



**BONHOMME**  
WHERE FAITH GROWS

## **YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT**

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

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

### ***Bonhomme Presbyterian Church of Chesterfield, MO***

**January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

By Bryant Johnson, Senior Consultant and Drew Hulse, Staff Consultant / Search Specialist

[bryant.johnson@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:bryant.johnson@ministryarchitects.com)

[drew.hulse@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:drew.hulse@ministryarchitects.com)

### **BACKGROUND**

Bonhomme Presbyterian Church has a rich history in St. Louis, forming over 200 years ago. The church is leading it's members to grow toward the mind and heart of Christ while becoming the hands and feet of Jesus to the community. Members describe their church as "home," "traditional," "family," and "changing."

In the recent history, the church has been in a consistent state of transition. With multiple staff changes, including youth ministry, deciding where the church belongs denominationally, and hiring a new senior pastor, the church has been in a state of unrest. Furthermore, when the next hire is complete, the youth ministry will have seen six different people join the staff since 2013. That is more than one staff change per year.

The membership of the church is around 1500 and on an average week, 600 people attend one of the church's two worship services. The church is led by Senior Pastor, Rev. Phil Hargrove. He is joined by Rev. Don Everts, Associate Pastor, AmyRuth

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Bartlett, Minister of Community, Chris Macky, Associate Pastor of Church Planting and Missions, Lynn Packwood, Minister of Music and Pastoral Care, and Tom Hobson, Assistant Pastor. There are directors for contemporary worship, children's ministry, youth ministry, community care, and pre-school. In addition, there other staff who support the business of the church including finance, childcare, communications, custodians and technical / IT work.

Currently, there are 188 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, 81 of them participate in either Sunday school, worship or one of the youth programs such as Confirmation and Wednesday evening youth group for middle school. There are other program opportunities such as game nights for high school youth, lock-ins, and Trivia Night that take place throughout the year. Annually, there are trips and events such as The Great Escape and mission trips to places like Nashville and Atlanta during the summer. It should also be noted that a student ministry leadership team has also recently been formed. The youth ministry is described by parents as "siloed," "frustrating," and "inconsistent." Youth described the ministry as an "opportunity" and "fun," while others said it is "stagnant," "frustrating," and "shallow."

The church has a 2018 budget of \$2.5 million, of which \$127,651 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program budget as well as the salary and benefits for the staff, consisting of the director of youth ministry and the assistant director of youth ministry.

There are about 17 adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The ministry is currently led by a Janelle Mosely, Assistant Director of Youth Ministry, who has been at the church since May, 2016 There is also a part-time interim director of youth ministry currently providing programmatic support. In addition, a search team has been formed which reports to personnel and will meet on a weekly and semi-weekly basis until the next director of youth ministry has been hired.

The youth facilities are more than adequate for youth ministry to take place. With a stage for large group teaching to take place, easy-to-move-chairs to create a large space for games and activities, and comfortable couches for more intimate conversations to occur the youth space allows for the various styles of youth ministry to take place.

Upon the resignation of the previous director of youth ministry and the strong desire to end



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the ups and downs of quick staff transitions, the church decided to explore how a third party might help in that search process.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward while engaged in the search process for a new director of youth ministry. Ministry Architects met with 62 individuals in 11 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

## YOUTH MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

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

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

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

While there are a significant number of youth participating in the youth ministry, the perception within the congregation is that the church should be engaging a larger number of youth in the ministry than is currently taking place with no agreement or clarity of what that number should be. This signals that this rent is unpaid.

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

This rent appears to be partially paid. Some people rave about middle school ministry and The Great Escape, while others are frustrated that program seems to be ever changing and insufficient.

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

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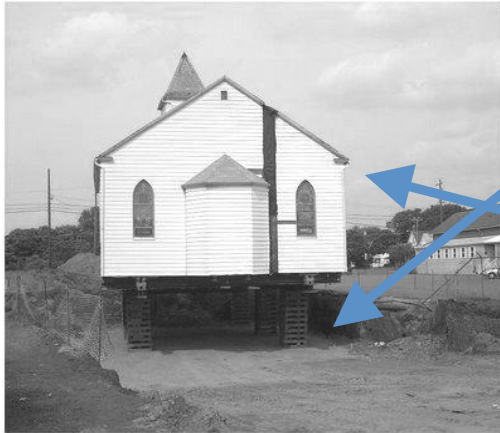
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Frustration, anxiety, and uncertainty are the most common emotions currently surrounding the youth ministry during, yet, another staff transition. This suggests that this rent is unpaid.

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

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:



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

Continuing to Do Ministry:  
Maintaining the *current* youth ministry in a way that builds the enthusiasm of youth, their families, the staff and the church at large.

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

**1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 600 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 60 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 81 youth is over and above what a church of this size could normally expect to see and should be celebrated.

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

Very few youth ministries seem to be able to break beyond this 20% level. Bonhomme Presbyterian Church might keep in mind, then, that the expected ceiling for this youth ministry is around 120 youth. The road to that level of participation is dependent on increased staffing, volunteers and budget.

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**3) \$1,500 per Youth**—With a budget of \$127,651 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Bonhomme Presbyterian Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 85 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 81 currently participating each week, the ministry is right on target for its current reach. However, it is not likely that the ministry will be able to do more to reach the other 107 youth on its rolls without more of a financial investment.

**4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including the interim director of youth ministry and the assistant director of youth ministry, Bonhomme Presbyterian Church has the equivalent of 1.5 full time staff persons. According to this rule of thumb, when both positions are filled, Bonhomme Presbyterian Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 75 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration is at maximum capacity. However, when the full-time director is hired, the staff configuration will allow room for growth to take place.

**5) 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 17 weekly volunteers, Bonhomme Presbyterian Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 4-5 youth. In other words, the team seems to be the right size for the current ministry of 81 youth. However, if the church wants to expand its impact, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

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

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

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Each of these roles is important as Bonhomme Presbyterian Church pursues a more sustainable model of youth ministry. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

- While there has been no one person assigned the role of the architect, multiple adults appear to be independently assuming this role.
- The paid staff have not yet been given the time or training to do their important work as the “general contractor” of a complex ministry that is performing at a higher level than one person can normally manage.
- Bonhomme has a history of expecting youth ministry staff to serve in all three of these roles. Predictably, this is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- Many participants expect the next director of youth ministry will be someone who is a laborer primarily skilled at leading, singing, playing games, teaching a Bible lesson or connecting with individual youth.

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## ASSETS

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

#### **Fingers In the Dike**

Do you remember the story by Hans Brinker about the little Dutch boy who put his finger in the leaking dike in order to save the city? Thank goodness the boy was willing to stand in the gap and temporarily hold off the flood. The obvious challenge with the situation was that it was a temporary solution to an ongoing problem. Well, you have an amazing person in Janelle, who is doing everything she can to hold the dike of youth ministry needs together, but she is quickly running out of fingers, and the problem isn't going away. She needs to be celebrated for her "Bring-it-on" spirit and her willingness to stand in the place of need for Bonhomme as they build the foundation for new and sustainable youth ministry.

#### **This Is No Fixer-upper!**

Having a space to call their own will help to add to the identity of a youth ministry and Bonhomme has provided a great space for the youth ministry to thrive in. Highlighted by a leaf graphic featuring "Bonhomme: Where Faith Grows" students are invited into a bright, fully equipped ministry space. Thought was clearly given during the past building campaign to make sure youth ministry had the physical resources to do the work of ministry.

#### **Stepping Up to the Plate**

Though the flow is not unlimited, the church has stepped up to the plate in regards to funding the youth ministry at Bonhomme. It was common to hear comments saying that funding has never really been the issue. From staffing needs to program opportunities, resources have been made available to do the work of ministry.

#### **All In the Family**

There was no word heard more often when people were describing Bonhomme and the youth ministry there, then the word "family." From how people are received on Sunday morning, to multiple generations worshipping together, family is at the heart of Bonhomme. Even with the changes in leadership, one mother said her kids told her they would never go to another church because Bonhomme was their family. "There are other choices church wise, but these are my people." Whereas many larger churches with multiple worship services struggle to maintain a strong sense of community, Bonhomme, through mentoring programs and more has created and held onto a deep sense of family.

#### **Clarity of Need**

62 people potentially had much better things to do with their time on Friday and Saturday then to come and sit in a 75-minute meeting to talk. But it is their commitment to youth ministry and the youth of Bonhomme that brought them out on one of the coldest

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weekends of the winter to express their understanding for the need to do more. They see the youth who are missing, they know the expectations being put on current staff, and they long to be a part of the answer for the future for the youth of Bonhomme. They are aware there are those who have gone before them and it is now their turn to step up and help meet the need.

### **Strategic Staff Planning**

People don't want to just repeat the same process that has led to the revolving door of youth ministry staff. They see the need for a seasoned, veteran, trained, committed, passionate person called to youth ministry for the long term to come along side them and, together, do the work of ministry. Rather than just filling a slot, the church is seeking to be intentional in creating a framework and doing the hard work to hire the right staff, and not to have another short-timer. To help facilitate that process, they wisely hired an interim staff person to help fill the current need, giving them space to make great, long term decisions. They have put processes in place to complete the hire and are looking forward to years of fruitful and sustainable ministry.

### **The Shelves Are Stocked**

Whether it is part of the DNA of Bonhomme, or just a providential moment in time, either way, the "experience" pantry is stocked at Bonhomme. Multiple volunteers, some connected to the youth ministry and some not, have significant education and experience in youth ministry. What a blessing for a church to have such a wealth of knowledge available to help with training, planning, and visioning for the youth ministry.

### **Parent Leadership Team**

Through wise counsel given by staff, Janelle has established a parent leadership team consisting of four adults who are stakeholders in the ministry. The team functions as a sounding board for ideas, gives encouragement, and processing decisions to be made. Rather than a staff person feeling alone in the process, committed lay leaders are coming alongside and walking together in the youth ministry.

### **Middle School Ministry Highlights**

One thing that most people, both parents and students alike, agree on is that there are some great things happening in the middle school ministry. From small groups within the confirmation classes, "I really like our small group," to MS Refuge, "It's really cool," to the Great Escape, "I go every year," things are happening in the middle school ministry. In addition, it is a ministry that has strong parental support and participation from small group leaders, mentors, and high school students as student leaders.

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## CHALLENGES

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

#### **Cracks in the Foundation**

There are several very important systems and documents that are missing from the youth ministry at Bonhomme. While this may seem unrelated to the pressure that is currently felt in the ministry, it is absolutely true that the lack of these systems has led to multiple stops and starts with staff members, and the ministry will struggle to build a healthy culture until these things are in place. Ministries struggle to thrive when an adequate infrastructure has not been provided to support the ministry.

The following items and systems are currently either *inadequate* or *missing*:

- **Attendance Tracking:** While attendance is being tracked, The Fellowship One system has not been easy to use for attendance. If there's no tracking process, then 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors and students who formerly attended, but are now "missing-in-action" may not be followed up on like they should be. Without this, growth doesn't happen; instead, decline begins.
- **Database:** A cloud-based system so that busy adult volunteers can access student contact info at any time for outreach and relationship building, like visits to school events, cards and notes, follow-up after key events, etc.
- **18-months Calendar:** An online calendar where events are always 12-months out "in pen" with another 6-months beyond that "in pencil." This way, parents, youth, volunteers, staff, and church members can have the opportunity to say "no" to other things and "yes" to youth events. The farther out the calendar, the farther out the organizational process, the better the critical mass when the event comes.
- **MIA & First Timer Follow Up:** A system for following up with visiting youth and checking in on those who are missing in action, to be sure no one falls through the cracks and goes unnoticed.
- **Major Event Notebooks:** For annual special events and programs, information and data should be gathered to enable new volunteers to run these in the future. It's all fine and good to leave the info in the head of a staff person...until that staff person leaves and the event info leaves with them.
- **Youth Ministry Manual:** Budgets, game plans, calendars, job descriptions, curriculum plans, and visioning documents all located in one place.
- **Communication Plan:** Bonhomme does not appear to have a normative, comprehensive process for communicating about the various programs being offered for youth. There are several different vehicles being used, but each seems to fall short of effective communication. A new game plan needs to be evaluated and put into place.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs for each semester, in order to measure the effectiveness of the ministry's impact.

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### **CONFIRMATION: Missing the Mark**

Many acknowledged that the bridge between confirmation class and the youth ministry seems to be out. Historically, strong numbers in confirmation have not translated into strong numbers of students making it into the high school ministry. Confirmation, with its many formulations over the years, has not seemed to bring the results that are hoped for. Focus group members reported,

- “The mentors were never trained.”
- “It doesn’t seem to translate into students moving into the HS ministry.”
- “I know it’s just a lot of talking at my kids.”
- “I like it, I learn a lot.”
- “It was training, and not discipleship.”

Confirmation is the one area where a clear sense of curriculum is at least in place. Throughout the entirety of the youth ministry program, there has never been a curriculum plan put in place that speaks to the Christian formation needs of adolescents. Great thought and planning need to take place to put into action a plan that will equip the students for a lifetime faith that grows them far beyond their years within the youth programs.

### **Can You Hear Me Now?**

Some indicated that they would like to see better communication about the programs of the youth ministry. There has not seemed to be a clear method of communication used, even though many methods, from the church newsletter to “The Feed” at worship to email blasts to text messaging have been used. With the best efforts of communicating, too many times families have not seemed to hear about events until the last minute, if at all. Missing from the larger message has been the opportunity to tell the story of the youth ministry to the whole church. There is a great story to tell, but there seems to be a lack of a broader plan for marketing the youth ministry, particularly to families and the church at large. Whether the message is done through print media, students in worship, or an all church email blast, the more the word of what God is doing in the lives of the students can get out, the more students and families are going to be drawn in, in addition to growing increasing support for the youth ministry throughout the church.

### **How Do You Stop This Rollercoaster?**

One of the strongest messages heard through our time with Bonhomme is that the youth ministry has been on a rollercoaster ride for a long time. The ministry has been marked by an ever, repeating series of ups and downs with no one knowing what the goal was. One youth shared, “It’s not all the changes that are bad, I just never know what we’re trying to do.” At least in the most recent years, no one has been able to express what the vision of the youth ministry is or has been. It is pretty clear this is a result of there *not* being a vision put forth for the youth ministry. There is a cry from parents, staff, even students across the board, “We need to have a vision for ministry.” People want to get off the rollercoaster and start heading forward in a unified direction.

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### **Staff's Revolving Door**

It's almost like a challenging trivia game. Can you name all of the paid youth staff over the last ten plus years? Through a series of circumstances and events, the youth ministry staff has felt like a revolving door. Every student has had a different leader, with many of the students having multiple leaders. For many students, the experience of losing a leader unexpectedly was described by one person as "crushing." Another parent stated, "I just wish, we'd have someone stay." With every new director, the youth ministry has started over again with no structures in place. People, both parents and students alike, are longing for a sense of stability and someone who will pour into students and the ministry for the long haul, rather than seeing the position as a stepping-stone to something bigger.

### **One Man Band**

The model at Bonhomme, whether intentional or not, has been for the youth ministry to be lead by a one-man band, a paid staff person(s) who does it all. One person, "We've been a ministry of staff personalities," when referring the dependency on staff to lead the ministry. It has seemingly been the staff responsibility, by choice or default, to do everything on their own. Most of the tasks of visioning, recruiting, training, administration, planning, support, and "head cook", have been left to the youth director. One of the consequences of this has been the lack of buy in by parents and students when ideas are put forth or changes are made to previous models. The sad thing is there seems to be many people standing by with their hands raised saying, "I will help." Still, a Youth Ministry Team has never been effectively put into place.

### **Terminal Uniqueness**

As was stated in the 2011 assessment, parents continue to suffer from a perception disorder we like to call "terminal uniqueness," focusing intensely on the challenge the youth ministry faces due to the "unique" factors of Bonhomme's student population.

- Multiple feeder schools, both public and private, making it difficult for kids to feel connected,
- Youth with packed schedules, who are therefore unable to attend, "I go from school, to sports, to play practice, to home for homework, so I never go to youth group."
- Being a church that does not come from the same zip code, making it difficult to get people to come to church other than Sunday mornings.
- Youth attending schools that demand high levels of performance, including multiple hours of homework each night.

The reality is, none of these challenges are unique to Bonhomme, but are all too true for churches across the country who are ministering in affluent, suburban areas. The "stressed life-style" of high school students is now the new norm.

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## **Poof!**

So, where have all the high school students gone? One of the goals of the confirmation program is to create a tight knit group of students who will then transition into high school. Unfortunately, this has not been happening. In fact, the high school students have become an ever-decreasing population. “Numbers just aren’t what they used to be.” “Feels like we are losing the high school students to other churches.” Outside of students attending the Sunday morning offering and some students participating in student leadership opportunities, there is a very real sense that high school ministry and the students have become almost non-existent at Bonhomme.

## **Who’s Keeping Track?**

Due to many different factors, from challenging computer-tracking systems to a lack of consistent volunteers, data for students and attendance tracking has been a challenge. As a result, the task of tracking students who are “Missing-in-Action” (have dropped out of the ministry without people noticing) or follow up with new attenders (have we had any of those recently) has been made much more difficult. There don’t seem to be any procedures or instruments in place to address the need and be able to care for students who are on the fringes.

## **Put Me in the Game, Coach**

What was communicated by listening group participants was that there are a lot of adults who would love to help out and be a part of the youth ministry, but they are “sitting on the bench.” They are willing to play, but they have never had the opportunity to get into the game. One parent said, “I have never been asked to help in youth ministry.” Another responded, when trying to volunteer for confirmation said, “I was told I wasn’t needed.” The real losers in this situation are the students who don’t have enough adults pouring into their lives. Effective ministry would see as many adults as possible who have received effective training, responding to the call to know and love students. This multiplies the effectiveness of the ministry and allows Bonhomme to reach far more students in fruitful ministry.

The new people joining the team and entering the game will need a “playbook.” Currently, the pieces that would comprise a “playbook” for volunteers do not exist in the youth ministry. Current volunteers do not have written job descriptions, on-going training, access to training resources, or opportunities for team development. Volunteers are currently left to depend on their own knowledge and any training they may have received somewhere other than Bonhomme or from other ministries. There is no established system and rhythm for developing volunteers, but such a system will be absolutely necessary as more adults enter the game at Bonhomme.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reframe the next 16 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the youth ministry. Understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the youth ministry, target May 2019 as the date when the youth ministry renovation will be complete.
2. Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
3. Present this report to Session, requesting that they endorse an 16-month strategic design process for the children's ministry.
4. Establish a Youth Ministry Team, made up of at least three non-anxious, goal-oriented volunteers and at least one representative from Session who will work closely with Ministry Architects to ensure that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
  - **Addressing the immediate pressure points** facing the ministry as it transitions toward a thriving, sustainable youth ministry (e.g., keeping the trains running on time)
  - **Implementing the strategic, long-term** recommendations of this report (e.g., building a new railway system)
5. Partner with Ministry Architects to take responsibility for
  - 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 youth ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of renovating the youth ministry.
  - Assisting the Search Team with the search process to fill the director of youth ministry position.
6. Address the current pressure points facing the youth ministry:

**Pressure Point #1: Equip the Volunteer Team** – Assure the each volunteer has clarity about the role they serve in the ministry, are receiving relevant training for the role, and understands the larger goals for the youth ministry.

- Create task oriented job descriptions for each volunteer role in the youth ministry including, Sunday school teachers, youth group volunteers, small group leaders, confirmation mentors, Youth Ministry Team, and trip, retreat, and event leaders.
- Schedule a volunteer training opportunity to take place in March. Consider using the time to do the following:
  - Review the youth ministry assessment report together as a group
  - Inform volunteers of the next steps that being taken to assure the challenges are being addressed

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- Review volunteer job descriptions together for accuracy
  - Identify what questions volunteers have regarding youth culture, facilitating discussion, and what they would like to learn more of.
- Calendar four volunteer training meetings for 2018/2019 school year including a volunteer kickoff event, a fall training event, a spring training event, and a volunteer thank-you event.
- Schedule one-on-one meetings with each volunteer to respond to the following questions:
  - What has excited you most this year working with youth?
  - In what way have you been challenged serving with youth?
  - Where is God at work in your life that can better impact your gifts with youth?
- Develop a youth volunteer training plan that outlines “what every youth ministry volunteer needs to know” and “what I need to know to serve as a youth ministry ...”

**Pressure Point #2: Continue the Search Process**

- Launch the search team to begin the search process for a full-time director of youth ministry.
- Create a results-based job description for a full-time director of youth ministry, focusing the position on the role of the architect.
- Ensure that the senior pastor is strategically included in the search process.
- Conduct interviews with potential candidates.
- Extend an offer to the top candidate for the director of youth ministry.
- Transition the interim youth ministry position into a permanent part-time youth ministry position.

**Pressure Point #3: Firming the Foundation** – Assure that the following foundation documents for a healthy youth ministry are in place. Develop the following gameplans for:

- Updating the database on a weekly basis
- Welcoming first-timers to the ministry
- Reaching out to MIA youth assuring that no youth has been missed
- Making a personal contact to each family on an annual basis
- How the various communication tools already established should be used and coordinated together so that all parents, families, and youth are “in the know.”
- Regularly telling the good stories of the youth ministry to the larger congregation
- Curriculum plans through the end of 2018
- A list of all youth ministry volunteer positions including hands-on and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

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- Retention of high school youth once they've moved into 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Confirmation retention following the completion of the class

**Pressure Point #4: Clarify the Vision** Invite students, parents, leaders, members to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry. This time will create a sense that everyone's input is valued in looking to the future plans. All walk away knowing they were a part of what was created, (Ministry Architects can help facilitate this), resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:

- A youth ministry mission statement
- A statement of youth ministry values (the spirit at which everyone goes about the work of the ministry.)
- A set of three-year revolving goals (practical, tangible, hands-on) with one-year measurable benchmarks.
- An organizational structure for the ministry (Who to go to for what as the vision is rolled out.)

7. Build the long-term infrastructure required for a long-term, sustainable youth ministry.

- o **Host a "Quick Start" Summit:** Invite the Youth Ministry Team, key volunteers, 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 youth ministry renovation process.
  - Identify any progress in implementing the recommendations of this report.
  - Orient the Youth Ministry Team to their specific responsibilities.
  - Assign Youth Ministry Team members responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report.
  - Calendar the dates involving Youth Ministry Team.
  - Create a plan for concrete communication between the Youth Ministry 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 Quick Start Summit:
    - o Results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry. The job descriptions cover all current positions and also include additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

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- A clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
- A broad “fishing pond” list of at least 40 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
- **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.
  - Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the children’s ministry programming.
  - Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
  - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s high school mission trip”).
- **Compliance Documents:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and all adults working with any youth affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **High School Schedule:** Evaluate the current high school youth ministry schedule and develop a 2<sup>nd</sup> weekly (i.e. Sunday night) high school ministry opportunity with a specified launch date.
- **Youth Ministry Manual:** Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, 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 youth ministry event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2018.

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

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

## **DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

- o **Strategic Staffing:** Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan, including the professional and volunteer components, for the youth ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth.
- o **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- o **Sustainable Pace:** Help each youth ministry staff member develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- o **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of volunteer needs. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 80 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- o **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.
- o **Student Leadership Development:** Develop a written game plan for combining the church’s current student leadership opportunities into a system that gives increasing load-bearing responsibility for mentoring and ministry leadership to youth.

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

- o **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through May 2019 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- o **Personal Connection Plan:** Develop a system for ensuring that every family in the current youth directory is contacted personally at least once a year in order to make a connection, express support, and clarify if there are any parents requesting that their sons and/or daughters be removed from the church’s directory.

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## PROPOSED TIMELINE AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL

### FEBRUARY

*The following provides Bonhomme Presbyterian Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term youth ministry.*

*Many churches choose to use the services of Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this infrastructure-building process. If the church would like Ministry Architects to provide more specialized consulting in certain areas, particularly for the 16-month transition, we are available to help.*

### February 2018

#### Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

#### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to Session for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and Session has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for March.
- The Youth Ministry Team has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Summit.
- Work has begun on the 2018-2019 youth ministry calendar.
- A fishing pond of 80 potential volunteers in youth ministry has been created.
- The church has partnered with Ministry Architects to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
- Task oriented job descriptions for each volunteer role in the youth ministry including, Sunday school teachers, youth group volunteers, small group leaders, confirmation mentors, Youth Ministry Team, and trip, retreat, and event leaders have been created.
- A volunteer training opportunity to take place in March has been scheduled and invitations have been sent.
- The search team has been formed and the search process has been launched.
- A results-based job description has been written for the director of youth ministry.

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- The position has been promoted through posting the position and the distribution of a marketing letter.
- Ministry Architects staff have worked their networks in order to reach potential candidates.
- Sourcing phone calls and emails to youth ministry leaders, professors, and pastoral contacts have been made on behalf of the church.
- Mechanisms for monthly on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided.

## March 2018

### Focus: Renovation Underway, High School Program, Volunteers, Pressure Points

#### Outcomes:

- A Quick Start Summit has taken place in which the renovation process was launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed. The Summit tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the youth ministry renovation process.
- Volunteer recruiting season has opened.
  - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
  - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2018-2019 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to youth ministry.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2018-2019.
- Four volunteer training meetings for the 2018/2019 school year including a volunteer kickoff event, a fall training event, a spring training event, and a volunteer training thank-you event.
- One-on-one meetings with each volunteer have been scheduled to take place through the end of the school year.
- Resumes have been collected and scored and preliminary interviews have been completed.

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- The current high school youth ministry schedule has been evaluated and a 2<sup>nd</sup> weekly (i.e. Sunday night) high school ministry opportunity has been developed. A specified launch date has been set.

## April 2018

### Focus: Gameplans, Search, Fall Kick-off

#### Outcomes:

- Gameplans for the following processes have been drafted:
  - Updating the database with new information on a weekly/monthly basis
  - Welcoming first-timers to the ministry
  - Reaching out to MIA youth assuring that no youth has been missed
  - Making a personal contact to each family on an annual basis
  - How the various communication tools already established should be used and coordinated together so that all parents, families, and youth are “in the know.”
  - Regularly telling the good stories of the youth ministry to the larger congregation
  - Curriculum plans through 2018
  - A list of all youth ministry volunteer positions including hands-on and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
  - High school retention
  - Confirmation retention
- A Visioning Summit has been scheduled for June and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.
- A Fall Kick-off for the youth ministry has been scheduled for September. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.

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- A youth volunteer training plan that outlines “what every youth ministry volunteer needs to know” and “what I need to know to serve as a youth ministry ...” has been developed.
- Phone or Zoom interviews have been conducted and the list of top candidates has been narrowed down.
- Reference checks have been completed on final candidates.

## May 2018

### Focus: Visioning Promotion, Compliance, Database

#### Outcomes:

- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has begun.
- The database has been reviewed to ensure any new youth and their families have been added and/or updated as necessary.
- All youth programs have adhered to the youth protection policy.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the youth ministry.
- Onsite interviews have taken place.
- A final candidate has been recommended to the senior pastor.
- An offer has been made and accepted.
- A thank you event for all youth volunteers has taken place.
- The interim youth ministry position has been transitioned into a permanent part-time position.

## June 2018

### Focus: Visioning Summit, Volunteers, Calendars, Volunteer Thank You

#### Outcomes:

- A Visioning Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the youth ministry (mission statement, core values, goals, and structure).

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- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- All volunteer needs for the 2018-2019 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- The 2018-2019 youth ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church's calendar.
- A thank you event for all youth volunteers has taken place.
- The new director of youth ministry has started on staff at Bonhomme.
- All pressure points have been addressed.

## July 2018

### Focus: Participation Goals, Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers, Curriculum

#### Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through December 2018 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The Youth Ministry 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 Youth Ministry Team has met monthly.
- A volunteer application, an application process, and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented.
- 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.
- A Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for October. The Summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- Each youth staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

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- A game plan has been created to develop student leadership in the youth ministry. The youth have been given charge of creating a welcoming environment.

## August 2018

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

#### Outcomes

- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- Communication methods currently being used to promote the youth ministry and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for the youth ministry has been updated with that new information. Every youth has been “tagged” as active, inactive, or MIA.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and, equips them to serve the youth of Bonhomme Presbyterian Church. The youth protection policy has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the youth ministry that welcomed youth and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about, and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants felt energized and enthusiastic about the coming year’s programs.

## September 2018

### Focus: Compliance, Major Event Notebooks

#### Outcomes

- As necessary, all background checks have been completed for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the youth protection 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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- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each youth event.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and scheduled for the youth ministry staff.
- A plan has been implemented for ensuring that every family in the current youth directory has been contacted personally at least once a year in order to make a connection, express support, and clarify if there are any parents requesting that their sons and/or daughters be removed from the church's directory.

## October 2018

### Focus: Christian Formation Summit, Budget

#### 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 detailed 2019 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.

## November 2018

### Focus: Marketing, Attendance, MIA Youth, Major Event Notebooks

#### Outcomes:

- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- Major event notebooks for each major youth event have been completed.

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- Marketing processes that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry have been evaluated and added to as necessary.
- All game plans that have been launched in last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through May 2019 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- Gameplans for retaining high school youth and Confirmands have been evaluated and updated as necessary.

## December 2018

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

#### Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2019.
- The Youth Ministry Team has continued to meet monthly.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.

## January 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Training, Calendars, Database

#### Outcomes:

- A mid-year parent meeting has taken place.
- 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.
- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth has been updated with that new information.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.

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## February 2019

### Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Recruitment

#### Outcomes:

- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- The 2019-2020 youth ministry calendar has been completed.
- 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 youth ministry.
  - Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2019-2020.

## March 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Manual, Reflection and Re-Assessing

#### Outcomes:

- Volunteer recruitment has continued.
- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth ministry.
- Current pressure points have been named
- A manual for the youth ministry has been completed, including
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
  - Volunteer directory
  - Volunteer training agendas and notes
  - Attendance records
  - Annual calendar
  - Results-based job descriptions
  - Game plans and new initiatives

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- o Meeting agendas and minutes for the Youth Ministry Team.
- o Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
- o Budget and other financial documents
- o Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
- o Compliance documents

## April 2019

### Focus: Compliance, Curriculum, Fall Kick-off, Sustainability

#### Outcomes:

- All gameplans implemented this past school year have been reviewed. Changes have been made as necessary.
- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall youth programs.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- 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.
- Ongoing coaching has been secured and a sustainability plan has been put in place.
- The staff and Youth Ministry Team have celebrated what God has done with their first 15 month investment.

## May 2019

### Focus: Volunteer Thank You, Benchmarks, Major Event Notebooks, High School Programming

#### Outcomes:

- The additional weekly high school program has been evaluated for effectiveness. Plans have been made to improve the program for the 2019-2020 school year.
- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- All volunteer needs for the 2019-2020 school year for the youth ministry have

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been filled.

- All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the youth staff to pass along to the next year's coordinator.
- The Youth Ministry Team has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the youth volunteers and focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, budgetary needs, and conducting an annual review of all gameplans and job descriptions are taking place. Monthly meetings are scheduled.

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## The *Ministry Architects* Team Serving Bonhomme Presbyterian Church (Chesterfield, MO)



**BRYANT JOHNSON – SENIOR CONSULTANT**

[bryant.johnson@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:bryant.johnson@ministryarchitects.com)

321.652.6947

Bryant began working in youth ministry in 1996 in the United Methodist Church. He has been worship speaker for summer camps, taught seminars for youth workers, and written curriculum for the Florida United Methodist Camping programs. Bryant graduated from Florida Southern College with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology. He joined the Ministry Architects team in 2010.

In his free time Bryant enjoys all things technology, exercise, good movies, and blogs at [thepostlu.de](http://thepostlu.de). He lives in Kernersville, NC.



**DREW HULSE – STAFF CONSULTANT / SEARCH SPECIALIST**

[drew.hulse@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:drew.hulse@ministryarchitects.com)

808.292.0691

Drew, an ordained ECO pastor, has served in youth ministry since 1977. His education includes a Masters of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry in Youth and Family, both from Fuller Theological Seminary. Drew's last two calls were as Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry at Columbia Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Vancouver, WA for 21 years and as Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry at First Presbyterian Church (ECO) in Honolulu, HI for 8 years. Both were opportunities to redesign and renew ministries, with Hawaii also being a wonderful multi-ethnic situation.

Drew recently moved from the warm sands of Hawaiian beaches to the desert sands of Tucson, AZ. In his free time, Drew is the assistant coach for his eight-year-old granddaughter's fast pitch team. He and Cathy enjoy hiking, working out, and watching Criminal Minds.



**ANNETTE SAFSTROM - SENIOR CONSULTANT**

[Annette.safstrom@ministryarchitects.com](mailto:Annette.safstrom@ministryarchitects.com)

469.441.9179

Annette fell in love with children's ministry in the 1980s and has never looked back. After graduating from Bible college in 1991 with a certification in children's ministry, she earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University, and a Master's from SMU. Over the years, she has consistently served in various roles and in various settings as either a staff member or volunteer team member.

Annette served as a director for a rapidly growing children's ministry, and has been a member of the Ministry Architects team since January of 2012. She is a conference speaker for both Children's Pastor's Conference and Group's KidMin Conference. She lives in McKinney, TX.

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