



## YOUTH MINISTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

*Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time*

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### **Christ Lutheran Church of Valparaiso, IN April 10, 2016**

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Christ Lutheran Church is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest national Lutheran denomination and is part of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod, a regional mission territory of over 180 Lutheran churches. Church members describe their church family as “welcoming,” “loving,” and “missional.”

Here is how Christ Lutheran Church describes itself on its website: *We are a worshiping community of 350 people on average that gather together in three services and other faith formation opportunities. We are married couples, singles, young adults, empty nesters, college students, kids, seniors and more, but all longing to grow in faith, hope, and love, and we all love and serve God. We expect our young people -- and young-at-heart folks too! -- to be involved with every aspect of church: learning, serving, worshiping, praying, leading.*

CLC’s first church service was in 1970; CLC’s development was sponsored by the American Lutheran Church (which became part of the ELCA in 1988). The founding

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pastor, Rev. Myron Lindblom, retired in 1978, and Rev. Jerry Castleman became pastor in 1979. Pastor Castleman continued at Christ Lutheran until his retirement in May of 2011 - a 32-year ministry. Rev. Timothy Knauff began as Sr. Pastor in May, 2013; Rev. Erica Gibson-Even began as first an Interim Associate Pastor in 2011, and was called as Pastor in November, 2014.

The membership of the church is around 1055 and on an average week, 309 people attend one of the church's three worship services. The 8:00 AM and 9:30 AM services are traditional in style; the 11:00 AM service has the beginnings of contemporary undertones. All three services have the same message and serve communion.

Currently, there are about 130 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on the rolls of the church. During a typical week, about 45 of them participate in either Middle School Sunday school, the worship services, or one of the weekly youth programs like Cornerstone (high school youth group), or Confirmation. There are also special trips like the summer mission trip, Confirmation Fall Retreat, "Quake," and the ELCA National Youth Gathering every three years. *(It should be noted that the church has also chartered a Boy Scout Troup, which has a weekly attendance of 20 young men, 6<sup>th</sup> grade and older. This number is not counted in the percentages of this report. At the same time, this program and number is celebrated!)*

The youth ministry is described by youth and parents as a "fun" and "exciting" place, while others say it is a "lacking," "stagnant" ministry. "We all love it here. This church is like family," said one youth member.

The church has a 2016 budget of \$654,823. For the year 2016, the youth ministry has a budget in the neighborhood of \$67,532, including the program expenses and salaries/benefits for the Director of Youth Ministry position. There is currently no one serving in that capacity, the position having been vacated in January, 2016. Four youth directors have served since 2000. One was a very short 4-month tenure, the remaining three with longevity. There is also an active youth board, which reports to the Church Council and meets monthly.

There are 7 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.

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 72 individuals in 9 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.

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## 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.

This rent is being paid due to the healthy attendance of youth in the life of the church, though some would say it isn’t paid because the numbers at Sunday night high school youth group have lessened over the last decade.

**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 paid due to several successful youth ministry programs such as Confirmation, Cornerstone, and special trips.

**Rent #3: ENTHUSIASM**—The joyful enthusiasm and positive attitude of the staff, volunteers, and the youth themselves are essential to building trust with the leadership of the church and with the parents. A fabulous, “We can do this” spirit suggests that this rent is being paid on time.

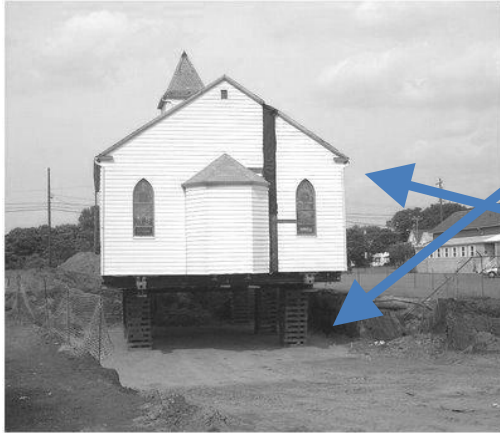
As the leadership of the youth ministry develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.” In this sense, the youth ministry faces parallel challenges.

Ministry Architects pictures the parallel challenge this way:

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

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

As the youth ministry leadership steps into this parallel process, five 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 that is around 10% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 309 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 31 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of 45 youth is over and above what a church of this size could normally expect to see. Celebrate!

**2) 20% Ceiling:** Ministry Architects has also discovered that in many churches, the youth ministry has difficulty growing beyond a level that equals 20% of the weekly worshipping congregation.

Very few youth ministries seem to be able to break beyond this 20% level. CLC might keep in mind, then, that the expected ceiling for this youth ministry is around 62 youth. The road to that level of participation is dependent on increased staffing, volunteers, and budget.

**3) \$1,300 per Youth:** With a budget of approximately \$67,500 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, CLC has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 52 youth in some aspect of the church's life. With 45 currently participating every week, the ministry is funded for some continued growth.

**4) 1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth:** Considering the position budgeted and planned to give time to the youth ministry with a current search process for a full-time Director of Youth Ministry, CLC will have the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 50 youth on a weekly basis. The planned staff configuration

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will be 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 about, more staffing may be needed.

**5) 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 7 weekly volunteers, CLC is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 6-7 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 35 youth weekly. CLC is under-volunteered.

## **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. In the case of Christ Lutheran Church, the church is the architect, represented by the Youth Board.
- **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. Ideally, this is a role in which a youth director fits best.
- **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. These are the wonderful people who are volunteering so faithfully at CLC.

Each of these roles is important as Christ 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:

- 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. Although there is a youth board in place, without clear blueprints, there doesn’t seem to be architectural blue prints in place.
- 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.

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## **ASSETS**

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

#### **Exceptional Youth**

The youth of Christ are quite remarkable. Middle school and high school listening group members were intelligent, articulate, thoughtful, and eager to contribute, learn, grow, and serve. They take their commitment to each other very seriously and when asked about strengths of the ministry, one student shared, “We care about each other and the church cares about us.” Another said, “I want it to be a place where kids can come and feel safe asking questions.”

#### **Mission-Minded Ministry**

In a world where instant gratification has become the norm and where youth seem to only want to have fun, CLC youth and their families are clamoring for more service/mission projects. The Sr. High love the summer mission trips and want to do more mission projects locally during the school year. “We should be doing something at least once a month,” said one parent. One student shared, “We really want more service projects.” All the other heads in the room nodded in energetic agreement. Yet another youth said, “I want us to travel more to serve and help in far away places.”

When the middle school students were asked about something that they’d like to see more of in the middle school ministry’s future, one student shared, “We want to do more local mission projects.” Another student said, “Couldn’t we have a mission trip?” All the other kids nodded their heads. These students are a gift to Christ Lutheran Church.

#### **Caring Clergy**

Both Pastor Tim and Pastor Erica participated in the assessment listening process, expressing considerable supportive care and concern for the youth ministry. Each pastor is hands on involved in some part of the youth program. This kind of participation doesn’t always occur in churches and is a real testimony to CLC. This clergy staff is well-loved by the congregation and church members count them as a blessing.

#### **Youth Board**

In the absence of a youth staff person, the youth board has stepped in admirably. They are caring, leading, filling the gaps, and doing whatever it takes to keep the ministry going. “We want to know what our role is. We want to do what it takes to make this ministry great,” said an adult.

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### **Generous Church**

The church supports the youth ministry with its time, talent, and treasures. “If the students need something, we can make it happen.” Christ church members are willing to put their metaphorical and actual “money where their mouth is” for reaching young people for Christ. Well-done, generous church!

### **Location! Location! Location!**

CLC is right across from Valparaiso High School! This is a wonderful outreach for the church, not just the youth ministry. Churches across the country would die to have the possibilities God has laid right at CLC’s literal front door. So, for an example, what a great place to sponsor an afterschool coffee shop where students have Wi-Fi, do homework, recharge their phones, hangout. It’s all about location, sometimes, isn’t it?

### **Passionate People**

Without a doubt the people of CLC are fiercely passionate. They long for deep connections and life-giving relationships. Truly, they desire to see a thriving youth ministry. Many are ready and willing to get into the trenches. With the right direction and guidance that passion can be the fuel that moves this youth ministry to even greater heights. Instead of passion that divides, it is passion that is bringing growth and vitality to the church.

### **Clarity of Need**

There seems to be an across-the-board consensus that although the youth ministry has many wonderful components, the parents, the volunteers, and the staff feel the ministry is not all they would like it to be. This is a good thing! This is evidenced is by the number of adults that participated, many who don’t have youth in the program.

The recognition of the need for growth and development is the foundation for change to occur. The open and honest recognition of this need is a huge asset and the starting place for developing the youth ministry to its fullest potential.

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward***

#### **Vision Vortex**

Imagine this scenario: The youth ministry advertises a big trip. The buzz begins and everyone plans on going! Bags get packed, snacks are ready. The day arrives and everyone gathers around the church bus. They load up, get seated, and the driver says, “So, where are we going?” ...and that’s where the trouble begins. Great people are ready, generous resources are onboard, but no one programmed the GPS. Everyone had a different destination in mind. Dissension ensues, folks get off the bus,

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conversations continue in the parking lot (which is never good), and the bus goes nowhere.

The youth ministry of Christ Lutheran Church is much like this scenario. There are people ready to do amazing things for the Kingdom. Resources abound and are at the ready. The missing piece is that there is a vacuum where clear-cut mission, target, values, three-year revolving goals with one-year benchmarks, and participation expectations should be. Without a clear-cut purpose for the youth ministry, staff members get tired and go un-checked, church members don't have buy-in, youth go unchallenged, and less-than-desirable results happen.

### **Weedy Christian Formation Path**

The ministry to youth is operating without a well-defined 6-year scope and sequence for its Christian educational path. In other words, not only have hands-on goals not been set, neither have spiritual goals.

CLC needs to determine what it wants its youth to know, feel, and do with their Christian faith upon high school graduation before sending them off into parts unknown. Without that, how can the youth ministry meet spiritual expectations reflecting the personality of the church?

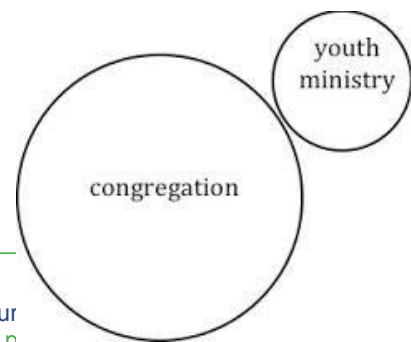
Missing from the youth ministry is:

- A set of core Christian educational competencies
- 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade scope and sequence
- Purposes for each program piece with a spiritual formation component
- Rites of Passage beyond Baptism, Confirmation, and Graduation
- Memory Makers/Milestones
- Ages and Stages
- Curriculum Core Comparison charts
- Topical/Subject Calendar

Currently, CLC has no widely communicated process in place to ensure a well-rounded, comprehensive plan for what curriculum topics are being taught over the course of a student's journey through the ministry. Such an approach can lead to haphazard planning; the risk of skipping key spiritual teaching, lost milestones and faith anchors, and missed opportunities for parental engagement in conversations of faith.

### **One-Eared Mickey Mouse**

Maybe it's because of past staffing personalities, perhaps it's the transition anxiety overload, or it could be just the way it is, but for whatever reason, a number of people felt



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that the youth program has been too much of a silo in recent years.

Without a purposeful agenda that brings everyone into the same room together on a consistent basis, the youth ministry grows metaphorically like a one-eared Mickey Mouse: touching the outside of congregation's scope but never really on the inside. Yet, this isn't really CLC's personality! Its membership really does enjoy other age-levels, young and old. The key? An intentional plan for intergenerational relationships.

### **Cracks in the Foundation**

As CLC focuses more if its attention on the youth ministry, there are some foundational documents and structural framework that will lead toward greater sustainability and happy families.

Currently missing from the youth ministry systems:

- Attendance Tracking: Cloud-based system for tracking individual attendance records at each youth program. If there's no tracking system, then 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors and those missing-in-action may not be followed up on like they should be. Without this, growth doesn't happen; instead, decline begins.
- Database: A cloud-based system so that busy adult volunteers can access student contact info at anytime for outreach and relationships building, like visits to school events, cards and notes, follow-up after key events, etc.
- 18-months-out Youth Calendar: An online calendar where events are always 12-months out "in pen" with another 6-months beyond that "in pencil." This way, parents, youth, and volunteers can have the opportunity to say "no" to other things and "yes" to youth events. The farther out the calendar, the farther out the organizational process, the better the critical mass when the event comes.
- Major Events Notebooks: For special events and programs that happen each year (Graduation Sunday, Quake, Summer Mission Trip, Trivia Night, etc.) information and data should be gathered to enable new volunteers to run these in the future without having to start fresh every year.
- Volunteer Recruiting and Development System: A tighter system of ensuring that every one who wants to help gets to help in his/her area of giftedness will do nothing but make a great ministry even greater! So a clockwork system of volunteer needs, a volunteer "fishing pond," job descriptions for every task, guidelines/expectations, training/resourcing, etc., all lead to a happy team where leaders feel they can meet ministry needs best when their needs are met.
- Communication: The system for getting "what parents and youth want to know when they want to know it" is missing. The youth page on the church website still mentions the youth leader two people ago. There are no links to forms needed or a youth calendar. What exact communication system doesn't matter as much as establishing a system and then pushing everyone toward it. All information in one place is best.

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### **Transition Fatigue**

Christ Lutheran has spent several years in a time of chaotic transition. Changing leadership in the senior pastor's position and in the youth ministry has placed responsibilities and burdens on the congregation and that can be exhausting. The congregation has stepped up to the task beautifully, but at a cost. One member stated that the leadership had lost focus on youth ministry, "because of the difficult transitions, we had so many other things going on we couldn't focus on this."

### **Trading Spaces**

Christ Lutheran Church has a beautiful campus, but the youth room needs more than a fixer-upper. It shares space with the preschool, which is also a vital part of the identity and mission of Christ Lutheran. With Valparaiso High School across the street, Christ Lutheran has a unique opportunity for outreach to youth beyond the church walls. An accessible youth room that can be available to students after school has the potential to become a sanctuary in which the youth can gather. One parent pointed across the street and said, "There is our mission field. There are 1000 kids over there (pointing across the street) and we should not be shy about transforming lives, we have unbelievable potential."

### **Where are the On-Ramps?**

There is not a clear path for a middle school youth to enter the ministry in the middle of the year or if they are not participating in Confirmation because there is little programming for this group aside from Confirmation. The potential for missed opportunities to engage in middle school ministry weakens its growth. Even the Sunday school class (A dearly loved class!) is currently 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders, which misses ultimate growth opportunity because of mixing different school age-levels together. (CLC might also consider moving the 6<sup>th</sup> graders under the "youth ministry" umbrella since 6<sup>th</sup> graders are in public middle school with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders.)

The real downside in the current structure is when students reach the end of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, many of them don't have a strong enough sense of wanting to make the jump into the high school youth ministry. The attrition rate after Confirmation of students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade moving into attending Cornerstone on Sunday nights is at an average of 48% over the past four years. One student said, "There were 13 youth in my Confirmation and I'm the only one that comes to youth group from that class."

### **Music, Music, and More Music!**

When the youth were asked to name something they would like to see in youth ministry that's currently not available, the answer was, "music, music, and more music!" The desire for youth music ministry was sung from every corner by youth, parents, and staff. Music is highly valued by the Valparaiso community, which has strong music programming

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in their schools. The kids want to share their gifts and interest in music with the congregation, but have not been able to find the inroad they need to flourish.

### **Where's the Farm Team?**

There is not a feeder league for the middle school ministry. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school is the only opportunity for involvement (and as it is, they're meeting with 7<sup>th</sup> graders). Parents voiced the desire for their children to, "see an exciting program that catches my child's interest early, so they want to be involved." Numerous studies show that 5<sup>th</sup> graders are becoming disengaged with church long before they reach youth ministry age. Youth ministries today are greatly impacted by the children's ministry being done for older elementary children.

### **Down with Comparisons! Up with CLC Today!**

The nostalgic longing for the way things used to be in "golden times gone by" can suck the air and energy out of what is happening now and in looking towards the future. Past ministry 15 years ago isn't done in the same way today. Things like iPhones and Facebook have changed all the rules and methods. Multiple listening group participants mentioned the great youth ministry under a former director, Jeremy. A youth put it into perspective by saying, "I wasn't even born when he was here."

Secondly, worry over "sheep stealing" diverts focus from creating a youth ministry that is grounded in Christ Lutheran's identity. Making comparisons to "the church down the street" is like comparing apples to oranges. Each church and youth group is different. Better to focus on harvesting the youth ministry crop CLC does have. There are WONDERFUL youth here right now. (And those other youth groups? They have problems, too.)

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reframe the next 18 months as a time of goal-setting and infrastructure building for the youth ministry. Target September 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 the Church Council, 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 Pastor Tim. 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.
  - Assisting the Renovation Team and Search Committee with the search process to fill the youth director position.

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

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

### **Pressure Point #1: Hire a Full-time Youth Director**

CLC is spot on in hiring a fulltime youth director at 40 hours weekly who gives input and oversight for all the programs that pertain to 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth. The youth director would be directly involved with Confirmation, Cornerstone, MS Sunday school, special youth events, and any other programming to come. The youth director would also give “team support” to any music ministry, worship outreach, or other program where someone else is directly in charge, but intersects with the lives of the 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. Based on feedback from the listening groups, the new staff person must have the following skills: relational with both parents and youth, team player, fun, energetic, team player, organized, good communication, theological consistent with the church’s personality.

A search committee has already been formed and should be charged with the following tasks:

- **Create Search Documents:** The search committee will need to create an updated job description and a job posting designed to catch the eye of someone searching for a good youth position. The job should be posted at youth/church staffing sites, 15-20 major college/university job boards, mainline denominational job boards, church members’ social media, etc.
- **Read “Before You Hire a Youth Pastor”** by Mark DeVries and Jeff Dunn-Rankin. A DVD of search document templates is available.

The Church Council should be charged with the following tasks:

- **Strategic Staffing:** Propose a clear and appropriate staffing plan, including the professional and volunteer components, for the youth ministry that will provide the church with significant capacity to sustain a thriving ministry to its targeted number of youth. This means the church has a plan for any support staff needed if the ministry grows significantly.
- **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).

(If Ministry Architects is brought on for further work, they can assist and coach in the search staffing process.)

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### **Pressure Point #2: Put Away the Past**

It's time to declare a moratorium on comparisons of future youth directors to youth directors from days gone by.

- o Develop a game plan that would find ways to share positive stories of what's happening here at CLC both in regards to youth successes and those of the new youth director. A continual stream of positive stories about the current youth ministry would turn members' focus from the past and into the now/future.
- o Focus on the connecting points between the youth ministry with congregational leadership so that the church council members see the awesomeness of the current wonderful youth and their ministry.
- o Share the experience of Ministry Architect's visit and the self-discovery that took place to shine a light on the future.
- o Utilize the love that members of CLC have for each other to gently remind each other, in loving ways, when someone begins old pattern comparisons: "That's the past. We're moving towards the future."

### **Pressure Point #3: Middle School Retention**

Develop a Middle School task force to look at the overall needs for the middle school ministry and what programming needs should be developed to ensure that middle school have solid relationships built with each other, the youth director, and the high school youth.

- Develop an intentional strategy for retaining the middle school youth. Consider creating separate middle school youth experiences that are designed to build their relationships with each other as 7 & 8<sup>th</sup> graders (and possibly include 6<sup>th</sup> graders?)/
- Determine whether 6<sup>th</sup> graders should be invited into this new ministry approach since 6<sup>th</sup> graders are in middle school with the public school district.
- Provide opportunities for middle school youth to bond and develop an identity that is not solely based on the Confirmation program. They need to spend more time with the high students so that they want to cross over that bridge into the older ministry.

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**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” Summit:** Invite the Renovation Team, key volunteers, and 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 ministry renovation process.
  - Meet with staff to review the report and identify current status of challenges and recommendations to create next steps for the Renovation Team.
  - Renovation Team would become oriented to the job ahead.
  - Renovation Team would take the next steps from the staff and begin to assign who will supervise over what recommendations/pressure steps.
  - Calendar dates involving Renovation Team would be scheduled.
  - A plan for concrete communication between the Renovation Team and staff would be determined so that all parties feel they’re “in the know.”
  - The following documents are developed during the Quick Start Summit, and within two weeks after the Quick Start Summit, they are finalized:
    - There is a finalized version of the calendar for all weekly programs and major special events through August 2016.
    - There are results-based, written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer positions in the youth ministry. The job descriptions cover all current positions and also include additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
    - There is a clear and complete list of volunteer needs in the youth ministry, including relational and behind-the-scenes, weekly events and special event leaders.
    - There is a broad “fishing pond” list of at least 25 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
    - Reasonable participation goals have been established for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events have been established.
- **Visioning:** 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:

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- A ministry mission statement
  - A statement of values
  - A set of three-year revolving goals and one-year benchmarks
  - An organizational structure for the ministry
- **Christian Formation:** 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 and develop an attendance system that allows for easy access to weekly participation numbers.
  - **Music:** Gather a team to discover possible leadership for a youth music ministry, looking within the congregation, at Valparaiso University, and the broader community. As the control documents are created, capture the names of interested youth singers, musicians, and the instruments they play.
  - **Building Utilization:** Conduct a usage study for the Youth Room. Space and timing are issues surrounding youth usage. Assess its creative use and consider new ways to leverage this valuable resource. Have a “Fixer-Upper” redesign of the space. Encourage members of the congregation and the youth to take part in the transformation. Give youth an opportunity to take part in this study as well as any creative design work.
  - **Silo Removal:** Create entry points for youth and adults to tear down the silos. Involve youth in the leadership of the church, worship, and build on the successful mentoring that begins in Confirmation.

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- **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, Facebook, 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.

## DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND SERVANTS

- **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.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of the volunteer needs. Create a "fishing pond" list of at least 50 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

## DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Missions and Outreach:** Continue to build on the desire of youth and parents to make a difference in the world, as well as their local community. Develop a clear, focused calendar for involvement in local agencies, as well as, regional, and possibly international missions. Evaluate the current mission trips for effectiveness. Create a plan for promoting and exposing the congregation to missions throughout the year.
- **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

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- Intentionally reaching out to missing-in-action (MIA) youth and reconnecting them with the life of Christ Lutheran.
- **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that will:
  - Welcome and connect the new 7<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents into the youth ministry
  - Welcome and connect the new 9<sup>th</sup> 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

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## PROPOSED TIMELINE

*The following provides Christ Lutheran 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.*

### April 2016

#### Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

##### Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the Church Council for the strategic renovation of the youth ministry and the Church Council has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for May/June.
- The Renovation Team for has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place during the Quick Start Summit.
- A prayer team has been recruited and charged with praying for the youth ministry. They have received a copy of the assessment report and timeline.
- Any immediate volunteer needs for the youth ministry have been determined and slots have been filled.

### May 2016

##### Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar.
- A fishing pond of 25 potential volunteers in the youth ministry has been created.
- Work on the youth database 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 and have attended at least once in the past year – plus visitors who have become a

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regular part of the group. They should show up in your printed youth ministry 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 their 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 Visioning Summit has been scheduled for the fall and a "save the date" email/postcard has been sent to all families.

## June/July 2016

### Outcomes:

- A Quick Start Summit has taken place in which the renovation process was 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 youth ministry renovation process.
- A database of all youth and their families has been compiled and each person is "tagged" with a category
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices are being implemented. Norms will include how the Renovation Team will communicate throughout the 18 months between the staff, the church council, and the search team. The goal is to ensure that duplicitous work isn't done by parties involved in the youth ministry renovations.
- The 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar has been completed.
- A Fall Kick-off for the youth ministry has been scheduled for September. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the youth ministry.

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- Ask the Church Council to see that a usage study team for the Youth Room is conducted regarding space and timing issues surrounding youth usage for current and possible future ministries.
- Form a taskforce to lead a “Fixer-Upper” program and enlist members of the congregation with design and construction expertise to participate.
- All programs have adhered to the Safety and Security policy as laid out by the church.
- Results-based job descriptions have been written for volunteers for the youth ministry.
- A volunteer application, an application process and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented

## August 2016

### Outcomes:

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- The 2016-2017 youth ministry calendar has been distributed to all youth and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates are on the church’s calendar.
- Curriculum has been chosen for the upcoming school year.
- All volunteer needs for the 2016-2017 school year for the youth ministry have been filled.
- 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 Safety and Security policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- Background checks (or other screening methods) have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- Promotion of the Visioning Summit has begun.

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## September 2016

### 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.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they are trained to implement the curriculum.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place 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.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe church policy.
- A youth music ministry leadership team has been identified and begun to explore the possibilities.
- A middle school ministry task force has been identified and begun their work.

## October 2016

### Outcomes

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2017.
- A Visioning Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred producing 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.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2016 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- 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.
- A detailed 2017 budget for the youth ministry has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.

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

## November 2016

### 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.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored and calendared for the youth ministry staff.
- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all youth ministry programs has been created and implemented.
- All game plans that have been launched in last 6 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – creating a template for the notebooks and collecting information on each youth event.

## December 2016

### Outcomes:

- Relax...Breathe...Celebrate the Baby King!
- A Christian Formation Summit has been scheduled for the spring of 2017. The Summit will facilitate a discussion of the learning objectives of each age level and how these might be accomplished utilizing available curriculum.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the 18 months.
- 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.

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## January 2017

### Outcomes:

- 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.
- Work has begun on the 2017-2018 youth ministry calendar.
- The summer 2017 calendar for the youth ministry has been completed and distributed.
- Continuing education opportunities have been explored for the youth staff.
- An intentional strategy for retaining the middle school youth has been established.

## February/March 2017

### Focus: Calendar, 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 has 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.

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## April 2017

### 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 Summit, the team
  - Evaluated the upcoming curriculum to ensure its effectiveness.
  - Developed a long-range scope and sequence as well as a set of core competencies for the youth ministry programming.
  - Determined how the curriculum selected will be communicated to volunteers.
  - Decided what level of training will be required prior to full implementation.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- A volunteer thank-you event has been scheduled and promotional materials have gone out to all youth volunteers.
- MIA youth have been systematically contacted.
- The collection of updated information from each youth and family has been completed and the database for youth ministry has been updated with that new information.

## May 2017

### Focus: Volunteer Recruitment, Major Event Notebooks, Fall Kick-off, Volunteer Thank You, Reflection & Re-Assessment

### Outcomes:

- 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
- A volunteer thank you event has taken place.
- 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.
- Volunteer recruitment has continued.

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- A Fall Kick-off team has been recruited to begin planning for the start of the fall youth ministry programs.

## June 2017

### Focus: Manual, Directory, Volunteers

#### Outcomes:

- All volunteer needs for the 2017-2018 school year for youth ministry have been filled.
- 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.
- The Youth 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 Youth Board/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

## July 2017

### Focus: Compliance, Preventative Maintenance Calendar, Curriculum, Benchmarks

#### Outcomes:

- A preventative maintenance calendar has been created for the youth ministry that will help regularly deal with on-going “behind the scenes” ministry maintenance.

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- 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.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and is in compliance with the safe church policy. Background checks have been completed on each volunteer.
- All one-year benchmarks have been achieved. Goals have been re-upped and new one-year benchmarks have been established.
- All youth programs have adhered to the Safety and Security policy.

### August 2017

#### **Focus: Major Event Notebooks, Strategic Staffing, Leadership Launch, Participation Goals**

##### **Outcomes:**

- 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-guarding God's Children Policy was reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.
- With the changes in the youth ministry, the volunteer 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.
- Major event notebooks for each major event for the youth ministry have been handed out to this year's event coordinators.
- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2018 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.

### September 2017

#### **Focus: Sustainability, Curriculum, Fall Kick-off**

##### **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.

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- 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 youth volunteers and focusing on strategic issues such as three-year goals and one-year benchmarks, curriculum selection, calendars, and volunteer recruitment.
- Curriculum has been distributed to all teachers/volunteers and they have been trained to implement the curriculum.
- A Fall Kick-off has taken place 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 feel energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.

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## THE **MINISTRY ARCHITECTS** TEAM SERVING CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

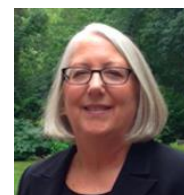


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Stephanie Caro has been involved in ministry to children, youth, and adults in the local church since...a long time. Her humorous, straightforward style keeps her busy presenting and coaching at conferences, training events, camps, mission trips, retreats, churches, etc. She is Senior Consultant for Ministry Architects and Director of Small Church Ministry Architects. Her books, *Thriving Youth Ministry in Smaller Churches* and *99 Thoughts for the Smaller Church Youth Worker*, were published by Group/Simply Youth Ministry. Her next book, "Ten Solutions (to 10 Common Mistakes in Churches) comes out in 2016. Stephanie is a contributing author to several ministry resources like Youth Worker Journal in addition to her regular column "Smaller Church Youth Ministry" in Group Magazine. Check out Stephanie's blog, part of the #1 read youth ministry blog network, [youthministry.com](http://youthministry.com) from Simply Youth Ministry/Group Publishing. She also blogs for [youthspecialties.com](http://youthspecialties.com), Princeton Theological Seminary, and others. Stephanie and her husband, Steve, live in Houston, TX. Their 7 children are all grown!

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Kristie is currently the pastor to Abundant Grace Dinner Church, a PC (USA) 1001 New Worshiping Community. She graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2014 with a Masters of Divinity and a Masters of Arts in Christian Education. Kristie is a bi-vocational pastor and is the grant coordinator for the Confirmation Project, a Lilly Endowment grant, researching confirmation practices across five denominations. Parents and families are a passion of Kristie's. She earned a Masters degree in parenting education and she has focused her education in this area. Kristie was a youth director for a Presbyterian Church in Lake Forest, IL for 8 years before attending seminary. Kristie has a BA from National Louis University and a Master's in Parenting Education and Support from DePaul University, both located in Chicago, IL. Kristie and her husband Paul live in Princeton, NJ, have four adult children and two grandsons. Kristie's previous career was as an interior designer and she still dabbles in design.



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Jeff has been Director of Youth at Christ United Methodist Church in Venice, FL since 1998. He has consulted with large and small youth and children's ministries from California to Florida and is a frequent speaker at events from the Group/Simply Convention to KidMin. He is a regular columnist for Group Magazine, and In 2011, Jeff wrote two books, [Before You Hire a Youth Pastor](#) and [The Indispensable Youth Pastor](#) (Group Publishing), both co-authored with YMA President & Founder, [Mark DeVries](#). Jeff is a graduate of the Sewanee: The University of the South and has a Masters in Business Administration from Vanderbilt University. He currently lives in Venice, Florida, with his wife Mary Lou, and two children, Matthew and Katie.

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