

Dear Parents and Supporters of Dance for Joy,

This summer, like every summer, I have had a chance to step back, breathe, pray, and seek God as He leads us in the future of Dance for Joy. You may or may not know, but we are entering our 9th year. It has been exactly 10 years this summer since the studio I thought I would teach at forever closed down and left me feeling a bit misplaced. I loved my coworkers and I loved my students. Many of who I still miss today, although some of them I see every week as I teach their little girls; my grand-students. Through time and healing, the Lord has shown me that His ways are way better than mine. After 9 years of God continually proving His faithfulness, His goodness, and His constant grace, I can say with confidence that I love the place He has taken Dance for Joy. I truly believe that only by His might has Dance for Joy grown and developed into what it is today.

In 2009, we started with about 20 girls between the ages of 2-5. My daughter Ryn was 3 at the time and most of the dancers were her "friends". I longed for the day when I could teach teenagers again and really teach "real" dance again. Every summer I prayed that God would give me peace about expanding the program into a full studio with all ages. And every summer, I felt the tug on my heart to be more present with my kids and my husband, so I took that as a sign to continue this growth of "one year at a time". So that has been what we have done now, for 9 years. My 3 year old Ryn is now almost 12. My son Tommy is almost 14. Grace will be 9 in August and the "baby" Charley will be 4 in September. We lost my brother in law in October and our life has had some reorienting because of it. Life is not as simple as it was 10 years ago when the old studio closed, however God's promises remain the same.

As I was watching the spring recital, I was in awe of some of our dancers. Some which have danced at Dance for Joy since the beginning. I can still picture their little preschool cheeks and round bellies. It is hard to believe several of them will be teenagers this year. That's right, Dance for Joy now has teenagers. I can hardly get over it. I love teenagers. I love to see God use teenagers and I love to see them use their gifts for Him. I could go on all day about it, but I won't. I will say that I have loved having God redefine my definition of "real" dance. Young dancers really can dance and the gift that God puts in their little bodies is jaw dropping every time I get to teach them. I will also tell you what will be happening in the future of Dance for Joy. There are some things I do know, and still many things I do not.

First, we will grow and develop our Outreach Team this year. We began the Outreach Team this spring with 5th-6th grade dancers who took more than one class per week and who were interested in using the gift of dance to serve others. I feel like God wants to do some cool things with this group of dancers and I would love to include other dancers from the community, not just Dance for Joy.

Second, I would like to begin some relationships with other local studios where our more advanced dancers can take more classes than our schedule has to offer to supplement their training in the future. While I sometimes struggle with comparison between studios, I truly do want the best for our dancers (their training and their hearts) so I am excited to forge some relationships where there won't be competition between studios, but rather dancers working together in unity. While I plan on continuing to grow one grade level at a time until we reach 12th grade, I know we must expand in order to do that. To what degree and what that looks like

is the piece of the puzzle that I do not know. It also may be at a cost that I am not willing to make. Thankfully we are not there yet and I do not need to know the answers until it is time. I do know that however the Lord leads, I want our dancers to be confident in whatever dance class they step into. I feel the Outreach Team is the start to bridging some of these connections and keeping a sacred time for dancers to put their focus on Jesus and dance for Him.

Thirdly, I would like to make some changes to how we do recital and our “register every semester”. These are big changes, so bear with me. Beginning fall 2017, we will be breaking our program up into 2 sections. Our Lower School (Cute name coming soon) will consist of all of our preschool classes and also include Kindergarten and 1st grade. This program will essentially stay the same as it has in year past. Semester-long commitment, 2 recitals both at Christmas and in the spring with a simple and affordable costume. I take the lower school very seriously and even though I am excited that we finally have “big girls”, my heart and commitment to excellence will be forever tied to our “little” dancers. My mom was the director of a preschool for 20 years, many years of which I worked for and I believe the lower school should have the best of the best. And hopefully you all know that I have a heart for all you mamas of littles pushing strollers and feeding babies in the hallway.

The big changes come with our 2nd-7th grade dancers. I found that last year, there was very little turnover in many of these classes and the classes that stayed the same, we made some real progress through the year. While I still want Dance for Joy to be a place where you can take a semester off and play soccer, I do feel like it is time to ask for a bit more of a commitment from our older dancers. So, for our “upper school” (fun name coming soon) I would like to begin a once a school year type registration process. The time frame would still be the same as far as the calendar goes (Mid-September-End of April) but you signing up for that whole time, rather than just the fall or just the spring. We will also be “helping” you pick which class to sign up for that will best suit your developing dancer. We also would eliminate the Christmas recital and would move to an “age group/level” showcase. For example, on Monday, December 10th at 6pm, all 2nd and 3rd grade dancers would meet downstairs in the Family Life Center to show what they have been working on in class. We would not have costumes or a polished dance to show, but more of a snapshot of what they have learned at the halfway mark of the year. This would give us more class time to work on technique and less time to be focusing on recital dances, which I believe is a good change. In the spring, we will have a “real” recital with costumes, theme, dress rehearsal and a new location. I feel it is time for our upper school to experience a bigger stage and hopefully some good lighting! I will keep using the \$10/costume rental fee, however in order to rent a venue for recital, I will be charging a Recital Fee this year for our upper school only.

I know this seems like a lot of change, and change is often hard, but I am excited about the things God has in store for Dance for Joy and for our precious dancers and teachers! I value each and every one of you and your children. We are and will always be a work in progress and I pray that there is grace for us along the way as we learn and grow. Thank you so much for your continued support and for choosing Dance for Joy.

With Joy,

Kit Rossi