



# YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by  
**YOUTH MINISTRY ARCHITECTS**

On February 10, 2011, Mark DeVries and Nate Stucky of Youth Ministry Architects presented an assessment report to a group of youth ministry stakeholders at Lititz Church of the Brethren (LCOB). The report grew out of their meetings with 48 people in 11 listening groups. This executive summary will provide a brief overview of the findings of that report. A copy of the full report may be obtained by contacting Bob Kettering at [bkettering@lititzcob.org](mailto:bkettering@lititzcob.org).

### BACKGROUND

The report began by giving a picture of the unique context for doing youth ministry at LCOB:

- The church has had 6 or 7 transitions in the leadership of the youth ministry since the arrival of the senior pastor 13 years ago.
- The high school ministry is overseen by the senior pastor, who adjusted his job description a year and a half ago to spend two years specifically investing in the youth ministry. The senior high ministry has seen a dramatic increase in participation in the last year and a half.
- The junior high ministry is overseen by the Director of Christian Nurture, who also oversees all Sunday School for all ages.
- The church currently has no long-range plan related to youth ministry. The Christian Education Commission recently proposed the hiring of a part-time youth director to begin at the end of the senior pastor's "2 years in youth ministry." But this proposal was voted down by the congregation, citing primarily a lack of funds.
- The church is currently spending approximately \$9,000 less in youth ministry and Christian Education than it did in 2003, with 1/2 less full-time staff.

### YOUTH MINISTRY IN CONTEXT



5229 Cochran Drive Nashville, TN 37220 877-462-5718

[Mark@YMArchitects.com](mailto:Mark@YMArchitects.com)

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

[nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com](mailto:nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com)

The report described the norms of youth ministry, rules of thumb in building a sustainable youth ministry: 10% of the Worshiping Congregation:

- 1) A “normal” youth ministry tends to settle at a participation level that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation.
- 2) Healthy youth ministries tend to cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1000 for each youth active on an average week.
- 3) Well-grounded youth ministries require at least one hands-on, weekly volunteer for every 5 youth active on an average week.

The report pointed out that LCOB is right on track with the above 3 norms.

- 4) A sustainable youth ministry requires 1 full-time staff person for every 50 youth active on an average week. If the church hopes simply to sustain the involvement of the current number of youth participating, it will require a 1/2 staff person at the very least.
- 5) Ordinarily, youth ministries can grow up to 20% of the worshiping congregation (in LCOB's situation, to 60 youth weekly) simply by increasing its investment (both in staff and funding).

## THE ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

The next section of the assessment reported back to the congregation much of the input that was received in focus groups. Drawing heavily on the comments shared in listening groups, this section first identified LCOB's unique assets brings to the task of building a sustainable youth ministry:

- A clear consensus that *something* needs to be done.
- A generous church with a great heart for the next generation.
- Strong pastoral support
- A sense of family
- Deeply committed and appreciated volunteers and staff in the youth ministry
- A strong mission focus
- A readiness for a new initiative
- New momentum surrounding the youth ministry
- Parent support
- Youth-friendly facilities

Next, the assessment identified some of the unique challenges that stand in the way of building a sustainable youth ministry:

- Dramatic and energetic differences of opinion about whether to invest in youth ministry with additional staff at this time



5229 Cochran Drive Nashville, TN 37220 877-462-5718

[Mark@YMArchitects.com](mailto:Mark@YMArchitects.com)

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

[nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com](mailto:nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com)

- An obvious gap in staffing the youth ministry with no clear game plan for how that gap should be filled.
- Missed opportunity with developing students into leaders, particularly seniors
- A lack of imagination to see solutions to youth ministry that might be outside-the-box
- A crisis of capacity, with little chance of the church doing much beyond what it is currently doing, without an increase in investment
- A maxing out of current volunteers, with potential burnout approaching
- Youth who still feel like they are “on the outside” and find it difficult to connect with the group
- Busy parents who themselves may not be all that connected to the church
- The lack of a critical mass of youth participating in some programs, making it difficult to build momentum for the youth ministry
- Depending on assumptions and approaches that may have worked a generation or two ago but no longer seem to be working
- Placing unrealistic expectations on volunteers
- Trying to build an outreach to students at the school across the street before building a sustainable youth ministry for them to participate in
- A smaller-than-normal demographic of children moving up into the youth ministry
- An unhelpful obsession with the “unique” challenges facing the LCOB youth ministry, which are the very same factors that almost every thriving youth ministry in the country has discovered how to overcome.
- The lack of a deliberate plan for engaging more youth.
- A disproportionate pessimism regarding the church’s capacity to invest in youth ministry
- The isolation of youth from the rest of the church (the one-eared Mickey Mouse)
- The youth ministry’s historic inability to translate its episodic success into systemic success
- An obsession with dozens of fragmented, contradictory ideas for what the youth ministry needs to do next with no overarching model to hold them together.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months (through August 2012) as a time of direction-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target September 2012 as the date for the launch of a fully formed youth ministry, built on the sustainable structure established over the previous 18 months.
- 2) Recruit a youth ministry renovation prayer team who will agree to meet together regularly to pray for the building of a sustainable youth ministry at Lititz Church of the Brethren.
- 3) Present this report to the church board, requesting approval for the 18-month strategic renovation process outlined in this assessment, with the understanding that the recommendations of this report can be fully funded (including interim



5229 Cochran Drive Nashville, TN 37220 877-462-5718

[Mark@YMArchitects.com](mailto:Mark@YMArchitects.com)

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

[nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com](mailto:nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com)

staff and proposed support from YMA) with a budget of \$31,000 for two years (roughly \$11,000 in 2011 and \$20,000 in 2012).

- 4) Take the next steps toward building a sustainable youth ministry at LCOB by identifying and selecting appropriate funding sources for accomplishing the outcomes of this report (the report includes a number of suggestions for these sources)
- 5) By June 1, 2011 hire a 15-hour-a-week staff person to serve as the Interim Youth Ministry Coordinator, a non-hands-on coordinator of all aspects of the church's ministry to both junior high and senior high youth.
- 6) Through the appropriate commissions, focus the work of the current senior staff in ways that give high priority to building a thriving ministry to children and their parents, as well as youth and their parents.
- 7) In order to work through the predictable inertia that could threaten to prevent this youth ministry renovation process from moving forward, engage the services of Youth Ministry Architects or another consulting team to take responsibility for helping to manage the proposed recommendations and timeline of this report during the 18-month renovation.
- 8) Schedule a pre-fall meeting for all youth and their parents, informing them of plans for the coming year as well as the broad details of the renovation process.
- 9) Refer conversations about the church's possible partnership with Teens Need Truth (TNT) to the Witness Commission.
- 10) Establish an 18-month, five-person Youth Ministry Renovation Team responsible for two overarching tasks:
  - o Task 1: Managing the current youth ministry, including addressing and resolving the immediate pressure points facing the youth ministry.
  - o Task 2: Coordinate the building of the long-term infrastructure needed to ensure the on-going stability of the youth ministry.

## **TASK #1: Addressing Immediate Pressure Points**

**Pressure Point 1:** Create a "fishing pond" list of potential volunteer adults.

**Pressure Point 2:** Identify the load-bearing volunteer roles needed for the youth ministry in the fall of 2011 and begin the process of recruiting those volunteers.

**Pressure Point 3:** Recruit a different Major Event Coordinator to be responsible for each special youth ministry event.

**Pressure Point 4:** Schedule an orientation dinner for the current youth ministry volunteers.

**Pressure Point 5:** Begin the process of contacting every family on the church's current youth directory who has not participated in the last 3.

**Pressure Point 6:** Expand the capacity of the youth database by coding each current with one of the student with one of the six codes offered in the full report.



5229 Cochran Drive Nashville, TN 37220 877-462-5718

[Mark@YMArchitects.com](mailto:Mark@YMArchitects.com)

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

[nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com](mailto:nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com)

**Pressure Point 7:** Draft a “Pardon Our Mess—We’re Building” letter to be mailed to all youth families, and post this letter on the landing page of the website.

**Pressure Point 8:** Schedule at least 3 senior high youth each month to serve as readers or ushers at one of the church’s worship services.

**Pressure Point 9:** Draft a working job description for the Interim Youth Ministry Coordinator position.

**Pressure Point 10:** Update the website to include an article about this assessment process, pictures of recent youth ministry events, and all programs currently on the schedule for the Lititz Church youth ministry.

## **TASK #2: Building Long-Term Infrastructure**

### **COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING LONG-TERM INFRASTRUCTURE-BUILDING TASKS**

- Youth Ministry Calendar Through May 2012
- An Accurately Coded Directory of Youth
- Creation of Youth Ministry Visioning Documents
- Deliberate Marketing and Communication Processes for Youth and Families
- Building a Realistic Budget With the Capacity for a Ministry to a Targeted Number of Youth
- Developing an Intentional 6-Year Curriculum Plan
- Ensuring that Core Compliance Documents Are in Place for the Youth Ministry
- Tracking Attendance and Developing Healthy Follow up Practices
- Drafting Job Descriptions for all Staff and Volunteers in the Youth Ministry
- Developing Youth Ministry Manual
- Making Provision for Regular Evaluation and Re-Calibration of the Youth Ministry

### **DEVELOP AND NURTURE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

- Developing and Work a Master Recruiting Template and a Process that Will Provide Sufficient Volunteer Capacity for the Church’s Targeted Number of Youth
- Creating Structures for On-Going Training and Support of Load-Bearing Volunteers
- Scheduling and implementing an inspiring, community-building, leadership-training event to be held in August of 2011.
- Proposing a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan for the youth ministry



5229 Cochran Drive Nashville, TN 37220 877-462-5718

[Mark@YMArchitects.com](mailto:Mark@YMArchitects.com)

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

[nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com](mailto:nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com)

- Providing mechanisms for the ongoing education and coaching of the youth ministry's paid and volunteer staff

#### **DEVELOP CLEAR STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND NEW INITIATIVES**

- Developing clear visitor welcome and follow-up processes
- Developing a game plan for launching a sustainable student leadership ministry
- Establishing or enhancing intentional rites of passage for youth walking through significant spiritual milestones
- Creating written processes for engaging the majority of parents of LCOB.
- Implementing processes for ensuring that each youth or youth parent receives a contact from someone on the youth leadership team at least once a quarter
- Developing a written, strategic plan for helping youth become an integral part of the whole church, weaving the youth ministry into the fabric of the entire church and its worship services, and implement at least three initiatives to accomplish this objective.

The remainder of the report places the above recommendations into an 18-month timeline to be implemented between now and September, 2012.



5229 Cochran Drive Nashville, TN 37220 877-462-5718

[Mark@YMArchitects.com](mailto:Mark@YMArchitects.com)

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

[nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com](mailto:nate.stucky@YMArchitects.com)