



## YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

August 7-10, 2009

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### BACKGROUND

University Christian Church is known within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as one of the largest congregations in the denomination, and church members describe the family here as “traditional, welcoming, generous and devoted to the church.” UCC’s annual presentation of The Boar’s Head and Yule Log Festival draws multiple generations together, and over the last 33 years has become a celebrated event anticipated by the community and congregation alike.

With a commitment to higher education and sharing Stone-Campbell’s message of Christianity, the Disciples of Christ founded Add-Ran College in 1873 and called the town of Thorpe Springs home. Soon after, the college birthed University Christian Church and a unique relationship began as they lived together for the next 60 years. Following the move to Waco in 1895, Add-Ran changed its name to Texas Christian University in 1902 and UCC called the first minister, Colby D. Hall in 1909. When a fire devastated the main campus in 1910, TCU and its church moved to “the hill” in Fort Worth in 1911. While the land for University Christian Church was acquired in 1920, the lack of funds made it impossible to build the original structure until the spring of 1933. In the face of the Great Depression, a testament of hope was claimed when the cornerstone for University Christian Church was laid. Perry E. Gresham, the first full-time minister in the new location, was succeeded by Granville T. Walker in 1943. Granville’s tenure oversaw two major expansions to the original church in 1951 and 1967 and though he retired following the 1973 centennial celebration of UCC, a rumor exists that his spirit still walks the halls.

University Christian Church membership is about 3,517 and typically between 750 and 800 people will worship in one of the 3 worship experiences available on Sunday. Sunday school is a large draw. The elaborate Journeyland experience, the four youth classes and the variety of adult options draw 450-500 people on a normal Sunday. The growing children’s ministry, as seen in the 2008 launch of CCF and JYF, in addition to the great music program, community ministries like The Children’s Closet and Room in the Inn are among the many bright spots in the congregation and community. There are about 15 different schools represented in the youth ministry of UCC, and families drive from near and far to participate.



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In years gone by, UCC has seen attendance spikes in the youth ministry for short periods of time. In the focus groups we heard, "I've grown up in this church and our youth group has always been small." As well as, "I remember when there were tons of people involved while Tiff was here." With an often different population of people engaged Sunday morning as opposed to Sunday evening, some of the discrepancy may be understood because of the different places youth have plugged in.

The youth ministry program has seen a persistent pattern of high staff turnover, with the ministry experiencing 7 staff changes since 2000: From Matt to Joe, Joe to Kristin, Kristin to Tiff, Tiff to Todd, Todd to Carol, and Carol to Russ. This change in leadership has left the youth ministry with a legacy of inconsistent leadership over the past 7 years averaging a new leader at the helm every 17 months. The rear view mirror reveals a significant turnover rate among the senior ministers as well. According to one beloved youth staff, "I felt like it was my job to be the stability. [Transitioning] with 2 senior ministers, 2 youth ministers ... was quite a lot for the whole church, not just the youth ministry." With the recent departure of the senior minister, UCC has entered again into a time of transition. As one parent stated, "We're in a holding place right now." The silence has been loud regarding this season in the life of University Christian but a resolved confidence seems to be present. The spirit of hope is undeniably strong.

Youth Ministry activities include worship, Sunday school, Handbell Choir, Youth Choir, Faith Development Class, Chi Rho Youth Group, CYF Youth Group, mission trips, camps and retreats. Currently, there are approximately 91 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders actively participating in these areas of the church. During a typical week around 45 participate in Sunday school, sometimes driving a great distance to do so. The Sunday evening fellowship, part of an intentional outreach to the community through *The Search*, often draws youth and their families from the community that are not connected to Sunday mornings.

The church has a 2009 budget in the neighborhood of \$2.6 million. For the year 2009, the youth ministry has a budget of \$139,900 this includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, as well as the program budget. Currently there is one full time Associate Minister for Youth and one part-time assistant minister for Chi Rho and approximately 15-20 hours a week of administrative support. A second part-time Assistant Minister for CYF resigned a month ago and the position has not yet been filled. There are approximately 20 adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth ministry programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The Youth Ministry Committee, supported by the youth ministry staff has created some momentum to build something new and sustainable in the youth ministry. The members of UCC are ready to rebuild from the "roller-coaster" and frequent transition in leadership. As one focus group member stated, "We have a problem of reinventing the wheel every year, and we do not have a cohesive approach within the youth ministry and also the congregation at large. We have a pattern of that repeating itself over and over, and then we have the same issues and problems so we are glad you're here to help us get off the treadmill." In an effort to address this lack of sustainability, a Task Force was commissioned in 2006 to assess the current picture of youth ministry, investigate other youth ministry models and recommend possible next steps. Under the leadership of Cy Rowell, the Task Force presented a report to the Board of Stewards in January 2007. Youth Ministry Architects was invited to review and build upon the 2007 Task Force report and conduct an updated assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically



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forward. We met with 65 individuals in 7 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 we like to use for understanding youth ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” It has been our 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.

Youth ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. And those youth ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

**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 Board of Stewards 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.

**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 students and parents “something to talk about.”

**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.

It is clear that the youth ministry at UCC over the past few years has struggled to pay these rents. As the leadership of the congregation goes about the process of re-visioning its youth ministry, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.”

With this in mind, the current youth ministry faces parallel tasks:



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



This year, UCC has the opportunity to do both: successfully revamp its youth ministry and create an appropriate infrastructure for sustaining an effective youth ministry that allows both staff and volunteers to thrive. One parent said: "There are certainly a lot of opportunities here."

**As the youth ministry considers how it might develop a sustainable youth ministry in the future, five "rules of thumb" or what we call "youth ministry norms" will be helpful to keep in mind:**

- 1) **10% of the Worshiping Congregation:** In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. Being a church with an average worship attendance of 750 and an average youth participation of around 91 throughout the school year, UCC is actually performing well from an attendance standpoint.
  
- 2) **1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth:** With one full-time and two part-time staff members (Russ, Anna and Sharyn) currently spreading out their workload over all of the programmatic, organizational/administrative, and relational components of the youth ministry and 91 youth participating on a weekly basis, UCC is staffed for the norm in its current structure. However, the youth ministry will not likely be successful in engaging a significant number of non-participating youth without additions being made to the youth staff. Ordinarily, a congregation that expects its staff to build a ministry without enough personnel sets itself up to be unable to fulfill all the expectations placed on them. And often the natural result of this situation is a climate of criticism, negative parking lot evaluations, and burnout for the staff.
  
- 3) **1 Adult for Every 5 Youth:** We like to think in terms of "spans of care," recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than five students on an on-going basis. The fact that 20 adults are involved as youth leaders on a weekly basis, would indicate that the youth ministry is poised to engage 100 students per week effectively. However, the lack of training and equipping of volunteers had led to the inability for these volunteers to serve at full capacity.
  
- 4) **\$1,500 for Each Youth:** With a budget of \$139,900 dedicated to the youth ministry and a weekly participation level of around 91 youth in some aspect of the church's life, the church is on target with the number of youth it can sustain. Though there may be a shift in which youth the church engages, it is not likely that the youth ministry will be able to do much more than it is currently doing (either in breadth or depth).

## Building a Sustainable Youth Staff

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 youth 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 insures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.



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- 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.

Though these three roles are very different, they are equally important, each one essential to the building of a sustainable youth ministry.

## THE ASSETS

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

**Shared Value in the Priority of the Youth Ministry:** There seems to be a common goal and an intentional desire to revitalize and build a sustainable youth ministry at UCC. The staff, youth leaders, parents and youth share this common value. UCC has the unified support to undergird this renovation project. The fact that close to 65 youth and adults participated in focus groups or one on one meetings, taking time to share their input about the youth ministry, gives undeniable evidence of a broad based eagerness about building a thriving youth ministry at UCC. All these factors contribute to a climate that says to youth and their families that they are highly valued and that their growth in faith is a high priority for this church family. Focus group members stated:

- *My boys have dropped out of the program but I came today as a board member concerned about wanting things to improve.*
- *One of the reasons I stay involved is seeing the connection my older children have and what it has meant to them through the trials of life. This has been the foundation which has led them to what they do in life and to see them become contributing members of society is gratifying. The importance of a foundation is not just at home but here as well and that becomes more and more significant every day.*

**Youth Committee:** The youth committee is going for the gold! In the history of Youth Ministry Architects we have never known a church to be as prepared for our arrival as UCC. If a significant number of folks, even beyond the current committee, have investigated and interpreted the facts that generated the Youth Ministry Task Force Report, have read Mark DeVries book *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, and have already started to tackle some of the heavy lifting that needs to be done to build a solid framework for youth ministry here, it is clear UCC has a medal in the future. This team has named the hard truth that this is a staff-driven church that needs to shift its model, without a climate of anxiousness and without panicking. It has swallowed the comparisons people make to other youth ministries without abandoning the plan to build a strong ministry with its own DNA. It has faced the intimidating need to create vision documents, without flinching. This team is relentless for the success of UCC’s youth ministry and that, along with continued parental and congregational support, will be the ace in the hole.



**Volunteers:** With 20 adults volunteering regularly in the youth ministry during the school year, youth have ample opportunity to connect with people who live in and out of their faith in different but meaningful ways. What a great gift to provide youth who won't always resonate with the "one way" approach. Here's the best part...they enjoy it!!! There was a sense that, while overwhelming at times, the experience has been very rewarding. To make things sweeter, some of the parents and other adults from the focus group indicated a desire "to be invited" to help out the youth ministry. Comments from focus group members included:

- *The youth ministry is one of the most inspiring parts of church which is why I do it. I am not scared by kids, I am amazed by them.*
- *I am going to try and recruit some others in my Sunday school class to volunteer and also a selfish reason I am here is that I hope someone will do what I am doing when mine get to be youth.*
- *I am excited about what's going on, we are working through turmoil and transition. I see people who care about the church.*
- *I enjoy this (teaching); my kids don't mind me.*
- *My son loves Sunday school because of Steve, they love Steve. He is huge for those little boys. He is not a parent but a cool adult.*
- *When I leave a Board of Stewards meeting I don't feel appreciated at all but I feel appreciated when we were in a prayer circle at youth one night and one of kids said they were thankful for me and that floored me. They want someone to notice them besides their mom or dad. Passing on your faith to the next generation is not just fun but incredibly important. I remember how important it was growing up having youth sponsors and volunteers in my own life so I feel the need to do that as well.*
- *Doug's awesome; he is one of the coolest youth sponsors ever. He acts like a kid and treats us like he is one of us. I see him in the hallway at church and he asks me about school and he remembers random stuff.*

**Russ:** Everybody loves Russ! His fan club spans the pool of staff, volunteers, parents and youth. Whether it is weekly e-news reports and facebooking youth or dropping in on a Sunday school class and being goofy on retreat, people shared, "He makes me feel important." And they want more of him! Russ is present both Sunday mornings and evenings, but his responsibilities limit his ability to "connect with each group of youth in the personal way I would like to." One adult who has been impressed with his dedication to build relationships with the youth shared, "he even showed up for youth group the night he had vertigo." Russ understands the limits to his time and the value of investing it in the youth. His intention to build a plan, with the help of the youth committee, to recruit, equip and empower volunteers will free him to be more visible in leadership and presence.

- *Russ deserves some credit because I think they are here because of him.*
- *I am here because of Russ.*
- *I admire the work and appreciated Russ' leadership and I think we are going in the right direction.*
- *Russ is constant and stable and kids like Russ. He is Type A, hard working and will do whatever needs to be done even on his day off he will come in. He is willing and wanting to revamp the ministry.*
- *The reason I am here is that I realized this is important and I support Russ and the inspiration he has been to my son and to these kids is too important to ignore.*
- *I think he (Russ) is one of the best youth ministers. As a child I remember that revolving door and I am committed because I want more consistency than I had growing up.*



- *I think Russ is doing a phenomenal job and I admire his courage in doing this (to hire YMA) and have the foresight to do something like this is courageous on his part.*

Comments from the Youth Included:

- *If Russ left us that would not be good; he has been the most personal youth minister we have had and tried to help us and help us grow and he is really really good about getting us involved.*
- *I would like to see Russ more involved in Sunday night and Sunday morning, seems more like a CEO cause he is really good at planning everything.*

**TBA Camps and Retreats:** Across the board youth, parents, staff and volunteers lifted up the TBA camp and retreat program as one of the best and most consistent experiences UCC youth have historically had to engage and explore their faith with their peers. During the conveyor belt of youth staff leadership, the TBA program has provided a welcomed sense of continuity and security for UCC youth. Comments from focus group members included:

- *Camps are some of the best experiences my kids have.*
- *9ers camp was amazing, he(my son) has never been so happy, he is all over the camp experience*
- *There is a real connection there with the camping program and I have wondered what the formula is that works there and how we can transfer that here.*
- *“I love how camp does God.” that is what my son said.*
- *The retreats are also great; it feeds them.*

**Highly Invested Youth:** As the youth ministry embraces a season of renovation, UCC should celebrate the investment that the youth also have in the renovation process. The youth we spoke with are not just looking to have the adults in the congregation serve on the construction crew, they too are ready to put on their tool-belts and work toward building a more sustainable and welcoming youth ministry environment for their peers.

Comments from the youth included:

- *I think we need a really really good ad campaign to bring people back.*
- *I love it here! Next year my friend Matt is going to start coming.*
- *I agree, it's all about advertising.*
- *I wish we did more out in the community: stuff like the food bank, service stuff and fun stuff and follow through with it.*
- *We need to think about ways, and not just Russ thinking about it, in terms of how to bring people back, all of us need to be a part of that. We could do scavenger hunts and TCU football weekends again.*
- *Sardines is the way to bring people back; it is the best lock-in game ever!*

**Beyond the Third Floor:** Normally in a church the size of UCC, we find that the congregation suffers from what YMA calls the “One-Ear Mickey Mouse syndrome”. In these churches the youth ministry is seen as a ministry that should function separately from the rest of the church. While there is room for improvement, UCC has taken great strides in combating this syndrome from taking root in its congregation. As one focus group



member stated, "There is an effort to connect youth with the larger congregation outside the youth program. Once a quarter they do coffee fellowship, they help with service, CYF participate in worship reading scripture. We are trying to help them find ministry committees to plug into like, Room in the Inn. We are working to create those connections one kid and program at a time." The fact that youth serve in other ministry areas of the church such as, Room in the Inn, Ushers and Deacons, as well as the fact that they are on the monthly scripture reading rotation is something UCC should lift up and celebrate as it continues to build upon its ministry.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

### **Obstacles to Moving the Youth Ministry Strategically Forward**

**Parent and Adult Involvement:** There seems to be a general resignation to the fact that "there just aren't people who will volunteer" to help in the youth ministry and that the youth staff "can't get parents to volunteer" As one parent stated, "I would like to see more participation from the parents. When the kids see our faces it shows we are committed to the program." At the same time, it has been said that parents are wanting to step up but have not been asked or equipped to volunteer. Across the board with staff, parents, volunteers and youth there is a general mood of despair about volunteers. Comments from focus groups included:

- *I got a call from Stacy and so I am here. If my daughter sees my involvement hopefully she will follow that. I am here to help and do whatever.*
- *We need Russ to manage the relational building as opposed to logistics.*
- *We have to pull the parents in if you want to pull the youth in.*
- *I have a daughter entering CYF and I am concerned that there not enough adults volunteering and supporting. I think they are afraid of the teenagers and I think that's too bad because they (the teenagers) are nice.*
- *The number of parents who volunteer has dwindled and that shocks me. I have more parents at my son's PTA than I have up here (at church) and his school is small. For safety sake, we couldn't find one parent who was willing to come and be with me once a month out of 25 kids to help in Sunday school. We can't find people to come and bring bagels. I don't understand it at a church this size.*
- *I think the biggest problem we have is lack of volunteers and parental involvement.*

**The Brite Light:** The absence of Chi Rho and CYF sponsors in the focus groups shed light on an unfortunate assumption: TCU and Brite students are the strength of the youth ministry at UCC. While their presence during the school year is significant, it will be impossible to build a vibrant and sustainable youth ministry when the volunteer needs rest almost entirely on a population that is transient in nature and predictably absent 4 months a year. As one fan of the youth shared, "Churches with the weakest youth ministries reside closest to colleges and seminaries because people opt out of their responsibility to provide leadership." God has blessed UCC with the Brite light down the street, but there are also people who can flip light switches throughout the church.



**The Treadmill Epidemic:** Over the last 4 years the wave of transition and tension surrounding the position of the Senior Minister cannot go unmentioned as the impact has been felt in all areas of congregational life.

Comments from focus group members included:

- *The feeling from the whole church bleeds into what we are doing in the youth ministry as opposed to the youth ministry being thought about by itself.*
- *The issues of the larger church chew up a lot of our time even though it's not our area of responsibility.*
- *It's hard to get a read right now on how the youth ministry is because things are so in flux. There are also fractured friendships and an atmosphere of animosity that exists right now in some pockets of the congregation.*

**Sunday morning vs. Sunday night:** One of the clearest messages we heard in the focus groups was that very few youth participate in both Sunday morning and Sunday evening programming at UCC. The two programs have different emphases and it seems that there looms a question mark over Sunday evening with little idea of what to do with it. While some of the youth enjoy the time, it is not a program that appears to be making a deep impact.

Comments from the Youth included:

- *The youth ministry is awesome, but youth group hasn't been completely awesome.*
- *I think there needs to be more planning and different activities for Sunday night. It is haphazard right now.*
- *I didn't know we had a youth group and I have been going here my whole life.*
- *Sometimes only 2 or 3 people show up.*
- *I liked the series on world religions, but usually Sunday nights don't have enough substance.*
- *Coming on Sunday morning does not make you a part of the youth group here. It's like the youth ministry club. But it is the Sunday night club.*
- *We have struggled this year with Sunday evening programs.*

**Training Deficit:** It can be assumed that the church is already asking a lot of the volunteers and to expect them to participate in a training program would be asking too much. However, it is our belief that well-meaning, untrained volunteers will never be able to establish a sustainable youth ministry program. A lack of training and direction also leads to the inability of the youth ministry to recruit and keep good volunteers because the amount of frustration that results from feeling ill-equipped, uninformed or unneeded prompts people to turn in their tool-belt. Comments from focus group members included:

- *We have people who want to help but based on past experiences they don't want to volunteer and that happens in all areas of the church.*
- *I've never felt like my role was defined. I was just asked to be present.*
- *I'm concerned about my effectiveness. I feel like I'm in deep water and leaving the youth behind.*
- *We need to be organized so we can free up Russ to build relationships with the kids when attending these events.*



- *I felt a little stranded, I guess. I didn't have a mentor. I didn't feel worthwhile as a teacher.*
- *I walked away feeling like I could have done more if I knew what was going on.*
- *I would like more structure for my role. I never really felt like my role was really defined. I walked away some nights inspired and amazed and some nights I felt like I could've done more had I known what we were doing.*
- *I was a first year Sunday school teacher and had never taught Sunday school before and I was not sure how it had been run or even how to teach and that was frustrating for me as I was not confident in my own abilities. I talked to Russ and he was supremely helpful the second semester and he met with me every week to help me prepare.*
- *We are not given the guidance and the direction that would make it more palatable. We are free to be as big as we want to be but we don't get together for training. Maybe we just need to be prayed over too, I would like that.*
- *I would like to know what the expectations are of me. For example, if there was a job description for me I could've done some of these things but when I find out a week before it's too late.*

**Terminal Uniqueness:** We observed that many we met with suffered from a perception disorder we call "terminal uniqueness," focusing intensely on the "unique" challenging factors facing this youth ministry:

- Youth with packed schedules, who are therefore unable to participate regularly.
- Youth attending so many different schools keeps them from connecting.

Though these factors present undeniable challenges, the truth is that none of them are completely unique to UCC. Since we know that a majority of these factors are present in almost every successful youth ministry in our country, the church would be wise to make the decision to keep their thinking about youth ministry off the dead-end streets of explaining away a less than effective youth ministry by pointing to these factors.

**Curriculum Makeover:** Focus group members and staff expressed a unanimous concern over that lack of intentional and structured curriculum in the youth ministry. All agreed that without a clear vision and intentionality of what is taught to the youth during Sunday school, youth groups etc, the program will continue to flounder without a clear purpose and plan, leaving the youth without tools needed to take their faith to the next level. Comments from focus group members included:

- *I think the curriculum is ok. I don't think the youth need to be told what to think I think they need to be helped to think about what they think.*
- *I would like for them to be biblically literate and also have knowledge about the theology of this church so they can give voice to that and have enough practice talking about it so they can share it without being embarrassed.*
- *It is important for them to know what their faith is, why they believe what they believe and how to defend it.*
- *I want youth to graduate with a framework for which to evaluate new ideas.*



- *I am struck by how extraordinary these kids are and I want a stronger base of theology so that the kids are able to talk about pop culture, homosexuality, drugs, sex etc, with their friends and be able to have a real conversation with them based on our theology.*
- *I'm not sure they will be ready to make faith-based decisions about relevant life issues.*

**Spiderman not Superman:** As UCC goes about the renovation process with its youth ministry, the congregation will need to ensure that the foundation being laid is one that invites, empowers and includes adults from the congregation outside the youth staff so that a web of support is created around each youth. The church needs to say to itself: "We are not trying to employ one superhero to make things work, but we are building a youth ministry, lived out in the body of volunteers, led by an Associate Minister who happens to have several good qualities, too!" The youth ministry needs a web of adults, not a superhero. Think Spiderman, not Superman. A youth ministry built upon the staff is a ministry setting itself up for instability. Instead, the youth ministry must create a web of support for the youth so that they are surrounded by adults who mentor and support them so when transition occurs the ministry is not compromised or paralyzed. As one focus group member stated, "We have got to make sure the staff continues to be supported by other volunteers. UCC as a whole is a very staff-driven church and by extension the staff is expected to set the vision and pace what happens and that has extended over into the youth ministry staff expectations as well."

**The Bridge Is Out:** Over and over again concern was named for the youth who completed the Faith Development Class. Even after celebrating baptism, most youth choose to stand firmly on the inactive, disengaged side of the river. Historically, large numbers in the FDC has not translated into large numbers in the youth ministry. As one focus group member stated, "We have got to figure out a way to get the 6<sup>th</sup> graders eager and wanting to continue to participate in the youth ministry after they complete the FDC."

- *Most stop coming after they are baptized.*
- *I think only about 30% started coming to Chi Rho*
- *Something is wrong when they just fall off the earth.*

**Lack of Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Many of the adults and youth spoke of "what a successful youth ministry would look like" in terms of having tons of youth coming to Sunday school and Sunday night youth groups. The fact is that if the church has 91 youth attending at least one event weekly in the life of the church, including worship, the church and the youth ministry can celebrate success! As the youth ministry continues to build a new foundation of sustainability, it will need to have in place clear, measurable standards of effectiveness. Without these markers the youth ministry staff will continue to be evaluated based on nothing more substantive than a multitude of personal opinions of what the youth ministry ought to be doing which may or may not be in alignment with the mission, values and goals of the youth ministry. As it has been said, "Only that which is measured can be managed." Comments from focus group members included:

- *I believe in Russ and his curriculum but I need to know what he thinks success looks like so I can help him be successful.*
- *We seem to do that a lot as a church. We make plans, put them on the shelf and wonder what happened to them so we make new plans. It's a cycle.*



- *I will know success when we are not reinventing the wheel every year.*
- *We're repeating patterns of growing carrots every year not orange groves.*
- *I agree the orange grove has been lacking and is desirable.*
- *The task force report was great but it's a nonlinear report and I am not sure where to go with the recommendations and how to implement the recommendations.*
- *I agree that you can't judge the youth ministry just based on numbers but if we don't have kids here then what does it matter how good our program is.*
- *I feel like the curriculum is good, but the blueprint is missing. Realistic goals, that is what is missing. Do we really have vision?*

**Out of the Loop:** Across the board there was some frustration and at times a lack of understanding about the youth activities occurring at UCC. These communication and organizational challenges seem to have left some parents and youth with the perception that details are at times not under control. Comments from focus group members included:

- *Communication has not been consistent or things changed last minute and family life today is busy and calendars are crazy and ongoing frustrations, although it has not been as noticeable lately.*
- *I appreciate the weekly email from Russ, it has a lot of information in it.*
- *I feel like communication is very strong. I feel like I get plenty of information. From big picture communication is excellent, but from the detail it is a 3-4 on a 10 pt scale. The details are lacking.*
- *The weekly email from Russ is awesome. I have never gotten anything like that before; its informational.*
- *When I have a question I don't know who to ask.*
- *Times change, days change, things are cancelled and we find out at the last minute or sometimes when we show up.*



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 12 months (through September 2010) as a time of retooling and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target September 2010 as the start date for a new, fully funded, sustainable structure for the UCC youth ministry.
- 2) Invite the Youth Committee to consider which recommendations from this report to embrace and then present this report to the Board of Stewards asking them to endorse an intentional 12-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.
- 3) Have the Youth Committee adopt a season of renovation for the youth ministry and over the next 12 months take responsibility for two primary functions.

*a) Addressing immediate pressure points facing the youth ministry*

*b) Implementing the strategic, long-term changes recommended in this report:*

### ***Immediate Pressure Points***

#### ***(The First Mission of the Youth Ministry Renovation Team)***

- Hire or restructure the following combination of interim staff to oversee the youth ministry during the transition process:
  - By September 1, review current youth staff structure and job descriptions for each staff member, including the Ministry Assistant.
  - Begin the search to fill the CYF Ministry Assistant position.
  - Invite Youth Ministry Architects to serve as UCC's Ministry Renovation Coach, overseeing the building of the infrastructure of the youth ministry and the implementation of the recommendations of this report. YMA's responsibilities would include coaching staff, assisting in the recruiting of volunteers, developing strategies for galvanizing parental support and student leadership, and generally "keeping both hands on 10 and 2" as the church walks through the growing pains of building a sustainable, magnetic youth ministry.
- Identify all volunteer roles within the student ministry program and create written job descriptions for each of the current roles.
- Complete the recruiting of any volunteers needed for Sunday school and Sunday night youth groups using the guideline of one adult for every 5 participating youth.
- A training and orientation date is set for all Sunday school teachers and Sunday night sponsors.
- Complete a leadership training event for all Sunday school teachers and Sunday night youth sponsors in the youth ministry.
- Calendar quarterly training events to support and encourage Sunday school teachers, Sunday night youth sponsors and all hands-on volunteers in the youth ministry.
- Create a youth directory of UCC students and leaders that includes contact information, grades, schools, parents' names, phone numbers (and email addresses, if possible).



- Utilize Youth Assistant in developing a process for tracking attendance of students in all programs in which they participate, including Sunday school, Sunday night youth groups, Chi Rho and CYF Handbell Choir and Chi Rho Choir.
- Create a calendar of major youth ministry events for the coming year (through August 2010), including local service projects, a retreat, and a fall youth parents' orientation.
- Have the Youth Committee and youth staff explore a new format for Sunday night to implement and launch in January 2010.
- Calendar a youth-input event to take place at the Back to School Retreat, resulting in the completion of a special event and Sunday night program calendar through August 2010.
- A parent volunteer survey is created as a tool for identifying and establishing a parent volunteer database.

## ***Creating a Long-term, Sustainable Infrastructure for the Youth Ministry***

### ***(The Second Responsibility of the Youth Renovation Team)***

- Outreach: Establish processes for reaching out to non-participating youth (both those whose families are members or visitors and those youth who are friends of UCC youth). (This is a benchmark)
- Setting Targets: Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through September 2010.
- Event Planning Empowerment: Create structures and processes for giving responsibility for the planning of each major event of the youth ministry to a different volunteer, and recruit the "major event coordinators" needed to cover all events through September 2010.
- Staff Development: Provide on-going "executive coaching" for the youth ministry staff.
- Communications: Develop a game plan for improving the communications between staff, volunteers, youth and parents surrounding the youth ministry and establish systems for implementing and enhancing that game plan which would include an accountability system for youth staff contacting youth directly on a more regular basis.
- Intentional Curriculum Plan: Create an integrated template for curriculum, including a design for Sunday school, Faith Development Class, and Sunday night programming. (This is a benchmark)
- Community Building: Strategically calendar youth events for the coming year which will build the momentum of growth and excitement surrounding the youth ministry.
- Marketing: Establish normative processes for ensuring that participation targets are reached for each major event and activity sponsored by the youth ministry (retreats, trips, fellowship events, etc.), consistently accessing the normal communication outlets of the larger church. (newsletter, bulletin, facebook, website, bulletin boards, etc.)
- Parent Engagement: Sponsor and execute a parent-equipping event, particularly targeting parents of teenagers in the congregation (Understanding Your Teenager as an option), and create



mechanisms for engaging the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way. (This is a benchmark)

- Bridge Building from JYF to Chi Rho Youth Group: Develop a long-term game plan to transition eager, engaged JYF youth into eager, engaged active Chi Rho youth.
- Creative Kick Off/Parent Orientation: Develop an intentional, outreach-focused, family-based, over the top fun event to kick off the youth ministry in the fall of 2010.
- Building on Sunday Morning: Develop a game plan to capitalize on the number of youth gathered on Sunday morning which would include a review of time and space needs necessary to maximize the impact.
- Strategic Staffing: Propose clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan for the youth ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth. (This is a benchmark)
- Youth Ministry Manual: Draft a Youth Ministry Manual, containing all visioning documents, directories, calendars, compliance forms, job descriptions, budget, and any other materials necessary for the effective functioning of the youth ministry.
- Major Event Notebooks: Create a planning notebook for every recurring event of the youth ministry that can be passed from one chairperson to another in subsequent years.
- Discipleship Track: Create a deliberate discipleship plan that allows youth and parents to understand where students are in their spiritual lives and determine what programs and ministries will meet their individual needs where they are. (This is a benchmark)
- Welcoming Environment: Develop a three-year game plan for infusing the youth ministry with a contagious friendship culture. Have youth staff and volunteers read Jeanne Mayo's book, *Thriving Youth Groups*.



## Proposed Timeline

August — Focus: Preparing for the Process/Leadership Recruitment

### Outcomes:

- A youth-input event has been completed at the Back to School Retreat, resulting in the completion of a special event and Sunday night program calendar through August 2010.
- Work on Control Documents has begun (18 month major event calendar, youth directory and leader directory, job descriptions).
- Quarterly volunteer check-in meetings are calendared for Sunday school and Sunday night volunteers.
- A leadership training date for all hands-on volunteers has been set.
- Volunteer youth ministry holes for the 2009-2010 year have been identified and recruiting continues using the guideline of one adult for every 5 participating youth has begun.
- A draft of the Youth Ministry Calendar of events through August 2010 is underway.
- The Youth Committee has completed an orientation to the expectations for their work for the coming 12 months.
- Weekly staff coaching and troubleshooting support begins.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day offsite*

September — Focus: Quick Launch

### Outcomes:

- Attendance tracking systems are in place for Sunday school, Sunday night youth group activities, handbell choirs and Chi Rho choir.
- Search begins for a new Assistant Minister for CYF.
- A leadership training event has taken place for all hands-on volunteers in the youth ministry and they have all received a copy of their job descriptions.
- Communication mechanisms are in place to communicate youth events and activities to youth, parents and the church at large.
- A calendar of youth events through August 2010 has been distributed to youth and parents and posted on the website.
- A youth event is calendared (with all grades) which celebrates those youth who have completed the Faith Development Class.
- A parent volunteer survey is created as a tool for identifying and establishing a parent volunteer database. (there are online options)
- The Youth Committee and youth staff have explored a new format for Sunday nights to implement and launch in fall 2010.
- A copy of the youth and leader directory has been distributed to all youth families.
- All key youth ministry volunteers for the 2009-2010 school year are in place.



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- The chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff receive specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day off site*

October— Focus: Pressure Points and Parent Support

Outcomes:

- All pressure points identified in this assessment have been effectively addressed.
- A parent volunteer survey has been distributed and at least 50 surveys have been returned.
- The chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff have received specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day off site*

November/December— Focus: Level of Engagement Groupings and Volunteer Database

Outcomes:

- The youth directory has been divided into three “level of engagement” groupings and distributed to the youth staff and volunteers for the purpose of intentional contact.
- A parent volunteer database is in place.
- Transition the volunteer list the Youth Committee has already created, preYMA visit, into a volunteer database.
- The chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff have received specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day off site*

January— Focus: Curriculum and Discipleship Planning

Outcomes:

- A curriculum design event has been completed with key youth ministry stakeholders, and a curriculum template has been completed, integrating Sunday school, youth groups and the Faith Development Class.
- A deliberate discipleship plan that allows youth and parents to understand where students are in their spiritual lives and determine what programs and ministries will meet their individual needs where they are has been created.
- The youth staff and Youth Committee have investigated a game-plan to leverage the momentum of Sunday morning to impact more youth, tackling the issues of time, space, format and curriculum.



- A new Sunday night format is in place.
- The chair of the Youth Committee has received specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.
- The youth ministry staff completes a half-day coaching, coordinating, troubleshooting meeting with YMA staff.

*Estimated YMA Time: 3 Days Onsite*

February— Focus: Marketing and Refueling

Outcomes:

- A process for setting clear participation targets for all youth ministry programs has been established and reasonable mechanisms are in place for the reaching of those targets.
- The curriculum design template and resources have been affirmed and embraced by the Board Stewards.
- A mid-year volunteer training event occurs providing time for feedback from the first semester as well as refueling for the current semester.
- A parent equipping event is calendared for fall 2010 (this is a benchmark)
- The chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff have received specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.
- Youth staff and the Youth Committee read Jeanne Mayo's *Thriving Youth Groups*
- The youth staff and the Youth Committee have embraced a game plan to encourage the continuing participation of those who have completed FDC and a point person(s) has been recruited to plan events to navigate this process.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day off site*

March/April— Focus: Volunteer Recruitment

Outcomes:

- A team is in place to develop a fall parent/youth kickoff event designed to 1) instill confidence in parents about the direction of the youth ministry, 2) offer the kids an event that is more fun than they expect, and 3) provides the youth ministry with the chance to promote major events and mission trips and obtain early sign ups for those trips.
- A game plan for infusing the youth ministry with a contagious friendship culture has been drafted.
- Volunteer needs for 2010-2011 have been identified and recruiting season begins.
- A three-year game plan for infusing the youth ministry with a contagious friendship culture is in place.
- The Chair of the Youth Committee receives specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day off-site*



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May — Focus: Curriculum, Volunteer Appreciation, Post FDC Celebration

Outcomes:

- Curriculum resources are selected for the 2010-2011 year, based on the curriculum template developed in the previous year.
- Volunteer recruiting continues as needed.
- A volunteer appreciation event occurred.
- A youth event occurs (with all grades) which celebrates those youth who have completed the Faith Development class.
- A preventative maintenance calendar (including priorities like when the annual youth ministry calendar is created, when work on the youth ministry begins each year, etc.) is drafted.
- The Chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff receive specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day off-site*

June/July— Focus: Final Preparations for the New Year

Outcomes:

- A game plan is in place for transitioning from the 12-month interim structure for the youth ministry to a structure that can sustain the youth ministry for the long-haul.
- The vast majority of the youth ministry's one-year benchmarks have been achieved.
- Volunteers are in place for the coming year and an August training/orientation day is calendared and promoted.
- The Chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff receive specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Days*

August— Focus: Youth Ministry Manual and Reload

Outcomes:

- The completed draft of the youth ministry manual is completed and ready to present to the Board of Stewards, which includes major event notebooks for each event from the previous year.
- The youth staff completes a day coaching, coordinating, troubleshooting meeting with YMA staff.
- Volunteers are in place for the 2010-2011 school year.
- All hands on volunteers have received training and orientation.
- All volunteers working with youth have been properly screened for child abuse and appropriate paperwork is on file.
- A new set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks is drafted for approval by the appropriate bodies of the church.



- The Chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff receive specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: 2 Days Onsite*

September— Focus: Preventative Maintenance Plan

Outcome:

- The Youth Committee is celebrated, having discharged their infrastructure-building duties.
- Structures are in place to provide on-going troubleshooting support for the staff and volunteers of UCC's youth ministry to ensure sustainable, intentional, effective ministry.
- Compliance documents ensuring copyright licensing for music and videos have been obtained.
- 2011-2012 dates are scheduled for re-upping the youth ministry goals and benchmarks and for locating appropriate curriculum resources.
- The Chair of the Youth Committee and youth staff receive specific coaching, support and troubleshooting from YMA.

*Estimated YMA Time: .5 Day*

*Total YMA Days 2009: 2 Days Offsite*

*Total YMA Days 2010: 7.5 Days (2.5 offsite and 5 onsite)*

This edition converted to PDF on August 11, 2009.



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## Mission Statement

The youth ministry at University Christian Church strives to create an inclusive and loving community that equips youth for a life-long journey of discipleship.

## Core Values

### *As a community of faith....*

**Spirit-Led** We continue to explore various methods of interaction with God for our personal reflection, discernment, and transformation, and are moved to act in response to God's call in our lives.

**Equipping** We provide the tools and guidance necessary to develop spiritual disciplines, including intentional Bible study, meaningful prayer life, sharing our faith, and service to others.

**Serving** We passionately and humbly serve the global community for the glory of God.

# YOUTH MINISTRY 3-YEAR REVOLVING GOALS

Target Date: September 1, 2012 One-Year Benchmarks: September 1, 2010

## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

1. **2012 Goal:** 160 youth (combined ChiRho and CYF) were active weekly in the life of the church (Worship, Sunday school, Sunday night or Handbells, etc.)
  - 2010 Benchmark:** 115 youth were active weekly in the life of the church.
  - Next Step:** Develop a strict system for tracking attendance in each youth ministry program.
  - Next Step:** Divide youth roster into 3 categories, based on level of engagement in the ministry, with an intentional communication plan for each.
  
2. **2012 Goal:** 70% of those who have completed the FDC have continued to actively engage in UCC youth ministry through high school graduation.
  - 2010 Benchmark:** An event celebrating the journey of those who have completed the FDC has taken place.
  - Next Step:** A team consisting of at least one adult and two ChiRho youth is recruited to plan and facilitate celebration.
  
3. **2012 Goal:** 25% of the volunteers serving in larger church outreach/mission opportunities that are open to youth (Habitat, Room in the Inn etc.) were UCC youth.
  - 2010 Benchmark:** A tracking system is in place to determine how many youth are serving as volunteers in larger church mission/outreach volunteer opportunities.
  
4. **2012 Goal:** 200 parents have attended at least one of the two parenting series or event that was offered by the youth ministry.
  - 2010 Benchmark:** UCC youth ministry has hosted a parenting series or event with at least 50 parents in attendance.
  - Next Step:** Recruit a volunteer to coordinate series or event.
  
5. **2012 Goal:** 4 youth are serving as deacons.
  - 2010 Benchmark:** 2 youth are serving as deacons.
  
6. **2012 Goal:** An intentional discipleship plan and 7 year curriculum plan are in place for the youth ministry.
  - 2010 Benchmark:** A curriculum and discipleship retreat has occurred.
  
7. **2012 Goal:** 90% of the children on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade children's ministry roster participate in the FDC program or some element of weekly UCC ChiRho youth ministry programming.

- **2010 Benchmark:** A fun relationship building event has taken place in the summer that includes the rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders and core youth from ChiRho.
- **Next Step:** A volunteer is recruited to plan and lead the event with the assistance of core youth from CYF.

**8. 2012 Goal: 6 youth ministry rooms have been renovated.**

- **2010 Benchmark:** The youth ministry committee evaluated the use, needs and possibilities of the existing youth ministry space.

## **VOLUNTEER AND STAFF SUPPORT**

1. **2012 Goal:** 40 adult hands-on volunteers are involved in some aspect of the youth ministry.
  - **2010 Benchmark:** 15 adults have completed the Youth Ministry Volunteer Training.
2. **2012 Goal:** The youth staff has increased to the equivalent of 3 full time ministerial staff.
  - **2010 Benchmark:** A new part-time Assistant Minister of CYF is in place
3. **2012 Goal:** An orientation fair for the youth ministry has occurred for the entire church which included education regarding volunteer opportunities, budget and fundraising needs, calendar events etc.
  - **2010 Benchmark:** A volunteer major event coordinator has been recruited for the orientation fair.
4. **2012 Goal:** One adult from each youth's family has volunteered in the youth ministry in some capacity.
  - **2010 Benchmark:** A Volunteer Coordinator has been recruited to invite and track parent/guardian participation in youth ministry needs.
  - **Next Step:** Create a list or parent survey of volunteer opportunities for the next 12 months based on needs related to weekly programming, special events and trips.

## **MISSION/OUTREACH**

1. **2012 Goal:** At least two outreach or worship experiences have occurred with other DOC churches in the area.
  - **2010 Benchmark:** DOC churches have a date on their youth ministry calendars for a shared outreach or worship experience.
  - **Next Step:** Determine which area DOC youth ministers will participate in the goal.
2. **2012 Goal:** A proposal is in place for a possible partnership with UCC, Brite and TCU that would seek to create a training and educational program for students interested in youth ministry.

- 2010 Benchmark:** A proposal has been written to the Board of Stewards seeking the approval of a cooperative training and educational youth ministry program.
  - Next Step:** Investigate a variety of youth ministry training models.
3. **2012 Goal:** A scholarship fund has been established for UCC youth alumni pursuing theological training for ministry.
- 2010 Benchmark:** A point person has been recruited to investigate the next steps needed to develop a game-plan.
4. **2012 Goal:** A program is in place to help youth explore a call to ministry; a system of support and nurture exists for those who express a sense of call.
- 2010 Benchmark:** Youth staff has investigated models and programs that offer students tools to explore a call to ministry.

**Developed August 7-10, 2009 by:**

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UCC Youth Committee

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