

Dear Friend, your involvement in our ministry is appreciated. We are growing, diversifying, and helping young people in more ways than ever!

I'm pleased to share we've now partnered with over 60 churches over the last five years. Most of these partnerships included a six-or 12-month consulting relationship. Others ranged from a one-time visit to train a search committee to a three-or four-year partnership in our extended course of study and cohort coaching program.

One of our recent goals has been to adapt our curriculum to better support young people. One result is to include additional coursework in counseling. One of our staff instructors, a social worker, specializes in mental health and suicide prevention. She teaches about youth in crisis so that youth ministers can recognize signs of eating disorders, abuse, stress, dependencies, and other diseases and symptoms that are a threat to the adolescents they serve.

I've also been particularly grateful lately for God's continued work through our students after they complete our course of study. Emily, a college student from Andover, recently shared her interest in pursuing ministry as a vocation; her youth minister was commissioned through our program. Chris, another commissioned YMIM youth minister, was recently appointed as a licensed local pastor in Central Kansas. We're seeing youth lead, learn more about the Bible, and share testimony about their faith. **Most of our partners see dramatic growth in youth ministry attendance, with many doubling the size of their groups. Our students, in partnership with the Spirit, have a hand in that.**



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Jenna Soltys, a YMIM youth minister, helped lead a chili cook-off fundraiser in February to support missions. Over 30 youth participated in the event, including these prize winners!



Our 2018-19 Course of Study Cohort in May 2019. These students are local and distant, from Dodge City and Manhattan (KS), to Norfolk and Kearney (NE).

In addition to our partners, our organization has seen growth as well. Paul wrote, "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard... these things God has prepared for those who love the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9). Indeed, we've had requests to help churches in ways we didn't imagine!

Two months ago, I got a call from a pastor in Springfield, Missouri. She said, "Matt, does your organization coach people in children's ministry? You seem to specialize in youth ministry, but we like your work."

In April, I opened an email from a colleague in North Carolina. She wrote, "I know a church near us that could use your expertise. Have you thought about church consulting outside the Midwest?"

And, I recently spent a year coaching a young, newly-ordained pastor how to oversee staff, lead committee meetings, and manage a budget. He said, "Thanks for the help! Seminary didn't teach me any of this!" In two years, his church attendance, staff, and budget all grew.

Our ministry is ready to diversify into new areas that are not limited by a ministry specialty or location. Our board is responding to these opportunities for growth by co-branding and changing our structure.

Beginning on July 1, we'll begin operations as "Ministry Leadership Initiative, Inc." (MLI), and we'll co-brand as "Youth Ministry Institute Midwest" (YMIM). Our board, which remains the same group of local professionals, will transition from operating under the non-profit umbrella of our sister organization into our own stand-alone 501c(3) non-profit based in Prairie Village, Kansas. The switch is as simple as transferring our funds to a new bank account and changing our legal name. We'll continue working with our primary partner, YMI, so we'll co-brand as "MLI - YMIM," embracing this ministry strength and new direction.

What does this mean for you, our supportive community, and for our clients?

Frankly, those who support our organization won't see much difference. Our Tax ID is changing to 82-4308014. Gifts sent before or after July 1 will end up in the same account to support expanded ministry in an effort to share the love and grace of Jesus Christ in new ways. Checks can continue to be written to Youth Ministry Institute Midwest, or to our new legal name, Ministry Leadership Initiative Inc. Our address is the same, as listed in this letter, and we'll soon unveil a new website (stayed tuned!).

We'll continue offering quality instruction for youth ministry leaders, and we're doing this beyond the Midwest: we hosted a youth ministry conference at Montreat, North Carolina in January, I was invited to teach clergy and youth ministry leaders at the NEXT Church national gathering in Seattle in March, and we're seeing other new opportunities emerge.

Our board and I value your partnership and appreciate your previous gifts. Thank you!

Would you support MLI - YMIM with a financial gift in 2019? Consider making a recurring gift on our website to help balance our non-profit work year-round. This ministry influences over 500 youth each year, and you make a difference in this mission!

Peace,

Matt Vaughan, June 2019

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Ministry Leadership Initiative Board:

Sara Aitken, Chris Andersen, Matt Dumler, Kris Kvam, Tony Liu, Thomas McIntyre, Cindy Parks, Desiree' Reinke, Matt Vaughan, Zach Walker, Rick Walter, Mark Webb, Sally Wright



Ryan King, youth minister from Lawrence First Presbyterian Church, shared what he learned during the YMIM Course of Study and Cohort Coaching Program. He said, "There's no way I would still be in ministry without the creative support and ideas I learned from this wonderful group of people. I am a better leader for my youth. Thank you!"