

Dear Manchester Youth families,

It's with great sadness I have to inform you that our three summer trips, Middle School Mission, High School Mission, and Spirit Camp, have been canceled.

More Information

Pastor Andy sent an email to the church on Tuesday, May 12 called the "Pandemic Plan for Ministry and Mission." If you haven't yet read it, you can read it [here](#). It details four distinct phases regarding what we as a church are planning to do as society gradually transitions back to "normal." I'm incredibly appreciative of Pastor Andy and our church leadership for putting this plan together, and to be part of a staff that endorses a slow and methodical approach to this process.

In order for our trips to go, we would have to be solidly in Phase 4 of this plan, and my colleagues and I agree that we will not be in that phase by the time any of the trips occur. As I have said numerous times before, the safety of our youth is always my first priority, and these phases are in place to keep us and our families safe right now. I personally can't wait for Phase 4 and all of the opportunities it will bring back to our youth program.

Alternative Plans

While this summer will of course look very different from past summers, I'm hopeful the plans we have in place will be enjoyable for our youth and offer some reprieve from the grief. Here's what you can look forward to as we head into the summer months:

- Fellowship gatherings for youth (and sometimes families) every other Sunday
- A weekly Summer Corona Challenge
- A Manchester Youth Minecraft server all summer long.
- Twice weekly porch visits

More details about all of these summer offerings can be found in the eNews.

Refunds

As you all know, the pandemic has affected our overall giving. If you are able, I'd ask you to consider that in lieu of a full or partial refund, to instead make a donation to our general fund. Your financial gifts help make it possible for our church to stay open even when the building is closed. Please contact Felicia at felicia.barringer@manchesterumc.org to state how you would like to proceed. People who have already registered will also be contacted directly early next week regarding refunds.

Communication Advice

To Parents: I strongly suggest that you initiate a conversation with your youth about this as soon as possible. Every youth will react a little differently, but many of our youth have strong emotional connections to these trips, so this information will be yet another loss to grieve. If you need any additional support or have questions, please don't hesitate to call or text me at 314-363-8261. I will make myself available for as long as needed. Otherwise, the standard advice applies. Listen openly, validate any feelings they share, and allow them to grieve in whatever way they need. If they need suggestions, talking, writing, and artwork are three tried and true methods.

To Youth: There's no wrong way to feel about this. Many of you will feel intense grief and sadness, and that's ok. Don't be afraid to feel it. Talk to your families, talk to your church friends, and don't hesitate to reach out to me or your small group leaders. We are here for you.

Please know that I grieve alongside you all, both personally and professionally. Let's remind each other that we are all in this together, lift each other and ourselves up in prayer, and be the hands and feet of Christ for our families and community. God is with us, grieves with us, and promises us that this too will be redeemed in the end.

Yours in Christ,

Beth