

Dear Parents,

August 23, 2009

The time is almost here! As a new school year begins, we are preparing to resume our regular Junior and Senior High meetings at West Church. As mentioned during our ministry spotlight on August 16th, there are significant changes to the student ministry program format this year. We want to make sure that you have all the information that you need to help prepare your child to participate.

Here is an explanation of the program changes for this academic year: If your teenager has previously participated in the youth ministry program, then you remember that both Junior and Senior High levels had their respective weeknight programs, and Sunday mornings served as a time for intensive Bible study in a small group setting. But over the last year, it became clear that the structure of the ministry was neither serving the needs of active students nor operating effectively given the times of highest attendance. To address these and many other concerns, we have completely overhauled the program, and it is important to communicate well how this next year will look. Please read the following summary carefully and be sure to note any questions you can send to the leadership to get clarification:

Sunday mornings, during the 9:30am service, all students grades 6-12 will meet in the Great Room for a “youth service” time of musical worship, announcements, and large group teaching. Halfway through that time, students will separate into their “breakout groups” to discuss the topic of the morning more in-depth, and to engage in a time of prayer with their peers and leaders. For breakout groups, Senior High students will remain in the Great Room, and Junior High students will divide by grade level into their own classrooms as directed by leadership. These youth services will begin on Sunday morning, September 13th.

During the week, **various in-home small group Bible studies will be taking place, and will be scheduled according to the leaders’ availability.** These groups may be formed by gender, by grade, or by purpose; and will follow a curriculum approved by leadership; and will abide by Safe Church policy. Students may receive more information about the possible groups open to them during the Sunday morning breakout group time, or you can look to the Student Ministries website after Labor Day weekend for an updated list of options. Small groups will begin the week of September 20th.

We will continue meeting at these same times weekly unless you are notified otherwise. In addition to these main items, we hope to plan several outreach and entertainment events, and you will receive more information as they are scheduled.

Getting to know our youth ministry team leaders

Hillary Oosting has been doing a great job leading our Junior High Ministry team for the past 2 years. She is a graduate of Gordon College’s youth ministry program and is going to be matriculating at Gordon Conwell through their semlink program this year. She and her husband Matt live in Haverhill with their two children Evie, and Jude. Hillary can be reached at hillaryoosting@comcast.net.

Will Anderson is new to our church, and will also be attending seminary at Gordon Conwell this fall. This year he is going to be leading the senior high ministry team as part of the seminary’s mentored ministry program. Will is relocating here from Melbourne, Florida at the end of August. If you would like to contact Will, his email is: wmanderson@gmail.com.

We're blessed to have such a well prepared, quality leaders for our youth! If you have not done so already, please introduce yourself to Hillary and Will up in the Great Room during the 9:30 service hour one Sunday this fall. Our youth leaders look forward to building relationships with you and your children.

Regarding Program Registration and Event Communication

Another change to this year's program involves registration for events. This year instead of having a medical release form completed for each individual event we are asking parents to fill out a one year permission slip and release form that will cover all student activities during the 2009 -10 academic year. Hopefully, this will not only cut down on paperwork but it will also make it easier for students to participate in programmed events throughout the year. Please complete and return the enclosed release form to register your child for this year's program. If you require additional forms for your other children, the form can be downloaded from the youth page on the church website at <http://www.westchurch.org/students.php>. We must have a signed release form on file for each individual student participating in the program.

Our primary ways of communicating upcoming Junior and Senior High events with parents are through the Sunday morning worship bulletin, our church website, www.westchurch.org, and through handouts given to the students at our meetings. During the winter months, please check the church website for questions regarding snow cancellations. In general, church youth activities are cancelled when Haverhill public schools are closed.

Prayer Partners

In the remaining days of summer vacation, we invite you to pray with us in preparation for what we hope, by God's grace, will be a great year: pray for the students as they prepare to return to school; for the leaders who have been invited to serve and are being trained to disciple the students; and for the many changes in the ministry that will be implemented shortly!

We welcome your feedback on this or any other matter, and we look forward to working alongside the families of West to bring glory to God in this next year! We consider it our privilege to partner with you in the spiritual development of your child. The student ministries leadership team shares your desire to see your child grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thank you in advance for the opportunity to walk alongside your child(ren) as their faith develops. We look forward to seeing them soon!

Thank you for the privilege of serving you and your children,

Grace in Christ,

Chris Ziegler
(on behalf of the Student Ministries Leadership Team)

Enc. West Congregational Church Youth Group Release form 2009-10