



**ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
NEW ORLEANS, LA**

**CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH
ASSESSMENT
REPORT**

JANUARY 2022

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is a welcoming and inclusive church serving the Lakeview area of New Orleans, Louisiana. Church members describe their church family as "reconstructing," "family," and "home."

After the effects of Hurricane Ida required extensive construction to much of the St. Paul's building, the church reopened its church on Christmas Eve 2021. The church is currently meeting in person, streaming online, and has a presence on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The membership of the church is 400 and on an average week, 85 people currently attend one of the church's two worship services.

The church is led by Rector Reverend Rob Courtney and Associate for Congregational Development Reverend Liz Embler-Beazley.

Currently, there are 52 children, birth – 5th grade, on the rolls of the church. During a typical week before COVID-19, about 20 children participated in either children's ministry, the nursery, children's church or worship in a typical week. Currently, about 10 children participate in weekly children's programs. Special events and milestones for the children's ministry include Pizza and Playground, Advent Wreath Making, Caroling, Easter Egg Hunt, and Baptism. The children's ministry is described by some parents and volunteers as a "lively," "steady," and "active" ministry, while others say that since the pandemic, it is a "very sparsely attended" ministry and "a void."

Currently, there are 29 youth, 6th - 12th grade, on the rolls of the church. During a typical week before COVID-19, about 12 youth participated in either youth Sunday school, youth group, or worship in a typical week. Currently, about five students

participate weekly. Milestones for the youth ministry include Confirmation and Graduation Sunday, and youth participate in an annual mission trip. The youth ministry is described by some parents and volunteers as "having good activities" yet others says it is, "stop and go," with "not much continuity."

Both the children's and youth ministries are led by Associate for Congregational Development Reverend Liz Embler-Beazley who has held the position for nearly four years. Prior to the pandemic, there were about three adult volunteers involved weekly in children's programs and about four adult volunteers involved in weekly youth ministry programs.

The church has a 2021 budget of \$795,208, of which approximately \$15,000 is dedicated to the children's ministry. An additional \$15,000 is dedicated to the youth ministry. This includes the program budget as well as a portion of the salary and benefits for the Associate of Congregational Development, who dedicates part of her time to both the children's and youth ministries.

St. Paul's has beautiful facilities that are nearly restored after Hurricane Ida required extensive renovation. St. Paul's Episcopal School, which serves 300 students (babies - 8th grade) is housed on the campus, and facilities are available for use by the church. A chapel was used for Children's Church prior to the pandemic, and youth have met in the conference room, or in the parlor, since there is no meeting space designated for youth.

Ministry Architects was invited to do an initial assessment of the children's and youth ministries and to make recommendations about how it might move strategically forward as the church prepares to fully reopen and welcome

children, youth, and families to reengage at St. Paul's. Ministry Architects met with 28 individuals in 7 listening 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.

MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

RENTS

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding ministry is the idea of the "three rents."

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

Rent #1: Numbers—A significant percentage of children and 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 children's ministry is typically more likely to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

The consensus is that this rent was paid before the pandemic. Since the pandemic and Hurricane Ida, however, this rent is now partially paid.

Rent #2: Programs—In order to earn the right to experiment with changes, the

children's and youth ministry leadership must provide the church with a few visible, effective children's and youth ministry programs to give children, youth, and parents something to talk about. **Since regular programming for children and youth is not currently happening, the programs rent is not paid.**

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

While listening group participants described enthusiasm for the children's ministry program prior to the pandemic, it has not returned to its former state, which suggests that this rent is only partially paid.



MINISTRY IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NORMS

There are four rules of thumb – “children’s ministry norms” – that Ministry Architects has researched from consultant work across the country which will be helpful to keep in mind.

These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences.

15% of the Worshipping Congregation:

In a typical church, the size of the children’s ministry tends to settle at a number that is around 15% of the worshipping congregation. A church with an average worship attendance of 85 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 13 children per week. The current weekly attendance of 10 children is slightly below what a church of this size would normally expect to see.

\$1,100 per Child

With a budget of approximately \$15,000 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the children’s ministry, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 14 children in some aspect of the church’s life. With 10 currently participating every week, the budget is adequate to support the current number of children attending but may need to be revisited as more children return to St. Paul’s.

1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 70 Children:

Considering the time that the associate for congregational development devotes to the children’s ministry, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church has the equivalent of $\frac{1}{3}$ of a full-time staff person. According to this rule

of thumb, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 23 children on a weekly basis. The current staff allotted to the children’s ministry allows room for significant numerical growth

1 Adult for Every 5 Children:

Ministry Architects likes to think in terms of spans of care, recognizing that, realistically, most volunteers cannot effectively oversee the church’s Christian nurture of more than about five children on an ongoing basis. With three weekly volunteers, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 3 children, giving the ministry a capacity for 15 children weekly. This shows that the current size of the ministry is well-supported by volunteers and yet may need to recruit more volunteers to build and sustain numeric growth.



MINISTRY IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

YOUTH MINISTRY NORMS

There are four rules of thumb – “youth ministry norms” – that Ministry Architects has researched from consultant work across the country which will be helpful to keep in mind.

These are not necessarily targets for success; they are simply what an average church typically experiences.

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 85 could expect an average weekly attendance of around 9 youth per week. The current weekly attendance of five youth is below what a church of this size would normally expect to see.

\$1,500 per Youth:

With a budget of approximately \$15,000 (including program budget, staff salaries, and benefits) dedicated to the youth ministry, St. Paul's Episcopal Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly participation level of somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 students in some aspect of the church's life. With five currently participating every week, it is well-funded for continued growth.

1 Full-Time Staff Person for Every 50 Youth:

Considering the time that the associate for congregational development devotes to the youth ministry, St. Paul's Episcopal Church has the equivalent of $\frac{1}{3}$ of a full-time staff person. According to this rule of thumb, St. Paul's Episcopal Church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of

about 17 youth on a weekly basis. The current staff allotted to the youth ministry allows room for significant numerical growth

1 Adult for Every 5 Children:

Volunteers are an important asset to any ministry, yet their span of care is limited. Ministry Architects has found that each volunteer can manage to care for about five youth on an ongoing basis. With four weekly volunteers, St. Paul's Episcopal Church is currently at a ratio of 1 adult leader to every 1.25 youth, giving the ministry a capacity for 20 youth weekly. This shows that the ministry is well-supported by volunteers and poised for significant numeric growth.



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 team of three different kinds of staff and volunteers.



The Architect

A person who designs the building plan and ensures that the building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.



The General Contractor

A person who manages the flow and sequencing of work and 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 are charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work.

Each of these roles is important as St. Paul’s Episcopal Church pursues a more sustainable model of ministry. Currently, the associate for congregational development is acting as “architect.” However, she also consistently plays the role of “general contractor,” and sometimes even “laborer.” Serving in all three roles may prevent the associate for congregational development from leading at a higher level and from recruiting and raising up volunteers to lead at high levels as well.



ASSETS

STRENGTHS TO PROTECT

History of Success

The children's ministry at St. Paul's has a well-known history of success. Children's Chapel, which featured Godly Play curriculum, was the central children's ministry program at St. Paul's before the pandemic began. One participant shared a common sentiment when she said, "Children's Chapel has been very successful." Another person said, "It was such a great program." One person described how Children's Chapel prepared children to be lifelong church members and how children enjoyed attending each Sunday. Unfortunately, Children's Chapel has yet to restart but parents are eager for its commencement.

Incredible Facilities

St. Paul's Episcopal Church sits on nearly a full city block. The outside of the buildings are attractive, and the indoor space is inviting to all those who enter. The church surrounds an outdoor courtyard and has a beautiful worship space, including a wooden vaulted ceiling and detailed stained glass windows. St. Paul's campus is shared with St. Paul's Episcopal School, with nearly 300 students. There is a basketball gym, over 20 classrooms, and a comprehensive outdoor facility complete with turf, three age-specific playgrounds, a deck (which also serves as a stage) and an outdoor kitchen. The already lovely building has gotten a substantial facelift due to Hurricane Ida's destruction. Although the school building is primarily used only on weekdays, the church has the opportunity to use the extensive space available on Sundays.

Great School

St. Paul's Episcopal School has a great reputation and is well-liked by the church. The school and church have not always played well together, but the relationship between the two is better than ever. One listening group participant said, "The school adds so much to the life and vibe of the church." Another person said, "We have this opportunity for cross pollination between the church and the school." Nearly 25% of school families claim that St. Paul's Episcopal Church is their church home, yet parishioners would gladly welcome other school families to attend.. One listening group member said, "We have this pool of potential people for the youth and the church, in general, from our school."

Beloved Leadership

St. Paul's is blessed with great leadership. Both the rector and associate for congregational development are well-loved and highly respected. One listening group member said, "Caring starts from the top and goes down, from clergy to parishioners." As they walked through the hallways, staff members, parishioners, and preschool students were greeted by name, and it was clear that they felt seen. Listening group participants noted the great pastoral care provided to them. They noted that the clergy often ask later about prayer requests parishioners mentioned weeks in advance. When discussing the children's and youth ministries, one listening group member said, "Mother Liz has done a great job."

Young Families Ministry

A few years ago, parishioners with young children developed a Young Families Ministry to provide parents a place to build community while their children played on the playground. This much-needed ministry hosts Pizza and Playground, Pumpkin Painting, Playground, Dinner and a Movie, Christmas Cookie Decorating, Scout Parade Tailgate, and potluck dinners. This ministry is a gift to the families of children at St. Paul's.



Clarity of Need

Although there is a history of success in the St. Paul's children's ministry, there is a felt need for things to be better. One listening group participant said, "I want something more." Another parishioner said, "We're missing the opportunity to grab the little ones and raise them up in faith." One participant showed hope when she said, "Between us already being a fledgling ministry, and then COVID, and Hurricane Ida, this is really a new beginning. We can start anew!" One person summarized this excitement when she said, "It's a great opportunity for us to do what we're doing right now," referring to St. Paul's decision to work with Ministry Architects to renovate the children's and youth ministries.



Kids Welcome

St. Paul's Episcopal is a place that truly loves children. Parishioners mentioned how they love watching children participate in worship through acolyting, ushering, and serving as lectors. A listening group participant said, "We really see the importance of youth and youth ministry in the church." Another group participant said, "Children are liked around here." One other person said, "When you see children, you know that there is a future in place."



CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving strategically forward

Lacking Critical Mass

When asked to describe the youth ministry, a listening group participant said, “It’s very sparsely attended.” Another person said, “When nobody comes, it makes me not want to come as much.” One other person said, “There’s just not enough people there to execute the activities and games provided.” Something interesting happens when a significant number of people gather in a certain location. It feels more like the place to be, so others become part of the group, and critical mass develops, which attracts others to the group. Since St. Paul’s currently has had a low number of children and youth attending each week, and the group has not yet developed a critical mass to attract others.

No Roadmap

While some children’s and youth ministry programming has been purposeful, there is not a clear roadmap for where the ministries are headed. A listening group participant said, “We have the potential to build something really wonderful for families.” It just appears that the roadmap is missing. Another person said, “It’s like throwing spaghetti on the wall. We try a bunch of things and see what sticks.” Another person said, “We have a very limited system.” While it may work for a time to try something new and then attempt a new strategy, this may inhibit the ministries from success. One listening group participant said, “We need a design for sustainability.”

Hurricane Hurdles

As the pandemic seemed to lessen, Ministry Architects was invited to do an assessment of the children’s and youth ministries. The weekend of the planned visit, Hurricane Ida wreaked havoc on the Lakeview area, causing much destruction to the St. Paul’s campus. This required that alternate buildings be acquired to provide temporary school settings, the office staff was displaced, and the church was closed for construction. Plans to renovate the ministries were replaced with plans to renovate the building. Five months later, the church reopened, yet construction is not complete. This lack of adequate, safe, space has been a challenge for the ministries.



Parent Commitment

Children can’t drive themselves to church until they are halfway through high school. This means that for children to attend church, parents must prioritize

church enough to add it into their families' busy schedules. Noting this lack of parent commitment to church, one listening group participant said, "We're the four parents who showed up, but only four parents showed up." Another person said, "This is not a priority for them, and parents don't make it a priority." Another participant noted how meaningful relationships with St. Paul's parents can be and said, "They don't know what they're missing." The St. Paul's leadership wants parents to value Christian education so much that they care about their own Christian education.

Consistently Inconsistent

Although listening group participants described some success in the children's and youth ministries prior to the pandemic, families are ready for consistent programming. One parent said, "My kids don't go to religious school. I really rely on the church to provide that for them." Another parent said, "I need a timeline. How much longer am I hanging on?" A listening group participant said, "When things get less regular, everybody sort of forgets about it." One person said, "We have seasons. We do it [youth programming] for months, have a party and then stop."

Missing Milestones

There is room to grow in celebrating some key ministry milestones at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. One listening group participant said, "I think it's a little loosey goosey." Currently, baptism, confirmation, and senior recognition are the only official milestones recognized at St. Paul's. There are opportunities to highlight these and other key milestones such as becoming an acolyte, recognition of children graduating to the youth ministry, and youth transitioning into high school.

Purposeful milestones encourage children and youth, as well as their parents, to stay engaged as they grow up at St. Paul's. Milestones provide opportunities to empower young people and to remind them of their importance in the life of the congregation, and they remind parishioners that there are children and youth growing up in faith at St. Paul's.

Parent Support

Parents have a difficult job, and the church can be a great support for parents as they do their best to raise their children in faith. When asked about resources for parents at St. Paul's, listening group participants described personal conversations with the clergy or the church's counselor. "I feel like you do [have resources] if you're in the church and know the church." Another participant said, "I have to seek out the information." There appears to be a missed opportunity for parents to be equipped with ways to tackle difficult family issues or to facilitate faith-based issues at home.

Volunteer Vacuum

Regular, committed volunteers are an integral part of a sustainable ministry, yet many ministries struggle to find enough volunteers to serve with children and youth. Building relationships with children and youth is vital to their spiritual growth, so the volunteer commitment can be a powerful factor. One listening group participant said, "It's a few anchor families that carry it [the ministry], and I'd like to see the population grow." Since there are few volunteers serving in the ministries, one participant asked, "How do you help them not suffer burnout?" Another participant said, "We need solid adult commitment and training."

Missing Systems

In order to build sustainable ministries for children and youth, it is important to have strong systems and documentation of these systems. When children's and youth ministries do not have this framework in place, the ministries struggle to support the development and growth of the ministries. While there are some systems like this in the development stage, it is important that these systems be developed and documented. Here are some of the systems that are missing or incomplete:

Attendance Tracking:

While the volunteers are likely aware of who attends Sunday School, without an accurate tracking system, it is difficult to follow up with first time visitors and children and youth who have been missing from church.

MIA & First-Time Visitor

Follow-Up: There is no system for following up with visiting children and youth. It is important to have a practice in place to ensure that no one falls through the ministry cracks and goes unnoticed.

Major Event Notebooks: For annual special events and programs, it is helpful to have all information and data in one place to enable volunteers to facilitate events. Major event notebooks prevent the event information from leaving with the staff member who may have stored all the information in their memory.

Children's Ministry & Youth

Ministry Manuals: These include important documents like budgets, game plans, calendars, job descriptions,

curriculum plans, and vision documents.

Communication Plan: St. Paul's does not have a normative, comprehensive process for communicating information about the programs offered for children and youth. A comprehensive plan, using several different forms of communication, should be developed.

Measurable Markers of Effectiveness: Reasonable participation goals are needed for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs. This will enable St. Paul's to measure the effectiveness of the ministries' impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Children's and Youth Ministries

Reframe the next 18 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the children's ministry. Understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the children's ministry, target June 2023 as the date when the children's and youth ministry improvement will be complete.

- 1) **Establish a Prayer Team** to undergird this improvement process.
- 2) **Present this report to the Vestry**, requesting that they endorse an 18-month strategic design process for the children's ministry.
- 3) **Establish a Children's & Youth Ministry Renovation Team**, made up of four to five volunteers. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on exceptional day-to-day ministry, while the Children's & Youth Ministry Renovation Team ensures that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved.

4) **Address the current pressure points** facing the children's and youth ministries:

Pressure Point #1: Create Critical Mass

Develop and implement intentional strategies to invite and welcome children and youth into the St. Paul's children's and youth ministries

- **Gather Ideas:** Collaborate with parents, older children, and youth to:
 - Generate ideas for getting children and youth excited about their programming and events.
 - Consider the best ways for effective

marketing of the ministries.

- Brainstorm activities for children and youth.
- **Service Opportunities:** Provide opportunities for youth to serve monthly within the community. Plan activities for service, followed by fun, and encourage youth to invite their friends to participate.
- **Share the Story:** Take photos and gather video testimonials to document the great things going on in the ministries. Share the story with the parish and school families during worship, through the ePISTLE, and on social media.
- **Invite:** Make contact with each family on the church's database to personally invite their children, youth, and parents to reengage with St. Paul's.

Pressure Point #2: Provide Consistent Programs

Plan a start date for the children's and youth ministries and relaunch programming on that date.

- **Children's Chapel:** Prepare for a smooth reopening.
 - Recruit volunteers to prepare the chapel for children.
 - Prepare the volunteer schedule for the next quarter.
 - Promote the Children's Chapel reopening to all families (who have

- elementary children) in the database.
- **Youth Group:** Prepare to kick off the youth ministry for the spring semester.
 - Create a rhythm for youth group meetings. Consider a weekly option to ensure consistency.
 - Provide a monthly opportunity for the students to serve within the community, or at the church, during designated youth group time.
 - Plan a monthly fun event for you (E.g.: dodgeball, kickball, painting, cooking, etc.).
 - Promote the youth group kick-off to all families (who have middle/high school children) in the database.
 - Encourage youth to invite a friend to each youth group meeting.

Pressure Point #3: Build the Volunteer Team

In order to meet the current volunteer needs and prepare for growth, the following volunteer system needs to be developed:

- Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with children and youth while others work behind the scenes.
 - Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for non-parent involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- Create a clear and complete list of volunteer needs, including classroom lead teachers and helpers, youth mentors, and other behind-the-scenes roles such as:
 - Supply Coordinators
 - Room Set-Up Volunteers
 - Major Event Coordinators
 - Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 24 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
 - Create results-based job descriptions for each volunteer position. Be sure to include relationship-building responsibilities (i.e: reaching out to missing children, checking in with families, etc.) in the job descriptions.

Building Infrastructure and Stability

In building a ministry there are key pieces to creating a solid foundation. Those key pieces to building infrastructure and stability are the following items:

- ***Host a “Quick Start” Summit:** Invite the Children’s & Youth Ministry Renovation Team and key volunteers 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 children’s and youth ministries renovation process.
 - Orient the Children’s & Youth Ministry Renovation Team to their specific responsibilities.
 - Assign Children’s & Youth Ministry Renovation Team

- members responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report.
 - Calendar the dates involving the Children’s & Youth Ministry Renovation Team.
 - Create a plan for concrete communication between the Children’s & Youth Ministry Renovation Team and staff to ensure that all parties feel they’re “in the know.”
- ***Visioning:** Invite parents and leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for the youth and children’s ministries with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministry:
 - A ministry mission statement
 - A statement of values
 - A set of three-year revolving goals with one-year benchmarks
- ***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 curriculum, milestones, and special programming.
 - 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 and children’s ministries programming.
- Develop a clear plan for milestones and special events to shape the faith formation through the ages and stages.
- 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 VBS”).
- **Youth and Children’s Ministry Manuals:** Develop a manual for the youth and children’s ministries, including the most recent youth and children’s directories, a 12 to 18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major children’s or youth ministry event.
- **Fall Kick-Off/Parent Orientation:** Develop an intentional, family-based, incredibly fun Fall Kickoff event to launch the youth and children’s ministries in the fall of 2022. Use that event to cast the vision, share information, and build enthusiasm about the year ahead.

- ***Enlist an Experienced, Professional Coach:** Engage 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 and children’s ministries and provide ongoing coaching for the ministries’ staff members as well as the Renovation Team.

Developing Clear Strategies and New Initiatives

- **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all youth and children’s ministry events and weekly programs through December 2021 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- **Parent Support:** Sponsor and execute an encouraging parent support event and create mechanisms for engaging the majority of parents in the children’s ministry in some way.
- **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.

THE CONSULTANT TEAM FOR
ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL
CHURCH



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Elaine comes with a wealth of knowledge about teaching and learning, child development, and children's discipleship. She holds a B.S. in Elementary Studies and an M.A. in School Administration, both from Gardner-Webb University (Boiling Springs, NC). Elaine has devoted her career to education and children's ministry. She has served both in public and private schools as an Elementary teacher, Instructional Specialist, Preschool Director, and Head of School. Elaine served as a Children's Minister at two large churches in Houston, TX. Elaine is passionate about loving children, making disciples, and equipping families to raise their children in faith. Elaine and her husband David have two beautiful children, Hayden and Julia.



Annette Safstrom, Senior Consultant

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Annette fell in love with children's ministry in the 1980s and has never looked back. After graduating from Bible college in 1991 with a certification in children's ministry, she earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University, Master's from SMU. Over the years, she has consistently served in various roles in the church from volunteer to director of children's ministry. Annette has been a member of the Ministry Architects team since January of 2012, and co-authored Sustainable Children's Ministry with Mark DeVries in January of 2018. She loves to share the joy of children's ministry with others through workshops, trainings, and national conferences.