



ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR

Northway Christian Church Dallas, Texas

SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

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BACKGROUND

Northway Christian Church is a Disciples of Christ congregation with a rich and storied history of over 115 years of ministry in the Dallas area. Church members describe their church family as “caring” and “inclusive,” but also “shrinking.”

Over the last five years, Northway Christian has seen a steady decline in attendance leading to the pandemic. Since the pandemic started, the decline has only accelerated, leaving a sense of urgency within the congregation.

The membership of the church is around 336, and on an average week, 100 people attend between the in-person and online services at 10 AM.

Northway Christian Church exists to share Christ with those seeking meaning and purpose. The church provides a day school for families in the community as well as a variety of community service events such as Mission Weekend and North Texas Giving Day. Given the church’s Disciples of Christ Theology and the calling of Senior Minister Law, Northway is uniquely positioned to reach a diverse community in the Dallas area that other churches cannot. There is also another DOC congregation that meets at Northway, the Oasis de Esperanza Church with services conducted on Sunday afternoons in Spanish.

Northway also boasts a well-maintained and effective digital presence. The church website, www.northwaychristian.org, is easy to use, up to date, and has a modern look for potential visitors. Additionally, Northway utilizes a wide variety of social media channels such as

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Vimeo to serve the congregation and members who cannot physically attend.

Northway Christian Church is led by Senior Minister Virzola Law who was called to the church in 2018. She is joined in leadership by a 10 person staff that is made up of four clergy members, one program staff, and five support staff. Ken Crawford joined the Northway staff in August of 2021 as the minister of mission, innovation, and operations. Cheryl Scramuzza serves as the minister of spiritual formation and connection, and has been in this role since 2016. Megan Turner serves on the staff team in the role of minister to children and families. She also joined the Northway team in 2016.

Additional staff includes Leanne Seabright who serves as the minister of music and worship, as well as a five member support staff. Barbara Miller oversees finances at Northway, while facilities are led by Facilities Manager Fernando Valdez and Clark Miller. Swati Solanki serves as the administrative secretary for the staff, and communications are overseen by Communications Specialist Jacquie Forsher.

The church has a 2021 budget of \$1.7 million which is an increase over the previous annual budget of \$1.62 million. However, both budget and attendance have been in a steady decline over the past decade.

Historical Data: *(Please provide the following data for the past 10 years as accurately as possible)*

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Annual Budget	1.3M	1.3M	1.3M	1.35M	1.5M	1.48M	1.7M	1.58M	1.65M	1.62M	1.78M
Average Attendance	303	297	281	275	271	282	251	213	180	108	100
Average Membership	824	707	749	685	652	619	610	366	350	330	336

Northway is located on the north edge of the Park Cities area of Dallas. The Northway facilities are well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and are in keeping with the look of excellence that is expected in the Dallas and Park Cities area. As Northway looks toward new growth opportunities and reaches more families in the community, their current facility provides ample space for growth and continued ministry. Additionally, the facilities could allow Northway to build strategic partnerships within the community by serving other organizations through the use of their facilities.

Significant ministries at Northway Christian Church include the children’s ministry, youth ministry, small groups, the music ministry, and VBS. There are also a variety of other opportunities for church members to serve in the community with Northway.

Given the steady trend of declining attendance and their desire to better reach their community, Northway Christian has partnered with Ministry Architects provide a systems diagnostic of the 17 essential systems of the church, a communication and marketing plan, a vision summit,



specialized planning and coaching for reinvigorating diverse attendance, and leading the design team during this season of infrastructure building.

This process includes an initial assessment of the church's ministries and recommendations about how it might move forward strategically over the next 12 months. Ministry Architects met with eight focus groups, totaling 68 people, and had 59 others complete a survey.

MINISTRY IN CONTEXT

One lens Ministry Architects likes to use for understanding ministry is the idea of the “three rents.” Churches that “pay these rents” with their ministry tend to have much greater freedom to be creative, take risks, and experiment with innovative ideas. Those churches 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 people 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 ministry is typically *more likely* to be judged by numbers than if the target numbers are clearly established.

The consensus is that this rent is not being paid. While there are many faithful volunteers and members at Northway, the lack of a clear attendance target suggests this rent is not being paid at this time.

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

This rent appears to be partially paid. There is a substantial sense of pride and enthusiasm surrounding Northway's various outreach and service activities. However, other significant ministries do not yet have the visible effective programs necessary for full payment of this rent.

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

The lack of energy and excitement around the various programs of the church suggest that this rent is not being paid on time.

As the leadership of the church develops its long-range vision, it will need, at the same time, to be attentive to these “three rents.”

CHURCH NORMS

There are seven rules of thumb – “church 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:

1) Budget —The average church budget settles around \$1400 per attender. With a budget of approximately \$1.78 million (including program budget, staff salaries and benefits), Northway Christian Church has the capacity to effectively reach and maintain a weekly total worship attendance level of 1,271 attendees. With 100 currently attending every week, the ministry is *experiencing a financial reality above most other churches of this size.*

2) Staffing—We’ve found that most churches have the equivalent of 1 full time staff member (40 hours per week) for every 75 people in average total worship attendance.

Considering the average worship attendance of 100 and all the positions giving time to the church’s ministry, including:

- Senior Minister
- Minister of Mission, Innovation, and Operations
- Minister of Spiritual Formation and Connection
- Minister of Children and Families
- Minister of Music and Worship
- Finance Support Staff
- Communications Support Staff
- Admin Secretary
- Facilities Manager
- Facilities Support

Northway Christian church has the equivalent of 1 full time staff for every 10 attenders. According to this rule of thumb, Northway Christian church has the capacity to sustain the engagement of about 750 worship attenders on a weekly basis. The current staff configuration allows room for significant numerical growth.

Keep in mind that churches that are in an active growth season are typically staffed in the range of 86-100 average worship attenders (AWA) per full-time employee (FTE).

3) Payroll Percentage—In a typical church, the percentage of the budget that goes to support the staff of the church (including salaries, continuing education, and benefits) tends to fall in the range of 45-55%. Northway Christian Church’s budget of \$1.78 million has \$1.02 million dedicated to the staff of the church, about 57.5%. The staffing to budget percentage is over and above what churches usually spend on staffing.

4) Facilities—A church's ministry is also impacted by the physical layout of its campus and the constraints it may contain. Typically, parking and seating become constraints for churches who are looking to see growth. Consider the following norms:

- **Parking Spaces:** Most churches need *three parking spaces for every five attenders*. With 200 spaces available, the church has a capacity of 333 worship attenders in a single service.
- **Seating Capacity:** Most churches will simply stop growing once the worship center is 80% filled on a regular basis. With 650 total seats available, the church has an attendance capacity of 520 in a single service.

Given these norms, Northway Christian Church can expect to reach its capacity in the current single service structure for people in weekend worship. Additional capacity can be created by first adding an additional worship service.

5) Visitors' Retention—For the average church, about 10-30% of first-time visitors will turn into regular attenders. Therefore, in order to grow by, say 10-30 people in a single year, the church will need to see about 100 first time guests in that year (including guests at regular services and special services like Easter Sunday.) In the past year, Northway Christian Church saw an estimated 180 first time visitors and could expect to see their church add 18-54 regular attenders in the coming year with healthy guest enfolding systems and opportunities.

6) Volunteers—In an average church, 45% of the number of weekend worship attenders (adults and students, but not children) are serving regularly in a volunteer role. With 45 total regular volunteers in the church and an average worship attendance of 100, Northway Christian Church estimates that 45% of its weekend worship attenders are serving regularly.

This number seems to be right on target for what normal churches experience.

NOTE: Normally this number is correlated to the amount spent on staffing; the more staff a church has, the lower the volunteer percentage becomes as more of the work is accomplished by paid workers.

7) Involvement in Groups— While the data for what's *normal* for churches in group involvement is not available, there are some targets worth noting. It's been observed that healthy churches have at least 40-50% of their adult attendance in some form of small group. Great churches have upwards of 80% of their adults in groups.

These groups can include Sunday school classes, small groups, Bible studies, youth groups, or men's or women's groups with fewer than 25 people. Northway Christian Church estimates that 90% of their average adult worship attenders are engaged in groups on a regular basis. This number falls *above* the target for healthy churches.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE STAFF

When a ministry is based solely on the giftedness of a pastor or 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 group that designs the building plan and ensures that building is done in compliance with the agreed-upon plan.
- **The General Contractor:** A person or team who manages the flow and sequencing of work, manages the building process according to the agreed-upon blueprint, and ensures that the appropriate number of “laborers” is in place for each stage of the project.
- **The Laborers:** Those people charged with specific gifts and responsibilities for particular aspects of the work. In youth ministry, a laborer might have particular skills in relating to youth, in planning and managing events, or in teaching.

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

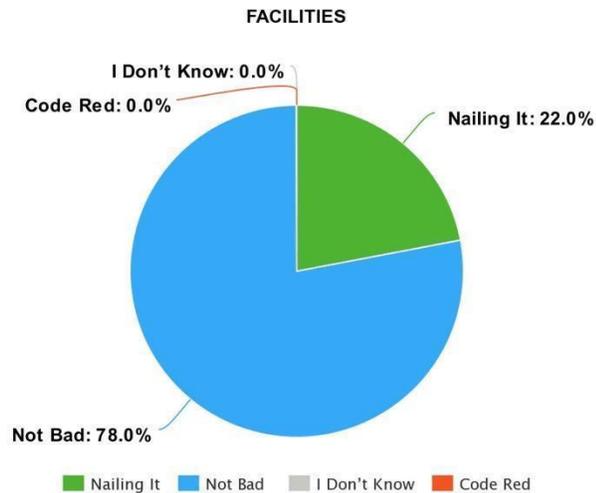
- At Northway, the senior minister plays the role of the architect. The direction and vision of the ministry will be set and championed by her, as well as the vision stewarded.
- The staff are generally serving in the general contractor roles for each ministry area, along with some volunteers. Clarity around the role, responsibilities, and target outcomes for each general contractor will help to increase their effectiveness in this role.

SYSTEM ASSETS

These Systems had the highest percentage of "Nailing It."

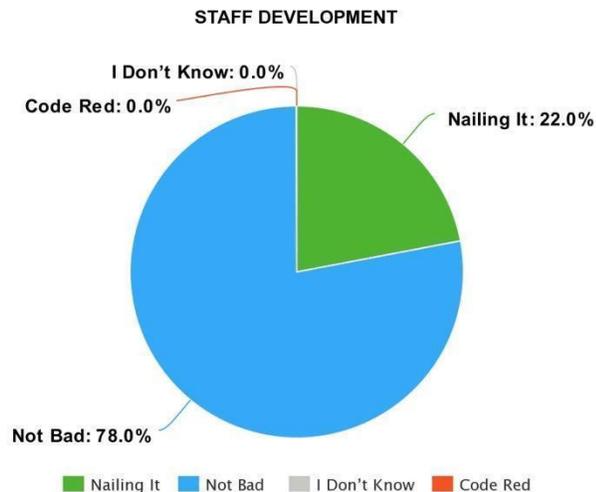
Facilities

The Facilities System ensures that both the long-term and short-term care and updating of the facilities related to the ministry are functional, fresh, and appropriate to the ministry's context.



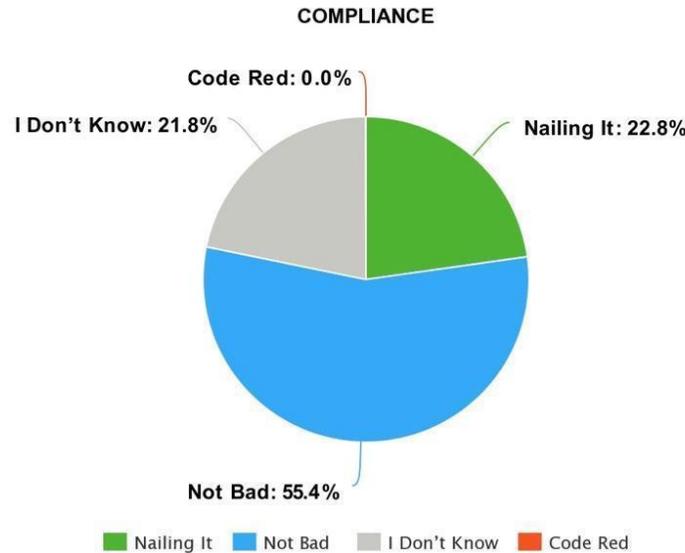
Staff Development

The Staff Development System provides a healthy ecosystem for the paid staff to thrive in their ministry, sustain their own emotional and spiritual health, while at the same time, staying highly engaged and productive in their positions.



Compliance

The Compliance System ensures that all legal requirements related to the church and ministry are met, including background checks, payroll filings, medical forms, licenses, etc.

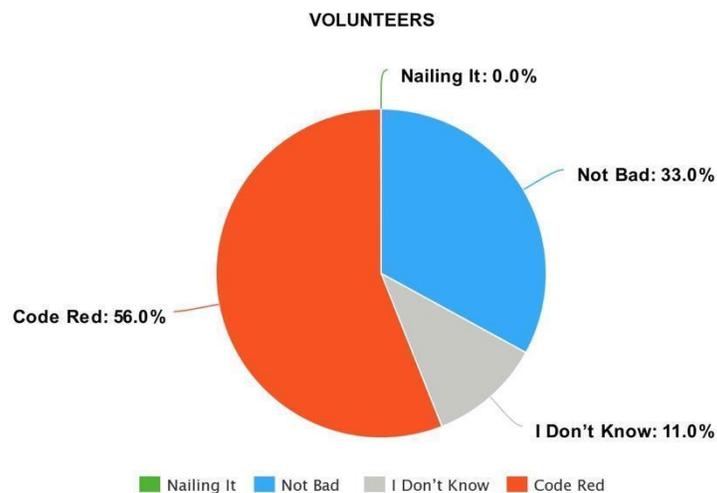


SYSTEM CHALLENGES

These Systems Had the Largest Percentage of "Code Reds."

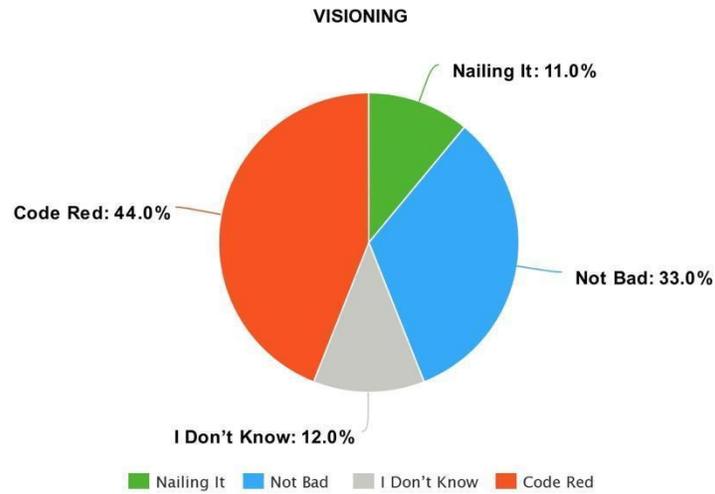
Volunteers

The Volunteer System provides a congregation with a hernia-free process for recruiting, equipping, and dispatching volunteers into roles that are life-giving for the volunteers and make an impact on the life of the community.



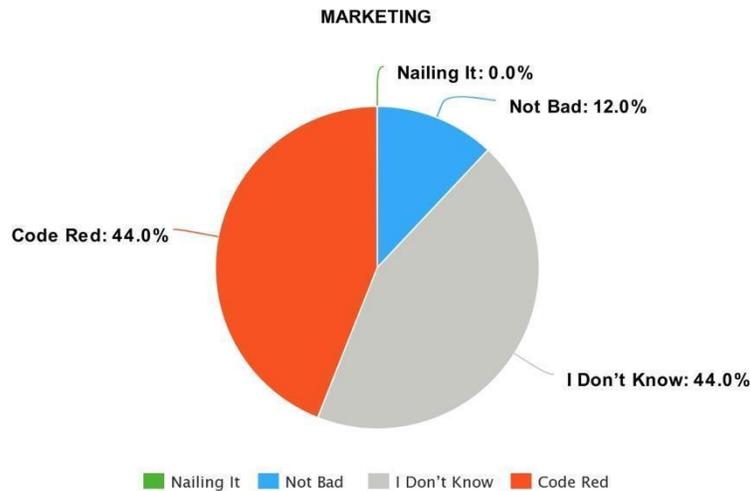
Visioning

The Visioning System defines for the ministry where it wants to go and provides benchmarks for how it hopes to get there.



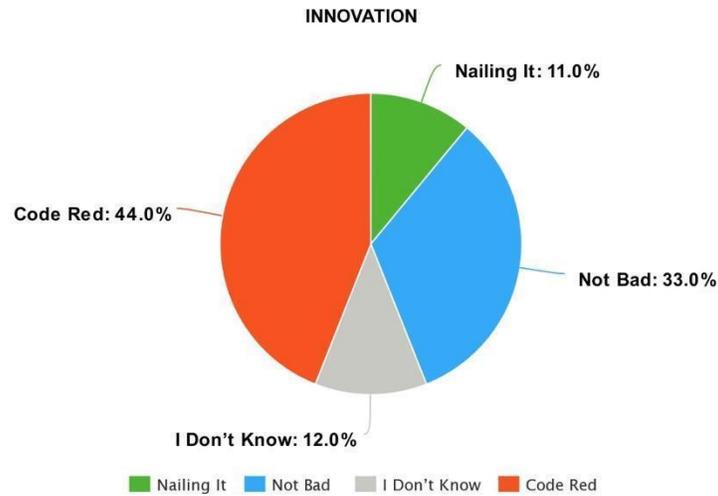
Marketing

The Marketing System identifies the habits a ministry uses to intentionally invite others into the life found as a part of their particular faith community.



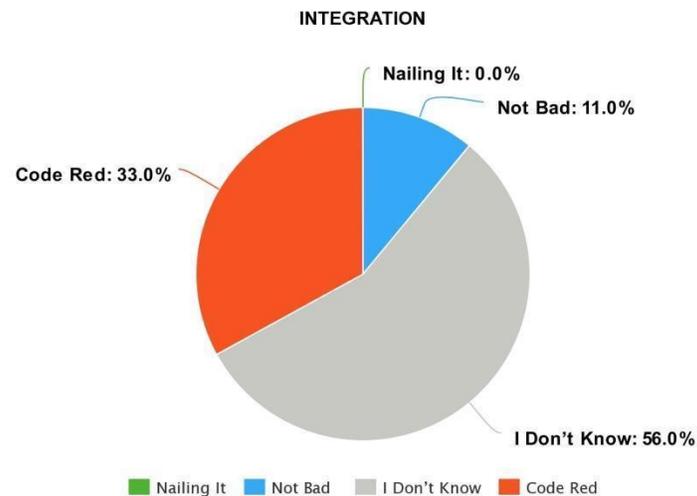
Innovation

The Innovation System points the ministry in the direction of its future, welcoming outside the box thinking from a generation without a long history in the organization.



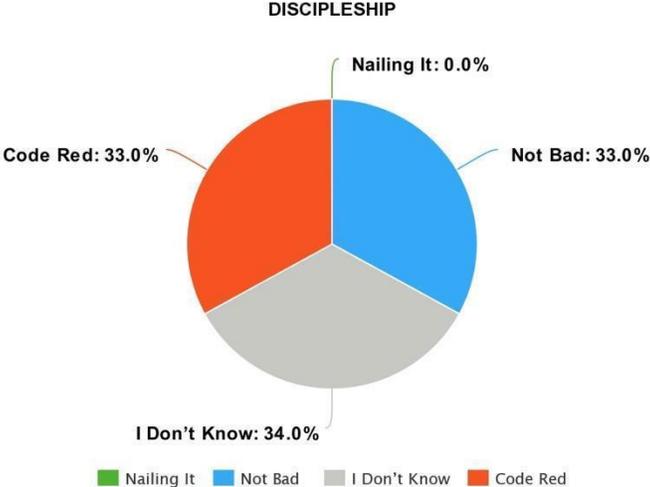
Integration

The Integration System links together the various departments and ministry efforts to remove silos and ensure the healthy, appropriate integration of the generations and the varied strands of ministry.



Discipleship

The Discipleship System identifies explicitly how the varied efforts of the ministry work together to deepen and strengthen the faith of those involved.



NEUTRAL RESULTS

The systems below are systems that seem to be more neutral in nature. They are neither strengths nor weaknesses, and had the highest number of “Not Bads.”

	Nailing It	Not Bad	Code Red	N/A
Calendar	0	7	1	1
Communication	0	7	2	-
Hospitality	2	4	1	2
Regular Programming	1	5	1	2
Major Events	1	5	2	1
Financial	-	-	1	4
Missions	-	5	2	2
Database	-	6	1	2

SYSTEMS RANKED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY

1. Communication
2. Hospitality
3. Volunteers**
4. Visioning**
5. Calendar
6. Innovation**
7. Missions
8. Compliance*
9. Facilities*
10. Discipleship**
11. Database
12. Regular Programming
13. Major Events
14. Staff Development*
15. Financial
16. Marketing**
17. Integration**

**Denotes systems listed as assets.*

***Denotes systems listed as challenges.*

ASSETS

Strengths for moving forward with this new ministry initiative.

OUTREACH AND SERVING IDENTITY

In discussions about the unique DNA of Northway Christian Church that should be protected as the church moves forward, Northway's commitment to outreach and serving in the community came up again and again. In almost every listening group, outreach and serving came up as a positive part of who Northway Christian is. Simply put, Northway cares about its community, and this is a powerful asset to be protected.

INCLUSIVITY

Being intentional about inclusivity is important to Northway. Throughout all of the listening sessions, this was one of the things that was repeated most often. It's not just lip service though. It can be seen on any given Sunday morning during worship. People from various ages and backgrounds come together to worship. Some who have been hurt by the Church in the past have found a place to call home again. Children are intentionally invited to be a part of the service in a meaningful and delightful way, and leadership responsibilities such as scripture reading are entrusted to teenagers and celebrated.

This commitment to inclusivity is a part of what makes Northway Northway. It is a strength to protect, and in an often divided world, a welcome breath of fresh air.

ENDOWMENT

One extremely unique asset of Northway Christian is the endowment set up from the sale of property to Highland Park Independent School District in 2015. It allows for extra financial margin and flexibility in a changing world that few churches will ever know. In times of uncertainty such as this season of a pandemic, the presence of the endowment serves to protect the church against unexpected expenses and budget deficits or shortfalls.

Moreover, the presence of a growing endowment opens the door to be able to take advantage of potential ministry opportunities that may arise in the future. This is a unique strength to be nourished, protected, and leveraged as Northway continues to move forward.

FACILITIES

Northway Christian Church has large and spacious facilities that are excellent, clean, and inviting to the community around it. From multipurpose ministry rooms to a spacious and beautiful sanctuary, there is plenty of room to grow and expand ministry. From the outside looking in, Northway's lawn and landscaping is both beautiful and inviting. The quality, aesthetic, and size of Northway's facilities is a strength for future growth and ministry opportunities to the surrounding community.



SENSE OF BEING KNOWN

People feel known and cared for at Northway. It's a place where the pastors know your name. People are visited and prayed for. They are checked in on in good and bad times, and members have a deep sense of being both known and loved by the staff and one another. In today's world full of hustle, bustle, and busy schedules, this is a unique strength of Northway Christian Church. People desire to be known and loved, and that's exactly what happens for those who call Northway home.

COMMITTED CORE

The existing congregation at Northway has gone through a significant transition in recent years and experienced much change. However, in spite of that, the church has a committed core of members who care deeply about their church and are willing to do whatever it will take to reach people and be the hands and feet of Christ to their community. That commitment is shown not only in long-time volunteers but also in the hallway conversations between members about what needs to be done and how they are serving others. This committed group of individuals at the core of the church make up good bones for the house called Northway Christian Church.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving forward with this new ministry initiative.

Some of the most pressing challenges facing Northway Christian Church today are systems-specific challenges that were found in our survey of the 17 essential systems of the church. Given their connectedness in nature, these system challenges are listed together below.

VOLUNTEERS

While Northway has a good number of volunteers for its size, many of the same volunteers are doing a large majority of the work. This will make it difficult to navigate any new changes or initiatives without additional volunteers or an expanded system of care for volunteers.

When asked to describe the effects of launching a successful worship service on the future of the church, one attender explained the change that would come in terms of volunteer health this way. "We would have more people coming and volunteering, so people would have time to rest and recover and not get burned out." Effective volunteer systems of recruiting, care, and communication are not currently in place at Northway resulting in strain on current staff and volunteers.

VISION

In the survey of the 17 essential systems of the church, vision had one of the highest percentages of "code reds." When asked about who the church is aiming to reach and what success would look like, there was really no consensus among focus group members. A clear and unifying vision of the future and the unique impact Northway Christian will make on the community is not currently present. Without a clear vision for both, it will be difficult to rally the people of Northway to transformational change and sustained growth

INNOVATION

With clear systems around innovation and how to try new things, both staff and church members can come alive with the freedom to exercise their gifts and move the mission forward at a rapid pace. Unfortunately, such a system for innovation is not currently in place. The lack of an innovation system results in second guessing, uncertainty, and a slower rate of change. In order to realize the Northway of the future, a clear system of innovation will need to be in place.

MARKETING

If you could change one thing about Northway Christian Church, what would you change? We asked this question in a focus group when a member gave this answer, "I would let people in our community know that we're here!"

The general consensus was that not enough people in the community know who Northway is and what they are about. Questions were raised repeatedly such as how to let people know about Northway? Another member explained the lack of knowledge in the community about the church like this, "We aren't very good about bragging on ourselves in the DOC."

In order to reach more people and maximize the impact in the surrounding community, it will be vital for Northway to build an effective system of marketing for the church to help share the good

news of what God is doing at Northway.

INTEGRATION

Siloed ministries are rarely healthy ministries. The church is the body of Christ, and a local church must be unified and integrated among ministry areas and departments to function at its best.

In our assessment of the 17 essential systems of the church, integration between various people, teams, and departments rated low. Without a clear and sustainable system of integration, Northway will likely not achieve the impact they desire to make in the Dallas and Park Cities communities.

DISCIPLESHIP

In the assessment of the 17 essential systems of the church, the discipleship system returned one of the lowest feelings of a system that was “nailing it.” In our listening sessions, it was difficult to get a sense of clarity on exactly why that is. However, that might be the biggest reason behind the challenge. There isn’t clarity around what’s missing from the overall discipleship process at Northway, just that something is indeed missing. Clarity around this system will be needed in order for Northway to be all that it wants to be as a church body.

LACK OF CRITICAL MASS

When asked what would be different at Northway in five years if a new worship service was successful, the answer came quickly and clearly, “We would have a full sanctuary!” One of the adjectives that came up most frequently to describe Northway was “shrinking,” and a large sanctuary with too many empty seats was brought up as a potential barrier to growth and retaining visitors during multiple listening groups.

For parents, the lack of a critical mass extends beyond the worship service and into the youth ministry as well. Across the board, more people in attendance on Sunday mornings would spark a buzz in the air and could be a ship that raises all tides. Today, a lack of critical mass is a barrier to that much desired buzz in the halls and was shared by some members as a barrier to retaining guests at Northway.

CLARITY IS KINDNESS

When it comes to leadership, clarity is kindness. Today, however, clarity is not pervasive in the life of Northway Christian Church. As one member put it, “There’s just no clarity about what we are doing!”

Another member posed this question. “If we have trouble with communication now, how much more if we add a new service?” Lack of clarity affects all aspects of church life from attenders to staff. Clarity makes you look great when it’s there, and causes unnecessary struggles when it is missing. As of today, a sense of clarity seems to be missing at Northway, and gaining clarity could serve as a powerful act of kindness to the congregation.

AGING CONGREGATION

“Well, I’m just going to say it. We’re getting old!” one person said. This sentiment was met with an uneasy laughter. As the people of Northway look around, they are noticing a rising average age of the congregation and know that it is something that will need to be addressed for future growth.

Another member shared it this way, “I’m 61 and my wife is 59, and we’re considered the young ones.” People want to see young families, singles, and new faces around Northway because they see the aging congregation around them and recognize it as a barrier toward continued growth into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reframe the next 12-18 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the ministry. Name October 2022 as the target date for ministries that have sufficient infrastructure and support to provide long-term stability, while enjoying incremental successes along the way.
- Present this report to the board requesting that they endorse a 12-18 month strategic design process.
- Invite a church prayer team to pray for this time of strategic development and share this timeline with them.
- Establish a Strategic Design Team who reports regularly to the board and Senior Minister and focuses on the recommendations below. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on providing day-to-day ministry by tending to two primary responsibilities:
 - **Addressing the immediate pressure points** as Northway makes the necessary transition toward thriving.
 - Establish a consensus for the direction of the ministry and take responsibility for **implementing the strategic, long-term changes** recommended in this report.
- Ministry Architects has been hired to be responsible for the following tasks:
 - Chairing and leading the Design Team during the 12-month period of momentum building.
 - Serving as an Experienced, Professional Coach: Ministry Architects will play the “coach” role during this renovation period. Ministry Architects will offer experienced direction for the building of an infrastructure for the Senior Minister and provide ongoing coaching for the ministries’ staff members as well as the Design Team.
 - Working with the staff and volunteers to ensure the achievement of the outcomes outlined in this report’s timeline.
 - Assisting the church in overcoming the obstacles that are certain to arise in the process of restructuring and fine-tuning the ministries.



- Assisting in improvement of key systems that will be necessary for growth
- Guiding the foundational work necessary to successfully launch seven new small groups that average at least ten in attendance. In conversation with the senior minister, this is in place of the original task of launching a new worship service. It is Ministry Architects' observation that the success of these five new small groups will be a readiness indicator for any future worship service development.

Additional Recommendations:

- While the following recommendation is not currently included in the contract with Ministry Architects, it is still included in our recommendations and in the timeline below. Whether Northway chooses to partner with Ministry Architects to lead the work on this recommendation or chooses to work on it internally, it will be important that the following work be done in order to ensure sustainability and success.
 - Guiding the process of establishing staff systems that provide clarity and accountability for everyone involved. *

* An asterisk (*) denotes any recommendations that are not currently included in the contract between CHURCH and Ministry Architects.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this report fall into five main categories. A brief summary of the needs in each category is contained below with more detailed recommendations named in the following section of the report.

1. Aligned Mission, Values, and Goal
2. Volunteer and Leadership Development
3. Building Systems and Infrastructure
4. Communication and Marketing Plans
5. Staffing and Organizational Structure*

ALIGNED MISSION, VALUES, AND GOALS

Begin the work of stepping forward into a new chapter of ministry together by clarifying the vision and the goals of the church's ministry. Align the structure of the ministry to live into this vision and craft a new narrative for the church's future.

VOLUNTEER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development will help staff and congregation members serve joyfully and happily in ways that are clearly defined. Some strategic work is needed in the following key areas:

1. Equipping staff and ministry leaders.
2. Recruiting and equipping new volunteers/new members.
3. Establishing systems and structures for evaluating all church leaders – staff and volunteer.
4. Helping new members and younger members become connected to volunteer roles.



BUILDING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The church has a firm infrastructure in many areas. It has experienced staff and lay leadership in many ministries, who have a smoothly running process for their organization. There are other areas, however, where it is time to square the corners and ensure the foundation is stable.

Those areas were identified in the systems assessment and include the following:

1. Volunteers
2. Vision
3. Innovation
4. Marketing
5. Integration
6. Discipleship

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING PLAN

For both internal and external communication, pull together the multiple streams of communication in a way that results in a coherent, strategic, integrated message producing agreed-upon, desired results

***STAFFING AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The church will benefit from evaluating how the workload is delineated among the staff positions. Strategically rework the existing structure in order to equip staff for success, leverage the unique gifts and talents of the staff, and plan for staffing success for the future.

STRATEGIC DESIGN TEAM TASKS:

These specific initiatives will enable the church to develop the five categories summarized above.

ALIGNED MISSION, VALUES, AND GOALS

- **Visioning:** Invite leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of envisioning the future with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the ministries and support the church's vision:
 - A Mission Statement
 - Defined Core Values
 - A Set of Three-Year Revolving Goals with One-Year Benchmarks

Vision Summits work best with a group representing pastors, staff, board members, volunteers, and other key ministry leaders. Sometimes it may be helpful to include an open invitation to the congregation.

- **Sharing the Vision:** Upon completion of the long-term vision and goal-setting process, create a game plan that will outline the best ways to communicate the vision, values, and goals of the church's ministry (sermon series, guidebooks, small group curriculum, etc.)



- **Focus:** Through the visioning process, explore the target groups for ministry. Instead of “being all things to all people,” establish priorities for discipleship, engagement, and evangelism.

VOLUNTEER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Host a “Quick Start” Summit:** Invite the Design Team, key volunteers, and church staff to participate in a Quick Start Summit in which the renovation process is launched and the tasks outlined in the Assessment Report are addressed. The Summit tackles the items that need to be done first and builds momentum for the church’s renovation process (typically items in the first few months of the timeline)..
- **Volunteer Leadership Clarity:** Draft and/or update written job descriptions for all volunteer roles in the church. Work with leaders to ensure the job descriptions accurately match the work being done, clarify to whom each volunteer is accountable.
- **Volunteer Development:** Provide sufficient training and development opportunities for all volunteers in a way that leaves them inspired to serve again rather than exhausted.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Create a master list of ministry opportunities in every area of the church, from weekly, to monthly, to annual opportunities. Once all volunteer opportunities in the church have been identified, begin the recruitment process to ensure that all positions are filled by August 1 of each year. Develop an annual leadership directory that lists all committees and leaders for all committees and groups (Board, Committee Chairpersons, etc.).
- **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training and vision-casting event for all volunteers at the beginning of each year.
- **Volunteer Alignment:** Do an audit of all volunteer teams and roles in the church and clarify their unique contribution to the church. Build a clear organizational chart for all volunteer teams and roles in the church and determine how best to align them for maximum impact in growing the church.

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING PLAN

- Review and revise current church communication practices to ensure that all congregants, regardless of age or technological proficiency, feel informed. Utilize as many forms of communication as possible including updating the church’s website, brochures, social media, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
- Create a protocol by which all decisions and important information are shared throughout the whole church community, ensuring that the church is not just communicating information, but that people are actually receiving it.

***STAFFING AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- **Leadership Evaluation:** Provide mechanisms for ongoing evaluation for all church staff members. The process should include space for self-reflection, supervisor feedback, and requests from the employee about how the church can help him or her succeed. It should be done in a way that leaves leaders feeling supported, encouraged, and positively challenged.



- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for ongoing education and coaching for the church staff including coaching, reading and continuing education.
- **Leadership Clarity:** Write or review written job descriptions for all paid staff positions in the church. Work with staff to ensure the job descriptions accurately match the work being done. Prominently include the role of building volunteer teams.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each 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).
- **Personnel Policy:** Revise the existing personnel policy to include new job descriptions, set a mutually understood level of accountability between those in leadership and the staff, and address any changes in staffing practices.

PRESSURE POINTS

In order to create a healthy climate conducive to change, Ministry Architects suggests addressing the most pressing needs in the first four to six months of the timeline. Pressure Points are the issues that, unless addressed, could very well keep the church “stuck.”

The following timeline outlines an intentional and strategic approach to implementing the recommendations listed above. The recommendations section is a broad and thorough list of recommendations for the church, but they are not presented in order or priority.

The timeline below prioritizes the following pressure points over the next four to six months:

- **Pressure Point #1:** Build a Robust Game Plan for Launching Small Groups to Reach Young Adults and Families
 - Write a strategic game plan for building proactive small groups in the community to reach young adults and young families and connect them in some way to the life of the greater church.
 - Craft a leadership plan for this ministry including a recruiting plan and any necessary job descriptions.
 - Create clear measures of success and participation goals.
 - Draft a timeline for implementation of these small groups and a plan for accountability and evaluation within the first year.
- **Pressure Point #2:** Establish a Clear Vision and Mission
 - Invite key leaders to participate in a multi-session, on-campus process of visioning a new future for Northway’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
 - 1-year benchmarks
 - An organizational structure for the ministry

- **Pressure Point #3:** Establish Clarity around Division of Labor for Staff and Volunteers
 - Evaluate all existing volunteer job descriptions for effectiveness and clarity, editing them as needed.
 - Write new results based job descriptions for any new volunteer roles or volunteer roles with no existing job description in place.
 - Create a strategic game plan for volunteer care at Northway.
 - Evaluate and edit staff job descriptions for clarity, effectiveness, and staff alignment.*
 - Plan a regular leadership launch or training event for volunteers ensuring that volunteers in each ministry area have the resources needed to fulfill their roles and a space to ask questions.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

The following provides Northway Christian Church with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of a healthy, sustainable ministry.

** An asterisk (*) denotes any recommendations that are not currently included in the contract between CHURCH and Ministry Architects.*

Month #1 – October 2021

Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

Outcomes:

- This report has been presented to the board for the strategic design of the church's systems and the board has given full support of this plan.
- A Quick Start Summit has been scheduled for October or November.
- The Design Team 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 design process. They have received a copy of this report and timeline.
- The church has partnered with Ministry Architects to serve as the architect for the entire design process.

Month #2 – November 2021

Focus: Quick Start & Pressure Points

Outcomes:

- A Quick Start Summit has taken place in which the design 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 design process.
- A Church-Wide Visioning Summit has been scheduled for February and a "save the date" email has been sent to the church leadership (staff & volunteers)
- Staff members have given feedback on their current job descriptions.*
- The senior minister has met with Ministry Architects to discuss an overall staffing strategy for the ministry.
- The design work, including the practice of equipping ministry as a biblical imperative, has been added to the preaching/worship calendar for the upcoming year through liturgy, sermons, and/or special presentations in worship.
- Volunteer recruitment guidelines have been developed to help guide current leaders in healthier volunteer recruitment practices.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented that ensure that all congregants, regardless of age or technological proficiency,

feel informed. Utilize as many forms of communication as possible including updating the church's website, brochures, social media, mass texting, mail, email, etc.

- A strategic game plan for building proactive small groups in the community to reach young adults and young families and connect them in some way to the life of the greater church has been created.
- A cascading communications strategy has been created that helps to easily identify “who needs to know what” throughout the church when decisions are made. Consider the concentric circles of leadership in the church and the timeline in which they should be informed of decisions. Ensure a list of communication tools is created that will help carry the information to the correct groups.

Month #3 – December 2021

Focus: Pressure Points & Staffing

Outcomes:

- Promotion of the Church-Wide Vision Summit has begun.
- A staff meeting strategy has been developed that helps staff stay in regular conversation about the ministry of the church that leaves staff members feeling well-prepared to respond to changes in the ministry. *
- Job descriptions for all paid staff positions in the church have been written and reviewed. The staff has been included in the process such that the job descriptions accurately match the work being done. The role of building volunteers is prominently included.*
- Each staff member has developed a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).*
- A long-term staffing game plan has been created to outline the key next steps in adding any additional staff to the team.*
- Mechanisms for ongoing evaluation for all church staff members that include pace for self-reflection, supervisor feedback, and requests from the employee about how the church can help him or her succeed has been implemented. *
- A Volunteer Ministry Job Description template has been created.
- Any tools needed for the cascading communications strategy (such as newsletters, meeting minutes, internal websites, etc.) have been created and have begun to be used.
- A Leadership plan has been created for the proactive small group ministry including a recruiting plan and any necessary job descriptions.

Month #4 – January 2022

Focus: Communication & Pressure Points

Outcomes:

- A timeline for implementation of these small groups and a plan for accountability and evaluation within the first year has been created.



- Clear measures of success and participation goals have been identified for the proactive small groups ministry.
- Job descriptions and processes have been updated to reflect the new sustainable staffing model approved by the board.*
- The personnel policy has been revised to include new job descriptions, set a mutually understood level of accountability between those in leadership and the staff, and to provide for annual review and evaluation.*
- All staff reviews and evaluations for the 2021 year have been completed.*

Month #5 – February 2022

Focus: Visioning Summit & Volunteer Structure

Outcomes:

- A Church-Wide Vision Summit with all major stakeholders has occurred and produced visioning documents for the church (mission statement, core values, goals, and structure).
- Volunteer ministry description forms have been created and distributed to leaders to gather raw information about the volunteer ministry opportunities they lead.
- One-year benchmarks have been assigned to each three-year, revolving goal developed in the church-wide visioning process.
- A clear organizational chart for all volunteer teams and roles in the church has been created and how to best to align them for maximum impact in growing the church has been determined.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for the 2022-2023 academic year.
 - Volunteer recruiting season has opened, and each ministry leader has been equipped to complete the following recruiting tasks:
 - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
 - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2022-2023 ministry year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
- Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to their ministry.

Month #6 – March 2022

Focus: Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers

Outcomes:

- All pressure points have been addressed.
- Mechanisms for ongoing education and coaching for the church staff including coaching, reading and continuing education have been identified.*

- A game plan outlining the best ways to communicate the vision, values, and goals of the church's ministry has been created (sermon series, guidebooks, small group curriculum, etc.)
- An audit has been completed of all volunteer teams and roles in the church and has clarified their unique contribution to the church.
- A game plan for volunteer care has been created that leaves volunteers feeling excited, cared for, and known.
- A database and directory for all ministry leadership teams and leaders has been created to provide clarity and connection for all ministry leaders.

Month #7 – April 2022

Focus: Volunteers & Equipping

Outcomes

- The Design Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the design process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.
- A marketing game plan has been created that selects the best communication methods for the community and assigns next steps for implementing them.
- Any new roles created in the volunteer Organizational Chart have job descriptions for their task.
- A game plan for ongoing volunteer development has been created.
- Volunteer recruitment has continued, and ministry leaders have begun asking potential new volunteers to fill roles for 2022-2023.

Month #8 – May 2022

Focus: Equipping, Staff Development

Outcomes

- A Discipleship gameplan has been created that outlines a clear and practical strategy for discipleship across all ages and stages within the church.
- The proactive small group game plan and ministry has been re-evaluated and any necessary pivots have been made.
- A communications survey has been sent out to staff and attenders to evaluate the effectiveness of the new communication plan so far and any pivots to the plan have been made.
- Recommendations for volunteer training development have been given to church leadership and ministry team leaders for review.

Month #9 – June 2022

Focus: Equipping & Attendance Tracking

Outcomes:

- An attendance-tracking game plan has been written that ensures attendance has been tracked throughout key ministry gatherings (worship, youth & children's ministry, major events, etc.)
- Work has begun on the 2022-2023 ministry calendar.
- A system for innovation and testing out new ministry ideas in an agile and permission giving way has been drafted and submitted to the board for approval.
- Mid year staff evaluations and reviews have been completed.*

Month #10 – July 2022

Focus: Equipping

Outcomes:

- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the church where each team leader gathers with their volunteers to launch their team's ministry. This could be a church-wide event, or different gatherings for each department or team.
- The Design Team has met monthly and decided how often they will meet for the remainder of the design process.
- A strategic gameplan for integrating all the ministries of the church in a unified and non siloed approach to the mission of Northway has been created.
- All strategic gameplans have been evaluated for implementation and effectiveness.
- The senior minister has evaluated the current leadership effectiveness of the proactive small group ministry so far. Any necessary pivots have been outlined.

Month #11 – August 2022

Focus: Outreach, Equipping

Outcomes:

- An outreach follow-up strategy has been created to capture information from guests who attend outreach events and provide timely follow-up to invite them to take a next step in the church.
- The 2022-2023 ministry calendar has been completed.
- 50% of the one-year benchmarks have been accomplished.
- All Northway volunteers have received a personal check in from a staff member to check on them, find one practical way to resource them, and answer any questions they may have.
- A re-evaluation of the current staff configuration and recent changes has been made. Any next steps or growing edges have been identified.*
- Current Pressure Points have been identified.

Month #12 – September 2022

Focus:

- Next steps for the proactive small groups ministry and/or new worship service have been identified and a gameplan outlining next steps and a practical timeline has been created.
- The 2022-2023 ministry calendar has been publicized.
- All volunteers have experienced a leadership launch.
- Northway Christian Church has celebrated the progress it has made together in addressing pressure points over the past year.
- A sustainability game plan has been created that outlines a process of accountability for continuing with this work and growth over the next 12 months.

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Trey has served as Preaching Pastor of Princeton UMC, Lead Pastor of Kingston UMC, College Director (serving students at Vanderbilt, Belmont, and Lipscomb Universities), Director of Young Adult Ministries at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, and international missions coordinator with Joshua Expeditions. He and his wife Debbie live in Oklahoma City, OK, as the delighted parents of Liam and Jack.



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