



CHURCH ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Christ Church Cathedral

Mobile, AL

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BACKGROUND

Christ Church Cathedral, located in Mobile, Alabama, the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, was founded in 1822 as the first protestant church in Alabama. During its first years, Christ Church served as a gathering place for all believers of all Protestant denominations. In 1823, the Episcopal congregation founded itself as Christ Church Parish. The existing Greek Revival building was consecrated in 1843, currently showcases stained glass windows by Franz Mayer & Company and Tiffany Studios, survived the great hurricane of 1906 (with renovations following,) Hurricane Katrina (with renovations following) and is still the gathering place for the current congregation and is considered a spiritual home for its community. In 2005, Christ Church was designated the Cathedral Church of the Diocese. Church leaders describe their church as “welcoming,” “sacred,” “historic,” “traditional,” “my church family,” and “spiritual.”

The membership of the church is 607, and on an average week, 199 people attend the two weekly Holy Eucharist services, Sundays at 10:00 AM and Wednesday at 12:00 PM. There are 27 youth and 71 children on the rolls. Two Sunday school classes are offered for children during the worship service (Kindergarten-2nd grade and 3rd-5th grade), and in a typical week around 10 children participate in these classes. Children’s Chapel meets during the 10:00 AM service for

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children 3 years-5th grade. There is nursery care available for children during worship services. Sunday school for youth 6th-8th grade as well as 9th-12th grade also meets after the worship service.

The Very Reverend Beverly Gibson has served Christ Church since 2005 in a variety of roles. She was appointed as Rector and Dean in 2013. Dan Wagner served as Canon Pastor from 2014-2017 and the position of Canon Pastor is currently vacant. Paid administrative staff currently include: Cathedral Provost, Cathedral Secretary, Assistant to the Provost, Cathedral Financial Secretary and a full-time housekeeper. Part-time and full-time paid program staff currently include: Dean, Canon Pastor, Organist/Choir Director, Assistant Choir Director, Youth Activities Coordinator, Children's Program Coordinator and Choir Section Leaders.

Outside of Sunday and Wednesday worship services there are other opportunities for folks from the community to engage in church life. There is weekly coffee fellowship immediately after the Sunday Holy Eucharist service, a monthly women's Circle that meets on the 2nd Monday of each month, and choir rehearsals. In addition to weekly events, there are also these yearly events: Epiphany and Lenten music series, organ concerts, EYC diocesan-wide Mardi Gras party, Cathedral anniversary celebration with Parochial visit, Vacation Bible School, Cathedral ministry celebration on All Saints' Sunday, and the diocesan diaconate ordination.

Christ Church Cathedral supports the Kappa League, Raise the Roof, and Catholic Social Services, among other ministries in and around the church.

The church is governed by the 18-member Vestry which works with Dean Gibson to provide oversight in administrative, fiscal, capital and building, personnel, and program matters. The 2017 operating budget accounts for \$806,729.46 in total expenses. Investment income accounts for 5% of this operating budget and is only dispersed from the interest on principle from endowed funds.

Several years ago the Vestry of Christ Church Cathedral commissioned a Master Plan for the facilities. This plan includes construction of a new kitchen, a façade and addition for a new Church Street entrance, relocation of the administrative space to the second floor of the current offices, as well as upgrades in the Chapel, Brantley/Huger Houses, and other projects aimed at meeting building codes and ADA compliance. One of the primary goals of this plan is to make the Cathedral building itself visible to promote an inviting, welcoming, and accommodating presence to guests as they enter and become engaged as part of the congregation. The plan is to complete projects in this Master Plan in preparation for the 2020 Diocesan Convention (celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Diocese) and the church's bicentennial in 2022.

As part of the current capital campaign, Ministry Architects was invited to complete an assessment of the overall ministry of the church. During focus groups and one-on-one meetings, the consultants met with a total of 100 people over the course of 11 groups. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

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When doing a whole church assessment we sometimes will give the church a snap shot of the health of its children's and youth ministries as they are often one of the keys to creating more sustainable ministry across the church. The next section gives a snapshot of several key areas of the ministry to children and youth.

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES IN CONTEXT

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

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

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

The consensus is that this rent is not being paid. There is not a concerted effort to talk about how to measure participation. There is a feeling of discontent about the numbers of children and youth showing up to Sunday school. Some people may assume the important number is only Sunday school but forget that there are several children and youth consistently participating in the Holy Eucharist services each Sunday.

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

This rent appears to be not paid. Youth and their parents mentioned episodic events like Happening and Raise the Roof but felt disenchanted by their feelings that there was not intentionality or purpose in the general programming for youth ministries. Parents of children as well as congregants without children expressed appreciation for volunteers but concerned about the lack of developmentally appropriate curriculum and fellowship events for children of all ages.

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

This rent is a little more complicated. On one hand there is good momentum in the church, excitement about the future and a desire to grow. On the other hand there is a concern with the lack of programming being provided across the church, small pool of current volunteers, and

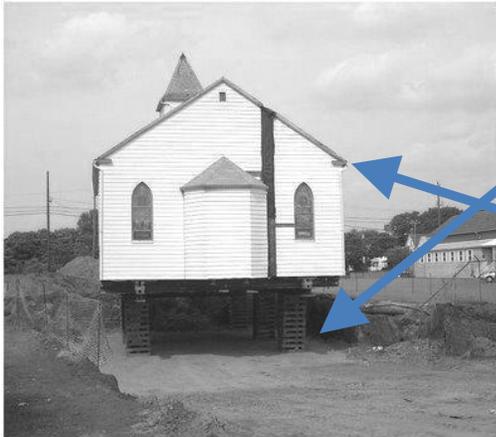
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lack of “story telling” to the congregation during key gathering times suggest that this rent is being half paid.

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

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:



1. Laying the Foundation: Building a foundation and infrastructure that will ensure the youth ministry’s *future* effectiveness, and at the same time,
2. Continuing to Do Ministry: Maintaining the current ministries in a way that builds the enthusiasm of congregation and staff of the church at large.

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

- 1) 15% of the Worshipping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the children’s ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 15% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 199 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 29 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 17 children is below what could be expected from the ministry.
- 2) \$1,000 per Child**—With a budget of approximately \$7,687 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits but not paid baby-sitters or nursery workers) dedicated to the children’s ministry, Christ Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 8 children in some aspect of the church’s life. With 17 currently participating every week, the ministry is under-funded to retain even the currently attending children. In order to maintain the ministry at its current rate, it would be wise to consider how to give the ministry the resourcing it needs.
- 3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 75 Children**—Considering all the positions giving time to the children’s ministry, including Children’s Program Coordinator, Christ Church has the equivalent of 1/4 full time staff person (not including paid baby-sitters or nursery

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workers). According to this rule of thumb, Christ Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 17 children on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration seems inadequate to sustain the needs of the ministry. Ordinarily, in over-capacity children's ministries, the children's staff is set up to be unable to fulfill all the expectations placed on them. The natural result is a climate of criticism and burn out.

4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Children— Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than about five children on an ongoing basis. With 3 weekly volunteers, Christ Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 6 children, giving the ministry a capacity for 15 children weekly. In other words, the team is too small to attend to the relational needs of the 17 children who currently attend. The volunteer pool will need to expand if the church wants to sustain its impact with children.

Ministry Architects has also observed the following youth ministry norms:

1) 10% of the Worshiping Congregation—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 199 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 19 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 10 youth is far below what could be expected from the ministry.

2) \$1,000 per Youth—With a budget of approximately \$2,447 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Christ Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 2.5 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 10 currently participating every week, the ministry is under-funded to retain even the currently attending youth. In order to maintain the ministry at its current rate, it would be wise to consider how to give the ministry the resourcing it needs.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including the Youth Activities Coordinator, Christ Church has the equivalent of 1/8 full time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, Christ Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 12 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration seems inadequate to sustain the needs of the ministry. Ordinarily, in over-capacity youth ministries, the youth staff is set up to be unable to fulfill all the expectations placed on them. The natural result is a climate of criticism and burn out.

4) 1 Adult for Every 5 Youth— Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of “spans of care,” recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church's Christian nurture of more than about five youth on an ongoing basis. With 3 weekly volunteers, Christ Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 3 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 15 youth weekly. The current team seems to be the right size for the current ministry of 10 youth.

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SUSTAINABLE STAFFING GUIDING

Ministry Architects has found that the most stable approach to developing leadership in a church, particularly in a time of disruptive transition, is to build a leadership of three *different* kinds of people or teams:

- **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. For example, a laborer might have particular skills in teaching, in planning, or in managing events.

The typical church leader tends to be mindful of the need for vision casting and strategic ministry organization in a broad sense. But pastors typically spend 90-100% of their time in laborer roles. When pastors and leaders and volunteers attempt to play all three of these roles at the same time, instability, burnout, and mediocre results are the natural outcomes. One of the unintended consequences of the common approach to church leadership is the creation of a pattern made up of sacrificial superstars desperately trying to recruit “little helpers.” This pattern results in

- Staff and volunteer superstars who are so entangled in the whirlwind of ministry that they almost never think strategically
- “Little helpers” who grow weary of always being asked for one more last-minute request and never truly bringing their full giftedness for meaningful ministry.

ASSETS

Strengths to protect in the current ministry

The “A” Team

The congregation has a deep affinity for the whole staff and the staff shared similar sentiments about the congregation. The staff team is hard-working, extremely efficient (often wearing several hats,) and extends radical hospitality to members and guests. One listening session participant said, “The staff does more with less than we could ever do.” Another said, “Carolyn knows exactly how to do everything. It’s the same thing with the finances—Brenda is very orderly and very detailed. Our leadership is fantastic!” Another added, “We have a great Dean; as a pastor, as a preacher, as a leader as well as the business part of it.” In each listening session participants raved about the preaching, music, and pastoral leadership offered at the

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weekly services. People said things like “The melding of music, scripture, and liturgy is harmonic toward worship itself” and “The ministers of this church came to visit my dad in hospice at least weekly, and that was before I was even a member here.” The staff not only understand the DNA of Christ Church but shares in it.

Music

Music is an important piece of the identity of Christ Church Cathedral both historically and currently. Several people mentioned how Christ Church is known in Mobile for its rich musical traditions. In almost every listening group people raved about how greatly the worship experience is enhanced by music. “I love the stillness and music during communion.” People are also excited about the new possibilities that may lie ahead for Christ Church’s music. When talking about the fear that was felt during the transition to a new organist and music director one person explained, “We didn’t even know what was out there and now we have this fantastic organist!” Music also came up in conversations about the evangelism potential of the church. One person said, “I’d like to see our music program expanded to share it community wide or even diocesan wide. We could help other churches with music. And a children’s choir would be just awesome, particularly community wide!” Most groups mentioned their desire to continue to be known in the community by the excellent music provided by Christ Church.

Strong Historical Connection

Christ Church Cathedral is deeply rooted in its own history as well as the history of Mobile. A quick walk around the building and neighborhood confirms that. From the historic gaslight etched with the church’s name that still burns on the street in front of the sanctuary to the Greek Revival building, there are nods to its history everywhere. When asked to describe the church in a few adjectives, many responded used the word “historic” while one noted that it is “steeped in tradition.” For Christ Church, history is more than just place, it is also about long family ties to the congregation. Many congregants expressed their deeply held identities as Episcopalians and several people mentioned being the 4th, 5th, or 6th generation in their family to be part of the church. One participant said, “The history of the church drew me here...the fact that people have been worshipping here since the early 19th century.”

Multigenerational Church

There seems to be no shortage of any certain age group at Christ Church. Children are an essential part of the worshipping life of the church in their role as crucifers and acolytes during weekly worship services, right alongside women who have been on the Altar Guild for decades. When people worship in the sanctuary of Christ Church they are sitting among a cloud of witnesses who have gathered in that space for nearly 200 years. Generations of families participate and new members were drawn to the church because it feels like a family. Newer members expressed their intentionality to choose Christ Church as their home church so that their children could grow up around people from multiple generations. A person with young children who appreciates the varying ages in the church said, “I think we should do more fun things together, not just be broken down into groups based on age.” That sentiment was also expressed by older adults in listening groups who were delighted by the presence of lots of

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children. “We like it because there are lots of people our age plus there are young families and young adults...and there are children!!” One person said, “We are stewards. I want my grandchildren to grow up here. I want it to be vibrant and strong.” This primes Christ Church to build ministries and programs that incorporate all people.

Desire to Be Formed

The desire to want to experience spiritual growth together is a strong one for Christ Church. Each of the listening groups talked at length about wanting more opportunities for spiritual formation in a variety of contexts including: small groups, Bible studies, adult Sunday school, fellowship events, and outreach service to the community. People talked lovingly about times when supper clubs were thriving and expressed a desire to create more moments like those. “Even when we didn’t have any money or any people here, we had a community.” Though their lives feel busy, families with young children want to grow in their faith, too. Several of them held desires similar to this one: “I would like to have a Bible study and family-fun activities to get to know each other better.” Several participants also communicated a desire to engage in outreach in the neighborhood and community and “get my hands dirty.” “The homeless problem is a huge issue that we could do something about. Six or seven years ago, I remember going out and fixing up fences and picking up litter and things like that. I feel like there’s more to being a good Christian than checking the box that I came to church.” During a few listening groups, “parking lot conversations” were happening at the end where people were making plans to start owning leadership of groups! The momentum is there to begin building opportunities.

Revitalizing Downtown

There is excitement in the air about the revitalization of Mobile’s 300-year-old historic downtown. The Downtown Mobile Alliance says, “The escalating pace of the redevelopment of Downtown Mobile is unmistakable, as skyscrapers are added to the skyline and historic buildings are being renovated at a clip not seen in decades. At its heart, downtown is a gathering place of fascinating people, where you’ll find endless surprises and an event around every corner.” Several people talked about the opportunity for Christ Church to be “the” downtown church and with Dean Gibson on the Board of the Downtown Mobile Alliance, there is greater potential to do just that. “As a downtown church with a strong congregation, I would like to see us take a more visible hand in what’s happening in downtown Mobile...we ought to be one of the one or two leading churches in downtown Mobile...just being more involved in what’s happening downtown...this is our yard and we need to know what’s going on and be a significant player.” As other downtown churches are weathering changes with declining numbers and significant staff changes, Christ Church is growing and providing stability during an exciting time in its part of Mobile. One participant saw that as an asset and said, “All the churches are moving out of downtown and yet we seem to be defying the trend. I think it’s a pro that we’re downtown...not a con. We could take advantage of the shifting population there.”

Cathedral Church

Christ Church is living into its identity of being the Cathedral for the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. In each listening group people commented about their pride in that distinction. When asked to name some dreams for five to ten years down the road, one person

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said, “I’d like to continue to grow into our role as the Cathedral...maybe even have the bishop have an office here.” Christ Church Cathedral often hosts diocesan events and sees themselves as providing a ministry to the Diocese. There is a group of people committed to providing hospitality during those events because they understand it as an important part of being the people of Christ Church Cathedral. One parishioner noted how much of an honor it is to be the Cathedral church, but with some trepidation she said, “I just want to make sure that we do it right, to figure out who we are as the Cathedral.”

Deeply Friendly Church

Newcomers as well as people who have been part of Christ Church for decades appreciate the hospitable, welcoming, friendly nature of individuals within the church and the congregation as a whole. One newer member said, “I came to the church because it’s within walking distance of my house but it was the friendly people who kept me here.” Another said, “The happiness that is here is just so evident. Everybody smiles and seems truly glad to be here.” Still another described the church as, “Welcoming. You walk in, you sit down, and someone will speak to you before the peace.” The friendly nature does not stop at worship. People talked about it in several ways including the way Christ Church comes together in acts of service to the Diocese. “During the Consecration of the Bishop, everybody was hands on. Everyone did something. This church is known for being able to pull off anything.” The existing groups with the church are also a place where people feel a special connection. “It’s such a meaningful part of my worship to come in and set the altar. I love the women, they’re family to me. They’re dedicated. It’s just a fabulous group of women. It’s a sisterhood.” Sentiments like these were heard in varying ways in each of the listening group.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the ministry strategically forward

Need for Dispersed Leadership

It is evident that there is strong leadership within the church. Those who lead, do so efficiently. Efficient leadership, while important, does not carry the day in churches that are growing to the size of Christ Church. As a church grows past the perimeters of what is considered a “small church” it must broaden its leadership and must create more shared leadership partnerships within the church. When meeting with people who were not in leadership positions, comments like “I am not sure if my voice is heard” and “I do not have a clear path to share my thoughts” were common. The good news for Christ Church is that these comments were not said out of contempt or distrust for the leadership. Many listening group participants said “we completely trust Beverly, she does great, we just want to be a part of the decision making too.”

Identity Confusion

The church is in a growing phase, in every sense of the word. The church is growing numerically, in its physical footprint, and in ministry. As is often the case with growth, it is experiencing growing pains. A part of the growing pains Christ Church is experiencing is that it is trying to figure out its own identity in this new phase of life. Just as a person will struggle with

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identity as she moves from one phase of life to the next, so is Christ Church trying to figure out who it is in this new and exciting chapter of its rich history. This identity confusion is also compounded by a parallel question the church is also asking: “Who are we as the Cathedral Church?” One parishioner said, “We really want to know what is expected of us.” Another remarked, “Many of us just do not know what our place is and how to live into it.” While this confusion is a natural part of growth, if not answered, it can lead to divisions in the church and divergent hopes and visions for the future.

Incomplete Infrastructure

Christ Church has a long and rich history as a historic and important church in the diocese and the community. Many of the members have been pillars in this church since its earliest days and carry a great institutional knowledge. Unless properly captured, the presence of such a deep institutional knowledge can lead to a lack of established and agreed upon policies, procedures, and systems. While some work has been done in this area, more will be necessary to establish a solid infrastructure that will last for years to come. Areas of particular need are: calendar development, volunteer development, database development, marketing, intentional faith formation, knowing where are people are, and being in faithful relationship with them.

Communication

Christ Church is no exception when it comes to communication and its difficulties in the modern world. While there is an ever-growing array of communications methods available to the average parishioner, determining which ones are most effective is a real chore. When asked how to best communicate, parishioners answers varied from “the messenger” to “email” to “pulpit announcements” to “Instagram” to “snail mail.” No matter what the preference, most listening session members felt that communication could improve and many even said that one of the ways it could improve is “for us, the members, to pay more attention to what is coming to us.”

Youth and Children’s Programming

When a church is occupying the liminal space between being a small church and medium size church, one of the sure signs is that a desire for a more robust children and youth program begins to arise. As the church continues to grow, so will its need to provide more consistent, meaningful, organized and structured youth and children activities, Bible studies, and events. Several students said that it is difficult to come because “I do not want to be the only one there.” Others echoed, “There is not a lot to do when we actually do come.” While this is a reflection on the actual programs, it is not a reflection as much on the staff as their roles and expectations have been minimal. One person said, “They have really gone above and beyond what anyone would expect from them in such a small role.” Others agreed.

Missing Volunteer Training and Equipping

There is a wonderful group of volunteers who help with programs and services at Christ Church. This group of volunteers have found deep meaning and joy in the work that they do. One person even talked about the people she volunteers with as “a sisterhood to me.” While so much

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goodness has come from being a volunteer, many commented that they are tired, ill equipped and some nearing burnout. When job descriptions, training, excellent resources and well defined terms of service are absent these results are common. As Christ Church moves into a new more programmatic phase of its history, it will be key to develop these processes and documents to build and sustain the ministries that they support.

Lack of Adult Christian Formation

Most listening group participants agree that Christ Church has struggled and is currently wrestling with providing adult Christian formation opportunities. To complicate things further, there appears to be a lack of consensus among groups in similar stages in life. In one listening group, participants were heard saying both, “I would rather not have a Bible study on Sunday...not anytime on a Sunday” and “I would like to have a Bible study on Sunday morning.” Other people have experienced adult Christian education in the past and want to get back to the way it used to be. One person expressed, “One of my wife’s biggest complaints is the lack of adult education.” In most of these conversations, the desire for adult education revolved around spiritual development and deepening relationships. Parents of young children overwhelmingly asked for opportunities for adult opportunities to be offered in tandem with events and programming for children. People across the board seemed to have the desire to connect with one another on a real level. Most of the groups agreed that there need to be consistent offerings, even if they happen monthly. They agreed that the continuity would build momentum and show people that these aren’t one-time events. “We have to have something on a consistent basis that would draw them here.” Overwhelmingly, the adults of Christ Church are aching for opportunities to grow closer to God by deepening their faith and being intentional in their efforts to connect with one another.

No Growth Pathway for Children and Youth

There is not a clear plan for ministries to children and youth that talks about where the ministries are going with intentionality. Churches who provide excellent ministries to their children and youth put processes in place that define the spiritual formation of a child from birth until the time that child graduates from high school. Christ Church does not have a spiritual formation plan. One parent said, “I’d like to know what the mission of the youth group is...what’s the point? They need to feel like they’re contributing.”

While there is conversation about of the future of Christ Church Cathedral and capital improvements the sentiment exists that there is no talk about the children and youth who are the “future of the church.” Just like any other ministry, ministry to children and youth takes investment of money, time, and people along with a mission or clear identity about who a church is to their children and youth. One parent expressed that this way, “I want my child to have a group of people here that he knows he can count on...because it takes a village.” There is not an intentional effort to recruit volunteers to staff the ministries for sustainability or growth. One parent said, “People tend to think they need to be hands off when they look at kids or youth. Older people don’t think they can step in. We need a broader base of volunteer help.” Putting in place a spiritual formation plan will give Christ Church tangible tools to know what kind of

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investment of time, money, and people power is needed to achieve the desired growth for its children and youth.

Fuzzy Vision

Vision is necessary for a worshipping community to figure out who God is calling them to be in the world. Christ Church is trying to figure that out two-fold. People are equally unclear about who Christ Church is as a local parish as well as who Christ Church is as the Cathedral. One participant said in a few words what many people described through each of the groups. “One of the things since the great divide is that we've become the Cathedral church. We were having a hard enough time figuring out who we are as a church...and now we have to figure out who we are as a cathedral. We don't even reach out to our neighbors. There's no mission work around us. But the need is all around us, we've got to figure out what we're going to do.” The people of Christ Church need to name who the church is, why the church exists, and what the church seeks to do in the God's beloved community.

Fear of Not Having Enough

Christ Church is on the cusp of moving into a new congregational classification based on its size. The effects of this are starting to show as the demand for more programming and opportunity is springing up from many people in the congregation. Dr. Timothy Keller says, “There is a ‘size culture’ that profoundly affects how decisions are made, how relationships flow, how effectiveness is evaluated, and what ministers, staff, and lay leaders do. Christ Church is changing from one size culture to the next and, with that, comes the need to step back and see what the church looks like from a different vantage point. With the growth in the number of weekly worshippers to 199, just shy of 200, comes the need for programmatic growth. It also allows for a bigger pool from which to recruit lay leaders for programming. One of the mentalities that prevents a church from moving into this next classification of growth was expressed by many in the listening groups. Several expressed it by saying things like: “I am afraid that we will not have enough people if we try something new” and “Well, we have tried that a lot of times and it just fizzled out, there were not enough people who could participate.” Another stated it more plainly: “We are a small church, we don't have enough people to do things like Sunday school.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **Reframe the Next 36 Months** as a time of infrastructure building and goal-setting for the church. Name April 2020 as the target date for ministries that have sufficient infrastructure and support to provide long-term stability, while enjoying incremental successes along the way.
- 2) **Present This Report to Vestry**, requesting that they endorse a 36-month strategic plan.
- 3) **Establish a Prayer Team** to pray on a regular basis for the implementation of this strategic

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plan, and share this timeline with them.

4) **Create a Strategic Planning Team**, made up of five volunteers. This team of non-anxious, results-oriented people take responsibility for implementing the recommendations of this report partnering alongside the clergy and staff of the church. If possible, consider engaging three volunteers who are not highly engaged in volunteer roles already or encourage them to find a replacement for their current role while they are engaged in this strategic process.

5) **Engage the Services of Ministry Architects** to take responsibility for:

- Serving as the point person for the Strategic Planning Team
- Working with the staff and key volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report's timeline
- Assisting the church in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning.

6) **Implement these Recommendations**, summarized into seven major categories.

A brief summary of the needs in each category is contained below with more detailed recommendations named in the following section of the report.

Clarifying the Vision and Purpose

Summary. Christ Church needs to involve staff, Vestry, clergy, and other key leaders in the congregation to clarify the mission of the church and the tangible ways it will live out its mission, complete with core values, three-year goals, and measurable benchmarks. As the bulls-eye is made clearer, decisions will be easier, calendars will become more coordinated, finances will be more focused, congregants more invested, and the impact decidedly more measurable.

Priority Tasks:

- **Discern the Vision:** Invite leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning for the future with Ministry Architects, resulting in a mission statement that is owned and translated into a set of Three-Year Revolving Goals with One-Year Benchmarks and agreed upon Core Values.
- **Identity Development:** Discern and develop the understanding and functions of what it means to be Christ Church as well as what it means to be the Cathedral Church for the diocese.
- **Share the Vision:** Lead church committees and ministry teams to write their unique purpose statements, core values, and ministry goals in light of the broader church-wide mission.
- **Following Through on Initiatives:** Research, design, and implement game plans that will drive the goals and benchmarks.

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Squaring the Corners

Summary: Much if not most of the infrastructure of the church sits on the shoulders of one or two people at the top of the church. This is clearly not a sustainable model. There are also areas, because so much is held by so few that have also not been developed across the church and is causing instability in the system. Those areas range from cooperative calendaring and attendance tracking to uniform systems of communication to volunteer development. Once those behind-the-scenes matters are firmed up, they will create a more secure “dance floor” for the “dancers” of this congregation.

Priority Tasks:

- **Stabilizing Document Development:** Maintain and publish a church-wide 12-month calendar, create major event notebooks in every area of ministry to help event planners succeed, generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (Example: March– nail down date for Rally Day; October – order candles for the Advent wreath, etc.).
- **Attendance:** Record attendance for all programs (worship, Sunday school, Bible studies, special events, etc.) in order to identify MIA's.
- **Visitor Follow-up:** Implement the game plan for welcoming those who visit Christ Church. Craft a plan for following up with adults and families who are becoming loosely connected to the church -- systematically reaching out to these important people of the parish.
- **Welcoming-** Develop welcoming ministries and initiatives that will proactively help guests find their way into the family that is Christ Church.
- **Set the Temperature:** Persistently tell the stories of God's good work in and around the people and mission of the church. Celebrate the small wins to build trust and inspire investment in the process.
- **Ministry Manuals:** Develop Ministry Manuals that include: the most recent directories, 12-month calendars, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, preventative maintenance calendars and notes for major events.
- **Communication:** Undertake a communications effectiveness survey and create a uniform communication plan across all areas of ministry that effectively communicates the priorities of the church to the congregation and the community in easily digestible and efficient forms.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all ministry events and weekly programs and develop plans for filling those events.

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Developing Leadership

Summary: In staff dependent ministries, it is important to ask: Are the staff members charged with doing tasks that are no longer needed, or (more likely) are they carrying a load that trained volunteers could help carry? The church's next step is to emphasize a different role for staff: that of a "multiplier." The multiplier moves from being the genius in the room – the person through whom everything should pass – to being a genius-maker who shares the ministry with a team of passionate and gifted lay partners. With this mindset, staff leadership can be leveraged for the maximum impact, and volunteer leadership will have the greatest potential for fruitful ministry. This model requires a process of getting to know each person as an individual and helping them find their unique position on the team – a position that they will find fruitful and fulfilling because it is what they were designed to do.

Priority Tasks:

- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for ongoing education and coaching for the ministry staff including coaching, reading, and seminars.
- **Staff Growth:** Evaluate what areas of the ministry will need additional staffing support (either more hours or new hires) in order to help the church begin to move to the next level of ministry. After these areas have been determined set appropriate trigger points in either participation or money secured that will trigger the hiring of the position or increase in hours.
- **Leadership Development:** Write or review written job descriptions for all paid staff positions in the church. Work with staff to ensure the job descriptions accurately match the work being done – and vice versa. Prominently include the role of building volunteer teams.
- **Volunteer Equipping:** Develop an annual calendar of volunteer trainings for all areas of ministry, including things like ministry overview, policies and procedures, serving from your walk, and skillset development.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each 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).
- **Develop Multipliers:** Train every staff member on how to develop a team of volunteers who share their ministry with them. Two possible resources are
 - *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter* by Liz Wiseman
 - *Doing Church as a Team* by Wayne Cordeiro
- **Recruit a Connect Champion (or co-champions):** This person will coordinate with the staff to help church members discover their unique gifting and fit for ministry at Christ Church. To accomplish this, they will:
 - **Help Ministry Teams attain lists of needed volunteers** from all the ministry committees and other groups.

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- **Create a Job Description for Each Position:** Work with staff, team leaders and ministry volunteers themselves to complete each results-based job description. Base each simple job description on a template that includes:
 - how the position contributes to the church's mission
 - job description
 - time commitment and schedule

Developing Children's and Youth Ministry

Summary: The youth and children's ministries at Christ Church have experienced both seasons of growth and seasons of decline in recent years. As the church moves from being a small parish to a medium size parish more attention, programming, staffing, volunteers and resources will need to be committed to these ministries to support the growth of young families who are making Christ Church their home.

Priority Tasks:

- **Fully Staff the Nursery:** Coordinate a network of care for the littlest ones of the church during worship and special programs and events.
- **Cry Room-**There was an expressed desire among many in the listening groups to help parents of newborns have a solution for when their young children became upset during church. As the renovation process begins for the building a group should explore the possibility of creating a cry room just from the church where parents of young children can discretely take their children when they are upset. This room should have an audio connection so that the parent can continue being a part of the service as well as comfortable furniture, changing table, supplies, toys and a bathroom.
- **Children and Youth Staffing:** Determine what are the appropriate number of hours needed in order to provide leadership for the existing groups as well as accounting for growth.
- **Funding:** Evaluate the youth and children ministry budgets and increase as necessary to appropriately fund the size of each ministry based on rubrics provided by ministry architects.
- **Determine the Goals for Christian Education:** Develop an overarching scope and sequence and a clear weekly teaching plan for children through 12th grade.
- **Revamp Youth Space:** Create a plan using feedback from youth and parents to revitalize the youth space creating an atmosphere of welcome, fun and encourages the youth to build relationships and grow in community together.
- **Build a Youth Calendar:** Develop opportunities for youth to connect, serve, and grow in their faith alongside one another.
- **Mind the Milestones:** Strategically design moments that will underscore the identity of the church in youth and youth in the church. Examples to consider might include: starting school, 3rd grade Bibles, getting their driver's license, graduation.

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Developing Adult Formation Ministries and Programs

Summary: Throughout the recent history of the church several adult formation opportunities have been attempted with varying success. While the results have fluctuated in their effectiveness, the desire for Christian Formation and lay ministry opportunities including outreach and evangelism have continued and grown. In the past there have not been enough participants to always create critical mass, but with the recent growth the church has experienced not only is the critical mass there but the threat of it not sustaining is very real unless opportunities are offered.

Priority Tasks:

- **Realign Current Groups:** Evaluate the current demographic and life stages represented in the church. In this evaluation note both their demographic (i.e. age) but also take into consideration their stage in life (i.e. single, young w/ young children, middle age families, empty nesters, retirees etc.) Also, collect the data that shows frequency of involvement and volunteerism in the ministries of the church. Based on this data determine where the most appropriate alignments should be drawn for possible new classes, supper clubs, and Bible studies.
- **Do the Research:** Conduct a survey to determine the levels of interest people have in regards to what type of formation opportunities they desire, frequency, venue and timing. Research also needs to be conducted on what all “non-learning based” opportunities might occur like supper clubs, service opportunities and family fun nights.
- **Develop Multiple Venues:** Based on the findings of the research develop 2-3 unique weekly opportunities for spiritual formation for the adults of the church. Create these based on the consensus created by the survey. Also, develop a new missional endeavor in the community and 2-3 one off family based events for the upcoming school year.
- **Recruit Seed Commitments:** Recruit individuals to be seed commitments for each of these new weekly opportunities, guaranteeing that there will be at least 10 individuals at each opportunity for the first six months of the new venture. This ensures a critical mass as well as instant community and leadership for the opportunity
- **Publicize and Invite:** Create a strong publicity and marketing campaign for each of these opportunities and have the seed commitments begin a personal invitation process, inviting others to the new classes and groups.
- **Try, Evaluate, Tweak, Retry:** After four months an evaluation process takes place, any issues will be addressed and changes made and it will be determined if the opportunity will proceed or the experience will become fertile soil for the next opportunities growth.

Culture Development

Summary: When working through a process like an assessment and renovation the church will focus on programs, ministries, systems and structures and forget another very important piece of the puzzle: culture. Culture building is an essential aspect of creating sustainable systems.

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Culture development is a process that is less centralized and much more dispersed among the people of the church and occurs less in programs and more in the everydayness of the lives of the parishioners. These five practices invariably improve the environment at a church:

Priority Tasks:

- **Deliver Results:** Leaders need to identify a small victory, a visible result, and go after it. A small victory can begin the process of climate change. Then, sustaining such a change requires a pattern of little victories tied together by the climate-control elements below.
- **Instill Stories and Metaphors:** If we want to create a climate of transformation, we'll do so by creating an "intentional mythology" for our ministries. For every positive result, we deliver, we need to tell winsome stories – stories that have people, emotion, and victory.
- **Embrace Rituals and Traditions:** Traditions and rituals have the power to create and sustain a climate that feeds personal transformation. They can be simple acts, like handing a compass to all new leaders, reminding them that they are leading the church somewhere new and exciting.
- **Import Joy:** Furrowing the eyebrows, tightening the muscles and working harder is seldom the answer. In fact, seriousness and anxiousness can work against us, sabotaging our efforts at making progress.
- **Trust the Process:** Moving from where we are to where we want to be takes time— so much time, in fact, that many church leaders short-circuit the process. If we're going to engineer a climate of transformation, we will not do it by stepping in with guns blazing. Sustainable change happens when leaders recognize the power of incremental revolution, the power of one small change after another, until the incremental changes result in exponential change.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

March 2017

Focus: Orientation, Staffing Structure and Plan, Communicating the Reports, Funding

- This report has been presented to Vestry and they have adopted the strategic plan and timeline of this report (or some updated version thereof).
- The next 3 years (through May 2020) has been designated as a time of culture shift, reframing, growth, and infrastructure-building for Christ Church, with the understanding that incremental progress and the building of cumulative momentum will begin immediately.
- The staffing needs of the church have been evaluated and a plan with triggers for hour allotment or hiring have been set and are being adhered to.
- A prayer team has been recruited from among the church's leadership and members to pray for this process for the next three years, and share this report with them as a starting point.

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April 2017

Focus: Quick Start, Database Management/Attendance,

- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled with the Session/Renovation Team in which the renovation process will be launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report will be addressed.
- The rolls of the church have been updated, and each person has been marked as:
 - **Active**- Their attendance has been recorded in the past 6 months
 - **Unsure**- It has been between 6 and 12 months since their attendance has been recorded
 - **Inactive Potential**- It has been over 12 months since their attendance has been recorded
 - **Inactive Remove**- The person has either passed away, moved or has asked to be taken off of the rolls of the church.
- Systems have been established for attendance tracking, visitor tracking, follow-up and for the database is to be reviewed monthly.
- Clear processes have been established to ensure every person visiting Christ Church experience a surprisingly welcoming environment, as well as consistent, comfortable follow-up contacts.
- A written game plan for internal communication to the Christ Church family has been developed and has included:
 - Updating the Christ Church website with updated programming, calendar, and contact information and doing a clean sweep of the entire site for accurate and useful information.
 - Establishing a regular cadence of communication for Christ Church.
 - Communicating at least monthly about the progress of the “renovation” of the church.

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The *Ministry Architects* Team Serving Christ Church Cathedral (Mobile, Alabama)



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Stephen is a dad, husband, and foodie. He has served in churches for 19 years and also serves as a lead consultant with Ministry Architects. He lives in Birmingham with his wife Mary Liz and their three kids Mary Clare, Patrick, and Nora Grace.

His books include *Hollow Faith: How Andy Griffith, Facebook and the American Dream Neutered the Gospel*, *ExtraOrdinary Time; 365 Ordinary Moments with and Anything But Ordinary God* and *Organic Student Ministry*.



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Since 2000, Monica has served in a variety of roles in both small and large churches, and understands the unique opportunities each setting brings. She has a passion for setting up systems that help to equip people in relationship and mission. Monica believes that churches are always changing and with the correct structures in place, ministry will continue to flourish and new possibilities emerge during moments of transition.

Monica earned a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Master of Divinity degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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

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Stephanie Caro has been involved in ministry to children, youth, and adults in the local church since...a long time. Her humorous, straightforward style keeps her busy presenting and coaching at conferences, training events, camps, mission trips, retreats, churches, etc. She is Senior Consultant for Ministry Architects, which allows her to help churches assess, vision, and formulate their ministry game plan.

Her books, *Thriving Youth Ministry in Smaller Churches* and *99 Thoughts for the Smaller Church Youth Worker*, were published by Group/Simply Youth Ministry. Her latest book, *Smaller Church Youth Ministry: No Staff, No Money, No Problem*, was published by United Methodist Publishing House in December of 2016. Her next book, *Ten Solutions (to 10 Common Mistakes in Small Churches)*, comes out summer 2017. Stephanie is a contributing author to several ministry resources like YouthWorker Journal in addition to her regular column "Smaller Church Youth Ministry" in Group Magazine. Check out Stephanie's blog, part of the #1 read youth ministry blog network, youthministry.com from Simply Youth Ministry/Group Publishing. She also blogs for youthspecialties.com, Princeton Theological Seminary, and others. Stephanie and her husband, Steve, live in Houston, TX. Their 7 children are all grown!

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