



Dear Students and Parents,

I'm often clueless, but I'm not dumb. I'm older than some, but I'm younger than most. I'm often forgetful, but I've got a great memory when it comes to lyrics from a song I haven't heard in 10 years. I'm an introvert, but I love spending my energy with people. I have experienced a rollercoaster of emotions since February of last year, but I have been holding steady on one emotion this whole week: "nerv-cited" (a combination of nervous and excited).

Why am I nervous? Well, as you might know, there's this dumb bully that waltzed into town that goes by the name of "covid," and "2020," and it's been acting like it owns the place – cancelling school, cancelling church, cancelling movie theaters, cancelling hugs, cancelling good moods, cancelling excitement – and it's never apologized. It took all of our previous routines and made them look like one big joke. We went to school, but it was online. We went to the grocery store, but we had to stand in a line outside before we went in. We went to youth things at church, but it was in a tiny depressing youth room where we had to sit at a distance and with a smaller group because most of us weren't able to be there.

I'm nervous because "Life as we knew it" went bye-bye, and I (like you) have sat in this new reality for so long that I've grown to expect tomorrow to bring the "same-ol-same-ol" joke of a routine instead of exciting newness. I see this new youth room and I have all this hope for what it SHOULD bring and what it COULD be for us...but what if it doesn't? Is it wise to have hopeful and large expectations or is it wiser to await the same-ol-same-ol and have small expectations? Should I get my hopes up or should I anticipate being letdown?

Why am I excited? Well, as you might know, there's this dumb bully that waltzed into town that goes by the name of "covid," and "2020," and it's been acting like it owns the place... but right in the middle of this current and now familiar mess, right in the middle of our routines becoming old and stale, "something new" – this new youth space – burst from the horizon and delivered a Mike Tyson upper-cut to the same-ol-same-ol, proving to me that the hero of "hope" as real and as powerful as it said it would be.

The best thing about something being "brand new" is that it brings us an opportunity to start from ground-zero. In this brand new youth space, you have no past. You have no experience in this room. You have nothing in front of you except a chance to build the room's atmosphere, and your life in it, in the way you want it to be built. I have no clue who will build that atmosphere, but I hope it's you. I hope it's you because I believe each person brings their own unique, valuable, and new perspective, and as long as there are new perspectives, the possibilities of what "could be" will continue to give us hope for today and tomorrow. This room may turn out to be a number of things, but it will serve the Lord – the deliverer of hope – and in doing so it will be a place that cares for students and their families.

Dan Venzin
Minister to Students