

Dear FCCG family and friends,

It is a great joy and privilege to serve as your youth minister. The joy has been found in the lively and familial nature of the church that captivated my interest on my first visit, in being a recipient of a sincere hospitality that one could easily take for granted, and of course, the friendly and jovial atmosphere the kids bring with them wherever they go. Likewise, the privilege of joining each of you as those tasked with reflecting Christ to the youth is only magnified by these gleeful experiences, which have made it more than worthwhile.

My vision for youth ministry imitates those I remember as crucial to my spiritual formation while growing up. There is the example of my grandmother, who prayed the Lord's prayer with my brother and me each night. There is my youth pastor, who nurtured my intellect and longing to know God by never shying away from the complexity I found in faith. And there were my parents, who, in tandem with my pastor, patiently allowed me to develop my thoughts and voice without adding too much "exasperation" (Eph. 6:4) to my life when their teachings seemed too bizarre, when God seemed too hidden, and when his church seemed too divided for me to find confidence in them.

In her genius, my mom perfectly encapsulates what was helpful in my upbringing through her knack for mixing vegetables with pasta sauce before I learned to like any vegetables. After that, she graciously waited to serve some greens she loved until we learned to love them ourselves. I hope to do the same while trusted with the care of our youth so they may learn spiritual disciplines they can fall back on when there is nothing else and know God is bigger than their questions. He welcomes their curiosity, troubles, and even accusations on their faith journeys. So whether they are participating in or considering embarking on the lifelong "race" we

must all finish in Christ, our youth ministry team will show them that they can still begin to know and love God in the meantime (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

If I'm lucky, akin to my inconspicuously healthy diet, they will receive what they can, as they can, in "milk" (1 Cor. 3:2). So when they are ready to chew on the "meat" of God, they too can reflect on their upbringing at church with gratitude for those who nurtured them in lieu of the bitterness and jadedness I've found prevalent among my friends while in college. I pray that we will reflect Christ to them well together so that their experience with church, and conversely God, is invigorating—not taxing. Let's help them know that, like Jacob, they too can wrestle with the Lord until heavenly things make sense because he does not forsake us while we wade through the messy reality of the world as it is now.