mission trip is a well-liked tradition for youth, and yet members seemed deflated to know that four youth are currently registered for this summer. The church does not know how many students they want to have in church school each week but there is an overwhelming sense that participation levels are lower than they should be. When we asked one listening group to simultaneously call out the number of youth they think should be participating each week, the responses ranged from 5-12 students. Setting realistic and transparent expectations will help the church work toward that goal and celebrate when they reach it - even if it's four! Some people like to say it's not about the numbers, but without target participation goals, you always feel like you're missing the mark.

### **Welcoming, Yet No Way to Welcome**

With great pride, most everyone we met described their church as a "welcoming" place and "open and affirming." So much emphasis is placed on being welcoming, and yet, when asked how new children and youth are welcomed into the life of the church, we heard a far more passive message; "The kids just have to ask to read in worship," "sign-up sheets are on the bulletin board," or "their parents can call the office to get the information." In addition, the children and youth ministries brochure that is currently available is outdated. Without realizing it, the church is not taking its fair share of responsibility for providing clear entry points to engage families in the church. Additionally, when we make newcomers initiate engagement, search for information, and wonder how to get involved, we fall short of our desire to be welcoming.

Others spoke of the emotional toll they experienced when they perceived their children were not welcome in worship, either through passing comments or disapproving looks. More than one participant became emotional about the way they were spoken to in worship regarding the presence of their children. One said, "people have said to me, 'Why would you bring your baby to church,' as my baby was sleeping in a carrier on the pew beside me." Another said, "It's frustrating that there's a message of being family-friendly because that's not the feeling that I've gotten." Someone else added, "I've tried to encourage my friends to come check us out...but I'm also a little bit hesitant because I'm worried of the way they might be treated." Even another added, "One of my friends, who grew up in this church with me, doesn't come back because she says it's clear that people don't want her here."

To capture the interest of first timers, FCC will need re-examine how to roll out the red carpet.

### **Volunteer Equipping**

The children and youth ministries of FCC have been blessed with a number of stable, long-term volunteer leaders. These volunteers "love working with the children" and think the children are "simply wonderful!" "They keep me young and give me hope" another volunteer

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teacher said. While there is a strong desire to serve the church in this capacity, the volunteers crave inspiration, direction, and training opportunities. To maintain a healthy spirit of volunteerism, the church needs a clear process for providing for the on-going nurture and training of adult volunteers. Though the volunteers we spoke with were enthusiastic, it is important for the church to develop process to celebrate these dedicated individuals and to recruit new leadership to join the team before others burnout.

### **The Negative Drowns Out the Positive**

Adjectives used by many to describe the children and youth ministries included “dwindling,” “going through the motions,” “struggling to stay alive,” and “lacking in vision.” All the while, other members repeatedly talked of the “nurturing” and “inclusive” environment they found in this place. One member said, “My kids really love coming to church school. It has some good things to offer, but we still have a long way to go.” This message of hope seems to be lost or ignored as the focus continues to return to all that is not going well. Even woven into what begins as a positive comment is the eventual takeover of the negative. FCC will need to be mindful to infuse joyful stories into the narrative moving forward in order to overcome this negative climate currently clouding the ministry.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Reframe the next 18 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 August 2019 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 Ministry Council, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the children’s and youth ministry.
4. Establish a Children’s and Youth Ministry Renovation Team, made up of at least three non-anxious, goal-oriented volunteers and the Pastor or Teaching and Learning Ministries Coordinator who will work closely with Ministry Architects to ensure that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved.
5. Partner with Ministry Architects to take responsibility for
  - Managing the renovation process, working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report’s timeline
  - Assisting the children’s and youth ministries in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of renovating the children’s and youth ministries.
6. Address the current pressure points facing the children’s and youth ministries as they transition toward thriving, sustainable children’s and youth ministries (e.g., keeping the trains running on time):

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**Pressure Point #1: Build a Sustainable, Long-Term Staffing Model** to clarify the roles of children and youth staff. Pay special attention to Ministry Architects' distinctions of the roles of "architect," "general contractor," and "laborers" to ensure that the ministry has all three roles represented in either staff or volunteer capacities. Before looking at any adjustments to the current staffing structure, a basic infrastructure should be implemented that includes:

- Results-based, written job descriptions for all paid positions in the children's and youth ministries.
- Control documents for staff and volunteer equipping
- Children's and youth ministries staff has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.
- Plan for professional development for staff
- Supervisory Evaluation Process
- 3-year staffing plan for anticipated ministry growth

**Pressure Point #2: Clarifying What's on the Menu** so that families and the congregation at large are aware of the children's and youth ministry offerings.

- Define the Sunday morning schedule in a way that would allow for a one-minute elevator speech to be given to a new family.
- Focus on programs that are working and prune what's not.
- Clearly define what ages are labeled "youth" and what ages are labeled "children."
- Structure church school classes into age appropriate groupings.
- Select curriculum material that is also age appropriate.
- Communicate what is being taught on Sunday mornings in the weekly email prior to Sunday's worship.

**Pressure Point #3: Create a Communication Plan** that contains plans for the communication needs of both internal and external audiences.

- Identify the top three vehicles of communication so that families know "where to go" to get their information (e.g. Weekly email, website, or Facebook page).
- Align communication vehicles so that they are communicating the same and accurate information.
- Make sure information about the 2018-2019 calendar is communicated to families during the early summer of 2018.
- Revamp the prime real estate of the "Involvement Center" to be visually appealing and the first stop for families upon entering the building.
- Utilize the weekly email as a way to communicate Sunday curriculum plan, photos of ministry happening, and the "menu" of weekly offerings, including room numbers.
- Build in opportunities for storytelling about the children and youth ministries to happen in every week in worship.

7. Build the long-term infrastructure required for long-term, sustainable children's and youth ministries (e.g., building a new railway system).

## **DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

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- 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 staff to ensure that all parties feel they’re “in the know.”
  - Draft the following documents finalizing them within no more than two weeks after the Summit:
    - o A finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events through December 2018.
    - o Reasonable participation goals are established for all children’s and youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2019 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events are established.
    - o Communication plan that contains plans for the communication needs of both internal and external audiences.
    - o Game plan for the “menu of offerings” available in the children’s and youth ministries.
  
- 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:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission trip”).
  
- o **Bring Vision into Focus:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the children’s and youth ministries with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:

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- A ministry mission statement
  - A statement of values
  - A set of three-year revolving goals
  - An organizational structure for the ministry
- **Compliance Documents:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and all adults working with any children and youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
  - **Volunteer Equipping:** Create a game plan for equipping and empowering volunteers that may include an annual Leadership Launch, semi-annual opportunity for volunteer appreciation, and semi-annual opportunity for continuing education (i.e. Ask a special education teacher to give a 30-minute workshop on how to best teach children with ADHD).
  - **Attendance:** Track attendance for all children's and youth activities.
  - **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.
  - **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, children, youth, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the children's and youth pages of the church's website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
  - **Children's and Youth Ministries Manual:** Develop a Children's and Youth Ministries Manual, including the most recent children's and youth directories, a 12-18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major children's and youth ministries event.
  - **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the children's and youth ministries in the fall of 2018. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.

## DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the children's and youth ministries staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with children and youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a "fishing pond" list of at least 20 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage

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volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

- o **Create Written, Results-Based Volunteer Job Descriptions:** Draft and implement volunteer job descriptions that cover all current positions and also include additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- 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 **Welcoming Environment and Culture:** Create a game plan that will foster and welcoming experience for families who are currently engaged, families who are disconnected, and families who are new to FCC (either as a first-time visitor or new member).
- o **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2019-2020 school year.
- o **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through December 2020 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- o **Magnetic Missions:** Build on the desire expressed by many children and youth to make a difference in the world as well as their local community by providing a well-publicized calendar of mission initiatives for children, youth, and families. Invite all age-appropriate visitors and first-timers to participate in these initiatives, recognizing that the social-justice DNA of FCC may be the most natural plug-in point for many outsiders.
- o **Integration:** To leverage FCC's organic culture of including children and youth in worship so that it becomes a sustainable practice, 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 **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children, 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.
- **Establish an "MIA" Process for Children and Youth:** Use the children's and youth database to collect the most recent information for families, youth, and children and categorize them in a manner that will follow up on MIA families, youth, and children. Each child and teen has been classified in the following categories:
  - o **Active Children and Youth** are the ones whose families are members of FCC 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.

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- o **Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you'll want to regularly pursue these children and youth, whether they ever show up or not.
- o **Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.
- o **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.
- o **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.
- o **Family Ministry:** Plan one or two family events throughout the year focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.
- o **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** To strengthen the milestones that exist within the children's ministry and broaden the scope to include birth through high school graduation, develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that may include milestones similar to:
  - **Rosebud in the Pulpit**
    - Purpose: informs the congregation of the birth of a new baby and celebrates with the family.
  - **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.
  - **Anniversary of Baptism**
    - Purpose: Reminds those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It is an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.
  - **Prayer Milestone**
    - Purpose: To encourage the congregation to can keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children learn they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.
  - **Kindergarteners Invited to Acolyte**
    - Purpose: To invite younger children into the special worship of the whole church.
  - **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Bibles**
    - Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.
  - **5<sup>th</sup> graders moving into the middle school ministry**

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- Purpose: To welcome the rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the middle school ministry.
- **Blessing of the Backpacks**
  - Purpose: To mark the passage of summer and to help children, youth, and adults transition back into the fall schedule, reminding the children and youth that Jesus is always with us.
- **Blessing of the Keys for 16-year olds**
  - Purpose: To join with youth in an important moment of their lives and connect it to a celebration with their family of faith.
- **12<sup>th</sup> graders graduating from the youth 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 adults.

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## PROPOSED TIMELINE

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

### March/April 2018

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

#### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Ministry Council for the strategic renovation of the children's and youth ministries and the Ministry Council has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for April.
- The Renovation Team for children and youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start 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.
- Immediate volunteer needs for the children's and youth ministries have been determined and slots have been filled.
- Mechanisms for monthly on-going education and coaching for the children's and youth ministries key volunteers and staff have been provided.
- 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 and youth ministries renovation process.
  - A finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events through December 2018.
  - Reasonable participation goals are established for all children's and youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2019 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events are established.
  - Communication plan that contains plans for the communication needs of both internal and external audiences.
  - Game plan for the "menu of offerings" available in the children's and youth ministries.
- A Visioning Summit has been scheduled for July and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families
- Work has begun on the 2018-2019 children's and youth ministries calendar.
- A fishing pond of 20 potential volunteers in children's and youth ministries has been created.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the children's and youth ministries.

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- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2018-2019.

## 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 FCC and have attended at least once in the past year – plus visitors who have become a regular part of the group. They should show up in your printed children's and youth directories.
  - **Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you'll want to regularly pursue these children and youth, whether they ever show up or not.
  - **Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.
  - **Visitor Inactive** are the ones who may have visited, but you are confident they will never become a regular part of the group. This group requires no follow up. But you'll want to keep their information for the occasional big event to which you'll want to invite everyone you know.
  - **First Timers** refer to visitors who have attended a program for the first time. You'll want to have a process for capturing their information on their first visit and follow up with them within one week of their visit.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.
- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has begun.
- The 2018-2019 children's and youth 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.

## June 2018

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

#### Outcomes:

- Promotion of the July Visioning Summit is in full swing.
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.

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- A database of all children, youth, and their families has been compiled and each person has been “tagged” with a category.
- All pressure points have been addressed.
- A thank you event for all children’s and youth volunteers has taken place.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the children’s and youth ministries.
- Create a game plan for equipping and empowering volunteers that may include an annual Leadership Launch, semi-annual opportunity for volunteer appreciation, and semi-annual opportunity for continuing education (i.e. Ask a special education teacher to give a 30-minute workshop on how to best teach children with ADHD).

## July 2018

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

#### 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).
- All volunteer needs for the 2018-2019 school year for the children’s and youth ministries have been filled.
- All children’s and youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children’s and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2019 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The effectiveness of this past year’s curriculum has been reviewed and decisions have been made for any necessary changes for the upcoming school year
- The 2018-2019 children’s and youth ministries calendar has been distributed to all children, youth, and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church’s calendar.
- One or two family events have been calendared for the upcoming year. They have focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.

## August 2018

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

#### Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly.

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- A Leadership Launch has taken place to equip volunteers for the 2018-2019 programming year.
- A volunteer application, an application process, and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year and has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and, equips them to serve the children and youth of FCC. The Safe Church Policy has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- A Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for November. The Summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.

### September 2018

#### Focus: Directory, Communication, Fall Kick-off

##### Outcomes

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

### October 2018

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

##### Outcomes

- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the 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.

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- A detailed 2018 budget for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each children's and youth event.

## November 2018

### Focus: Christian Formation Summit, Attendance, MIA Children and Youth

#### 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.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all children's and youth programs has been created and implemented.
- MIA children and youth have been systematically contacted.
- All game plans that have been launched in last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.

## December 2018

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

#### Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2019.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- 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 and youth ministries.

## January 2019

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

#### Outcomes:

- Major event notebooks for each major children's and youth event have been

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completed.

- Work has begun on the 2019-2020 children's and youth 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.
- Game plan that will foster and welcoming experience for families who are currently engaged, families who are disconnected, and families who are new to FCC (either as a first-time visitor or new member) has been developed.

## February 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Recruitment

#### Outcomes:

- The 2019-2020 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2020 including a Fall Kick-off.
- 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 2019-2020 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the children's and youth ministries.
  - Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2019-2020.
- New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.
- Game plan that will foster and welcoming experience for families who are currently engaged, families who are disconnected, and families who are new to FCC (either as a first-time visitor or new member) has been implemented.

## March 2019

### Focus: Database

#### Outcomes:

- The collection of updated information from each child, youth, and family has been completed and the database for children and youth has been updated with that new information.
- A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2019-2020 school year has been written and implemented.

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- 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.

## April 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Manual

#### Outcomes:

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

## May 2019

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

#### Outcomes:

- With the most recent information on children, youth, and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers have been created to be distributed at the Fall Kick-off.
- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the children's and youth ministries.
- Current pressure points have been named.
- Building on the desire expressed by many children and youth to make a difference in the world and their community, a calendar of mission initiatives for children, youth, and families has been well publicized. A plan to invite all age-appropriate visitors and first-timers to participate in these initiatives has been put in place, recognizing that the social-justice DNA of FCC may be the most natural plug-in point for many outsiders.

## June 2019

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

- All children's and youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall children's and youth programs.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the children's and youth ministries that will help regularly deal with on-going "behind the scenes" ministry maintenance.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- Reasonable participation goals have been established for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through December 2020 and there are clear lines of responsibility for filling those events.
- A plan for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges has been launched that includes:
  - **Rosebud in the Pulpit**
    - Purpose: informs the congregation of the birth of a new baby and celebrates with the family.
  - **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.
  - **Anniversary of Baptism**
    - Purpose: Reminds those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It is an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.
  - **Prayer Milestone**
    - Purpose: To encourage the congregation to can keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children learn they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.
  - **Kindergarteners Invited to Acolyte**
    - Purpose: To invite younger children into the special worship of the whole church.
  - **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Bibles**
    - Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.
  - **5<sup>th</sup> graders moving into the middle school ministry**

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- Purpose: To welcome the rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the middle school ministry.
- **Blessing of the Backpacks**
  - Purpose: To mark the passage of summer and to help children, youth, and adults transition back into the fall schedule, reminding the children and youth that Jesus is always with us.
- **Blessing of the Keys for 16-year olds**
  - Purpose: To join with youth in an important moment of their lives and connect it to a celebration with their family of faith.
- **12<sup>th</sup> graders graduating from the youth 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 adults.

## July 2019

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

#### Outcomes:

- With the changes in the children's and youth ministries, the staffing to meet the size and scope of the children's and youth ministries has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- All volunteer needs for the 2018-2019 school year for the children's and youth ministries have been filled.
- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the children's and youth staff to pass along to the next year's coordinator.

## August 2019

### Focus: Sustainability, Leadership Launch, Curriculum

#### Outcomes:

- A timeline for the next 12 months has been created that included game plans for the current pressure points and items from the online diagnostic.
- Game plans have been put in place to sustain the processes and procedures during the renovation
- Ongoing coaching has been secured and a sustainability plan has been put in place.
- A game plan for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests 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.
- The staff and Renovation Team have celebrated what God has done with their

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18-month investment.

- The Renovation Teams has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the children's and youth volunteers and focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The Safe-guarding God's Children Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.

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# The **Ministry Architects** Team Serving First Congregational Church of Oshkosh, Wisconsin



**MONICA LEWIS – LEAD CONSULTANT**  
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Since 2000, Monica has served in a variety of roles in both small and large churches and understands the unique opportunities each setting brings. She has a passion for setting up systems that help to equip people in relationship and mission. Monica believes that churches are always changing and with the correct structures in place, ministry will continue to flourish, and new possibilities emerge during moments of transition. Monica earned a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Master of Divinity degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Monica lives in the Kansas City area with her minister husband, their daughter (for whom they try every day to create a normal life as a double preacher's kid) and their dog, Princess Leia (who likes long walks, terrorizing rabbits, and cleaning up after meals).



**MARY BETH ABPLANALP – STAFF CONSULTANT**  
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Mary Beth has always had a special place in her heart for young people and helping them find their identity in the Body of Christ. She started out teaching first and third grades before realizing her true calling to youth ministry. In 2011 she became the Children & Youth Minister at Christ Church Episcopal in Alexandria, VA where she first encountered YMA. She is currently serving at St. James's Episcopal Church in Richmond, VA as Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries.

Mary Beth graduated from the University of Mary Washington with a B.S. in Psychology and a M.S. in Elementary Education. She has ten years of experience working at and directing summer camps at Shrine Mont Camp and Conference Center of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia.

In her free time, Mary Beth loves to make homemade pizza, go on road trips, and hang out in the backyard! Her amazing husband Chris is a nursing student and an integral member of the youth ministry volunteer team. They live in Richmond, VA with their two cats, Smokey and Jojo, and hope to welcome a puppy into the family soon.



**SCOTT PONTIER – SENIOR CONSULTANT**  
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Scott began his ministry career in 1998 with Young Life in Western Michigan at Grand Valley State University. In addition to holding a number of youth ministry and young adult leadership positions with Young Life and in churches, Scott has also served as Campus Pastor and Executive Pastor. Currently, Scott is the Lead Pastor of Jamestown Harbor Church, one of the Harbor Churches, a multi-site church in West Michigan.

Scott is the author of *Reimagining Young Adult Ministry: a Guidebook for the Ordinary Church* and lives in the suburbs of Grand Rapids, MI.

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