



Dear 8th Grade Families!

As your students prepare to enter high school, we know that many of you are experiencing variety of emotions. Some of you may be nervous for the transition into a new space with new people. Some of you may be excited for a fresh start with new opportunities. It's also totally okay to be experiencing any combination of these feelings or anything else as you enter a new season of life, students and parents alike. As a Christ Church Student Ministry team, we want to support you in any way we can. Whether that be a conversation over the phone, ice cream, lunch, or a cup of coffee with me or any of our other student ministry team members, we want to be partners and advocates as you navigate this next step of life and faith. One way in which we hope to support you and your family is by formally welcoming you into our high school ministry!

Our high school ministry is called Koinonia, which simply means “fellowship” in Greek. Koinonia is a vibrant and robust ministry experience, and we hope that your student will feel at home in this community. The format is similar to COW with a large group gathering of games and Biblical teaching, followed by small groups. Many of your students will have the same small group leader as they move up to high school as well as some new faces to walk alongside them in their relationships with Jesus. To facilitate this transition, please consider the following opportunities to engage with our high school community and as always, reach out if you have any questions. We would love to make you aware of ates on the horizon as you begin to familiarize yourselves with Koinonia.

Koinonia Preview Night | April 23 | 7:00–8:45 p.m. – This will be a special night to welcome our 8th graders into our community and give them a preview of next year. (Don't worry, Grace and Steve will be there too!) We will have a parent meeting running simultaneously led by Steve Noble and a brief check-in from myself (Grace Stevenson) to give you the run-down of what Koinonia is all about and answer any questions you may have about this next step!

Summer House Groups – Throughout June and July, high school students gather to play volleyball, ultimate frisbee, and connect with one another, followed by a short time of teaching. This is often a good touchpoint for our students to gather in Christ-centered community for a fun night in the summer! Details will be posted on our website in May.

Chicago Mission Trip | July 16–21 – Join us for a week of serving and fun in Chicago. Students will participate in a variety of activities designed to open their hearts and minds to the realities of poverty. Our students consistently report that mission trips are some of the most transformational experiences on their faith journey, building deep friendships with one another and cultivating a posture of Christ-like service. Register [HERE](#).

Roca Y Agua | June 11–16 – Roca is our annual houseboat camp trip to Bull Shoals Lake, Arkansas for a week of water sports, worship, friendship, and an adventure that is aimed at deepening their faith. Register, click [HERE](#).

Confirmation – During the Fall of 2023 we will launch our annual Confirmation experience, designed for high school freshmen. Confirmation may sound intimidating, but we promise it's not! At Christ Church, Confirmation is based in small groups led by mentors with the opportunity for students to engage in meaningful conversations about what they believe about who God is, how to grow in their relationship with Jesus, and what it means to be the Church. It is also a great on ramp for our freshmen to enter into our high school community. Confirmation runs in conjunction with our normal Sunday night Koinonia programming, so there is no need to worry about fitting one more thing in your already busy schedules! We do ask that you sign up so we can adequately build our volunteer teams to support our new students. Registration and information on Confirmation dates will be available late summer, so keep an eye out!

Fall Retreat | October 20–22 – Our annual Fall Retreat is similar to our middle school winter retreat, Stampede. Join us for a weekend at Covenant Harbor in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin to retreat from our normal weekly rhythms, engage in spiritual disciplines, build new relationships, and have a ton of fun. Registration and details will be available in August.

I would also like to introduce you to our high school ministry director and my friend, Emily Maruyama. She is so excited to meet you all and grow alongside each and every one of our new students as they enter high school this coming fall! She is more than happy to answer any questions you may have as well. You can reach her via e-mail at emaruyama@christchurch.us.

One more thing! Make sure to mark **Friday, May 5th**, on your calendars, for our **8th Grade Celebration**. We will be gathering at the Garst's house in Downers Grove to celebrate our time together in COW, share fun memories, and talk about what's to come in the future. We'll eat together, pray together, and hang out. We want to celebrate our 8th graders and the impact that this specific class has had on their community throughout the pandemic and beyond. More information on this to come in the next week or so with a registration link to get a sense of numbers as we plan for food and set-up!

Thank you again for partnering with us as we walk together on the discipleship paths of our student communities. We are praying for each and every one of you as you work to finish middle school strong and prepare for the next steps of high school as parents and students. We love you guys!

In Christ,
Grace Stevenson
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Middle School Ministry