



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2023-2024 No. 1

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, Head of School

Same Mission in a New Season of Growth



A historic (and fun) photo of our first high school class. May God use this class and their families to pave the path for many generations to come.

Recently, I was alone at one of my favorite Chinese restaurants in Ann Arbor. After perusing the menu, I relayed my order to my server, who was familiar with me since I am somewhat of a regular. Typically, she would punch my order into her tablet as she has done many times before. However, this time around, she told me that I didn't really want to eat that dish and strongly recommended a more authentic one. I liked her choice and proceeded with it, but I was a bit taken aback by her boldness.

It made me think about the role of boldness behind a person's convictions. While my dinner order wasn't a life-or-death matter, my server felt strongly that there was a better choice and was not afraid to share her opinion with me.

On a far greater scale, wouldn't it be amazing if Ann Arbor Christian School could play a key role, along with parents and churches, in equipping and shaping our students to see what's better, more beautiful, more noble, more eternal, and more praiseworthy, and then to have the boldness to convey that to others?



In our mission to provide strong, Christ-centered education, one of our goals is to shape disciples and culture makers for Jesus Christ. Rather than being swept up in the waves of pleasant-sounding but hollow philosophies based on human wisdom, we seek to help nurture children and teenagers who are deeply rooted in Christ, crave patterns and habits that are based on God's good and perfect will, and are eager to share those convictions with others. As an example, our 9th grade class will be the first to go through a robust curriculum around sexuality, gender, and marriage that clearly upholds love and grace while adhering faithfully to traditional views that align with God's beautiful design for our lives and relationships. Rather than allowing our culture to shape this discussion, we can help our students to grow in both love and truth as defined by His Word, to see how the two work together, and to be able to winsomely and boldly engage in that conversation through a biblical worldview.

In order to continue this work, we ask the broader AACs community to stay engaged with us and to help us during a unique season of our school's life. With over 30 years of history under our belt, we are no longer a start-up school, but are well into our early adulthood. However, adulthood also presents its own sets of opportunities and challenges. With our growth

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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

Continued from page 1

in recent years, we are navigating increased enrollment, space constraints, a nationwide teacher shortage, a new high school, the dynamics of two campuses, changes in technology, and the rapidly shifting cultural norms and values around us.

However, by His grace, God's people sustain us and spur us forward. As Ann Arbor Christian enters this new phase of growth in its life, we ask for your prayers, support, encouragement, and feedback as we navigate the opportunities and challenges before us as we seek to grow as a light for Christ in the greater Ann Arbor region in 2023 and beyond. Please send a card of encouragement to a beloved teacher or staff member; make a general year-end gift to financially support the school; commit to praying for the students or school leadership every week; volunteer in areas of needs; attend meetings to talk about the school; write an email of thanks to the school board for their faithfulness to maintain biblical values; or direct prospective teachers or families to look into Ann Arbor Christian. In whatever shape or form, your support of Ann Arbor Christian in this vibrant but delicate season will be a blessing to us as we live out our mission to raise students who see clearly through a Christian lens and have boldness in their faith.

YEAR-END GIVING: WAYS TO CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM

By Wayne Sit, Head of School

The city of Ann Arbor and surrounding towns need Christian education to be thriving. Financial 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!



Between now and December 31: As we approach the end of 2023, please consider AACCS in your thoughts, prayers, and generous giving during an exciting time in the school's history. By the end of December, we hope to raise \$100,000 in general giving. Your partnership has been and will be invaluable in our efforts to live out our mission in the coming weeks and months.

Multiplying: One set of friends donated an amazing \$150,000 toward our goal of an additional \$300,000 for the start-up of the high school. Their encouragement and challenge to the broader AACCS community: Can we do what the students did last year? - to see our personal money as a gift from God to be used for His work; to trust in God to multiply and to have their gift not just matched but exceeded by the school community. As a school, we are immensely grateful for this generous gift and the opportunity it presents to be multiplied by the AACCS community between now and December. Will you join us to more than double this gift? We have \$80,000 to go.

Praying: Lastly, there is no dollar amount to this, but this is one of the most meaningful ways to support AACCS. Its value is priceless. We are doubling down on the need for prayer during this season - for provision and protection for all of AACCS.



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

5500 Whitmore Lake Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48105

 Online at www.annarborchristian.org/give

 Mail a check to Ann Arbor Christian School.

 Scan QR code with your phone to give online.



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A COMMUNITY GATHERED

A Great Legacy for Us to Continue

By Wayne Sit, Head of School

Recently, the school recognized two people who, in different ways, had a significant and historical impact on Ann Arbor Christian School.

First, we celebrated the retirement of Jan Musch, who served as the finance manager for nearly the entire life of the school. In addition to the critical and often behind-the-scenes work that she performed, Jan and her husband David were among the founders of our school. They started planning and praying for the school in the 1980's and were financially giving to the school before it even opened. Their generation blazed the trail and took the leap of faith that gave us Ann Arbor Christian School.



Second, the school's first full-time principal, Ann Deckert, visited recently both to attend Jan's retirement celebration and to see the new high school. For several years when the school was in modular units, she and Jan shared a small closet as their joint office. During the mid-1990's to 2003, her leadership guided the school through its initial seasons of growth. Additionally, Ann was instrumental in purchasing the property for the main campus and the construction of its building. During her visit, Ann was able to spend some time with the 9th graders, shared how they were the new generation of pioneers for the school, and offered them words of encouragement. In turn, one of the 9th graders spoke on behalf of his classmates to thank Ann for her role in laying the foundation for Ann Arbor Christian.

Psalm 78 says: *My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old — things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law*

in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their

children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Both Jan and Ann were used by God over 30 years ago to help shape the school into what we have today, and the children at the school today were not even born yet! Doesn't that give you goosebumps? Our current students and those students in the future are the unborn generations mentioned in Psalm 78 above. That fact is both amazing and mind-blowing, but that's the kind of loving and all-orchestrating God we serve here at Ann Arbor Christian.

May the strong legacy of Christian education that people like Jan and Ann began decades ago inspire the rest of us to join in and continue the good work that God has and will continue to do through Ann Arbor Christian. Every generation has its role in the life of our school today that will also have an eternal impact on the precious children yet to be born!



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BOARD UPDATE

Important Mission of AACCS

By Nik Spasovski, President, AACCS Board

I was recently struck anew how important the mission of AACCS is: 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. I've been thinking about that last part in particular, living and acting in society as committed followers of Jesus. With war breaking out in Israel, war continuing for over a year and a half in Ukraine, all the mental health challenges of our times, and not to mention an election year beginning soon, it can be so hard and yet is incredibly necessary to hold on to hope. Society desperately needs followers of Jesus who know how to persevere in hope since our ultimate hope is found beyond this world. If we can model, teach, and challenge all our children and students to keep coming back to Jesus for hope and then bringing that hope to the world, what a blessing that would be to our society!

The main duties of the Board of AACCS are to protect the vision and mission of our school, be forward thinking and plan strategically for the future, ensure proper governance of the school, and oversee and evaluate the head of school. The last few months and about the next six months the board has been and will continue to focus our main attention on the second item listed (while not neglecting the rest). In particular, with high enrollment and the high school expansion we are spending a lot of time and energy thinking through and exploring options and possibilities for the future of the school and how to best address the challenges that higher enrollment creates. We will be consulting with shareholders and the association as a whole on those options in the coming months. The board has also been reviewing possible updates to the student handbook that are necessary with the addition of high school grades, tackling board items related to accreditation for the school, and we have completed our study of *Guiding Schools to Flourish* by Henry Contant and Edward Noot. In addition, the board will be working with Wayne Sit and the leadership team as we approach our re-accreditation in April and begin steps to update our long-range strategic plan.

Let me close by praying this verse over our school community from Romans 15:13—

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



AACS EAGLES!

Successful Fall Season in Middle and High School Sports

By Bryan Diemer, Athletic Director & Grades 3-8 Physical Education, Grades 7-8 Health

Ann Arbor Christian School recently concluded a very busy and successful fall athletics season. Middle school teams participated in girls' volleyball, co-ed soccer, boys' flag football, and co-ed golf while high school teams participated in girls' volleyball, co-ed cross country and girls' equestrian. Additionally, AACCS partnered with Father Gabriel Richard High School for a co-op in boys' soccer and boys football. There were 70 middle school students, and 15 high school students who participated in a fall sport.



This year, AACCS continued to have a strong presence in the league for the traditional sports that we offer, built on sports that started last year, and, with the addition of the high school, was able to kick start some new programs as well. The Middle School soccer team, coached by Sean Lindblade and Tom Gritter, took 2nd place in the WCA invitational and was



atop the standings throughout the regular season. The 7/8th grade volleyball team, coached by Lauralyn Bottom, took 1st place in the WCA Invitational Tournament, as well as 1st place in the A.A.I.A.A league tournament. The flag football team, coached by Ty Anderson and Mark Hake, completed an

undefeated season, going 10-0 on the year. The golf team, coached by Dustin Ferrell and Jim Warring, did not compete against other schools, but still had 8 golfers who came out for the team. Additionally, the 5/6th grade team, coached by Kim La Marca, had 16 girls participate, and finished 4th in the league tournament.

At the high school level, the girls volleyball team quickly established a reputation around the community as having a very strong and competitive program. The Eagles, coached by Isaac London and Jayme Higgins, went 12-8 overall on the inaugural season and took 2nd place in the WCA Invitational Tournament. For the first time ever, AACCS hosted a cross country team, coached by Autumn Lytle, as well as an equestrian team that was coached by Abbie-Jo Wilcox. In addition, AACCS was able to send two soccer players and two football players to join FGR in the co-op.

Lastly, AACCS was also able to join the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) and will be able to participate in post season tournaments starting next school year.

Go Eagles!

A COMMUNITY GATHERED

Grandparents' Day 2023

By Kristy Peterson, AACS Parent

It's one of the most celebrated traditions of the year and certainly one of the most meaningful for many people in our school community. Recently, our school celebrated Grandparents' Day. Over 500 people filled the school, with many in attendance having many years of wisdom to share with the kids within AACS.

Students and teachers prepared for a day to share with their grandparents and showcase the amazing school where they are being educated and growing in their faith. An exciting aspect for the grandparents this year was to explore the new maker space on the main campus as well as visit the high school upper campus for a luncheon, a student-led activity, and a tour.

Some grandparents traveled further than 500 miles to be at this monumental event in their grandchildren's lives. Opa Auden and Ima Auden came from Pennsylvania to attend their first grandparents' day at Ann Arbor Christian School. Mr. Auden commented that his favorite part was



“witnessing a living part of the Christian life of our grandkids.”

The school looked amazing. On the main campus, the welcoming atmosphere included 8th grade greeters, a beautiful fall display of mums, pumpkins, fresh donuts, coffee, and a book sale in the Gathering Space. A deeper look, however, shows a grandmother's smile as her granddaughter pulled on her hand to show her the classroom or a grandpa put his hand on his grandson's shoulder to show his support. It's those little moments of connection between different generations that made the day special. Grandma Sue Costello shared, “She just enjoys sharing time with her granddaughter.” On the upper campus, a grandfather shared that he was so impressed with the quality of the facilities for our new high school and the technology being used. He trusts that God will be leading families as they look at the high school.

God can do amazing things in the hearts of these young children as they spend time with the generations that have come before them and who have lived out the Christian life. For these reasons and many more, Grandparents' Day at AACS is always a day to remember. We are grateful for the great transmission of faith from grandparents to their children's children.



A Colorful Community Gathering

By Kristy Peterson, AACS Parent

Running alone can be a good workout, relieve stress, and some would say “fun”. However, an event like the *Inaugural Eagles Take Off Family Color 5K Run/Walk* was far more than just a race for our community members and working up a sweat, it also helped our AACS community come together to connect with one another in a new, fun, and exciting way.

It was a foggy Saturday morning in October when about 100 participants, 25 volunteers, and many cheerleaders gathered at Hudson Mills MetroPark to experience a memorable race. The music was playing on the speakers, white shirts were waiting to be sprayed with multi-colored powder, and bandanas and sunglasses were in place. The overall feeling of pre-race excitement was in the air.

Ann Arbor Christian School parent and early elementary physical education teacher, April Bertin, gave a warm and enthusiastic welcome to the crowd! It was with great anticipation that students, parents, and fluffy friends took off running through the paths of Hudson Mills.

The color run/walk is a unique and delightfully fun race that involves squirting multiple colors of powdered paint on the participants as they pass certain designated stations throughout the course. The results are beautifully colored t-shirts, hair, and skin!

As the runners and walkers raced toward the finish line, the

volunteers and spectators yelled, hollered, and hooted encouragement to the participants. Clapping, cheering, and praise filled the crisp air as they finished the 3.2 mile course.

Bertin reports, “It was so heartwarming and impactful to see the sense of community and partnership as we watched the third, fourth, and sixth graders holding hands as they came through the finish line.” The spirit of good sportsmanship was all on display all day! Another feeling of accomplishment was demonstrated as a proud mom hugged her child and welled up with tears for finishing a 5k race! After the race, everyone enjoyed cider, apples and donuts from Dexter Cider Mill. We would like to thank our generous sponsorships from the Ann Arbor Running Club and Runguard.

The school wishes to thank Lisa Hawly and April Bertin who were the moving forces behind this incredible event. Using their creative energy, this race was designed to raise support and enthusiasm for our Mileage Club. This club involves students running laps on a route during recess and keeping track of their miles throughout the school year. It also sponsors 3 fun runs throughout the year on campus. The fun runs this year are: “Turkey Trot Fun Run” on November 16th; “Run, Run, Rudolph Fun Run” on December 15th; and “Shamrockin' Fun Run” on March 15th. We are excited to hear about the plans for the Second Annual Color Run!



BEYOND THE BASICS

Measuring our Mission Through Accreditation

By Renée McKeone, Curriculum Director & Student Support Coordinator

According to the Cambridge dictionary, accreditation is the fact of being officially recognized, accepted, or approved of. However, the accreditation process with Christian Schools International (CSI) is much more than that. CSI's accreditation not only provides the necessary stamp of approval, but also guides the school in a process to assess itself and create goals for improvement. Additionally, Christian distinctiveness is embedded into the accreditation indicators which allows Christian schools to assess themselves against their mission. This dovetails directly with Ann Arbor Christian School's philosophy that faith is not an add-on, but an integral part of everything we do.

The accreditation process for established schools such as AACCS is called *Measuring the Mission*. The process begins with gathering data through stakeholder surveys including parents, staff, older students, and the board of directors. The next step is honestly assessing ourselves through an in-depth self study. The full staff gathered on October 12 and 13 to begin this process which involves discussion around specific indicators, rating the school's performance in each indicator ranging from "getting started" to "exemplary", and providing evidence to support the rating. Over the two days, the staff worked through 45 indicators in 3 main areas in addition to the office staff verifying compliance on organizational assurances, such as having documents, procedures, policies, and structures in place that meet state requirements as well ensuring that systems are in place which allow the school to function well so it can fulfill its mission. Staff members worked diligently, providing essential feedback for the accreditation team in order to help identify areas where AACCS is clearly fulfilling its mission as well as point to areas for growth.

As we reflected on our efforts for the day, Michelle Harris, our fourth grade teacher, shared that she has been on accreditation teams in the past, and it has usually not been a very enjoyable experience. However, the way AACCS approached our accreditation was entirely different, allowing the teachers to feel good about what they have accomplished and are doing as well as encouraged in areas to grow. Feedback such as this verifies the importance of the collaborative nature of the accreditation process through CSI.

Our last accreditation was in 2018. During the past five years, AACCS has been dedicated to working on carrying out the goals which



were developed from that year's self study and verified by the site study team. This year provides the unique experience of completing the last few details on our former plan, while

we are assessing ourselves for our next plan.

A few of the goals we accomplished through our last school improvement plan were the creation of our school-wide learner goals, adopting a formal vision for academic support, and expanding services to meet the needs of all learners.

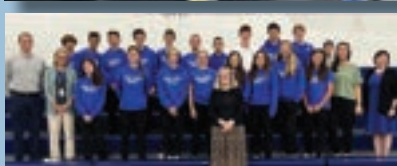
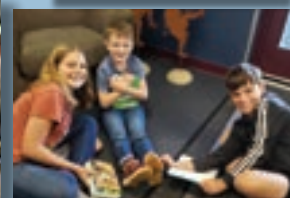
The next steps for our current accreditation cycle include summarizing the data detailed by the staff in the self study and using that to look for emerging patterns which will lead to our next school improvement goals. A team of Christian educators will conduct the site visit in April 2024 to verify our ratings and look for areas that are going well that are related to our ratings and for areas for improvement. As part of their visit, they will be accrediting our new 9th grade class as well and, with the submission of annual updates, will be accrediting each high school grade as they are added. By the fall of 2026, our hope is that AACCS will be officially accredited as a PK-Grade 12 school.

Together, this information will be used to create our final school improvement goals for the next five years. The structure and accountability through Christian Schools International has been key in sharpening our practices and enhancing our desire for continuous improvement. Therefore, a better definition of accreditation as experienced in our partnership with CSI would be "a process by which all faculty and staff work together to measure the mission of their school and create a plan for further growth while being encouraged and called on to continual growth and advancement".



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LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

Chapel Theme: The Great I Am

By Becky Johnson, Spiritual Life Coordinator



The issue of identity is a central theme in our culture. How do I know who I am? Do I find my identity by looking inside myself? Do I find my identity by listening to what others say about me? Do I find my identity in what is posted on social

media or what my grades are like? Is it in what I do or accomplish? How do we answer the question “Who am I?”

Our chapel theme is *The Great I AM shows me who I am*. Ultimately, the answer to the question “Who am I?” does not come from looking inward or outward but rather looking upward to the God who made us. In the burning bush, God declared His name to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” When God gave Moses his mission to set the people of Israel free, Moses asked the question, “Who am I?” God did not answer Moses by giving him a list of his qualifications. Rather, God said that He would be with Moses. What -- mattered was not who Moses was, but who God is.

God continued to reveal who He was through His son Jesus. Jesus makes seven amazing I AM statements in the Gospel of John. These statements clearly reveal who He is and who we are. Jesus said,

I am the Good Shepherd

I am the Door

I am the Bread of Life

I am the Light of the World

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

I am the Resurrection and the Life

I am the True Vine



The new chapel banner designed and painted by the 7/8th grade chapel banner elective class under the direction of Jeanne Palmbos.

If Jesus is the Good Shepherd, it means that we are sheep who easily get lost and need guidance. If Jesus is the Bread of Life, it means that He knows that we are hungry and

often fill our hunger with the wrong things. If Jesus is the light of the world, it means that He knows we are filled with the darkness of sin. If Jesus is the True Vine, it means that He knows we cannot bear fruit on our own.

God’s grace is so evident in each of these I AM statements. He knows how lost, broken, and hungry we are. He offers to be with us, rescue us, and show us who we truly are: His beloved children.

As we reflect on these seven I AM statements, our prayer is that AACs students will find their identity in Jesus and will live in the freedom that comes from knowing they are His.

WELCOME TO THE AACs FAMILY!

Welcome Our New Teachers & Staff



Dan Adsit
SIXTH GRADE
BIBLE



Evelyn Hammond
ELEMENTARY
ACADEMIC SUPPORT



Nathalia Arico
FINANCE
MANAGER



Rebecca Hawley
ENGLISH, STUDENT
SUPPORT, AND SAT/
ACT PREP



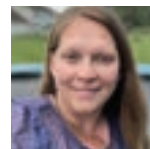
April Bertin
PRESCHOOL—
SECOND GRADE
PHYSICAL
EDUCATION



Brett Kilgore
THEOLOGY AND
BIOLOGY



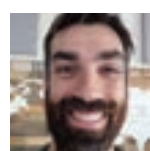
John Boshoven
COLLEGE
COUNSELING



Rachel Palnau
HOUSEKEEPING



Georgina Camacho
SPANISH



Dane Peterson
HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC



Carolyn Corey
WORLD HISTORY
AND THEOLOGY



Michael L.
SCHOOL SAFETY
OFFICER



Kerry DeKraker
IT SUPPORT



Jennifer Reddeman
MATHEMATICS
AND BIBLE

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ALUMNI PROFILE: LOGAN GOSSIAUX

Year of graduation from AACCS: 2019 • **Grades you attended AACCS:** Preschool—8th grade • **What high school did you attend?** Chelsea High School • **Post-secondary educational plans?** B.A. in Marketing from Calvin University
Favorite memories or experiences of your time at AACCS: Getting to do the 8th grade trip to Chicago, the 5th grade pilgrim unit, Field Day, Grandparents' Day, and co-creating a product called Coffee-Tea for my middle school passion project.

Special personal accomplishments since graduating AACCS? One of my largest accomplishments since graduating from AACCS has been the formation of my Rock n' Roll band, Wicked Cricket, in which I play lead guitar and sing. Forming just before my senior year of high school, we quickly gained a lot of local recognition, winning the Ann Arbor Teen Battle of the Bands and getting several articles published about us in newspapers. Since then, we have continued to perform all around the Washtenaw County area, playing a combination of original compositions and covers. This accomplishment was particularly special as it made me realize the love I hold for music, which has given me direction for a future career: hopefully doing marketing for the music industry.

How did your experiences at AACCS impact you? Through the numerous experiences I had over my 10 years spent at AACCS, I was most impacted by the academic success I was set up for and the lasting friendships I was given. Firstly, as I went into high school, I found myself already having mastery over many of the concepts and lessons I encountered in my freshman and sophomore years. Furthermore, I continued to have a strong understanding of several topics I learned in later grades. I credit all this to the great curriculum and incredible teachers I had at AACCS. Secondly, I'm still in contact with all of the roughly 18 kids from my AACCS class I got to grow up with, providing me with great friendships I hope will last a lifetime.



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