

Greetings Friends and Family,

I trust you are doing your best and keeping the faith during these tempestuous times. This letter comes to you, as I embark on a new chapter of ministry. I feel compelled to share my journey with you. My new role as the creative and musical director for the Quinte Youth for Christ in Belleville, Ontario is one that I am deeply honored and keen to begin (if anyone is interested in garnering further details about this program, please PM me and I would be happy to share).

I am both elated and terrified at the thought of returning to youth choirs and the creative arts in general. It is no easy feat, but my passion for empowering God's children to become leaders of meaningful change through teachings of love and divine scripture surpasses all my perceived fears. What gives me hope is the resilient spirit of our youth who continue to thrive using technology with virtual conferences which effectively bridge the gap despite Covid.

Allow me to share the story of Cherisse, a 10-year-old firecracker from a single parent home in Little Burgundy, Ontario. Our paths crossed thanks to her interest in the youth choir, and my life was transformed because of our meeting. I witnessed a light in her the moment she entered my orbit. We worked/sang/yelled/worshipped together for years. That friendship was most enriching for us both. Today, Cherisse has blossomed into a phenomenal woman with a career as a civil engineer, a stand-up comic, a loving partner, and mother.

Another story of inspiration can be found in Janelle, a young woman, whom we met and worked together with. She learnt teamwork, resilience as well as confidence in a choir setting. Against more obstacles than we will ever know she went through high school then nursing school and is now teaching Health Science and Nursing in Montreal and raising her son.

My most challenging memory comes from Tammie; she was one of my greatest test- or rather her sassy mouth was. Being from a single parent home, Tammie dealt with ongoing socio-economic struggles, but today she is acquiring her second degree in social work. Tammie found purpose in her pain and is now an agent for change in the system that once marginalized her family.

My collection of inspirational tales is limitless, because I continue to see how transformative this program is for youth and young adults alike. This choir teaches them to thrive in all aspects of life through the teaching of Christ. In my humble opinion, the Arts acts as a beautiful conduit to express our faith, fears, and freedoms!

Naturally, where there is success, one can also find stories of tragedy. Sadly, I have witnessed lives lost to gangs, deaths by suicide, along with several other terrible decisions that OUR youth make out of hopelessness. Despite these tragic tales, I remain optimistic because the success always outweighs the tragedies. As a veteran of the Faith and Choir programs, I continue to lead the charge with optimism and vitality - because our youth deserve nothing less. I hope these stories proved inspiration to you - or at the very least serve as a gentle reminder of the luminescence and love that exists in our world today.

If you would like to know more or to support me in this journey alongside me, please PM me.

Peace and Joy,

Dawn

