

Dear Parish Family,

As you read this note I, Mary Ball, Drew Royster and other adult leaders from Transfiguration are serving our youth and many other teenagers at the successful Genesis retreat weekend in Buena Vista. These weekends are a time of fantastic ministry, community building for groups, and a unique opportunity to introduce young people to the Christian faith for the first time.

My joy at these kinds of events is tempered by the news of an alleged victimization of a student of Vail Christian High School by a teacher there. While we await the adjudication of this case by our legal system, the toxic consequences of this kind of violation are manifesting themselves throughout our community. To me, this violation of trust we all place in someone who ministers to youth is the gravest of offenses. I ask you to pray this morning for the victim and the victim's family, as well as the families of students, faculty and staff of Vail Christian. As Christians we are charged to pray also for the alleged offender and his family, and I ask you to do that as well. I have offered pastoral support to the Vail Christian families who are members of Transfiguration, and also to those teachers and Board members we know there. I have offered to the leadership there the resources of our staff for consultation and support in the days ahead.

As a former professional youth minister myself, I understand the devastating ramifications this kind of violation can have for a school or a church. Please know that your Vestry and Staff have worked very hard to create a supportive, safe environment at our parish so that we can minister to our youngest members using the best practices and wisdom available to us. Under Mary Ball's leadership, we were one of the first parishes in the Diocese of Colorado to enact a comprehensive set of policies aimed at protection of our children and youth. Indeed, the diocesan policies now mandated are based upon the policies Mary drafted and the Vestry enacted years ago. We have continued to update these policies over the years as the Episcopal Church has learned more about safeguarding our youngest members, and even now the Vestry is in the process of approving the most recent improvements to our standing set of policies.

I have asked Mary to summarize these policies on our web-site, and will inform you when that summary is available. I thank the Vestry, Mary, Drew, and the rest of our Staff and adult leaders and helpers for their commitment to protecting our youngest members. We will all continue to work hard to place Transfiguration at the cutting edge of establishing as safe an environment as we possibly can. Please feel free to contact me, Mary, Drew or any Vestry member with any questions, comments or concerns. See you next week.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooks" with a stylized flourish at the end.