



## **Impacting Others for Christ**

One of the great joys in life is working with people who love Jesus. Thank you, Laurelwood family, for being such a loving and serving body of believers! Another great joy for me is partnering with a great staff. Wouldn't you agree that we have some outstanding people serving us? Pastor Phil is one of those special servants. He came to us over twelve years ago as an intern and continued with us as our youth pastor. I have loved the way he has cared for our students, how he integrated youth ministry with our other ministries, and the high degree of integrity he has shown as a man of God. So, it is with a sense of sadness that I share with you that Pastor Phil is stepping down as our youth pastor.

While this sounds sudden, Pastor Phil has sensed in these last 6 months that it may be time for someone else to be that catalyst for our youth ministry. Even though he is resigning, Phil, Anna and the family are staying with us! We are excited for that good news. In addition, we would like to celebrate his ministry and service to us. For our youth, we are planning to have a combined Middle School and High School celebration on Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at our normally scheduled youth night. In addition, following our worship service on May 21<sup>st</sup>, we will be providing refreshments, a time for testimonies and an opportunity for all of us to write and give Phil and Anna love notes to thank them for their sacrificial ministry to all of us and our youth. So, let Phil and Anna know how much you appreciate them, rejoice that they are staying here with us, and let's celebrate.

~ Pastor Mike Wilde

**I've included Phil's letter so you can hear it from him:**

*For the past 12 ½ years, God has given me the privilege to live that out as your Youth Pastor serving alongside my wife and a faithful team of amazing volunteers. Shortly after I was hired as the youth intern, we rebranded the Laurelwood Baptist Youth Group as IMPACT, with the vision of IMPACTing Students Today to IMPACT the World Tomorrow. I can look back with satisfaction at having faithfully and effectively made changes: to our program, in the lives of our students and their families, in our volunteers and even in my own life and that of my family to open doors for students to have an impact.*

*Although I will always advocate for the youth of this world to be equipped, empowered and released to do Gospel-centered ministry, my time as Laurelwood's Youth Pastor has come to an end. While Anna and I are not sure what God has in store for us next, we know that Laurelwood is our home, our family, and we have no plans to go anywhere. But as far as catalysts go, over the past six months or so, I have been asking myself if it's time for a new catalyst to take the youth ministry in a new direction.*

*I have spent the last several years mentoring Luke Jech, teaching him all I know while he was part of the Convergence Program. Now that Luke has graduated and has established himself as an integral part in the lives of our students and staff, I am thrilled that he now has this opportunity to take the lead as your interim Youth Pastor. In this next season, I am confident that Luke will rise to the occasion and show himself to be a faithful servant and a powerful catalyst toward continuing the vision God has for our youth ministry.*

*Anna and I would like to thank God for all the ways He has blessed and grown us and our children; the Laurelwood family for all your love and support; the ministry leaders I've gotten to partner with; all of the elders I have served with throughout the years; Michelle and Debbie for all their hard work, support and encouragement each day in the office; Melanie, Heather, Tracy & Leng, Herman and Brandon in the Children's ministry, Pastor Kevin (my twin) for the many ways he raises up the next generation of worship leaders, and to Pastor Mike –*

*who always told me, 'If it was easy to be a Youth Pastor, anyone could do it!' Thank you for your trust and confidence in me and for pouring your wisdom into me to help me be the best Youth Pastor I could be. To all the volunteers that have served alongside of me at IMPACT – thank you for the impact you have had in my life and in the lives of countless students. To all the parents – thank you for partnering with me and allowing me to partner with you in discipling your children. And finally, to all my students – present and former – thank you for all the incredible memories, thank you for all the things you have taught me, thank you for stepping out of your comfort zones to pursue Christ and to have an IMPACT in the lives of your friends and families! I pray you will continue to 'set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (1Tim 4:12),' while 'always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.' (1Pe 3:15 ESV)*

*Thank you!*

*Pastor Phil Ball*