



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2019-2020 No. 2

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, head of school

Our human efforts meeting a supernatural God



The Ann Arbor Christian School community supporting fifth graders as they present their family heritage projects.

A few years ago, I wrote about how I am always moved by a child's baptism. The pastor reminds the parents of their irreplaceable role and duty to raise their child in God's ways. Then, before an assembled body of believers, the parents profess their intention faithfully to ask for God's help to do their best. Then, the pastor turns to the congregation and speaks to everyone witnessing the event. The pastor is well-aware that some in the pews may never meet this child or family, but there is nevertheless a challenge and duty put before everyone to spur on that family's faith in the Lord and to let every opportunity presented be an encouragement for that child's faith.

When the pastor addresses the audience, what hits me every time is that he is talking not just to the people around me, but he is also talking to me. While I do not know if I will ever meet that child or the child's parents, I am always humbled that I have a responsibility to that family and to that child. If I am a Sunday school teacher or help with VBS, my possible impact on the child's faith seems clearer and more obvious. However, there are many opportunities that will arise for me to affect that child in his or her faith that may be more subtle

or may elude my awareness. For instance, she may notice something about the way I speak to other adults during coffee hour, the way I address (or ignore) times when she is misbehaving in the church atrium with friends, the way I pay attention (or don't pay attention) during the service, or the way I interact with my own children.

This reminds me of how we need to function as a school community. We will not know every family at the school, but the time that we each spend at the school can be a moment in which we can spur on the faith of a child, a teacher, or an entire family at AACS. Perhaps a child will notice something about us when we are volunteering in the library, supervising recess, rolling a pizza cart down the hall, or coaching a team. Or it may be something we say while chaperoning a field trip, how we conduct ourselves during athletic events or in a playground conversation, how we handle conflicts, or how we speak about other members of the school.

Likewise, when you support AACS with your time, prayers, and financial support, please realize it is more than the moment you help, more than the moment you pray, and more than the moment you make an online gift or mail in a check. When you support AACS, you are taking a tangible action that, when combined with hundreds of others, advances God's work forward in ways that you may never fully realize. For instance, gifts to our capital campaign have already funded a new science curriculum and expanded resources for our academic support program, but think beyond the "thing" and imagine its long-term impact on real students' lives. Imagine what God can do over a lifetime with a child who learns to love science or a child who learns that he can succeed despite having reading difficulties. Don't underestimate your impact!

A group of families started our school nearly 30 years ago with one teacher and four students. For all current families and many alumni families, none of our children were even alive when AACS started! That thought should

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Today, let's look at the school we are striving for and envision it thriving for the next 30 years. No gift, no prayer, no helping hand is too small for God to use for His mighty work today and for the future. What you do today will cause a cascading effect to ensure that God's love and truth abound now and that AACs is thriving not only for the next generation of children, but also for the children yet to be born. That should cause some goose bumps too!

Please join in the effort by attending one of the upcoming sessions in-person or online for more information about the *Be Rooted. Be Relevant.* Capital Campaign with Head of School, Wayne Sit.

[illegible]

Upcoming meetings will be held March - May 2020

By Rachel Bush, AACCS parent

THE
AristoCats
KIDS

A large group of approximately 30 children and a few adults are posed in several rows for a group photo. They are wearing a wide variety of costumes, including pirates (with hats and eye patches), ninjas (in black and white outfits), animals (like a girl in a large white cat costume and others in animal ears), and various other characters. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with some red circular decorations. The floor appears to be a wooden stage or gymnasium floor.



AACS Community Building

By Liz Steggall-Lewis, AACS parent

A COMMUNITY GATHERED

While winter is a time when we naturally hibernate, Ann Arbor Christian is intentional in building community amongst our families in these cold months.

The Talent Show has always been a popular family event and a highlight for students. This year's show featured probably our widest range of talents - from preschooler Hannah's solo of "Jesus Loves Me" to a harp solo by Natalie, from Michael's performance of "Desperado" to a magic act by first grader Arianna, and many more (see our Instagram and Facebook page for images). One parent commented, "Thank you to [Colleen] and the AACS team for the great Talent Show. Our family was amazed at the courage, confidence, and talent demonstrated by these young performers. The confidence we witnessed at the Talent Show speaks to the sense of safety, and to the sense of self-worth the AACS staff is instilling into the student body. This was a great way to bring the families together, and to bring the AACS community closer." Another parent shared, "I absolutely love the variety of acts every year. Some of our family favorites this year were the Unicorn dance, the Martial Arts Demo and the Harp player."

Furthermore, we deeply value continued opportunities to engage with our AACS alumni community. For the past three years, PE teacher and athletic director Bryan

Diemer has invited high school alumni students to a school basketball game, followed by pizza and an open gym session. This year, 14 alumni students attended! On MLK day, 15 alumni returned and shared about their high school experiences. According to Mr. Diemer, "It was encouraging to hear how God is working through our alumni and how they are standing up for their faith and choosing to follow what they know God wants for their lives."

New this year, the UofM vs MSU tailgate event brought together

AACS alumni at this year's MLK Day events. We love reconnecting and hearing all about what is happening in their lives!



families from our community for some good, old Michigan fun! Families were encouraged to wear their UofM or MSU attire and cheer for their favorite basketball team while watching the game projected in the gym. Funds raised support the school and our athletic program. UofM may have won the game, but the day was a winner for all the AACS families who came out.

Lastly, this winter, our annual science fair also drew a big crowd.

Instead of the traditional soup supper, this year's eighth grade class also made it into a pasta supper to try something new.

As AACS grows in size, we know we need to be more intentional about maintaining our strong sense of community.

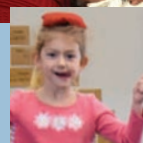
We appreciate the work of so many individuals who make these community events possible and a joy for families to enjoy together.

"I absolutely love the variety of acts every year. Some of our family favorites this year were the Unicorn dance, the Martial Arts Demo and the Harp player. ~ Kalyndra, AACS parent"

Be sure to check out Lands' End for the updated spiritwear with the NEW Eagle logo. Go, Eagles!



#AACSLIFE



Check out photos like these on Instagram @annarborchristian and Facebook

LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

Faith Stories: Seeing our chapel themes lived out in our school community

By Becky Johnson, spiritual life coordinator

This fall, I had a “chance” meeting with Ann Arbor Christian School parent Kelli Si in the hallway after school. As we were chatting, she shared with me how meaningful the last two chapel themes have been for her. Last year’s chapel theme was “The One

Another: Loving Like Jesus.” After her stage 4 metastatic breast cancer diagnosis, she experienced our school community loving like Jesus - from people making meals and watching her children every week to receiving notes of encouragement and having so many people praying for her. Not only did this bless Kelli

and her family, but it also was a witness to her in-laws who are not Christians.

One day last year, when her in-laws were visiting, a meal was delivered by AACS parent and Chinese language teacher Janet Chen. Although Kelli knows Janet, they are not close friends, and their children are not in the same grades. However, Janet had volunteered to make a meal and brought an elaborate Chinese meal that day. Kelli’s father-in-law, who is Chinese, could not believe it. “Your friend made this kind of meal for you?” he asked in surprise. Kelli answered that Janet wasn’t really her friend but rather someone from the school community. Her father-in-law asked, “I don’t have friends or acquaintances like that! How do you get to have such friends?” Kelli answered, “By having one friend – Jesus.” She went on to share how we are united as brothers and sisters in Christ, part of a family where we care for one another. John 13:34-35 was being lived out in their lives. “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

This year’s theme also connects deeply as Kelli and her family journey through cancer. Faith is the operative word in their family. Faith trusts – no matter what the outcome. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted God, even though they did not know whether God would deliver them from the fire. However, they knew, no matter what, that God was worthy of their worship and their trust. Certainly, anyone who has talked with Kelli has experienced seeing such faith in action. In her words, “faith is bigger than our fear.” We ask you to join us in praying for her healing from cancer.

As Susan Furr, our beloved first grade teacher of 20 years, also journeys through cancer and prepares for retirement, she is also recognizing that it is no accident that faith is the chapel theme this year. Faith trusts, faith waits, faith asks, faith perseveres. All of these are so necessary in the midst of traveling on the roller coaster called cancer. We also ask you to pray for Mrs. Furr and her family.


Sue DeZeeuw is also seeing the chapel theme lived out in her own life as she steps out of the boat of AACS and answers God’s call to become a foster parent. After working at AACS for over 20 years, while she will maintain a small administrative role with the school next year, Mrs. DeZeeuw’s servant heart and many gifts will be deeply missed. However, we support her as she is obedient to God’s call and as she demonstrates that “faith acts”.

Our prayer is that our AACS community will continue to embody Paul’s prayer in Col. 2:7, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, **strengthened in the faith** as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

Send us your FAITH STORY today at
(www.annarborchristian.org/faithstories),
so we can share them with the students!



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>	
We were referred by the _____ family.	
Our Family Name: _____	
<small>5500 Whitmore Lake Road • (734) 741-4948 • www.annarborchristian.org * Applied to your May 2021 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!

BEYOND THE BASICS

Going above and beyond

By Renée McKeone, curriculum director



The members of our Ann Arbor Christian School community are undoubtedly familiar with this line of our mission statement, “Ann Arbor Christian School offers Christ-centered,

academically excellent education” and usually relate academically excellent to student achievement in reading, math, science, or results on standardized tests. However, in 2011, Ann Arbor Christian School adopted a statement to clarify what academic excellence actually means. From this document, “academic excellence refers to the school’s desire to provide a holistic educational experience that highly promotes individual growth and emphasizes the entirety of a child as a unique and cherished creation of God.” This document went on to describe that “academic” refers to any scholastic endeavor that builds the different areas of intelligence of a person and thus includes areas such as fine arts, physical education, and music.

Based on this belief, weekly “specials” classes in art, music, PE, and world language are not just “extra” for our students, but an integral part of our academically excellent education. Our students are blessed each week to delve into subjects that develop their creativity and artistic expression, challenge them to develop physical skills and use their bodies to glorify God, and develop understanding of different cultures and people through exploring world languages. These classes provide a complete education for our students.

Our school is enriched by the work of our dedicated team of teachers who lead these efforts. Mrs. Cupery, our music teacher, works with the students on a variety of skills, both vocal and instrumental, which are shared with the community in our annual Christmas Concert and Spring Fine Arts Program. According to Mrs. Cupery, “Our goal in music class is to glorify God in our music making.” Mrs. Zimmerman, our art teacher, challenges students to work to the best of their ability while developing new skills and taking artistic risks. She carefully incorporates many art projects that align with classroom curriculum areas to have a holistic, integrated experience with the content. In addition to the education they give our students, they each impact the school community. From the lovely artwork Mrs. Zimmerman so beautifully displays in the hallways to the sounds of band instruments or singing drifting into the Gathering Space, our school is a richer place because of the presence of these creative arts.

Likewise, students in physical education are challenged to develop new skills, care for their bodies, and work together as a team. The energetic shouts coming from the gym testify to the joy that students experience in their PE classes. Mr. Diemer challenges students to work together while encouraging and supporting one another, a much different experience than some adults had in physical education during their childhood. It is not surprising that PE is one of the students’ favorite weekly activities!

World language classes allow students to not only become proficient in another language, but also grow in understanding of other cultures and people, helping the students to grow in understanding God’s world and the idea that all people are created in His image. Our current language teachers, Mrs. Chen and Señora Nagpal, do an excellent job of immersing our students in the target language to help them

learn a new language naturally. With the elementary children, songs, games, and activities make weekly language lessons engaging and fun. Their minds readily soak up new words as well as the sounds and intonation of the language. In middle school, students focus on developing Spanish vocabulary and grammar, completing the equivalent of high school Spanish I by the end of eighth grade.

Each of these special areas has state or national curriculum standards and expectations that AACs strives to meet as the teachers plan varied instruction and experiences for each of their classes. This means working with a variety of mediums in art or playing different types of games and using different types of equipment in PE. Our classes are taught by highly qualified teachers who take their work seriously and strive to provide the best experience for their students. These teachers are an important part of our staff. The specials teachers participate in regular teacher development like our classroom teachers including professional development, personal goal setting, staff devotions and community building. Their unique perspectives help balance our staff and impact our students as well.

In addition, our definition of academic excellence states that academic excellence must incorporate a Christian worldview. The special classes are important areas in which to build this worldview. Students are challenged to appreciate and nurture their own creativity and recognize, enjoy, and evaluate the aesthetic side of God’s creation. They are challenged to see themselves as stewards of the gifts they have been given and to use those to serve others. Whether this is in how they play or lead a game in PE or use their gift of music to play for senior citizens at one of the community concerts, students are challenged to see that they must use their talents to bless others.

Guided by these principles, AACs has chosen to make these classes an integral part of our curriculum. We recognize the importance of developing all the gifts God has given to His people and the power of the arts, physical expression, and language to make an impact. As we raise the next generation of “culture makers” for Jesus Christ, we not only seek to develop mathematicians and scientists, but also artists, musicians, athletes, missionaries, and diplomats who can impact the world for Jesus.

Grateful for this blessing!

AACS received a \$5,000 grant from the Michigan Equitable Services Collaboration. Thanks to Renée’s work, the school received this amazing grant for us to continue Google Apps for Education and instructional training this summer.

The Value of Science Fair Projects

By Laura McMahon, AACCS teacher and parent

Science fair time is often a time of excitement and wonder in the eyes and minds of budding science students. While having fun along the way, students choose a question about God's world that they want to explore and answer by researching information about the topic, setting up an experiment, drawing conclusions, and making a display about their findings.

What makes science fair projects so outstanding is that they involve more than just the scientific process. Invaluable skills around critical thinking, research, organization, using computers, written and oral communication, learning from mistakes or



unexpected outcomes, and artistic presentation are just a few skills that young scientists develop and learn how to implement during a science fair project, but there is more beyond the actual project.



The hope of every science teacher is to instill a curiosity and love for science in their students. Igniting the joy, passion, and thinking of young learners through a science fair experience can cause students to think more broadly and deeply, particularly about larger issues that came from doing their projects. Perhaps a project might initiate a student's thinking on how to help with global humanitarian issues. Or perhaps their research may lead a student to future passions that will lead to engineering the future generation of computer technology, how they consider significant bioethical issues, or how they can use science to point others to God. You never know what may stem from a student science fair project!



Acts of Service During MLK Day

By Laura McMahon, AACCS teacher and parent

This year's chapel theme focuses on various action words related to deepening our faith in Jesus Christ, such as *faith trusts*, *faith asks*, and *faith waits*. Focusing on how *faith acts*, Ann Arbor Christian School chose to focus on taking action to help others this past Martin Luther King Jr. Day. While most schools have the day off, AACCS had a half-day "on" and put their faith into action by completing service projects to help people and families in need for their local community.

Students in complementary grade levels completed service projects of various kinds. Preschool and Kindergarten students counted and put together diapers in packages for families of Hope Clinic and Family Life Services.

First and second grades assembled personal care kits for people at Hope Clinic. Third and fourth grade students wove placemats out of love for elderly people at Meals



on Wheels, while fifth and sixth grade students made assembly-line style sack lunches for St. Andrew's Church. Finally, seventh and eighth graders cooked ready-made meals for Circles, an outreach for families in need.

Our students thoroughly enjoyed serving others in the Ann Arbor community that day and putting their faith into action. There is definitely a joy that comes from serving others in need and putting our faith into acts of service. In addition, serving others also places emphasis on others' needs before our own.

Our hope and prayers are that the students of AACCS will carry these experiences of service throughout their lives and practice living to serve others through actions of their faith in years to come.



ALUMNI PROFILE: AIDAN WAROWAY

Favorite Memory of AACS: I loved being an eighth grader and getting the opportunity to lead chapel families. It was super fun to be looked up to by the younger students, and I loved stepping into that leadership role. It was a great learning experience, too. I also enjoyed the eighth grade class trip to Chicago. It was a great experience and I made many memories and formed bonds with my fellow classmates that I carry with me to this day.

Accomplishments: I graduated from high school with magna cum laude honors and was a member of the National Honors Society from 2017-2019. I was also captain of the men's Cross Country team at Father Gabriel Richard High School my senior year, and a four year varsity athlete.

Impact of AACS: My nine years at Ann Arbor Christian School provided me with a firm foundation to move on and live my life as an agent of Christ. Whether it be in the social aspect of life, or the faith aspect of my life, I feel as if AACS shaped me into the young man I am today.

Socially, I formed a relationship with a group of seventeen wonderful students in my graduating class of 2015. These relationships have lasted to this day, and I am forever thankful that we were all brought together at AACS. The teachers and staff still have a large role in my life. Even though I graduated nearly five years ago, I still feel as though I can go back to visit my teachers for advice and encouragement.

Spiritually, AACS helped me to develop and nurture my faith at a time that I needed it most. I attended a Catholic high school, and as a non-catholic student, I was able to use the skills that AACS helped me acquire to define and defend my own faith. Through weekly chapels and daily Bible classes, I always felt that I had a good grip on my faith in my time at Ann Arbor Christian. Not only would faith be part of chapel and Bible class, though. We looked at everything through a Christian perspective, something that has helped me to this day.

I will forever be thankful for my parents for risking time and money to allow me the opportunity to attend AACS. It truly has blessed me, and it is an amazing thing to know that I am always welcomed back, no matter how far removed I may be.



Education: Graduated AACS 2015, currently a freshman at Calvin University studying Elementary Education with a focus in Integrated Science.

Board Meetings or Boring Meetings?

By Ryan Peterson, AACS board president

Some of you have been active on various boards, whether a church board, other not-for-profit board, or maybe a less formal board. Our Ann Arbor Christian School is also guided strategically by a Board of Directors, which reports annually to the Christian School Association of Ann Arbor (CSAAA). Organizationally, our Head of School, Wayne Sit, is accountable to the Board. He is responsible for leading the daily initiatives and operations of the school while working with the Board strategically. As I shared in a previous Beacon article, your AACS Board is tasked with **looking ahead**. We look ahead and dream, imagining a school that does not yet exist. We debate and discuss strategic priorities for the school, all while looking ahead to a future we cannot predict. We look ahead to the next academic year, anticipating enrollment projections. Our commitment to looking ahead helps to ensure our beloved Ann Arbor Christian School continues to fulfill its mission of offering "Christ-centered, academically excellent education that challenges students to live and act in society as committed followers of Jesus Christ."

AACS Board meets monthly from 6:00pm–8:30pm. Based on the insights of educational consultant Henry Contant, we have restructured our meetings in the past couple of years to maximize unity, strategic discussion, and intentional decision-making. But what does an actual Board meeting look like? In the first 30 minutes of the meeting, we share a meal and time of devotion and prayer, led by one of the Board members. We cannot pray enough for our school! Then, we jump into the consent agenda, including the Head of School report and financial summaries. The regular agenda consumes most of the meeting. Each regular agenda includes both decision items and discussion items. For example, we will discuss a strategic item for a month or more before moving it forward for a decision. This basic outline has allowed the Board to engage in passionate conversation centered in Christ, driven by our mission, informed by data and focused on our students and families. In addition, this allows the Board to be focused on the initiatives outlined in our strategic plan.

As the Board, we thank you for your prayerful support of our mission. Your generosity and faithfulness allows the mission to move forward in robust and exciting ways. Our God is faithful and able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine!



Ann Arbor Christian School
5500 Whitmore Lake Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
annarborchristian.org
734.741.4948

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 Ann Arbor Christian School.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

"Hoverheads" are headed to the 2020 FLL World Festival

By Ben Westerhoff, AACCS parent

Continuing a long history of success, Ann Arbor Christian is proud to share that one of our FIRST Lego League (FLL) Robotics teams qualified for the world competition. This year, we featured three teams. Two were designed to be recreational, while the third was designed to be competitive and put extra time into their practices.

On December 8, our AACCS team "The Hoverheads" competed at the Michigan state championship for FLL. The challenge was to build a robot that could navigate, capture, transport, activate, or deliver objects. The team had two and a half minutes to complete as many missions as possible. The Hoverheads won the robot performance award and the overall champions award!

Because of their excellent achievements at the state level, the Hoverheads will continue to the 2020 FLL World Festival, which will be held April 29-May 2 in Detroit. As state champions, the Hoverheads will proudly represent the state of Michigan at the FLL World Festival. For the school, demonstrating that science and faith can work together at a high level is also a very important witness of the value of Christian education. We are so proud of all three AACCS teams and their hard work this year!

AACCS parent Peter Chen coaches the Hoverheads, while parent Fulter Hong coached not one but both recreational teams. Their passion for teaching, thoughtful shepherding of their teams, and dedication to the AACCS community are greatly appreciated. Parents such as Peter and Fulter exemplify the roles that parents play in making AACCS such a wonderful school. No robot or AI system can do what they do.



AACCS Robotics Team after their Michigan State Championship win at The FIRST Lego League (FLL) Robotics Competition.

MORE UPCOMING DATES

OPEN HOUSE
ANNUAL ASSOCIATION MEETING
DADDY/DAUGHTER DANCE
WASHTENAW ELEMENTARY SCIENCE OLYMPIAD
SPRING FINE ARTS PROGRAM
8TH GRADE GRADUATION
END OF SCHOOL YEAR

March 16, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
April 28, at 7 p.m.
May 2, at 7 p.m.
May 9, all day event at Pioneer H.S.
May 14, at 7 p.m.
June 4, at 7 p.m.
June 5, at 11:45 a.m.