

MICHELLE THOMAS

Youth Director / Jacksonville, FL

Background:

How do you serve in GCI? I work with the youth (Pre-K and teens), I am the greeter, and I help run SEP Florida. **/ How many years have you been part of GCI?** Since birth, so 27 years. **/ What are some of your reasons for choosing to participate with GCI in ministry?** I feel that my church has given so much to me: the members poured into me and prayed for me all my life, and I have a circle of family from it. While I know ministry moves, I feel it's time for me to pour back into what's meant so much to me. The members in my Jacksonville church are important to me and helped me form a foundation of Christ. The people in GCI, whether in the local church or globally, seem to actually love everyone, value people, and seek the truth in Jesus Christ. I love genuine people who are sincere, and I'm surrounded by them in this church. **/ How has your ministry had an impact on who you are? On who God is to you?** I view ministry as life, which can seem daunting, but it is rather relieving. If personal relationships and contact with others can be ministry, then we can spread Jesus' love in many ways. We don't have to limit ourselves to scheduled gatherings before we can do ministry. I see God's love in people; I see the good and the Light. I'm a school teacher by day, and I strive to spread this love and importance to my students as well (though it's certainly challenging). If people can love each other this much, how much more does God love us? **/ Who has invested in you to support you in your ministry?** My dad has obviously invested in me to support my ministry, as he's the pastor of the church. I had many youth leaders along the way who still support me, like my sister Amanda, Michelle Fleming, the Cherneys, the Williams family, and pretty much any adult in the church. Because of my parents' investment in me, I was able to venture to SEP SoCal in 2012 and take back some effective practices for our own camp. This led to investment from the Mullins, the Stapletons, Jeff Broadnax, Ted Johnston, and others associated with GCI's Generations Ministries. **/ Is there something unique about your church services that connects with your local context?** We have members who walk and bike to church or play basketball on our outdoor court. This has been a notable ministry, as it has led high school students and older to be on our property. Our youth are an integral part of the church service and get service opportunities as a result.



Get to Know Michelle

FAVORITE SCRIPTURE?

Psalm 37:4 – Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

1.

For what are you most grateful? Open-mindedness—that people can draw close to Christ without growing up as a Christian. I am grateful that my husband and family are open-minded, and that people are willing to learn about something they may not know.

2.

What energizes you? People exhaust me, but also give me the best kind of energy. I love dance parties, but I love seeing the “light bulb” come on for young people even more. Whether it's making a connection about Christ, learning something new about the Bible, or young people enjoying being in communion with each other, I really love seeing people connect to Christ and be happy about it.

3.

Struggle or life lesson you would like to share? I think we're all works in progress. I always want to know my circumstances and control them as much as possible, but I'm learning to let go and trust God. I also think all people want to feel loved and have purpose.

4.

How do you experience/feel close to God? Loud worship music, talking with friends about God and life, being outside in a beautiful place, and being around happy people who are having good, clean fun.

5.

What makes your region different than other places in the world? We have proximity to several major cities in Florida, so it is easier to connect with other GCI churches in our region.

6.

What are some stand-out memories from your time in GCI? Going to Higher Ground camp in 2005 and enjoying worshipping with so many like-minded people. That was the biggest crowd of GCI youth I've seen since I was a kid. I've always enjoyed our gatherings and reunions, and I love the energy that camp provides. The most powerful GCI memories I have involve meeting fellow believers, having meaningful conversations with them, and leaving feeling refreshed and loved.

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