

Final Report and Recommendations

**Youth Visioning Team
St. Andrew Lutheran Church
Vancouver, Washington**

Submitted to the Church Council | August 2011

Youth Visioning Team

As part of the Outside These Walls campaign, the Church Council in December 2010 created a Youth Visioning Team to review the church's priorities for youth ministry.

Youth Visioning Team members: Pastor Martha Maier (chair), Sara Howe, Ariana Hoyer, Paul & Ellen Krane, Marion Lansdon, John Oliver, Cameron Moret, Mike Leisle, Lauren Neiffer, Sammie Matthew, Ann Smith, and Jacque Stuhr.

Consultant: The council authorized a consultation agreement for the period of January-July 2011 with Mark Jackson, Professor & Chair of Children, Youth & Family Studies at Trinity Lutheran College in Everett, Wash., who guided the team's visioning process.

Purpose and Goals of the Consultation

The goals established for the consultation were:

- Discern the work of God's Spirit in the faith formation ministries of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church.
- Conduct an assessment of current youth ministry practice.
- Create a new/renewed vision for youth and family ministry.
- Determine a plan of action that includes specific strategies and objectives to achieve the congregation's vision for faith formation and youth ministry.
- Give consideration to staffing possibilities to support the congregation's youth and family ministry.
- Raise other issues or concerns related to supporting, growing, and sustaining the congregation's youth and family ministry.

Youth Visioning Team Activities

Friday, Feb. 25: Mark Jackson met with St. Andrew's pastoral staff to discuss the church's history, present, and envisioned future, including an introduction to the Outside These Walls campaign and the congregation's priority on youth ministry.

Saturday, Feb. 26: Team met with Mark Jackson for a 5-hour session to initiate the visioning process, engage in team building, study biblical foundations for faith formation, and review historical trends in Christian education and youth ministry.

Sunday, March 27: Team met with Mark Jackson for a 5-hour session to conduct a contextual analysis of St. Andrew's, including identification of internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats, and review of current children, youth, and family ministry-related programs.

Saturday, April 30: Mark Jackson led 5-hour congregation-wide training and workshop (approx. 70 in attendance), including biblical foundations of faith formation, review of historical trends, and both small- and large-group conversation related to a congregational vision for the future of youth ministry.

Sunday, May 1: Mark Jackson preached at both worship services on the topic of Christian faith formation and led an intergenerational “Circle of Blessing” event during the education hour.

Sunday, May 1: Team met with Mark Jackson for a 2-hour session to reflect on April 30 workshop and to begin crafting a shared vision for youth ministry.

Sunday, May 15: Team met to continue work on drafting a vision for youth ministry.

Saturday, June 11: Team met with Mark Jackson for a 4-hour session to review and confirm the youth ministry vision, then begin to identify specific elements of a strategic plan including both immediate tasks and future initiatives.

Wednesday, July 20: Team met with Mark Jackson for a 6-hour session to complete work on developing strategies for immediate, short-term, and long-term initiatives, to prepare the Final Report and Recommendations, and evaluate the consultation process.

August: Team submitted Final Report and Recommendations to the Church Council.

A New Vision for Youth Ministry at St. Andrew

The Youth Visioning Team recommends the following as a new/renewed vision for congregational youth ministry at St. Andrew:

The goal of youth and family ministry at St. Andrew is to create an environment where youth and their families experience the love of God, deepen their faith in Christ, and identify their Spirit-given gifts and calling in order to empower them to share the good news of God’s reign in word and deed at church and in their daily lives.*

We imagine doing this through:

- *Creating a variety of intergenerational connections for forming faith.*
- *Training and equipping leaders, youth, and families for ministry.*
- *Engaging households and individuals in faith practices.*
- *Continuing to focus on serving and sharing faith with the community, including St. Andrew Christian Preschool.*

* Note: “Youth” refers to children and teens.

Goals, Strategies, and Recommended Next Steps

To accomplish the vision for youth and family ministry, the Team named four goals and developed 14 strategies divided into three phases: immediate action, short-term initiative, and long-term initiative. A number of “next steps” are also provided to demonstrate application of these strategies to the congregation’s ministries.

IA = Immediate action (within 3 months)

ST = Short-term initiative (3 to 12 months)

LT = Long-term initiative (12+ months)

GOAL #1: Creating a variety of intergenerational connections for forming faith.

- **Strategy 1.1 (IA): Communicate that all members are active participants in youth and family ministry.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Schedule one or more “temple talks” in fall 2011 in which youth and adult members can share personal experiences that emphasize the whole church’s involvement in youth and family ministry.	Ann Smith, Youth Team
Write one or more newsletter articles in fall 2011 in which youth can share personal experiences describing the benefits of adult involvement and support of youth.	Ariana Hoyer (and others?)
Frequent references made by pastors throughout fall 2011 (in worship, newsletter articles, at meetings, etc.) to emphasize that all are involved in and important to youth ministry and lifelong faith formation.	Pastor Jim, Vicar Matt
Create a Rally Day display to share information about youth and family ministries and invite church members to sign up for support opportunities in the coming year.	Ann Smith, four youth members

- **Strategy 1.2 (ST): Increase involvement of multiple generations in most programs and activities.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Hold intergenerational forums on youth-related issues or perspectives (e.g., movies, Facebook/social media, sexuality), perhaps offered as a Sunday morning class.	Pastor Jim, Pastor Martha, Youth Education Team, Adult Education Team
Continue end-of-year Sunday School celebration and consider adding mid-year celebration prior to Christmas.	Pastor Jim, Pastor Martha, Youth Education Team, Adult Education Team
Find ways to increase intergenerational connections during Lenten soup dinners and Lenten worship services.	Pastor Jim, Pastor Martha, Youth Team
Invite all congregation members to participate in youth ministry activities; describe opportunities for church members to be involved and support youth activities.	Youth Team
Continue to hold intentionally intergenerational events (such as Pancake Fest and MLK service day).	Pastor Jim, Pastor Martha, Vicar Matt, Youth Team

- **Strategy 1.3 (ST): Worship services increasingly involve and speak to all generations.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Continue to offer a diversity of music and worship styles that appeal to a broad range of ages	Phyllis Ernsberger, Worship & Music Team
Continue involvement of children and youth as ushers, readers, music leaders, etc.	Phyllis Ernsberger, Worship & Music Team
Schedule a forum with the Worship & Music Ministry Team, Youth Team, and youth to discuss worship services and creative ways to make services increasingly attractive to young people.	Youth Team, Pastor Jim, Phyllis Ernsberger, Worship & Music Team
Consider addition of music to “children’s chat” (such as familiar music from Sunday School or Vacation Bible School).	Pastoral staff, high school youth, Julie Ash, Diane Smith

- **Strategy 1.4 (LT): Develop cross+generational mentoring (e.g., adult-to-youth, older youth, post-high school, youth-to-children, family-to-family).**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Create a comprehensive intentional mentoring program, with a specific focus on (1) teenagers and adults, (2) older youth and younger youth or children, and (3) family to family.	New youth and family ministry staff person and/or persons trained in peer ministry/mentoring

GOAL #2: Training and equipping leaders, youth, and families for ministry.

- **Strategy 2.1 (ST): Provide regular opportunities for youth to develop and share their faith stories.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Create a document/template with questions and examples that would help youth record their faith story.	Pastor Martha
Identify and train mentors to help youth develop their faith stories (perhaps as a Sunday School class).	Adult Education Team
Continue to provide opportunities in worship for youth to share their faith stories (or have them shared by others); provide opportunities to practice these ahead of time.	Worship & Music Team, pastoral staff
Encourage adults to model sharing faith stories and parents to record events that demonstrate the faith of their children, and tell them these stories (e.g., birthdays, baptismal birthdays, Christmas, etc.)	New youth and family ministry staff person
Make available and encourage use of “faith talk cards” and caring conversation questions that focus on sharing faith stories.	Youth Education Team

- **Strategy 2.2 (LT): Provide training and support for youth ministry leaders, including Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, as well as trip and activity leaders and chaperones.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Provide training opportunities for volunteers involved in specific events or activities (e.g., Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, youth mission trip, etc.).	Youth Team, Youth Education Team
Develop a comprehensive training program for volunteer leaders.	New youth and family ministry staff person, Youth Team, Youth Education Team

- **Strategy 2.3 (LT): Provide procedures, practices, policies and support that promote strong communication and consistency in leadership.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Continue to implement the Safeguarding God’s Children policy.	Church Council, Personnel Team, Youth Team, Youth Education Team
Create written handouts with description of responsibilities and procedures for volunteer positions.	Youth Team, Youth Education Team
Determine and implement best practices in congregational children’s and youth ministry related to risk management, safety, and crisis response.	New youth and family ministry staff person, Youth Team
Continual evaluation of programs and activities for the purpose of continual improvement, documentation of successes and failures, and consistency in leadership.	Youth Team, new youth and family ministry staff person

GOAL #3: Engaging households and individuals in faith practices.

- **Strategy 3.1 (ST): Faith practices are incorporated into all outreach activities (e.g., including a meal prayer in food boxes, asking caring conversation questions at Kid’s Club, and inviting those at VBS to serve others).**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
<p>Assemble four-person task force to work on this strategy, trained by staff and former members of the Youth Visioning Team. Task force’s responsibilities would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop list of groups and teams that need to be educated. • Develop ideas and resource packet for groups and teams. • Contact and visit leadership of all groups/teams to tell them about this strategy, why it’s important, and then work with them to develop specific ideas, strategies, and timeline for implementing this in their respective group. 	Youth Ministry Vision Implementation Task Force

- **Strategy 3.2 (ST): Materials are provided for home and individual practices. For example, Christian education and worship are “taken home” through take-aways and discussion questions, focusing on “what does this mean for my daily life?”**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Develop ways to prepare people for worship ahead of time and encourage reflection afterward (e.g., Scott Norton posting worship reflection questions on Monday on Facebook); encourage pastoral staff to take retreat time to plan themes and reflection questions on sermons well in advance.	Worship & Music Team, pastoral staff
Develop weekly resource for reflection on the lectionary or use one already available (e.g., Vibrant Faith Ministries); explore ways to use resource intergenerationally, with the preschool, and with youth and adult education classes.	Adult Education Team, in conjunction with Worship & Music Team; possibly require new youth and family ministry staff person
Continue to provide takeaways (e.g., cross on stone) for special services, events, and some preschool chapels.	Coordinated by staff; may require additional staffing
Consider increased use of social media to encourage faith practices.	Volunteer and/or new/expanded staffing for communications

- **Strategy 3.3 (LT): Faith practices (such as the Four Keys: caring conversations, devotions, service, rituals and traditions) are taught, modeled, and practiced with youth and families, including those involved with the preschool.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Identify opportunities already happening and create other times and places to do this. Develop strategies and timeline, including creating opportunities for families to engage these practices with guidance. Examples of new ideas include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a team to make home visits to preschool and Sunday School families to share treats and devotions/Bible reading. • Emphasize the importance of adults modeling faith for youth at church, at home, and in the community. • Provide opportunities for families to share stories through temple talks and newsletter articles about how they practice the faith, challenges they face, and how they address them. 	New task force comprised of staff and members of Youth Education Team, Preschool, Adult Education Team, and former Youth Visioning Team members; long-term initiatives might be implemented by a new youth and family ministry staff person
Continue Sunday School emphasis on one or more of the Four Keys each year (caring conversations, devotions, service, rituals and traditions).	Pastor Martha, Youth Education Team
Pastors share ideas for observing Four Keys and faith practices in the home when leading parent and child Communion classes, Bible classes, Confirmation, and preschool prayer classes.	Pastor Jim, Pastor Martha, Vicar Matt

GOAL #4: Continuing to focus on serving and sharing faith with the community, including St. Andrew Christian Preschool.

- **Strategy 4.1 (IA): Outreach ministries (such as SACP, WHO, Kid’s Club, Relay for Life, VBS, Confirmation Camp, mission trip, and Social Concerns activities) are regularly publicized, lifted up, and celebrated so they are more visible in the congregation.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Publicize fall 2011 and spring 2012 outreach ministry opportunities during September 2011, including Rally Day.	Social Concerns Team
Identify one member of the Social Concerns and Great Commission Ministry Teams tasked with providing regular communication of outreach opportunities to the wider congregation, with an emphasis on including youth and families.	Social Concerns Team, Great Commission Team
Provide opportunities for sharing experiences with the congregation after participation in service events.	Social Concerns Team, Great Commission Team
Create “how to” information sheets to distribute with sign-ups to describe responsibilities	Social Concerns Team

- **Strategy 4.2 (ST): Preparation, reflection and celebration activities are incorporated as part of service and outreach activities.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Service events, outreach activities, and mission trips should include adequate time for reflection of participants’ experiences.	Social Concerns Team, Great Commission Team, Youth Team
Evaluate service activities and impact following each event.	Social Concerns Team, Great Commission Team, Youth Team

- **Strategy 4.3 (ST): Opportunities to serve those within our congregation are provided (e.g., helping older and disabled members care for their yards and homes).**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Create a system for coordinating needs of congregation members with those willing to provide assistance. Additionally, publicize opportunities among youth looking to fulfill service hour requirements for school or community organizations.	New youth and family ministry staff person or new/expanded communications staff
Create opportunities for preschool families to be introduced to St. Andrew, such as providing open gym or playdates for families. Consult preschool’s Family Involvement Group for additional ideas and to coordinate.	Social Concerns Team and/or Youth Team to assign responsible party; coordinate and publicize with preschool staff

- **Strategy 4.4 (LT): Those in the St. Andrew community are regularly invited and trained as support and volunteers for our congregation's outreach ministries.**

<i>Recommended next steps</i>	<i>Person(s) responsible</i>
Create training opportunities appropriate to all volunteer positions, including adequate orientation and preparation for responsibilities of volunteer opportunity.	Social Concerns Team, new volunteer or staff person
Consider establishing a prayer team to match and guide mentors in praying for service/outreach ministry participants.	Social Concerns Team, Great Commission Team
Develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated training program for volunteers in outreach ministries to increase long-term support, competence, and commitment	New staff person

Appendix A: Information shared at April 30 congregational workshop

Biblical foundations for faith formation:

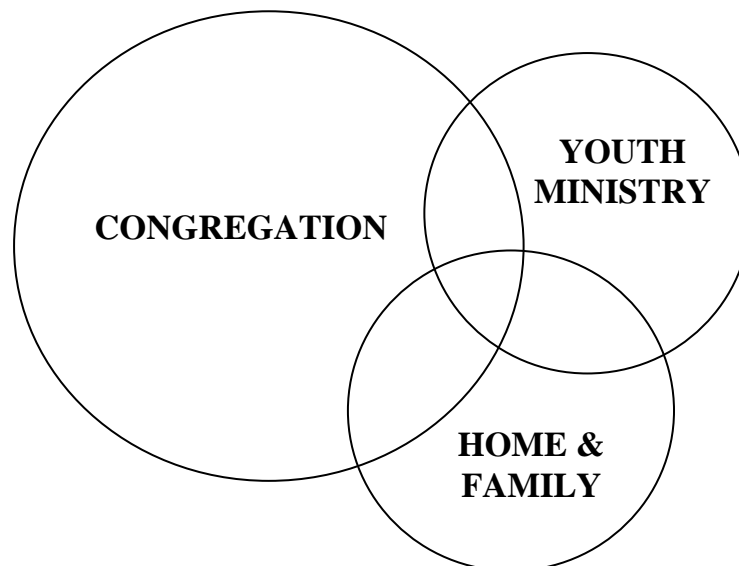
- Acts 2:17
- Exodus 12:21-27b
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Psalm 78:1-7
- Matthew 19:13-15
- Matthew 28:16-20
- Acts 2:41-47
- Ephesians 6:1-4
- 2 Timothy 1:1-5

Trends in Christian education and youth ministry:

- The Sunday School movement
- YMCA, YWCA, Society for Christian Endeavor
- Luther League and denominational youth societies
- Young Life, Youth for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes
- Modern-day church youth groups

Recent research studies and trends:

- Study of Effective Christian Education in Protestant Congregations (1990): *Moms and dads (not so much the church) are instrumental in faith formation.*
- Four Keys (1990s+): *Faith is developed through conversation, prayer/devotions, acts of service, and rituals/traditions.*
- The “one-eared Mickey Mouse?” (1990s): *It’s not working.*
- National Study of Youth and Religion (2002-2013): *Adolescents are benign about their faith and see faith as “moral therapeutic deism.”*
- Exemplary Youth Ministry Study (2004): *The congregation’s entire life and ministry, coupled with excellent youth ministry and faith development in the home, forms youth in a solid Christian faith.*



“There are long-held assumptions in American Christianity that effective youth ministry has to do with adopting the newest techniques, the finest resources, the best training programs, or securing the most dynamic leader ... However, these factors in themselves are not sufficient to describe the influence these churches have on the faith of their young people. ... The EYM Study discovered that it is the culture of the whole church that is most influential in nurturing youth of vital Christian faith.”

-- Roland Martinson & Wes Black, *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry* (2010)

Appendix B: Review of Current Programs and Activities

The Team identified in March 2011 the following as an illustrative (not necessarily exhaustive) list of the church's current programs and activities for youth and families.

Congregational ministries designed for children, youth, and/or families:

Sunday School
Christian Kids group
Confirmation
Youth group
Mission trips
Vacation Bible School
National youth gatherings
Clark County Youth
Souper Bowl of Caring
Lock-ins / youth activities
Adult education
Service projects (food baskets, Bread for the World letter writing, etc.)
Advent, Easter, and Halloween Fairs
World Vision child sponsorship
Habitat for Humanity
Day of Service
Love & Logic parenting classes
... and more!

Church-related activities that involve children, youth, and/or families:

Preschool
Orchards Elementary Kids Club
Winter Hospitality Overflow (WHO)
Worship / Praise Band
“Outside These Walls”
Relay for Life
Financial Peace classes
Thrivent chapter events
Walk and Knock
Softball
Prayer shawls
Quilters
Teachers Appreciation (Orchards Elementary)
Korean Church
Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts
Other “outside” groups that meet here
... and more!

Appendix C: Internal and External Assessment

The Team developed the following list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in March and April 2011 after reviewing demographic data for Vancouver/Clark County and considering the church's neighborhood and locale. The Team gave special attention to these items in crafting the vision, goals, and strategies contained in its recommendations.

Strengths – what we do well:

1. Variety of activities and ways for youth to be involved
2. Relationships and interactions between age groups
3. Service opportunities and community outreach
4. Strong staff and volunteer support for youth and family ministry
5. A vibrant, healthy congregation

Weaknesses – where we need to improve:

1. Lack of consistent youth ministry leadership
2. Lack of consistent attendance, involvement and at-home support of faith development by youth and their families
3. Poor communication
4. Need for training, support, and biblical literacy for youth, parents, and volunteer leaders
5. Few connections between families, between youth, between generations, and between home and church

Opportunities – what we can leverage:

1. Neighborhood businesses, high traffic and visibility
2. Culturally diverse neighborhood
3. Commuting population willing to drive distance to church

Threats – what we must pay attention to:

1. Transient community, with people moving frequently
2. Economic instability, high unemployment, and single-parent families
3. Majority of people in the area don't claim any religious affiliation

July 27, 2011

To: Saint Andrew Lutheran Church Council
From: Mark Jackson, Consultant to Youth Visioning Team

Commendations and recommendations at the completion of the youth ministry consultation process

It has been a distinct privilege for me to work with Saint Andrew Lutheran Church's Youth Visioning Team for the past six months. While the team's *Final Report and Recommendations* will summarize the group's activities and offer proposals for the future of youth and family ministry at Saint Andrew, I would like to offer the following comments as the consultation process draws to a close.

Commendations

- (1) **A sense of God's presence.** One of the Exemplary Youth Ministry Study's (2005) key findings was that congregations with strong youth ministries also had members who could articulate a sense of God's presence and activity in their midst. From team meetings to worship services to interactions between church members to individual conversations to printed materials, my observations would indicate that many can sense and describe God's presence and activity in the life and ministry of Saint Andrew.
- (2) **Pastoral leadership.** Another vital asset in congregations with healthy youth and family ministries is pastoral leadership that supports and advocates for ministries with children and youth. This includes program leadership, participation in events, including young people in worship, publically recognizing and honoring young people, making frequent references to youth culture and family life issues, and speaking publically in support of faith formation ministries. Your two pastors are to be highly commended for their leadership in this regard.
- (3) **Outreach and service.** It is immediately evident that Saint Andrew is concerned with growing its ministries to those "outside these walls," including a debt-reduction effort to free up resources for ministry in the greater community and world. My observation is that Saint Andrew's commitment to this vision exceeds most other Lutheran churches, evidenced by the level of current outreach ministries (e.g., preschool, Kid's Club, WHO, quilting, youth mission trip, etc.).
- (4) **Committed leaders.** The members of the Youth Visioning Team, without exception, were fully committed to the process and a joy to work with. The diversity of backgrounds and representation (including youth, older adults, pastoral leadership, Youth Team, preschool, church leaders, etc.) provided a balanced, energetic, and dedicated team. All are to be commended for their service, if not their dedication to a renewed vision for the congregation's youth ministry.

Recommendations

- (1) **Continue emphasis on service and outreach.** Given Saint Andrew's strong focus on outreach in the community and world, it would be misguided to pursue a future for youth ministry that did not include a significant focus on outreach and service. In fact, service and mission experiences are vital components of Christian discipleship and lifelong faith formation.

Part of this endeavor could be increasing the relationship between the congregation and those served by its outreach ministries, including Saint Andrew's Christian Preschool, Orchards Elementary Kid's Club, and Winter Hospitality Overflow. Ministries with and among participants of these programs should be seen as vital –not separate– components of the congregation's ministry with children, youth, and families.

(2) **Focus on intergenerational ministry and lifelong faith formation.** I would encourage the congregation to continue, if not incrementally expand, opportunities for multiple generations to gather. This may not require creating fully new activities or ministries, but instead seek to expand or re-cast existing events to include multiple generations.

(3) **Focus faith formation on households.** While congregations play an important role in faith development of young people, research (if not common sense) has repeatedly shown that the context of the family home is the most significant influence on faith formation. To that end, church-to-home connections should be regularly provided through worship services, Christian education (including a robust adult education program), and in church publications (as three examples) by constantly asking "How can we support and encourage faith development in the home through this activity/ministry?"

(4) **Train, nurture, and recognize gifted volunteer leaders.** I would recommend that the congregation continue to support, nurture, and recognize those individuals who commit themselves to children's ministry, youth ministry, and Christian education programs. The Church Council might consider creating a pool of funding (\$1,000-\$2,500 annually) to provide resources for training and recognition. Equipping and honoring volunteers is an especially important consideration in moving forward the Youth Visioning Team's goals.

(5) **Staffing.** I would recommend that the Church Council give consideration to adding a staff position (25-40 hour/week staff person) to implement a number of the proposals included in the Youth Visioning Team's *Final Report and Recommendations*. While current staffing and volunteer support will be able to move a number of the proposals forward, many of the initiatives are long-term in nature and will require a certain level of professional competence (particularly in the areas of faith formation, program development, team leadership, and communication), continual training and development of volunteers, integration with other congregational ministries, and consistent monitoring of progress toward established goals.

(6) **Celebrate.** Saint Andrew has much to be thankful for concerning its *current* ministry with, for, and among children, youth, and families. Strong programs, able volunteer leadership, strong pastoral leadership, vibrant worship services, and numerous ministries to others combine to provide fertile soil for growing and nurturing young people in the Christian faith.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these insights at the conclusion of the consultation process. It has been a privilege to work with Saint Andrew Lutheran Church. God's blessings for your ministry in Vancouver and Clark County.

cc: The Rev. James Stender, Senior Pastor
The Rev. Martha Maier, Associate Pastor, Youth Visioning Team Chair
Youth Visioning Team members