YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT
Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time
www.ministryarchitects.com

Clearbranch Church of Trussville, AL

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BACKGROUND

Clearbranch is a United Methodist church located in the Trussville area just outside of Birmingham, Alabama. It is a large contemporary church with a deep calling to reach out to its surrounding community and being the body of Christ for its area. Clearbranch’s evangelistic heart is evident in its emphasis on outreach and sharing the Word of God inside and outside it’s walls. Church members describe their church family as “warm,” “welcoming,” “inviting,” and “growing.”

Clearbranch is a relatively young church. It was founded in 1996 in the original pastor’s home. It began with an average attendance of 45 members in its first year and quickly morphed into one of the fastest growing churches in the area. Within three years the church had dedicated a 20,000 foot multipurpose space and had launched a second worship service to accommodate its quickly growing population. By 2003 over 1500
people were worshipping each week. The church experienced a decline but in the past few years the church has found its footing again and is currently in a growing season.

The membership of the church is around 2,100 and on an average week, 930 people attend the church’s 9:30 contemporary worship service, which is followed by a church wide life group time. The church has a pastoral staff, which consists of the Lead Pastor Vaughn Stafford who has been there since 2013, two Associate Pastors and an Executive Pastor.

Clearbranch Student Ministry has two primary meeting times; the Sunday morning life groups and a Wednesday night youth worship service. Currently, there are about 110 6th through 12th graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 60 of them participate in either Sunday morning life groups or the Wednesday night youth worship service. The student ministry also has three major events that mark their year. Inside Out is their annual winter retreat held at the church which includes Middle School participants and High School leaders. The group also annually attends a Big Stuff Summer camp and in the fall attracts hundreds of youth to Dodgeball, an outreach event sponsored by the student ministry. Some students and parents describe the student ministry as a “loving” and “welcoming” place, while others say it is an “unorganized” ministry.

The church has a 2016 budget of $1.6 million for the year. The youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of $79,300 including the program budget. This includes the salaries/benefits for the staff, consisting of a youth minister and part of the youth worship intern salary.

There are about 17 adult volunteers involved each week in one of the major youth programs. Others help out at special events or behind the scenes throughout the year.

The ministry is led by a youth minister who has been at the church since 2012 but only in his current role since September of 2015. There is also SALT (Student Adult Leadership Team) consisting of around 30 students and adults, which reports to the youth minister and meets monthly.

The youth facilities are housed in the original sanctuary of the church. When the church built its current worship center half of the original sanctuary was given to the youth and the other half to the children’s ministry. A large wall was fabricated to divide the two areas, creating two distinctly separate spaces.

Ministry Architects was contacted by the associate minister of the church to come into the church at the beginning of the new youth minister’s tenure to help address any issues and help the student ministry at Clearbranch UMC to achieve its full potential and create a ministry that will be alive and viable for many years.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the youth ministry and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward. Ministry Architects met with 52 individuals in 11 focus groups or one-on-one meetings. What follows are the findings gleaned from those conversations along with recommendations and a proposed timeline for the future.
YOUTH MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding youth ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” Youth ministries that “pay these rents” tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. Those youth ministries that fail to pay these rents often find themselves mired in distrust, second-guessing, and discouragement.

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 often the most immediate evaluation tools used by youth, parents, staff, and the congregation at large.

Rent #1: NUMBERS—A significant percentage of youth need to be participating visibly in some aspect of the church’s ministry. It is important for this target number to be clearly agreed on by the church leaders and the staff. Ironically, when target numbers are not established, the youth ministry is 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. While listening group participants expressed their excitement with the ministry program and the students who are attending, concern was raised that the ministry does not adequately represent a church this size.

Rent #2: PROGRAMS—In order to “earn the right” to experiment with changes, the youth leadership needs to provide the church with a few visible, effective youth programs that give both youth and parents “something to talk about.”

This rent appears to be not paid. While the two weekly programs that are in place are well received and well attended there is a strong desire among parents and youth for more. Again and again we heard that there was a desire to go deeper and to have more time to just be with each other.

Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM—The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the youth staff, volunteers, and the youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents.

The love, joy and excitement shared in the listening session, suggest that this rent is being paid on time. It was very clear when talking to the listening group participants that most people found relational depth, community and excitement in the youth ministry.

As the leadership of the youth ministry develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.” In this sense, the youth ministry faces parallel challenges.

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:
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 Worshiping Congregation**—In a typical church, the size of the youth ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 10% of the worshiping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 928 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 93 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 60 youth is below what could be expected from the ministry.

2) **$1,200 per Youth**—With a budget of approximately $79,300 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, Clearbranch has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 66 youth in some aspect of the church’s life. With 60 currently participating every week, the ministry is right on target for its current reach. However, it is not likely that the ministry will be able to do more to reach the 110 youth on its rolls without more of an investment.

3) **1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth**—Considering all the positions giving time to the youth ministry, including the youth minister and worship leader Clearbranch has the equivalent of a little over 1 full time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, Clearbranch has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 55 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration seems inadequate to sustain the 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 burn out.

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 17 weekly volunteers, Clearbranch is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 3.5 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 85 youth weekly. This ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for sustained growth in the future.
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 or organization that designs the building plan and ensures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.

- **The General Contractor:** A person or team who manages the flow and sequencing of work, manages the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of “laborers” is in place for each stage of the project.

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

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

- In many churches, there is no person or group playing the role of the architect. The ministry simply moves from one event to the next without a clear vision or stated outcomes.
- Sometimes paid staff are not given the time or training to do their important work as the “general contractor” of a complex ministry.
- The staff is often expected to serve in all three of these roles. This is a recipe for congregational dissatisfaction and staff burnout.

Some churches hire a laborer who is skilled at leading singing, playing games or teaching a Bible lesson. These laborers often mature into an architect or a general contractor, but only if they are given permission, time, and training.

**ASSETS**

**Strengths to protect in the current youth ministry**

**Committed and Deeply Relational Volunteers**

One of the strongest tenants of the student ministry at Clearbranch is its committed volunteer core. Student after student named the volunteers by name who poured into their lives. “My life group leader really does life with us, she knows everything that is going on with me.” Another student said, “This is a place where, when you bring a problem or issue you know people will care about you, they will listen and they will pray for you until it is over.” There is no doubt that the students love their leaders. Parents consistently noted and named volunteers who had poured into the lives of their children.
Great Space
The youth were given a tremendous gift in the large worship space the church provided upon the building of the new worship center. It is a large space that is incredibly versatile. While there is still a lot to do to make that space more intimate, comfortable and functional, the actual space is every youth ministers dream. One student said “there is so much room in here, we could really do a lot if we used it better.” A parent shared that “the space has incredible potential to be a great hang out place for the youth all through the week.” There is no question that the space, especially when fully utilized, will prove to be a significant asset in reaching students in and around the area that surrounds Clearbranch.

Discipleship Culture
Clearbranch has a deep culture of development and discipleship in its DNA. Throughout the listening sessions we heard phrases like “we want to continue to pour into him,” “she just needs time and development,” and “we are going to mentor them into what God is calling them into.” This language and culture that surrounds it is a huge asset for any church. It is an asset that has and will continue to bring the church into its God called future together, consistently strengthening itself as it moves forward. While this is language used in the student ministry it is indicative of a larger DNA fostered throughout Clearbranch.

Desire to Serve
Another strand of the DNA at Clearbranch is a deep desire to serve. From youth essentially begging for “more ways to reach out and help people” to parents telling us “I am always more than happy to do whatever the youth ministry needs, I just have to know what that is,” the culture of service in and beyond the walls of Clearbranch is strong. When students “complain” that they want more times and opportunities to go out and do good in the world you know you have a great problem on your hands.

Students Who Love Each Other
Many times in churches you will find a significant amount of “gradeism”, or infighting among a certain group of students. This is not the case at Clearbranch. There is such a sweet spirit among the students undergirded by a genuine care and concern for one another. One volunteer told us ‘the kids pray for each other constantly. If they see another student come down to the altar to pray they, no matter if they are friends or not, will jump up and surround them in prayer.” A youth told us that it does not matter what grade they are in “I know that everyone here is looking out for me and cares about me.” One mother even told us about her child being so surprised that an older student in the group went out of his way to speak to her in the hallway at school and how much that meant to her.

Relational Leadership
Most of the time we try to not list staff and leadership as assets of a church but in a case like Clearbranch we would be in trouble with almost everyone in the listening sessions if we did not! Almost every participant went out of their way to compliment and talk, in great detail, about how relational and inspirational the staff are in their lives. "Chase
does the best talks, I am so much closer to God after his talks.” Another Jr. High student was displeased when “we play games during the summer on Wednesday nights instead of doing worship and the talk, I feel a loss when we do not do that.” Volunteers told us that “the youth staff are so committed to the kids and being in good relationships with them.” High School students were quick to name specific Clearbranch pastors when asked which adults play a significant role in their lives. There was no question that the staff leadership play a big role in the daily lives of the students at Clearbranch.

Big Events
At Clearbranch there is no doubt among the parents and students how meaningful and impactful big events are to the life of the ministry. If there were any non-negotiables among the students, the big events were at the top of the list. Inside Out, Big Stuff and Dodgeball were explained as catalyst experiences that have and continued to shape those involved. One student shared, “You would think a big dodgeball tournament is just about fun but every year there are a lot of people who accept Christ during the talk time.” Another parent told us that they wish they “had known years ago all of the things about parenting they learned through the Big Stuff retreat.” Having just come off of the annual Inside Out retreat the youth were completely on fire about their faith and wanting to reach out to their community.

Desire for Depth
It is one thing for a few members of a youth group to ask for more and deeper small group Bible study but to hear it over and over again from students is pretty incredible. The big ideas were not about more games and fun trips but about wanting to learn more and grow deeper in their faith. “I want to go even deeper with my faith in God” and “I want to really dig into God’s word and grow closer to Him” were common sentiments among the youth of Clearbranch. It is important to note that this desire for more depth did not come from a lack of depth or vacuum of biblical learning; the desire seemed to grow stronger from the depth they were already being presented with.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

Leadership Training
It is abundantly clear that the volunteer leaders at Clearbranch are passionate and capable adults who care deeply about the youth of the church. It is just as clear that those volunteers want on-going training in order to better serve the youth. Said one volunteer, "I think a lot of the adults do not know what to do when the kids break rules, they do not know if they should step in or not." Another echoed, "We love the youth, but we don’t always know what we are supposed to do besides be in relationship with them." On-going leadership training opportunities are needed to provide confidence for the volunteers and excellent ministry for the youth.

Compliance Documents
There is some significant risk to doing ministry the way that it is currently being done at Clearbranch. The youth ministry must quickly and deliberately adopt the UMC Safe
Sanctuary training as an absolute non-negotiable for all staff and volunteers working with youth. Additionally, adult to student ratios, transportation policies, emergency plans, social media guidelines, and behavioral/discipline agreements must be established and implemented. One parent commented, “The lack of rules and structure at some youth events scares me.” Policies and procedures are necessary not only for the protection of the youth but also for the staff and volunteers working with them.

Lack of Foundational Basics
There are several very important systems and documents that are missing from the youth ministry at Clearbranch. Youth ministries struggle to grow when an adequate framework has not been provided to support that growth. One parent said, “We’ve got to have some structure behind the youth ministry to help it succeed.” The following items and systems are currently missing:

- **Youth Database** – The church-wide database is outdated and clunky and precludes a helpful youth database. Basic technology upgrades are needed to streamline the process.
- **Attendance Tracking** – Roster-based attendance is not currently being taken at youth ministry activities. Leaders know how many kids have been coming but cannot verify which youth have been coming from one week to the next. This makes it difficult to follow up with missing youth. It also creates some easily avoided liability.
- **Major Event Notebooks** – As volunteers are increasingly stepping into leadership roles for many of the youth events that take place each year, helpful information and data is not being gathered to enable new volunteers to continue to run and improve these events in the future.
- **Communication Plan** – While communication from the youth ministry has improved drastically in the past few months, there doesn’t seem to be a normative process for communicating about the various programs being offered. A comprehensive plan has not yet been developed to utilize all of the different types and styles of communication available to the youth ministry.
- **Youth Ministry Manual** – The budgets, calendars, and job descriptions for the youth ministry that do exist are all laying in different drawers, files, folders, and closets. This information is not centrally located for easy access.

Finding the Perfect Mix
There are mixed sentiments about how much time the middle school and high school youth should be together. On one hand, there is deep sense of mentorship and discipleship embraced by youth and adults alike. One older youth commented, “I love getting to see the transformation of sixth graders entering the youth ministry and becoming a real member of the group and thriving for God.” “I want our whole youth group [middle school and high school] to act as a family,” said another.

On the other hand, there is a need for both social and spiritual growth opportunities specialized enough to meet these very specific needs presented by the wide age range of ages in the youth ministry. An older youth stated, “We need our own time, middle schoolers are just in a different place.” Perhaps the best summary was one youth’s
suggestion: “There should be a few intentional times where we have the middle school and high school together and other intentional times when we are apart.”

Youth in Leadership
The Clearbranch youth group is filled with passionate youth who are ready to step into significant leadership roles within the ministry. One parent expressed the sentiments of many when she said, “My daughter has sensed a call into ministry and she’s ready to serve now.” Said one youth, “I don’t understand why the SALT team can’t run the Hungry Games. There’s no reason we couldn’t set that up!” Students were able to name multiple specific areas that they would like to help lead and were able to acknowledge that they will need support and training as they step into meaningful leadership roles within the ministry but lacked the system or process to step into leadership. With a clearer vision and some intentional restructuring of the SALT team, the core group of active youth the church is a willing and ready resource for the ministry.

Outward Focus
There is an across the board desire to do a better job reaching out to the community surrounding Clearbranch Church. One listening group member said, “We need to increase our presence at the local schools, to draw kids whose families don’t attend Clearbranch.” Another parent commented, “Our family is here because someone invited my son to come to a youth event and we are now all involved at Clearbranch. That’s how it happens so often but I don’t see many visitor anymore.” The ministry lacks a system for intentionally inviting and following up with guests who do attend youth programming and events.

A Place to Be and Play
We heard over and over that the youth of Clearbranch would like to spend more time together. They are not particularly interested in high dollar, highly structured programs but they long for an organic opportunity to be together. They would like to be with their friends and they would like it to be at church. Said one student, “I want to be bored on a Tuesday and be able to text a friend to come hang out at the church.”

While a designated area for the youth group is an incredible blessing, we heard the youth room described as “cold,” “sterile,” and “cavernous.” A few simple updates – area rugs, pictures of youth on the walls, or cheap couches – could warm up the space and help it reflect the welcoming, intimate character of the youth group itself.

Missions
Students at Clearbranch love to serve, either through opportunities like Inside/Out, serving at VBS or Mission Wednesdays during the summer. However, to many students and parents, it seems like these opportunities are too sporadic, too poorly planned and sometimes too poorly communicated to effectively engage more and more students.

Many participants asked for more accessible mission options both in the summer and throughout the year, saying things like:

• “Often we’re at a location ready to serve and there’s just not enough for us to do.”
• “I wish we had Mission Wednesdays all year long…maybe monthly Mission
Saturdays during the school year?”

- “I want to do more impactful things. We should find a run-down church and help it back to life.”
- “We want to serve. When you give us a service project we can use our energy for God.”

**Without a Vision the People Perish**

The current staff, volunteers, parents and youth are passionate about the youth ministry; they want to see marvelous things happen, and they are willing to work sacrificially to do so, but the ministry lacks a clearly stated mission and vision. In a listening group one participant asked, “What is the bar for success and what is the bar for failure?” Until there are clear goals with a strategic plan and accountability, the ambiguity and confusion will limit successes and potentially even breed frustration.

**Spiritual Formation Plan**

Though Sunday morning Life Groups and Wednesday night Worship are doing great work at speaking God’s Word into the lives of the youth at Clearbranch, a clear-cut spiritual overview is missing. Without an over-arching discipleship plan for what the church wants the youth to know, feel and do with their Christian faith, Clearbranch runs the great risk of a hit or miss approach to spiritual formation. A clearly expressed, well-known set of spiritual developmental milestones and an understanding of when the youth will reach those markers is a necessary addition to the youth ministry.

Not only is there a need for an intentional spiritual formation plan, there is a longing for more spiritual depth within the youth ministry. One parent commented, “My kids love Wednesday nights, but they want more. More teaching, more depth…more.” Almost every listening group included a comment about youths’ desires for more small group bible studies. Programs like Exodus, focused on a small group of students studying a particular thing, could be a fruitful addition to the regular Sunday morning and Wednesday programming already happening.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target July 2017 as the date for achieving sustainable structures for the youth ministry knowing that incremental successes will be seen throughout the renovation.

2) Establish a Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.

3) Present this report to Clearbranch Leadership, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the youth ministry.

4) Establish a Youth Ministry Renovation Team, made up of four to five volunteers who report regularly to the youth minister. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Renovation
Team focuses on the recommendations below. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:

I. Work with the youth ministry leadership to **address the immediate pressure points** facing the ministry as they transition toward sustainability.

II. Establish a consensus for the direction of the ministry and take responsibility for **implementing the strategic, long-term changes** recommended in this report.

5) Engage the services of Ministry Architects to take responsibility for:

- Working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report’s timeline,
- Assisting the youth ministry in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the youth ministry.

**RENOVATION TEAM TASK #1: Address the Pressure Points**

*(Accomplish these urgent tasks first to create a healthy climate conducive to change.)*

**Pressure Point #1: Build Up the Team** – Provide immediate and ongoing leadership training for current youth volunteers while recruiting and equipping new volunteers.

- Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all volunteer positions in the youth ministry, and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers.
- Develop and implement a written Volunteer Matriculation Process, incorporating a detailed volunteer application form.
- Calendar a leadership launch for each ministry where volunteers are being equipped with all the information they need to know about their role, the resources needed in order to serve in their role (curricula, special knowledge, etc.), and an outline of the major events planned for the entire year.
- Determine the volunteer needs for the youth ministry in 2016-2017.
- Create a “fishing pond” of at least 65 potential volunteers who could serve in a hands-on, weekly role, behind-the-scenes role, or light support role.
- Marry the fishing pond with the volunteer needs list, inviting a wide variety of adults into various roles, recognizing that the baptismal covenant is made by those of all generations.
- Hold a Dial-a-thon to make phone calls to recruit potential volunteers. Continue recruiting until all volunteer roles have been filled.

**Pressure Point #2: Safe Church** – Implement standard Safe Sanctuary training for all youth volunteers and create policies for other potential safety issues.

- Provide the tools, support, and expectation for all current youth volunteers to receive Safe Sanctuary training by April 1, 2016 and for any new youth
volunteers to complete Safe Sanctuary training before they spend time with the youth.
- Create a small team to create church wide policies and/or guidelines regarding adult to youth ratios, transportation, social media, emergency response and behavioral/discipline issues.
- Establish a regular review system to be sure that all youth ministry personnel and events are within policy standards at all times.

**Pressure Point #3: Establish a Youth Logistics Coordinator** Create a staff position to assist the Youth Minister in coordinating the logistics aspects of the youth ministry.

- Create a results-based job description for a 10-hour a week Youth Logistics Coordinator.
- Hire for that job description, recognizing that part time positions are often filled by members of the congregation already active in the ministry.

**Pressure Point #4: Upgrade the Youth Ministry Facilities** Transform the cold, industrial youth ministry room into a space that reflects the warm, welcoming, relational youth group.

- Create both a team of youth and adults that have a passion for transforming spaces and a budget for this transformation.
- Empower the team to live into their call as they create a welcoming youth ministry space.
- Establish a long-range plan to evaluate the technological and media needs of the youth ministry and to provide the equipment and personnel necessary to produce great worship and programming.

**Pressure Point #5: Increase Youth Mission Opportunities** Provide meaningful, consistent youth mission opportunities throughout the year.

- Identify appropriate mission partner organizations within the church, community, state and country to develop long-term mission relationships with.
- Calendar at least one monthly mission opportunities for the youth ministry throughout the year.
- Prepare for each mission opportunity with an eye to detail and organization.
- Establish a regular review system to ensure that partnering mission organizations continue to be a good match for the youth ministry mission volunteers.

**RENOVATION TEAM TASK #2:** Establishing a consensus for the direction of the youth ministry and the creation of its infrastructure, including the completion of the following tasks:

**BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND STABILITY**

- **Host a “Quick Start”:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and youth staff to participate in a Quick Start in which the renovation process is launched and the pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The
retreat tackles the items that need to be done first, and builds momentum for the youth ministry renovation process.

- **Visioning Summit**: Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth ministry with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
  - A *ministry mission statement* that will drive the programs and hold the calendars accountable.
  - A *statement of values* that will name the spirit in which Clearbranch Church is committed to approaching ministry with youth and families.
  - A *set of three-year revolving goals* that will rally the team and harness the heart for new initiatives with clear strategic next steps.
  - An *organizational structure for the ministry* that will provide clarity for staff, volunteers, parents, and laity.

- **Christian Formation Summit**: Gather a team for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
  - Evaluate the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Develop a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
  - Determine how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decide what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.

- **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 high school mission trip”).

- **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 affirm a sexual abuse/child protection policy.

- **Attendance**: Track attendance for all youth activities.

- **Marketing**: Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, youth, leaders, and the broader church to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.

- **Communication**: Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, youth, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the youth page of the church’s website, social media, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
- **Youth Ministry Manual**: Develop a Youth Ministry Manual, including the most recent youth directory, a 12-18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major youth ministry event.

- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation**: Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth ministry in the fall of 2016. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.

- **Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach**: Invite Ministry Architects to play the “coach” role during this renovation period. Ministry Architects would offer experienced direction for the building of an infrastructure for the youth ministry and provide ongoing coaching for the youth ministry staff members as well as the Renovation Team.

**DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS**

- **Staff Development**: Provide mechanisms for on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry staff including coaching, reading and seminars.

- **Sustainable Pace**: Help each youth ministry staff member develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).

- **Leadership Development**: Complete results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry and create a structure for the ongoing training of all volunteers at least quarterly.

- **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities**: Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

- **Leadership Launch**: Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

- **Student Leadership Development**: Develop a written game plan for developing student leadership and reconfiguring SALT into a system that gives increasing load-bearing responsibility for mentoring and ministry leadership to youth.

**DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES**

- **Parent Support**: Sponsor and execute an encouraging parent support event and create mechanisms for engaging the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.

- **First-Timer Process**: Develop a process for welcoming new families, 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.
o **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges such as:
  o Welcoming and connecting the new 6th graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  o Welcoming and connecting the new 9th graders and their parents into the high school ministry
  o Launching 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 AND OPTIONAL CONSULTING PROPOSAL**

**PROPOSED TIMELINE**

*The following provides Clearbranch with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term youth ministry.*

*Many churches choose to use the services of Ministry Architects to provide coaching and experienced troubleshooting through this infrastructure-building process. If the church would like Ministry Architects to provide more specialized consulting in certain areas, particularly for the 18-month transition, we are available to help.*

**February 2016**

**Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins**

**Outcomes:**

- This report has been presented to Clearbranch Leadership for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the governing body of the church has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start has been scheduled for March.
- The Renovation Team for youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start.
- Immediate volunteer needs for the youth ministry have been determined and slots have been filled.
- Work has begun on the 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar, including at least one mission opportunity a month and intentional times for middle school and high school to be together and separate.
- A fishing pond of 65 potential volunteers in youth ministry has been created.
- Mechanisms for monthly on-going education and coaching for the youth ministry key volunteers and staff have been provided as Ministry Architects has been hired to serve as the architect for the entire renovation process.
March 2016

Focus: Renovation Underway, Calendars, Volunteers, Compliance, Youth Logistics Coordinator, Missions

Outcomes:

- A Quick Start has taken place in which the renovation process was launched and pressure points outlined in the Assessment Report have been addressed. The retreat tackled the items that needed to be done first to initiate the youth ministry renovation process and kicked off volunteer recruiting season.

- Volunteer recruiting season has opened for hands-on all weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2016-2017.
  - Results-based volunteer job descriptions have been written for all volunteer positions in the youth ministry.
  - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
  - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2016-2017 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 youth ministry.

- A small team has been created and empowered to research and write church wide policies and/or guidelines regarding adult to youth ratios, transportation, social media, emergency response and behavioral/discipline issues.

- A results-based job description for a 10-hour a week Youth Logistics Coordinator has been created and advertised.

- Work has begun to identify appropriate mission partner organizations within the church, community, state and country to develop long-term mission relationships with.

- A team has been identified and empowered to transform the youth room into a warm, inviting space.

April 2016

Focus: Compliance, Database, Communications, Fall Kick-off, Youth Logistics Coordinator

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day onsite, 1 day offsite
Outcomes:

- All current youth volunteers have completed Safe Sanctuary.

- Work on the youth databases has begun, collecting the most recent information for families and youth. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families and youth. Each youth has been classified in the following categories:
  - **Active Youth** are the ones whose families are members of Clearbranch have attended at least once in the past year – plus visitors who have become a regular part of the group. They should show up in your printed youth directory.
  - **Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you’ll want to regularly pursue these youth, whether they ever show up or not.
  - **Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.
  - **Visitor Inactive** are the ones who may have visited, but you are confident they will never become a regular part of the group. This group requires no follow up. But you’ll want to keep his or her information for the occasional big event to which you’ll want to invite everyone you know.
  - **First Timers** refer to visitors who have attended a program for the first time. You’ll want to have a process for capturing their information on their first visit and follow up with them within one week of their visit.

- A Vision Summit has been scheduled for June and a “save the date” email/postcard has been sent to all families.

- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.

- A Fall Kick-off for the youth ministry has been scheduled for August. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.

- Each youth staff member has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

- Interviews have begun for the Youth Logistics Coordinator position.

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**Ministry Architects Option: 1 day onsite**

**May 2016**

Focus: Visioning Promotion, Compliance, Database, Volunteers
Outcomes:

- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has continued.
- A database of all youth and their families has been compiled and each person has been “tagged” with a category.
- All youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- All pressure points have been addressed.
- A volunteer application, an application process, a screening process, and going training schedule for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the youth ministry.

**Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite**

**June 2016**

**Focus:** Visioning Retreat, Volunteers, Calendars, Volunteer Thank You, Youth Logistics Coordinator, First Timer Process

Outcomes:

- A Visioning Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the youth ministry (mission statement, core values, goals, and structure).
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the visioning process.
- All volunteer needs for the 2016-2017 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- The 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church’s calendar.
- A thank you event for all youth volunteers has taken place.
- A Youth Logistics Coordinator has been hired.
- A game plan has been written and implemented for welcoming new families, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.

**Ministry Architects Option: 3 days onsite, 1 day offsite**

**July 2016**
Focus: Participation Goals, Mid-Course Evaluation, Student Leadership, Christian Formation, Facilities

Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2017 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.

- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.

- The Renovation Team has met monthly.

- A game plan has been created to reconfigure SALT and develop student leadership in the youth ministry.

- 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 Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for October. The retreat will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.

- A long-range plan has been established to evaluate the technological and media needs of the youth ministry and to provide the equipment and personnel necessary to produce great worship and programming.

Ministry Architects Option: 1 day onsite

August 2016

Focus: Directory, Communication, Leadership Launch, Fall Kick-off,

Outcomes

- Communication methods currently being used to promote the youth ministry and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.

- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for the youth ministry has been updated with that new information. Every youth has been “tagged” with a category.

- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and, equips them to serve the youth of Clearbranch. The Safe Sanctuary Policy has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
• A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the youth ministry that welcomed 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 felt energized and enthusiastic about the coming year’s programs.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite*

**September 2016**

**Focus: Compliance, Major Event Notebooks**

**Outcomes**

• A review of the new protection and safety policy procedures has occurred. All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church 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.

• Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each youth event.

*Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite*

**October 2016**

**Focus: Christian Formation Summit, Budget, Continuing Education**

**Outcomes:**

• Interested staff, volunteers, and parents have gathered for a Christian Formation Summit to discuss the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum. At the retreat, the team
  o Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  o Developed a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
  o Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  o Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.

• A detailed 2017 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.
• Continuing education opportunities have been explored for the youth ministry staff.

**Ministry Architects Option: 3 days onsite, 1 day offsite**

**November 2016**

**Focus: Marketing, Attendance, MIA Youth, Major Event Notebooks**

**Outcomes:**

• A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth programs has been created and implemented.

• MIA youth have been systematically contacted.

• Major event notebooks for each major youth event have been completed.

• Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the youth ministry.

**Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite**

**December 2016**

**Focus: Catch Up, Summer Calendar, Benchmarks**

**Outcomes:**

• Relax…. Breathe…

• Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2017.

• The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.

• 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.

**Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite**

**January 2017**

**Focus: Volunteer Training, Calendars, Database**

**Outcomes:**

• Work has begun on the 2017-2018 youth ministry calendar.

• The summer 2016 calendar has been completed.

• A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers have 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 collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth has been updated with that new information.
- New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.

*Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite*

**February 2017**

**Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Recruitment**

**Outcomes:**

- The 2017-2018 youth ministry calendar has been completed through August 2018 including a Fall Kick-off.
- Volunteer recruiting seasons 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 2017-2018 school year.
  - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
  - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the youth ministry.
  - Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2017-2018.

*Ministry Architects Option: 1 day offsite*

**March 2017**

**Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Manual**

**Outcomes:**

- Volunteer recruitment has continued.
- A manual for the youth ministry has been completed, including
  - Visioning documents
  - Directories
April 2017

Focus: Directory, Reflection and Re-assessment, Parents, College

Outcomes:

• With the most recent information on 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 review of the renovation process has been completed.

• An online diagnostic has been completed to re-assess the youth ministry.

• Current pressure points have been named.

• Parent Support: An encouraging parent support event has engaged the majority of parents in the youth ministry in some way.

• A game plan has been written to reach out to the youth who have graduated from the youth program. Ongoing communication with them has been established throughout the school year and when home from college.

May 2017

Focus: Compliance, Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Curriculum, Fall Kick-off

Outcomes:

• All youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.

• A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited and has begun planning for the start of the fall youth programs.
• A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.

• Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.

• All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

June 2017

Focus: Strategic Staffing, Volunteer Thank You, Benchmarks, Major Event Notebooks, Rites of Passage

Outcomes:

• A volunteer thank you event has taken place.

• With the changes in the youth ministry, the staffing to meet the size and scope of the youth ministry has been evaluated and a game plan to meet those needs has been created if necessary.

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

• All volunteer needs for the 2017-2018 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.

• All major event notebooks have been updated by the event coordinators and given back to the youth staff to pass along to the next year’s coordinator.
  o A game plan has been established for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges such as:
    o Welcoming and connecting the new 6th graders and their parents into the youth ministry
    o Welcoming and connecting the new 9th graders and their parents into the high school ministry
    o Launching the church’s high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they have been surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults

Ministry Architects Option: ½ day offsite

July 2017

Focus: Sustainability
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 Teams has transitioned their role to providing support and accountability to the youth volunteers and focused on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.

Ministry Architects Option: 2 days onsite, 1 day offsite