



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2019-2020 No. 1

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, head of school

A Future in His Hands



Students in praise and worship at an all school chapel.

Recently, I was very moved by the boldness of a number of people.

At a prayer gathering for a mother at our school who has stage IV cancer, I heard several people pray with courage and boldness for full healing for this parent of three young children. The parent herself has also been a pillar of faith and bravery for many.

At a chapel in which we talked about how our Good Father wants us to ask for all of our needs, a student volunteered to pray aloud that God would allow us to reach the \$4.5 million goal for our capital campaign.

At another school prayer meeting, the calm and humble confidence of the alumna parent who led the time was a wonderful testimony of Christian maturity and hope.

As we unpack this year's chapel theme (see article on page 2), we will also discuss when our faith needs to wait, to persevere, to surrender, and to trust when prayers are not answered in the manner we hoped. However, the "shameless audacity" (Luke 11:8 NIV) of these individuals to run to their Good Father and to lay out their hearts' desires openly were powerful reminders to be a people of hope when we can be doubtful and fearful, like "a wave of the sea, tossed and blown by the wind" (James 1:6).

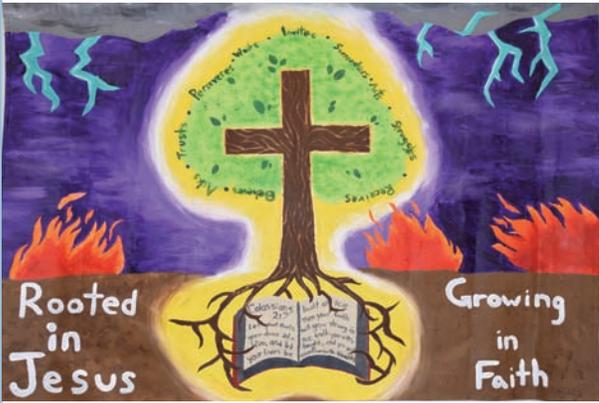
As I think about the next year or two and what it may mean for our school community, a few areas stand out that may test our hope: where will we be with our capital campaign, where will enrollment be, how will our school community handle the increasing volume of change in our culture and the noise of a tempestuous political landscape as we are one year away from a presidential election, and how will Ann Arbor Christian remain steadfast while standing out in 2019 and beyond.

Over this period, my prayer is that we can be a people of God-centered hope. It would be easy to react with anger, discouragement, and a wavering heart. As we ask for more people to join in the campaign, as we talk to each other at church or on the playground about cultural shifts, as we respond to the decisions and behaviors of our elected leaders, as we fight injustices, as we pray for healing of broken bodies and damaged relationships, and as we seek to raise the next generation of Christians, may we remember some words of hope from 1 Peter: *Be holy because I am holy, we have a living hope, the word of the Lord endures forever, you are a chosen people, show proper respect to everyone, when they hurled insults at him he did not retaliate, repay evil with blessings, love one another, be compassionate and humble, if you suffer as a Christian do not be ashamed but praise God that you bear that name, do not be surprised at the ordeal that has come on you... as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice as you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed, even if you should suffer for what is right you are blessed, and cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

These words and promises from Scripture give us hope and teach us how to respond in a hope full of joy, thanksgiving, peace, assurance, and confidence that points to a Good and Faithful Father.

Chapel theme: Rooted in Jesus, Growing in Faith.

By Becky Johnson, spiritual life coordinator



Here is this year's chapel banner that was created by middle school students with their art teacher.

Is "faith" just a nice sentiment that we put on our wall? Is "faith" just wishful thinking? Statistics show that many young people will walk away from the faith they were raised in. It is our desire at AACs to help our students have a faith that is rooted in the saving work of Jesus Christ and a faith that is gritty and resilient, able to withstand trials and persecution.

This year's chapel theme, "Rooted in Jesus, Growing in Faith," is aimed at helping our students develop such faith, as captured in Colossians 2:7.

Faith in Athletics

By Laura McMahon, AACs teacher and parent

There is no doubt that our faith in Christ influences us in many realms of life. Faith in Christ is what strengthens us in times of trial. Our faith also grows and changes as we encounter different experiences. Our student athletes at AACs are no exception. Athletic Director Bryan Diemer teaches and coaches our youngest students in preschool through our oldest in eighth grade to compete in sports with good Christian character, which ultimately stems from their faith. Perseverance in faith extends to athletic performance. In fact, according to seventh grader Charlotte, "My faith helps me with sportsmanship because it is a big part of being Christ-like, both with teammates and the opponent. Being encouraging to others and being shown encouragement increases your faith because we have to be grateful with the skills God gives us. Thankfulness comes out when you play for Him."

As we examine the lives of various heroes of the faith from both the Old and New Testament, the students will be encouraged to see the actions of faith.

- Faith believes
- Faith asks
- Faith trusts
- Faith perseveres
- Faith waits
- Faith acts
- Faith surrenders
- Faith struggles
- Faith receives

In addition, sharing our own faith stories with the students is an important and powerful aspect of helping faith "stick." Children and teens need to hear how God has worked in our own lives through answered prayers, healing, and miraculous interventions, as well as through suffering, hardship, and struggle. During the course of the year, teachers and students will be sharing faith stories in the classroom. On our Faith Stories Board in the Gathering Space, parents, grandparents, alumni families, and other adults are invited to jot down a story of how God has worked in your lives to strengthen your faith so that our students can read about them.

Our hope is that Paul's prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:3 can also be said of us.

Send us your FAITH STORY today!
(www.annarborchristian.org/faithstories)



Perseverance and endurance in athletics are key aspects of any game or event. Faith to persevere in sports can be a reflection of how students incorporate difficult circumstances in their daily lives. Seventh grade volleyball player Jessica explained how her faith influences her in her sport: "You do everything at your very best for God. I pray before a game because I want to do my best for Him." Similarly, when asked how his faith influences his athletics, seventh grader Chase put it this way: "Two years ago, in boys basketball, we made a banner that said 'play for an audience of One.' It helped me to realize that I'm not playing for a big crowd or audience, my family, or my friends, but I'm playing for God. My faith in God has allowed me to absorb that information more deeply."



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Building community one apple pie at a time

By Rachel Bush, AACS parent

As I look back at this year's apple pie fundraiser, the theme that stood out to me was *community*. Here are some of the many acts of community that I observed this year:

In the making of the pies, we welcomed new AACS parent volunteers serving as first-hand witnesses to the entire community pulling together and making 1,356 pies during the course of three days. We saw the return of alumni students (now in high school) participating in an evening pie-making session to reconnect with each other. Alumni parents, due to their fond memories of Apple Pie Week, happily signed up to help assemble pies, even though the need for parent volunteering is a distant memory. Eighth graders finally earned their right to crank out pies and dance to the music. Middle school students, without hesitation, lent a helping hand when more apples, sugar, or flour needed to be hauled into the production room. And the entire student body worked hard, drawing 1,300+ unique thank-you cards.

The sense of community was apparent in our customers as well. We received an order online from former AACS teacher Mark Wiersma, currently living and doing great work restoring Christian schools in Nigeria.

A COMMUNITY GATHERED



Grateful for all our new and returning parents who joined together to make this event a success!

305 lbs of flour
375 lbs of sugar
208 lbs of brown sugar
198 lbs of margarine
100 bushels of apples
1360 pie shells

We greeted both familiar faces, coming from near and far to pick up their apple pies, and those whose students who graduated years ago. We greeted the faces of people who helped to found the school, and those who have supported the school even after it was established after their own children had gone off to college.

So, if you see Lauralyn Bottom and me still walking around school with silly grins on our faces, it's because we had the honor to serve in community with all of you, and it, once again, filled our souls. Thank you!

#AACSLIFE



Check out photos like these on Instagram @annarborchristian and Facebook



In this season of Thanksgiving, we give thanks for the grandparents of our students and for the many ways they support our students' lives, strengthen our school, and encourage us to be rooted in Christ and growing in faith. Grandparents' Day is a cherished annual event in which we celebrate our grandparents for their wisdom, encouragement, and influence in the lives of their children's children. This day is so special that several sets of grandparents traveled over 1000 miles to be here!

What makes Grandparents Day special? Is it the smiles of our middle school greeters and teachers welcoming our guests? Is it listening to the worship songs presented in chapel or the revealing of the new chapel banner? Is writing a letter together to encourage a persecuted believer in another country? Or perhaps honoring our grandparents who are veterans?

It is all of these and more. For most students and grandparents, the best part was the simple joy of being at school together.

As we dig our roots deep into Christ and grow in faith, we look to those who love us and help us on this journey. We thank grandparents for the contributions they make--everything from purchasing apple pies and buying books to grow our library, from contributing a faith story that inspires us to volunteer at the school, to supporting the school financially to praying for the school everyday. The Ann Arbor Christian School community is blessed by our grandparents.

Frank, a missionary with Cross Roads, deeply believes in the importance of Christian education. *"It is very important to us to see that they have a good solid education, academically and from a Christian perspective as well because they need that foundation. The school provides that foundation as well as having a philosophy and direction we are comfortable with. We might not find that at other schools, but we have that here. I came to Christ in a Christian school. My 5th grade teacher led me to the Lord."*



"My grandparents are special because they are always near me and encourage me in everything." — Grade 6 student

WELCOME TO THE AACS FAMILY

Claire Ward

THIRD GRADE TEACHER

Claire is excited to be joining the AACS community and staff this year. Last year, she taught fourth grade at the highly regarded Holland Christian Schools system in Holland, MI. She is originally from Pella, Iowa. In July, she got married and moved in August to the area with her husband Caleb. Claire has always wanted to be a teacher and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Calvin College. She is excited to build a Christ-centered community in her classroom this year where her students learn more about the love of the Lord, each other, and the world. When Claire is not at school, she enjoys traveling, exploring Ann Arbor, and playing tennis with her husband. Claire and her husband attend Grace Bible Church.



WELCOME TO THE AACCS FAMILY



Jaime Phelps

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS AND BIBLE

Jaime has taught for 18 years in Christian education and has enjoyed the privilege of sharing her love of God's word and His creation through her middle school Bible, math, and science classes. With a bachelor's in Education from Asbury University in Wilmore, KY, Jaime is passionate about helping her students discover who they are in Christ and providing opportunities for wonder and curiosity in her classroom. She comes to us from Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, a large K-12 Christian school in Cincinnati. When not teaching, she enjoys exploring nature with her German shepherd, settling down with a good book, or engaging in some form of creative pursuit. Jaime and her fiancé got married in October, now live in Livonia, and attend Journey Church.

Laurie Campbell-Nunez

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT

Laurie is thrilled to join the Ann Arbor Christian School community. She has a passion for Christian education and how it is essential as we equip our students with a solid foundation for the kingdom and their future endeavors. Laurie has 20+ years of experience in various settings, spanning academic, corporate, and graphic design/marketing communications. Laurie grew up in Saline, but spent over 25 years in Chicago before moving back in 2011 to assist with her father after the passing of her mother. Her husband, Jorge, is a Firefighter/EMT and their daughter, Isabel, currently attends Calvin University in Grand Rapids. They attend Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton.



Magaly Nagpal

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL SPANISH TEACHER

Another seasoned teacher with about two decades of experience, Magaly is a native Spanish speaker from Guatemala. She has a background in Psychology and Child Development and is a certified vocational and educational counselor from the University of San Carlos de Guatemala. In addition, she worked as a Montessori Master teacher for ten years, as well as a Spanish teacher at the Rudolf Steiner High School in Ann Arbor for ten years. She loves teaching Spanish and sharing the Latin American history, culture, and Christian values through the diversity and richness of Hispanic traditions. She and her husband Mohit are members of Saint Francis of Assisi in Ann Arbor, and she has been a member of the Coffee Break Ministry at the Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church for nine years. Magaly enjoys volunteering and is an avid gardener. She also enjoys singing, dancing, pottery, and handiwork.

Timothy Sliemers

FIFTH GRADE TEACHER

With two decades of teaching experience, mainly with upper elementary and middle school at Christian schools, Timothy and wife Ardith are coming to AACCS from Illinois. Timothy earned his bachelor's in elementary education from Trinity Christian College and his M.Ed. from Lakeland College in Plymouth, WI. In fact, his Master's thesis topic was on the transition from fifth grade to sixth grade in small private schools. He fell in love with teaching between semesters in his freshman year of college when he worked with second graders in a Christian school in downtown Chicago and felt called to Christian education to hopefully help his students grow in their personal faith. Timothy's faith background is in the Christian Reformed Church, but he most recently attended a Lutheran church where he assisted with worship with his wife. Timothy and his wife are currently looking for their new church home. They are looking forward to growing and learning about the AACCS community.



New and challenging experiences in Life Science

By Renée McKeone, curriculum director



Crawfish and Worms and Pillbugs, Oh My! These are just a few of the living organisms our Kindergarten through fifth grade students will be interacting with as we launch the second phase of our Next Generation Science Curriculum with the life science units. Each class in these grades will be implementing one new life science unit this year.

Our third grade class led the way, launching the school year with a unit on the Structures of Life. A key component of this unit was observ-

ing and interacting with the classroom crayfish over the past five weeks. During this time, students were able to observe how crayfish structures enabled them to survive and were able to witness some of their adaptations and behaviors, such as eating, territorial behavior, and molting. Meanwhile, fifth graders, learning about living systems, are maintaining redworms in order to observe the important role of decomposers in God's interconnected living systems. The fifth graders looked forward to bringing food waste to the worms and observing how they convert it into compost.

To prepare for these new units, teachers spent a full day in further training on the pedagogy and methodology of the new life science modules before the start of the school year. The school furthered this preparation by using our Professional Development sessions on developing Christian worldview to take time to discuss how teacher would be building a Christian worldview into these units. Teachers have found these connec-

tions natural to make, as the wonders and intricacies of the natural world point clearly to God as Creator and Designer. As teachers develop the scientific understanding and process skills, students simultaneously grow in seeing God's purpose and plan for the world and their role as stewards of this gift.

In the second year of implementing our new science curriculum, teachers are also focusing on guiding the students in using their science notebooks to record their observations and making sense out of their investigations. In the second year of teaching some of the modules that we implemented last year, teachers are already seeing students grow in their ability to use these skills effectively. As a staff, we are continuing to develop integrated activities that maintain the wholistic, thematic teaching approach AACCS has been known for, while giving our students new, challenging experiences with Next Generation Science Content.



Quotes from Grandparents' Day 2019

"I appreciate the school. It reminds me of the beginning days of my son's school... I would do anything to keep them in a private school that is centered around Christ. I hope my grandchildren become mighty people for the Lord."

— Sylvia, grandmother of a 2nd grader

"I always love the chapels. It is great to hear the kids sing and they sang so well. There is so much Christian content and expression starting from the Trinity song this morning and right on through this wonderful chapel!"

— Craig, grandfather of a 5th and 2nd grader

"It's been fantastic to have our grandchildren at AACCS. Their parents have built such strong bonds and connections not only with students but with other parents. They strongly support the morals, standards, and educational strengths of the students. I believe they will be extremely well prepared to further their lives when they leave this school." — Andrea, grandmother of a 6th, 3rd and 1st grader

"It is wonderful for my grandchildren to have the freedom to have a Christian education."
— Marge, grandmother of a 6th and 5th grader and former missionary to Yemen



BEYOND THE BASICS

FIRST Lego League - AACCS robotics team

By Ben Westerhoff, AACCS parent

When you think of robots, you may think of the object that cleans your floor by itself, or a long mechanical arm on an assembly line putting a car together, or you may even think of Transformers. Robots are machines that can carry out tasks automatically. They are programmable by a human operator or by computer.

This year, AACCS participated in the FIRST Lego League (FLL), which had a qualifying event November 16 where the AACCS Composting Critters, Hoverheads, and Skyscrapers had a great event with a lot of enthusiasm, and camaraderie as a school. The Hoverheads are advancing to Michigan State Championships on December 8 in Mason, MI.

FIRST stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology." It was founded in 1989 to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology. Our students in FLL design, build, and program LEGO MIND-STORMS®-based robots to perform autonomous "missions" on a playing field. Along the way, they develop critical thinking, teambuilding, and presentation skills.

AACCS has three FLL teams comprised of 16 students led by parents Peter Chen and Fulter Hong. One of the teams spent their summer building robots, learning how to program their robot and navigate accurately, and conducting research on their science project, which involves protecting buildings from earth-

quakes using a new form of base isolation (inspired by hovercrafts!). During the early fall, they brainstormed, strategized, and implemented ways for their robot to accomplish the missions in this year's robot game.

According to Peter, the FIRST robotics programs have sometimes been called a "sport for the mind" and "the hardest fun you'll ever have." Peter has been involved with the program since 2011, when one of his children was on a team. Fulter got involved in FIRST Robotics as a high school mentor nearly 20 years ago while volunteering with GE in Cleveland, Ohio. He got involved with LEGO League last year when his oldest daughter was a new Ann Arbor Christian School student in fourth grade, and Peter invited him to consider coaching the team.

The school is immensely grateful for the generous giving of time and care of parents such as Peter and Fulter. They are a testimony of the many parents who go above and beyond to provide a rich educational experience for our students.



Robotics teams at a FIRST Lego League Event on November 16th.

Giving thanks in all circumstances

By Ryan Peterson, board president

A common question at this time of the year is: "What are you thankful for?" Friends might suggest that you even list "things for which you are thankful" each day. As you spend time reading this issue of the Beacon, what are you thankful for? I would encourage you to pause in the midst of your reading and make a few mental notes, followed by a time of prayerful praise to God the Father, Jesus His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Gratitude is one of the healthiest of all human emotions, and we are wise to not only teach gratitude to the next generation, but we are wise to practice it ourselves. That is easier said than done, right? It is easy to look around at our circumstances or present struggles and wish for different or better. Sometimes, we might even wonder where God is in the midst of these challenges.

Today, I am most grateful for Ann Arbor Christian School. Our school community is far from perfect. We have many challenges. But, as a school centered in the Gospel, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. We worship a God who is faithful, despite our unfaithfulness. **The truth of who God is and what He has done allows Ann Arbor Christian School to continue fulfilling its mission of offering "Christ-centered, academically excellent education that challenges students to live and act in society as committed followers of Jesus Christ."**

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

As a Board, we continue to work closely with our Head of School, Wayne Sit, to protect the mission of AACCS and to direct the vision of AACCS. We are thankful for this opportunity. We are also very thankful for each of you, friends of AACCS, for your continued prayers and support. Please know that your Board is eager to serve you and happy to always engage with you regarding God's work in our midst. We do rejoice, pray, and give thanks!

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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.

Alumni Profile: Stella Johnson



Education: Graduated AACCS 2019, currently a freshman at Mercy High School.

Favorite Memory of AACCS: Loved the eighth-grade class trip and serving as a chapel family leader.

Accomplishments: Mercy High's Varsity Cross Country Runner and recently won WDIV Fan Choice Award - Voted 4Frenzy's "Favorite Freshman"

Impact of AACCS: I was able to find a group of friends that I know would be able to help me grow, instead of bring me down. AACCS was able to help me by starting my life with people like that.

Congrats to one of our most recent alumni, Stella Johnson, for the special profile and award on WDIV! She started running at AACCS' Girls on the Run.



NEW Eagle Design

We are thrilled to introduce you to the new AACCS Athletic Eagle! Our new mascot

was designed to honor the past and simultaneously spark excitement for the future. Like the AACCS shield, the Eagle has to be unique, recognizable and communicate a sense of pride. With a cross displayed over the Eagle's head, it also reminds us that, at AACCS, we play for Christ's Glory, not championships. Go, Eagles!

MORE UPCOMING DATES

CHRISTMAS CONCERT	December 17, 7 p.m.
ALL SCHOOL CAROL SING	December 20, 10:50 a.m.
CHRISTMAS BREAK	December 21-January 5
TALENT SHOW	February 1
OPEN HOUSE	February 21, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., and 6-8 p.m.
SOUP SUPPER/SCIENCE FAIR	February 21, 5:30 p.m.
THEATER CLUB: DISNEY'S THE ARISTOCATS	February 28, 7 p.m. & February 29, 2 p.m.