

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks

Director of Program & Leadership Advancement

Opportunity Profile

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks

“Encountering God in the Wonders of Creation.”

Since 1951, undergraduate students and seminarians have provided opportunities for worship and Christian fellowship to the people who live, work, and visit our country's national parks. Each summer this ministry is carried out by nearly 200 student volunteers who take jobs with park concessionaires. Now over 10,000 people are alumni of **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks** and a great number of them credit their summer as an ACMNP ministry volunteer with being a life-changing experience that continues to shape their call and service to God in his local church and the world.

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks embodies and extends the ministry of Jesus Christ through worship, witness, and the development of Christian leaders.

The National Park Service (NPS) hosts over 40 million visitors per year in the parks that ACMNP serves. These guests are served by over 8,000 seasonal and permanent NPS employees. Over 10,000 students are employed each summer by the private concessionaires to provide guest housing, meals, and excursions. And over 100,000 people live in the “gateway communities” just outside the park entrances. It is these people that **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks** serves through 50 teams of students placed in over 20 national parks each summer. In many parks, ACMNP is the only community of faith present year after year.

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks has a vision to provide and promote ministry that embodies and extends the Christian faith in the majesty of the national parks by offering:

- Opportunities for worship that inspire, encourage, and bring joy to those who live, work, and vacation in the national parks.
- Real-world contexts in which men and women explore and express their Christian faith through service and witness while growing as Christian leaders.
- Theological guidance to a wide spectrum of the Christian community to inspire people to engage in issues of faith and the environment.
- Outdoor experiences that give men, women, youth, and children opportunities to explore the meaning of their Christian faith.

Work, Wilderness, Worship

These three words sum up a typical week for each student who serves with **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks**.

Work Each Ministry Staff Member (the ACMNP title given to these students and seminarians) is employed by a concessionaire in the park and will work as a desk clerk, housekeeper, bellhop, store clerk, wait staff, or other job typical of seasonal employment. So each week, 40+ hours of time is committed to cleaning, hospitality, food preparation, and guest service. Our students live with their co-workers in employee housing in the park.

Wilderness Our national parks are located in some of the wildest, grandest, ruggedest, remotest places in our country. Pure, unprocessed, awesome creation! Time is always made for hiking, camping, kayaking, fishing, photography, and just sitting amidst the landscape.

Worship The Ministry Teams lead interdenominational worship services in the natural sanctuaries of God's creation. They bring Christian teaching and community to people often isolated from immediate contact with local churches, including millions of visitors who come to enjoy God's great natural wonders.

The students who serve with **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks** come to understand the important blend of work, wilderness, and worship that remains the hallmark of the ACMNP experience. A summer in the parks with ACMNP is hard and challenging: it always involves risk, there is never enough support that you cannot help but to depend on God, leading worship over and over is refining, and life in community is abundantly rich and maddening, simultaneously. All this compressed together leaves those who stick it out – changed!

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks is an intriguingly complex organization for its size. The continental scope of its recruitment, training, and ministry areas is one daunting component. A second is the inherently challenging array of constituencies to understand and nurture: government employees, business leaders, nature lovers, volunteers, churches and denominations, foundations, donors, and ACMNP alumni. This ministry is overseen by an diverse mix of highly dedicated trustees (24) and a national board that acts in an advisory capacity (80). The new Director of Program & Leadership Advancement will work closely with the hardworking national office staff team to integrate and achieve all the short and long-term objectives of the whole ministry. The ACMNP nation staff team consists of the:

- Executive Director
- Director of Development
- Recruiting Coordinator and two traveling Recruiters
- Placement Coordinator
- Administrative Assistant

The **Director of Program & Leadership Advancement** will be a new position on the national office staff team created specifically to strengthen two strategic areas of ACMNP's ministry.

1. **All ACMNP Program-related material and activities.** Once a student is accepted and given a ministry placement assignment, everything - from their initial orientation packet, to a spring training weekend, to on-site orientation with their new team, to their summer ministry experiences, including their interaction with the local Ministry Support Committee (MSC).... all the way through

the debriefing activities just before they return home - all of this falls under Program.

2. **Proactive leadership development** in the lives of the student volunteers (including the seminary students on the teams) is a new focus for ACMNP. Leadership development happens in the midst of work, life, and Christian service, yet it doesn't happen automatically. The task here is to utilize technology and other means, resources, and mentors to foster and accelerate this process, both during and after the summer.

Challenges

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks has a model for ministry that is uniquely shaped around the contexts of the National Parks, and the recruitment and ministry of student volunteers. The annual mechanics of this model are complex and involve a great deal of personal face-to-face engagement. Each year, 85% of the ~200 students are new to **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks**. Given the geographic separation of the parks, ministry support for the students comes primarily from the local Ministry Support Committees and not from ACMNP national office staff. Therefore, the **Director of Program & Leadership Advancement** must form an effective network and training program for these Ministry Support Committees. This is a huge task. Likewise, pre-summer orientation is vital to a healthy ministry, but is also a geographically challenging task because these students come from over 100 different colleges, universities, and seminaries. Much can be done to utilize ACMNP's dedicated trustees and 10,000 alumni for this work, but this needs to be developed almost entirely from scratch.

In addition, **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks'** new commitment to proactively focus on leadership development is uncharted territory. How to add this activity into a summer that is already packed full (from the students' perspective) and under resourced (from ACMNP's staff and volunteer side) will take creativity and wisdom. And the potential to leverage the experiences of one intense summer by extending ACMNP's active contact with their newest alumni for the next 9-18 months has been only a dream thus far. The person who fills this Leadership Advancement position will be charged with creating a plan and bringing together the greater ACMNP family around the country to make this happen.

Opportunities

The position of **Director of Program & Leadership Advancement** is a senior leadership position in **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks**, and with that come the responsibility to steward and advance the ministry of this organization. **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks** had a very healthy Executive Director transition three years ago and now looks forward to a great season of ministry. Much of this growth and development will be guided by the work and coordination of this new Director of Program & Leadership Advancement.

One of the largely untapped assets that **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks** has is their **10,000+ alumni**. The majority of these alumni first need to be found and reconnected with the work and vision of this ministry. Once that is done, these alumni can become a large and significant resource for ACMNP.

The **Ministry Support Committee** (MSC) concept was a brilliant idea decades ago and still is today. The opportunities here include creatively establishing MSCs at parks where they do not currently exist and to develop and run an annual MSC conferences to celebrate, train, and resource these volunteers so their local MSC is ready for each summer.

A third opportunity for both Program and Leadership Advancement is in the area of **deploying appropriate technology** to resourcing and equipping these students and MSCs who are all spread out

across the nation, most in remote areas, and some with dial-up internet access at best. How can technology help enhance the variety of experiences ACMNP's students have each summer? How can ACMNP use technology to better serve the people they are in the parks to serve? How can technology assist ACMNP to collect better information to analyze and assess its effectiveness and ministry?

A fourth area to mention is how to become more intentional about the **international opportunities for ministry**. A growing percentage of the students working in the parks are international students hired from abroad. How can ACMNP proactively connect with these internationals? Beyond this, what might it look like for ACMNP to expand their recruitment of team members to Christian college students from overseas? A second group of internationals in the parks are the park guests who come from abroad. How might ACMNP better serve them? A further international step might be preparing to launch or partner with a sister ministry overseas, doing ministry in a similar national park-like a setting in Europe, Asia, or even Australia!

And last, there is much to do to **integrate the areas of faith and the environment**. This will require some deep thinking, strategic partnerships, development of resources, training, mentors, and funding.

Qualities, Experience, Requirements

No attempt will be made here to be complete or exhaustive, but the following items are of great importance to this position and will be looked for in strong candidates.

- A long, thoughtful, active life as a follower of Christ and servant of God. This includes evidence of a high view of the role of the church, a missional view of ministry, and an appreciation for the diversity found under the Christian tent in America.
- A love for both undergraduate students asking big vocational questions and seminarians engaged in serious theological studies. These are important stages of life and these pastors-in-training need to be given real responsibility and mentoring as much as their younger teammates do.
- Having lots of tools in your ministry tool bag, including:
 - theological study: be it formal or informal*
 - analytical abilities: both qualitative and quantitative
 - business sense: possessing insight into how to get the right things, done well
 - people skills: for communication, training, counseling, mentoring, and inspiring
 - technology savviness: to know what to use and what not to bother with
 - road warrior wisdom: being fully functional out on the road
- Having something in you that thrives in nature, and that goes to another level in the national parks. It's about creation; but a creation that includes men and women. A deep understanding and strong desire to care for the natural ecosystems of the parks' flora and fauna, paired with a God-given concern for the parks' human ecosystem: those who live, work, and visit these places.
- Being comfortable with just about everyone; from CEO's of large concessionaire firms, to National Park Service Rangers, to international students, to wait staff, to tourists.
- Having a long and diverse record of ministry in general**, and the development Christian leaders specifically.

* An M.Div. degree is preferred, but not required.

** Being an ACMNP alumni is preferable, but not required.

Statement of Beliefs

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks' essential distinction is that it is a *Christian* ministry. The Apostles' Creed is embraced by ACMNP as its statement of Christian beliefs. The Apostles' Creed is ecumenical in nature, focuses on Jesus' nature and work, and has been used since the days of the early church as a public declaration of faith and starting point for Christian education.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth;
 And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord:
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, dead, and buried;
 he descended into hell;
 the third day he rose from the dead;
 he ascended into heaven,
 and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

Additional information about **A Christian Ministry in the National Parks** can be found on their website: www.acmnp.com.

The Search and Application Process

Jeff Yockey of Vocational Search/Consulting has been retained to assist ACMNP's Executive Director, Rev. Spencer Lundgaard, in conducting this strategic and timely search.

This search was announced in mid-December, 2011. Initial discussions with interested candidates will begin after January 2, 2012. Candidate applications will be evaluated beginning January 16, 2012 and will continue until a hire is made. Having a qualified person selected and hired in the spring of 2012 is the goal, so the new Director can be actively engaged in ACMNP's ministry this summer.

If you are interested in further exploring this position please email Jeff directly to ask questions or request a brief initial conversation. If you wish to recommend a potential candidate for this position, please contact Jeff as well. Jeff@jobfitmatters.org

Application Documents

To demonstrate your strong interest in being a candidate for this position, please submit a full application electronically to Jeff Yockey at: Jeff@jobfitmatters.org. Please email all your application documents all at one time.

A full application for the **Director of Program & Leadership Advancement** consists of:

- A 1-2 page cover letter
- A resume
- A list of five references (see instructions below)
- Short responses (2-4 paragraphs) to the following set of prompts/questions.
 - Briefly tell us about your journey with God.
 - Describe your connection to nature, and specifically to America's national parks.
 - What do you love, or not love, about doing ministry in the local church setting?
 - Describe one of your biggest learning experiences in life so far, and how it changed you.
 - If you were asked to submit a portfolio of work that you have produced in previous jobs, in roles you have held, or from your personal hobbies – what would you bring to show us?
 - Respond to the following YouTube video: “The Missional Church..simple.” http://youtu.be/arxfLK_sd68 What do you agree/disagree with, what thoughts did it bring to mind, what difference can this make, is this a fad, etc.

References

Please provide the reference's:

- name,
- occupation,
- email address,
- home, cell, and work phone numbers,
- and a paragraph about how you and your reference know each other. (How long, in what contexts, and whether there is a spiritual component to your relationship.)

Out of your five references, please ensure that two are people you have mentored, developed, tracked with, and otherwise influenced that are now mature Christians, serving God faithfully in the church and out in their world.

Our practice is not to contact references without your knowledge or permission. Time will be given for you to notify your references to expect a call from Jeff or from ACMNP's Executive Director if we desire to explore your candidacy at the next level.

Thanks in advance for all the effort involved to prepare and submit an application. Again, you are welcome to contact Jeff Yockey prior to submitting an application with any questions you have, or to request a short initial exploratory conversation. Jeff@jobfitmatters.org.