

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP...

Cal Wacker, Youth Program Director

As the new Youth Group Program Assistant I want to reflect on some of the meaningful highlights of Youth Group 2014, our experiences during transition:



• **February:** We embarked on the Youth Service Outreach Program (YSOP) service trip (3 days in NYC), and served meals in a soup kitchen, distributed produce from a neighborhood food pantry, and participated in a clothing drive. Meeting and spending time with the participants was one of the biggest highlights of the experience.

• **March:** Both the young and the young-at-heart enjoyed our annual Multi-Generational Service, where we connected with all generations of the congregation through small skits, artwork, and music.

• **May:** We went to on our annual and beloved retreat at Camp Jewell in Colebrook, CT, connected with each other and the Coming of Age (CoA) group through outdoor activities and an amazing candlelight worship led by Cal Wacker.

• **June:** Our former Youth Program Director Mary Curtsmith and graduating seniors said goodbye to us as they moved on into the next chapter of their journey.

• **September:** We welcomed in the new Youth Program Director, Cal Wacker, who enthusiastically joined us in New York City for the People's Climate Change Rally. It was a highlight of the month for many of our members as we marched for awareness.

• **November:** At a time honored tradition, the Youth Group lock-in, we did some traditional games and activities along with some new ones. We also all shared a meal together over a potluck dinner.

• **December:** The 9th graders were enthusiastically welcomed into Youth Group just in time for our Yankee Swap and holiday potluck and after the Coming of Age service

While we wrapped up the old year, we hit the ground running in 2015! Cal is away to focus on his divinity school studies in January, and we are preparing for our Multi-Generational Service on February 8th. It would be great if as many people as possible could come and connect with us, since we want to connect with you!

Friday, February 6th – is an important date for YG

- 6:30 pm Potluck in Foyer for a Youth group and Parents
- 7:30 pm - All Youth Group members required 7:30 pm Rehearsal for the service,
- 7:30 pm – Parents of 9-12th graders meet with staff about youth group plans (bring your calendars to note dates of interest) and talk to other parents of teen-agers!

See all of you there!

Nicole Khanna, Assistant Youth Program Director

From your Ministerial Search Committee

Your Ministerial Search Committee has been very busy reviewing applications from 21 potential ministers, and interviewing the most promising candidates by Skype, to narrow the field to four pre-candidates who, over four separate weekends, will meet with us in person and preach at "neutral" pulpits in the area. By April we will reach a consensus on our final candidate.

Throughout this process we've been guided, and will continue to be guided, by what you told us in the focus groups and survey – what you most love about our church, the qualities you wish for in a new minister, and your hopes and dreams for our congregation.

What we distilled from you was that, above all, we want a minister who has warmth and charisma, who connects and builds a sense of community. A critically important part of that, you told us, is sermons that will draw us in on Sundays, sermons that inspire, that make us think, that touch our souls, that make us laugh and cry, that appeal to our intellect and our emotions.

We want a minister who is authentic, approachable, and a good listener. A minister who loves us and whom we can love. A minister who takes the time to get to know us. A minister who is creative and brings new thinking into the congregation, while hearing our differing viewpoints and gaining our trust with warmth, humor, and compassion.

We also want a "big picture" leader who will be an effective Chief of Staff and help build our organizational strengths, and who will provide the vision that will inspire greater financial support. While many said they were yearning for a greater sense of community, there was also a strong desire for growth, for attracting more young families, for greater diversity, and for our church to have more impact in the world.

A candidate who scores a perfect A+ in every one of these areas may not exist in the real world. Each candidate has his or her own particular style. We hope to discern the minister who is, overall, the best fit for our complex congregation now, and as we hope to become.

Some of us probably want our experience of church to continue much as before, while others feel the need for a new kind of ministry and are eager to embrace change. Our next minister cannot come in and magically get us all on the same page single-handedly. We have to do some of that work ourselves. We'll talk more about that in upcoming Soundings.

Your Ministerial Search Committee

Jim Cooper, Charles Harrington, Linda Hudson, Kristen Leddy, John Mason, Carrie McEvoy, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Anita Pfluger, Kathy Roberts