



First Covenant Church

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To whom it may concern,

Three years ago our congregation at First Covenant Church began a journey of starting an after school program for middle school students in Red Wing. After receiving input from other local organizations, it was discerned that there was a huge need in our city around three areas: 1) provide a safe space for students after school, 2) a place where students can build friendships with caring adults who would become their support and encouragement, and 3) offer opportunities for students to develop various life skills or help them grow in their “sparks”. After great partnerships were formed with Goodhue County 4-H, Red Wing Youth Outreach, and Every Hand Joined, we then launched Fusion a year later. Fusion meets weekly on Tuesdays from 3-5pm at First Covenant Church (a short walk down the road from Twin Bluff Middle School).

What started with just nine students has now grown to about seventy students attending weekly for what has become “the best day of their week” as some students have shared. The concept is fusing together the idea of a Youth Center along with our own version of a Community Education booklet. In other words, students are invited to come and play games in the full-sized gym and dedicated youth space, can purchase snacks from a cafe, and swing into our homework center to get help from volunteer tutors. After a few announcements and door prizes, students then have the opportunity to sign up for what we call Learning Experiences. These are one to four week-long classes where students can participate in art projects, shop classes, auto maintenance training, cooking/baking classes, mini-sports camps, and many other opportunities that develop life skills or grow their “sparks”.

As Fusion continues to expand, we have been dreaming about how we can continue to make Fusion a great place for students in our city. Our hope is to be able to fund a part-time Fusion Coordinator that can help give direct investment into the planning and execution of our weekly gatherings. Right now we are mostly a volunteer-led program. But as the need continually grows for recruiting adult volunteers, coordinating schedules, finding resources, and organizing future program plans; having a dedicated staff person will help ensure that Fusion is accomplishing its purposes well.

In addition, we at First Covenant Church want to continue to expand our efforts in providing safe places for students in Red Wing to find support from caring adults. In order to make this dream a reality, we are in the beginning stages of starting a new faith-based gathering for students on Thursdays through the ministry of Young Life. Young Life is a Christian organization that reaches out to students through a team of

adults who are concerned enough about kids to go to them, on their turf and in their culture, to build bridges of authentic friendship centered on Christ. At Young Life gatherings, they host “parties with a purpose”; creating an environment that students want to be in while inviting students to find hope and an abundant life in Christ. Therefore, we would like to expand this Fusion Coordinator to include launching and providing oversight to Young Life as well. By adding Young Life, we would be able to offer a second opportunity each week for students in middle school to find the support and encouragement they may need.

In order to see this exciting opportunity happen in our community, we are looking to raise \$42,000 annually. This amount will allow us to make this dream a reality by staffing a 30-hour per week Fusion/Young Life Coordinator, as well as fund staff training, additional resources for programming, and scholarships for students to experience life at summer camp! But we cannot do this without your help! Would you consider becoming a financial supporter in order that we, together, may continue providing the best opportunities we can to invest in and support our youth here in Red Wing? Visit giving.younglife.org/redwing from any device to give online! Thank you for your investment in the life and faith of our community’s youth!

Michael Bechtold
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First Covenant Church