

CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

NOVEMBER 2023

HAMLIN CHURCH

ST. PAUL, MN



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

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BACKGROUND

Hamline Church, founded in 1880, is a progressive church that values theological humility and inclusion. Located between downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul, the church strives to be a sanctuary for the city. An active member of the Reconciling Ministries Network and the Minnesota Methodists, Hamline Church is committed to the full inclusion of all people. Church members describe their church family as “inclusive,” “welcoming,” and “community-focused.”

The membership of the church is 426 and in an average week, 230 people attend one worship service on Sunday mornings at 10 AM, in-person or online. Worship is uplifting and community-oriented. Hamline Church values the presence of children in worship and provides resources for families to worship together and for children to be fully embraced in the community of faith.

Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard has served as the Senior Pastor of Hamline Church since 2014, providing faithful and steady leadership through many challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and a turbulent season in the United Methodist denomination. Mariah also helps with pastoral care, teaching, and events in the children’s and youth ministries. Rev. Heather Grantham has served as the Associate Pastor of Spiritual Formation since 2018, providing supervision of the children’s and youth ministries staff, and support for Confirmation, events and pastoral care. Katie Morris has served as the Director of Student Ministries since August of 2021, overseeing all aspects of the church’s ministries to children, youth, and their families. David Kozisek, Director of Music and Worship, helps with music, VBS,

and worship involvement for the church’s children and youth. There are also interns, support staff, and the Director of Communications giving time and energy to the children’s and youth ministries, plus several other individuals serving in pastoral, program, and administrative roles to round out the church staff.

Youth Ministry Information: Currently, there are 50 sixth through twelfth graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, six of them participate in worship or youth programming such as Confirmation or monthly fellowship opportunities. Each summer, the youth look forward to a trip to serve and explore their faith, traveling in recent years to places such as Chicago, New Orleans, and Detroit. The youth ministry is described by some youth and parents as “active,” “warm,” and “traditional.” There is one regular adult volunteer involved in the youth programming. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

Children’s Ministry Information: Currently, there are 65 children, birth – sixth grade, on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, 34 of them participate on Sunday mornings (in Sacred Studio, childcare, or worship) or Wednesday evenings (children’s music and potluck dinner). Significant annual events in the children’s ministry also include VBS, the Christmas Pageant, a Fall Festival, Easter Scavenger Hunt, Summer in Sprout Garden, and the Winter Family Retreat. The children’s ministry is described by some children and parents as a “safe” and “growing” place, while others say it is an “engaging” and “loving” ministry. There are four adult volunteers involved each

week in one of the major children's programs, with more serving in one-off or background roles during a typical ministry year.

The children's and youth ministries are led by Katie Morris, who has been at the church since 2021. The church has a 2023 budget of \$808,964 of which approximately \$30,400 is dedicated to the youth ministry and \$57,100 is dedicated to the children's ministry. This includes the program expenses as well as the salary and benefits for all of the staff giving time and energy to children's and youth ministries.

Hamline Church - specifically Hamline Methodist Episcopal Church - is on the national register of historic places, and is located in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood next to Hamline University. There is a nice outdoor space, used and enjoyed by children and youth, including the Sprout Garden and a bread oven. Inside the building, there is an area designed for children in the sanctuary, with age-appropriate seating and materials. There is also a nursery, several classrooms used for children's programming, and a youth room with couches, a TV, several stuffed animal mascots, and pictures and keepsakes from events over the years.

Hamline Church hosts a robust, regularly updated, and easy-to-navigate website. The website describes the church's heritage, recent history, mission and values, weekly schedule, church staff information, and upcoming events. The church website also includes a vibrant children and youth section, including upcoming event information, an annual calendar, recent ministry announcements, and a sign-up to receive regular email communication.

Weekly worship services are streamed live to the church's Facebook and YouTube pages, where community members who cannot be at church join for worship and exchange greetings. Livestream and archived videos can also be found on the church's webpage and social media platforms. Announcements and community celebrations are shared both on the church's Facebook and Instagram pages. In addition, it is impossible to miss children and youth on each of the church's digital platforms. They are featured prominently in photos and videos that range from celebrating children singing and dancing in worship to recent events such as the Fall Festival.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's and youth ministries and to make recommendations about how they might intentionally navigate the next season of ministry at Hamline Church. Ministry Architects met with 71 individuals in 7 listening groups or one-on-one meetings, (plus lots of children during the children's time and Sacred Studio!). What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a plan for how to move forward strategically.

THE INVISIBLE CHECKLIST

The three most common ways that churches secretly judge their ministries.

There's no such thing as a blank slate. In most churches, everyone has an opinion about the youth and children's ministries. Sometimes, it's simply a positive or negative impression. Other times, it is based on a single conversation with a happy or unhappy parent, youth, or child. More often than not, the reputation of a church's youth and children's ministries is based on an invisible three-item checklist.

Although the items on this invisible checklist, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, they have a way of profoundly informing a church's perception of its youth and children's ministries.

Youth and children's ministries that check these three boxes typically build a climate that gives them significant freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. The youth and children's ministries that fail to check these three boxes often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

#1: Numbers – A significant percentage of youth and children need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church's youth and children's ministries. When the participating youth and children are not seen by the congregation, either in person or through typical communication channels, youth and children's ministries will often be perceived as anemic. Because the target numbers are not typically agreed upon and

communicated clearly, most youth and children's ministries are judged by a mashup of conflicting numerical goals.

- For children at Hamline Church, this box is definitely checked, with a significant number of children visible and active in the life of the church.
- However, for youth, this box is not currently checked, since fewer youth are present and engaged in the ministries at Hamline Church.

#2: Programs – In order to earn the right to experiment with changes, the youth and children's leadership needs to provide the church with a few visible, effective programs that give youth, children, and parents something to talk about. This box might be checked by a special youth-led worship one Sunday a year, a beloved VBS ministry, or a weekly program visible enough to stir conversation.

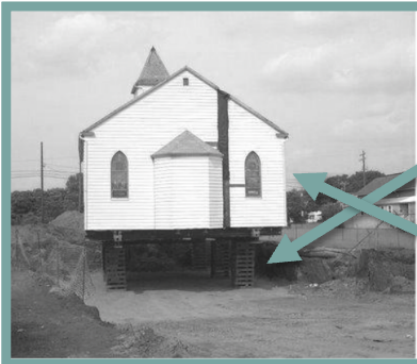
- This box is clearly checked for the children of Hamline Church. Children are featured regularly in worship through the children's time and milestone celebrations and musical leadership.
- While there are a few anchor events that occur each year for the youth, establishing regular programming that is visible to the congregation has been more challenging for the youth ministry at Hamline Church and thus the box is not yet checked.

- #3: Enthusiasm** – The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the youth and children's staff, volunteers, parents, and the youth and children themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents/caregivers. The large turnout for listening groups, the

hope and excitement expressed in those conversations, and their willingness to make the ministry to children, youth, and families a priority suggests that this box has been checked.

As the leadership of the youth and children's ministries develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be sure to ante up by checking these three boxes.

In addition, as Hamline Church continues with all of the current offerings for children, youth, and families while also working on the systems needed for stability and future success, the children's and youth ministries face parallel challenges.



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

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NORMS

There are a few rules of thumb – “children’s ministry norms” – that will be helpful to keep in mind. There are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences.

15% of the Worshiping Congregation

In a typical church, the size of the children’s ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 15% of the worshiping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 230 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 35 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 34 children is close to what a church of this size could normally expect to see.

\$1,100 per Child

With a budget of approximately \$57,100 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the children’s ministry, Hamline Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 52 children in some aspect of the church’s life. With 34 currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded for continued growth.

1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 70 Children

Considering all the positions giving time to the children’s ministry, including the director of student ministries, pastors, music and communication directors, interns, childcare

and support staff, Hamline Church has the equivalent of about one full time staff person (38 hours per week). According to this rule of thumb, Hamline Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 70 children on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth.

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 four weekly volunteers, Hamline Church currently has the capacity to effectively care for 20 children each. With 34 children, right now there is a ratio of one adult for every 8-9 children. Thus, the team is too small to attend to the relational needs of all the children who currently attend. The volunteer pool will need to expand if the church wants to sustain its impact with children.

YOUTH MINISTRY NORMS

There are a few rules of thumb – “youth ministry norms” – that will be helpful to keep in mind. There are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences.

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 230 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 23 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of six youth is well below what could be expected from the ministry.

\$1,500 per Youth

With a budget of approximately \$30,400 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Hamline Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 youth in some aspect of the church’s life. With six currently participating every week, the ministry is well-funded for continued growth.

1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth

Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including the director of student ministries, pastors, interns, and communication director and support staff,

Hamline Church has the equivalent of about one half of a full time staff person (19 hours per week). According to this rule of thumb, Hamline Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 25 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth.

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 one weekly volunteer, Hamline Church is currently at a ratio of one adult leader to every six youth, and really only has the volunteer capacity to care for 5 youth each week. The current team seems to be about the right size for the current ministry. However, if the church wants to expand its impact with the youth, it will need to consider recruiting more volunteers.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a single staff person, instability is a predictable result. Ministry Architects has found that the most stable approach to staffing a ministry, particularly in the early stages of a rebuild, is to build a team of three different kinds of staff and volunteers.

The Architect



A person who designs the building plan and ensures that the building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.

The General Contractor



A person who manages the flow and sequencing of work and the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of skilled workers is in place for each stage of the project.

The Skilled Worker



These people are charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. For example, a skilled worker might have particular skills in relating to children or youth, in planning and managing events, or in teaching.

Each of these roles is important as Hamline Church pursues a more sustainable model of children's and youth ministry. As the church moves forward, the following observations will be helpful to keep in mind:

- At Hamline Church, there is no person or group explicitly playing the role of the architect for the children's and youth ministries. While this type of work has been done in the past, some of it has fallen away during and since COVID-19. This work will need to restart in full in order to help the ministry do more than simply moved from one event to the next without a clear vision or stated outcomes.
- The soon to be formed Student Ministries will likely be able to help with both architect and general contractor work, but will need to be equipped to do this, and not get stuck focusing on skilled worker tasks.
- It is difficult for the busy youth and children's ministry staff to find the time or training to do their important work as the "general contractor" of a complex ministry. A larger team of skilled workers is needed to take responsibility for the ongoing programs and events of the ministry.
- The staff currently seems to be expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- And in order for the staff to mature into an architect or a general contractor, they need to be given the permission, time, and training to learn how to do this work.

ASSETS

STRENGTHS TO PROTECT

Strong & Growing Children's Ministry

There are a good number of children, and their families, actively participating in the ministry offered to/for them at Hamline Church. And the offerings, highlighted by Sacred Studio on Sunday mornings and children's music on Wednesday nights, and numerous special events throughout the year, seem to be meeting the needs of this community. One listening group participant said, "There are lots of great access points for our children and families," and another said, "We have a good variety of programming and do great events, the church really shines here." The children shared how much they enjoy the stories and activities and snacks (of course!) at the various offerings for them. Ultimately, as one listening group participant put it, "The church feels like a place that is fun for kids, and they feel like this is their home." With lots of new families coming to church and growth happening in the children's ministry, leadership will need to be prepared to help children and families, especially those with the littlest/youngest ones, connect to the ministry and church. And, a strong and growing children's ministry is generally an encouraging predictor of a strong, healthy youth ministry in the future.

Safety First

One of the reasons the children's ministry is thriving is because of the emphasis placed on safety at Hamline Church. The Safe Sanctuaries policy is available online, and all staff and volunteers complete a training and background check before working with children and youth. Multiple listening group participants agreed with one who said, "It's so comforting to know that I can drop my kid off, and they're gonna be okay." Everything is done in safe spaces. Each room has a safe church sticker on the door and the staff even ensured that all listening groups with Ministry Architects adhered to the safety policy. Families feel like they know the people who are involved in the ministry and helping lead. The church is committed to keeping children, youth, and adults safe. One listening group participant summed it up saying, "The staff and volunteers are not just here to do a job, but to also take good care of your family."

Visible and Valuable

The children and youth at Hamline Church are regularly a visible part of the church's life, and, in part due to this, the children and youth know they are a valuable part of this community. "The children and youth here are important, they are heard and seen, and they have a voice," said a listening group participant, and many echoed this sentiment. They are present in worship on Sundays, and considered in the planning of the services; the children's time not only helps the congregation know them better, but also reminds the children and families that how they think and feel really does matter. One listening group participant stated it plainly, "This attitude toward children comes from the leadership down, and you see it all over the church." Children and youth know they are needed, and a vital part of this church.

Intergenerational Success

But the children and youth are more than just present, they are connecting with the larger community at Hamline Church, and this is celebrated by children and youth, parents, and the congregation. One parent praised the church, saying, "It feels like everybody here knows my child, and wants to get to know our family." Whether it's visiting with a child during worship on Sunday morning or serving with a youth at the Dining Hall - and countless other opportunities - the church has made intergenerational relationships a priority. Many recognize that the church is one of the last places in our society today where all generations gather together. And there is a desire for even more connection and interaction between all the generations. "Every child needs someone who loves them irrationally, other than their parents," declared one listening group participant, and followed it up, saying, "And we want them to find that here, at our church."

Excellent Staff

The staff supporting the children and youth ministries at Hamline church are appreciated and celebrated by all. "Katie is a huge asset in her role, and her work ethic is excellent," said one individual. Others shared things like, "The staff is so responsive. Anytime feedback is given, they react and adapt as needed," and, "The staff is really good at reaching out, and asking us what we want." And while the staff is beloved, the church recognizes they can only realistically do so much. One listening group participant articulated it this way, "It just can't always be the pastors and staff. We rely on them a lot, and they carry a lot of the load." It will be important moving forward to ensure the staff are getting the care they need and have the support necessary to continue leading the ministries in healthy and sustainable ways. But the staff is a clear strength of Hamline Church, as one listening group participant said, "I don't know that it gets better than our staff. They work well with all different kids and are great at including everyone."

Memorable Milestones & Traditions

The various milestones that Hamline Church celebrates with its young people are both consistent and meaningful, and an important asset. Three-year-olds and third-grade children receive Bibles, and other milestones center around prayer, baptism, service, and communion. In addition to the recognition and reflection, children receive a smooth, cross-embossed stone to mark each of these milestones. 7th and 8th grade youth participate in Confirmation, and they help plan a service each year, picking music, giving faith statements, and leading other parts of the service. High school graduates are recognized by the congregation in worship every spring, and there is hope for more milestones for the youth. One listening group participant said, "These are joyful occasions. It's a genuine connection and celebration for the entire congregation." There are also traditions, like special events at Christmas, Vacation Bible School, the Winter Family Retreat, summer mission trips, and more, that are a highlight of the ministry every year. Many shared passionately about their memories of and anticipation for these occasions. It is important to acknowledge these key steps in the faith journey of children and youth, for the individuals and the entire community, and the church seems to be doing an excellent job with the current offerings.

CHALLENGES

OBSTACLES TO MOVING STRATEGICALLY FORWARD

Volunteer Gap

While there are several committed volunteers faithfully serving the children and youth at Hamline Church, there is definitely a need for more. Listening group participants said things like “I just don’t know what is needed,” and “We simply need more volunteers.” Volunteers are also primarily parents of children and youth, and staff. There is a hope, and need, for a wider range of adults to be involved here, which one listening group participant expressed by saying, “We need more than parents to help with this ministry.” Some wondered how people without children were made aware of ways to help and how to get involved. More volunteers, serving consistently, will expand opportunities and allow more adults to build caring relationships with the church’s children and youth, and their families.

Volunteer Support

Another important volunteer piece that seems to be missing at Hamline Church is the various types of support that volunteers need to be set up for long-term, successful service. Volunteer job descriptions do not exist, and there is not a system or schedule in place for recruiting. Some of the current volunteers don’t feel equipped in their roles. One listening group participant expressed, “I don’t know what I’m doing, and it feels like I’m not being helpful,” while another voiced, “I need to know, as a volunteer, what do I do, and what are my boundaries and expectations.” There isn’t regular volunteer training or support offered throughout the year, other than communication and help as needed, and volunteers aren’t regularly recognized and celebrated. Without some of these practices in place, potential volunteers are not given the opportunity to serve and current volunteers are more likely to stop serving sooner than is best for the children and youth, and the ministry, at the church.

Vision

When asked about a unifying, overarching vision of the ministries for children and youth at Hamline Church, no one was able to provide an answer. There was always a good amount of silence after this question was asked, and on one occasion a listening group participant finally responded, saying, “I’m not aware of one, not that comes from the church.” Another said, “Everyone has their own ideas, but I don’t know of anything formal.” Some listening group participants referenced the overall vision of the church; numerous others shared their own idea of a vision, including developing and growing in a relationship with God, being integrated into the life of the church, and welcoming and including all. These are all noble hopes and dreams for the children and youth and families, but without a shared and stated vision, it will be near impossible to decide where the ministry is headed, how to get there, and if success has been achieved.

Communication

While there are good communication channels in place for children and youth ministries at Hamline Church, it appears as though it is not as effective as many want and need. The children

and youth monthly emails are helpful, but the church-wide weekly email seems to have more information than parents/caregivers generally need. Several listening group participants wondered if more targeted or segmented communication might be possible. One in particular said, “There’s lots of good communication, but with so much it’s hard to pay attention and easy to ignore.” Sometimes it feels as though the information is unclear or incomplete, lots of people were unaware of the text communication that exists, and the congregation at large wants to know more about the children and youth ministries. The current systems will need to be reviewed and improved in order for the community to feel better connected and informed.

Children Programs & Numbers

There are lots of children participating in the nursery and classes at Hamline Church but the current programming setup does not appear to be working well with the increased numbers. “I wonder if the program is getting too large for the current structure,” asked a listening group participant. There is a wide range of ages/grades in each classroom, and often too many children in the classes. And space is also an issue; the programs are close to or at capacity in all the children’s programming rooms currently, so new space will need be found in order to expand offerings for children. One listening group participant voiced this concern, sharing, “With so many in a class, children can get lost in a large group and it’s hard to meet their individual needs.” And some are worried that this might affect new children and families being able to connect.

Youth Programs & Numbers

Meanwhile, for the youth ministry at Hamline Church, there is a lack of critical mass that is necessary for youth to be interested in and excited about meeting together. And opportunities for the youth to regularly gather are also missing. Fifth and sixth grades meet together during worship services on Sunday, but work is needed to determine where these young people actually fit in the children and youth ministries. Confirmation is offered to seventh and eighth grade youth, but a lot is expected and it’s difficult for some to commit. One listening group participant said, “Confirmation is really rigid and there’s lots of youth who don’t participate because it requires too much.” Some youth take on internships at the church and serve at the Dining Hall and in other ways at the church. Beyond this, and the summer mission trip, programming for youth is infrequent and inconsistent. One youth said it clearly, “It would be nice to do more things, that would be ideal,” specifically mentioning service and times to just hang out, without a schedule or lesson or plan. If given the opportunity, it seems as though the youth are interested in being and meeting together more regularly throughout the year.

More for Parents/Caregivers

Parents and caregivers love the way the church is supporting their children, youth, and families. They are also longing for more support as parents and caregivers. A multitude of listening group participants liked the comment of one individual who said, “We need space for parents to talk about parenting, without our children around.” There is a hope for more intentionality when it comes to connecting with one another. “I miss sharing wisdom and talking about life with other parents; that was always super helpful,” expressed one listening group participant. And some are interested in more ways to extend the conversations beyond church and continue faith

formation with their children at home. Building community for parents and caregivers will need to be a priority for Hamline Church moving forward.

Cracks in the Foundation

One of the things that keeps ministries from crashing and burning during times of transition is a strong infrastructure of systems and processes that undergird the ministry and programs of the church. There are calendars and children/youth/family directories available, but only numbers, and not names, are tracked for attendance, and the database is not used regularly to manage those involved in the children and youth ministries. A ministry manual, major event notebooks, and a preventative maintenance calendar are all being worked on but don't exist in any official version. Without these key components, Hamline Church will be unable to maintain strong and consistent programs through staffing transitions, and other changes and challenges that arise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on Hamline Church's current assets and challenges, a number of solutions and initiatives might bear fruit in the children's and youth ministries. These have been formed into two lists that include what's important to accomplish now and what will be important to accomplish next.

What's Important Now: Recommendations that the children's and youth ministries should consider implementing in the next three to five months. These are the steps that will relieve the immediate pressure points and gain momentum quickly, setting the children's and youth ministries up for success moving forward.

What's Important Next: Recommendations that will build excitement, and enthusiasm, and secure the future success of the children's and youth ministries.

The Now List

- **Reframe the next 18 months** as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the children's and youth ministries, understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the children's and youth ministries. Target April 2025 as the date when the children's and youth ministries renovation will be complete.
- **Establish a Prayer Team** to undergird this renovation process.
- **Present this report to the Church Council**, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the children's and youth ministries.
- **Establish a Student Ministries Team**, made up of four to five volunteers. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will serve as architects responsible for the sustainability of the ministry in coordination with the director, while also freeing up the director to focus more on exceptional day-to-day ministry. This team is responsible for implementing the assessment recommendations and the Vision Summit goals, and supports the staff in the management of the ongoing youth and children's ministries of the church.
- **Host a "Quick Start" Summit.** Invite the Student Ministries Team and the director of student ministries to participate in a virtual Quick Start Summit in which the renovation process is launched and the recommendations outlined in the Assessment Report are prioritized. The Summit tackles the items that need to be done first and builds momentum for the children's and youth ministry renovation process, and orients the team to their general ministry responsibilities moving forward.
- **Introduce new programming for the youth of Hamline Church.** Start by connecting directly/individually with youth and families to glean their needs and wants for the ministry. Based on this feedback, launch regular offerings, likely monthly or semi-monthly to begin with, starting in January, scheduled through the end of the school year.

Consider service opportunities and fun/fellowship events, and determine what volunteers and other resources will be needed to implement these programs.

- **Re-envision children’s programming on Sunday mornings.** Consider additional spaces that might be used, and more narrow age/grade groupings of children in order to decrease class size while increasing the effectiveness of the lessons, capabilities of volunteers, and comfort for new children/families. Determine additional volunteer needs and recruit these individuals. Also decide what, if any, additional curriculum and resource needs there will be.
- **Develop the infrastructure that will be needed to build the volunteer team at Hamline Church.** Determine all volunteer needs, create or update volunteer job descriptions for all positions, and build a list of current and potential volunteers, including non parents/caregivers, to serve in the ministry. Also, build a plan for volunteer onboarding, training, and celebration throughout the year. Once these items are complete, prepare to open volunteer recruiting season in February/March for the 2024-2025 school year.
- **Build an updated communication plan.** Document the rhythms and methods for effective and timely communication with parents, youth, children, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the youth and children’s pages of the church’s website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc. Determine what is and isn’t working, make any changes/additions needed, and launch a clear, targeted communication plan for the ministry.

The Next List

Building Infrastructure and Stability

In building a ministry there are key pieces to creating a solid foundation. Those key pieces to building infrastructure and stability are the following items:

- **Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth and children’s ministries with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
 - A ministry mission statement
 - A statement of values
 - A set of three-year revolving goals with one-year benchmarks
- **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like “September: nail down the date for next year’s VBS”).
- **Organizational Chart:** Create a clear organizational chart for the children’s and youth ministries that outlines the responsibility of the staff as well as volunteers. This clear presentation of roles and responsibilities helps provide accountability and equipping for leaders in the ministry.

- **Compliance Documents:** Review the application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and ensure that all adults working with any youth and children affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.
- **Children's and Youth Database:** Work on the youth and children's ministries databases has begun, collecting the most recent information for families, youth, and children. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on First-Time Guests and MIA families, youth, and children. Children/youth have been identified with appropriate tags so that targeted communication for one-time visitors to long-time members is streamlined and effective.
- **Attendance:** Track attendance for all youth and children's activities in one cloud-based, electronic system.
- **Marketing:** Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, youth, children, leaders, and the broader church are exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's and youth ministries.
- **Youth and Children's Ministry Manuals:** Develop a manual for the youth and children's ministries, including the most recent youth and children's directories, a 12 to 18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major children's or youth ministry event.

Developing and Nurturing Staff and Servants

As the foundation is built, the church will need to assess the staffing structure that will best serve the ministry as it moves forward. The church will also need to ensure it is engaging and equipping the leadership.

- **Strategic Staffing:** Propose a clear, appropriate long-term staffing plan, including the professional and volunteer components, for the youth and children's ministries that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of children and youth.
- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth and children's ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each ministry 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).
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with children and youth, while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a "fishing pond" list of possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Volunteer Accelerator:** Design and implement a customized Discovery Tool powered by the Ministry Architects Volunteer Accelerator which will help match the specific volunteer opportunities at Hamline Church with each person's skills, passions, and talents. Develop an ongoing utilization plan that builds the tool into the regular rhythms of the church.

- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth and children's workers at the beginning of each school year.

Clear Strategies and New Initiatives Developing

Once the foundation is being laid and volunteers are engaged and clear on their roles, the church will then need to shift its focus to establishing clear strategies and developing new initiatives such as:

- **Expand offerings for parents/caregivers:** Connect with parents/caregivers to get a sense of how they are hoping to connect with others, and what needs they want to have met through these connections. Based on this, plan regular opportunities for parents to meet, without their children, for the remainder of the school year. Consider recruiting a small team of parents to organize and facilitate these gatherings. Also brainstorm ways for parents/caregivers to continue spiritual conversations and faith formation with their children beyond the time at church.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth and children's ministry events and weekly programs through December 2024 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth, children, and parents to make a difference in the world, as well as their local community. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as, regional, and possibly international missions. Evaluate the current mission trips for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **Personal Connection Plan:** Develop a system for ensuring that every family in the current children's and youth directories is contacted personally at least once a year in order to make a connection, express support, and clarify if there are any parents/caregivers requesting that their child(ren) be removed from the church's directory.
- **Youth/Children's Contact:** Develop and implement processes for ensuring that each youth, child, and/or parent in the church receives a contact from someone on the children's or youth leadership team at least once a month
- **First-Timer Process:** Review processes for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- **Non-Parent Recruitment:** Create a game plan to target specific demographics in the congregation when recruiting volunteers.
- **Relational Strategy:** Develop a plan for the staff and volunteers to foster a relational atmosphere and build incarnational relationships with youth and children for deep & long-lasting impact in the ministry.
- **Pre-Teen Ministry:** Consider creating a ministry specifically geared to 5th and 5th grades to build community among the children and ensure their transition into the youth ministry,

or determine if children will be full members of the youth ministry following 3rd grade, and develop a plan to guide this transition.

- **Confirmation:** Evaluate Confirmation with the assistance of the clergy and input from a key group of parents. Determine the duration of the program, what age it is to take place, etc.
- **Retention Plans for the Youth Ministry:** Create game plans for
 - Keeping youth involved in the youth programs after Confirmation.
 - Continuing to engage youth who have gotten their drivers' license and/or are working part-time jobs.
 - Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them in the life of the church.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Expand on the current milestones offered, in particular considering the best times and ways to celebrate these rites of passage with the middle school and high school youth. This might include:
 - Welcome and connect the rising 5th graders and their parents into the middle school ministry.
 - Welcome and connect the new ninth graders and their parents into the high school ministry.
 - Do a blessing of the driver's license to recognize and prayer for all the new drivers in the congregation each year.
 - Launch the church's high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they are surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults.

MINISTRY ARCHITECTS

Ministry Architects has been hired to ensure the following tasks are completed:

- An onsite 2-day assessment of the children's and youth ministries identifying assets, challenges, and recommendations for building healthy systems.
- A virtual 1-day Quick Start to launch the Student Ministries Team into their new role, identify the pressure points that need to be addressed first, and begin addressing those pressure points.
- A 2-day onsite Vision Summit for the student ministries resulting in a mission statement, core values, and three-year goals with one-year benchmarks.
- Development of a Student Ministries Team including recruitment of members, orientation, job description and one-year preventative maintenance calendar, launching this team to serve as architects responsible for the sustainability of the ministry in coordination with the director. The Student Ministries team and staff will be responsible for implementing the assessment recommendations and the Vision Summit goals.
- Staff coaching with the director of student ministries (total of 18 sessions) and with the associate minister of spiritual formation (total of three sessions) throughout the renovation process, troubleshooting along the way and building healthy leadership habits that promote sustainable ministries.
- A volunteer development plan and the Volunteer Accelerator® software, resulting in more volunteers, plus a church-wide database system for volunteer recruitment, volunteer job descriptions for all volunteer positions, and a training plan. Support for this particular deliverable will last for 15 months, with the option to renew your software subscription after 15 months for \$259 a year.
- Reimagining current youth programs offered to middle school and high school students in such a way that increases the agency of young people while fulfilling the church's mission to be a sanctuary in the city.



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Sean began working in youth ministry in 1997 and has served as Youth Minister in United Methodist Churches and Presbyterian Churches (USA) in Texas, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and South Carolina. He is currently the Children's and Youth Minister at First Baptist Church in McMinnville, OR. Sean graduated from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX with a B.A. in Theology, and loves serving in a local church while helping (and learning from) churches around the country through Ministry Architects. Sean lives in McMinnville, OR with his son Parker and daughter Sybil.



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Caroline's passion for ministry leadership began while serving in youth ministry during her college years at UNC Chapel Hill (Go Heels!) and has continued in a variety of roles within several denominations and traditions. She holds a M.Div and a Master of Arts in Christian Education & Spiritual Formation from Princeton Theological Seminary and is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She and her family live on campus at Asheville School, a boarding high school in Asheville, NC, where her husband, Nate, serves as Chaplain. In her free time, Caroline loves exploring a farmer's market, hiking, and searching for the best baked goods the area has to offer!



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Bryant began working in youth ministry in 1996 in the United Methodist Church. He has been a worship speaker for summer camps, taught seminars for youth workers, and written curriculum for the Florida United Methodist Camping programs. Bryant graduated from Florida Southern College with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology. In his free time, Bryant enjoys all things outdoors, technology, movies, and hosts The Sustainable Ministry Show. He and his wife, Tonya, and two kids live in Kernersville, NC.