

September 1, 2017

Dear Youth Group families,

Every year at the beginning of September, I am filled with nervous excitement. To be honest, it is really more nervousness than excitement. I think back to the spring and all the seniors who are now either in college or doing some other cool thing, and I wonder who will take their place? Who will be the leaders, rallying the rest of the group? What will happen at Discussion Group? Who will set the tone on the Mission Trip? Who will call me out and keep me in line?

The answer, of course, is that nobody will lead the way that those before them have led. Charlotte O'Brien is not Amelia Amodei, although they both excel at volleyball. Zander Kessler is not Meredith Ackley, although they both run far and fast. Peter Bruning is not Peter Mushlitz, although they are for all intents and purposes, brothers. And that is what makes the Youth Program great. We will carry on, similar to last year, but different. We will still play, talk, love and care for each other, work, and learn like we have in the past. But it will be different, and those differences will be awesome.

When I was in college, a professor told us a little anecdote. I don't remember the class, or reason for it (I was not a great student), but I do remember this, and it seems to be a good analogy for the Youth Program - There is a baker that has a sourdough starter that has been in her family for over 100 years, and that is the reason she makes the best bread. Her apprentice asks, "How is that possible? How has it not died, or been used up?" The baker answers, "It's simple, you just put a little in before you take some out." - In youth group, so many people have come, thrived, and been released to the world. But we are constantly replenished. The same, but different.

So finally, welcome back to everyone. I am looking forward to seeing you all at Discussion Group on September 6<sup>th</sup>, Youth Group on September 10<sup>th</sup>, or just around town.

In friendship,

*Nick*

A note to the Seniors - I know first-hand that you are in for a very challenging semester. Your parents, your parents' friends, your neighbors, your teachers, your coaches... will be all college, all the time. I promise you this: I will never ask you where you are applying to college. Youth Group, Discussion Group, the Mission Trip, and any other Youth Group based activity will be a college free zone. Come join us if you need a break from the madness.