

300 YEARS • GREEN'S FARMS CHURCH



REMEMBER



REJOICE



RENEW

OPPORTUNITY PROFILE

YOUTH MINISTER GREEN'S FARMS CHURCH

Westport, Connecticut
www.greensfarmschurch.org

Presented by:

Ministry by Design *a division of* SIMA International Minneapolis
www.simaforchurch.org



Introduction

Green's Farms Church (GFC) is a community of faith that believes churches in general provide youth with a unique opportunity to find meaning and connection in their lives. We also believe that our congregation, in particular, is called to engage young people in the life of a vibrant church home. For 300 years Green's Farms Church has been a vital resource for families raising children to lead lives of purpose, meaning, and grace. By following Jesus' teachings to open our doors to welcome strangers and to deepen our relationships with God and one another, we seek to embrace faith as a way of life. And we care deeply about offering this way of life to our young people!

Because of these beliefs and commitments, GFC is seeking an individual with certain gifts and abilities, as well as passion, to become GFC's Youth Minister and to make a difference in the lives of young people, the congregation and the community. The Youth Minister will feel compelled to share their personal faith in the God revealed in Jesus Christ, creating opportunities for young people to experience God's transforming love in a Christian community and empowering them to carry the love they have found beyond the walls of the church to a hurting world.

There is a sense in which we're all strangers to one another and to God. This may be especially true in places of affluence and success like Fairfield County, Connecticut, where the culture of busyness and achievement often preclude time and value for relationship and reflection. Green's Farms Church is a place that works hard to welcome the stranger and to build a warm faith community open to the spiritual needs of people. The Youth Minister position at GFC is an exciting opportunity to enter into this context, reflecting these core commitments to the world of adolescents and their families and furthering the already thriving youth ministry. Our Youth Minister will also play a key leadership role in the life of a congregation that wholeheartedly supports our ministry with young people.

The Church

GFC is a youthful and lively church that welcomes members and non-members through a growing ministry serving youth and adults alike. With a current membership of 630, the Church offers excellent youth and children's ministries, a joyous and renewing worship service with a strong music program, an engaging faith formation program for adults, and ample opportunities for service and outreach to a needy world. GFC includes parishioners from diverse religious backgrounds and provides an opportunity for people of all ages to explore their spirituality through an understanding of, and connection to, Jesus Christ and his love.

Since a church is comprised of its congregants, the best way to capture the spirit of Green's Farms Church is through the words of its people. A January 2011 all-church survey effectively demonstrated overwhelming support for Youth Ministries at the Church.

Following are some of the comments:

GFC is an incredible, special community because of its friendliness, beautiful New England architecture, lack of formality and stuffiness, kind and welcoming people, spirit of community and openness, gregarious and fun Senior Pastor, amazing music, Sunday School that kids like and want to attend, and sermons. It is truly beautiful on the outside and inside.

The church is always welcoming; the people are warm and non-judgmental; there is something for everyone from the little ones through the seniors.

GFC is a place where families seek faith as a way of life and a church to enable people to live that way of life. A big part of the work of the staff is supporting families to live out a way of life and to connect to God.

The difficulty is that most of the congregation is available only one hour on an average of twice per month. This necessarily limits the impact of the church. The benefit is that we have congregants who want more. The quandary is that to provide more, the church needs to find new and unique ways to serve a busy community.

GFC is an anomaly among the national main line Protestant churches. Nationally, Protestant churches are in a membership free fall. Because of its focus on families, GFC is a vibrant and growing community.

Greens Farm Congregational Church has been an important part of Westport, Connecticut since its founding in 1711. First known as the West Parish (of Fairfield), Westport was established on the banks of Long Island Sound at a site called Machimus or “beautiful land” by the Native American people. The Church’s life is grounded in the foundation affirmed by our Covenant:

We hereby set forth the principles of the Christian faith as commonly held among the congregation, believing that the foundation for their lives is Jesus Christ. It is our aim to bring joy to little children, instruction and high ideals to youth, inspiration to men and women in the midst of life and comfort to those in life’s later years; and to work together for the betterment of all people.

Our fellowship is not dependent upon identity of theological opinion, or of outward circumstance, or of denominational name, but grows from a common loyalty to Jesus, a common passion to serve the world, and a common purpose to do justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. Our ideal is a church of the open mind, the warm heart, the aspiring soul, and the social vision which ever seeks to express, in all walks of life, the mind and spirit of Jesus.

As we celebrate our 300th anniversary in 2011 and look ahead to a new chapter of ministry, our aim is to create fresh ways for youth and their families to encounter the Christian faith and discover how it speaks to them in this time and place.

Youth Ministry at GFC

The future of the church is in its young people. We are a congregation that recognizes that the Town's culture of success creates special challenges for parents and adolescents who are in the difficult process of claiming personal identity, choosing where to belong, and defining what to do.

GFC strives to give young people the inspiration and high ideals needed to guide them towards a living faith while they inspire GFC with their support for one another, their probing questions and their desire to serve the larger community. The busy and involved young people bring a lively sense of curiosity and joy to congregation and community. Green's Farms Church has a history of strong leaders, both lay and ordained, developing compelling Youth Ministries and is always looking for ways to make a growing youth ministry even more engaging and relevant for middle and high school students. The following programs comprise the ministry:

Middle School – 6th, 7th, and 8th Graders:

- Cookies and Conversation – creating baked goods to be distributed to local organizations in need. Organizations are then invited to come to the church to present their programs.
- Hungry Hearts – Youth prepare 200 bag lunches monthly for a local homeless shelter.

Confirmation – 8th Graders

- Confirmation for 8th graders is a team-taught program of faith formation culminating in the confirmation of baptismal vows and the opportunity to join the Church. Youth attend weekly meetings to allow for exploration of spirituality, of being a Christian in today's world and how Jesus Christ can play a role in their lives.

Ichthus – 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Graders

- This is a loosely woven program for high school students to continue to explore their faith journeys and create a support group for managing through the rigors of high school. Our current program includes an active 50-member youth group for senior high school students, called Ichthus, that meets weekly during the week; a leadership and spiritual development group for juniors and seniors called "Soul Tending"; seasonal retreats and ski trips; a youth band with weekly practice and regular contributions to Sunday morning and seasonal worship; and annual Mission Trips (domestic and international) focused on outreach and faith formation.

Position Summary

Green's Farms Congregational Church is currently seeking a full-time Youth Minister who will assume spiritual leadership for students from 6th grade through high school and, potentially, beyond. The right person will be collaborative, yet able to function with autonomy. Joining a collegial staff team, the candidate will be innovative, highly relational and committed to excellence. The candidate will also be motivated to develop volunteer leaders and continue to foster parental involvement in ministries.

This ministry requires a uniquely talented individual who fulfills the aspirations of our congregation. Congregants are less interested in specific credentials than a soul that is deeply connected to God, a heart that beats for youth and can inspire and transform young lives, a personality that is ready to function in the Westport micro-culture, and a mind that knows how to plan and organize group events. In the words of congregants, the ideal minister would:

--have a high connection quotient. The ideal candidate is off the chart in their ability to form relationships with teens and adults alike. The ideal candidate will build a mini-community of young people and adults. Most importantly, the candidate can relate to/connect with/live out their faith with youth by instilling a sense of community and priorities in their lives; carve out time in the busy lives of adolescents to be together in a nonjudgmental, relationally safe atmosphere; build trust with young people by keeping confidences and building respect; and build order out of chaos. This will require the minister to reveal themselves through a heart that is open and malleable, a soul that is nonjudgmental, and a mature life perspective with a youthful mind.

--relate to what it feels like to grow up in a stressful environment like Westport. Westport youth are impacted by the large and competitive nature of a suburban New York community and are also jaded by exposure to affluence and lives with a global view. The minister needs to counterbalance the culture of affluence by moving young people from the perspective of entitlement...towards a culture where they are part of a community purposed to reach out to others.

--be an intellectual and spiritual leader, a role model to youth, and a team player on the staff.

--be a resource for parents to help them deal with issues such as perfectionism and competition. Teens are only part of the picture; the minister forms bonds with parents, as well.

--create a synergistic community in Westport by cooperating with other youth organizations in other religious and civic organizations.

--bring a sense of humor and a great deal of stamina.

The position will report to the Senior Minister, the Rev. Jeff Rider, joining a team of five ministry staff and three support staff. S/he will have administrative support from the Education Assistant, as well as an existing cadre of volunteers and lay leaders.

CANDIDATE SPECIFICATION: KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Ideal Qualifications

- Bachelors Degree required. Advanced theological degree (in process or completed) preferred. If already ordained, a clear focus on youth ministry is required.
- Experience in leading student ministry OR relevant professional experience conceiving, developing and leading effective youth initiatives and programs.
- Capable of interacting and working with a church organizational structure (including both ministry and lay leadership) to further the Youth Ministry.
- Theological consistency with Green's Farms Church Covenant and United Church of Christ Statement of Faith.
- Individuals with multi-denominational backgrounds will be considered – true faith and an ability to bring God's love to life for youth will be the main area of focus.

Where is this individual today?

The right leader to assume the position of GFC's Youth Minister might currently be found in a number of areas or ministry venues. This individual might be leading a congregational student ministry in a mid-sized or larger church or perhaps leading a para-church ministry such as Young Life. There is an open mindedness about the sort of background and experience this person may bring and contribute to GFC. Regardless of where this person may be engaged today, he or she will have demonstrated clear and proven leadership qualities, strong communication and interpersonal skills, spiritual maturity and a solid personal understanding of their leadership and management style and capabilities, as well as their spiritual gifts.

Inquiry Process

We encourage anyone who has the qualifications and who senses a potential calling for such an opportunity to contact us and discuss this position. Alternatively, you may know someone you wish to recommend for this position.

In contacting us, please include a resume outlining your roles, responsibilities and accomplishments. In order to provide a more complete picture of you and your abilities, please also provide succinct responses to the following:

- Describe your relationship to Jesus Christ. How do you practice your faith in everyday life?
- Please indicate the size and theological perspective of the churches or organizations noted in your resume. Please also provide examples of the way in which you have effectively initiated, built and fostered relationships within your youth-serving contexts.
- Please articulate your theological and philosophical framework for ministry with adolescents. Also please review the Green's Farms Church Covenant and other theological commitments of the congregation and comment on your personal alignment with these.
- What is most compelling for you about the role of Youth Minister at GFC?
- Please also provide at least five references (including at least two previous supervisors, a peer and a youth participant or parent). Include phone and email information for each person.

Submit these confidential responses (in Word or PDF format) along with your resume to:

Rick Heltne
Senior Search Consultant
Ministry by Design(a division of SIMA International)
rheltne@simainternational.com
612.384.0410