Executive Summary

With the departure of our Director of Youth and Family Ministry, the Vestry of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church asked a small Task Force to think creatively and strategically about our next Director of Youth and Family Ministry and how and if the tasks and responsibilities of this job might change to reflect the needs and desires of the parish. This process of visioning included a parish-wide survey, two town halls, targeted discussions with lay leaders and clergy, and consideration of different models from other Episcopal churches and recognized experts.

The Task Force faithfully discerned how the Youth and Family Ministry Program at St. Mark’s can be inclusive, responsive and nurturing as we foster each youth's faith journey and sustain St. Mark's as a life-filled faith community for individuals of all ages. To that end, we hereby present to the Vestry our report, which includes the following recommendations:

- Youth and Family Ministry Program:
  - Mission
  - Goals
  - Structure

- Director of Youth and Family Ministry Position:
  - Job Description
  - Timing of search
  - Search Committee

Background and Mission

With the departure of the most recent St. Mark’s Director of Youth and Family Ministry, the church leadership appointed a Task Force, chaired by Vestry Youth Liaison Steve Dalzell and Associate Rector Justi Schunior, to conduct “a holistic review and re-envisioning of our youth and family ministry program.” The Task Force was asked “to dream about youth and family ministry generally, with the goal of arriving at a refreshed vision of the program that guides our staffing considerations.”

The Task Force determined its implied tasks were to provide the church the following:

1. A mission statement and statement of values for our Youth and Family Ministry program.
2. A proposed organizational chart showing how the Director of Youth and Family Ministry and the Youth and Family Ministry program overall could better fit into the structures of the church.
3. A proposed job description for the Director of Youth and Family Ministry to be hired in early 2015.

Process Overview

- In addition to the Co-Chairs, Vestry Youth Liaison Steve Dalzell and Associate Rector Justi Schunior, the Task Force included the following members: Teddy Ammon (youth member), Hanna Andrews (youth member), Mary Freed, Kris Humphrey, Ken Johnson, Julie Murphy and Christy Rumpf (young adult member).

- The Task Force met a total of six times, from July 17 to October 29, 2014.

- We held two town hall meetings to reach a large number of people in a group setting.

- We held a series of meetings with representatives of the various pillars and other key groups within the church. The intent of those meetings was to explore how other programs interact with the Director of Youth and Family Ministry and the Youth and Family Ministry Program and how this interaction could be improved.

- We conducted a survey of parishioners. We received 70 responses from a cross-section (albeit not a fully representative sample) of the parish. The survey results revealed much to celebrate about our ministry to youth and families at St. Mark’s; it also provided guidance on how we might transform the way we approach youth programs in the future and how these changes can inform the search for a new Director of Youth and Family Ministry.

- We consulted known leaders in the field of youth ministry, giving special consideration to the guidance provided in Mark DeVries’ book, Sustainable Youth Ministry. We looked at alternative models, reviewed Director of Youth and Family Ministry job descriptions from other churches (including Episcopal parishes in our area) and reached out to the Virginia Theological Seminary and Iman Green at the Diocese of Washington.

- As we worked through this process, the Task Force considered a number of decisions the church needed to make in hiring the next Director of Youth and Family Ministry. These included:
  - Should the individual be ordained or lay?
  - Should the position be part-time or full-time?
  - What is the pay standard for similar positions in the DC area?
  - What should be the educational requirements (B.A., M.A., MDiv, credential) for the position?
  - What should be the focus for the position: children, youth, family, education, service, social, etc.?
  - Should the St. Mark’s Youth and Family Ministry Program be a Pillar or cross-cutting area?
What would be the expected duration of term for our next Director of Youth and Family Ministry?

Primary Findings and Recommendations

- **Findings:**

  - **A Web of Relationships:** We desire a faith community that fully embraces and intertwines all ages in our shared experience as members of St. Mark’s. We want more intergenerational events and activities. We want to raise up youth as leaders, as mentors to younger children and as “doers” rather than “receivers.” We want to go beyond practices that could be viewed as token efforts around youth and families and move toward a community where the needs and gifts of youth and families are integral to our communal life.

  - **The Challenge of Geography and Alternative Youth Activities:** Our discussions with parishioners touched on the connected issue of the parish’s geographic dispersion and our “over-scheduled youth.” (There has been a pattern of parishioners joining St. Mark’s while living on Capitol Hill and remaining members after they have moved to the suburbs, as well as suburban families who join St. Mark’s because of the limited number of progressive Christian churches\(^1\) located in the suburbs). When our geographic issues

\(^1\) An explanatory note to newer St. Mark’s members: In 1994, the Rev. Jim Adams (former Rector of St. Mark’s) founded the Center for Progressive Christianity (TCPC). Churches, such as St. Mark’s, that affiliate with TCPC support the “Eight Points” of Progressive Christianity:

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who…

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to:
   - Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics,
   - Believers and agnostics,
   - Women and men,
   - Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
   - Those of all classes and abilities;
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
are combined with the myriad demands on the time of youth (homework, sports, arts, family activities, etc.), there are limited times for them to participate in church-related activities as individuals, let alone in groups. This will remain a challenge to the Youth and Family Ministry, regardless of the skills and attributes of the new Director, but St. Mark’s needs to explore how best to mitigate these other demands on the time of youth to increase the ability of the youth to remain active and engaged in the life of the Church.

Lay leadership and the Director of Youth and Family Ministry: We view these efforts as necessarily led by a paid staff member but it is overwhelmingly evident that the future of our Youth and Family Ministry Program should and will depend on the full engagement of lay leaders and volunteers of all ages. Lay leadership at St. Mark’s is in our collective DNA and structures and mindsets that promote collaboration between the Director of Youth and Family Ministry and lay leadership are fundamental to our success.

The Five Pillars and Youth: Similarly, we want our Youth and Family Ministry and our Director of Youth and Family Ministry to be intentionally and systematically integrated into the five pillars at St. Mark’s: Worship, Christian Education, Outreach, Parish Life, and the Arts. The survey revealed strong support for the adoption of an organizational structure that would provide the Director of Youth and Family Ministry with opportunities for input in (and possibly even direct responsibility for) aspects of parish program development, especially in the areas of Christian Education and Outreach.  

5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.


2 St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, in Grand Island, NY, exemplifies a church with an integrated Christian Education and Youth Group Program:

Since 2002, St. Martin’s has been using “Journey to Adulthood” as its integrated Christian Education and Youth Group Program for youth in Middle School and High School. The program was designed by St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Durham, North Carolina. The title “Journey to Adulthood” comes from the premise that girls and boys become women and men simply as they age. This is a gift from God. However, in order to become contributing adults in the community, young people need to learn the traditions and expectations and information. This is the “Journey to Adulthood.” As Christians, this includes learning about our Lord Jesus Christ, about the gifts we are given by the Holy Spirit, and about ways of using and sharing these gifts.

Available at: http://www.stmartinsgi.org/youth/j2a/
Ordained Minister? Some parishioners expressed interest in elevating the Director of Youth and Family Ministry position to one filled only by a member of the clergy. A larger number of survey responses stated that faith formation of our youth should be a primary responsibility of the DYFM, but this did not necessarily require an ordained individual.

How “hands-on”? We have had Directors of Youth and Family Ministry at St. Mark’s who felt their responsibilities included too many activities that constituted nothing more than babysitting. Ensuring that our youth have a safe space and quality activities during church events and at other times is vital, but should not require the constant attention of the DYFM. Furthermore, while having the DYFM running youth programs satisfies the immediate concerns of parents and parishioners, it has the potential to sap the DYFM’s time and energy and leave little “bandwidth” left to do the necessary behind-the-scenes administration and strategic work. Creating a sense of balance builds on several related steps: 1) Helping parents see the DYFM as more than just an activities coordinator, 2) Paying the DYFM enough that they can be present for week night meetings and weekend functions, 3) Including ministry to parents as an aspect of the job requirements for this position, and, most importantly, 4) Ensuring the next DYFM has an active team of parishioners to whom he/she can delegate responsibility for implementing youth activities.

Let’s Not Wait: The question of whether we wait to hire a new Director of Youth and Family Ministry until we have installed the next Rector was not asked in the survey; however, many parishioners have expressed a strong desire to see this position filled as soon as possible. For these individuals, the promise of continuity in the Youth and Family Ministry Program outweighed possible disadvantages to bringing on a new staff member during a time of personnel transition.

Assumption of Our Own Uniqueness – Any transition period in the life of an organization provides a moment to reflect on practices that may or may not be working. It is also healthy to look outside the organization’s traditions to determine if new ways of thinking and new ways of meeting organizational goals can be adopted. We encourage our parish leaders to read the full 25-page survey results; it includes many thoughtful suggestions from parishioners on an array of topics, reflecting this “out of the box” thinking.

In particular, we recognize that some St. Mark’s practices regarding youth ministry – e.g., an individual church approach to youth ministry as opposed to a denominational/consortium of churches approach to youth ministry – may have been motivated by a desire to protect St. Mark’s youth in nontraditional families (multi-cultural families, inter-religious families, two-mom families and two-dad families) from unwelcoming experiences elsewhere. In the current day, when same-sex marriage is legal in 35 states and the District, St. Mark’s youth in nontraditional families can and do
have positive experiences interacting with other youth at events sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia.

- **Youth AND Family** – One valuable comment in a town hall meeting was that the Youth Minister should also be a resource for parents. As difficult as it is to be a child or teenager in today’s society, it is equally challenging to be a “good parent.” Depending on their job description and personal attributes, the Director of Youth and Family Ministry could help parents with programs and insights regarding this important aspect of fostering youth development.

- **Lack of Clarity of Role** – Based on the first-hand experiences of prior Director of Youth and Family Ministry, as well as responses in both the surveys and individual interviews, there is lack of clarity of the expectations of the job. In many respondents’ minds, it seems that the DYFM is synonymous with a leader of Sunday School for the youth and outreach programs for teens. Overwhelmingly, survey respondents felt “faith formation” was a key responsibility of the job. However, interviews with the leaders of the Christian Education Pillar confirmed that the DYFM’s role in CE has been focused on providing administrative support to Sunday School, rather than content or teaching support, co-leading the Youth Confirmation Class, and bringing outreach programs to Middle School and High School Sunday School classes. Some thought the role should be a clergy member, while others felt that enthusiasm was all that was needed, still others had a “kitchen sink” response. There is a wide divergence in opinions about what this role should entail. It is likely that, if this is not addressed directly, individuals filling this role will not be able to be successful. The main point in this is not that any one of these definitions is “right,” but that whatever set of roles and priorities the DYFM is given needs to be understood by all parts of the parish family. The clergy, vestry, and other lay leaders have a critical role in helping deliver this message.

- **Recommendations:**

From the research and processes described above, the Task Force would like to make the following recommendations to the Vestry of St. Mark’s:

- The Task Force recommends the following as the enduring mission statement for the St. Mark’s Youth and Family Ministry:

  Through our Youth and Family Ministry program, we seek to provide a safe and supportive place where families and children can:
  - Embark or progress on their faith journey, connecting to faith in their lives,
  - Learn about the Christian faith and Bible,
  - Exercise their faith by providing outreach and service to the community and those in need,
  - Connect to the larger St. Mark’s community, including parishioners of all ages, and
The Task Force recommends the following as the vision statement for the St. Mark’s Youth and Family Ministry:

Over the next five years, St. Mark’s will make its Youth and Family Ministry more successful and sustainable by increasing the role of youth in all aspects of parish life, with an emphasis on the educational component of spiritual formation.

The Task Force recommends the following statement of values for the Youth and Family Ministry program:

- **Welcome:** We seek to live as a unique spiritual community in which everyone feels welcome.
- **Growth:** We strive to continually challenge our own understanding of God and humanity, thereby growing in our faith.
- **Trust:** We affirm an atmosphere of acceptance in which the expression of honest questions and empathetic listening are valued.
- **Service:** We believe the greatest expression of God’s presence and Jesus’ teachings is bringing love and justice to our community and the world.

Based on the above Mission, Vision, and Values, the Task Force recommends that St. Mark’s continue this developmental process by entering a planning phase in which we assess options and develop a strategy for achieving the vision, beginning with ways the youth Christian Education program could be revised, in terms of both content and administration. We recommend the Vestry establish a committee of interested parishioners to lead that planning process. We recommend that the next Director of Youth and Family Ministry be hired as soon as is practicable, and that this person actively participate on the committee to help facilitate and guide its efforts.

The Youth and Family Vision Task Force recommends its own transition into a search committee for the next Director of Youth and Family Ministry, using the recommendations of this report and subsequent decisions by the Vestry and clergy.

The Task Force recommends the Director of Youth and Family Ministry should be supported by two standing groups of lay persons:

- An advisory group, which would continue providing a sounding-board and emotional support to the Director of Youth and Family Ministry.
- A Youth Ministry Board (YMB), which will assist the Director of Youth and Family Ministry in all aspects of operating the Youth and Family Ministry Program and will provide a venue for parishioners to offer helpful input and suggestions for the program. This board will be made up of lay leaders and parishioners who can connect
and integrate the Youth program activities with other areas of St. Mark’s (for example, connecting the Music Program with Sunday School). When appropriate, board members would serve as an advocate and facilitator on behalf of the YFM Director to Parish Leaders to help resolve any problems as they arise.

- The Task Force recommends the Vestry continue the effort of building a sustainable youth and family ministry by hiring a Director of Youth and Family Ministry focused on improving the quality of spiritual formation of our youth, particularly in Christian Education. The primary duties of this individual would be the following:
  - Serve as lead staff member in further review of all youth and youth-related programs and development of a comprehensive strategy for improving our programs and fulfilling our Youth and Family Ministry Mission.
  - Support the youth-related activities of parish pillars and other programs with their expertise in education, training, and management.
  - With lay leaders, develop and implement more effective structures and processes for integrating youth into all areas of church life and for managing the components of a successful youth and family ministry (youth recruitment and welcoming, volunteer recruitment and management, adult training, assessment, etc.)
  - Provide a visible and approachable face for Youth and Family Ministry to the church community, and develop a rapport with children and parents.

- The Task Force recommends the draft Director of Youth and Family Ministry job description included in annex A, subject to review by the search committee once appointed.

- The Task Force recommends that the Vestry proceed to put in motion the search process for a new, permanent Director of Youth and Family Ministry with the goal of reaching a contract decision with the individual by March 15, 2015.

Figure 1: Relationship of supporting bodies for Youth and Family Ministry
ANNEX A: Draft Position Description:

**Director of Youth Ministries** (full time)
St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Capitol Hill
Position Description and Job Overview

*St. Mark’s Episcopal Church is an open community, welcoming people wherever they are on their faith journey. We celebrate the gifts of God that empower us to engage boldly in the struggles of life and care for others with love, justice, and compassion.*

**Required Competencies:**
- M.A., M.Div., or equivalent education/training in education, education management, Christian formation, or a related field
- At least 4 years cumulative management or supervisory experience. (This may include positions including supervision as a secondary duty, such as teaching that includes administrative tasks or mentoring other teachers, or work in non-profit that included volunteer recruitment and training.)
- Well-developed interpersonal skills, especially the ability to work collaboratively, to exercise sound judgment in challenging situations, and to listen and honor divergent points of view
- Strong organizational abilities and time management skills
- Enthusiasm for and expertise in working with volunteers
- Excellent communication skills, written and oral
- Passion for working in an open, questioning, and progressive faith community
- Familiarity with Microsoft Office and social-networking sites
- A sense of fun and joy in working with people of all ages
- Individuals who have been ordained as priests or are on the path to ordination are encouraged to apply, but this is not a requirement for the position.

**General Position Description:**

The children and youth of St. Mark’s are a vital and visible part of the church community. The Director of Youth Ministries is responsible for creating educational and outreach opportunities and worship activities that will inspire and support the spiritual development of families and young people. He/she will work closely with the clergy and lay leadership of the church to facilitate youth participation in Christian Education, Worship, Outreach, Parish Life and the Arts. He or she does this by:

- Serving as lead staff member in further review of all youth and youth-related programs and development of a comprehensive strategy for improving our programs and fulfilling our Youth and Family Ministry Mission.
- Supporting the youth-related activities of parish pillars and other programs through expertise in education, training, and management.
• With lay leaders, developing and implementing more effective structures and processes for integrating youth into all areas of church life and for managing the components of a successful youth and family ministry (youth recruitment and welcoming, volunteer recruitment and management, adult training, assessment, etc.)
• Providing a visible and approachable face for Youth and Family Ministry to the church community, and develop a rapport with children and parents.
• Connecting youth to all aspects of parish life
• Fostering a vibrant volunteer base of adults and support lay leadership in initiating and oversee activities
• Communicating with families and youth regularly
• Facilitating youth programs which build a sense of community and trust among peer groups
• Initiating programs that meet the needs of the church community
• Networking with youth workers from other churches and denominations in the greater Washington DC, region

Specific Responsibilities and Duties
• Communicate with families and the parish at large via weekly bulletin, individual & group emails, bulletin board postings, mailings, and e-newsletter
• Work with the Christian Education Co-Directors (lay leaders) to support to the Sunday School program including oversight of the registration process, supplies, logistics, etc.
• Compile and maintain a calendar of all youth events
• Meet weekly with the Rector
• Participate in and assist with planning an annual youth service trip
• Assemble curriculum materials for and co-teach Youth Confirmation (biennial)
• Provide support to the 5 pillar co-chairs(Worship, Christian Education, the Arts, Outreach and Parish Life) in regard to youth related activities
• Meet monthly with Director of Youth Ministries Advisory Committee for vocational reflection and programmatic support
• Serve as the primary logistical coordinator for individual youth events. Primary events include:
  o Welcome brunch/ volunteer fair for families at the start of the program year (Sept.)
  o Fall retreats for high school and middle school youth groups
  o Christmas pageant
  o Brunch for returning college students (Sun. after Christmas)
  o Winter lock-ins for high school and middle school youth groups
  o Family ski trip
  o Easter Egg Hunt
  o Children’s activities during larger parish events such as Fall Canvass, Mardi Gras Dance, and Annual Meeting
• Manage the budget and expenditures for designated youth and children’s activities accounts
• Attend and participate in weekly staff meetings
• Develop curriculum, recruit teachers, and facilitate summer Sunday school
• Meets regularly with parish leaders: vestry liaison and pillar co-chairs
• Manage the sexual abuse prevention certifications required by the Episcopal Diocese of Washington:
  o Maintain a roster of all persons who have received Safeguarding God’s Children training and copies of their certificates
  o Obtain the certification and keep valid during the duration of ministry
  o Provide assistance to those seeking to register for training and ensure all adults volunteering with youth complete the class
• Maintain the youth section of the church website and youth Facebook group
• Find, promote, and participate in monthly outreach projects for families
• Support to the Nursery Manager and Parish Nursery Liaison

Reports to: The Rector. When the position of Rector is vacant, the director reports to the interim Rector, if one is present, or to the priest-in-charge or Senior Warden as directed.

Expectations:
• Several evening meetings per month
• Work Sundays and all major religious holidays (including Christmas Eve)
• Occasional travel and weekend events, including one weeklong service trip away from Washington, DC, in most years.