



**FAMILY MINISTRY
ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR**

**UPPER DUBLIN LUTHERAN
CHURCH
AMBLER, PA**

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Background

Upper Dublin Lutheran Church (UDLC) is an open and affirming congregation of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Church members describe their church family as a “great church with great people” who have a “deep abiding faith” and “love for one another.”

As with most churches in America, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has changed multiple aspects of UDLC’s community life. Worship, outreach, formation ministries, and children and youth ministries have existed in multiple iterations during the previous two years. Church members are longing for the connection they once experienced and are equally excited about the opportunity they have to live into the next season of UDLC’s ministry.

The membership of the church is 700 and on an average week, 150 people attend one of the church’s two worship services. The 8:30 AM contemporary service takes place in the outdoor chapel (weather permitting, May thru October.) This service features contemporary Christian music led by a band and includes communion each week.

The 10:30 AM traditional service is based on traditional Lutheran liturgy and features hymns accompanied by organ and piano, and music by the Chancel Choir. Approximately every six weeks the children perform at this service (e.g. Joyful Noise, Grace Notes, Children’s Choir).

The pastor, Rev Keith Anderson, has been serving UDLC for ten years. He is supported by Rev George Detweiler, Pastoral Associate, who preaches monthly and is responsible for some of the executive functions of pastoral ministry.



Children

Currently, there are 106 children from birth through sixth-grade children on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, 34 children participate in Sunday school, worship, or the children's music ensembles.

Annual programming includes events such as intergenerational vacation Bible school, the Christmas and Easter pageants, and various service projects throughout the year.

The children's ministry is led by Livvy Steffens, Director of Christian Education, who has served the church part-time for 40 years in both volunteer and staff capacities. There is also an active Christian education committee that reports to the director of Christian education and meets as needed. There are 10-12 volunteers involved each week in one of the major children's programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The children's ministry has \$36,596 dedicated, including the program budget as well as the salary and benefits for the children's staff, consisting of the director of children and family faith formation and half of the salary for the director of music ministry.

The generous amount of rooms dedicated to children's ministry are shared by UDLC's nursery school for its weekday programming. There are conversations about the possibility of reworking the children's classrooms because, although there are multiple rooms, the nursery school could accommodate more children and adjust their ratios with rooms that have a larger footprint.

Youth

Currently, there are 75 seventh through twelfth graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, 12 youth participate in Sunday school, worship, or Confirmation. Historically, youth have participated in various mission activities such as the Appalachian Service Project (ASP) during the summer. Currently, there is an annual Confirmation retreat in the fall, as well as occasional fellowship activities like the escape room and ice skating.

The youth ministry is in a time of transition and is currently supported by Rev Anderson and a team of 8-9 volunteers. There is not currently a youth ministry committee. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The church has a 2022 budget of \$560,000 of which approximately \$11,049 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program expenses as well as the salary and benefits for the staff, consisting of the interim youth minister.

UDLC has an education wing which consists of several children's classrooms that are shared with Upper Dublin Christian Nursery School. Additionally, there are two dedicated youth rooms located on the second floor – one for middle schooler students and another for high school youth. The second floor also has a large fellowship room with an adjoining kitchen that could easily be used for children and youth programming.

UDLC has a revamped website that houses its streaming worship services, offers its worship as a weekly podcast via Apple podcasts and Stitcher, and has a presence on Facebook.



The 8:30 AM contemporary service (when inside) and the 10:30 AM traditional service are both live-streamed on the church website and YouTube channel. UDLC has made a recent shift from printed to digital bulletins in each of its indoor worship services, offering a simple bulletin as a guide and projecting everything on the screens. A printed bulletin is still being used during the outdoor, summer service.

As part of UDLC's strategic plan, Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's and youth ministries and to make recommendations about how they might move strategically forward in the creation of a comprehensive family ministry.

Ministry Architects met with 52 individuals in 11 focus groups, one-on-one meetings, and email interviews. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.

Children's and Youth Ministry in Context

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding children's and youth ministry is the idea of the "three rents." Rents are defined as core elements of the ministry that must be paid in order to establish a sustainable children's and youth ministry. The rents of numbers, programs and enthusiasm are often the most immediate evaluation tools used by children, youth, parents, staff, and the congregation at large. It has been Ministry Architects' experience that though these three rents, in and of themselves, do not ensure an effective or faithful ministry, they are the most common sources of discontent when people talk about their church's children's and youth ministry.

Ministries that "pay these rents" tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. The ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

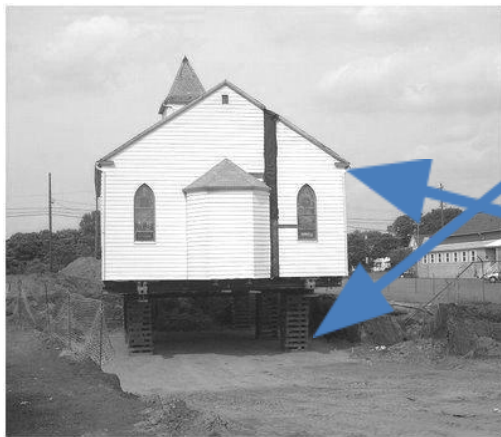
Rent #1: Numbers - A significant percentage of children and youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church's ministries. It is important for these target numbers to be clearly agreed on by the church leaders and the staff. Ironically, when target numbers are not established, the ministries are typically more likely to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established. The consensus is that this rent is not being paid. Several parishioners discussed declining numbers in all programming, a trend that started before the pandemic. Even though the numbers have changed, UDLC could still establish its new target and effectively communicate that so that there is clarity and alignment in expectations and resource allocation.

Rent #2: Programs-In order to earn the right to experiment with changes, the children's and youth leadership need to provide the church with a few visible, effective programs that give children, youth, and parents something to talk about. This rent appears to be partially paid. During the school year, Sunday school is offered weekly for children and youth; however, youth participation is lacking. Additionally, there is no regular youth programming for students in 6-12th grades, outside of the weekly Sunday school offering.



Rent #3: Enthusiasm-The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the children’s and youth staff, volunteers, and the children and youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents. The general pandemic malaise, lack of opportunities for the youth to gather for fun, and feeling of stagnation suggest that this rent is being partially paid.

As the leadership of the children’s and youth ministries develop its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these three rents. In this sense, the children’s and youth ministries face parallel challenges.



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

Continuing to Do Ministry:
Maintaining the *current* children’s and youth ministries in a way that builds the enthusiasm of children and youth, their families, the staff, and the church.

As the children’s ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, four rules of thumb –children’s ministry norms – will be helpful to keep in mind. These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences:

1) 15% of the Worshipping Congregation: In a typical church, the size of the children’s ministry tends to settle at a number of around 15% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 150 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 22 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 34 children is above what could normally be expected from the ministry. With these numbers in mind, special attention should be paid to the reality that the majority of the numerical engagement comes from Tuesday evening programming.

2) \$1,100 per Child: With a budget of approximately \$36,596 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the children’s ministry, UDLC Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the

neighborhood of 33 children in some aspect of the church's life. With 34 currently participating every week, the ministry is slightly underfunded to retain the currently attending children. In order to maintain the ministry at its current rate or to plan for a trajectory of growth, it would be wise to consider how to give the ministry the resourcing it needs.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 70 Children: Considering all the positions giving time to the children's ministry, including the Director of Christian Education (14 hours) and the Director of Music Ministry (9 hours), UDLC has the equivalent of about a half-time staff person(s). According to this rule of thumb, UDLC has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 35 children on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration is aligned well to the current needs of the ministry, however does not allow room for much more growth. In order to see the kind of growth the church is excited to experience more staffing may be needed.

4) 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 10-12 weekly volunteers, UDLC is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 2-3 children, giving the ministry a capacity for 50-70 children weekly. It is important to note that there is nuance in this norm given the reality that participation is weighted on Tuesday evenings with volunteer assistance of one person. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and could be poised for sustained growth in the future if volunteer alignment occurred for each ministry event.

As the youth ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, four rules of thumb –youth ministry norms – will be helpful to keep in mind. These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences:

1) 10% of the Worshipping Congregation: In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number of around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 150 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 15 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 12 youth (primarily participating in Confirmation) is slightly below what could be expected from the ministry.

2) \$1,500 per Youth: With a budget of approximately \$11,049 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, UDLC has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 6 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 8-9 currently participating every week, the ministry is underfunded to retain even the currently attending youth. In order to maintain the ministry at its current rate, it would be wise to consider how to give the ministry the resourcing it needs.

3) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth: Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including the Interim youth minister UDLC has the equivalent of slightly below a quarter-time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, UDLC has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 8 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration



seems inadequate to sustain the current needs of the ministry. Ordinarily, in over-capacity youth ministries, the youth staff is set up to be unable to fulfill all the expectations placed on them. The natural result is a climate of criticism and burnout. Additionally, with the desire for growth in the youth ministry, the allocation of staffing resources will need to be evaluated.

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. With about 8 weekly volunteers, UDLC is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 1.5 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 40 youth weekly. *This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future. A similar nuance is found in this norm as in the children's ministry norm—alignment among Confirmation and other programs will need to be examined considering this norm, potentially redistributing volunteer hours toward other youth programming.*

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 staff of three *different* kinds of people:

- **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, 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.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. In children's and youth ministry, a laborer might have particular skills in relating to children and/or youth, in planning and managing events, or in teaching.

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

- At UDLC, there is no person or group playing the role of the architect for the family ministry. The youth ministry simply moves from one event to the next without a clear vision or stated outcomes and the children's ministry continues to do what has been successful in the past without a collectively agreed upon vision.
- The staff is often expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.
- UDLC has a plethora of highly competent and skilled volunteers that have historically been deployed as laborers when their skill set could be used more effectively as



architects or general contractors. As UDLC enters into this new season of family ministry, it will be important to keep this in mind as volunteer teams are created to support the staff.



Assets

Strengths to protect in the current children's and youth ministry.

Committed Leadership and Volunteers

UDLC is marked by the incredible energy and commitment of a core group of volunteers and leaders investing relationally in others and encouraging their spiritual nourishment and formation. This core of leadership is unique in that it consists of members who have served the church for decades along with newer members who have joined the church within the last 5-10 years. One participant commented, "One of the things that impressed me the most is how active parishioners are." Volunteers were described as "generous," "dedicated," and "caring."

Superstar Staff

Over and over again, focus group participants expressed immense gratitude for how hardworking, devoted, and effective the staff is at UDLC. One person said, "We've been blessed with incredible leadership." Multiple focus group participants mentioned UDLC's pastor's keen ability to sharpen the church's vision and his unique giftedness to effectively navigate the pandemic as UDLC quickly moved from an in-person to a digital presence. Each listening group had multiple people speak about the love and commitment that Livvy has shown the church in nearly 40 years of service as a volunteer and staff person. One parent commented, "Livvy leads with love and that's what keeps people coming back."

One staff member offered, "Keith has been able to bring the staff group together. We all come to the staff meeting. As a group, we have united." Individuals on the staff even complimented one another on the gifts they bring to the ministry. One staff person said, "Those kids don't care one bit about seeing me there! They were so excited about seeing Miss Carol!" Another person shared that, during a drive in the car, their child commented, "Miss Livvy loves glitter! She has a closet FULL of it!" What a gift to have a staff that is fondly remembered during the week in the memories and imagination of children.

Hungry for Change

There is a keen awareness that aspects of the children and youth ministries at UDLC will have to evolve to meet the changing landscape of a post-pandemic world, but there is also a sense of openness to and determination about making the necessary change happen. As one participant commented, "The world is totally different. The way it used to be is never going to happen again. We have to realize it and adjust." While there is uncertainty about the actual changes that need to be made, there is a general spirit of trust and flexibility.

Music Ministry

When parents spoke of what ignited a spark in their children's desire to participate in the programming of the family ministry, they raved about UDLC's music ministry. One listening group participant said, "We really appreciate the structure and content of Tuesday evening programming. Our children are asked about their highs and lows and there's always prayer." Multiple people shared the sentiment of one parent who said, "Our music program is really strong!" Another person added, "We absolutely love Tuesdays. The kids get to know each other



and play together while also learning music.” Parents of youth lamented about the changes brought about by the pandemic and the grief they experienced when they couldn’t gather for music with their friends and longed for a return to some sort of normalcy so that they can experience those deep connections once again. When asked their favorite thing about church, one youth commented, “I love singing in worship during the 10:30 service and I love watching my little sister sing.”

Fantastic Facilities

Blessed by the resources of spacious facilities, including indoor and outdoor chapels, and ample parking, UDLC can celebrate what many churches long for: capacity for more. With a large sanctuary, classrooms for Sunday school and nursery, and multiple areas for gathering, there is an abundance of space for just about any need. There is no question that UDLC’s facilities point to the desire that this community wants to welcome and make space for all people as they grow in faith and life.

Aiming for Sustainability

Because of UDLC’s recent churchwide visioning and strategic planning and its desire to thrive into the future, the congregation is working on its plan and taking the necessary steps to build a family ministry that is set up for long-term health. From long-term staff members to its most recent hire, UDLC’s employees desire to see the years of service given to the children and youth ministry translate into an updated version of a thriving and sustainable family ministry. The adaptability and willingness of the staff to do what needs to be done to make this work will serve as a strong foundation that can be built upon by a renovation team, moving efforts forward with a clear strategy and effective planning.

Reconciling in Christ

UDLC’s recent evolution to an official Reconciling in Christ congregation of the ELCA is something to celebrate! Inclusive and welcoming were on the lips of almost all listening group participants when asked to describe their church. One person said, “The top question we’ve been getting from potential members is ‘Are you an inclusive community?’” Parishioners spoke of the importance of inclusion to emerging generations.

Desire for Connection

If there was one thing that bridged the various generations represented in listening groups, it was the desire for relationships. Youth, parents, and volunteers all seemed to be seeking connection—some desiring it for themselves while others longed for young families to experience the kind of life-giving and life-long friendships they’ve been able to nurture during their decades-long connection to UDLC. Families of both children and youth expressed a strong desire for connection through fellowship activities and “living life together.” One parent said, “I want the children to form relationships in catechesis that will last through high school.”

Potential to Plug-In

UDLC participates in a variety of local and national service projects and mission opportunities. This seems to be an untapped resource, ready and waiting for an intentional plan that connects



children, youth, and families who are hungry for opportunities to engage in service. One person said, “OHAAT and Chosen 300 are always looking for people to help. They always need people!” During a conversation about the Confirmation process, several parents engaged in a conversation about what it might look like to add a service component. One parent excitedly commented, “What if they did something like a mitzvah project- some kind of passion project and they could interweave their faith into that?! It could be a great rite of passage as they’re going through this faith journey.”

Nursery School

UDLC is fortunate to house Upper Dublin Christian Nursery School (UDCNS) within their building. The school brings vitality to day-to-day life in the building and the relationship between UDLC and UDCNS is strong. Participants commented on how families from the church have been recruited from the nursery and vice versa and described the relationship between nursery staff and church staff as “harmonious.” The addition of the new playground is great example of church growth that equally benefits the nursery school.



Challenges

Obstacles to moving the children's and youth ministry strategically forward.

Sunday Morning Experience

Multiple participants, including parents of children/youth of different ages/stages, stated that the current Sunday morning structure is not supporting their family's needs. There is confusion about what is happening when, why the current Sunday morning structure is now in place (i.e. is this a result of surveying the families or is this a solution for the shortage of volunteers?), and why are children and adult programs not occurring at the same time. Almost every parent who participated in a listening group had something to offer about the challenges of the Sunday morning experience.

- "My child says, 'I don't know these kids.' I don't know how you make it a social activity so that they come here thinking, 'Where I'm going is fun!'"
- "I can't engage in church as an adult without trying to watch my kids the whole time. The kids like to be in Sunday school and we like to not be distracted. You're still always looking down at your kids."
- "We watch at home because I get way more out of the service by sitting on the couch while the kids are playing."
- "There's no staff for the nursery during worship. I've been sitting in there by myself with my younger child while our older one is in Sunday school. That makes it a hard sell to attend services in person. Do we sit here so they can go to Sunday school or do we just watch it all from home?"
- "My kids want to be in service but there should also be other options for those kids. They've all been so isolated during the pandemic. It's the same for the parents that have been dealing with that for the last three years. We are craving connection."
- "I feel like I'm missing out."
- "I can't take my kids to Sunday school and then wait another hour."
- "We can't give two to two and a half hours on a Sunday but we can't get anything out of the service when our kids are with us."
- "In the summer there's nothing for Sunday school."
- "I'm concerned about the timing of Sunday school this year. The reason I started attending UDLC is that we were looking for a church where Sunday school was at the same time as the service."
- "The reason my family originally came to this church was that we could drop our kids off and go to service. We were all happiest that way."



Missing Ministry to the Whole Family

While there is acknowledgment in the congregation that parents are essential in the faith formation of their children, there is a lack of programming to equip them in this work and to support their own faith formation. Additionally, adult participation becomes prohibitive because of the lack of childcare available for younger children at all church events. While regular Sunday morning nursery care has been halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic, on the rare occasion that childcare is scheduled, it is disorganized, last-minute, and as a result, falls through.

Young Children

- “We just saw a prime example tonight. He left because the promised childcare fell through. He’s got really little ones so they’ll not sit at a table and color for an hour like the older kids.”
- “My daughter was 3 when I came. I’ve since had another child and have been pretty consistently concerned about the lack of programming for children under 3. There’s not much in the way of support for parents of young children.”
- “The nursery is not staffed, not offered for all church events, and there’s a complete lack of communication regarding childcare.”
- “The adult forum has no concurrent programming offered for children birth through three years.”
- “Congregational meetings never have childcare offered!”
- “Book clubs that I enjoyed offered childcare and I got the sense that they were often underutilized because people weren’t aware it was available. Sometimes when childcare is offered and not taken advantage of, they don’t offer it again.”
- “Lydia’s group had no child care available so I couldn’t participate.”

Parents & Caregivers

Parents continually expressed their desire to connect with one another and engage in their own formation opportunities that are provided at times that work for their busy lives. Parents had the following things to say:

- “They don’t have any couples or adult bible studies during the week and it would be really nice to have that in the evening hours so that my husband and I could come.”
- “I would love a format that might be someone facilitating activities for the younger kids but also time for the parents to come together and chat.”
- “There’s a women’s bible study and men’s bible study but it’s in the mornings during the week. Most of us work so we can’t participate.”

UDLC’s staff also had much to say about the options available for parents:

- “Supporting parents is a big part of this whole process. What are ways that we can support parents and their faith and not just think they’re picking it up from their kids? Parents are on a faith journey for their own selves. We’ve seen a lot of people who do everything for their kids and then they leave and are like “what are we doing?”
- “We know what’s happening in the congregation, communities, the wider church, and society at large. We’re working hard on becoming more welcoming, more inclusive, and



meeting people where they are. What we know is that they're exhausted and the model of the church has always been how to get people to come to a thing *AT* the church building. It's not that way anymore. That's still a bridge we're missing."

- "I'd like to see us connect more pieces like what's helping in Sunday school? How do we connect that with the adult formation?"
- "We are at a critical point with everything we offer and provide. It's a great time for a facelift with many of our programs. We are aging, and not very diverse. The core of our growth will be families."

Communication & Marketing

Internal Communication: There is much happening at UDLC; however, many indicated they would like to see better communication about what's taking place. In multiple focus groups, there was confusion and lack of understanding about communication methods for children and youth ministries and a lack of clarity about where to find information when seeking it. In addition to the weekly church email, there are ministry-specific emails being sent including a quarterly children's ministry newsletter available via email and in print, an as-needed, periodic youth email, and a weekly children's music email. When referencing youth ministry in the past few years, one parent said, "I think there was a willingness on the part of the leadership to make things work but there wasn't enough communication. Communication is key."

When talking about the continual change in procedures necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, one parent said, "There's not transparency of what the protocol is. The church sends out communication that they want people to hear and not what is really going on." Another person added, "There's a lot of last-minute communication. With kids' stuff, it's hard to make a last-minute decision to do something because we are already committed to other activities." Another parent agreed adding, "I think having a consistent schedule so that we can plan around it would work the best. Whatever the schedule is moving forward the more advanced notice the better."

Regarding volunteer recruitment and member engagement, another person commented that the communication is too impersonal saying, "If you're trying to recruit people, making an announcement doesn't work."

Internal Marketing: Telling the story of the good things happening in the family ministry is essential. Parishioners should be continually made aware of the transformation that occurs during the faith formation of young people. Celebrations of relationships, events, service, and "God moments" seem to be missing from the story that UDLC is telling its people. Some parents mentioned not knowing what opportunities were available for themselves and their children. One person commented, "Council has talked in the past about having something on rally day where all the ministries participated in a ministry fair. Rally day is usually an outdoor service and everyone is there. We should have tables set up for all the different ministries to have information available! Or we could do something like a fast-fire so people know what's available for them." A plan for planting the good seeds of gossip about the family ministry so that the story spreads through the body is absent. A volunteer said, "I think it would be lovely if lay people



were encouraged to share their faith story or their involvement in something. A more regular fixture of worship where someone gets up. 'A God moment.'"

External Marketing: When asked about an intentional plan for marketing UDLC's family ministry to the community, most people were unaware if a plan existed. When specifically questioned about the recent move to become a reconciling congregation and how the community would know that, most participants agreed that it would be exclusively based on word of mouth. While personal invitations and elevator speeches are wonderful ways to share UDLC's "brand," an intentional plan for sharing UDLC's identity and impact in the community is missing.

Onboarding Visitors

With great pride, most everyone described their church as a "welcoming" place and "open and affirming." So much emphasis is placed on being welcoming, and yet, when asked how visiting children/youth and their families are welcomed into the life of the church, the message is muddled. Without realizing it, the church is not taking its fair share of responsibility for providing clear entry points to engage families in the church. One participant said, "If someone new comes in, there's no good way to direct them. There are no greeters. There's a coffee hour and adult forum but those are intimidating if you're new." A Sunday school teacher added to the conversation, "I had a parent this year with the two kids that would bring her kids to Sunday school. She said, 'Well, what can I do during this time?' [Visitors] don't like to be thrown into a room of people that they don't know."

Digital???

In an effort to go digital, UDLC has not fully thought out what might be lost in the process. There are missing items on the website that might have previously been captured in the bulletin. Individual ministries have not been resourced to follow the church's lead. In some areas of the building, television screens are used as a communication tool and in other parts, the stories of effective and vibrant ministries are told using dated bulletin boards and photos that are easily overlooked and/or seem out of place.

Additionally, technology is not being effectively used in the family ministry. There is not a platform used for group texting to communicate with youth and for the youth to be in relationship with each other. The use of social media is ineffective for a younger demographic and there is a lack of student involvement in the conceptualization and creation of their own digital church experience. One long-time member said, "It's a different generation with technology. There are a lot of kids that come here but don't go to school together. If there was a way for them to stay connected. Group text or something."

Lack of Alignment

UDLC's council has made great strides with its recent strategic planning and visioning. That said, several listening group participants expressed they did not feel like these changes have been adequately communicated. As one committee member put it, "I think the council makes a lot of the decisions that we don't know anything about. There's no effective communication from the leadership of our church to the parishioners." Another put it this way: "Two years ago a lot of



changes were made by the council. Communication of those changes was not good. They weren't communicated; they were dictated." There is some discontent around the lack of collaboration and communication surrounding recent changes that have resulted in some parishioners feeling left in the dark.

Lack of Critical Mass

It's no shock that kids want to hang out with other kids. They go where the masses are. UDLC is experiencing a lack of critical mass in middle school and high school ministries. Because of this, ages are offered to combine so that they may participate (e.g. Sunday School, music ensemble). However, youth and parents alike agree that the span in age from sixth to 12th grade is too great for regular programming and is more appropriate for more occasional opportunities for fun and fellowship. Without events geared toward the small number of middle schoolers (who are participating in UDLC youth ministry and Confirmation process) and their friends, there is basically nothing to offer this age group. As one parent put it, "My kid doesn't usually want to be involved in any youth event because it doesn't excite them so I try really hard to get them to come and, inevitably, we show up and no one else is there that night. It's so defeating."

We're Losing Control

There are several very important processes, policies, and documents that are missing from the children and youth ministry at UDLC. Family ministries struggle to grow when an adequate framework has not been provided to support that growth, leading groups to feel like they are flying by the seat of their pants. The following items and systems are currently missing:

- **Children and Youth Ministry Manuals** – The budgets, game plans, calendars, job descriptions, and curriculum plans may be in existence, but the information is not centrally located for easy access. Keeping these basic items together can help save some future headaches.
- **Results-Based Volunteer Ministry Job Descriptions** – Everyone working within the ministry needs direction that is clear, current, and concise.
- **Staff Job Description Clarity** - Church leadership, staff, clergy, and families are all in alignment regarding their assumptions and understanding of UDLC's potential new family ministry staff hire.
- **Calendar of Events** – Parents of children and youth and youth themselves need to know what is coming 6 to 12 months in advance. This system is not consistent across the board and families are forced to try and fit family ministry activities into their busy schedules with very little notice.
- **Preventative Maintenance Calendars** – Ensures that we are not simply reacting to the most urgent demands but are also building a rhythm into the work we are called to do together.
- **Comprehensive Christian Formation Plan** – The comprehensive plan for Christian Formation, planning for what UDLC wants children, youth, and their families to know, feel, and do as a result of their connection to UDLC's family ministry, including milestones and special events, is missing.
- **Attendance Tracking** – Roster-based attendance at family ministry activities is not



being tracked across all ministry areas. Leaders have a vague estimate of how many kids are attending but cannot verify which ones have been coming from one week to the next. This makes it difficult to follow up with missing children. It also creates some easily avoided liability.

- **MIA and Guest Assimilation Process** – In addition to keeping track of attendance, there are no formal systems in place that include following up with children and families who seem to be missing in action or, even the opposite – to effectively welcome and assimilate guests and their families!
- **Major Event Notebooks** – Hallmark events that are deeply rooted in the DNA of the ministry have no gathered, accessible portal of information that supports the planning and execution of the event. The lack of such accessible information has made events more time-consuming than necessary to repeat and more difficult to pass on or apprentice other leaders.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time for 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 ministries, target December 2023 as the date when the ministry renovations will be complete.
- 2) Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
- 3) Present this report to the church council, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the children's and youth ministries.
- 4) Establish a Family Ministry Renovation Team, made up of four to five volunteers. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation Team ensures that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved.
- 5) Ministry Architects has been hired to be responsible for the following items:
 - **An onsite assessment** of the children, youth, and family ministry, identifying assets, challenges, and recommendations, resulting in an 18-month timeline
 - **A virtual Quick Start**, immediately following the assessment, to launch the newly formed Renovation Team into their new role, identify the pressure points that need to be addressed first, and begin addressing the pressure points
 - **Implementation support and creation of a family ministry structure** that provides resources, support, and programming to families as they practice their faith and navigate parenting
 - **An onsite Program Design Summit** to name the direction of the ministry and create the weekly, monthly, and annual rhythm of the family ministry
 - **Chairing the Renovation Team** for nine months, which includes ongoing coaching for the Renovation Team and transition assistance to a ministry team model upon completion of the contract
 - **Coaching the Renovation Team chair** for three months to assist in the transition of leadership and continuation of the team's momentum as leadership shifts
 - **An end-of-contract survey** of families, volunteers, and staff to assess the current challenges moving forward and to create a new 12-month timeline
 - **A virtual recalibration visit** at the end of the contract to celebrate the work that has been accomplished and develop a plan going forward
 - **6 months of combined executive coaching**, initially for UDLC's interim family ministry staff person and then for UDLC's children, youth, and family ministry staff upon hire, focusing on onboarding to UDLC's family ministry processes and sustainability in the transition.



1. Address the current pressure points facing the children's and youth ministries.

Pressure Point #1: Shore Up Communication

Summary: Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, children, youth, and volunteer leaders, utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the children's and youth pages of the church's website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.

- Based on the needs of the ministry and in consultation with the digital communications specialist, revise, edit, or create a communication plan for the family ministry
- Create and implement a process using Breeze to ensure that all of the contact information for children, youth, and their families is current and accurate
- Create and implement a process for informing families of the two or three places they can go to find out any answer they may be seeking (I.e., information is always current on the website, family ministry Facebook page, and in the calendar of events posted on Linktree, etc.)
- Revisit the communication plan monthly, by making monthly, personal contact with five randomized families to ensure consistent communication with the appropriate constituents

Pressure Point #2: Create a Plan for Sunday That Best Serves Families

Summary: The Sunday morning schedule is not working for most of UDLC's young families. Although there will never be a one-size-fits-all approach to scheduling Sunday morning worship, formation, and fellowship opportunities, families appreciate participating in the planning process, creating a schedule that best serves the other demands upon their day, allowing them to prioritize church. In cooperation with current families, keeping in mind the target audience of new families, create a rhythm for Sunday mornings, conducive to these particular needs.

- In cooperation with two or three parents, create a survey that asks the questions that need to be answered regarding the participation of young families in the Sunday morning worship and formation experience
- Survey families of children and youth who are currently enrolled in the ministries of the church in person, via personal phone call, and by electronic survey
- Utilizing the information gathered, engage in a Program Design Summit with Ministry Architects that includes the outcome of a plan for the Sunday morning experience

Pressure Point #3: Create a Plan for Staff Transition

Summary: Considering the planned retirement of the current director of children and family faith formation, create an intentional process for a sustainable transition, ensuring that their decades-long commitment and infrastructure development is shored up, creating room for the next iteration of ministry with UDLC's families.



2. Build the long-term infrastructure required for long-term, sustainable children's and youth ministries including the following tasks:

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:

- **Host a “Quick Start” Summit:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and youth/children's staff to participate in a Quick Start Summit in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The Summit tackles the items that need to be done first and builds momentum for the youth and children's ministries renovation process.
 - Orient the Renovation Team to their specific responsibilities.
 - Assign Renovation Team members responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report.
 - Calendar the dates involving the Renovation Team.
 - Create a plan for communication between the Renovation Team and staff to ensure that all parties feel they're “in the know.”
 - Draft the following documents, finalizing them within no more than two weeks after the Summit:
 - A finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events through December 2022.
 - Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth and children's ministry events and weekly programs through August 2022 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- **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:** Ensure that copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained, an application and screening process for every volunteer is in place, and 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 continued, collecting the most recent information for families, youth, and children. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on First-Time Guest 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.
- **Schedule:** Tweak the weekly schedule for corporate youth and children's group activities. There is a desire for families to be in church together without sacrificing Sunday school. There is also a desire for Tuesday night programming to come alongside the rest of the church.
- **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.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth and children's ministries in the fall of 2023. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.

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.
- **Build the Team:** Recruit, equip, and empower a group of volunteers to participate in UDLC's inaugural family ministry team. Create job descriptions so that each team member is aware of their purpose, function, and responsibilities on the team as well as the duration of their term. Consider a group of 5-7 people including representatives from the RIC team, adult education, children's ministry, youth ministry, a 6-12th grade student with the understanding that there will be specific attention focused to the individual components (i.e., children, youth, parents, specific programming or events) as well as bigger picture program execution.



- **Volunteer Accelerator:** Continue the work of designing and implementing a customized Discovery Tool powered by the Ministry Architects Volunteer Accelerator which will help match the specific volunteer opportunities at UDLC with each person's skills, passions, and talents. Develop an ongoing utilization plan that builds the tool into the regular rhythms of the church.
- **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.
- **Create the Director's Job:** Shift from the model of a mid-size church – where a full-time youth or children's director is the superhero who makes everything happen – to a large church model where the director equips others for doing the ministry, too. The director becomes an architect and general contractor, nurturing the staff and the volunteers for ministry.

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:

- **Parent Support:** Sponsor and execute an encouraging parent support event and create mechanisms for engaging the majority of parents in the children's ministry in some way.
- **Build the Family Ministry:** Create a family ministry that equips families to practice faith at home, provides programming and resources for parents, and views the whole family as the target audience of its ministry. This initiative will start with parent focus groups to determine specific needs of parents at UDLC.
- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth and children's ministry events and weekly programs through December 2023 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 and offerings for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **Share the Good News!:** Now that UDLC is officially a reconciling church, in consultation with UDLC's digital communications specialist, create a game plan for connecting with families in the community that includes weekly, monthly, and annual rhythms.
- **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:** Develop a process 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.
- **Cradle Roll Process:** Capture in writing the process that is currently being used to connect with families who have welcomed children into their families and consider how it could translate to use for families in the nursery school so that UDLC is celebrating their life transitions the same way as people who are connected to the church in other ways
- **Facilities:** Explore the possibilities for a renovation or redesign of the children's and youth ministry spaces to better serve the families of the church as well as common spaces in UDLC's building to understand what they communicate about the importance of children and youth. Take this opportunity to visit other churches, schools, and community gathering spaces to borrow from their best practices. Propose options for the above to the church leadership for revision or approval.
- **Building Bridges:** Develop a game plan for building bridges between the nursery school and the children's ministry.
- **Confirmation:** Develop a Confirmation plan with the assistance of the clergy and input from a key group of leaders (i.e., Connor, an educator, and a systems thinker.) 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.
 - Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them in the life of the church.
- **Family Ministry:** Plan a few family events throughout the year focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship as well as events designed specifically for parents to address felt needs and current parenting issues.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that includes moments like:
 - **First Steps Milestone**
 - Purpose: introduces the congregation to a few of the youngest members and makes both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminds both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
 - **Anniversary of Baptism**
 - Purpose: Reminds those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It is an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.

- **Prayer Milestone**
 - Purpose: To encourage the congregation to keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children learn they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.
- **Kindergarten children invited to Children's Church**
 - Purpose: To invite younger children into the special worship experience of elementary age children.
- **First Holy Communion**
 - Purpose: To celebrate the decision and moment in a child's life when they symbolize their connection to the larger church as it existed in the past and will in the present.
- **Bibles to 8-year olds**
 - Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.
- **Acolyte Invitation to 5th graders**
 - Purpose: To recognize leadership abilities of children in worship.
- **5th graders moving into the middle school ministry**
 - Purpose: To welcome the rising 6th graders into the middle school ministry.
- **Blessing of the Backpacks**
 - Purpose: To mark the passage of summer and to help children and adults transition back into the fall schedule, reminding the children that Jesus is always with us.
- **Key Middle/High School Transitions**
 - Welcome and connect the new seventh graders and their parents into the youth ministry.
 - Welcome and connect the new ninth graders and their parents into the high school ministry.
 - 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.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

The following provides UDLC with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term children's and youth ministries.

August 2022

Search Outcomes:

- Initial work has begun on assembling the job description for UDLC's director of family ministry.
- The search team for UDLC's director of family ministry has been assembled and roles have been assigned.
- A transition plan has been implemented for the director of children and family faith formation with the input from the personnel team, [utilizing agreed upon information-gathering, transition questions.](#)

Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the council of the church for the strategic renovation of the children's and youth ministries and the council of the church has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for August.
- The Renovation Team for children's and youth ministries has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the August Quick Start Summit.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the children's and youth ministries. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline.
- In cooperation with two or three parents, a survey that asks the questions that need to be answered regarding the participation of young families in the Sunday morning worship and formation experience has been created
- A few family events have been calendared for the upcoming year. They have focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.
- A program design summit has been calendared for September that will tweak the weekly schedule for corporate children's and youth group activities as well as focus on a practical and helpful ministry to parents.

September 2022

Search Outcomes:

- The job description for UDLC's director of family ministry has been finalized.
- Promotions have begun for UDLC's director of family ministry, including video, photo, and text content.
- The transition plan for the director of children and family faith formation is in process and being tracked by the personnel team.



- The [template for major event notebooks](#) is being used to ensure sustainability of all children and family programming

Outcomes:

- A Quick Start Summit has taken place in which the renovation process has been launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed. The Summit tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the family ministry's renovation process including these:
 - Orient the Renovation Team to their specific responsibilities.
 - Assign Renovation Team members responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report.
 - Calendar the dates involving the Renovation Team.
 - Create a plan for communication between the Renovation Team and staff to ensure that all parties feel they're "in the know."
 - Draft the following documents, finalizing them within no more than two weeks after the Summit:
 - A finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events through December 2022.
 - Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth and children's ministry events and weekly programs through August 2022 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written and distributed to the appropriate volunteers for the children's and youth ministries.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The safe place policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- The 2022-2023 children's and youth ministries calendar has been finalized.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed children, youth, and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants feel energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.
- Utilizing the survey created in August, families of children and youth who are currently enrolled in the ministries of the church have been surveyed in person, via personal phone call, and by electronic survey.
- *A program design summit focused on creating the structure for the family ministry including Sunday morning programming, mid-week offerings, mission opportunities, special events, confirmation, and ministry to parents has been calendared for October and key stakeholders have been invited.
- Assemble the survey information gathered prior to the Program Design Summit so that the contents can inform the direction of program planning

- *A program design summit focused on creating the structure for the family ministry including Sunday morning programming, mid-week offerings, mission opportunities, special events, confirmation, and ministry to parents has occurred and program implementation benchmarks have been added to the timeline.

October 2022

Search & Transition Outcomes:

- The job description for UDLC's director of family ministry has been posted.
- Promotions have continued for UDLC's director of family ministry, including video, photo, and text content.
- Vetting has begun for candidates.
- All plans for transition of the director of children and family faith formation are on target for November completion.
- The [template for major event notebooks](#) was used to ensure sustainability of all children and family programming, and all notebooks have been completed.
- The overall budget for children and family faith formation has been completed and work has begun on each ministry programming offering budget.

Outcomes:

- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all children's and youth ministries programs has been created and implemented. A program design summit has been calendared for October and key stakeholders have been invited.
- A detailed 2023 budget for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2023 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and calendared for the children's and youth ministries staff.
- Based on the needs of the ministry and in consultation with the digital communications specialist, a communication plan for the family ministry has been revised, edited, or created.
- A process has been created, ensuring that all the contact information for children, youth, and their families is current and accurate
- Work has begun on the job description for the new director of family ministry with the understanding that the church will shift from the model of a mid-size church – where a full-time youth or children's director is the superhero who makes everything happen – to a large church model where the director equips others for doing the ministry, too. The director becomes an architect and general contractor, nurturing the staff and the volunteers for ministry.



- A group of volunteers have been recruited, equipped, and empowered to participate in UDLC's inaugural family ministry team. Job descriptions so that each team member is aware of their purpose, function, and responsibilities on the team as well as the duration of their term have been created and passed along. A group of 5-7 people including representatives from the RIC team, adult education, children's ministry, youth ministry, a 6-12th grade student with the understanding that there will be specific attention focused to the individual components (i.e., children, youth, parents, specific programming or events) as well as bigger picture program execution.
- Now that UDLC is officially a reconciling church, in consultation with UDLC's digital communications specialist with special attention paid to the upcoming holiday season, create a game plan for connecting with families in the community that includes weekly, monthly, and annual rhythms.

November 2022

Search & Transition Outcomes:

- Promotions have continued for UDLC's director of family ministry, including video, photo, and text content.
- Vetting has continued for candidates.
- A short list meeting has occurred with UDLC's search team.
- In-person interviews have been conducted with candidates on the short list.
- All plans for transition have been completed for the director of children and family faith formation.
- The budget for each ministry offering withing children and family faith formation has been completed.

Outcomes:

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- Three or four people who are not connected to any religious institution have been recruited to explore UDLC's website as if they were looking for a church to join and give feedback on its content and useability
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices are being implemented.
- Work on the children's and youth database has begun, collecting the most recent information for families, youth, and children. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families, youth, and children. Children and youth have been identified with appropriate tags so that targeted communication for one-time visitors to long-time members is streamlined and effective.
- Create and implement a process for informing families of the two or three places they can go to find out any answer they may be seeking (i.e., information is always current on



the website, family ministry Facebook page, and in the calendar of events posted on Linktree, etc.)

- Capture in writing the process that is currently being used to connect with families who have welcomed children into their families and consider how it could translate to use for families in the nursery school so that UDLC is celebrating their life transitions the same way as people who are connected to the church in other ways
- Upon the assembly of UDLC's family ministry team, notify council of its make up so that they are aware of who is in ministry leadership
- Now that UDLC is officially a reconciling church, in consultation with UDLC's digital communications specialist, create a game plan for the connecting with families in the community that includes weekly, monthly, and annual rhythms.

December 2022

Search & Transition Outcomes:

- Promotions have continued for UDLC's director of family ministry, including video, photo, and text content.
- Vetting has continued for candidates.
- Short list meetings have continued with UDLC's search team.
- In-person interviews have continued with candidates on the short list.
- An offer has been extended to UDLC's top candidate.
- An exit interview has occurred with the director children and family faith formation using agreed upon [exit interview guidelines](#) and [exit interview agenda](#).

Outcomes:

- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe space policy.
- Copyright licensing for music and videos has been obtained. Permission slips for each offsite event in addition to standard medical release forms for the entire year have been created.
- The director of digital communications has calendared a monthly "how are we doing?" personal check-in with five randomized families to ensure consistent communication with the appropriate constituents
- All programs have adhered to the safe space policy as laid out by the church.
- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2023.



- An encouraging parent support and equipping event has been calendared for February and has engaged the majority of parents in the youth and children’s ministries in some way.
- Feedback has been gathered regarding the accessibility of UDLC’s website to someone not already connected to a faith community and necessary changes have been documented and the work required to complete the changes has been scheduled for January through February, 2023.

January 2023

Search Outcomes:

- An offer has been extended to UDLC’s top candidate.
- UDLC has implemented an onboarding plan for the new hire.
- UDLC has announced the new hire.
- Plans are in place for a January 2023 start date for UDLC’s director of family ministry.

Outcomes:

- A database of all children, youth, and their families has been compiled and each person is “tagged” with a category.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers received support and training in their specific roles. A “check-in” with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- The summer 2023 calendar for the children’s and youth ministries has been completed and distributed.
- Work has begun on the 2023-2024 children’s and youth ministries calendar.
- Building on the desire of youth, children, and parents to make a difference in the world and their community, a calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as, regional, and possibly international missions has been well publicized. Current mission trips have been evaluated for their effectiveness.

February 2023

Outcomes:

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments necessary to improve the work being done.
- Volunteer recruiting season has opened.
 - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
 - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
 - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2023-2024 school year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.



- Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the children's and youth ministries.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2023-2024.
- The 2023-2024 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2024 including a Fall Kick-off.
- An encouraging parent support event has engaged the majority of parents in the youth and children's ministries in some way.

March 2023

Outcomes:

- MIA children and youth have been systematically contacted.
- Communication methods currently being used to promote the children's and youth ministries and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each children's event.
- A process has been implemented to ensure 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
- A game plan for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed has been implemented. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- Possibilities for a renovation or redesign of the children's and youth ministry spaces to better serve the families of the church as well as common spaces in UDLC's building to understand what they communicate about the importance of children and youth have been explored. Plans have been made to visit other churches, schools, and community gathering spaces to borrow from their best practices.

April 2023

Outcomes:

- A volunteer thank-you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all children's and youth volunteers.
- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the children's and youth ministries that will help regularly deal with on-going "behind the scenes" ministry maintenance.



- The collection of updated information from each child, youth, and family has been completed and the database for children's and youth ministries has been updated with that new information.
- A process has been implemented to ensure 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
- As a result of the facilities assessment, options have been presented to the church leadership for revision or approval.

May 2023

Outcomes:

- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's and youth ministries.
- A Confirmation plan has been developed with the assistance of the clergy and input from a key group of leaders. The plan included the duration of the program, what age it is to take place, and what will be taught.
- A game plan for building bridges between the nursery school and the children's ministry have been built.

June 2023

Outcomes:

- All game plans that have been launched in the last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- The effectiveness of this past year's curriculum has been reviewed and decisions have been made for any necessary changes for the upcoming school year.
- A volunteer thank-you event has occurred.
- A game plan has been written and implementation has begun to
 - Keep youth involved in the youth programs after Confirmation.
 - Engage MIA youth who have gotten their drivers' license.
 - Intentionally reach out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them in the life of the church.
- A plan for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges has been launched that includes items like the following examples:
 - **First Steps Milestone:** Has introduced the congregation to a few of our youngest members and made both children and parents more comfortable with



- Sunday school. It reminded both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
- **Anniversary of Baptism:** Has reminded those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It was an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.
 - **Prayer Milestone:** Has been a way a congregation can keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children have learned they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.
 - **Kindergarten children invited to Children’s Church:** Has invited younger children into the special worship experience of elementary age children.
 - **Bibles to 8-year olds:** Has invited children into the community’s practice of reading scripture together.
 - **Acolyte Invitation to older elementary children:** Has recognized leadership abilities of children in worship.
 - **5th graders moving into the middle school ministry:** Has welcomed the rising 6th graders into the Jr. High ministry.
 - **Blessing of the Backpacks:** Has marked the passage of summer and helped children transition back into the fall schedule and has served as a reminder that Jesus is always with us.
 - **Welcome and connect the new seventh graders** and their parents into the youth ministry.
 - **Welcome and connect the new ninth graders** and their parents into the high school ministry.
 - **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.

July 2023

Outcomes:

- The Family Ministry Manuals (both hard copy and digital) have been completed, including
 - Visioning documents
 - Directories
 - Volunteer directory
 - Volunteer training agendas and notes
 - Attendance records
 - Annual calendar
 - Results-based job descriptions
 - Game plans and new initiatives
 - Meeting agendas and minutes for Children’s and youth ministries Committee/Renovation Team.



- Christian Formation Plan and record of curriculum resources used for the current year
- Budget and other financial documents
- Recruiting template, with a record of all the volunteer needs for the year
- Compliance documents

August 2023

Outcomes:

- A review of the renovation process has been completed.
- An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the children's and youth ministries.
- Current pressure points have been named.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.
- Major event notebooks for each major event for the children's and youth ministries have been handed out to this year's event coordinators.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours that clarified their roles, inspired them to grow in their own faith and equipped them to serve. The Safe Sanctuaries policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.

September 2023

Outcomes:

- All children's and youth programs have adhered to the safe space policy.
- With the most recent information on children, youth, and their families, a directory of all families and a directory of all volunteers have been created to be distributed at the Fall Kick-off.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place that welcomed children, youth, and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants feel energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.

October 2023

Outcomes:

- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.



- With the changes in the children's and youth ministries, the volunteer staffing to meet the size and scope of the children's and youth ministries has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.
- A detailed 2024 budget for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.

November 2023

Outcomes:

- All game plans that have been launched in the last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe space policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.

December 2023

Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through December 2024 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- Work has begun on the 2024 summer calendar.

January 2024

Outcomes:

- A timeline for the next 12 months has been created that included game plans for the current pressure points and items from the online diagnostic.
- Game plans have been put in place to sustain the processes and procedures during the renovation
- Ongoing coaching has been secured and a sustainability plan has been put in place.
- The staff and Renovation Team have celebrated what God has done with their 18-month investment.
- The Renovation Team has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the family ministry volunteers and focusing on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- The summer 2023 calendar for the family ministry has been completed and distributed.



- Work has begun on the 2023-2024 children's and youth ministries calendar.



The *Ministry Architects* Team Serving Upper Dublin Lutheran Church (Ambler, PA)



Monica Lewis – Lead Consultant

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Monica has served in a variety of roles in different sized churches, worked alongside non-profits and institutions of higher education, and understands the unique opportunities each setting brings. She has a passion for setting up systems that help to equip people in making connections, fostering relationships, and strategically aligning an institution's mission priorities with its goals. Monica believes that organizations are always changing and with the correct structures in place, ministry will continue to flourish, and new possibilities emerge during moments of transition. Monica earned a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Master of Divinity degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Monica lives in the Kansas City area with her spouse, their two children (who are exceptionally brilliant and equally hilarious), and their dog, Princess Leia (who likes long walks, terrorizing rabbits, and cleaning up after meals).



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Hayley O'Connor is an ordained PC(USA) minister living in northern New Jersey. She has recently returned to the States after spending seven years as an Associate Minister in Edinburgh, Scotland. In addition to working with Ministry Architects, Hayley serves as the Associate Minister at First Presbyterian Church New Vernon. She is also a graduate of the Shalem Institute's Spiritual Guidance Program and has helped to organize and lead pilgrimages to Edinburgh, Iona, and Paris.



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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. In addition to his consulting work with Ministry Architects, Bryant serves as a project manager for Ministry Architects' partner institutions of higher education, non-profits, and grant projects. He 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.

