



February 19, 2016

Dear Youth Pastors and Leaders,

Transitions - big and small - are a key part of every ministry. I am overwhelmed when I think about the number of transitions ministers face in a single year and, yet, remain resolute in leading others through to transformation. I am certain that were it not for the result of transformation, each of us might think differently about entering into the transitions that life offers.

The past several years have witnessed many transitions in region based ministry. My involvement with the Regional staff and Board over the past 4 years has witnessed a strong commitment toward transformation. I am moved every day knowing that each decision enacted by regional staff and board members is made to transform our churches into a people empowered together by the abundance of God in Jesus Christ. Our journey would not be such without particular transitions.

The past year has been full of transitions. Among these was the movement of leadership of the ABY Retreat events resulting from the recent retirement of Jim Walter. Jim and I began a changeover in leadership and direction for the ABY ministries by seeking better ways to offer meaningful and impactful ministry while maintaining a cost effective model. Among this shift included a transition to separate events for Middle and High School grades, a desire to utilize and celebrate the vast leadership talent throughout our churches and a move to encouraging a mindset centered on localized, mission based service. By mid-spring of 2015 we had identified planning teams for each of the events and began our preparations for the fall retreats.

Honestly, these objectives were met with mixed results. We were able to implement an impactful High School retreat in early November. However, when the Middle School event did not come together quickly enough, due to leadership gaps, I decided to postpone the retreat until Spring 2016. I am grateful for the planning team's leadership, hard work and dedication to the youth of our regions. Each member worked extremely hard and I was certain that a delayed timing for the Middle School retreat would give us the space necessary to secure the missing parts.

As I began to reconvene the team, it became clear that several personal transitions impacted the ability of the Middle School planning team to continue. In short, nearly every member of the team had a significant change that did not allow him or her to continue in the planning process. Attempts were made to secure additional planning team members with little success. By the latter part of January 2016 it was evident that securing a team and bringing them up to speed on previous planning would leave us virtually no time to secure the necessary leadership for a transformative event.

It brings deep dissatisfaction to announce that the Middle School retreat scheduled for April, 2016 has been cancelled. As a region, we do not take lightly the cancellation of any event and know the impact felt by you, your churches and your people. We appreciate your understanding.

As we look to move forward, we understand that no transition is easy. It bears a cost and that cost often requires us to adjust our planning and efforts. In all of this, there is a confidence that the transition taking place in our youth events is aimed squarely on the transformation of the individual and collective lives of the region's youth. ***As such, we ask (1) for your prayers that the fruit of transformation will bear itself out in future events and (2) that each of you consider how you might be a part of the planning and implementation of the Fall 2016 youth retreats.***

Blessing in Christ,

Pastor Joshua Carney
Associate Regional Minister for ABY Events