**LETTER FROM MATT TO GRACE COMMUNITY**

Dear Grace Academy community,

Re: A succession plan for Grace Academy’s Head of School

It has been thirteen years since Sarah, Lindsey McPhee and I first started envisioning the formation of a tuition-free *NativityMiguel* middle school for girls in Hartford. The work of building Grace Academy has been a blessing to me, due to the many dedicated individuals who are part of this wonderful Grace Academy community. The energy to rise each morning comes from the daily interaction I have with students, parents, teachers, staff and volunteers who exhibit their commitment to the mission of this “little miracle on Main Street.” Grace Academy and the coalition of *NativityMiguel* schools are a vital and necessary educational model that has a proven record of transforming lives as witnessed by what the Grace community has done for the girls we continue to serve. I believe it is now time to pass the torch to a new Head of School who will lead our amazing school forward. For me, I am exploring the idea of opening a new tuition-free middle school in a city where young people will benefit from this amazing model.

Since our founding in 2010, Grace Academy has grown in every category—curriculum, acceptances into premiere high schools and colleges, quality of faculty and staff, financial stability, and a new and larger facility. The time is right for a transition to a new leader who will ensure the continued vitality and long-term success of Grace Academy. The Board of Directors has formed a six-member Head of School search committee and is firmly committed to identifying a dynamic leader who will perpetuate the culture and values that we hold so dear. Lindsey McPhee and Janine Cote have agreed to serve on the search committee and will be integral in the selection process. I, along with my wife Sarah, will work with the Board to ensure that a smooth transition for the next Head of School will remain engaged in the important work for Grace Academy going forward.

To the students and graduates of Grace Academy, you have been a source of grace to me through your perseverance, resilience, and hope for our future. I have had the opportunity to witness your humor, your struggles and joys, your generous hospitality exhibited to fellow students and guests, and your love for one another and the ways you have shown compassion to others.

To the teachers and staff, I thank you for the blessing and privilege of these past twelve years and the opportunity to lead and serve this community. You have taught me extraordinary lessons about the power and impact of selfless and generous service and care. Your thoughtful kindness to our students—especially when they need your compassion—is a model to me. The challenging yet gentle way you invite them to new intellectual and personal growth, and your openness to our mission of faith and service inspire me.

To all of our donors who have supported us with a multitude of in-kind gifts and services (legal, building, classroom, technology, etc.), countless volunteer hours, and most importantly with the financial resources to create a school that is truly transforming lives – I thank you.

The creation of Grace Academy in 2009-10 was driven by a need to educate girls from Hartford who were being denied the opportunities they rightly deserved. Many people and organizations embraced the idea of a tuition-free school to be later named Grace Academy. Educational leaders, Hartford philanthropists, four Orders of Catholic religious sisters, South Congregational Church, nonprofit organizations, business leaders and countless volunteers came together to make the school a reality. It was only by the grace of God that I happened to be the Head of School during the school’s formation.

Leaving behind people who are dear to me and a mission which moves my heart is never easy and I will hold you and all those connected with Grace Academy in my heart. I am consoled that an extraordinary leadership team and Board of Directors will continue to guide Grace Academy’s future growth. I am especially grateful to my wife Sarah, Lindsey McPhee, Gina Bolduc and Janine Cote – all of whom helped shape the direction and culture of the school since its founding. They will continue to provide stability, vision, and continuous improvement in so many areas of the school’s mission.

Sincerely in peace,

Matt

Matthew Fitzsimons

Head of School