



# FOOTHILLS PRESBYTERY

## YOUTH MINISTRY MINISTRY ARCHITECTS ASSESSMENT REPORT March 21, 2017

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### BACKGROUND

The Foothills Presbytery serves as the regional connection and central office for 58 PC(USA) congregations in northeast South Carolina. The presbytery seeks to care for, empower, and celebrate the churches in its area. Among focus group members, the presbytery youth ministry is described as a “vital” and “energizing” place, while others describe it as “reactive” and “in desperate need of refreshing.”

Within the 58 churches in the presbytery, there are just over 1,250 youth in grades six through twelve. Approximately 30 churches are actively involved in the presbytery youth ministry programs. Historically, the presbytery has sponsored three annual youth ministry events: a fall middle school retreat, a spring high school retreat, and a mid-winter rally (which did not happen in 2016). 16 congregations regularly participate in Presbytery-wide youth ministry activities, with an average of 130 youth attending one of these retreats.

There are an estimated 13 people in the presbytery dedicating between half-time and full-time hours in their church’s youth ministries, with another three or so less than half-time paid youth workers. The Presbytery Youth Council (PYC) is currently comprised of 13 sophomore through senior high school students from churches throughout the presbytery. The PYC provides leadership and energy to the annual Presbytery events, as well as leadership development opportunities for the youth on the Council.

The students on the council are chosen upon the recommendation of their congregational youth leader, written application, and oral interviews. The PYC has traditionally been led by the Presbytery staff member, but with a recent transition, leadership in the group has been assumed by a team of volunteers, primarily paid youth directors serving in congregations within the presbytery.

As a denomination, the PCUSA has gone from having four million or so members in the 1960s to 1.5 million today, and the churches in Foothills Presbytery have experienced a similar trend. Like so many mainline denominations across the country, Foothills Presbytery has experienced a significant loss of resources in the past decade or so. In 2004, the Presbytery had a youth ministry budget of over \$40,000, while today’s youth ministry budget was \$6,000. The presbytery’s budget has decreased from over a million dollars ten years ago to \$595,000 in

2017, with estimates for 2018 at \$525,000.

Foothills Presbytery has also recently make the difficult decision to sell Camp Buc, the Presbytery camp and retreat center. Though this property has been the location of profound faith formation for many who have grown up in Foothills Presbytery, the presbytery had been investing approximately \$150,000 a year in Camp Buc for many years. The plan is to sell the 80-acre camp portion of the property and enter the remaining 220 acres into the North Carolina Land Conservancy, providing opportunity for the presbytery to use this area for camping, hiking, and outdoor ministry, without the camp facilities to maintain.

Not only have monetary resources decreased at Foothills, its personnel has experienced significant reduction as well. Just eight years ago, there were four full-time staff members serving in the Executive Presbyter and Associate Presbyter positions. Today there are two. In the same time frame, there were the equivalent of three full-time positions people serving in program and administrative support roles. Today, there are 1.5 full time equivalents.

In 2013, the presbytery entered into a deliberate discernment process to clarify its direction and vision, particularly in the light of reduced resources. The final recommendations of this process were approved by presbytery in August 2016. One of results of this process was a major restructuring of the presbytery into three committees: Committee on Ministry, the Committee on Shared Ministry, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The Committee on Shared Ministry combined the work of what had been eight different committees involving 68 people down to one committee of 24 people.

In the transition to this new structure, at the end of 2016, the part-time staff position for youth ministry was eliminated. At that time, Donna Templeton, the last presbytery staff person to be solely dedicated to youth ministry, ended her twelve-year tenure with Foothills. Currently, the Youth Ministry is currently "housed" under the Committee on Shared Ministry and the Associate Stated Clerk serves as the staff liaison for youth ministry with limited part-time administrative support.

The discernment process identified the presbytery's ministry to youth as one of its top three immediate priorities and established a youth ministry task force to begin to consider the design for the next stage of youth ministry in the presbytery. In this transition time, one of the highlights in the presbytery's youth ministry efforts has been the gathering of youth leaders for what was to be an every-other-month time of refreshment, connection, and encouragement. These gatherings, involving an average of 13 youth workers, became so meaningful that they quickly moved to a monthly schedule.

Though the presbytery's official operating budget for youth ministry is just \$6,000 for 2017, its total investment is currently in the neighborhood of \$22,000, when the allocations by Committee on Shared Ministry and other designated funds for a year-long youth ministry cohort and this assessment process are included.

In its effort to discern the way forward for youth ministry in the presbytery, the Youth Ministry Task Force invited Ministry Architects complete this assessment and provide some coaching with the first stages of implementation. We met with or heard from over 140 youth, volunteers, youth workers, clergy, and presbytery staff in nine listening groups. This document represents an initial assessment of the presbytery's unique assets and challenges, along with key recommendations for the shaping of the next expressions of youth ministry in and through the

presbytery.

## **NAMING NORMAL**

### **Normal for Church-Based Youth Ministry**

As the presbytery seeks to build thriving ministries with middle school and high school students in churches throughout the presbytery, the following norms can serve as a helpful baseline for normal. These norms are largely descriptive, not prescriptive, so there is no doubt that there will be churches in the Presbytery that will be exceptions to these norms.

1. **10% of the Worshiping Congregation**—In a typical church, the number of youth involved in the life of the church tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. In other words, a church with an average worship attendance of 100 could expect an average weekly participation of around 10 youth per week.
2. **\$1,000-\$1,500 per Youth**—The typical church invests somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1,000-\$1,500 per youth active on an average week (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits dedicated to the youth ministry). So it would be normal for a church that sustains the involvement of 15 youth on an average week to spend between \$15,000 and \$22,500.
3. **1 Full-Time-Equivalent Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—The trigger point for hiring a full-time staff person (or full-time-equivalent combination of staff people) dedicated to youth ministry seems to be the participation of 50 youth on an average week.
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. According to this norm, a church with 10 youth would require a minimum of two adults volunteering in the youth ministry.

The key principle here is that effective youth ministry depends more on appropriate investment than on great ideas.

### **Normal for Next-Generation Ministry Through Mid-Level Judicatories**

In short, there *is* no normal other than chronic ineffectiveness and shrinking investment from conferences, presbyteries, diocese, and synods. As a result, most mid-level judicatories are struggling to find traction in next generation ministry. A growing number have no staff at all related to youth ministry, despite the fact that the vast majority of churches are struggling mightily with children, youth, and young adult ministries.

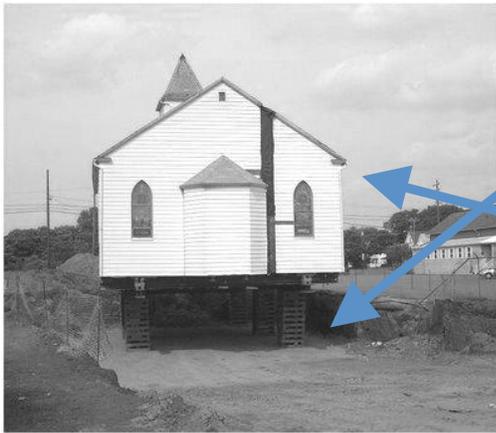
Many full-time judicatory youth staff positions have become very part-time, and those who continue in full-time work find themselves with vastly expanded job descriptions (i.e., the once “Presbytery Youth Coordinator” assumes responsibility for children, young adults, college ministry, technology, and janitorial services). What is clear is that few, if any judicatories, have identified a staffing model that actually moves the needle for youth ministry.

Those bright spots across the country are often expanding their reach by creative, collaborative, innovative partnerships, rather than by the tried-and-true, grind-it-out Presbytery Youth Coordinator model.

### **Normal for Strategic Planning: The Parallel Priorities**

As the leadership of the presbytery begins to develop and live into a long-term strategic plan for youth ministry, it will face the challenge of working parallel priorities at the same time.

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:



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

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

### **Sustainable Staffing for Next Generation Ministries**

We have repeatedly observed that the most stable approach to leading a ministry involves building a team with three different capacities:

- **The Architect:** A person or organization that designs the building plan and ensures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan. In ministry, this person would be putting together the strategic design.
- **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. In ministry, this might be a program coordinator.
- **The Laborers:** That wide assortment of people with specific gifts, charged with responsibility for particular aspects of the work. For example, a typical laborer in youth ministry might be a worship leader, an event planner, or a small group leader.

When a ministry leader attempts to play all three of these roles at the same time, as is the case in almost every judicatory program staff, instability, burnout, and mediocre results are the natural outcomes.

### **ASSETS**

#### **The Priority of Youth Ministry**

It is not insignificant that the Presbytery Coordinating Council identified youth ministry as one of the presbytery's top three priorities for this year. The Equipping the Saints Team recently invested significantly in a one-year coaching cohort for presbytery youth workers. This assessment is itself another clear evidence of the presbytery's commitment to youth ministry.

We heard a surprising number of people express an abundance mentality surrounding the

presbytery's commitment to youth. One said simply, "We're not broke. We have money." Another said, "The money will be there if we clarity and vision." Still another said, "We are nowhere near a red light. We just don't know what direction to go. We are green and green."

## **PYC**

The Presbytery Youth Council (PYC) is described as one of the "core successes" of youth ministry in the presbytery. For decades, youth have experienced the balance of support and empowerment, elevating high school youth into leadership. One PYC member commented, "It's nice to have the guidance of people who are more experienced, but it's also nice for us to be able to make decisions."

"PYC is a collaboration of different ideas," said another, "and it makes our events better." Other high schoolers in the presbytery point to the existence and leadership of PYC as an indication that Foothills takes its commitment to youth ministry seriously. One celebrated, "[The presbytery] gives a lot of responsibility to youth. They listen to us."

Not only does PYC provide energy and youthful enthusiasm to the annual retreats, it provides hands-on leadership training for the youth who serve. There was no shortage of affirming comments about PYC:

- "I'm doing stuff now I never thought I'd be able to do a few years ago."
- "I want to be sure that someone from my church serves on PYC next year – I want to pass on this great experience."
- "PYC shows our young people that the Presbyterian Church is a connectional church. It provides a great space for youth to explore leadership opportunities."

## **Retreats**

For those youth involved, the highlight of Foothills youth ministry are the annual retreats, held in the fall for middle school students and in the spring for high school students. One youth said, "The retreats allow us to get closer to people all over the presbytery. I still talk to someone in my small group from last year." Others said, "The retreat is a great thing for all the churches in the presbytery for so many reasons" and "[retreats] allow teens to get to know people they don't already. They allow them to dive into deeper topics, and they allow back home groups [local congregations] to get closer."

When given a choice to keep the current youth retreat schedule or increase the high school retreats to both a fall and spring, nearly every high school student indicated that they would be glad for the additional fall retreat, with a number reporting that they would be glad to come to Montreat every weekend!

## **Desire for Missions**

There is a strong desire from youth for missions and outreach opportunities, both at the presbytery level and through individual congregations. The following are just a handful of comments from listening groups:

- "I would love to do more mission outreach as a presbytery. Maybe even just 2 churches near each other go out together in their community."
- "A mission trip to West Virginia helped me understand how much I have. It would be cool if multiple churches could do that together."
- "Working together brings people together."

## **Desire for Collaboration**

One of the most common themes that emerged in focus groups was the desire for greater collaboration between churches, whether at a whole presbytery, regional, cluster, or church-pairing level. More than one youth leader expressed a desire to see more partnership between churches in things like volunteer trainings and special events. One said, "Wouldn't it be cool if we could talk to each other and decide which week we would all go to Montreat together in the summer?"

Likewise, high school students also expressed a desire for more relationship between Foothills Presbytery churches. One youth said, "I would love to do something with another church for youth group." A PYC member expressed a highlight of service on the council was the opportunity for collaboration: "I like taking new ideas back to my church."

While there were a few activities such as confirmation classes or senior recognition activities that youth expressed a desire to keep at a congregational level, there was great enthusiasm for activities like lock-ins, service projects, concerts and more to be done together. One commented, "without the Montreat retreat, I wouldn't know anyone from any other churches – we should do more together!"

### **Student Leader Empowerment**

When asked what they would definitely not like to see change at Foothills, one high school student responded, "the responsibility given to youth!" A student in leadership echoed this attitude by saying "I like how they guide us on how to do the retreat but there's a lot of freedom. They give us lots of space to lead." Somewhat surprisingly, another commented, "We don't need a lot of money; we've got everything we need."

Presbytery leadership articulated the priority of youth empowerment, saying, "Youth should feel empowered to serve their local congregations and build on a foundation of faith that will carry them through their years after high school."

### **Youth Workers Coming Together**

In addition to the youth worker coaching cohort, the monthly youth worker roundtable is another visible aspect of the desire among those in youth ministry to connect with each other. One youth leader commented, "We're doing a lot of things well. We're getting youth leaders together on a much more regular basis. That has been HUGE!" Another expressed the sentiment heard from a number of focus group members, "The Youth Ministry Roundtable discussions are outstanding!"

### **Momentum**

Despite the predictable anxiety that surrounds transition and change, youth ministry at the presbytery has kept up a steady forward momentum. After the recent mini-Montreat conference, one youth worker reported, "I am energized and hopeful. This retreat was the first time I saw youth leaders given the gift of working together. It felt like a different space." Another listening group characterized the youth ministry by saying, "It's far more grounded than it's been." And still another said simply, "I am very encouraged."

### **Clarity of Need**

Among those in focus groups, there was an across-the-board consensus that the youth ministry is ready to move to the next level. Dissatisfaction, in this case, can actually be an extremely important asset to renovating the presbytery's youth ministry efforts, as well as a strong motivation to stay committed to innovation. This eagerness for change was articulated by comments like these:

- “We are not doing well by our kids.”
- “Making youth ministry a priority is not making it back to our churches.”
- “We're stuck.”
- “We need to put a little more fire into our youth program. We're pretty vanilla. There are other places that are getting the attention of our youth.”
- “These kids are the future of the church and we're losing them.”
- “We need to step it up.”
- “We have become complacent in the way we're doing youth ministry in the presbytery.”
- “I want our youth to be a priority! We talk so much about diminishing financial resources, and the reality of denominational differences, but we need to think of new ways to focus on our mission to love and care for our youth.”

## **CHALLENGES**

### **“There’s a Presbytery Newsletter?!”**

One listening group participant summed up the communication challenge when he asked, “What? There’s a presbytery newsletter?!” There is clear consensus that “churches should know and understand what the presbytery offers” but there is not an agreement on the best way to go about decimating information.

While many praised the efforts made by the staff at the presbytery to connect and resource churches, they were quick to point out that a dwindling staff can easily have difficulty keeping up with the number of relationships necessary to communicate appropriately to 58 different churches. Repeatedly, we heard the desire for more effective mass communication. As one listening group member remarked, “Regardless of what the information is, finding ways to get communication from the presbytery level to the people in the pews is an ongoing challenge.”

The lack of communication directly impacts how many congregations engage in the work of the presbytery. One youth leader reported, “We sent 0 kids to mini-Montreat because we got the information so late. That broke my heart.”

Likewise, youth ministry in the presbytery also suffers when successes are not well communicated and appropriately celebrated. Without a plan for communication, the great successes of the presbytery’s youth ministry efforts will remain hidden “under a bushel.”

### **Lack of Clarity About Needed Staff**

There is a strong sense that the presbytery needs to provide some sort of coordinating staff person in youth ministry, but there seems to be little consensus about what that person’s role should be. Some expressed concerns that depending too much on youth workers to volunteer at the presbytery level may have a detrimental effect on their own congregational youth ministries. One parent said, “The volunteers running the mini-Montreat can’t keep that up forever. I want them to be able to give attention to *their* youth group. Someone [else] needs to be able to give their full attention to PYC.” A youth director echoed, “I have not had much time to spend with my own youth group at any retreat when I’m in leadership.”

### **Funding**

The lack of immediately available funds for youth ministry was expressed as a concern by some, but others saw it as an invitation to greater creativity and innovative thinking. One youth leader said, “I believe the presbytery when they say they will never fully eliminate the youth

ministry budget, but we're going to have to find new ways to be creative with our resources."

### **Fuzzy Vision**

The current staff, volunteers, parents and youth are passionate about the youth ministry; they want to see marvelous things happen, and they are willing to work, and work sacrificially, to do so. But most seemed unable to articulate a clear picture of what they envision the youth ministry looking like beyond what we are currently doing. One person wondered aloud, "What is meaningful youth ministry these days?"

We "desperately need a some refreshing" said one youth leader, while another asked, "How do we vision together what it means to be Foothills Presbytery?" It's clear that there is work to be done to create a broad-based vision for the future, one that does not depend on old models. Like one tongue-in-cheek participant commented, "Entertaining our privileged, over-busy youth may *not* need to be our focus!"

### **Large Church / Small Church**

Across the board, focus group members expressed a need to do a better job at reaching out to smaller churches. One high schooler said, "Engaging smaller churches is important. The smaller churches don't come because they aren't used to the big group setting."

A volunteer youth leader from one small church articulated, "I would like more opportunities for our small youth group to join up with larger groups - mission opportunities, discussion opportunities, a day ski trip – things we don't have the resources to put together ourselves." A parent voiced the same need by saying, "I would like to see small churches pool their resources - these activities have been so important to my boys, and I would hate for other people's kids to miss that just because they attend a smaller church."

On the other side of the church-size spectrum, the largest churches in the presbytery historically have not participated in presbytery youth ministry events. With the resources to sustain their own programs independently, the largest churches often find their ministry calendars full.

While there is a consistent desire to do more to equip small churches and engage large churches, there is a lack of consensus as to how to accomplish the task. Ideas range from asking small churches to send a representative to monthly "Youth Roundtable" meetings to an online events calendar to an annual planning retreat for all congregational youth ministries in the presbytery.

### **Collaboration Challenges**

While many listening group participants expressed gratitude at the connectional nature of our denomination, that connection has, at times, proven difficult to create and maintain. Though many youth ministries are experimenting with partnerships with other churches, one youth worker said, "It's not always easy to partner with another church in youth ministry." Others admitted that collaboration often requires relinquishing control and preferences and gives rise to the fear of competition, "There is sometimes fear that the partner church will 'take our kids.'"

### **Transition Anxiety**

With the ending of the part-time Associate for Youth/Young Adults position, one PYC member commented, "The transition has been hard and a little chaotic." Another echoed, "It was a very abrupt change." Others have been left with anxiety that the presbytery will not be able to lay necessary the groundwork without a paid person.

As was stated more than once in focus groups, the presbytery's youth ministry efforts are suffering from what could be best described as "transition anxiety." More than one person commented that it would be easy to assume that no paid staff person for youth ministry means no priority for youth ministry. One volunteer commented, "I'm hearing mixed things out of the presbytery. I thought we were shutting it down," while another youth worker said, "There are churches that feel like there is an us vs. them with presbytery." Transitions, even done well, are almost always difficult and require time for healing.

### **The Limited Reach of PYC**

Though PYC is a treasured program of the presbytery youth ministry, there is a clear sense that it could be more than it is. The group is currently comprised of 13 youth, with a number of those from churches with more than one PYC member. 13 is a far cry from reaching almost 1,250 youth and 58 churches in the presbytery. A previous PYC member commented, "The Presbyterian Youth Council was an amazing experience for me and I wish it would grow." Without a well publicized recruitment process or structural capacity to engage more youth, the impact of this group will always be limited.

Others also wonder about the reach of the PYC. "I don't have the sense that we are fulfilling the leadership development potential of PYC," said one youth worker. Another leader wondered if the lessons learned on the PYC are spilling back to the local churches.

### **Where Have All the Kids Gone?**

Some voiced concern about the fact that fewer and fewer youth seem to be participating in their churches. One volunteer said, "My youth ministry is dwindling." The concern deepens in those who start with a smaller congregation to begin with. "We have some years when our HS youth group will be virtually non-existent. We will need a group for the few kids to be a part of now more than ever." Looking into the future, another leader commented, "one challenge with Generation Z is that they are going to be less likely to join groups."

### **Volunteer Gaps**

There does not seem to be anyone who holds responsibility for building and nurturing a cohesive, well-trained team of volunteers for the variety of roles within the presbytery youth ministry. One person said, "We're not providing significant support to volunteers serving in youth ministry." Another said, "There is a deep administrative part we have not even considered."

Some expressed the concern that, as tasks that have primarily been handled by staff people are turned over to volunteers, those tasks will become burdensome and lead to disengagement and burnout of volunteers. One focus group member said, "If we are going to rely on [youth workers already leading congregational youth ministries], we can't do much more than we're already doing." Another voiced a desire to support these volunteers, "We've got to provide some support (financial and otherwise) to folks who are volunteering to do things like run events."

Finally, others pointed to the rich storehouse of volunteers in churches who don't yet know that they have been gifted in youth ministry. Pointing across the table at one such long-term youth ministry volunteer who, 20 years ago, was invited by his daughter to help with their youth group at Montreat, one focus group member said, "We're missing out on resources like Bubba!" Another shared frustration that some have volunteered to help, but have been left on the sidelines because of a lack of clear attention to building volunteers.

### **Execution Paralysis**

The presbytery is ready to take the next step into deep impact, sustainable youth ministry, but the plethora of tasks to be handled and decisions to be made seems to have paralyzed many. Without the freedom to innovate, accepting that failures have as much to teach as successes,

the youth ministry will be stuck in the ways expressed in these comments:

- “I don’t know what the venue is to actually put these ideas into practice.”
- “Nobody knows what we need to do.”
- “Ideas are great, but we’ve got to have more than ideas.”
- “So many ideas, but not sure who will keep up with them.”
- “We are not doing a lot to reach out to non-participating churches.”
- “We feel like we’re doing okay. There’s not a lot of urgency.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

1. Support the presbytery’s effective youth ministry efforts (retreats, PYC, youth leader roundtables, youth worker cohort) by staying in regular communication with the leaders of those initiatives throughout this process and clarifying running lanes for any collaborative and/or overlapping projects.
2. Focus less on the structure of programs and more on the structure of connections.
3. Cultivate an innovative ethos around youth ministry in the presbytery, choosing to:
  - Prototype and iterate
  - Give up on THE answer or THE model.
  - Resist returning to comfortable categories that have failed to produce desired results (e.g., a presbytery-owned camp, an in-house staff person for presbytery youth ministry, etc.)
4. Provide latitude for the development of communication channels and innovative programs that may not naturally fit into the presbytery’s current communication structure
  - Example: A youth ministry website and resource portal, connected to the Presbytery site
  - Resources: *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*, *Innovator’s Dilemma*
5. Combine the systems that ensure sustainability with a willingness to embrace disruptive innovation.

### STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reframe the presbytery’s youth ministry efforts through May 2020 based on the recommendations of this assessment. Though the horizon for a comprehensive culture shift, infrastructure building, and alignment will take approximately three years the implementation of this process should begin in earnest immediately.
2. Establish a prayer team to undergird the strategic implementation of the building plan developed out of this report.
3. Establish a Youth Ministry Action Team, made up of 3 people, along with the Associate Stated Clerk and a representative from Ministry Architects. This team will work together to delegate and monitor the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report and will create a shared folder (Google Drive, Dropbox, Slack, Basecamp, etc.) to house all documents related to this effort.
4. Address immediate pressure points facing the presbytery:
  - a. Develop a robust, nimble database of youth ministry stakeholders who can easily be

sorted by at least the following categories:

- i All paid youth staff
  - ii All youth ministry volunteers who have participated in congregation or Presbytery youth programs
  - iii All pastors passionate about youth ministry
  - iv All seminary students engaged in the call process
  - v All teenagers serving in leadership roles in their congregations or the Presbytery
  - vi All presbytery staff who touch youth ministry in some way
- b. Agree on a next-step staffing structure for youth ministry, based on these starting recommendations:
- i Ministry Architects serving in two roles:
    - o As the project manager for the implementation of this plan
    - o As the central point of connection, communication, and coordination of the various expressions of youth ministry throughout the presbytery
  - ii Contract staff serving in targeted roles (e.g., retreat directors) for an agreed-upon stipend
- c. Create a master youth ministry program calendar for the presbytery, considering the possibilities of
- i Bonclarcken and mini-Montreat retreat dates for 2018
  - ii Regional parent engagement events
  - iii Presbytery-wide service opportunities
  - iv Suggested weeks for Montreat High School Conference attendance
  - v Paid youth staff or point leader training
  - vi Volunteer leader training
  - vii Pre-fall regional Leadership Launch
  - viii Youth Leader Roundtable dates
- d. Draft an article about the assessment process and the strong commitment of presbytery to youth ministry, with the hope that this article be used in congregational newsletters and linked to congregational websites.
- e. Meet with the presbytery's lawyer to ensure that the presbytery has no responsibility for ensuring that the volunteers serving in Foothills churches agree to that church's child protection policy.
5. Build infrastructure essential to sustaining a culture of flourishing ministry to youth throughout the presbytery including:
- a. Calendars (event, programming, and preventative maintenance)
  - b. Job descriptions (paid and volunteer positions)
  - c. Org Chart
  - d. Volunteer Recruitment Plan
  - e. Volunteer Orientation and Training Plan
  - f. Youth Mission Engagement Plan
  - g. Parent Engagement Plan
  - h. Rites of Passage Plan
6. Reimagine the Presbytery Youth Council to include more youth participants and an

intentional leadership development plan by:

- a. Structuring the PYC to include multiple, multi-grade, PYC “cohorts,” perhaps with each one focused on planning a single event (Bonclarken, mini-Montreat, Presbytery Service day, etc.) and one volunteer Coordinator overseeing each cohort.
  - b. Expanding the size of the PYC, with the goal of including at least one youth on the PYC from each church in the presbytery that has youth.
  - c. Integrating intentional training for PYC participants to help youth use the leadership skills they are acquiring to bring vitality back to their home congregations, with one volunteer coordinator overseeing the leadership development aspect of PYC.
7. Incubate connective structures for students, youth leaders, and families in the presbytery through one or many of these ideas:
- a. Collaborative Clusters of Churches doing youth and children’s ministry together
  - b. Support and Connectivity Structures Specifically for Churches with less than ten youth.
  - c. Support and Connectivity Structures Specifically for Churches with 11-35 youth.
  - d. Support and Connectivity Structures Specifically for Churches with more than 35 youth.
  - e. A Transportation co-op allowing churches with limited options for transportation to formally partner with churches that have vans that might be shared.
  - f. A Short-Term Missions Arm of youth ministry that offers groups of churches short-term mission opportunities, including housing, meals, and work projects within the presbytery.
  - g. A Multicultural Cohort of youth and adults from a variety of ethnicities and economic backgrounds
  - h. A study of the book Growing Young, as a resource for congregations throughout the presbytery
  - i. A robust internship program that provides college students with the opportunity to be mentored together as they serve in a churches throughout the presbytery
8. Build a robust marketing process for youth ministry in the presbytery, including:
- a. Monthly stories of effective youth ministry in the presbytery
  - b. The building of an audience of at least 2,500 stakeholders in youth ministry, easily sortable by area of interest and engagement
  - c. Targeted marketing plans to ensure achievement of participation goals for all presbytery-sponsored, youth ministry initiatives
  - d. Intentional social media campaigns highlighting youth ministry opportunities and successes.
9. Develop a user-friendly, easily accessible, online youth ministry resource portal, including (but not limited to)
- a. A list of recommended camp and retreat centers in the area and a link to those websites
  - b. Easily downloadable games, curriculum, videos and music for youth leaders
  - c. A list of recommended vendors for catering, t-shirts, transportation, etc.
  - d. A list of all the opportunities for service and mission for young people in and through the presbytery
  - e. A resource bank for sharing and exchange of:
    - i Curriculum
    - ii Props for Programming
    - iii Spaces on Trips and Retreats
    - iv Sports Equipment
    - v Transportation (vans and trailers)

- vi Meeting Spaces
  - vii Youth Bands or Musicians
  - viii Web or Design Expertise
  - ix Children and Youth Ministry Manual Templates
  - x Parent Ministry Resources
  - xi Confirmation Resources
- f. Templates for all-things youth ministry:
- i Release forms
  - ii Child Protection policy
  - iii Job Descriptions, both paid staff and volunteer
  - iv Calendars
  - v Sample Retreat Schedules
  - vi Major Event Notebook Templates
- g. Youth leader training modules:
- i How to grow a youth ministry
  - ii Leveraging Transitions (Elementary-Middle School; Middle School-High School; High School-College; First Time Parents)
  - iii Cultivating Sticky Faith
  - iv Building an Awesome Volunteer Team
  - v Turning First-Timers Into Regulars
  - vi Leading Instead of Leaving: Secrets to Retaining Older Youth
  - vii How to Design and Launch a Pre-Teen Ministry
  - viii From Zero to Something: Reaching Children and Youth When You Have None
  - ix Building Partnerships with Parents
10. Hold a Youth Ministry Visioning Summit to define the vision for youth ministry in the presbytery, including a mission statement and values for the presbytery's youth ministry efforts, as well as three-year measurable goals and one-year benchmarks.
11. Invest in small church youth ministries by:
- a. Listening for what presbytery might do to support small churches in their ministries with teenagers
  - b. Sponsoring presbytery wide events (perhaps once a quarter) based on feedback from churches. These events might include concerts, day trips, service opportunities, etc.
12. Develop presbytery-wide confirmation resources, particularly supporting churches with very small confirmation classes.
13. Develop game plans for communication about youth ministry in the presbytery by
- a. Create a narrative arc of joy and enthusiasm around youth ministry in the presbytery through at least monthly stories shared throughout the presbytery, ideally stories meaningful enough to be shared by pastors from pulpits around the presbytery.
  - b. Maximizing available means of communication about upcoming events
  - c. Providing information about presbytery-sponsored trips and events at least 6 months before those events
14. After a season of iterating and prototyping,
- a. Adjust the structure of the presbytery's youth leadership teams to make them more effective in executing and promoting excellent ministry and building vital connections between stakeholders in youth ministry.

- b. Design a next-step staffing plan for presbytery's youth ministry efforts.

## **PROPOSED TIMELINE**

*The following timeline, organized by quarters (i.e., Q1: April-June, Q2: July-September), provides a sequencing plan for implementing the recommendations of this report over the coming three years:*

### **Quarter 2 (April-June) 2017**

#### **Focus: Starting Right**

Outcomes:

- A prayer team, charged with praying for the youth of the presbytery and the ministries designed for them, has been recruited. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline and have calendared quarterly gatherings for prayer (either virtual or face-to-face).
- The Youth Ministry Task Force has embraced an updated version of the plan outlined in this report and has request support of the appropriate committees and governing bodies of Foothills Presbytery.
- The task force has determined how, if it all, they would like to recommend partnering with Ministry Architects for the launch and implementation of this plan. The recommendation of this report is that Ministry Architects serve in two roles:
  - As the project manager for implementing this plan
  - As the virtual staff to build alignment, coordination, and communication throughout the various expressions of youth ministry in the presbytery.
- The Youth Ministry Action Team has been recruited and has been oriented to their responsibilities over the coming three years.
- The structure of youth ministry in the presbytery has been agreed on, including
  - The Youth Ministry Task Force overseeing the operations of the presbytery's youth ministry efforts
  - The Youth Ministry Action Team overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of this report.
- 2017 budgeting decisions have been made for any additional contract staff the presbytery's youth ministry might require (e.g., stipends for retreat directors, etc.).
- A Shared Folder has been created (Google Drive, Dropbox, Slack, Basecamp, etc.) to house all documents related to this effort.
- Funding for the implementation of this plan has been approved.
- A robust, nimble database of 300 contacts has been developed, easily sortable by at least the following categories:
  - All paid youth staff
  - All youth ministry volunteers who have participated in congregation or Presbytery youth programs
  - All pastors passionate about youth ministry
  - All seminary students engaged in the call process

- All teenagers serving in leadership roles in their congregations or the Presbytery
- All presbytery staff and committee members who touch youth ministry in some way
- An article has been drafted about the assessment process and the strong commitment of presbytery to youth ministry and has been disseminated to all congregations.
- A master youth ministry program calendar for presbytery events through the end of the 2018 school year has been created, considering the possibilities of
  - Bonclarken and Mini-Montreat retreat dates for the next three years
  - Regional parent engagement events
  - Presbytery-wide service day
  - Suggested weeks for Montreat High School Conference attendance
  - Paid youth staff or point leader training
  - Volunteer leader training
  - Pre-fall regional Leadership Launch
  - Youth Leader Roundtable dates
- Implement and develop a game plan to promote awareness and applications to PYC, aiming to increase the size of the group to at least 20 youth by the start of the 2017 school year.

### **Q3 (July-September) 2017**

#### **Focus: Volunteer Development, Compliance, PYC, Communication**

##### Outcomes:

- All volunteer needs for the presbytery's youth ministry efforts have been identified.
- All volunteers needed for the effective operation of presbytery's youth ministry initiatives have been recruited.
- A volunteer leader training and orientation has been completed for all volunteers serving in presbytery initiatives.
- An organizational chart defining the various volunteer and staff roles of the presbytery's youth ministry initiatives has been drafted.
- The presbytery's lawyer has been consulted to ensure that the presbytery has no responsibility for ensuring that the volunteers serving in Foothills churches agree to that church's child protection policy.
- A design for an expanded PYC beginning in the 2018 school year has been created and approved by the Youth Ministry Action Team and the Youth Ministry Task Force considering
  - Multiple, multi-grade, PYC "cohorts," perhaps with each one focused on planning a single event (Bonclarken, Mini-Montreat, Presbytery Service day, etc.)
  - A volunteer Coordinator serving over each cohort
  - The size of the PYC being increased, with the goal of including at least one youth on the PYC from each church in the presbytery that has youth
  - A much enhanced leadership-development design for PYC
- Culture-creating communication protocols have been established, including
  - Promotion for youth ministry events getting to churches six months before those events take place
  - Monthly youth ministry good news stories shared with the youth ministry database and all pastors in the presbytery

- Integrated web, social media, and print promotion
- The database of youth ministry stakeholders in Foothills Presbytery has grown to 500 and contact information and tagging for those people has been updated.

#### **Q4 (October-December) 2017**

#### **Focus: 2018 Planning, Visioning, Resource Portal, Marketing, PYC, Staffing, Innovative Connective Initiatives**

#### Outcomes:

- A basic structure for the presbytery's youth ministry efforts for 2018 has been agreed on, including
  - Calendar of 2018 programs
  - Volunteer needs for 2018 programs
  - Budget request for 2018 programs
  - Targeted contract staff requirements for 2018 programs.
  - An updated, easily sortable database of 500 or so youth ministry stakeholders
  - A preventative maintenance calendar
  - Updated job descriptions for all volunteer roles
- A Youth Ministry Visioning Summit has been held to define the vision for youth ministry in the presbytery, including a mission statement and values for the presbytery's youth ministry efforts, as well as three-year measurable goals and one-year benchmarks.
- The design of a user-friendly, easily accessible, online youth ministry resource portal has been drafted, along with a rollout timeline.
- A game plan for marketing presbytery youth events has been drafted, including
  - Identifying a target participation number for each event
  - Personal contacts with individual churches
  - A strategy for reaching out to the 42 churches who historically do not participate in presbytery youth ministry events.
- All necessary PYC volunteer coordinators for the expanded program have been recruited
- Design a next-step staffing plan for presbytery's youth ministry efforts.
- Budget requests for the presbytery's 2018 youth ministry initiatives has been drafted and submitted.
- Ideas for initiatives for building connections between churches, youth, youth leaders, and parents have been considered, and three ideas have been selected to be beta-tested (using the following list as a starting point):
  - Collaborative Clusters of Churches doing youth and children's ministry together
  - Support and Connectivity Structures Specifically for Churches with less than ten youth.
  - Support and Connectivity Structures Specifically for Churches with 11-35 youth.
  - Support and Connectivity Structures Specifically for Churches with more than 35 youth.
  - A Transportation co-op allowing churches with limited options for transportation to formally partner with churches that have vans that might be shared.

- A Short-Term Missions Arm of youth ministry that offers groups of churches short-term mission opportunities, including housing, meals, and work projects within the presbytery.
- A Multicultural Cohort of youth and adults from a variety of ethnicities and economic backgrounds
- A study of the book Growing Young, as a resource for congregations throughout the presbytery
- A robust internship program that provides college students with the opportunity to be mentored together as they serve in a churches throughout the presbytery

### **Q1 (January-March) 2018**

#### **Focus: PYC, Resource Portal, Volunteer Recruitment, Infrastructure, YM Action Team, Innovative Connective Initiatives**

##### Outcomes:

- Promotion for a vastly expanded PYC (to launch with the start of the school year 2018) has begun.
- All PYC coordinators have begun to meet regularly.
- Intentional training has been integrated for PYC participants to help youth use the leadership skills they are acquiring to bring vitality back to their home congregations.
- An user-friendly, easily accessible, online youth ministry resource portal has been launched, including at least list of recommended camp and retreat centers in the area and links to those websites.
- Recruiting has begun for all volunteers needed for presbytery's youth ministry efforts for the 2018-2019 school year.
- The database of youth ministry stakeholders in Foothills Presbytery has grown to 750 and contact information and tagging for those people has been updated.
- The Youth Ministry Action Team has completed an evaluation of the strategic implementation process and made the necessary adjustments to accomplish the outcomes of this report.
- The master youth ministry program calendar for presbytery events for the 2017-2018 school year has been evaluated and a calendar of events through the end of the 2019 school year has been created.
- 3 Innovative Connective Initiatives for churches, students, youth leaders, and families in the presbytery have begun to be implemented.
- A design for small church engagement and support has been drafted by the Youth Ministry Action Team, starting with identifying a contact person at each small church and listening for what initiatives might be most meaningful in supporting small church youth ministries.

### **Q2 (April-June) 2018**

#### **Focus: Volunteers, Infrastructure, Resource Portal, Website, Prayer Team, PYC,**

##### Outcomes:

- Volunteer recruitment for the 2018-2019 school year is complete.
- A volunteer orientation and ongoing volunteer training has been calendared for the coming year.
- The number of churches represented on the PYC has more than doubled from the previous year and the cohorts for the 2018-2019 school year have been filled.

- An inspiring, equipping PYC orientation has been calendared.
- An user-friendly, easily accessible, online youth ministry resource portal has expanded, with the addition of a resource-sharing component for things like curriculum, props for programming, sports equipment, transportation (vans and trailers), meeting spaces, youth bands or musicians, web or design expertise, parent ministry and confirmation resources.
- An audit of the youth ministry web pages has been completed and recommendations have been made for making it more effective.
- The prayer team for Foothills youth ministry and this strategic implementation process has recalibrated their efforts,
  - Inviting additional people to participate
  - Providing prayer updates for youth ministry stakeholders who are not officially a part of the prayer team.
- At least one initiative for supporting small church youth ministries has been launched, and a timeline for implementing a full plan has been developed.
- Reasonable financial projections for the next three years have been developed and potential streams of funds have been explored.

### **Q3 (July-September) 2018**

#### **Focus: Infrastructure, Marketing, Resource Portal, Confirmation, Innovative Connective Initiatives**

##### **Outcomes:**

- A game plan for engaging parents both on the congregational and presbytery level has been developed and implemented.
- A plan for publicizing monthly stories of effective youth ministry in the presbytery has been created and implemented.
- A list of all the opportunities for service and mission for young people in and through the presbytery has been added to the portal
- The online youth ministry resource portal has been expanded, with the addition of templates for all things youth ministry in the presbytery (e.g., Release forms, Child Protection policy, Job Descriptions, both paid staff and volunteer, Calendars, Sample Retreat Schedules, Major Event Notebook Templates)
- The changes to the website recommended in the website audit have been made.
- A plan for a presbytery-wide confirmation resources events, and retreat has been drafted with specific efforts made to support churches with very small confirmation classes.
- The database of youth ministry stakeholders in Foothills Presbytery has grown to 1250 and contact information and tagging for those people has been updated.
- The effectiveness of the 3 Innovative Connective Initiatives for churches, students, youth leaders, and families has been evaluated, and initiatives for the upcoming year have been selected.

### **Q4 (October-December) 2018**

#### **Focus: Marketing, Portal, Infrastructure, Innovative Connective Initiatives, Visioning, Small Church Youth Ministry, Communication**

##### **Outcomes:**

- A marketing audience of at least 1,500 stakeholders in youth ministry, easily sortable by area of interest and engagement has been built
- The game plan for marketing presbytery youth events has been evaluated and updated

as necessary.

- Easily downloadable games, curriculum, videos and music for youth leaders and a list of recommended vendors for catering, t-shirts, transportation, etc. has been added to the resource portal
- Design a next-step staffing plan for presbytery's youth ministry efforts.
- Budget requests for the presbytery's 2019 youth ministry initiatives has been drafted and submitted.
- A game plan for creative youth missions engagement and rites of passages, both on the congregational and presbytery level has been developed and implemented.
- The next round of Innovative Connective Initiatives for churches, students, youth leaders, and families in the presbytery has begun to be implemented.
- One-year benchmarks from the Visioning Summit have been revisited and goals have been updated as needed.
- The structure (org chart) of the presbytery's youth ministry staff, volunteers, and teams has been updated to maximize presbytery's effectiveness in executing and promoting excellent ministry and building vital connections between stakeholders in youth ministry.
- The design for small church engagement and support has been drafted by the Youth Ministry Action Team, starting with identifying a contact person at each small church and listening for what initiatives might be most meaningful in supporting small church youth ministries.
- Communication protocols have been re-evaluated and necessary changes have been made with a particular effort to continue to promote youth ministry events to churches at least six months before those events take place and communicating good news stories to the database and pastors monthly.

### **Q1 (January-March) 2019**

#### **Focus: Confirmation, YM Action Team, Volunteers, Small Church Youth Ministry**

Outcomes:

- A presbytery-wide confirmation retreat for youth has been developed and executed.
- The Youth Ministry Action Team has completed an evaluation of the strategic implementation process and made the necessary adjustments to accomplish the outcomes of this report.
- Recruiting has begun for all volunteers needed for presbytery's youth ministry efforts for the 2019-2020 school year.
- The master youth ministry program calendar for presbytery events for the 2018-2019 school year has been evaluated and a calendar of events through the end of the 2020 school year has been created.
- The database of youth ministry stakeholders in Foothills Presbytery has grown to 1750 and contact information and tagging for those people has been updated.
- The design for small church youth ministry engagement and support has begun to be implemented.

### **Q2 (April-June) 2019**

#### **Focus: Marketing, PYC, Volunteers**

Outcomes:

- Targeted marketing plans have been created and implemented to ensure achievement of participation goals for all presbytery-sponsored, youth ministry initiatives
- The prayer team for Foothills youth ministry and this strategic implementation process

has recalibrated their efforts.

- An evaluation of the new format of PYC has been completed and necessary changes have been implemented for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Volunteer recruitment for the 2019-2020 school year is complete.
- A volunteer orientation and ongoing volunteer training has been calendared for the coming year.
- The database of youth ministry stakeholders in Foothills Presbytery has grown to 2,000 and contact information and tagging for those people has been updated.
- Reasonable financial projections for the next three years have been developed and potential streams of funds have been explored.

### **Q3 (July-September) 2019**

#### **Focus: Marketing, Next-Step Strategic Planning, Infrastructure, Innovative Connective Initiatives, Confirmation, Resource Portal**

Outcomes:

- An intentional social media campaigns highlighting youth ministry opportunities and successes has been developed and implemented.
- The Youth Ministry Action Team has drafted a proposal for the next step strategic plan for youth ministry in Foothills Presbytery.
- The game plan for engaging parents both on the congregational and presbytery level has been evaluated and changed as necessary.
- The database of youth ministry stakeholders in Foothills Presbytery has grown to 2,250 and contact information and tagging for those people has been updated.
- The effectiveness of the latest round of Innovative Connective Initiatives for churches, students, youth leaders, and families has been evaluated, and initiatives for the upcoming year have been selected.
- Presbytery-wide confirmation resources, events, and retreats have been evaluated and any needed changes have been made.
- Youth leader training modules have been added to the portal including:
  - How to grow a youth ministry
  - Leveraging Transitions (Elementary-Middle School; Middle School-High School; High School-College; First Time Parents)
  - Cultivating Sticky Faith
  - Building an Awesome Volunteer Team
  - Turning First-Timers Into Regulars
  - Leading Instead of Leaving: Secrets to Retaining Older Youth
  - How to Design and Launch a Pre-Teen Ministry
  - From Zero to Something: Reaching Children and Youth When You Have None
  - Building Partnerships with Parents

### **Q4 (October-December) 2019**

#### **Focus: Marketing, Next-Step Strategic Planning, Database, Infrastructure, Innovative Connective Initiatives, Visioning, Small Church Youth Ministry**

Outcomes:

- The Youth Ministry Action Team's proposal for the next step strategic plan and timeline for youth ministry in Foothills Presbytery has been approved by the appropriate bodies.
- A marketing audience of at least 2,500 stakeholders in youth ministry, easily sortable by area of interest and engagement has been built
- The game plan for creative youth missions engagement and rites of passages, both on

the congregational and presbytery level, has been evaluated and changed as necessary.

- The next round of Innovative Connective Initiatives for churches, students, youth leaders, and families in the presbytery has begun to be implemented.
- One-year benchmarks from the Visioning Summit have been revisited and goals have been updated as needed.
- The structure (org chart) of the presbytery's youth ministry staff, volunteers, and teams has been updated to maximize presbytery's effectiveness in executing and promoting excellent ministry and building vital connections between stakeholders in youth ministry.
- The design for small church youth ministry engagement and support has been updated by the Youth Ministry Action Team.

### **Q1 (January-March) 2020**

#### **Focus: Volunteers, YM Action Team, Infrastructure, Small Church Youth Ministry**

Outcomes:

- Recruiting has begun for all volunteers needed for presbytery's youth ministry efforts for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Adjust the structure of the presbytery's youth leadership teams to make them more effective in executing and promoting excellent ministry and building vital connections between stakeholders in youth ministry.
- Design a next-step staffing plan for presbytery's youth ministry efforts.
- The Youth Ministry Action Team has completed a final evaluation of the strategic implementation process and has been appropriately celebrated.
- The master youth ministry program calendar for presbytery events for the 2019-2020 school year has been evaluated and a calendar of events through the end of the 2021 school year has been created.
- The design for small church youth ministry engagement and support has begun to be implemented.
- The preventative maintenance calendar for Foothills youth ministry has been drafted:
  - Innovative Connective Initiatives (Launched in Q 4, Evaluated and Selected in Q 3)
  - Small Church Youth Ministry Initiatives (Launched in Q 1, Evaluated and Selected in Q 4)
  - Volunteer Development (Recruiting Launched in Q 1, Orientation and Training calendared in Q 2)
  - Visioning (Benchmarks and Goals evaluated and updated in Q 4)
  - Confirmation (Evaluating and Updating in Q 3)
  - Communication and Marketing (Evaluating and Updating in Q 3)
  - PYC (Marketing and Recruitment begins Q 2)

**The Ministry Architects Team Serving  
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Mark served as the Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee for 28 years. Though Mark resigned his position as youth pastor in 2014, after a year away, he returned to First Presbyterian as a volunteer associate pastor. Mark serves as the chairman of the board for the Center for Youth Ministry Training, a two-year residential, masters-level, youth ministry training program based in Nashville. He also serves on the Alumni Board for Princeton Theological Seminary. Mark is a frequent seminar speaker, training youth leaders at both the Youth Specialties' National Youth Workers Convention and the Simply Youth Ministry Youth Ministry Presbytery. Mark lives in Nashville with Susan, his wife of over 30 years, and they have three grown children: Adam and his wife, Sara, Debbie and her husband, Trey, and Leigh. Mark and Susan have three grandchildren, Parish, Nealy and Liam.

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Betsy began working in Youth Ministry in 2001 where she served as a full time youth minister at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Mobile, Alabama. She currently volunteers for the youth program at Christ Church and teaches high school math and science. Betsy holds a B.A. from Sewanee (The University of the South) in Religious Studies and a Masters of Theological Studies from Spring Hill College. She lives in Charlotte, NC with her husband, Taylor, and their two little girls, Katie and Grace.

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Katie is the Youth Minister at St. David's Episcopal in Roswell, Georgia where she has been serving since July of 2004. She heads up all things around the middle and high school students and loves every bit of it! She teaches and shares about the things she's most passionate about, creates adventures, and works with an amazing team of volunteers who have a passion for the Lord and students. After being at the same church for 10 years, Katie has come to learn that every year holds its own challenges and blessings. She is married to an amazing man named Jeremy who is an integral part of the youth program, and has two young children: Rollins and Harlow.