

Weekly Eagle News – Head of Schools

My Favorite Parents:

Imbedded in our mission statement is a commitment to partner with the church. The picture our long-time administrator Ray Leenstra used to cite was of a three-legged stool – the idea being that a student thrives when they are supported on the three legs of church, home and school.

We often talk of our partnership with parents, but sometimes that can make the church partnership feel less important. While there are a number of examples of this church partnership – just today I was welcoming the children's pastor from Packinghouse Church to our lower school chapel and last week it was pastoral leaders from the region helping lead our upper school retreat – the most important way we can build that partnership is to encourage your participation in a local church.

I have been reading *The Great Dechurching*, a rather sad, but insightful book chronicling research on the trending move away from church attendance, a move that was accelerated during the COVID time period. One thing that jumped out to me is that high among the reasons for “dechurching” are “social” factors – feelings of not fitting in, of not connecting with others and not feeling loved. I have not dived into the research enough to know how much these reasons are fleshed out, but I do wonder if they become self-fulfilling. As we fail to prioritize church attendance and become more sporadic, relationships within the context of church fade. When we treat church like an “experience”, like going to a movie, this removes the sense of community that should be at the center of our church experience.

I would encourage you to make church a priority. I know for me there are three things that I highly value in my church experience because it makes me uncomfortable (I know that sounds odd!):

- Church takes me out of my comfort zone in terms of the people with whom I interact. They are NOT just like me and that is a good thing. God's kingdom is made up of diverse people that Revelation describes as “people from every nation, tongue and tribe.” There are many things, including politics, about which we may not agree. That is challenging... but okay.
- Through church I live in community with others. Yes, there is certainly a sense of community in our RCS world and I am thankful for that, but I live in community in the context of my church as well. I learn about and seek to meet the needs of others. I experience life with others that allows me to be prayerful about the needs in their lives. We worship together, weep together, share meals together and do social activities together.
- My church involvement stretches me spiritually. My wife and I host a small group in our home for which I lead a Bible study. I am part of the preaching team at our church and find the study required to do that challenging but so rewarding to learn and understand more about our great Savior.

So here's to a partnership with our local churches!

Extras:

To update on the notice below... we will make available a video of the society meeting so that if you are not able to attend, you can catch up later. Also, we are seeking to add a fun element to the evening. Stay tuned.

Our Fall Parent Society will take place on Monday, October 30th at 7 pm at the lower school gym. This is an opportunity to hear updates from each principal and a state-of-the-school address from me. Typically, there is a brief report from a couple of board committee leads too. While there are opportunities for questions from the audience, if you have a personal issue or frustration, this is typically not the best place to address it. Set up an individual appointment with the person involved and, if that does not resolve it, escalate it to the division principal.

Enjoy your week!

Brian