

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My name is Ismael Ruiz-Millán, Executive Director of Connectional Ministries for the North Carolina Conference.

Since last November, we've been listening — deeply and intentionally — to youth, youth leaders, and ministry partners across our Conference. These conversations have happened through in-person gatherings, virtual meetings, and more recently, a focused session with young adult leaders and youth from across our districts.

I want to share an important update on our process for hiring the next Conference Youth Ministry Director.

Working closely with Bishop Shelton and Rev. Dr. Gloria Winston, we discerned the importance of inviting a group of young adults and youth from diverse backgrounds to be part of the search process. This group will serve alongside the existing leaders who are already deeply engaged in youth ministry — leaders from the Conference Youth Committee, the Youth Operations Team, the Conference Council on Youth Ministry, and the deans from our Conference youth events.

Together, this diverse and gifted group forms the Search Team that will guide us forward. They will meet for the first time on August 18 to begin the work of prayerful discernment, reviewing the job description, developing a timeline, conducting interviews, and identifying the next Conference Youth Director by January 31, 2026.

The voices and insights from the listening sessions have shaped every aspect of this process. Our goal is not simply to hire someone to fill a role, but to call the right person to guide, inspire, and walk alongside our youth ministry in the years ahead.

We hope to keep offering you regular updates on the search — either from me or from members of the Search Team. Thank you for your prayers and support as we take this important step in nurturing spaces where our young people can grow in their love for God and neighbor, deepen their faith, and love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in the Church and the world.