



CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES ASSESSMENT REPORT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Richardson, Texas

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BACKGROUND

First Presbyterian Church, nestled in the community of Richardson, Texas, will celebrate their 140th year of ministry this year. The church is currently led by Rev. David Fletcher who is serving as the interim senior pastor. FPC is a strong community of families, many of whom have raised their children in the congregation and are now bringing their grandchildren. The church is described by its members as

- friendly, warm, and welcoming
- aging, dying
- a home – we're not mega church people, we're neighborhood people
- caring and compassionate

The church was founded by the Rev. G. L. Blewett in 1870. In 1910 a new building was built on Greenville Avenue at Polk Street. The present site was dedicated in 1957 with additions of an education building in 1963 and a new sanctuary in 1983. The 53-rank Reuter pipe organ was dedicated in 2001. The renovation of the education building is the most recent project underway at FPC. The church property also includes athletic fields that are utilized in the area for soccer programs.

Richardson is an affluent inner suburb of Dallas and home of the Telecom Corridor with a high concentration of telecommunications companies. More than 5,000 businesses have operations within Richardson's 28 square miles, including five of the world's largest communications and networking companies: AT&T, Cisco Systems, Samsung, Fujitsu and Nortel. The city is no longer the bedroom community of the 1950s and 1960s, but is itself home to a significant employment center, the Telecom Corridor, where more than 80,000 people work each day. The city is currently experiencing a second major growth period with wide spread New Urbanism development and revitalization. The city has also seen an influx of the Asian and Hispanic communities.

The membership of the church is about 525 and on an average week, 180 people attend the traditional service at 10:30 am on Sunday mornings. Christian formation for children, youth and adults takes place at 9 am. The church's 2010 projected annual budget is \$527,386 of which



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\$24,700 is budgeted for the youth ministry (operating budget + salaries) and \$15,729 is budgeted for the children's ministry (operating budget + salaries). There are approximately 56 youth, grades 7-12, and 50 children (0-11 years) on the church rolls.

The church itself has been in a state of transition for a number of years with the departure of a long-term pastor, building renovations, capital campaigns, short tenures of one pastor and two co-pastors with 2-year interim periods in between, and the departure of Director of Christian Education and Youth Director back-to-back. The accumulation of these events has taken its toll. The church is in a state of transition overload and fatigue, and they are unsure of their next steps.

Other programs at FPC include a strong music program with four different choirs – Sanctuary Choir (adults), The Joyful Noise Choir (youth), The Joyful Echo Choir (children) and the Ruth Greer Handbell Choir (adults). These programs are under the leadership of Ralph Stannard, the Director of Music, Becky Lormor, Director of Handbells, Harriet Turnbull, Children's Choir Director and Shirley Latham, organist. Members spoke proudly of the music program at FPC naming it as one of the greatest strengths of the church.

Outreach to the surrounding neighborhood is clearly evident through a variety of offerings. The most recent, vibrant, and energetic program is First Fridays which began in April 2009. The first Friday of each month, the church opens its doors to children from 6:30 – 10 pm providing a "night out" for the parents in the neighborhood. Each month has a theme around which the activities are centered and they range from crafts, to educational segments, to just plain fun. We had the opportunity to observe First Friday in action and it was a joy to see large numbers of volunteers at the tables, on the floor, and interacting with elementary-age children. Attendance has grown from 19 to 39 children and there are just as many volunteers making the programs happen.

Other significant outreach programs at FPC include a partnership with the neighborhood elementary school, a growing Tawainese congregation nesting at FPC, the Clothes Closet, ESL programs, and Meals on Wheels just to name a few. The overall church is invested in reaching out to others.

The youth ministry program at FPC has seen its fair share of ups and downs over the past 7 years. In 2003, the program was overseen by James Sicks, a dynamic leader. The youth programs were robust with attendance between 20-30 youth each week, consistent programming, special trips and an incredibly close-knit group. This was when the youth ministry was described as most thriving. Parents and youth describe this era as energizing, lots of activities and special experiences like the mission trip. After James' departure in 2007, the programs floundered with very little leadership. In 2008 Ashley Herzer was hired as Youth Director. Programming was sporadic and the communication was unreliable. Lauren Black, a novice youth director, was most recently hired in September of 2009 and is beginning to build relationships and a foundation of consistent programming.

Youth Ministry Architects was contacted by Margaret Wright to do an initial assessment of the children and youth ministries and to make recommendations about how they might move



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strategically forward. We met with 55 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 AND YOUTH MINISTRIES IN CONTEXT

Children and youth ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. It has been our experience that these three rents, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, but those ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing and discouragement.

Rent #1: NUMBERS— A significant percentage of children and youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church’s ministry. Currently at FPC, they sing in the children and youth choirs, one youth elder serves on session, and they assist with First Fridays and Vacation Bible School. While the youth and children were more visible and participatory in the past, participation is not as high as members would like it to be. It will be important for a target participation level to be clearly agreed on by the session and staff. Ironically, when target numbers are not established, the youth ministry is typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

Rent #2: PROGRAMS—In order to “earn the right” to experiment with changes, the children and youth leadership will need to provide the church with a few visible, effective programs that give both youth and parents “something to talk about.” In the children’s program, First Fridays and Vacation Bible School are taking place and the children’s choir sings in worship occasionally. In the youth ministry, there have been a few special events such as the Church Under the Bridge project, a lake house retreat and Presbytery-sponsored events. There is mixed levels of satisfaction with the current programming. More established, consistent programs and activities are needed.

Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM— The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the volunteers, children and youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and the parents. The level of malaise and anxiousness is high among the adults with concerns about the future. However, the youth are positive about what’s currently taking place. The general consensus seems to be satisfaction regarding the First Friday program. But there is desire for improvement in other areas.

As the leadership of the children and youth ministries develop their long-range vision, they will simultaneously need to be attentive to these “three rents.” In this sense, these ministries face parallel challenges:



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1. Laying the Foundation: Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the ministries' *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,
2. Continuing to Worship on Stilts: Maintaining the *current* ministries in a way that builds the enthusiasm of children, youth, families, staff and the church.

As the children and youth ministries leadership steps into this parallel process, four rules of thumb – or what we call “ministry norms” – will be helpful to keep in mind:

1) 10% of the Worshiping Congregation—In a typical church, the size of the children and youth ministries tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. With an average worship attendance of 180, the size of the children’s ministry should be about 18 children. It is the same for the youth – 18 teenagers. The view of church members is that both programs are well below that number, when in reality, for the children’s ministry, it is not. At FPC, there are approximately 8 children of members and upwards of 46 (and growing) children of neighborhood families walking through the doors of the church in a given week. Whether the church realizes or not, Christian formation is happening on Sundays *and* Friday nights. FPC is showing God’s love to these children through the relationships being formed with the volunteers. That is making an impact on the lives of those children. The number is off the charts, which speaks volumes to this amazing program that’s happening at FPC.

On the other hand, there is room for growth in the youth ministry with approximately 8-10 youth regularly participating in some aspect of the church’s ministry in a given week.

2) The 20% Ceiling—Most churches find it challenging to grow their children and youth ministries beyond a level that exceed 20% of its worshiping congregation – about 36 children and 36 youth at FPC. The children’s ministry has already exceeded 36 children, which we find is above and beyond the norm.

In regards to the youth ministry, a youth program of about 18 youth is the norm for this size church. Knowing that, there is room to grow if a sustainable model is in place.

3) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth/Children— We like to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church’s Christian nurture of more than about five students or five children on an ongoing basis. FPC does not currently have a regular, weekly, hands-on volunteer assisting with the youth



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ministry. Parents have filled in from time to time. There are 20-30 volunteers in the children's ministry and therefore, the children's ministry is resourced with adults to reach somewhere between 100-150 children.

- 4) **\$1200 per youth/\$500 per child**—The calculations of how much FPC is investing in its youth and children, funds included program budget, salaries, and designated funds. There is approximately \$18,800 being invested in the children's ministry. Based on \$500 per child rule, FPC is invested to serve approximately 37 children. Given that over 50 children are involved, the children's ministry is under-funded. More investment will need to be made to match the current volume and programming.

With \$24,700 in the church's funds currently dedicated to the youth ministry, the youth ministry is funded to potentially serve 20 teens. While this seems grossly over-funded, we caution the church in cutting any youth ministry monies.

- 5) **1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth/50 Children**—One full-time staff member has the capacity to reach approximately 50 youth or 50 children. To grow significantly beyond that, more staffing will be needed. At the present time, the youth ministry has a percentage of the hours of 2 part-time staff members: Youth Director – 25 hours or 60% of 1 full-time staff member; Director of Music - 5 hours or 10% of 1 full-time staff member. Combining the two together, the church is staffed to reach approximately 35 youth.

Presently the children's ministry is staffed with 2 part-time employees – Children's Choir Director at 2 hours per week and Childcare Coordinator at 4 hours per week. Combining the hours of these staff members, the church is invested to serve 8 children.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF FOR MINISTRY

When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a single staff person, instability is a predictable result. We have found that the most stable approach to staffing a ministry, particularly in the early stages, 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 Construction Foreman:** A person 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 responsibilities for particular pieces of the building project.

The children's ministry has laborers serving at First Fridays and Sunday school. In the youth ministry, Lauren is filling the role of laborer although she was not hired to do so.



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Lauren is hired to fill the role of foreman – recruiting, equipping and managing volunteers, creating the youth ministry calendar, making sure the necessary materials and tools are in place. Unfortunately Lauren, while having incredible amounts of youth ministry experience as a youth, does not have the skills yet to serve as foreman. To provide stability, she will need additional training and professional mentoring.

At this time in the children's ministry, there isn't a person or group managing the details of all the children's programs. Becky is serving as a foreman for one piece of the children's ministry.

No one is filling the architect role at this time in either ministry. The result is inconsistent programming with no cohesive vision or plan. Volunteers are apt to try to do anything in order to provide something for their children and youth. Ultimately, this can lead to burn out of the few volunteers trying desperately to make something work.

ASSETS

Strengths to protect in the current children and youth ministries.

Window of Opportunity: First Friday

The real energy and excitement surrounding this program was evident in all the listening groups. Strong vision and leadership have spearheaded a well-organized event with creative themes. The organizers have employed revisions monthly to tweak and mold the format to shape and perfect it. There is a brilliant use of volunteers, matching gifts and availability with tasks that are definable in scope, and the program is involving a large percentage of the congregation. There is built-in fellowship for church members, as well as outreach to the neighborhood and beyond. The children, ones who will grow into youth, are here and engaged in a vibrant Christian formation program, one that is making God's love visible to the world. There is a solid structural foundation in place here upon which to grow, potentially involving older children and youth. The registrar has collected a wealth of information that can be utilized for ministry.

We are Family

Unifying all the listening groups was a strong sense of community and connectedness. "Our church is a warm, loving place, tolerant of differences", mentioned one member. There is a strong sense of loyalty and accountability to one another. As one parent said, "This church is my home. I don't want to leave it but I'm concerned my children aren't having the same experience I had." Friends greeted one another with affection and took time to ask about and catch up on specific life events. Several Sunday school teachers were remembered by the youth with great fondness. Adults seemed to remember individual youth, as well. The youth alumni pointed to this as one of the most important things that they took with them after graduation. Several adults made it clear that, in the words of one, "We want our children and youth to go away from here knowing they leave a church home and family behind." Real love is present here along with a great desire for relational ties. The congregation is of a size to realize this desire.



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Cathedral Vision

There exists a clear vision for ministry outside the obvious bounds of the congregational body. From the recent participation of youth in “Church under the Bridge”, to the ongoing clothes closet, to the ESL classes, to neighborhood outreach and more, there is evident a sense of purpose beyond the self. Over and over we heard a dedication to mission and outreach.

Clarity of Need

There appears to be general consensus that now is the time to determine a sustainable path for the future of the congregation. Across the board we heard a call for action of some sort but there was a lack of direction. This is true at the staff level, as well. One staff person commented, “We know something needs to happen, we’re just not sure what that thing is or who can make it happen.” No one thinks that there is nothing to be done. They just don’t know what to do.

Highly Invested Individuals

We witnessed deep commitment on the part of most of the attendees to our listening groups. Over 55 people showed up to share their thoughts, some of them coming more than once. People really care about this congregation and its future. The youth genuinely enjoy one another’s company and there is obvious affection amongst the group. Among the alumni of the program there was a consensus that it was their church friends and family that were most important during their high school careers despite the fact that many schools were represented. One member of the session summed up the opinion of many when he asked, “This is our church. How do we leave the candle lit in the window for the future?”

Durable Volunteers

There exists at FPC a depth of talent and experience not available in younger congregations. Individuals know their limitations of time and energy but are willing to step up to the plate to meet achievable goals with defined parameters (witness First Friday involvement). Many volunteers are retired and have some flexibility in their schedules. In addition, there is a familiarity with the available skill set that is allowing appropriate matching of gifts with tasks.

The Right People on the Bus

The staff in place is strong, experienced and talented. There is real camaraderie amongst them and they appear motivated to see the church move forward. There are still some empty seats on the bus and everyone may not be in the right seat, but all are committed to the health of the entire congregation, including the children and youth. Staff members have demonstrated a willingness to step outside their assigned roles for the good of the whole. Ministry with children and youth is taking place under assorted headings, most notably in the music department.

The Music Program

This program has a reputation as the consistent program of excellence across the years. Many of the youth and alumni referred to the program and choir tours as a huge part of their church experience.

Facilities

When the new space, along with its planned kitchen, is completed the church will be in good shape to support its staff, as well as any increased educational programming and outreach.



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The First Friday program is well served and has room to grow in the current education wing. The educational classrooms were well-stocked and beautifully decorated with murals. The narthex to the sanctuary is open and welcoming. The sanctuary itself is adorned with incredibly beautiful stained glass windows. A Reuter organ was installed nine years ago that completes the worship space.

Shared Value in the Priority of Ministry with Children and Youth

There is a broad-based eagerness for the congregation to include members of every age. This is substantiated by the initiative to undergo this assessment, youth expressions of a desire to be more visible and feel more connected to the life of the larger church, the comfortable welcoming spaces dedicated to children and youth and the funding and volunteer support of programs such as First Friday. We heard comments like “It’s a joy to hear children’s’ voices in the building” and “No family is complete without all ages represented.” The financial commitment is there, as well. In addition to the funds allotted in the operating budget, there are substantial designated funds available for children and youth ministries.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the children and youth ministries strategically forward.

Missing Organization and Infrastructure

There is an obvious lack of a clear and workable structure for maintaining a consistent ministry with children and youth. No one is directly charged with team building or developing an infrastructure. There is a real need to continue to build relationships with children and youth, to galvanize and support parents, to initiate strategic change, to develop a team of volunteers, to increase effective communication, and to track details and logistics. Some symptoms of this are:

- inaccurate rosters, no one seems to know just how many children and youth are truly potential attendees
- lack of systematic contact with all potential attendees
- the youth website is incomplete and not up to date and therefore unusable
- there is no planned calendar available going forward
- strong traditions of the youth group (ex. the spaghetti dinner and talent show) have not been recorded in a written format that can be passed from director to director

Lack of a Strategic Plan and Vision

There is no common direction, game plan or vision guiding children’s and youth ministry. Without such there is no objective standard to evaluate the programs or staff. There is an immediate need for a permanent structure that can outlast any personality, one that includes a method for the sharing of information. The program cannot reach an intentional destination without a road map. Measurable goals and objectives with realistic time frames are required.

Lack of Intentional Christian Formation

There is no cohesive vision for Christian Formation and the confirmation program seems to have been abandoned. The stellar music program has been used as a hook or gateway, but there does not seem to be an alternative entrance for those not inclined to participate. An



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overarching, comprehensive plan needs to be developed taking into account the question: What do we want our children and youth to be or know or do when they graduate from high school? An opportunity for confirmation should be available each year.

Return to Oz (The Way Back Leads Nowhere)

There exists a great nostalgia for the way things were. We heard a lot of comments that began along these lines of “when James was here...” or “Blake always...” Other statements would start with “we used to...” or “I remember when...” Various parties of all ages are clinging to a desire to replicate days gone by, to return to the way it was, the glory days. It is time to acknowledge the past is gone and the present is here so forward motion can resume.

Urgent Anxiousness

There is present an element of fear. “We’re really struggling. There are no children, no youth and no prospects” said one member. Over and over we heard tales of losing families and signs of a dying congregation. One person even said “we have an underdog mentality.” Alongside this anxiousness is an urgency to address the problem **NOW**. Unfortunately, fear, if not contained, grows and gives way to ineffectiveness. If channeled, however, fear can turn into diligence and fuel to create systematic solutions.

Lack of Critical Mass

There is no concentration of population at any grade level. This makes programming and planning a challenge since attendance is unreliable. The result is frustrated volunteers who are easily discouraged. At the same time, the church needs to work with what they’ve got – the children and youth that are there and are coming consistently. In the book, *Small Church Youth Ministry* it’s stated in this manner - “Don’t focus your energies on counting kids; instead focus your energies on making kids count.” (Stephanie Caro and Rick Chromey).

Chronic Dissatisfaction

There is a chronic dissatisfaction with the way things are in the children and youth programs and it is permeating the overall climate at FPC. One member stated, “There is a real sense of malaise.” Concerning the state of the congregation we heard:

- “We’re dying”
- “We’re aging”
- “We’re old and tired”
- “Our numbers are dwindling”
- “Soon we’ll have to turn out the lights and lock the doors for good.”

There is missing a joyful attitude. The anxiety and feelings of helplessness have kept the focus on the list of deficits and dissatisfactions and have obscured successful initiatives such as First Friday. There is a mythology of hopelessness being established that needs to be reversed.

Search for a Superhero (Superman v. Spiderman)

FPC has experienced the “superman” style of leadership in some of its staffing. This kind of leadership is based on the skills, knowledge and ability of one person. Any ministry built on a personality is set up for instability. The ministry becomes personality driven and when Superman moves on, there becomes a void. Superman may be able to leap tall buildings but those buildings remain obstacles in his/her absence. FPC needs to search for a different sort of



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superhero: Spiderman instead of Superman. Spiderman uses a web of support to move forward and navigate the buildings along the way. The foundation for sustainable ministry empowers and includes adult volunteers who can hold the line, who can utilize such a web during transitions. In this way obstacles do not become insurmountable.

Who's Minding the Store?

There is no staff member explicitly charged with Christian Formation for children and youth. There is no one in place to provide consistent leadership, to recruit, train, motivate and coordinate volunteers or to develop and lead a program. There is no "go to" person providing welcome, support and information for families or visitors and no one following through on administrative responsibilities. There is a Youth Director in place but she needs to be equipped with practical training, professional mentoring and supportive adults to be most effective.

Everybody's Got An Idea

There is a large quantity of ideas being thrown on the table – ideas that would easily solve the church's challenges if "we just did ..." Unfortunately, no two ideas are the same and there is no consensus among the members of the church. Everyone believes in their own solution with a sort of anxious hopefulness. This is akin to getting caught up in choosing wallpaper before you have a wall even built. Wallpaper is pretty and fun to choose but you need the framework in place before it can be hung. Some of the solutions presented to us were:

- Hire a bilingual pastor
- Start a Young Adult Ministry
- Recruit the parents of First Friday kids to join the church
- Rent some children!
- Just finish the new dining hall
- Combine with another youth group
- Host a concert series to draw in folks
- Move the educational programs back to Sunday afternoon
- Have mid week programming
- Start an after school program
- Start a preschool
- Provide a First Friday type program on school holidays
- Have more potluck suppers

A unified vision statement and sense of identity would help focus this creative problem solving.

Transition Overload

This congregation has been in constant flux, a case of chronic transition. In the course of the past 15 years there have been two pastorates, and two interims, three youth directors and a DCE has come and gone. It feels like there is a habitual pattern of short-term ministry, so people are no longer comfortable planning far into the future.

Decision Paralysis

There is an across the board agreement that change is happening but there is an equally strong resistance to specific recommendations for that change. The church is, as one member said,



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“standing in a dark room waiting for someone to come along and turn on the lights.” The church is paralyzed, unable to turn the lights on for themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months (through July 2011) as a time of direction-setting and infrastructure building for the children and youth ministries. Target September 2011 as the date for a sustainable structure, ready to support the expected growth at FPC.
- 2) Present this report to the session, requesting they endorse the intentional 18-month strategic design process outlined in this document.
- 3) Hire Youth Ministry Architects to oversee and give direction for the building of an infrastructure for the children and youth ministries (filling the Architect role) and to provide ongoing coaching for the Youth Director.
- 4) Revamp the current Christian Education Committee so that it is comprised of a representative from Sunday programming, First Fridays, and youth, the Youth Director and chair. This team is charged with two overarching responsibilities:
 - I. Work with the children and youth ministry leadership to address the immediate pressure points facing the ministries as they transition toward sustainability.
 - II. Establish a consensus for the direction of the children and youth ministries and take responsibility for implementing the strategic, long-term changes recommended in this report.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points

(to be accomplished before any major changes in weekly programming)

Pressure Point 1: Relieve the Stress

- Acknowledge and celebrate the assets FPC has in a way that creates a positive atmosphere that is contagious.
- Embrace the family identity of the church, recognizing the advantages of being smaller and leveraging off those assets.

Pressure Point 2: Know the Sheep

- Develop a roster of all children and youth who are from a church member family or have participated in the either ministry three or more times this year. Include grade, address, email, phone numbers and parent/guardian information and preferred method of communication for each one.
- Distribute the directory to volunteer leaders and staff.
- Contact all the youth on church rolls inviting them to upcoming events.



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- Contact the families of younger children for a personal check-in, extending an invitation to them as well for Sunday programs or special events

Pressure Point 3: Develop the Plan

- Gather a group of youth and get their input on the youth calendar for 2010-2011.
- Create and publicize a written 18-month calendar including weekly children and youth programs, major ministry events/programs, and Presbytery events for youth through June 2011.
- Track expenditures for the children and youth ministries monthly to lay the groundwork for the budget process in the fall.

Pressure Point 4: Build & Equip the Team

- Recruit one additional adult for Sunday night youth programming.
- Recruit any additional volunteers for children's programs and any chaperones needed for youth events through May 2010.
- Hold a mandatory training session for all volunteers to receive training in Child Protection policies.
- Provide practical training in youth ministry for the Youth Director.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE TASK #2: Establishing a consensus for the direction of the children and youth ministries and the creation of its infrastructure, including the completion of the following tasks:

INFRASTRUCTURE TASKS THAT BUILD SUTAINABILITY AND STABILITY

- **Visioning:** Create a vision for the church that gives clear purpose and directive in its mission. Discuss how the children and youth ministries can interweave into the church's vision. Develop a set of three-year revolving goals, as well as a clear structure for the church, children and youth ministries.
- **Control Document Development:** Develop children and youth directories, an 18-month calendar, volunteer application processes, major event notebooks, and preventative maintenance calendar.
- **Christian Formation Plan:** Create an integrated template for curriculum, encompassing all aspects of the children's and youth ministry programs including a design for Sunday programming, Confirmation, First Fridays, rites of passage and youth group.
- **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 a sexual abuse/child protection policy is adopted and affirmed by all adults working with any children or youth.



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- **Attendance:** Create an attendance database and begin entering attendance weekly for all of FPC's children and youth programs.
- **Marketing:** Establish normative processes for celebrating the successes of the children and youth ministries throughout the church and ensuring that participation targets are reached for each program sponsored by the ministry.
- **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents and youth. Utilize as many forms of communication as possible including updating the church's website, the church newsletter, bulletin, Facebook, mass texting, bulletin boards, phone tree, etc.
- **Children and Youth Ministry Manuals:** Develop manuals for both children and youth that would include the most recent directory, an 18-Month Calendar, job descriptions, three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar and notes for every major ministry event.

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the paid staff including development of a rhythmic week with Sabbath and balcony time.
- **Leadership Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of whom will do relational ministry while others will work behind the scenes. Create a "fishing pond" list of possible volunteers to call on.
- **Leadership Development:** Create results-based, written job descriptions for all volunteer positions in the children and youth ministries and invite/recruit until all necessary job descriptions have been accepted by the appropriate number of volunteers. Develop a structure for the ongoing, quarterly training of all volunteers.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer workers at the beginning of each school year. Share the vision for the new year, answer questions about the focus, brainstorm about the future and leave them excited about what God is doing at FPC.
- **Strategic Staffing:** Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan for the children and youth ministries which will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain thriving ministries to its targeted number of children and youth. Name measurable landmarks for when the church should consider hiring additional staff.

DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Missions:** Leverage off the desire of youth and parents to make a difference in the community. Evaluate the current mission opportunities and develop a coordinated strategy for involvement in local and national missions.
- **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministries in some way during the 2010-2011 school year.



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- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all children and youth ministry events and weekly programs through June 2011 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children, youth and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed at FPC. Develop a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- **Rites of Passages:** Create traditions for various rites of passage like welcoming 7th graders into the youth ministry. Consider developing an enriched rite of passage for graduating seniors, such as a commissioning ceremony.
- **Climate Control:** Harness the desire of the youth to have a friendly environment. Train and support the youth as they create a climate of welcome and friendship in the ministry (*Thriving Youth Groups* by Jeanne Mayo would be a good “cookbook” for the group).

PROPOSED TIMELINE

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

Many churches choose to use the services of Youth Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this infrastructure-building process. YMA can be available to serve in the role of “architect” to provide more specialized consulting during the 18 month transition.

February 2010

- The Christian Formation Committee has been recruited and oriented to their unique roles and responsibilities over the next 18 months.
- The session has endorsed an 18-month infrastructure building plan for the children and youth ministries.
- YMA has been hired to serve in the architect role for both the children and youth ministries and to provide ongoing coaching for the Youth Director.
- A group of invested youth have gathered and given their input on the youth group planning calendar through July 2011.
- An article has been written celebrating the great things that are happening at FPC as well as informing the congregation about the renovation process. It has been published in the church newsletter and on the church’s website.
- A Child Protection Policy training has been scheduled for April.
- An additional volunteer for Sunday youth group has been recruited and oriented to his/her job.
- A church-wide visioning workshop is scheduled for March and publicity has begun.
- The church has had a party celebrating the 140 year history of FPC and the start of a new chapter in the church’s history.

YMA Option: 2 days off-site



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March 2010

- A written 18-month calendar including weekly set children and youth group times and major ministry events/programs and Presbytery youth events through June 2011 has been created and publicized.
- Chaperones have been recruited for the youth programming through May.
- Contact information for the children and youth directories has been gathered, confirmed and distributed appropriately.
- All current volunteer needs in the children's ministry are being met through May 2010.
- A Church-wide Visioning Workshop involving staff, volunteers, parents and invested youth has produced four key visioning documents:
 - A Church Mission Statement,
 - A statement of values,
 - A set of three-year revolving goals with one-year benchmarks, and
 - A clear structure for the church.
- Calling all youth on the church rolls and families with younger children has begun.
- Clear steps for tracking expenditures in the children and youth ministries have been determined and put in place.

YMA Option: 2 days off-site, 3 days onsite

April 2010

- A database has been created to track the attendance patterns of all children and youth ministry programs.
- The Child Protection Policy training has been completed by all current volunteers.
- A parent interest survey has been created, distributed and filled out by the parents of youth and children.
- Result-based, written job descriptions for all volunteer positions in the children and youth ministries have been developed.
- A list of all volunteer needs has been created and a master list of 30 potential adult leaders has been developed, including people from a variety of age groups.
- All summer events for children and youth are on the church calendar and plans for implementation of those events are underway.
- A Child Protection Policy training has taken place for all current children & youth volunteers.

YMA Option: 2 days off-site

May 2010

- Volunteer recruitment for 2010-2011 has begun.
- Based on attendance tracking, reasonable participation goals for children and youth ministry events and weekly programs have been set, and there are promotion strategies for meeting these goals.
- Compliance documents are in place such as ensuring the copyright license for music and video has been obtained, application and screening process is in place for volunteers and a child protection policy has been adopted and affirmed by all adults working with children and youth.



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- A one-year benchmark has been established for each of the 3-year goals developed at the vision retreat, and session has taken responsibility for each of these strategic “next steps.”
- A church-wide fall kick-off event has been calendared for August and a team of church members has begun the initial planning of a momentum-building fall 2010 kick-off event for the church that will engage over 50% of the families in the church.
- Details for summer activities have been finalized, promoted and children and youth have registered for these events.
- Steps for ongoing training and support for the children and youth ministry staff are in place. Staff members have created a rhythmic week which includes Sabbath (time for self) and balcony time (time spent looking at the big picture instead of the day-to-day details).

YMA Option: 3 days off-site

June 2010

- A Leadership Launch Event has been scheduled for August.
- The Youth Director has received practical training and ongoing coaching in youth ministry.
- Volunteer recruitment for the children and youth ministries is complete. Coordinators for major events have been oriented to their role and equipped with a major event notebook.
- Contact has been made to all youth and to all families with younger children.
- Curriculum resources have been reviewed and/or chosen for the 2010-2011 year.
- Processes are in place for tracking attendance at all children and youth events. Attendance records are reviewed monthly in order to determine any children or youth that have not been attending recently. Efforts are made to contact those children and youth.

YMA Option: 2 days off-site

July 2010

- Normative processes have been established for reaching all children, youth and their families with announcements and for celebrating the successes of both ministries in multiple ways throughout the church.
- Normative processes have been established for effective and timely communication with families and youth. As many forms of communication as possible including updating the church’s website, the church newsletter, bulletin, Facebook, mass texting, bulletin boards, phone tree, etc. have been utilized.
- The Christian Education Committee has completed a half-year course evaluation of the renovation process and makes corrective action to address those components of the strategic plan that may have gotten off course. Unexpected challenges (which are to be expected!) in these ministries have been addressed with playfulness and proactive creativity.
- All the parent interest surveys have been collected and ways to plug in parents for the children and youth ministries have been determined.
- The majority of the pressure points in the assessment report have been addressed.

YMA Option: 2 days off-site



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August 2010

- The Fall Kick-off, designed to welcome children and youth into a program they can get excited about and to introduce parents to format and structure they feel confident about, has been successfully attended. Sign up forms, surveys and contact information have been distributed and returned during the event.
- All volunteers have experienced a 2-4 hour Leadership Launch event that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and equips them to serve the young people of the church. The Child Protection Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- The 2010-2011 children and youth ministry calendar has been printed, distributed and is posted on the website.
- The youth, children's, and leader database has been updated with the most current information available.
- The dates and costs of all major children and youth ministry events and trips have been determined through August 2011.

YMA Option: 1 day off-site

September 2010

- The writing of a game plan has begun, with the input of 3 or 4 youth, for creating a welcoming environment in the youth ministry.
- The youth ministry volunteer database now has 50 names.
- A template for major event notebooks has been created and notebooks have begun to be filled with information.
- A children and youth ministry budget proposal for 2011 has been adopted by the Christian Education Committee and presented to session.
- A strategy for sharing children and youth ministries' stories regularly with the congregation has been created.

YMA Option: 1 day off-site

October 2010

- The game plan for creating a welcoming environment has been adopted and tasks related to its implementation have been integrated into the calendar.
- A Preventative Maintenance Calendar has been created for the children and youth ministries that will help it regularly deal with on-going "behind the scene" ministry maintenance.
- The current staffing structure has been reviewed and recommendations have been made in regards to long term staffing.

YMA Option: 1 day off-site

November 2010

- Ongoing training for the welcoming environment team has taken place and initiatives created by the teens are put in place.
- At least 50% of the church's one year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- A process has been developed for welcoming new families, children, youth and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed at FPC. Timely follow up has ensured their return to the church.

YMA Option: 1 day off-site



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December 2010

Just breathe.....and avoid the fruitcake!!

January 2011

- A Christian formation design retreat has been completed, and a draft of a curriculum planning template has been completed for children and youth programs.
- A game plan is in place for a deliberate system that allows children, youth and parents to understand where young people are on their spiritual journeys and determine how the children and youth ministries can help meet their individual needs where they are. All children and youth programs and events have been evaluated in light of church's mission statement, and plans are in place to leverage off of strengths and shore up missing elements.
- Work has begun on the 2011-2012 children and youth ministry calendars.
- A game plan for strategic staffing is in place to meet the needs of the children and youth ministries.

YMA Option: 3 days on-site, 2 days off-site

February/March 2011

- Create and publicize a deliberate discipleship plan that allows children, youth and parents to understand where the children are in their spiritual lives and determine what programs and ministries will meet their individual needs where they are.
- Traditions to celebrate the important transitions in a young person's life have been developed (like welcoming 7th graders into the youth group). An enriched graduation rite has been put in place for graduating seniors.
- A mid-year training event has taken place for volunteers.
- Efforts have been made to build off the desire of students and parents to make a difference in the world as well as their local community. A focused calendar for children and youth involvement in local, national, and international missions, has been created. The evaluation of the current outreach opportunities has taken place, and a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to youth missions throughout the year has been developed

YMA Option: 2 days off-site

April 2011

- Two manuals for the children and youth ministries has been completed, including
 - Visioning Documents
 - Children and Youth Directories
 - Volunteer Directory
 - Annual Calendar
 - Job Descriptions
 - Game Plans
 - Curriculum Template and Record of Resources used for the current year
 - Budget
 - Recruiting Template, with a Record of All the Volunteer Needs for the Year
 - Compliance Documents (volunteer applications, music and video copyright licensing, etc.).



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- Recruitment of children and youth ministries' weekly volunteers and major event coordinators for 2011-2012 has begun.
- The 2011-2012 children and youth ministry calendars have been completed and distributed.
- The majority of parents of children and youth are engaged and serving the ministries.

YMA Option: 1 day off-site

May 2011

- The one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- Based on attendance tracking, reasonable participation goals for children and youth ministry events and weekly programs have been set, and there are promotion strategies for meeting these goals.
- Recruitment of all volunteers for children and youth programs is complete.
- A thank-you event has taken place to share how much the church appreciates the time, talent, commitment and energy of the volunteers. The celebration gives leaders the chance to give input on the upcoming year and gives the Christian Education Committee the chance to inspire the leaders about the vision for the children and youth programs.

YMA Option: ½ day off-site

June 2011

- The structure for a more established and sustainable Christian Education Committee to be in place overseeing the children and youth ministries is in place.
- The work of the past 18 months of the Christian Education Committee members has been celebrated.
- A final “defrag” has taken place to re-up the three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks, update control documents, update the Children and Youth Ministry Manuals, evaluate the progress of completing the tasks presented in the YMA assessment report, and deal with any current pressure points that are affecting the children and youth ministries.

YMA Option: 3 days on-site, 1 day off-site

THIS TIMELINE CAN BE COLLAPSED OR LENGTHENED, BASED ON THE NUMBER OF HOURS THE CHURCH CAN AFFORD TO DEDICATE TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES.



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