

Dear Friends:

Earlier this week, our youth and their families were informed that JJ Joseph has made the decision to leave his position as Trinity's Director of Student Ministries. You may recall that JJ was granted a three-month leave of absence in early September. As he shared with youth and families a few weeks ago, this leave was due to a short-term opportunity available to him to address some financial needs for his family, including support for his mother who suffers from Parkinson's. Because of his previous training as an insurance adjuster, he was able to put those skills to work following Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

JJ, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and all four pastors anticipated that he would return to youth ministry following the three-month leave. During the last few weeks, however, it has become apparent to him and to his wife Angela that they cannot continue in youth ministry at this time. This is due in large part to their need to focus on caring for their family and to move closer to his mother for the foreseeable future. We are saddened to see JJ go, while at the same time we are supportive of his decision to put family first.

As the school year began, there was an extraordinary enthusiasm present and a level of involvement in youth ministry that Trinity had not seen for quite some time. For a number of our youth and families, the news of another youth staff departure is disheartening. We will begin a process of discerning future staffing plans immediately and will be seeking your input in the process. In the meantime, Aaron Rousseau and I will both be significantly involved with the youth ministry. We are grateful for the presence of Deawna Acra as assistant director and Audrey Metcalf and David Fox as youth ministry interns to work with us in caring for the needs of our youth during this time of transition.

I had the opportunity to be with the youth last Sunday evening and offer a message of encouragement. As I shared with them during our worship time, there is an assurance in the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." While we wait with hope, I invite you to join us in prayer for God to reveal those plans for the future of Trinity's youth ministry.

Grace and Peace,

Steve