



# The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2020-2021 No. 1

## HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, head of school

### Sticking Together in Hard Times



*One of our virtual parallel students made a visit to his classmates. Even though he livestreams with his class most days, it was very moving seeing this in-person reunion and some of his classmates spending one-on-one time with him. It was a great reminder about the importance of our school community during this time.*

As many of you know, I had an unexpected heart attack in April. Thanks be to God, I am grateful that I can share that, overall, I am doing well right now as a slimmer version of my previous self.

One of the reasons is because of the coordinated care that I received. First, I had a surgeon who inserted a stent and identified other areas that needed attention. A second cardiologist fine tuned my medications. Next, a nutritionist helped me to establish dietary goals and how to maintain those changes, and a therapist helped me to strengthen my heart muscles during cardiac rehab and to create better exercise habits. At home, my wife has also been a blessing in encouraging these lifestyle changes, and our church's sermon series on Sabbath rest is helping me to better manage stress during a challenging time.

On a larger scale, Ann Arbor Christian is also a result of many people working together, and this is true during perhaps the most challenging time in the school's history. For many of those who work here, this may be the most intense season of our entire career. For parents, nothing has prepared them to

juggle children, work, schooling, church, and life in general in the way that the pandemic has forced them into.

However, we are back in-person again and living out our belief that in-person schooling in a Christ-centered environment is best for the overall health of a child. This is possible because God's people are pulling together. Some spent countless hours preparing over the summer to re-open school. Some have kept AACS in their prayers since March to get us to where we are. Staff members are doing tasks not on their job description to keep the school going. Others see the huge financial burden of re-opening and are giving generously to support us. Anxious parents trusted and took a leap of faith in sending their children back to AACS when so much was unknown during the summer months, and unknowns are still in front of us. Alumni families are telling friends about AACS, and new families have joined us. Students are rising to the challenge of masks and other safety protocols while making AACS a place where our staff find joy as we see them everyday. Parents continue to safely volunteer, and chapels remain a part of our spiritual practices. By God's grace, we each play a part, whether seen or unseen, in allowing us to be in-person again right now and to be the best school we can be during the pandemic. In a season when we are fatigued and differences quickly lead to separation, virtues of loyalty, sticking together through hard times, assuming the best, patience, and trust are to be cherished.

More than ever, we need everyone coming together to support us so that we can remain and grow as a light for the Gospel in both a time and location that desperately need the Good News. We have completed a successful start to school, and I know that God will lead us successfully through this year.

# Different but Committed and Faith-filled

By Ryan Peterson, AACCS board president

This current school year, I have had the opportunity to be more active in the drop-off and pick-up process at Ann Arbor Christian School. While it's a small thing, it has given me insight into an important part of our school culture. Some of you have had experiences similar to what I will describe; for those of you who are past or not yet in that season of life, I hope you will appreciate the spirit of this brief message.

The first person I see when pulling into the parking lot is our Head of School, Wayne Sit. Masked but with an iPad in hand (ensuring proper health screening has occurred), he and other staff members are eager to welcome students and parents to the beginning of a new day. For our family on most days, we drop off our kids in three different spots, making our way around the building and seeing both staff and a few parent volunteers assisting. It's a smooth process, but, more importantly, it is a comforting process. In the midst of a contentious and changing world, these small operational procedures reflect a greater reality: life may be different than the past, but God invites us to live with confident faith over fear. The psalmist wrote: *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea"* (Psalm 46:1-2).

When I wrote my most recent Beacon article this past summer, I noted:

*"Looking ahead, for the start of 2020-2021, the school intends and hopes to welcome our students and staff back in-person. There may be some safety precautions in place, but our intention and hope are to be back in-person. Naturally, the next two months will shape the final outcome, and we are aware that other less ideal possibilities may need to be considered if the situation warrants them."*

Much has happened in these past months, and much continues to unfold today. As parents of four children enrolled at AACCS, we are grateful for the commitment of the teaching staff and entire leadership team in creating a Christ-centered environment for learning and growth. It has struck me this year, more than ever, that this commitment is evident from the classroom to the playground to the parking lot.

As a Board, we invite your prayers and encouragement for the entire AACCS team. This year is different. But *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8). Our mission, vision, and commitment to partnering with Christian families remain the same.

## Needed Prayer & Support

By Wayne Sit, head of school

More than ever, Ann Arbor Christian needs your prayer and financial support as we navigate the pandemic. *The wonderful opportunity to start the new year in-person fills us with joy and hope, but this is arguably the most challenging season that the school has ever faced.* As we approach the end of 2020, please consider AACCS in your thoughts, prayers, and generous giving during an unprecedented season in the school's history. Your partnership has been and will be invaluable in our efforts to live out our mission in the coming weeks and months. You may give at [annarborchristian.org/give](http://annarborchristian.org/give), or, as always, by mail to AACCS. Thank you in advance for your prayers and support as we move forward together.



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*When I am in parallel learning, the teachers interact with me and make me feel like I am part of the class even though I'm not there in person. — Ryan, 6th grade*

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## 2020 Apple Pie Update

By Rachel Bush, AACS parent

Thankfully, COVID did not stop our long-time tradition of making Dutch apple pies! While we limited the number of pies sold, we still sold out in a matter of a couple days!

Thank you for your continued support!

- » 858 pie crusts
- » 150 lbs flour
- » 275 lbs white sugar
- » 105 lbs brown sugar
- » 110 lbs margarine
- » 5-16 oz containers of cinnamon
- » 65 bushels of apples



8th graders broke a record by 3 minutes in making 40 pies in 16 minutes!



## A COMMUNITY GATHERED

### Leaving a Legacy

By Becky Johnson, spiritual life coordinator

When Susan Furr, our twenty year first grade teacher, and Sue DeZeeuw, our twenty plus year middle school lead teacher, retired from teaching at AACS last spring, we commissioned two gifts for the school in their honor. On Oct. 21, these gifts were officially dedicated. Al Kraker, one of the founding parents of AACS, crafted a special bookcase geared for our youngest readers in Susan Furr's honor. Mary Alice Sit and Olivia Palmbos, two of our AACS alumni students, designed and painted two canvases with the phrase "Learn it, Live it" that now hang in the middle school hallway in honor of Sue DeZeeuw. We are grateful for all the ways Sue and Susan have blessed the students and families of AACS. And we are grateful for the talents of our school community in making such lovely gifts in their honor.

Sue DeZeeuw with alumni Olivia Palmbos and Mary Alice Sit.



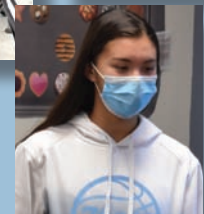
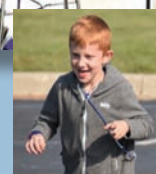
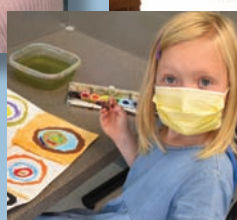
Susan Furr with the bookcase that was crafted in her honor.



Thank you to one of AACS founders, Al Kraker who hand crafted the bookcase in honor of Susan Furr.

## #AACSLIFE

Check out photos like these on Instagram & Facebook





# LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

## Putting on the Whole Armor of God

By Becky Johnson, spiritual life coordinator

Take your temperature, complete the online screening form, wear your mask, sanitize your hands as you walk in the building, maintain social distance throughout the day. These are just a few of the protective measures we go through every day at AACs to make in-person school happen. Personal protective equipment has become a “normal” part of our lives. Why? Because we are battling with an invisible virus!

As we prayed about our chapel theme this year, it seemed so appropriate that we focus on Ephesians 6 where we are encouraged to put on the whole armor of God. **“Let the Lord make you strong. Depend on His mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor then you will remain strong against the devil’s evil plans.”** Eph. 6:11 (NIRV) is our key verse. As our students and staff daily put on protective equipment, we want to be reminded that God wants to equip us with spiritual armor. The reality is we are in a spiritual battle, and we do have an enemy. However, God is in control, and He is working for our good. He will give us what we need as we turn to Him in prayer. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. These four statements help create the lens through which we see the world around us.

Ephesians 6 reminds us that we are not fighting against flesh and blood, “but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” In this season where, all around us, people are often treating and speaking of one another as the “enemy”, we will remember Jesus teaches



*Eighth graders brought the story of Elisha to life from 2 Kings 6 for chapel. This scene re-enacts when the prophet Elisha prayed and trusted God to protect them and saw God’s angels appear!*

us to love our earthly enemies, but to resist Satan, our spiritual enemy. Over the course of the year, we will learn about the different pieces of God’s spiritual armor and how they can be used to strengthen our faith.

Finally, we access this spiritual armor through prayer. Ephesians 6:18 says, **“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”** We would ask you to join us in praying for Ann Arbor Christian School, that we would reflect God’s love in this world, that our students would continue to grow in their knowledge and love of God, and that we would remain strong in the Lord.



*Our chapel theme this year is very relevant to what our world needs, especially right now. It is pertinent for us personally and as a community as we come together during this season.*

## Supernatural Restoration: Revisited

By Wayne Sit, head of school

In the summer issue of the Beacon, I wrote an article entitled Supernatural Restoration. In it, I asked: How do we help our school community to be part of a supernatural reconciliation and restoration process that will not succumb to the divisiveness and despair that plague our nation, but is a model of hope that is united in love through Jesus Christ?

As I write this, the election has not been held yet. However, I have been in enough conversations and email exchanges with families and supporters to know that many issues create much emotion and, at times, division. Such topics include the presidential election, face masks and the general handling of the pandemic, feelings about how their churches are handling the pandemic and racial injustice and if they should stay or leave, balance of personal liberties and health precautions, the economy, and thoughts about how racial issues are being handled. It pains me to hear people separating from relationships and communities that they have been part of for many years due to eight months of the seismically disrupted reality that we are all trying our best to navigate imperfectly.

In this season, I urge us to not enable Satan’s plans to see wedges driven deeper. At the same time, I am not urging for a quick fix definition of unity. Real unity does not mean an abandonment of truth or convictions, but it should be characterized by 1 Corinthians 13’s definition of love in how we treat each other, including: It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

What I hope is that you pause and listen to God’s voice in the midst of so much noise and that you allow His voice to guide you in how you view who our next President is, how you view your school or church leadership, how you view your neighbor, how you view people within your own extended family, and ask God to transform the brokenness within us and in the world into something better and greater.

# BEYOND THE BASICS

## Parallel Learning 2020-21

*Adapting to provide the best education possible during this season.*

*By Renée McKeone, curriculum director*



*In addition to her regular classroom teaching, Arienne Zimmerman has taken on the role as our new Parallel Learning Coach where she connects with our AACS parallel students daily.*

In order to meet the needs of families who wanted to be part of the AACS community but for whom in-person school was not a viable option at this time in the COVID-19 pandemic, AACS launched a virtual parallel learning opportunity. This option is

beyond three days, we have been able to have absent classmates join their classes via the virtual parallel track. This allows them to stay caught up with school work while they await clearance to return to school. In this way, the parallel track has created some new opportunities and solutions for AACS.

The virtual parallel track has been a blessing to several families. Carrie, the parent of 4th grader Aaron, was faced with a difficult decision about returning to in person school due to her autoimmune diseases. She shared, "While we put all our trust in God, His answer for the safest possible learning experience for our 4th grader Aaron was for him not to return to in-person schooling this fall. At first, we worried about his social and emotional well-being while being stuck at home away from his teachers and classmates, but Mrs. Harris and everyone at AACS has gone above and beyond to ensure keeping his connections intact and flourishing. We can't thank AACS enough for the amazing job they are doing with their parallel learning program during COVID and pray prayers of gratitude and blessings every day for their love and devotion to our family's spiritual, physical, social, and emotional health as well as to Aaron's education."

Parallel learning certainly is not without challenges, as this is a brand new experience for both students and teachers. As we end the first quarter of school, many of the processes are becoming more automatic for students and teachers. Despite the ups and downs of technology and other obstacles, seeing the students on the screen and knowing they are part of the AACS experience makes it all worthwhile!

being utilized by a small number of AACS families, but, in a time when we are distancing and community can be elusive, we are grateful that they can still be part of our school community through the parallel program.

From our experience during the closures last spring, we learned that additional support is beneficial for students who are learning virtually. To achieve this goal, we created the role of Parallel Learning Coach and appointed art teacher Arienne Zimmerman to the job. Arienne had already accepted additional hours with the student support team for this year, and we saw this role as an important part of student support. Arienne was a natural fit for this position, as she knows the students, is extremely organized and efficient, and comfortable with technology. She starts each day with a check in-meeting to help students navigate the day ahead and know what is expected of them. This creates a supportive and caring environment that helps the students to meet the demands of online learning. According to Arienne, "Our virtual parallel program is going well so far. I meet with the virtual students each morning through Zoom for a short devotion, and then we review schedules, classwork, and touch base on how everyone is doing. It has been a joy to work in this new capacity with our students."

The Parallel learning experience is built around livestreaming key portions of classes and completing assignments through Google Classroom or other materials prepared for the students by their teachers. Streaming is achieved through the use of a device called the Swivl, which is essentially a robot that holds an iPad and moves to track the speaker and captures the livestream video through a Zoom meeting. While it is not exactly the same as being in the classroom, it is a great way to experience AACS virtually and receive the benefit of the excellent teachers, to learn along with classmates and peers, and to participate in their classes. Karen, the mother of a 6th grade parallel learner, recognizes that AACS has gone above and beyond to serve the needs of the students. Karen shared, "I have heard so many stories from friends with students doing remote learning programs through other schools and their kids are not engaged with it. With AACS, I have felt like it's as close to being there as you can get without actually being there."

Additionally, parallel learning has proven to be an effective means of maintaining learning for extended absences due to the extra precautions needed to return to school due to COVID-19 concerns. For absences that go

*"I cannot thank you enough for the strident dedication and courage that you and the staff have shown in your effort to open the school this fall. I, along with most parents, am well aware of the logistical and emotional challenges that go along with making this decision. I would like you to know that I feel completely comfortable attending school, knowing that safety, stability, and development are in the forefront of your decision making."*

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# Capital Campaign Update

By Wayne Sit, head of school



Even during the pandemic, the *Be Rooted. Be Relevant.* capital campaign has fulfilled a number of important campaign goals this year, most notably

the long-sought after dream of eliminating the mortgage. The overall purpose of the campaign is to prepare and equip the school with critical resources to thrive deep into the 21st century with its opportunities and challenges. Before the pandemic, the campaign allowed the school to move an entirely new science curriculum based on the Next Generation Science Standards into our elementary grades. In addition, a new fleet of laptops was deployed, dramatically changing the learning opportunities happening every day. However, the pandemic has greatly affected all of the school's plans. We will be spending the fall and winter recalibrating our approach to the campaign and speaking with supporters.

As a recap, the four goals of the campaign are:

- Eliminating the mortgage: Completed
- Strengthening core resources: In progress and partially completed
- Improving the facilities: In progress and partially completed

- Expanding the building: This goal will receive a large portion of our attention as we recalibrate the campaign, including if any new and major giving partners emerge. This goal is 75% of the campaign's \$4.5 million target (\$1.3 million pledged in total).

In the meanwhile, for 2020, we should all rejoice that the campaign allowed the school to:

- Be debt-free as we move into our 30th year.
- Deploy new technology resources in a time when they are more important than ever, including enabling the school to livestream classes and chapel during the pandemic for students who are working from home.
- Move ahead with adding mental health support, which is more important than ever with the pandemic. We do not wish to underestimate the mental strain it has put on many, including students.
- Add more teacher aides in a time when we need more adults to care for students, especially in larger classes, and to meet COVID-19 safety guidelines.
- Purchase a new Bible curriculum for our middle school students.
- Upgrade our deteriorating light fixtures in our gym to energy-efficient, cost-saving LED fixtures.
- Install a new security camera system to monitor our building while we were required to stay home and to add a new layer of peace of mind when school is in session.
- The fulfillment of these goals directly impacts our school right now, so thank you!

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



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 in the faith just as you were taught, abounding in thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7.

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

By Lisa Hawley and Dawn Geldermans, co-chairs

Join us as we celebrate 30 years of AACs with a celebration under the stars at The Valley at Frutig Farms on September 18, 2021 with a LIVE and silent auction, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and so much more!!

Please contact [anniversary@annarborchristian.org](mailto: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. Look for more information to come out in January 2021 at [www.annarborchristian.org/30thanniversary](http://www.annarborchristian.org/30thanniversary).

If you are interested in volunteering before and/or at the event to help the celebration run smoothly (e.g., technology, bid-ambassadors, runners, check-out, decorations, etc., etc.), please contact us at [anniversary@annarborchristian.org](mailto:anniversary@annarborchristian.org) to learn more about how you can help AACs grow.

Thank you in advance for your support of AACs!



# WELCOME TO THE AACCS FAMILY!

## Welcome Our New Teachers



**Tama Frison**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS TEACHER**

Tama first began her teaching career teaching middle school mathematics and language arts at Winthrop Harbor Public Schools while her husband, Mike, was attending seminary. During the years at home with her children, she remained active in the classroom by providing teacher support and started a ministry to mothers with young children which is still thriving. Tama and Mike are the parents of six children, all of whom graduated from AACCS. She has coached 5-8 volleyball, as well as tutored middle school mathematics for five years at AACCS. Tama has also worked in various settings with Ann Arbor Public with math instruction. Tama loves seeing students' progress in their problem-solving skills and use of various strategies to tackle challenging math problems. She also enjoys watching students' analytical and reasoning skills evolve

into better problem-solvers. Tama currently attends Knox Presbyterian Church with her husband (who is an Associate Pastor) and family.

**Julie Straight**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL BIBLE, HISTORY & LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER,  
LEAD TEACHER**

Julie fell in love with teaching during her senior year of college. During her student teaching experience, she realized that her love for literature and writing and her love for teenagers combined perfectly for a career in teaching. Over the next eight years, Julie taught a variety of high school English classes ranging from American Literature to SAT prep. She also sponsored the Student Government Association and created a class to help students develop their leadership skills. During her last four years of teaching high school, she got to participate in an interdisciplinary teaching cohort where she fell in love with American History. Julie had to leave this teaching job in Virginia when her husband accepted a job in Michigan. When her youngest child was in middle school, Julie took a position as the 8th grade LA teacher at her son's school. She is confident that the Lord brought her to AACCS, and she is excited to be able to share her faith as she teaches LA and history. Her desire for all students is that they develop a love for reading and, more importantly, that they grow in their love and knowledge of God. She knows that God has exciting things in store for her time at AACCS! Julie, her husband, and her three young-adult children live in Ypsilanti and attend Knox Presbyterian Church.



## Welcome Our New Academic Support Team!



**Becca Arnold**

**ELEMENTARY &  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**



**Lisa Hawley**

**ELEMENTARY**



**Kellie Steen**

**ELEMENTARY**



**Lauren Tharp**

**ELEMENTARY &  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

We are excited to welcome Becca Arnold, Lisa Hawley, Kellie Steen, and Lauren Tharp to our academic support team. Through their service, we are able to better meet student needs, support our teachers, and further the AACCS mission of providing academically excellent Christ centered education to all students. Adding more adults into the classroom is one of our campaign goals.

News for  
family and friends  
of Ann Arbor  
Christian School



The **BEACON**

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## ALUMNI PROFILE: COLT PARKER

**Year of Graduation from AACCS:** 2015

**Grades of attendance:** Kindergarten through 8th grade

**What high school did you attend?** Skyline High School

**What are your post-secondary educational plans?** Currently a sophomore, pursuing a Mechanical Engineering Degree at Purdue University.

**Favorite memories or experiences of your time at AACCS:** 5th grade camp and the 8th grade class trip are my two favorite memories from my time at AACCS.

**How did your experiences at AACCS impact you?** My time at AACCS built a strong foundation from which to launch into high school and beyond. AACCS cemented my faith in God, my confidence in my abilities, and my pursuit of continual self-improvement. I owe much of who I am today to Ann Arbor Christian 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.*

