



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2020-2021 No. 3

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, head of school

Four Vignettes



Our staff's effort and perseverance this year exceeded all expectations and surpassed the "going above and beyond" adage. Between navigating health protocols, both in-person and virtual students, and personal crises, we praise and thank God for sustaining our staff through possibly the hardest season of their careers and ask God to grant them rest, protection, and rejuvenation over the summer.

Four notable events happened to me recently that renewed my appreciation for God's work at Ann Arbor Christian School and the community we have here.

Pointing to True Hope: Around Easter, my family and I travelled to Kentucky. During the drive, we noticed that a regional health system had many displays stating "In science lives hope." My wife and I were taken aback by this bold statement, especially when we had just celebrated the real hope we have in the Resurrection. While I understand the underlying sentiments of their phrase and science is a powerful tool that our God-given abilities can use for wondrous achievements and to better understand our Creator, I was struck at how their motto idolized science and how health was so narrowly defined by their four words. I think most of us would agree that any complete view of almost anything comes from examining it from multiple lenses, with the Gospel being one of them. Science is balanced by bringing in other disciplines and perspectives, and the Gospel shapes how we approach and use science. Even with

COVID-19, we know science alone will not address the tremendous ripple effects that the pandemic has had on people's health far beyond physical ailments. Hope is far beyond science alone. While it simultaneously invests in new science curriculum based on Next Generation Science Standards, I am glad AACCS points its students to the Gospel as true hope and the primary lens through which we view our life.

A "Pro" People: More so than any other year, I have heard prospective families looking at AACCS painfully describe a growing public school culture in which their voices are being dismissed and sometimes ostracized. In many of the local public school districts that serve students across every spectrum and should have a neutral stance on many topics, there is a growing passive and sometimes active dismissal of perspectives that do not align with the dominant ideas of the greater Ann Arbor area, resulting in many Christian families feeling that they cannot voice their opinions in class or to administration or feeling openly attacked for their perspectives, shockingly sometimes by teachers who are supposed to foster robust discussions and open dialogue. At the same time, Christians are increasingly tagged in our culture and much of the mainstream media as "anti" and fill in the blank, automatically creating negative assumptions about who we are or our positions. This is not to excuse the countless ways that Christians have poorly exemplified Jesus over the course of history. We can be legalistic, hypocrites, letter of the law, and stiff-necked. However, the shift in our culture around our location is palpable and creates real challenges and heartaches for many Christian families in the area.

As a school, to counter the "anti" and to grow as better witnesses to the Gospel, we affirm that: we can love without compromising our convictions and we can accept without agreeing (pro-love and aligning with our understanding that God accepts us with all of our flaws and loves us while constantly calling us to repent and to live holier lives), we can believe in science

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and excellent science education and in a God who is beyond science and human comprehension (pro-science and pro-supernatural), a generous heart to love should work closely with biblically strong theology and doctrine (pro-integrity and pro-Scripture), we need to tangibly care for those who are marginalized and regularly experience injustice in our society as we ourselves experience increased marginalization (pro-social justice), our hope and future do not reside in a political party or any one individual (pro-sovereignty of God over our nation), and we can hold honest, respectful, and intelligent conversations without sinking into personal attacks, hateful words, self-righteousness, and listening with a deaf ear (pro-respect and civility).

As a broken people, we struggle mightily with these and make mistakes that feed into the world's perception of Christians as "anti", but, by the grace of God, my hope is that AACS can be a God-fearing and God-honoring school that helps students to love and engage each other and the broader community in a winsome manner - Daniels in the world who hold steadfast to our God and our convictions in a sea of change in an honorable manner that few can find fault in and might actually admire and bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ.

In a recent article in its alumni magazine, the president of Harvard (who likes to go by his first name Larry) wrote about the many requests he receives from alumni to ban different speakers, groups, faculty appointments to the university, or ideas from being allowed on campus. At first, I was worried that he would support these requests, but he went on to argue against them. He wrote "*Harvard is a place of many voices. One of the most important - and most difficult - of our tasks is to ensure that all members of our community feel empowered to speak their minds freely, to listen to others generously, and to expand our thinking regularly. We are better served by sharpening our arguments and strengthening our resolve rather than distancing ourselves from those with whom we disagree. History teaches us the dangers of campus bans and litmus tests based on ideology. The defense of free and honest inquiry in the unfettered pursuit of truth is our shared responsibility - and one of our most sacred commitments.*" My reaction as an alumnus who became a believer while at Harvard and understands the antagonism there often directed towards anything broadly labelled as conservative, outdated, Christian, evangelical, or traditional: You da man, Larry!

Wise leadership: I work with a wonderful school board made up of men and women who love and fear the Lord and honor His work at AACS. As some of you have heard, I will be taking a three-month sabbatical starting in October 2021. This is what the Board shared at April's Annual Association meeting:

For both current parents and for supporters, your attendance to the meeting will allow us to share our hopes for this well-deserved time for Wayne as he approaches his 12th year at AACS and how it serves the school. After several months of discussion, the AACS Board of Directors has voted unanimously to offer our Head of School, Wayne Sit, a paid sabbatical lasting up to three months, to be taken during the 2021-22 school year. Wayne has been our Head of School for over 11 years (longer than any administrator in the school's 30-year history) and has intelligently, sacrificially, and faithfully worked to help make AACS the school and community we love. Wayne has led many significant initiatives during his tenure at our school, including moving the school to its current governance model, the development of a new school logo and branding, the start of our Be Rooted. Be Relevant. Campaign, growing our enrollment, and maneuvering through a global pandemic. A sabbatical is not an extended vacation, but rather purposeful time away from one's everyday responsibilities to make the space for additional education, equipping, study, prayer, and rest for the purpose of being replenished and reinvigorated. Our hope is that this sabbatical blesses Wayne personally and professionally, that it blesses Wayne's health, and that this time is a spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical investment that allows Wayne to be the best Head of School for what God has planned for Ann Arbor Christian School in its next season.

With the average Christian school administrator only lasting five years, I hope this gives you confidence and a deep peace knowing that we have a school board that sees rest as good and time well spent in a world that is so fast paced and agenda-packed. It testifies to a

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board who thinks deeply, carefully, and biblically and is willing and eager to make wise decisions that may seem counterintuitive to the broader world and to make a generous investment of time in me. In addition, the board will be encouraging future boards to consider a similar policy for future heads of school. We want a board like this helping to shepherd our school into its future!

Heroic endurance and support

I do not have the words to express how grateful and proud I am of the many who rallied around AACs to finish arguably the hardest year in its history. It was at times brutally hard, but staff went above and beyond to educate over 200 students every single day in-person without missing a beat. Families stuck by the school's side through every up and down moment, supported their children, and showered the staff with prayers, meals, messages of encouragement, and just being available to help. Supporters blessed us with a record giving season, and their prayers could be palpably felt. Many times this year, when I was feeling crushed by the weight of leadership, a supernatural strength and peace came upon me that I attribute directly to the prayers of hundreds of people for me and AACs.

After an extraordinary 16 months, I hope these four vignettes give you a new appreciation for God's critical work in strengthening Christian education in the greater Ann Arbor area and how Ann Arbor Christian is reflecting and thinking and how we are striving to keep our eyes on Christ as we navigate the opportunities and challenges of the 2020s.

To express my personal gratitude and for the simple pleasure of seeing you and talking, I will be hosting a number of outdoor events this spring, summer, and fall at my home in Howell, MI. Invitations will be coming soon. My wife and I would enjoy seeing many of you in the coming months.



Prayer Request

Please join us in praying for our AACs past and current families:

- The Mitchell family as they face cancer in their daughter Lauren's life.
- The Si family as they deal with cancer and the stresses of moving.
- The Maldonado family as they also struggle with cancer.

#AACSLIFE



Check out photos like these on Instagram & Facebook

LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

A farewell to graduating families

The Miller Family



"As our time at Ann Arbor Christian draws to a close, we are so thankful for all of the prayers, enthusiasm, commitment, and guidance given

to Charlotte over the past 5 years. When we made the decision to transfer to this school in 4th grade, we could not have anticipated the blessings that were to come. Charlotte has come to know Christ in myriad lessons provided by the staff and interwoven into her everyday school life. She has made close friendships and expanded her knowledge as a Christ-follower. We, as a family, have come to appreciate the educational opportunities as well as fellowship and service outside of school hours. Charlotte has participated in Theater Club, Basketball, Volleyball, Apple Pie making, and Talent Shows over the years and we have so enjoyed serving behind the scenes with other families to support many of these activities.

We give sincere thanks to Wayne Sit for providing excellent leadership through so many challenges, for addressing concerns with timeliness and grace, and setting a wonderful example of faith through action. And above all, we give praise to all of the teachers who navigate curricula, Biblical truths, and the individuality of so many students while meeting their educational requirements. When we talk about AACS with other parents, we emphasize what a unique and wonderful school community the teachers, staff, school board, and fellow families have created together. As Charlotte enters Father Gabriel Richard in the fall, she will be equipped to meet new challenges with faith, grace, and resilience and this is due, in large part, to the firm foundation set at AACS."

Thank you! — David, Cathy, and Charlotte Miller

The Anderson Family



Ty, Renee, and Chase Anderson

We have a special video of the Andersons as they shared with the AACS community at our recent Association meeting that we would love to share with you.

Thank you to the Anderson family for your commitment to AACS and sharing about your time at Ann Arbor Christian School!



Link to the family testimonial.

THINKING AHEAD



As we shared in January, the end of 2020 was the best giving season in the school's history. We thank you again for your support. It means so much to us, especially after this long, hard year.

As we wind down this school year and slowly gear up for 2021-2022, may we ask you to continue to pray for Ann Arbor Christian and to consider us again for your financial support during the second half of the 2021 calendar year, especially if you tend to make your giving in October, November, and December. By God's grace and the support of His people and despite pandemic constraints, we have pulled off a great year in the face of great challenges and have not closed a single day! With the pandemic likely to still have an impact on schools, your continued and historic support of AACS is greatly needed and appreciated.

Are you interested in receiving \$500 off your tuition for the next school year?

	\$500 TUITION CREDIT
<small>Submit this voucher when you register at AACS to receive the \$500 tuition credit per family when you enroll one or more children in grades K-8 at the school.*</small>	
Ann Arbor Christian School	
We were referred by the _____ family.	
Our Family Name: _____	
<small>5500 Whitmore Lake Road • (734) 741-4948 • www.annarborchristian.org * Applied to your May 2022 tuition bill.</small>	

As in the past, \$500 referral vouchers will be available if you refer a new family who enrolls in AACS. The added incentive is that the new family will receive \$500 off their tuition as well.

This is a great way to introduce AACS to families you know who may want to join us in the fall! Contact the school office for a voucher.



BEYOND THE BASICS

Reading Leads the Way to Becoming Lifelong Learners

By Renée McKeone, curriculum director

Cultivating a love of reading is one of the goals of teaching reading at Ann Arbor Christian School. Teachers from PK - 8th grade inspire and motivate students to read through read alouds, class novels, book recommendations, and other ways of infusing reading in the culture of our school. However, our AACSL library serves a unique role in making quality books readily available for our students.



The library serves to provide students with a wide variety of quality independent reading as well as to stock non-fiction or content related books to enhance curriculum areas in our school. The library has high visibility and is a warm and welcoming place to inspire students to love books. Overseen by library coordinator Janet Chen, generous volunteers carry out all the duties of a professional library, including cataloging, checkouts, shelving, organizing, book repair, as well as creating displays and decorating the library. This adds up to countless hours, but getting good books into the hands of our students is worth the time and effort. According to volunteer Anita Lautenbach, "I love spending time in the library! It is one of the most vibrant and friendly spaces in the school. I love books and get a kick out of helping the kids find titles that interest them. I have particularly enjoyed spending time with the 3rd graders on Wednesday afternoons during this past year."

Students in grades K-5 visit the library weekly to choose books for their independent reading time, and middle school students can visit more flexibly to do self checkouts. For elementary students, the

library is a highlight of the week.

The original book collection was made up of a mixture of purchased and donated books. However, in recent years, our main influx of new books comes from grandparents who have purchased books at our Grandparents Day Book table. Janet Chen and I select books based on recommendations from teachers, students, and library book lists as well as from looking at needs in our library. We work hard to obtain books that will be good reads, but also be good for our students' hearts and minds. "Working at the book table each year has been such a great way to connect with grandparents. There are some I see year after year who are passionate about building up our library collections and love to purchase books in honor of their grandchildren." Unfortunately, due to COVID, we missed this special event in 2020. To make up for that, we have created an online book sale to give families, grandparents and friends the opportunity to purchase books for the AACSL library. **The online book sale opens on June 21 and continues through July 19.** Please visit the book sale by scanning the QR code below.



The smiles on our students' faces when they are in the library are a testimony to the motivation and inspiration it gives our students for reading. The AACSL library is truly a special place. Whether this comes from the love poured in by our volunteers or the love our students have for reading, it is a little library with a big heart.



AACSL Book Sale 2021

Ann Arbor Christian School typically holds an annual book sale on Grandparents Day. This sale has been a great way to help keep our library at the school up-to-date with all the wonderful books we make available to the students at AACSL. We would love for you to participate and continue to help us stock our library with these titles and others if you are willing and able.

Note: This is a small selection of our top picks and if a specific title is taken, we will purchase a similar grade appropriate one and dedicate that one in your or your student's name. We continue to get daily requests for books and review them on an ongoing basis, so this list is an ever-evolving one. So if you don't see a book you like or the selection gets low, please know we will use your donation wisely and select an age-appropriate one for you.

Thank you in advance for your generosity!

* Required

#AACSLIFE



If you would like to join us in building our library, please scan the link to our google order form.



2021 AACCS Band Awards



2020-21 Eighth Grade Band Award Recipients

Students were awarded for musicianship, regular effort, and great attitude. This year's recipients did a beautiful job displaying all three attributes! Kudos, Eighth Graders!!

2021 AACCS Art Show



Art Show Success!

AACS students did a great job this year creating wonderful works of art! Thank you to all involved to make this a beautiful display of creativity!

Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7. Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built on him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7. Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built on him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7.



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Save the Date to Celebrate 30 Years of God's Faithfulness at AACCS!

By Lisa Hawley and Dawn Geldermans, co-chairs

Join us as we celebrate 30 years of AACCS with a celebration under the stars at The Valley at Frutig Farms on May 14, 2022 with a LIVE and silent auction, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and so much more!!

Please contact anniversary@annarborchristian.org if you would be interested in donating a product or service to be auctioned off at the event. The event team is also looking for people or companies that would be interested in financially sponsoring the event. For more information and updates please keep checking our event website at www.annarborchristian.org/30thanniversary.

Thank you in advance for your support of AACCS!

THANK YOU!

May 24th kicked off our special preview, teaser auction of this year's classroom projects!

Thank you to all the students who created and made these one-of-a-kind projects for this year's kick-off! We had a fabulous online turn-out, and the bidding went crazy for these priceless gems! Thank you to all those who bid and helped make this an encouraging time for AACCS!

We are looking forward to our May 14, 2022 event when we can all see each other in-person and continue celebrating all that God has done and is doing in the lives of our students, families, staff, and faculty of Ann Arbor Christian School.

Plan on joining us on May 14, 2022!



Here are a few of the 2021 class projects that were auctioned off the week of May 24th as our 30th Anniversary celebration kicked off!



Auction Wishlists:

We are in the midst of planning for our 30th Anniversary Celebration and are looking for any and all who would be willing and able to help us with our auction wishlists.

Do you have access to any unique items or experiences that could be added to our auction? Do you know anyone who might? BE CREATIVE!

We are hoping to connect with folks that have those special and unique skills or access to fabulous hands-on experiences.

Some ideas to consider:

- Special Services: Landscaping, interior design
- Training: Sports, music, art, cooking, bartending, strength and conditioning
- Hangouts: Celebrity meetings, wine tastings
- Free Access: Summer camps, golf courses, private tours, vacation rentals
- Autographed items: sports memorabilia

Please let us know if you can help make this celebration a memorable one!

BEYOND THE BASICS

*“What do you want most for your children and grandchildren?”
“To know and love Jesus.”*

This was the answer my mom gave before Alzheimer’s robbed her of the ability to speak. It is hopefully the primary reason why parents enroll their children in AACS. We desire to pass on the baton of faith to the next generation. We want them to make that faith their own – a faith that, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, they can have a relationship with the one true God. Like a relay race, we want to see that faith in Jesus transmitted from one generation to the next. But unlike a relay race, it is not a once and done type of event. Growing in faith is a process, a journey with ups and downs, questions and doubts.

One way we have to help parents and teachers “see” into a child’s developing faith is with the Faith Portfolio. Each year, items are added to a student’s Faith Portfolio that give us a peek into how they are growing in their faith and relationship with God. Items include things from Bible class, devotions, chapel reflections, and a yearly formal reflective writing piece. The reflective writing piece is a response to a grade level prompt. Here are a few examples:

- **Grade 1:** I know Jesus loves me because. . . .
- **Grade 2:** How do you show Jesus that you love Him?
- **Grade 5:** What does it mean to be a Christian?

Passing the Baton: Nurturing Faith and Faith Portfolios

By Becky Johnson, spiritual life coordinator

- **Grade 6:** How do you determine what is right or wrong?
- **Grade 7:** In Mark 9:24, a man says, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Write a letter to Jesus, expressing what you believe and what you need help to believe.
- **Grade 8:** What does it mean that Jesus is Savior and Lord?

The pieces in a child’s Faith Portfolio give us insight into their faith development from expressions of love for God to doubts and questions, from areas of confusion to a commitment to follow Jesus. I have experienced the joy of reading a student’s reflection filled with doubt and questions one year to reading their affirmation of faith and commitment to God several years later. God is at work in the lives of our students!

8th graders spend time looking through their portfolios and reflecting on what they have learned about God and how their faith has grown during their years at AACS. These Faith Portfolios are now given to the 8th graders and their parents as part of 8th grade graduation.

As students leave AACS, our fervent prayer is that their faith in Jesus continues to grow and deepen and that one day they too may pass on the baton of faith to the next generation.

A COMMUNITY GATHERED

So Why Am I Still Here?

By Shannon Waroway, AACS volunteer and alumni parent

For 15 years, my children attended AACS, from the fall of 2004 until my youngest graduated 8th grade in the spring of 2019. I have been a room mom, planned countless parties, driven on nearly every field trip ever taken, served pancakes, made costumes, chaperoned 5th grade campers, prepared hot lunches, supervised recess, attended concerts, coached sports, organized field day, and served in many other roles throughout those years. One could say that I certainly served my time! So why am I still here?

I’m still here because in those years, I found a community of people who care deeply for my family. Some of those friendships will last a lifetime! I found a staff of teachers and administrators who not only were invested in the education of my children but genuinely celebrated the unique gifts each of them have to offer. AND they continue to pour into my kids’ lives long after they’ve graduated. I found coaches who nurtured and challenged my kids to achieve goals, develop character, and learn to be witnesses on and off the court. I’m still here because I believe in the mission of Ann Arbor Christian School, and I desire to be an instrument of that mission in any way that I can.

What does that look like for an old alumni parent? For me, it means teaching a cross country elective to 7th and 8th graders. It means continuing to coach girls’ and boys’ track. And it means helping the next generation of field day coordinators. Out of love and gratitude for this great school and because AACS will always hold a small piece of my heart, I offer my time, my talents, and my treasures. Thank you, dear community, for giving me the opportunity to pour into your precious children. It is an honor.



Alumni Encounter @ Calvin

Wayne Sit had the pleasure of catching up with some of our alumni students who currently attend Calvin University. It was a great time hearing all that is happening in their lives!

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JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR: AACCS GRADUATING CLASS OF 2021!

Each year is a bit bitter-sweet as we send off the 8th grade class. We are so blessed to have each one here at AACCS, and are excited for them as they take their next step in their education journey ... but admittedly we are sad to see them go.



Our class this year is heading off to various high schools: Charyl Stockwell Preparatory Academy, Father Gabriel Richard, Livingston Classical Academy, Mercy High School, Plymouth Christian Academy, Saline High School, Skyline High School, and Washtenaw International High School.

Like us on Facebook, follow us on Instagram (@annarborchristian), or check out our hashtag #AACSLife to see what our students are up to here at AACCS.

SEE US LIVING OUR MISSION

FACEBOOK INSTAGRAM

#AACCS-LIFE

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