



April 10, 2024

Parents, Students, and Friends of Nativity:

We are delighted to announce that Mr. Tyler Popa will join Nativity as a founding faculty member serving as our 9th and 10th grade Math and Science Teacher and as Head of Campus Ministry.

Mr. Popa grew up in Phoenix, AZ the fourth of five children in a family made close by sharing countless home-cooked meals, watching each other's sporting events, and attending mass together. Always active outside, as a young man Mr. Popa developed a particular affinity and skill for running, basketball, and golf.

Mr. Popa graduated from Gonzaga University in Spokane earning a degree in Accounting with a minor in Philosophy. Inspired by his faith, he pursued a Masters in Education as part of the [ACE Teaching Fellows Program](#) at the University of Notre Dame. Mr. Popa taught Math and Science at St. John Vianney Catholic School in Goodyear, AZ. He enjoyed living in community with five other ACE teachers and discovered his love of coaching while serving as the school's basketball, soccer, and football coach.

During his time in the ACE program, Tyler was lucky and blessed to meet his wife Iona, another ACE Teaching Fellow. After completing their Master's degrees, Tyler and Iona progressed into the world of classical high school education. They both joined Scottsdale Preparatory Academy, a classical high school in the Great Hearts Academies network. At Scottsdale, Mr. Popa taught Math and Classics (Humane Letters) and was an assistant coach for both Varsity Cross Country and Men's Varsity Basketball. Leading socratic seminars with young minds and hearts forever changed his outlook on what was possible in a high school classroom.

In 2017, Tyler and Iona were offered an opportunity to teach at the Thacher School, consistently ranked as the top boarding school in California and Iona's alma mater. At Thacher, Mr. Popa taught Algebra and AP Economics. He resided on campus, serving as Dorm Head for the sophomore boys. Thacher expanded his experience in athletics where he served as head coach for Men's Varsity Cross Country, assistant coach for Men's Varsity Basketball, and for one year, as interim Athletic Director. Tyler and Iona also cherished the opportunity to welcome students into their home each week for Christian Fellowship Club.

After four fruitful years at Thacher, Mr. Popa felt a calling to more deeply study the Catholic faith by returning to Notre Dame to earn his Masters of Divinity. In this full-time, three-year program Tyler studied alongside Seminarians and Brothers in formation with the Congregation of Holy Cross. He also gained ministerial experience working with the Catholic Worker community of South Bend, teaching at Holy Cross College and facilitating programming for Campus Ministry at Notre Dame.

With these broad and diverse experiences, Mr. Popa brings the unique perspective of a Math and Science teacher who views the careful study of those technical subjects as perfectly aligned with his faith life.

Mr. Popa is also an avid gardener and advocate for regenerative agriculture. He has organized and worked at several local farm programs in South Bend, Indiana and at [Nazareth Farms](#) in Salem, West Virginia.

Mr. Popa also has extensive experience teaching outside the traditional four walls of a classroom. He has led week-long backpacking trips at Thacher, led a trip to World Youth Day in Portugal, and spent a summer teaching at the [African Leadership Academy](#) in Johannesburg. Tyler recently spent his spring break on pilgrimage in El Salvador, walking the footsteps of St. Oscar Romero in solidarity with a Christian people who have been mistreated for practicing their faith. He is excited to draw on these experiences as he helps build Nativity's Academic Travel program.

In his free time, Mr. Popa loves to embark on outdoor adventures of all kinds, especially those which include his two golden retrievers. He loves a game of pick-up hoops, riding his bike, reading, baking bread, making coffee, spending a day at the farmers market, or ideally in the garden himself growing whatever is in season.

Tyler and Iona are happy to be moving back to the Richmond District where Iona grew up and where her family still resides. The Popas were married at St. Dominic's here in San Francisco, visiting Star of the Sea to make a confession the day before their wedding!



Please join us in welcoming and congratulating Tyler!

May God Bless You!

Nativity Board of Directors



Nativity HS, 360 9th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94118 (415)-322-9229