

June 10, 2020

Dear Grace Community,

We have been meeting virtually for the last few days as a faculty, and the connection and work unfolding is inspiring and engaging to say the least. We will be happy for the rest that is coming, but we are currently very focused on our vision and planning for this September. Of course, we are still saying our goodbyes to Gail Kennedy, Rose Morrison, and Alma Scott. Each of them has brought so much in their individual contributions to Grace, and collectively their departures leave a measurable gap for us to manage. Sadly, I write today with another departure that has recently emerged.

In the last few weeks, Kristin Smith has finalized her plans to join the faculty at Indian Creek School in Crownsville, MD. This appointment puts her much closer to her current home in Crofton, MD from where she has been commuting this past year. It was a hard decision for her to make as she has loved her time at Grace. Kristin came to Grace in the fall of 2017 after John Kennedy's retirement that same year. She had big shoes to fill, and with her deep knowledge of Orff Schulwerk instruction, her creativity, her passion for giving students room to create, and her love of performance, Grace gained a master music teacher. In her tenure, Kristin collaborated with our Chaplain, Susan Thon, to bring new vision and life to our chapel program. She led community-wide sing-alongs, Assembly performances, Christmas Chapel, and the Spring Musical. Last spring, the musical was created by students and featured much of the Orff instruction that Kristin is most adept in teaching. Her direction of this production was innovative and her students experienced the performance in a way that put them even more fully at the center. We will miss Kristin immensely, along with her remarkable rising Grade 3 daughter, Ava. We wish them both our very best as they make this move to Indian Creek. We will be considering our replacement for this position over the next few months as we continue to plan for our reopening in September. More details will follow this summer.

Amidst all of these goodbyes, we are delighted to announce the appointment of Jason Murphy to Grade 4. Jason comes to us from National Presbyterian School in Washington, DC where he has worked since 2014. Jason holds a B.S. from the University of Maryland Global College and an A.S in mathematics from Montgomery College. At NPS, Jason has been a long-term substitute in Grade 6, a teacher associate for multiple grade levels, the After 3 Club Coordinator, and Director of the After 3 Program. He has also served as an Assistant Camp Director at their Horizons summer camp. Jason has a long history with Fillmore Arts Camp where he has been director and served in multiple roles since 2005.



Jason's mission is "to empower students with agency and a genuine understanding that every idea matters, every moment matters, and everyone matters." He has a passion for math and has found great success with his students and coursework during distance learning this spring. We are honored and delighted that he has chosen Grace, and we look forward to giving our rising Grade 4 parents and students a chance to meet him virtually and in person very soon.

It is a bittersweet time of year for schools as we must contend with departures and new beginnings for some of our beloved staff. As we take the time to do this, we remain joyfully expectant for all that is to come for our community with the arrival of new faces.

Looking forward to connecting with you throughout the summer,

Jen Danish