



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2022-2023 No. 1

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, Head of School

More Than Numbers



145. In my early years at Ann Arbor Christian, that was the number we talked about over and over. It was the number of enrolled students that we wanted to reach. We asked our school community to pray for 145, urged people to tell others about Ann Arbor Christian, and focused our marketing efforts around that number.

Today, thanks be to God and the stirring He put into people's hearts to both support and join Ann Arbor Christian, we have 225 students - our biggest enrollment ever.

Now, we have a new number to strive for: 50.

As we prepare to launch our second site at Huron Hills Church (which we call the Upper Campus) in August 2023, this 50 represents the number of 9th graders we are seeking for our first high school class - the class of 2027. As you read this article, we have just opened enrollment for the 9th

grade class and begun the work of sharing our vision and hopes for Christian families with our expansion into high school grades.



Naturally, we hope that a notable portion of our current 8th grade class will continue into our high school. With our second location being close to St. Paul Lutheran School, we hope that some of their families will join, and some have already begun to inquire and to tour our Upper Campus. In addition, we pray that homeschooling families and Christian families in the public schools will now see AACS as a new and exciting option that did not exist before. This last group represents hundreds of Christian families who are considering something different and more life-giving than public high schools, and the Ann Arbor Christian High School now is a real option for them to consider.



On an exciting note, despite a dire nationwide shortage of teachers, I currently have more people interested in working at the AACS high school than I will likely have positions. Some are drawn by the unique opportunity to be part of the exciting start-up of our high school and what it means for the city of Ann Arbor, while others are Christian teachers in the local public schools looking for a change and a place where they can be open with their faith and help nurture the faith of teenagers.

This month, our students began their Multiplication Project in which participating students received either \$5 or \$10 of "seed

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MISSION

In partnership with Christian families, Ann Arbor Christian School offers Christ-centered, academically excellent education that challenges students to live and act in society as committed followers of Jesus Christ.

HEADS UP

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money” to use. With that money, they will each be finding ways to multiply that amount in order to support refugee children in Ukraine. As I watched our students receive their seed money during Grandparents’ Day, it reminded me of our need to ultimately trust God to do the work of multiplying. Yes, we are called to do the hard work before us and to use our talents properly, but, in the end, only He can stir people’s hearts and make plenty out of what was little.

50 isn’t just a number. It represents real students and their families to whom we hope to offer a great high school experience centered on Jesus Christ. So, as we collectively join in prayer for those 50 ninth grade students and for pioneering teachers to join them, we also rejoice in the reassurance that 50 or beyond is well within God’s sovereignty to provide.

God is clearly moving with our second site and providing the pieces:

- We know the need for Christian education in our community.
- We have an eager partner who has provided a great location and space.
- We have some start-up funds from the 30th Anniversary Gala from this past spring.
- There is tremendous support from within the Christian Schools International community and leadership.
- We have eager Christian teachers who want to join, and we already have our first nine students enrolled.

If He can do the impossible task of feeding 5000 people with a few pieces of fish and bread, then we can truly believe that He can finish the multiplying work He has started with our second campus. We can trust He has so much in store for Ann Arbor Christian’s future beyond our best laid plans.



Thank you to those who also donated bleacher plaques—they are a daily reminder of God’s impact on our lives and the legacy you have left to AACCS.

EVENTS & NEWS

The Yummiest Time of the Year!

By Heidi Eliason, PR/Development Assistant



Our annual Dutch apple pie sale has been a school tradition for most of its existence. Not only does it provide delicious pies that thousands of families have used for countless family and

social occasions, but it also serves as a fundraiser for the school. The coordinators of the sale have always been passionate about Ann Arbor Christian School and generating buzz around the Dutch apple pies, and we want to acknowledge one person in particular.

After working the apple pie week for 12 years in various roles, parent Lauralyn Bottom is retiring from her title as “apple pie mom”. Anyone who knows this elite swimmer and coach knows her knack for competition and motivation. In 2014, Lauralyn took over as co-coordinator and, in 2019, co-led a record breaking year with 1356 Dutch apple pies made! She spent countless hours tweaking the assembly line process to make it more efficient. This pie-making coach made it a memorable competition between the morning, afternoon, and evening shifts, keeping careful tallies with the number of pies made in the fewest number of minutes! The only thing missing was her whistle and a pool deck.

Lauralyn commented, “There’s so much I will miss about apple pie week, the student’s cards and support, the teachers and staff giving us support throughout the week, but I’ll probably miss the enthusiasm and passion of the 8th graders.”

The 8th grade class made a record 100 pies in 45 minutes and 40 pies in 16 minutes!

Thank you, Lauralyn, for over a decade of serving AACCS in this vital fundraiser. We will miss your leadership and enthusiasm. Many thanks to the rest of the AACCS community for your teamwork in making this Dutch apple pie sale another successful year!

Pie by the numbers 2022:

- 946 pies
- 88 bushels of apples
- 150 lbs of margarine
- 250 lbs of flour
- 290 lbs of white sugar
- 160 lbs of brown sugar
- 62.5 lbs of cinnamon

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A COMMUNITY GATHERED

When Two or More Are Gathered in My Name

By Wayne Sit, Head of School



This fall, the school was able to experience three remarkable gatherings of believers.

First was the Christian Educators Association convention in South Bend, IN where our core teachers and administrators joined nearly 2000 like-minded colleagues from Christian schools around the Midwest. During those two days together, we joined our collective voices in song, praise, and thanksgiving during corporate worship. Then, in small sessions, we attended a host of workshops about teaching, curriculum, healthy self-care, student support, and culture, and this was all done within the context of a strong, biblically based Christian perspective by the speakers and presenters.

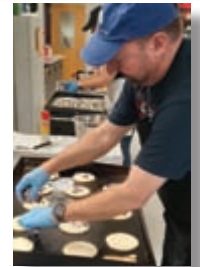
In Ann Arbor, our school community can feel alone and isolated. When we attend a convention like this, we are reminded that we are not alone and that there is a great cloud of witnesses in hundreds of Christian schools across the region eager to support and spur each other on in our common cause of Christ-centered education and traditional biblical values.



I know that I am deeply grateful for my many peers in Christian schools in Michigan.



Second was the return of Grandparents' Day after a two-year break. In addition to the joy of seeing grandparents and grandchildren together, it was a powerful reminder of the great transmission of faith between generations. Many of the grandparents present instructed their own children, the parents of our school, in the ways of our faith. Their children in turn passed it onto their children, the students at our school. Someday, our collective hope is that our students will pass on the faith to their children.



I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (Gen. 17:7)

A third recent gathering was the return of the Pancake Breakfast. In addition to bringing families and grandparents together, this event often brings back alumni families. It is always great to see a cross-section of people from the school's history together to enjoy fellowship, to trade stories about their times at AACS, and to express our mutual support of what the school did and continues to do.

GIVING UPDATE

Year-End Giving: Continue the Momentum

By Wayne Sit, Head of School

The city of Ann Arbor and surrounding towns need Christian education to thrive. Giving through God's people is one of the most critical ways that enables Ann Arbor Christian School to be that light for Christ in our community and to experience the successes and growth we have seen. Your giving will allow us to continue the momentum!

As we approach the end of 2022, please consider AACS in your thoughts, prayers, and generous giving during an exciting time in the school's history. Between now and the end of December, we hope to raise \$120,000 in general giving. (More targeted opportunities to give towards the second site will be shared in 2023.) 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, or as always, by mail to AACS. Thank you in advance for your prayers and support as we move forward together.



G I A A E
C S

Your gift ensures more children will be able to receive an education rooted in the Gospel.

5500 Whitmore Lake Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48113



Online at www.annarborchristian.org/give



Mail a check to Ann Arbor Christian School



Scan QR code with your phone to give online



BOARD UPDATE

Out of Nothing

By Nik Spasovski, President, AACS Board



I went to a conference recently where one of the speakers talked about the theological concept *ex nihilo*, which means “out of nothing”. Normally, this Latin phrase is used to refer to God’s powerful

creative work that is revealed in Genesis 1, when He created our world out of nothing. Our speaker reflected on how, if God could do this for our world, He has the power to continue to do this in our lives. From the nothingness of apathy or depression, He can bring joy. From the wounds that come from brokenness in family, He can bring a new generation of hope and healing. From the emptiness of death, He can bring resurrection and life. I’ve been reflecting on *ex nihilo* and how often God has done exactly that in history and in my life. Each time, it feels like a miracle. I can’t help but feel similarly about our second site and high school. Out of nothing, God is creating and bringing forth a new and exciting chapter for AACS!

Our board of directors has acclimated well with the addition of new board members and officers at the end of the summer. Nik Spasovski (President), Daniel Bingham (Vice President), Sandy Quinn (Secretary and Treasurer), Ann Deckert, Karen Eekhoff, John Nadzam, Erin Perry, Ryan Peterson, and Michael Yankonis make up our current board. We have been hard at work working with Wayne Sit, our head of school, on the second site and talking through major decisions relating to that large endeavor as well as other items. Since the summer, we have negotiated a lease with Huron Hills Church, set the tuition rate for the new high school, helped to host a celebration event at the new location with about 200 people between the AACS and Huron Hills communities, have discussed school security on multiple occasions, and have performed our head of school annual review. In addition, to help us develop as board members, we have been reading and discussing *Guiding Schools to Flourish* by Henry Contant and Edward Noot, a book focused on the governance of private Christian schools.

We are excited to continue to work with Wayne to dream about what God has next for our school community and to do our part to help those dreams become a reality!



SPORTS RECAP

Great Fall Season with New Sports

By Bryan Diemer, Athletic Director

The Ann Arbor Christian fall athletic season recently concluded, and it was another great season. Furthermore, in an effort to allow our students more opportunities to glorify God with our bodies and to maximize participation in our 5th-8th grades, AACS was able to add two new sports this fall. AACS had an excellent turnout with 68 total students participating in fall sports this year. We loved the overwhelming participation of our students and the dedication of parents, and even one alumni parent who invested in the students as a coach.



Led by parents Sean Lindblade and Tom Gritter, the co-ed soccer team finished with a 13-4-1 record and took home the league tournament championship. They also placed 3rd in the WCA Invitational, which took place earlier in the season.

Parents Lauralyn Bottom and Jayme Higgins returned to coach both the JV and varsity girls volleyball teams this year. They guided both teams to winning seasons, as the JV volleyball team finished with a 15-5 overall record, taking 2nd place in the league tournament. The varsity team finished with a 14-6 overall record.

Additionally, AACS was able to field two entirely new sports teams this fall with the addition of co-ed golf and boys flag football. Co-ed golf had 10 students participate and were coached by parent Dustin Ferrell and AACS friend Alex Bartee. They did not compete against other schools, but were able to play 3 rounds of golf at Whitmore Lake Links where they also practiced throughout the season. Flag football also had 10 students participate and were coached by alumni parent Ty Anderson and parents Mark Hake and John Perry. The team compiled a 3-1 record on the season.

As we look toward fielding a high school athletic program next year, these new athletic ventures gave a higher number of students an opportunity to pursue their passion, learn a new sport, and stay active this fall, laying the foundation for the growth of our athletic program into the future of the high school.

Go Eagles!



#AACSLIFE



Check out photos like these on Instagram & Facebook

WELCOME TO THE AACCS FAMILY!

Welcome Our New Teachers & Staff



Ty Anderson

SIXTH GRADE BIBLE

B.S., History, Political Science, and Secondary Education, Eastern Michigan University



Julie Simons

FOURTH & FIFTH GRADE MATHEMATICS

B.S.E., Chemical Engineering, Princeton University



Arpi Arkoussian

PRESCHOOL TEACHER AIDE

Undergraduate Certificate (CDA Credential Prep), Penn Foster College; Early Childhood Education, Khatcher Kalousdian Pedagogical Center (Beirut, Lebanon)



Christina Stoller

PRESCHOOL TEACHER AIDE

B.A., Sports Management, Minor in Bible, Cedarville University



Laura Bougher

FIRST GRADE TEACHER AIDE

B.A., English, Minor in Elementary Education; Currently pursuing a Master's in Curriculum & Instruction with a Reading Emphasis at Eastern Michigan University



Caroline Wiersma

SOCIAL WORKER CONSULTANT

B.A., Psychology and Communication Arts, Northpark University; M.S.W., Western Michigan University; Certifications in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-DBT), Child Welfare Institute, and Trauma Across the Lifespan



Stacy Charlton

THIRD GRADE TEACHER

B.A., Elementary Education, Eastern Michigan University; M.A., Reading Instruction, Eastern Michigan University



Abbie-Jo Wilcox

MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND

B.A., Humanities, Hope College



Karen Eekhoff

MIDDLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

B.A., Special Education, Calvin College



Jenna Zemaitis

TEACHER CONSULTANT

B.S., Psychology and Education, Grand Valley State University; K-8 Elementary Education Certificate; Endorsements in Cognitive Impairment and Emotional Impairment



Anilú Seromik

SIXTH GRADE SPANISH

Colegio de Ciencias y Humanidades, Durango, Mexico; Eastern Michigan University

Be sure to check out more about our new teachers and staff on the AACCS website at [www.https://annarborchristian.org/faculty-and-staff/](https://annarborchristian.org/faculty-and-staff/).

BEYOND THE BASICS

Supporting the Whole Child

By Renée McKeone, Curriculum Director & Student Support Coordinator

Seeing our student body gathered at a chapel or other all-school events is an awe-inspiring experience. Looking at our 225 students ranging from 3 year olds to 14 year olds, we see God's amazing handiwork in each of them. On the outside, we see different hair colors, skin tones, eye colors, heights, but, on the inside, the differences are even greater. One of the hallmarks of an Ann Arbor Christian School education is that students are known and loved for who they are.

In each classroom, teachers work to create a community where each student can be loved and accepted for his or her unique personality and what he or she brings to the classroom, including each student's areas of strengths and challenges. Our partnership with All Belong, a non-profit organization committed to helping Christian schools build learning inclusive schools where every learner can thrive, has helped us to embrace the idea that all of us have areas of strength and all of us have areas of challenge. All Belong coins this concept the "puzzle piece perspective" which helps us to understand ourselves and others and see how we can fit together to form one body as Christ has placed us. Our areas of strength, our "green" areas, are those that come easily and "pink" areas are our hot spots or areas of challenge. Helping students to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses allows them to lean into their community for help in their areas of weakness, while supporting others in their areas of strength. This can be made more visible to students by participating in a class puzzle piece activity where students use physical puzzle pieces to record their strengths and challenges on the pink and green sides of the puzzle piece. According to Jenna Zemaitis, our consultant from All Belong, "We see this described in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 12, but especially verse 18. 'But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.' Isn't it amazing that God not only created us just as He wants us to be - with all of our strengths and challenges - but then He placed us in community alongside others, just where He wants us to be!"

This perspective is at the root of our understanding of student support. Each student reflects God's image and is a unique and irreplaceable gift. Our goal is to build a school community where ALL students can appropriately develop their gifts and abilities in order to live and act in society as disciples of Jesus Christ. We believe all students can learn.

Ann Arbor Christian School has been working with All Belong since the 2009 - 2010 school year. Our contact has included regular visits with a teacher consultant who supports our faculty in the mindsets and practices necessary to meet a variety of learning needs and support students in the classroom. Jenna has served our

school for the past four years in this role, and she has developed a wonderful rapport with our staff, providing support, encouragement, and wisdom as we seek to create intentional classroom communities where all students can thrive. She also meets with parents. The teacher consultant role has been primarily academic in focus, but, since we recognize the whole child, our response has always gone beyond the academic to the social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a learner.



Social worker Caroline Wiersma working with our middle school students to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses.

This fall we were delighted to discover that All Belong had begun providing these services to member schools during the 2021-22 school year. After considering various options for social work services, we decided to contract these services through All Belong. AACS is now able to provide social work services to better address the social and emotional needs of our students, something that has long been on the AACS teacher wish list and strategic plan as part of our student support services. Caroline Wiersma has been assigned as our school social worker, serving AACS two days per month. She consults with teachers, providing advice and expertise. In addition, she provides direct service to our students, meeting one-on-one or in small groups. At times, she may also meet with parents to offer advice. Caroline is familiar with the Social Emotional Learning Curriculum that we launched last year and is able to build on the concepts presented through that program. In a world in which there exists a growing mental health crisis, we are so thankful for this new addition to our staff and the ability to better support our students - all of it done within a Christian worldview.

As we strive to fulfill our school's mission, supporting all students is one of the key ways that we offer academically excellent education. Our partnership with All Belong provides key tools for teachers so they can, in turn, better support students.

A Puzzle Piece Perspective

Video: Barb Newman shares the basic mission of All Belong through the picture of puzzle pieces. In summary, we all bring our strengths and weaknesses to our communities, and we need each other to create thriving communities.



LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

Created for a Purpose

By Becky Johnson, Spiritual Life Coordinator



Our 8th graders at their leadership retreat.

What is your purpose in life? Is your purpose to be a spouse or a grandparent? Is your purpose a successful career? How do you discover your purpose? Can our weaknesses get in the way of God's purpose? These are some of the questions that will be touched on in this year's chapel theme: **Created for a Purpose.**

One of the foundational truths that we believe as Christians is that we did not

create ourselves. At the moment of our conception, we are fearfully and wonderfully made by a loving Creator. So, as we seek our purpose, we start by seeking the God who made us in His image.

This question of purpose is addressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (from the Reformed tradition) which asks this question: What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Throughout this year's chapel theme, we will be dwelling on both parts of that answer - glorifying God and enjoying God. We enjoy God as we recognize that He enjoys us. In fact, Scripture says that God takes great delight in us and that He rejoices over us with singing (Zeph. 3:17). Part of our chapel worship is delighting in who God is and in His great love for us! As we examine what it means to glorify God, we will be looking at the lives of young people in the Bible who did just that: David, Samuel, Jeremiah, Josiah, Naaman's Israelite slave girl, and the boy who offered Jesus his lunch. The students will discover that God's purpose for them does not start when they are grown up or have a job. God's purpose for them starts right now!

We saw this theme unpacked for the 8th graders during their fall leadership retreat. Julie Straight, the 8th grade homeroom teacher, and I spent a day away with the 8th graders focusing on their role as chapel family leaders. Students had the opportunity to reflect on their ideas of what traits good leaders have and then think about Jesus as a leader. Suddenly, it became clear that being a leader was not about having a strong personality or being an extrovert, but rather Christian leadership is about humble sacrificial service. The students had a chance to think about their strengths and weaknesses and to see how each of them have something to contribute for the good of the whole. As they participated in a low ropes team building activity, they put that knowledge to use as they learned to listen to one another and appreciate each other's suggestions.

Another practical way this theme is being lived out is through our Multiplication Project. Through this unique project, participating students came up with an idea and were given \$5 or \$10 of "seed money" to run with their idea. Some students will use their seed money to perform a service (e.g., make signs to advertise a dog walking service), while others will use their seed money to purchase supplies to produce items (e.g., crafts or baked goods) to sell at our Craft Fair in late December. This is a voluntary activity which gives the students a chance to take initiative, to practice some business skills, and to use their unique gifts and talents to be a blessing to others by multiplying their seed money. All the proceeds from the Craft Fair will go to support the Shepherd's Foundation, a ministry that helps children and families in Ukraine.

Please pray for our students as they learn about the purpose that God has for each of them.



Our AACS students receiving their seed money during their commissioning on Grandparents' Day.

EVENTS & NEWS



Be sure to check it out at:
www.annarborchristian.org



Launch of the NEW AACS Website

News for
family and friends
of Ann Arbor
Christian School



The BEACON

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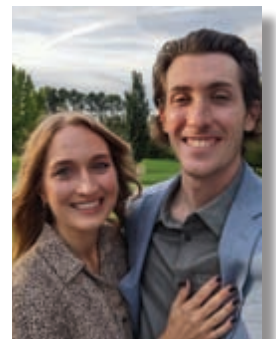
ALUMNI PROFILE: PATRICK MCKEONE

Year of graduation from AACCS: 2007 • **What high school did you attend?** Father Gabriel Richard High School
Post-secondary educational plans? Attended the University of Dayton (Degrees in Communication Management & Human Rights Studies) - working on Masters in Organizational Leadership from Mount Saint Joseph.

Favorite memories or experiences of your time at AACCS: Coming into AACCS in fifth grade, I was nervous but excited for a change. The other students and teachers were all so welcoming that I felt at home very quickly. Most of my favorite moments came in Middle School being able to play on the basketball team, 50s Diner Night, and our 8th Grade class trip to Chicago.

Special personal accomplishments since graduating AACCS? I work in Health Care as a Project Manager in Innovation and Process Excellence. So, when the COVID-19 Pandemic first hit the US, I was tasked with managing the roll out and implementation of our emergency telehealth services to the community. Shortly after, as vaccines were becoming available, I also managed the start up of 5 new vaccine clinics in less than 2 months. It was a very busy season, but it was amazing to see the response and collaboration from our teams to serve the community. As a faith based health care organization, we were able to collaborate with local churches and leaders to also identify those in need, without transportation or without internet, to ensure that everyone in the community had the access to the services and healthcare they needed.

How did your experiences at AACCS impact you? My time at AACCS really helped build the foundation of who I am as a person. I went to a Catholic School prior to AACCS, so I did not have much exposure to other denominations of Christianity. Being in an ecumenical space helped broaden my horizons and grow my faith. I also truly felt that every teacher cared for me as an individual. Typically 5th-8th grade can be a difficult time of growth, but feeling supported and encouraged helped grow my confidence as a person and leader. This foundation is what first sparked my interest and belief that I could be a leader in my community one day, which continues to impact my studies and the projects I lead everyday.



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