

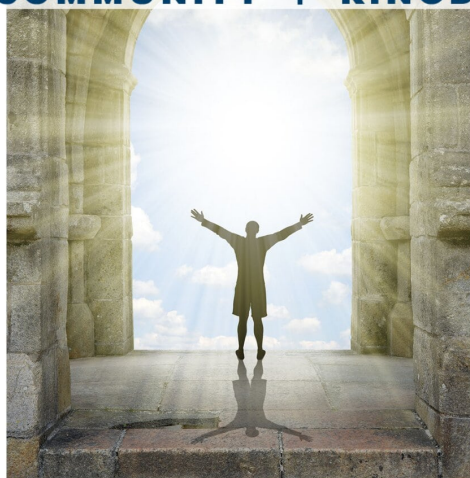
MINISTRY PLAN

2024



CONNECTIONS
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COMMUNITY | KINGDOM | CALLING



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OVERVIEW

In keeping with our Mission to **make disciples by connecting people in community, teaching them the truths of God's Kingdom, and helping them engage their unique calling from God**, our 2024 Ministry Plan focuses on equipping and encouraging members of Connections **to be intentionally maturing in their faith and influencing the people around them with the hope of Christ**.

It's no secret that there is an erosion in the foundation of faith in God in our culture. This reminds us of the examples in scripture where faith was lost in one generation (Judges 2:10-13). To prevent this, God commands His followers to be intentional about maturing in our own faith and passing it on to the next generation. (Deut 6:4-9, Joshua 4:20-24, Psalm 78:4, Joel 1:3, and many others). As a body of believers, we choose to obey that command to mature in our faith and pass it on to the next generation!

That's why, over the next two years, we want to see every member of Connections involved in a discipleship group (LifeGroup or Bible Study), serving on a ministry team (inside or outside the church), and becoming better equipped to share their faith through words and actions to the non-believers in their life, and to the generations following. By living this way, we hope to see non-believers and future generations genuinely examining Jesus and His teachings, asking questions, and being invited to pursue a life of faith in Him.

These priorities influence every ministry, as seen in the following plans. However, plans are only as effective and influential as those who invest in them. We intend to not only show you each plan but also invite you to fully engage in the ministries where God prompts you. Together, we can achieve this God-given vision for our church and community so *"all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that we might always fear (revere) the LORD our God."* Joshua 4:24

OUR VISION:
"To be intentionally maturing in our faith and influencing the people around us with the hope of Christ"



ADULT MINISTRY

The Adult Ministries at Connections focus on equipping, encouraging, and empowering people as followers of Jesus. Jesus called Himself the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE, so following Him should focus on those areas: leading people in the WAY of Jesus (sacrificial, worshipful, fully surrendered living) into the TRUTH of Jesus (by studying and applying His Word) to live the LIFE of Jesus (in relationship with God and others). We call this three-part framework the Discipleship Pathway.

The environments listed below offer opportunities designed to mature disciples in one or more of these areas:

MEN'S MINISTRY

Our Men's Ministry exists to equip, encourage, and empower men to mature in Christ and lead their lives, homes, families, and friendships in God-honoring ways. Through twice-monthly large group gatherings and smaller group interactions throughout the month, we use the power of relationships and Scripture to sharpen one another and learn how to apply God's wisdom to our everyday lives. In addition to these TRUTH-focused opportunities, we also have periodic Service Projects to help people in our church family and community and coordinate and serve at large church gatherings (community events, etc.). These broaden our discipleship to develop the WAY and the LIFE of Jesus among our men. To find out more, please contact us at men@connections.cc.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Similarly, our Women's Ministry, Women2Women, exists to inspire and encourage women in their faith and help them see their value and purpose in the Kingdom of God. We focus on creating a supportive community where women of all generations can grow and thrive through monthly fellowship gatherings, weekly Bible studies, and individual discipleship relationships. We are eager to see our newest initiative, Wise Women Discipleship Groups, take flight in 2023-2024! In addition, we encourage our women to serve in the church and our community by volunteering with our Missional Partners, serving in our schools, and caring for our church family members in times of trial or celebration. To find out more, email women@connections.cc.

In addition to our gender-specific ministries, Adult Ministries offers mixed-gender gatherings to help adults mature in their faith.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDIES

We offer multiple Bible studies environments on Sunday mornings before our Worship Gathering during fall, winter, and spring. These interactive experiences help us mature in our understanding and application of the TRUTH of God's Word.

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP GATHERING

Following the Biblical example, our Worship Gathering exists to gather our church family for a specific time of praise and worship to God. Worship takes on many forms in our gathering: singing, prayer, sharing in Communion, fellowship, and hearing the Word of God preached and explained so we can apply it to our lives. Our Worship Gathering is a great place for people at any stage of faith: unsure, testing, beginning, or deepening, and it provides our church family with a safe and accessible place to invite those around them to meet Jesus.

LIFEGROUPS

While many environments are available at Connections that prioritize one or more elements of the Discipleship Pathway, all three come together in a LifeGroup. LifeGroups most closely resemble the discipleship model Jesus shared with His followers; that's why they are a crucial element of our Discipleship Ministry.

Specifically, LifeGroups aim to help disciples grow together as Jesus' first followers did - sharing LIFE together while learning and understanding His TRUTH and living it out in our lives His WAY. LifeGroups are supported by the church staff and ministry partners but are autonomous groups that decide when and where to meet, what to study, and how to communicate with each other. To find out more, contact us at lifegroups@connections.cc.

MINISTRY TEAMS

The WAY of Jesus is sacrificial and servant-based. That's why we place such a high value on serving inside and outside the church. Sunday morning and mid-week Ministry Teams and community engagement teams offer opportunities for you to grow in your faith through service. These teams have varying levels of commitment, but all offer comprehensive training and mentoring, so you are never left unequipped or unempowered to serve as God leads you. To learn more about where your gifts and passions can be invested, please email engage@connections.cc.

FAMILY MINISTRY

Several years ago, God called us to realize that the family is His creation and the birthplace of discipleship. Church ministries should not compete with or try to replace the role of the family and the spiritual influencers within it. Instead, church ministries should partner with the home to inspire and equip the primary disciple-builders in each family.

The mission of Family Ministry, then, is to create a culture of intentional disciple-building families by making discipleship in the home Easy, Likely, and Clear. Beginning in 2024, Family Ministry will create easy-to-use faith development ideas and resources for families to implement into their homes and provide environments where disciple-builders can be encouraged, inspired, and equipped through interaction and discussion with one another.

OUR MISSION:
To create a culture of intentional disciple-building families by making discipleship in the home Easy, Likely, and Clear.

Some of these environments and resources will help us prioritize healthy marriages as a foundational building block of intentional disciple-building families. Others will encourage and equip Holy-Spirit-led parenting and grandparenting. Additionally, we are taking a stand against the attacks on the family by the evil one and combating those efforts that lead to parenting/discipling in isolation with initiatives that will build a strong community among families: within similar life stages and intergenerationally. The power of this Holy-Spirit-led community is more than enough to overwhelm the societal and cultural attacks our families are currently experiencing.

All of this requires more significant investment than in years past, and we are inviting you to begin praying about the role God is calling you - and preparing you - to fulfill. As each phase of this new ministry is created and communicated, please be eagerly and expectantly seeking God, listening to His direction, then boldly and obediently following Him into this ministry. We are excited to lock arms with you and invest in strong families who will build strong communities!

One of the primary ways we partner with families is by providing age-specific ministries to encourage maturity in Christ for all members of the Connections family. Below, you will find specific descriptions for these ministries.

KIDMIN

KidMin, our Children's Ministry, exists to introduce children to Jesus in a manner that will transform their lives through solid Biblical truths. Our vision for a child's time in KidMin is that they will have an understanding of Christ that will guide them to be drawn to Him earnestly, serve Him faithfully, and share Him boldly.

Our primary environments for kids occur weekly during our Sunday Morning Bible Study time and Sunday Morning Worship Gathering, annually during our Vacation Bible School, and periodically during our Celebration Seasons (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost). Through these unique and varied experiences for kids, we will emphasize the approachability of God when we draw near to him, the importance of faith in Him, obedience to His commands, the invitation He gives children to be useful in work for Him, and the expectation He has for us to share Him boldly with friends and family.

In addition to what kids experience, KidMin also focuses on equipping disciple-builders in the home to reinforce and expand their child's faith. Parent resources that align with a child's experience are available for each of these experiences, which, when used in the home in everyday ways, will accelerate a child's maturity in Christ.

Every environment and resource in KidMin is designed to work together to provide effective and inviting experiences for kids and thorough equipping and encouragement for disciple-builders in the home. We are eager to experience all God has planned for kids and families and are excited to have you partner with us as we invest in the next generation of the church.

OUR VISION:
*that [kids] will have
an understanding of
Christ that will guide
them to be drawn to
Him earnestly, serve
Him faithfully, and
share Him boldly.*



STUDENT MINISTRY

OUR MISSION:
*Guiding students
toward maturity in
Christ by sharing the
truth of the Gospel
through trusting
relationships.*

The seven years encompassing Middle and High school are dynamic, complex, and incredibly influential in establishing a foundation of faith that lasts a lifetime. That's why it's the area experiencing the strongest attack from the enemy.

But God's truth and His presence in a student's life are more robust than these attacks. That's why we are committed to guiding them toward maturity in Christ by sharing the truth of the gospel through trusting relationships.

The competition for students' attention is fierce. The church must be present and engaged with students in multiple places and at numerous times throughout a week so that the reality of God and a faith perspective are among the voices students hear. We are expanding our Student Ministry environments significantly because of this.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY (MSM)

Over the next three years, we will create trusting relationships at all three local middle schools, create a new environment to guide committed students to maturity in Christ, and refine existing environments so that they work together to guide middle schoolers from unknown to committed disciples. Some specific goals for this timeframe are:

- Creating trusting relationships with students, faculty & staff at all three local middle schools in our community (MMS, KQA, Civica).
- Developing a new environment where our committed students can continue to grow in their maturity in Christ & help disciple other students in their journey.
- Refining existing environments within our ministry so they work cohesively to guide students toward maturity in Christ.
- Adding a "destination" Middle School Summer camp (CIY MIX) that allows our coaches to focus entirely on the discipleship of students
- Creating parent outreach events for us to better connect with non-attending families



HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY (HSM)

In the next two years, we will expose high school students in the Johnstown/Milliken communities to the hope found in Christ and develop their faith through intentional environments. Some of our specific goals for the next two years are:

- Increase weekly presence at local high schools.
- Cultivate faith development through tiered small group environments.
- Establish deeper connections with students' homes.

In keeping with our student ministry vision, our plans for 2023-2024 include:

- Creating HSM 5th quarter events in partnership with RHS FCA
- Creating opportunities for HSM student body outreach events at RHS during the winter and spring months
- Creating monthly student outreach events at the "Y" in Johnstown
- Creating "our turf" events that help connect students from the community to our student ministry environments
- Creating parent outreach events for us to better connect with non-attending families
- Creating two new discipleship environments for our high school students



MISSIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Church is God's means to reach a rebellious world with His message of forgiveness, love, and hope. As part of the Church, we intentionally engage our community to establish relationships built on trustworthiness and credibility. Not all of our efforts immediately produce the opportunity to share the Gospel, but they all focus on demonstrating God's love and care for our community. We plan to significantly expand our opportunities to engage and serve our communities in 2023-2024 and are excited to have you share your time, talents, and passions with others in Johnstown & Milliken. Email us at engage@connections.cc for more information.

MISSIONS & MISSIONAL PARTNERS

Everything we do is missional – focused on going and making disciples. Even though our focus is the immediate places and people that God has placed in our lives, we also need to be involved in the broader work of the Kingdom. We define Missions as the initiatives that support and encourage people and organizations who spread the Gospel in places Connections doesn't have a presence.

Missional Partners are specific relationships in which we provide multiple layers of support: financial (funded by a specific percentage of our General Fund Giving), prayer, relationship, and active partnership (where we go and serve those serving other areas). Currently, we dedicate 5% of General Fund giving to Missional Partners. Our goal is to expand that by an additional 1% each year until we are a tithing church, dedicating 10% of our General Fund to Missional Partners.

Our Missions Ministry Team and our Board of Elders oversee our Missions efforts. If you want to learn more about that team, please email missions@connections.cc.

MEMBER CARE & BENEVOLENCE

CARE MINISTRY

In addition to spreading the message of the Gospel, the church should be a place of care and recovery. Our Care Ministry exists to extend that care to the members of the Connections family and others in our community that we know. There are multiple elements to provide that care: meals in times of crisis or celebration, visits to those who are in care facilities or homebound, lay counseling, and pastoral counseling. Our goal is to unleash the collective power of the Connections family to care for each other and our community well, so if you are interested in sharing your gifts or need to experience the care of the Connections Family, please email care@connections.cc.

BENEVOLENCE

Financial crises can happen to anyone at any time. God has called Connections to support those within our family and those in the broader community. Our goal is to offer a hand-up (empowering people to take steps forward) and not a hand-out (just paying bills, etc.). Our Pastoral Team handles benevolence relationships and keeps them strictly confidential. If you or someone you know is in a financial crisis, please contact our pastors at pastors@connections.cc. We have seen significant increases in Benevolence requests throughout 2023 and expect that to continue into 2024. Please join us in preparing to meet these needs as the new year progresses.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

All of us could benefit from a trusted adviser when we're in times of uncertainty or unsettledness. Our trained Stephen Ministers have the skill and passion to offer that kind of relationship to you. Through confidential discussions, Stephen Ministers help you identify barriers and help you develop ideas to remove or avoid them. They can also help you identify opportunities and provide the encouragement and accountability necessary to step into them and move forward. To find out more, email care@connections.cc.

SUMMARY & CALL TO ACTION

The plans you just reviewed are audacious and are far more extensive than we can accomplish alone. That's **precisely** where God wants us - to lift our vision and goals to the point where we absolutely depend on Him. We truly believe God has crafted these plans and is calling us to participate with Him in making them a reality. He has the necessary resources at His command - money, time, talent, and passion - but He's distributed them to us. In His wisdom and grace, He invites us into a partnership with Him where we bring what He's given us, and He amplifies it for His purposes.

Accomplishing the Vision God has given us across all our ministries will require a family-wide effort. God has placed you in the Connections Family at this specific time because you have a part to play in His plans. We ask that you consider this plan and pray over it. As you pray, please ask God to reveal how he's positioned you to be involved. Then, take the bold step of contacting ministry areas where God leads you and explore how you can be involved. Every ministry area is moving forward, and there are plenty of opportunities.

We are eager to see our entire Connections family engaged in their maturity in Christ and bring their unique gifts and passions to make God's plans a reality.

*Accomplishing the Vision God has given us across all
our ministries will require a family-wide effort.*

FINANCES

God has called us into a dynamic plan to influence our community, and it will take a dynamic partnership among all of us to realize it. We are excited about what our future holds and are eager to see more kids, students, adults, and families find the hope and purpose God has for them because of our efforts and our investments. When you invest your time, talent, prayers, relationships, and finances into this effort, you make God's vision a reality and positively influence the people around us.

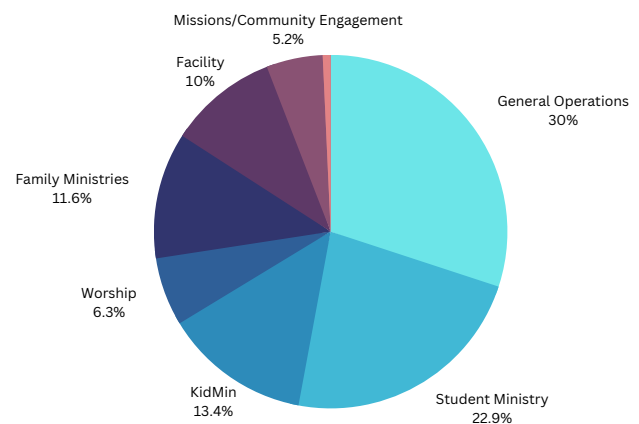
As you examine the financial part of our Ministry Plan, please consider how God is asking you to steward the resources He's entrusted to you. Then respond in faith and generosity through your financial giving to see His plan become a reality.

Ministry Area	FY2023	FY2024	\$ Change	% Change
General Operations	\$ 130,200	\$ 139,900	\$ 9,700	7.5%
Student Ministry (incl camps)	\$ 86,600	\$ 106,550	\$ 19,950	23.0%
KidMin	\$ 57,700	\$ 62,400	\$ 4,700	8.1%
Worship	\$ 34,300	\$ 29,150	\$ (5,150)	-15.0%
Family Ministries	\$ 48,100	\$ 53,800	\$ 5,700	11.9%
Facility[^]	\$ 36,400	\$ 46,550	\$ 10,150	27.9%
Missions[#]/Community Engagement	\$ 21,400	\$ 24,050	\$ 2,650	12.4%
Benevolence[*]	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Leadership Development	\$ 2,900	\$ 3,350	\$ 450	15.5%
Total Expenses	\$ 417,600	\$ 465,750	\$ 48,150	11.5%

[^] this anticipates a significant increase in lease expenses at the new high school. At the time of printing, this amount had not been determined

[#] Due to needs in local ministry expansion, the Elders elected to keep our Missions investment the same in FY2024. It will remain at 5% of our General Fund giving.

^{*} Benevolence is a separate fund maintained by designated contributions and fundraisers and supplemented by general fund money when necessary.



FY2024

