

The Youth and Family program has spent the last several months in partnership with Ministry Architects working on ways to grow our program. Here's an update on our progress.

In August, we met with members of the congregation to discuss the many assets of our program and to outline some goals we have for the future. The resulting report can be found [here](#). The report:

- Defines the roles and responsibilities of Youth and Family Ministry and Christian Education as it relates to our youth;
- Outlines the current offerings St. Mark's provides to our youth, including the relationships with other church pillars;
- Provides "norms" or rules of thumb from other churches in the size, cost, and programming for youth as a means of comparison; and
- Provides the results of an online diagnostic (survey) filled out by members of the congregation.

The report noted the current strengths of the Youth and Family ministry program, including the overall support and enthusiasm for the program and its staff from the congregation, the success of the program's communications, and the success at identifying rites of passage, such as confirmation. The report also identified some challenges too, which the program is addressing now with an updated set of goals and initiatives. These goals include, but aren't limited to, reimagining middle and high school programming, creating a process to keep in touch with more families, and continuing to find ways for our children and youth to be involved in the greater St. Mark's community.

We established a "Renovation Team" with Caleb, our YFM Minister, and our Ministry Architect consultant Sean as well as several volunteers from across our congregation to spearhead the changes needed to meet our program goals. This team has spent the last few months hard at work! In that time, we have:

- Rebuilt our family database and created a plan to stay in touch with anyone we haven't seen in a while, which is particularly important during this lockdown period.
- Brainstormed several ways for youth and families to be active in the greater St. Mark's community and created a process to evaluate new ideas. You will see the first fruits of this in our virtual Christmas pageant, but we also are working on building programs with other St. Mark's groups in the future.
- Worked on some creative new programming. We are experimenting with different activities, venues and formats to see what connects most with our students. The first of these, a pumpkin painting event went really well, and we have even more coming up! As we learn what connects best with our students, we will be launching some new recurring events in the new year.

Renovation team members are Paul Albergo, Kris Humphrey, Mary Thuell, and Shay Waye. Keep an eye out for more updates from us, coming soon!