

Lydia Gajdel



Lydia has a Bachelor of Arts from Loyola University Chicago, where she majored in Theology and History and minored in Pastoral Leadership. She earned her Master of Divinity from the University of Chicago this past June.

Lydia has demonstrated a robust set of skills and dispositions which we feel will serve her well in this important position. We have been impressed by her high level of intelligence, communication and organizational skills, sense of humor and passion for youth ministry. She shares her faith journey in a compelling and relatable way.

While a student at Loyola, Lydia became involved with LIFT, an organization with sites in six cities which helps clients living in poverty access social services. After graduation, she took a full-time position with LIFT in Philadelphia. There she was responsible for recruiting and training high school and college volunteers who worked one-on-one with clients to secure services in their communities. She nurtured her young volunteers' spiritual and emotional development, helping them to learn from their interactions with clients and build their own leadership skills. Josh Romalis, Executive Director of LIFT at the time, described her as "absolutely extraordinary at connecting with clients and volunteers quickly."

During her time at the University of Chicago, Lydia served as a seminary intern, office administrator, and assistant to the youth minister at St. Paul and the Redeemer Episcopal Church (SPR). At SPR she led small group ministry, assisted in the worship service, and recruited and trained volunteers, among other responsibilities. In the youth program, she facilitated conversations with students on topics of faith and the Bible as well as coordinated events. Rev. Peter Lane, rector at SPR, said, "In my 10 years at this church I have had 10-12 interns from the University of Chicago Divinity School. Lydia is the best of those interns."

Lydia is currently pursuing ordination through the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, which is supportive of her working in other denominations. She has actively sought guidance from spiritual mentors since she was an undergraduate. She continues to be in close touch with them, and they provide her with support and advice.

In early August Lydia relocated to New Haven, where her partner, Laurie, is starting graduate school at Yale University. They will marry in March at their home church in Chicago.