

Spotlight on Chris Miller

“God writes with crooked lines. We serve Him by using our gifts and talents,” says Chris Miller – this month’s featured alumnus – aptly summing up his calling, his vision and his boundless energy.

Gifts and talents certainly abound for this California native. Born, raised and currently residing in Los Gatos, he commutes Mondays through Fridays to his current position as a religious studies teacher at De La Salle High School in Concord (now that’s dedication!). In addition to past teaching posts at Saint Mary School in Gilroy; Saint Frances Cabrini School in San Jose; Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut; and his alma mater, Los Gatos High School, he has served as Youth and Adult Ministry Coordinator at St. Christopher Parish in San Jose; Youth Ministry Coordinator at Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish in Palo Alto; a consultant in drug, alcohol and suicide prevention for the Palo Alto Unified School District - and many more!

Evidenced by his enviable academic credentials – among them, a B.A. in History from Santa Clara University (SCU), M.A. in Interdisciplinary Education, Curriculum and Instructions AND an M.A. in Pastoral Ministry from SCU; an M.A. in Clinical Psychology from Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU); an Ed.D. in Education, Learning and Instruction from the University of San Francisco and numerous certificates PLUS a graduate diploma in Canon Law – **Chris’ passion lies at the intersection of religion and spirituality, education, and psychology.**

“We live in an area where the pace is so frenetic and there’s so much focus on excelling,” says Chris. “High school students are under so much pressure, and it’s really taking a toll on their mental health. I became acutely aware of this while working in Palo Alto during a time when there was a cluster of teen suicides. I’m trying to do what I can to help kids develop realistic expectations and take care of their emotional well-being as much as they do for their physical health.”

Chris regularly draws upon his graduate work at NDNU where, among other courses, he studied the neuroscience of anxiety, trauma and depression, and a class in crisis counseling taught by Dr. Helen Marlo. “The NDNU program provided opportunities to broaden my pastoral ministries background and general understanding of adolescents’ needs with classes that addressed trauma, psycho-pharmacology, addiction and substance abuse, and other related fields. What I learned at NDNU is especially relevant to my overall goal of meeting people where they are and helping them in the current moment. It was inspiring to form relationships with fellow NDNU students and faculty who were so passionate about making a difference.”

His distinguished background has not gone unnoticed. Chris is currently co-president of Catholic Professionals of San Jose; a member of NAMLI FaithNet National Advocacy Group; a member of Faith Communities Task Force, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention; board president of Jesuit Friends and Alumni Network; co-chair of Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Intervention Workgroup; assistant stage manager with the Children’s Musical Theatre ... and that’s just a partial list! At the tender age of 23, he was an elected member of the Los Gatos Union School District Board of Trustees where he served for 8 years. He was recently tapped to serve on the alumni board for NDNU’s School of Psychology.

Part of Chris' vision is working with youth to reduce the stigma of mental health and focus instead on their mental wellness. "I talk openly with my students and work hard to create a safe environment so they can talk about themselves and their issues without fear of judgement, criticism or reprisal."

When asked which of the Hallmarks resonate for him, Chris quickly responded with the following list, that truly mirrors in his personal and professional journey:

- We proclaim by our lives even more than by our words that God is good.
- We educate for and act on behalf of justice and peace in the world.
- We commit ourselves to community service.
- We create community among those with whom we work and with those we serve.

"It's important to me that I am of service to others," says Chris. "I go where God calls me."