

Student Ministries Pastor

Willowdale Chapel

Kennett Square | Jennersville

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Position Overview

Willowdale Chapel is in the process of reimagining how we do student ministry. We are looking for a team of leaders to help us do this, starting with the Student Ministries Pastor.

We currently have approximately 150 middle school and high school students led by two people, a middle school pastor and a high school pastor. In the past we have had part-time interns as well. However, both youth pastors are transitioning, giving us the opportunity to rebuild, reimagine, and reinvigorate our ministry for a new day.

This is not a mass exodus or controversial move, but a timely transition. These two leaders who have served us for a decade are each moving on to new endeavors. They are products of our church who came to Christ through our high school outreach, and subsequently became interns and youth pastors.

While we are searching for two or more youth staff members, we begin with the overall leader, the Student Ministries Pastor. This person will oversee the entire Student Ministries department, while likely offering direct leadership to the high school ministry—although the right middle school specialist could lead the entire department from that seat.

The Student Ministries Pastor—and all our youth staff—will serve on our Next Generation Team, encompassing birth to graduation. Therefore this role requires strong gifts in youth ministry as well as a passion for the entire next generation of young people being raised and educated in our community.

Initially this position reports to the Next Gen Team Leader, who is a member of our Lead Team (five pastoral leaders with managerial responsibility for our staff). In due time and as competencies warrant, the Student Ministries Pastor could take managerial leadership of the entire Next Gen Team and thereby join the Lead Team.

Regarding student ministries oversight, we want the Student Ministries Pastor to oversee a full-time middle school pastor. Additionally, we hope to hire a full or part-time youth pastor for the Jennersville Campus who will lead both middle and high school there. Our vision is for a robust and united team, dreaming of creating a movement among teenagers in our region.

About Willowdale Chapel

Willowdale Chapel is a thriving, outreaching, multisite church with two campuses in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. While our roots go deep—this year we celebrated our 60th anniversary—we have many of the characteristics of a newer church.

For about the first 50 years of our life, we were a solid, Bible-believing church (slightly fundamentalistic, to be honest) that grew to 300+ people. But more recently God has brought renewal, resulting in a complete reworking of our church's mission and vision. The original DNA of devotion to Christ is the same as it ever was. The way in which that animates our body and informs our ministry is completely different.

Over the last dozen years we have changed, grown, expanded, experimented— and thrived. We are now about 1,500 people on a Sunday, and in 2014 we “adopted” a church in Jennersville, ten miles from our original campus in Kennett Square. Kennett has an average weekend attendance of about 1,150 people; Jennersville has about 350. Together we now have two 15+ acre campuses, modern facilities, a robust budget, and a mission that we're passionate about.

That mission is to love God, love each other, and love the world that Jesus *through his people* is working to restore. We draw this mission from the three great “You shall love” statements in the Bible, which Jesus wove together in his parable of the Good Samaritan. (See Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18, 34; Luke 10:25-37.) God is love. Love summarizes his heart toward us and the world. As his followers, we are a people learning to love in all its dimensions.

In addition to our mission statement, we have articulated five core values that suffuse our ministry:

- **Authentic storytelling:** We tell the unvarnished truth about ourselves and God. There are no facades or masks, and “perfect” people tend to find our church unsettling.
- **Person pursuing:** We join Jesus in his mission to rescue wandering sheep; to seek and to save those who are lost; and to see to it that “goodness and mercy follow people all the days of their lives.”
- **Status quo challenging:** We believe in change and innovation, trying new ways to connect to the world we're sent to serve. But we insist that those ways be authentic, not contrived or gimmicky. We're also bent to “go there,” wherever “there” may be; that is, we broach topics and cross bridges that others might not be eager to navigate.
- **Active Learning:** We follow Jesus in real life, believing that the gospel is to be a lived reality. One of our mantras is, “Are we going to talk about it or are we going to do it?”
- **Generous Serving:** We're a full-service church, meaning not that we have a plethora of programs to consume, but rather that every person serves the mission. Willowdale Chapel is not a cruise ship but a rescue boat. And on a rescue boat, everyone is crew.

But what we aspire to be—and have in some measure achieved—is a church characterized by *movement*. Innovative, grass-roots, entrepreneurial, collaborative.

Although we are a multisite church, our movement is about much more than opening new campuses. In fact, those are as much a byproduct of our growth as a strategy for it. We are about leaning into new opportunities that are more than “church.”

For example, fifteen years ago, a former youth pastor and a businessman in our church started a youth center called The Garage, which is itself now multi-site. It has become a model for other youth centers in the Northeast and was even featured in a PBS special. Willowdale Chapel does not own the Garage, it is a separate non-profit; but we continue to back it significantly. Visit garageyouthcenter.org.

Spinning out of The Garage and founded by another member of our church is YoungMoms, a non-profit serving unwed teenage moms in our region. These girls are given the support and coaching they need to finish high school, get jobs, and parent their children. Again our church does not own YoungMoms, but we are instrumental in it from top to bottom. You can learn more at youngmomscommunity.org.

Most recently we have launched The Constellation Network (theconstellationnetwork.com), networking local churches and organizations to do works of common grace for the common good throughout Southern Chester County. It’s an expansive vision that already involves 14 local churches, but we are just getting started.

And just this year Willowdale created a new “department” within our church that we call Community Engagement. It has three pastors—latino, black, and white—who are championing reconciliation, diversity, and cultural connection within our church body and outside. In fact, as they lead out at Willowdale they are also serving some small, mostly minority churches in our area, to make sure they are strengthened and not tapped out by our desire to grow more diverse.

The question is: Can we build an innovative movement among young people?

Many churches struggle to keep their own youth engaged, let alone to reach those who are far from God. But we don’t need to be defeated by the status quo. We look at the landscape of the adolescent world and see great opportunity for those who are willing to think new thoughts, try new approaches, and forge new partnerships.

We are looking for the kind of leader who wants to engage in current best practices while inventing new ones of their own. The opportunity exists here to continue reinventing student ministry for a new generation that desperately needs the gospel in all its forms and fullness.

Candidate Profile

- Gospel Motivation** The candidate must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and live a gospel-centered life. We desire to know Jesus, who is full of grace and truth; and more, we aspire to be like him. Having an ongoing experience of Christ, we let his love compel us in ministry. A robust understanding of grace, and a life of prayer and faith, must be at the motivational center of this leader's life.
- Strategic Alignment** The candidate will align with the mission, vision, and vibe of our church. They will seek to build their ministry in harmony with our values and evangelistic passion.
- Spirit of Collaboration** The candidate must love to work with a team. They will be a vital part of the Willowdale Chapel staff. They will play an integral role on the Next Generation Team, which seeks to have a consistent, coherent message and strategy from Preschool to Young Adults. And, of course, they will need to build a team of committed, well-trained, and loyal volunteers.
- Eagerness to Equip** The candidate must have a passion to train teenagers for real life. We want to make disciples who not only know the faith but live it, letting it shape their entire way of being in the world. We want to graduate students into the world who are grounded in the faith, trained to serve, and able to share their faith with others.
- Love of Relationships** The candidate must have strong people skills and place a high value on relationships. Everything hinges on relationships; they are the conduit through which our gospel and leadership travel. This person must understand a student's need to be known and accepted "as is" before ever being asked to change or make a commitment to Christ. This person will lead with relational influence, not lording it over students or volunteers. Moreover, this pastor must value strong relationships with other staff that they do not directly work with, and other churches and ministries with whom they may one day collaborate and synergize efforts.
- Robust Ecclesiology** The candidate must love the church like Christ does, not just in principle but in practice. They must love the particulars of our local body, warts and all. They must understand that the youth ministry cannot exist as a separate silo; therefore, they will balance age-specific programming with intergenerational community and relationships.
- Respect for the Family** The candidate must value the role parents play in the development of their teenager's faith. They must genuinely care about parents and work with the Next Gen Team to provide tools to help parents integrate their faith into the rhythms of their family life.

Candidate Profile (cont.)

Drive toward Expertise The candidate must care deeply about youth ministry—enough to continually learn and drive toward expertise in the field, and always being eager to be informed by best thinking and practice. This leader will be strong enough to hold deep convictions, humble enough to change and accommodate better thinking; and driven enough to strive for excellence.

Intellectual Bent The candidate will have a reasonable intellectual bent in order to mesh well with a majority culture that is highly educated and living in a region with strong public and private schools. This leader does not need to be a Rhodes Scholar, but must be able to hang with people who think well, and be able to respond wisely to a world that challenges our faith precisely on its so-called scientific, philosophical, and historical weaknesses.

True Leadership Gifting The candidate will have leadership gifts that tend toward the strategic and executive; that is, they will not just love to be around students but will have the mind and drive to build a movement. They will know how to build systems and create an organization to effectively disciple, equip, and mobilize students for God’s mission in the world. While we are not seeking to build a mega-ministry, we are seeking to build a movement, one that multiplies into the lives of a growing number of students.

Candidate Responsibilities

Develop the Vision

The candidate will develop a clear, compelling, comprehensive vision for the ministry. This will include what they want the entire student ministry to be about, and what they want to see teenagers become by the time they graduate. This will be worked out with the Next Generation Team, so that it dovetails with what comes earlier in our elementary department and what is to follow in the adult community.

But we desire an even broader vision: We desire a collaborative vision that embraces partners in other churches and organizations (FCA, YoungLife, etc.) so that the thousands and thousands of students who live in our region—students who spiritually don't know their right hand from their left; who are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd (to use biblical phrases)—might one day truly have access not only to the facts of the faith, but might have friends in the faith; might have a connection to the family of believers.

We want someone who dreams of a 21st century “great awakening” among the students of our region.

Equip the Staff

Understanding the need to multiply oneself in others, this leader will equip and empower the student ministries staff, while also recruiting a growing team of volunteers for their particular area. Through ongoing training and relationship building, a student ministries community will grow.

Execute the Plan

Working with the Next Gen Team, the candidate will execute weekly ministry activities that are consistent with our mission, strategy, and values. They will be trusted to build disciple-making platforms (“programs”) for evangelism and spiritual growth based on the best practices available for reaching teenagers where they are.

Coordinate the Teams

Staff colleagues, ministry volunteers, parents, and students are among the constituencies that need to be coalesced into teams and communicated with effectively.

Guide the Organization

The candidate will be responsible for the administration of their department: budgets, reviews, communications, strategic planning, and so forth. This leader does not need to do all the administrative tasks, but must see to it that all the administrative tasks get done well and in a timely manner.

Candidating Details

Search Team	Our search is being led by Johnny Johnston, the Jennersville campus pastor and Next Gen Team leader, and Greg Lafferty, senior pastor. We will collaborate with our pastoral staff and elder team, and a cross-section of parents and student ministry volunteers, as the interview process progresses.
Timing	We are prepared to hire and on-board our Student Ministries Pastor as soon as we discover each other. We hope to have this role filled by the start of the 2016-17 school year.
Compensation	TBD, but commensurate with our other associate pastors
Benefits	Full medical, dental, and retirement benefits according to Willowdale's policy for full-time pastors

Contact Information

Please send your cover letter and resume to staffsearch@willowdalechapel.org.

About Our Region

Kennett Square and Jennersville are located in Southern Chester County, about an hour southwest of Philadelphia.

We are an exurban community (prosperous and spacious) but with some truly unique features. We have horse farms and mushroom farms—very different places! We have sprawling estates and row homes. We have moneyed elites and undocumented immigrants.

A few years ago Kennett Square was named one of the coolest small towns in America. We have great restaurants and a wonderful little downtown. We are home to Longwood Gardens, rated the best botanical garden in the nation. We are the smallest town in the country with its own symphony orchestra. Talula's Table is one of the hardest dinner reservations to get on the east coast, booking a year in advance. And we can't say for certain, but The Kennett Flash may be the world's smallest club, which nonetheless brings in good talent to play a great-sounding room that seats about 100 people.

At the same time, the borough of Kennett Square is majority minority. About 48% are Latin American, but there are African American and Asian residents as well, and plenty of typical Caucasians too. The various races and ethnicities aren't necessarily close friends, but they peacefully coexist and contribute to a strong sense of civic pride. If nothing else, we all appreciate each other's food, and there will be as many Anglos at the Cinco de Mayo festival as at the Friday Night Art Stroll.

Overall, in Southern Chester County, Anglos represent 68% of the population while Latinos make up 16-25%, depending on the community. This area is a microcosm of the larger urban centers not too far from us; and therefore it is a great laboratory in which to develop a model of ministry. It has all the variables, but at a size and scale you can grasp. It's not overwhelming by its sheer enormity.

The whole of Chester County typically ranks in the top 40 richest counties in the country, yet there is a pronounced poverty problem in some areas. Similarly, we are home to many of the best public schools in the state, but also some troubled districts.

Historically our area played a significant role in both the Revolutionary and Civil wars. The Battle of the Brandywine, in Chadds Ford, was the immediate precursor to Valley Forge and then Washington's crossing of the Delaware. Lincoln University, very close to our Jennersville campus, was America's first four-year degree granting black university, named of course after America's greatest president. Willowdale is currently partnering with CCO to do ministry on this HBCU campus.

All in all, this is a very livable and desirable location, with plenty to offer in itself while also being two hours from Washington D.C., New York City, the Jersey shore, and the Pocono Mountains. We have people in our church who have traveled the world and lived in some of the nation's most popular communities, but they have happily settled in Southern Chester County and call it the best place they've ever lived.