Dear Parents and Students,

I want to take this opportunity to welcome you into the Middle School ministry at South Church! I’m looking forward to meeting you and getting a chance to know you as the summer and upcoming school year progress!

For those of you who don’t know me, my name is Joel Wayner. I am the Lead Student Ministries Pastor here at South, working especially with middle school students. I’ve been at South for 20 years now, and my passion is teaching God’s word to middle school students in relevant, practical ways, hopefully helping them grow and mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as helping them make their faith their own.

This week your student is participating in VBS for the last time as a student at South. I’ll be there each evening to get to know your students a little bit during the week, which I hope will help make the transition from “children’s ministry” at South to “Student Ministry” a bit easier on them.

On Sunday June 26th, your 5th grader officially becomes a 6th grader here at South Church, and we would love to see them at our Sunday morning student ministry hour. Our students meet during the 9:30 service in the Student Ministry Center at the back of the church. Whether your student participated in VBS this year or not, this will be another opportunity for myself and some of my middle school staff members to meet your student, introduce ourselves, and make them feel welcome. I hope that you’ll make this time a priority for your student.

On the evening of June 24th  (Friday evening of VBS week), we’ll be hosting a “welcome 6th graders” event at the church from 6:30-8:30. Regardless of if your student is participating in VBS this year, they are welcome to come Thursday evening, and this would be a great way for your student to begin connecting with the Jr. High Ministry at South.

Along with this letter, you’re receiving our Jr. High summer calendar. Let me take just a minute to highlight a couple of things from the calendar. Pastor Nick (our HS pastor) and I will be hosting a middle school and high school student Bible Study Wednesdays June 29th and July 6,20, and 27 from 10:30-11:30, followed by lunch from 11:30-1:15. They should bring $10 for lunch if they are going to go out with us. We’d love for your students to come and participate, even if they can’t necessarily come every week. On July 25th we will take a trip to Michigan’s Adventure. The details are on the calendar, but we leave at 8:30 a.m. and get back home at 8 pm. Students are welcome to bring food along with them, and we will also stop for fast food on the way there and back. This is a great time to get to know your students, and for them to get to know us and other students as well – I hope we’ll see many of our incoming 6th graders at this event. On August 20th we are river tubing on the Chippewa River in Mount Pleasant. We will float for 1.5-2 hours and share copious amounts of snacks and soda. This is usually a highlight event for most of our students and the relational time it gives us is pivotal to forming relationships with your students.

Please be assured, that more than anything we value God’s word…teaching it and interacting with it together. This is our primary focus in the Middle School Ministry, and along the way we make sure to have lots of fun together. If you want your student to value and enjoy the Middle School Ministry at South, please encourage them to get involved in as many events as possible this summer! We are looking forward to meeting you and interacting with you as the summer progresses. If you have any questions about the Middle School Ministry – our philosophy – calendar of events – or anything else, please don’t hesitate to call, email, or set up a time to come in and see me!

Also, our student ministry assistant Jessica Doerr is a fount of information, as well as one of my incredible middle school staff team members. She will be at virtually all of these events and does an incredible job of keeping me organized. Any questions you have regarding schedule, sign-ups, registering students for retreats or events, or just about anything else related to logistics can be directed to her as well. Her email address is: [jdoerr@southlife.org](mailto:jdoerr@southlife.org)

Jessica has a weekly email you can sign up for …..

We’re looking forward to meeting and getting to know your students and beginning the next 3 years of ministry with them!

Don’t hesitate to reach out to me with questions or concerns any time.

For His glory,

Joel Wayner

Lead Pastor of Student Ministries – Jr. High

South Church

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