

Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church Sustainable Youth Ministry Team Final Report, August 22, 2018

The Sustainable Youth Ministry Team (SYMT) began its work in March of 2017 in response to the recommendation from Ministry Architects who conducted listening sessions with members of the congregation in December 2016. Ministry Architects were engaged by the Session of Ladue Chapel to help them better understand the desires of the congregation and needs of staff as it related to children's and youth ministry at Ladue Chapel.

Ministry Architects recommended 18 months of rebuilding long-term infrastructure for the children's and youth ministries and the establishment of a team to work with Robin Crawford and Melanie Smith to ensure that the outcomes envisioned from its assessment be achieved. Ministry Architects also recommended partnering with them to manage the "renovation" process and assist the team in overcoming the obstacles identified in its assessment.

Session approved partnering with Ministry Architects (February 2017) and recruitment of lay members to serve on the Renovation Team (later renamed the Sustainable Youth Ministry Team) began in February 2017. Youth is used broadly to include the entire span from birth to grade 12. Documents and plans produced by the team often use the terms children and youth ministry but the simpler title of Youth Ministry was chosen as the team's name. Ministry Architects (Lead consultant Kathy McCarron and Heather Quiroz) met with the team for a Quick Start Summit in late April 2017. The 18 month timeline was presented to the team and the flow of work outlined.

Ministry Architects' assessment acknowledged the talented staff and excellent facilities at Ladue Chapel, but pointed out, "When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a single staff person, instability is a predictable result." At Ladue Chapel, children and youth staff was referred to by Ministry Architects as the Dynamic Duo. They articulated the different kinds of people needed for a ministry to be sustainable and pointed out that often the people can be in place but the infrastructure or architecture is missing and those elements need to be added in order for ministry to be sustained.

First Steps

Developing a Child and Youth Safety Policy as required by the PCUSA General Assembly became an early priority. With input from the consultants, SYMT, Dr. Mark Thomas, Tom Sargent, Business Administrator, and Brian Plegge, Staff Resources Committee Chair, a Child and Youth Safety Policy was presented to Session for its approval in September 2017. All ministry volunteers receive training annually regarding the implementation of this policy.

Other critical needs became the focus of SYMT's work:

- ❖ Creating an ongoing plan for recruitment and retention of ministry volunteers including nurture and training

- ❖ Infusing all aspects of ministry with a focus on Christian faith formation
- ❖ Developing a clear mission statement for children and youth ministry including values, and spiritual development milestones which express what we want children and youth to know, feel and do with their Christian faith
- ❖ Developing an intentional game plan for keeping Confirmands involved in the life of the church following their Confirmation (8th grade)
- ❖ Developing an effective communication plan so that both the congregation as a whole and parents, youth and children, in particular, will be well informed about program opportunities
- ❖ Strengthening fellowship opportunities at all ages, 3rd-12th grades

Listening and Learning

Building on the listening sessions conducted in December 2017 by Ministry Architects, SYMT (with assistance from the Ministry Architect Lead Consultant Kathy McCarron and Jen DeJong) planned two Summits as a means of engaging members of the congregation in dialogue about shared visions for Children and Youth Ministry at Ladue Chapel. A Visioning Summit occurred in September 2017 with 39 attendees. Discussion during that Friday-Saturday summit resulted in a set of Visioning Documents including a Mission Statement, Values, Three-year Goals and One-year Benchmarks. (Appendix)

Based on the articulation of our mission, core values and goals, SYMT continued its work in building an infrastructure capable of supporting that vision. These documents expressed the vision in broad terms, however, and greater depth of understanding came from the Christian Faith Formation Summit in October 2017 which had 29 attendees. Using a similar Friday-Saturday format, this dialogue probed deeper into exactly what our congregation expected children and youth to feel, know and be able to do. Based on those discussions, Forming Faith Core Principles were articulated and a curriculum scope and sequence was developed. (Appendix)

Equipping the Ministry Workers

Aware of the challenges identified by Ministry Architects in its assessment, SYMT focused on developing tools which would aid staff and ministry volunteers as they engaged with our children and youth. Both game plans (broad strategies and processes for achieving a desired result) and specific tools were developed. Nearly all of them are designed with BOTH staff and lay leaders in mind. Most of these game plans and tools are included in the Ladue Chapel Children and Youth Ministry Manual. Additional Event Notebooks have been created for each special event currently a part of the children and youth programs. The goal of the notebooks and documents in the manual is to provide detailed information so that any individual could follow the plan and coordinate an activity or assume a role as a teacher or youth advisor.

Recruiting and retaining ministry volunteers

Recruiting teachers, advisors, covenant partners and event coordinators loomed large as one of the most discouraging aspects of the staff members' work. A Game Plan for Recruiting, Training and Retaining ministry volunteers is now ready for implementation and has been tested as it was being developed. For example, Children and Youth Committees will begin brainstorming potential volunteers for the following year as early as August and October. Working documents which can be shared electronically are in place so that all committee members know who is making "the ask", what the response is, and how close to completion the task of recruiting is.

Making it easy for a prospective ministry volunteer to say "YES!" when asked to teach Sunday School, lead Good Shepherd, serve as a youth fellowship advisor, or coordinate an event is a priority. Thus, the game plans and tools including the event notebooks tend to be practical, step-by-step guides. They are not intended to stifle creativity or flexibility, however, only to be a road map showing one way of organizing an activity or reaching a goal.

Core Principles

Great time and attention was given to laying out a scope and sequence to be used in developing learning programs for all ages so that forming faith core principles will not be overlooked, but rather become an intentional part of each activity, fellowship or class. For example, when youth engage in assembling hygiene kits as an activity the planners of that event are conscious that the purpose of the event is Faith Formation, Fellowship and Service. They intentionally talk with youth about the following core principles during and after the event:

- Practicing Faith - We offer our gifts to God and community.
- Following Jesus Christ
 - We love others as we love ourselves.
 - We share our lives with one another as a community of faith
- Knowing the Holy Spirit
 - I am a partner in God's saving work.
 - God calls and the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve family, friends and church in Christ's name.
 - God calls and the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve our neighbors locally and globally in Christ's name.

Curriculum Revisions

In similar fashion, Sunday morning curriculum has been revised so that lesson plans provided to teachers also highlight the core principles addressed in each lesson. Teachers are provided training each fall before the program year begins and provided support by staff throughout the year.

Middle School Curriculum

Curriculum for sixth and seventh graders was adapted to the Forming Faith Core Principles with emphasis on Biblical literacy and familiarity with key stories in the Old and New Testaments.

One aspect of the pedagogy encourages questions and open discussion as reflected in the values articulated in the Forming Faith Summit.

Confirmation Curriculum

The confirmation curriculum was strengthened by cross referencing it with the Core Principles and infusing the Game Night/Lock-In with subtle learnings related to the curriculum. Stronger emphasis will be placed on confirmands getting to know their covenant partners and all of the pastors. Opportunities for how to engage in the life of the church will be highlighted throughout the year.

Senior High Curriculum

A newly formatted “Sunday Conversations” offering for senior high youth will be launched in the fall of 2018 during the traditional educational hour on Sunday morning. The series will explore a variety of topics throughout the year featuring different discussion leaders for each topic. Leaders will use a dialogue format, not lecture, to stimulate dynamic conversations about issues relevant to the youth at this unique stage of their lives. Several senior high members met with SYMT members and church staff to help create the list of topics for the first year.

Communication Plan

Staff can be brilliant and charismatic, volunteers can be dedicated, curriculum can be stimulating, but without communication to the congregation and families all elements of effective programming are for naught! Recognizing that lack of communication was highlighted by Ministry Architects as an obstacle to success, SYMT re-examined all the modes of communication available for children and youth programs at Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church and experimented with using all the options. A Communication Game Plan was developed and a detailed spreadsheet illustrating how to stay abreast of the communication demands was created. Implementing this game plan requires active cooperation between the Children’s and Youth Committees and the staff.

Fellowship Opportunities

In addition to the offerings on Sunday morning, children and youth benefit from opportunities to know one another and spend time with pastors, member leaders and advisors. Learning to BE a Christian is more than an intellectual pursuit and the experiences gained through fellowship groups is a vital part of forming one’s faith.

Route 345

Middle elementary years can be a formative time in learning how one is a part of the Church. Coming together each Monday afternoon, third, fourth and fifth graders engage in fun, fellowship and an occasional service project. New in the fall of 2018, Route 345 will have a Coordinator who works with the Associate Pastor in shaping the curriculum and activities. There will also be at least two adults consistently present with parents helping on a rotating basis. Previously, everyone but the Associate Pastor rotated from week to week.

Middle School Youth Group

Sixth graders will graduate from Route 345 into their own youth group which meets on Sunday evenings. Meeting simultaneously with the Senior High Youth Group, this group will have its own advisors and activities but share a quick Sunday evening meal before beginning the program portion of the evening. Activities will reflect the Forming Faith Core Principles. The Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults serves as a resource to the MSYG advisors.

Senior High Youth Group

Presently, Senior High Youth Group will continue under the leadership of the Associate Pastor and a team of volunteer leaders. This group shares a quick evening meal with Middle School Youth Group before engaging in its own program. Activities reflect the Forming Faith Core Principles. Future plans include a team of ministry volunteers working with the Associate Pastor so that the Pastor is able to spend time with both HSYG and MSYG.

Continuing needs

While most challenges highlighted in Ministry Architect's assessment have been addressed in a robust manner, two areas continue to need attention:

Non-engaged or Disconnected Parents

Some parents are quite engaged by teaching, contributing to events, or responding to one-time requests. However, a sizeable number of parents are not connected directly with the children and youth programs.

A stated goal for 2020 is "Each year 25 parents participate in church programs designed to equip them to support their child's faith journey." In the spring of 2018, one session of the "Family Matters" course offered by Adult Education was devoted to an update of the work of the Sustainable Youth Ministry Team. A 2018 benchmark was having eight parents participate in a quarterly Christian Faith formation group with each other to support and encourage their child's faith journey. No such group has been formed yet for 2018.

Learning from the Numbers

Most would agree that relationships are more important than numbers in ministry, however, numbers reveal important information. Are we reaching ALL of our children and youth? Who are we missing? What do we know about who participates when?

As SYMT began its work in early 2017, attendance records, lists, databases, etc. existed in varying formats and few of them "communicated" with one another. ACS, Ladue Chapel's database, was often cited as having the capability but not being utilized. The clear goal is to be able to access all of the attendance data for each of the programs in one place - ACS! Progress is being made, but this goal has not been met quite yet.

Transition from SYMT to Christian Education, Children's Committee and Youth Committee

SYMT envisions the Christian Education Committee as the group having broad responsibility and oversight of Ladue Chapel's faith formation programs for all ages. Children and Youth Committees are sub-committees responsible for those particular ministries and report to Christian Education. The best laid plans often gather dust in some remote file unless skilled, dedicated people are on board to interpret and implement those plans.

To that end, a newly invigorated Youth Committee is in its formative stages with the expectation that additional members will join that group. Children's Committee is currently being formed with the expectation that the Co-Chair of SYMT will assume leadership of that committee in August 2018. Other members of SYMT have expressed willingness to either be part of the committees or be "on call" for interpretation of particular plans/strategies should that prove helpful.

Several tools were created to assist the committees in their work and include the following:

- Annual Planning Calendar for Children and Youth Ministry provides a quick visual of the tasks requiring attention by each of the three committees.
- Agenda Planning provides helpful tips for making committee meetings productive and relevant rather than simply a format for hearing reports.
- Children and Youth Volunteer Recruitment spreadsheet provides a format to track the work being done in recruiting volunteers.

In summary, the infrastructure for a sustainable children's and youth ministry is largely now in place. Implementation of the plans by using the tools, game plans and strategies and adhering to the Vision, Values, and Forming Faith Principles is in the hands of not only the staff but also is very much the work of the Children and Youth Committees. Every aspect of the ministry can be described as ongoing. A few pieces are still in the beginning stages, but most are up and running.

Ladue Chapel is fortunate to have had highly skilled and dedicated members who stepped forward to eighteen months of intense examination of Ladue Chapel's ministry with children and youth. The Sustainable Youth Ministry Team is grateful to Session for its support through engaging the services of Ministry Architects as well as listening and providing feedback throughout the process. We especially thank those elders who participated in the two Summits.

Sustainable Youth Ministry Team

Sarah Yancey, chair
Laila Crabtree, co-chair
Martha Baur
Sharon Fenoglio
Frecky Lewis

John Meyer
Katie Spencer
Robin Crawford
Melanie Smith

APPENDIX

Ladue Chapel Visioning Documents

Mission Statement

Our ministries provide a welcoming, loving and safe space for children of God to worship, learn, grow, serve, and lead as followers of Jesus Christ.

Values

Faithful: We worship God and demonstrate God's love in word and action.

Inclusive: We fully embrace and respect everyone's race, creed, sexual orientation, gender status, economic standing and those with special needs and provide a safe space for all.

Welcoming: Every child and youth feels joyfully received and wants to return.

Loving: Our actions are grace inspired and demonstrate that we care for each other.

Exploring: We value our Reformed tradition which encourages questions and open discussion.

Three-year Goals and One-year Benchmarks

(Target Date for Goals: Sept. 1, 2020 Target Date for Benchmarks: Sept. 1, 2018)

The Sustainable Youth Ministry Team will evaluate and revise the 3-year goals and 1-year benchmarks annually. When SYMT is dissolved, the Christian Education Committee will assume this role.

2020 Goal: Each week during the program year, 150 unique* children and youth participate in a church program (Worship, choirs, Sunday School, youth groups, etc.)

2018 Benchmark: An attendance tracking system has been developed in which unique weekly children and youth numbers are captured.

2018 Benchmark: A target number of unique children and youth have been determined for the 2017-2018 school year.

*Unique means a child who participates in three different programs is only counted once, not three times.

2020 Goal: To fulfill the desire of our members to know our children and youth by name, all children and youth on the roster have meaningful relationships with at least 5 adult members (non-staff) at Ladue Chapel other than their parents.

2018 Benchmark: A system for tracking the adults connected with the children and youth in the ministries has been created.

2018 Benchmark: 50% of active children can identify meaningful relationships with at least five adults (non-staff) at Ladue Chapel other than their parents.

2020 Goal: At least 50% of the adults ministering with children and youth are members other than those with children and youth in the program.

2018 Benchmark: At least 25% of the adults ministering with children and youth are members other than those with children and youth in the program.

2020 Goal: Each year 25 parents participate in church programs designed to equip them to support their child's faith journey.

2018 Benchmark: Eight parents participate during the year in a quarterly Christian faith formation group with each other to support and encourage their child's faith journey.

Youth Ministry Specific

2020 Goal: At least 20 youth worship at Ladue Chapel weekly during the year.

2018 Benchmark: At least 10 youth worship at Ladue Chapel weekly.

2020 Goal: Eight youth serve as leaders who invite and connect youth from inside and outside the Ladue Chapel community.

2018 Benchmark: Work with students to define youth leadership positions in youth ministry.

2020 Goal: At least one annual service trip for high school students of 4+ days duration, (one local and one global in alternate years), which includes at least 20 youth participants.

2018 Benchmark: 70% of the adult leaders for Urban Plunge participate for the full week.

2018 Benchmark: Recruit needed adult member leaders (other than Mel) for the global trip in 2019.

2019 Benchmark: Implement a global trip for high school youth.

2020 Goal: 25% of 6th-12th grade students serve as assistants or leaders with a K-5th special event or activity during the church program year.

2018 Benchmark: At least 10% of 6th-12th grade students serve as assistants or leaders with a K-5th grade special event or activity during the program year.

Ladue Chapel

Forming Faith Core Principles

1. Knowing God
 - a. God is sovereign; holy and worthy of worship.
 - b. God is Triune; whom we experience as God, Jesus and Holy Spirit.
 - c. God's love is steadfast; forgiving, reconciling and embraces all.
 - d. God's love is personal; I am a beloved child of God.

2. Knowing the Bible
 - a. Bible as the word of God: the story of God and God's people
 - b. Bible as Old & New Testament/Covenant
 - c. Bible as guide for life and faith

3. Knowing Jesus
 - a. Jesus lived, died and rose for us.
 - b. Jesus reveals God's love.
 - c. Jesus saves - from sin and for abundant life.
 - d. Jesus is Lord.

4. Following Jesus Christ
 - a. We love others as we love ourselves.
 - b. We forgive others as we forgive ourselves.
 - c. We share our lives with one another as a community of faith.

5. Practicing Faith
 - a. We worship God as a community of faith.
 - b. We pray, sing hymns, study and observe the liturgical seasons, and celebrate the sacraments.
 - c. We are shaped by the Reformed tradition.
 - d. We express what we believe.
 - e. We offer our gifts to God and community.

6. Knowing the Holy Spirit
 - a. I am a partner in God's saving work.
 - b. God calls and the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve family, friends and church in Christ' name.
 - c. God calls and the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve our neighbors locally and globally in Christ's name.