



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2022-2023 No. 3

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, Head of School

The Next Chapter is Around the Corner



Thanks to a generous donation, AACS has its first transportation vehicle! This passenger van will transport high school students from our main campus to the high school campus, take teams to athletic events, and help the entire school with other school activities, such as field trips.

As you read this Beacon, the school year has ended, summer has begun, and a new chapter awaits in a couple short months.

First, my hope for everyone reading this is rest. Please allow the more relaxed rhythms of summer to give your entire family a deep, restorative rest to rejuvenate your body and soul. When we are rested, we can better hear and serve God and better hear and care for each other. Even consider not using any technology with you on your vacation. For myself, with a new high school opening, a second daughter going off to college, construction on our main campus, and my parents' planning to move from Boston to be closer to my family, this is one of the busiest summers of my life, but I know rest is critical for me to be an effective and present school leader, husband, father, and son. I am grateful that the school's first

principal, Ann Deckert, will be checking in on me over the summer and holding me accountable to rest.

Second, as we think ahead to the 2023-2024 year, please pray for God's blessing and protection of our school and that He will use AACS for His greater purposes in the broader Ann Arbor area. Here is the link to a beautiful prayer guide that a parent created.



As I shared in the last Beacon, we are in what I would call one of the most historic seasons in the school's 30+ years of existence. This milestone moment is the launch of our high school in August 2023 with our first 9th grade class and the beginning of our journey to become the first Preschool-Grade 12 interdenominational Christian school in Ann Arbor. At the same time, on our main campus, we have begun the construction of two new exciting facilities, the new maker space and an industrial kitchen, with the hopes of their operation by the start of the new school year.

For the coming weeks and months, specific items that could use your praise, prayer, and support include:

- Timely completion of the maker space and kitchen on our main campus. It's exciting seeing all of the work underway. Thanks be to God that these projects are finally underway and off to a great start.
- The hiring of teachers and staff who are passionate about our mission. We still have some key job openings. Thanks be to God for our recent hires.
- The recruitment of 50 ninth graders to join the pioneering first class. This first year will be the hardest year as we seek to make families aware of our new high school. We will open regardless and we are operationally planning for 30, but



Continued on page 2

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

50 is what we are striving for. In fact, we anticipate that there may be students who join in the fall once the new school year begins. Thanks be to God to the nearly 20 students already enrolled and others that are looking and considering.

- Continued high school planning of curriculum, extracurricular programs, student life, spiritual formation, school culture, policies, transportation, and other key areas. Thanks be to God for progress already made, including the amazing donation of a passenger van to AACCS.
- We have already raised \$200,000 of the additional \$300,000 needed to help with the high school start-up, so we have \$100,000 to go between now and December. This was largely made possible by God's stirring of a set of supporters who gave \$150,000 and hopes to see the broader AACCS community join with them to multiply our collective giving to the school. Thanks be to God for our generous supporters.

While we call on the collective community of AACCS to rally together to enable the school to carry out its mission, please also read the article entitled "Prophets of a Future Not Our Own" to bring us back to the Master Builder and His sovereign role in completing all things according to His will. It reminds us that this school and this world belongs to God.

SUPPORT UPDATE: WAYS TO JOIN TOGETHER

By Wayne Sit, Head of School

Many of you recall our students' Multiplication Project. In that project, the school distributed a total of \$500 to over 125 participating students. In the end, through their creative ideas and hard work, the students raised over \$5,000, which was donated to Shepherd's Foundation, an organization in Ukraine that supports refugee children and their families impacted by the war. That's a 10-fold increase in what was given to them!

Multiplying: One set of friends was inspired by what the students did with their seed money and passionately believes in what God is doing through AACCS for the greater Ann Arbor area. As a result, these 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? - to see our money as a gift from God to be used for His work, trust in God to multiply, and have their gift not just matched but exceeded by the school community. As a school, we are immensely grateful for this significant and 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?

Planning: In addition, each academic year, the school seeks to raise around \$100,000 in general, undesignated gifts to support the operation of the school. The school intentionally keeps tuition below the actual cost of educating a student to make the school more financially accessible and relies on general giving to balance its budget. With the school's next fiscal year beginning soon in July, please keep us in mind as you plan your giving for the second half of 2023.



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. One way to pray is to sign up for our prayer calendar through August. Please consider signing up as an individual or with your family and friends.

Join Us in Celebrating Our 8th Grade Graduates!

It is always a blessing to see our eighth grade class grow and graduate onto high school. Join us in celebrating and praying for them as they embark on this next phase in their educational lives.



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Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

This is an excerpt from a sermon given in 1979 by Fr. Ken Untener. As AACS strives to grow and to seek support, the excerpt reminds us well of our role as God's instruments to carry out His good purposes for the world. We are called to labor hard and to use His gifts faithfully, but this excerpt reminds us that we are workers, not the Master Builder. We can put our trust in Him for the future. —Wayne Sit

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

A COMMUNITY GATHERED

AACS Theater Club is Back!

By Nellie Wilcox, Producer and former AACS student

In April, after a few years off due to the pandemic, AACS Theater Club returned to produce *Seussical Kids*.



Most of the 23 cast members, ranging from preschool to seventh grade, had little or no prior theater experience, but they did a fantastic job.

The mission of AACS Theater Club is to provide students an outlet to use and grow their God-given gifts and talents. Students are coached on how to be creative and expressive within their role, but that is not all. Students are also busy working on their spiritual growth. During *Seussical* rehearsals, Director Abbie-Jo Wilcox shared devotions that matched themes from the musical. These included the topic of kindness and how it is not always easy to be kind, fulfilling the role that God created especially for you and being the person God created you to be, and sharing the Good News, even when others belittle you for it. These topics challenged students to think about and discuss how faith relates to everything they do, including a musical.

Students also developed other skills, such as leadership and encouragement. Older students help younger students, providing opportunities to develop leadership skills. Cast members encourage one another through the use of "shout-outs", which are positive comments meant to celebrate and build one another up, to fellow cast or crew members.

AACS Theater Club would like to give a huge thanks to the



AACS community and the support shown as audience members. The show would not have been possible without you!

GIVE

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

5500 Whitmore Lake Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48111



Online at www.annarborchristian.org/give



Mail a check to Ann Arbor Christian School



Scan QR code with your phone to give online



 ANNARBORCHRISTIAN.ORG/GIVE

BOARD UPDATE

The Purpose and Work of AACS

By Nik Spasovski, President, AACS Board

I read a C.S. Lewis quote about Jesus recently: “The pure light walks the earth; the darkness, received into the heart of Deity, is there swallowed up. Where, except in uncreated light, can the darkness be drowned?” There is so much darkness in this world, is there not? I couldn’t help but think about the purpose and work of AACS in building a strong foundation of Jesus in the lives of all our students when I read this quote. Our students (and all of us) will face all sorts of darkness in this world throughout their lives, and the only true answer to that darkness is Jesus Christ. During their time at AACS, these young disciples learn how to think soberly and critically, how to pray, how to read and obey God’s word, how to persevere, and how to build a strong Christian worldview. They also learn how to apply all those things whenever darkness rears its ugly head. What a gift and a blessing to be a part of building that foundation (Matthew 7:24-29) in these formational years of their lives!

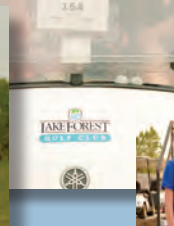
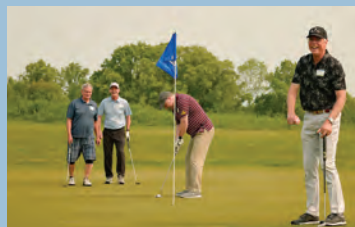
One of the main purposes of the Board of Directors of AACS is to uphold the mission of our school community: *In partnership with Christian families, Ann Arbor Christian School offers Christ-centered, academically excellent education that challenges students to live and act in society as committed followers of Jesus.* We read this mission statement out loud together at the beginning of every board meeting to keep it in view of every discussion and decision we have before us. Over the past few months, the board has been evaluating and collecting input and information about school security and vetting potential security partnerships. We also had our Annual Association meeting in April, and we recently sent out the minutes to Association members for that meeting if you missed it. We have also been performing our annual head of school evaluation, reviewing our school improvement plan, exploring future athletic facility partnerships, welcoming our newest board member, Amy Brink, and saying goodbye to Ryan Peterson as our one departing board members who faithfully served perhaps the longest single term as a board member. Please pray and ask the Lord to give us wisdom and guidance for the future.

AACS GOLF OUTING

Thank You for Joining Us!

By Lisa Hawley & Dawn Geldermans, Golf Outing Coordinators

Our Inaugural **Eagles Take Flight** golf outing was a huge success! We had 96 golfers, great weather, and fantastic fellowship filled with current families, alumni, founding families, grandparents, and friends. Thank you to all the golfers, volunteers, and sponsors for helping us raise over **\$31,400** for AACS Athletics, surpassing our goal of \$25,000. A big thank you to Lake Forest Golf Club for an unforgettable day. **Save the Date for our next outing— May 20, 2024!**



A COMMUNITY GATHERED

Can You Believe It?

By Becky Johnson, Spiritual Life Coordinator

Can you believe that the 6th grade band made so much progress this year? Can you believe that the students created such beautiful and unique art pieces? Can you believe that the students sang with such enthusiasm and joy?

These were just some of the comments after our annual Spring Program called "Can You Believe It?". From rhythm sticks to xylophones, hand bells to percussion instruments, recorders to ukuleles, the students wowed the audience with their ability to play together, keep the beat, and hit the right notes. The 6th grade band and the 7/8th grade bands showed off their growing mastery of various instruments and the 7/8th grade choir sang a moving piece about working together. In addition, each student had several pieces of artwork displayed in the Gathering Space and hallways. It was evident that both our

music teachers, Manuela Mansour and Abbie-Jo Wilcox, as well as our art teacher Arienne Zimmerman, are using their gifts and talents to equip our students and help them develop their own musical and artistic gifts, given to them by their Creator. We can believe it!



#AACSLIFE

Check out photos like these on Instagram & Facebook



BEYOND THE BASICS

Award Winning Artist and Author Visits AACS

By Renée McKeone, Curriculum Director & Student Support Coordinator

As part of our annual reading month celebration in March, Ann Arbor Christian School students were treated to a special visit by author and artist, Richard Schlatter. Richard's visit was made possible through funding provided by AACS alumni family Bill and Lorri Vander Roest. During Richard's visit to the school, he spoke to students in grades 1-4 and shared his book, "The Old Man and the Tree." Students were delighted with this beautiful tale of loyalty and respect and learned how to apply the message to their friends, nature, and themselves. In addition to the charming story, students were fascinated with the drafts Richard shared as he told how he wrote the book and created the illustrations. Students were amazed with the transformation from his first penciled thumbnail sketches to the final beautifully colored pictures. The second graders, who were creating their own mystery stories at the time of the visit, were able to relate to the steps in the writing process and share their own process back with Mr. Schlatter.

At the end of the book presentation, Richard led the groups through the "Old Man's Pledge". This helped students make the connection between the story and their own friendships. They repeated with Richard, "I will not cut down my friends." Finally, students were presented with their own copy of the book, personally signed by Richard Schlatter. This program was a wonderful way to connect with our school's biblical worldview through Richard's example of using and sharing his gifts to make the world a better place, as well as discussing the ideas of stewardship and caring for nature and protecting and caring for our friendships. As students read and re-read their books, these lessons and experiences will be remembered and reinforced in their lives and hearts.

The next day, Richard returned to AACS and spoke with the fifth through eighth grade students about another one of his projects, his ArtPrize piece "A. Lincoln", a large two-dimensional work of art made entirely of pennies. Based in Grand Rapids, ArtPrize is one of the largest art competitions and festivals in the world open to the general public to participate in. Richard's "A. Lincoln" won the 2017 2D entry in ArtPrize, as well as winning the overall public vote grand prize.

Not only were the students amazed by the description of how Richard created the 12-foot-tall portrait of the 16th president from more than 24,000 pennies, but he also shared his admiration and respect for President Lincoln. "Especially today we need the message of Lincoln. He was one of the greatest presidents, if not the

greatest president," stated Richard who is passionate about sharing his knowledge of Lincoln with youngsters. Listening to Richard was an inspiration to the students. His gentle and



humble manner spoke volumes to the students about using the gifts you have been given, as well as working with perseverance and completing challenging tasks.

In addition to these projects, Richard owns a graphic design firm where he works as an independent graphic design consultant. He also gives his educational presentation to local schools in the Battle Creek area where he lives. Richard greatly enjoyed his visit to Ann Arbor Christian School and noted how warm and welcoming the students and staff were, as well as the positive atmosphere and how attentive the students were. AACS was blessed to have this opportunity to have Richard visit our school and the generosity of Bill and Lorri Vander Roest in sponsoring this event.

RISING 9TH GRADER: KARIS JANSSEN

My name is Karis Janssen, and I will be attending Ann Arbor Christian High School. When I first joined Ann Arbor Christian School this past February, I saw something different from anything I had seen before. It was a school filled with laughter, friends, love, and, most importantly, the mindset to follow Jesus Christ. Although my time at AACS has been short, it left me excited to be a part of the new high school.



God led my family in the decision to attend the new high school, and I feel honored and excited to be a part of the first class. My fellow classmates and I get to be a part of something big - the first interdenominational Christian high school in Ann Arbor! We will be setting the course and tone of the school for all those who come after us. This is a big responsibility, but it will also be an exciting adventure.

I am also looking forward to continuing with this amazing community. From what I heard, high school can be a difficult time with many ups and downs. I feel comforted to know that I will be going through high school surrounded by a big support group of my teachers/staff, classmates, and their families. The AACS community is something special that I know will continue to the new high school. While I pursue academic excellence and sports at the high school, I am confident that my faith and love for God will only grow stronger because it did in the few months I attended AACS 8th grade. Seeing teachers who love God is something new to me and encourages me in my walk with God. Also, having the opportunity to pray with my classmates regularly in classes will strengthen us as a community. I cannot wait to start my high school journey with Ann Arbor Christian High School!

LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

Farewells from Departing Staff

Jan Musch, Finance Manager:

"It is with mixed emotions that I contemplate retiring this summer after 29 years as a staff member at AACS. My husband Dave and I have been



members of the Christian School Association of Ann Arbor since it was formed in 1986 to pursue opening a non-denominational Christian School in Ann Arbor. We recall long board meetings, fundraising projects, the search for property, planning the curriculum, etc. By God's grace, the school opened in the Fall of 1991. In 1994, when our young-

est son was in 1st grade, I was asked to volunteer part time in the school office to support our first teacher, Vic Luchies. Soon after, this became a paying job. When Ann Deckert was hired as the first full time principal, the two of us shared a very small office in one of the modular classrooms of our original facility.

When the school moved to our current facility in 2003 and Cheri Lubbers was hired as office manager, my responsibilities shifted to focus on financial and human resources concerns, which of course have grown along with the school. It's amazing to think that our current staff of 35+ is larger than the student body was when I started! While not part of my job, it has also been a joy to assist with the musical activities of the school over the years by playing the piano for special events, such as opening and closing chapels, Grandparents' Day, Christmas and Spring Programs, the 4th grade (now 3rd grade) Michigan play, and 8th grade graduation.

Dave and I continue to be amazed at the ways God has blessed AACS and brought it from a dream to the flourishing, growing school that it is today. I have been blessed to work with a school community of staff and families who love Jesus and care for one another. I will truly miss AACS, but this special place will always remain in our hearts and prayers. As Dave and I and the school transition to new chapters, it is our prayer that God's grace will be showered upon us all."

Kirstin Boettcher, Language Arts & Social Studies Teacher:

"When I walked into Ann Arbor Christian School for my interview in July 2015, I knew it was a place I wanted to be. There was an overwhelming feeling that this was someplace special, and, when Wayne called to offer me the job, my answer was an immediate "Yes!" I started

work on my new classroom immediately and started getting to know my colleagues. After I settled into the school year, and then the next school year, and the next, it felt like home, and the people I met became my family. My faith grew. The



people I taught alongside cared about me, and prayed with me, encouraged me. I grew professionally and learned more about being a teacher at AACS than all my previous 20 years in education. I could not imagine teaching

anywhere else. In fact, I was convinced that my teaching career would end if I could not teach at AACS.

It is funny how God works in our lives and how the impossible thing we can never imagine doing is something we suddenly find ourselves having to do. In September of 2022, my beautiful grandson, Ricky Zayden Gomez, was born, and my life changed. Zayden and his parents live in Virginia, a short eight-hour drive away. Those eight hours got longer and longer every time I had to say goodbye, and the call to be with family got louder and louder. After much prayer and many, many tears, I knew it was time to say goodbye to AACS and, as previously mentioned, my career as a teacher. However, no doors for any other profession opened, only teaching. Maybe, just maybe my career as a teacher wasn't over. Maybe God wanted me to take what I had learned here to someplace else. As soon as I wrapped my head around those ideas and that the plans God had for me were "plans to prosper [me] and not to harm [me], plans to give [me] hope and a future," everything fell into place with a new teaching job. I have packed up my classroom with the help of my amazing colleagues, one of whom was on the committee that interviewed me and am ready for this next chapter in my life. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you, teach your children, and be a part of this wonderful community. It has been an honor and a privilege to teach at Ann Arbor Christian School, and I will miss it more than words can say. But I also know that God has wonderful things in store for all of us!"

Arienne Zimmerman, K-8 Art & Extended School Coordinator:

"Over the past 13 years, Ann Arbor Christian School has been a big part of my life. When I first began teaching here in 2010, I had just graduated from the University of Toledo with my degree in art education only a few months earlier. From the very beginning, my family at AACS believed in me and supported my growth as a new teacher. After a few years, I began



teaching art at several other schools part-time while continuing to teach at AACS. It was also around this time that

I was encouraged by the school to try something I had been interested in for years: offering summer art classes and camps for our students. The summer program was a big success and has been such a fun opportunity that I will always be thankful for.

In 2016, I began my graduate studies at Eastern Michigan University and graduated with my MFA just as all the chaos of COVID began in 2020. At a time when so many people in our country were concerned about job security and safety, I was being reassured and prayed for by Wayne and the rest of my AACS family. When we returned to in-person learning the following fall, the school was able to offer me a full-time position by expanding my role to include student support and directing the extended school program (ESP), in addition to teaching art. I have enjoyed having the opportunity to serve and work with my students and coworkers in such a variety of ways.

Through all the challenges and changes that have happened in my life over the past 13 years, my family at AACS has been there for me through it all. I am grateful for the countless ways that the school has supported me and helped me to grow. The love that Ann Arbor Christian School has shown towards me has been a beautiful reflection of God's love for us all."

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RISING 9TH GRADER: JOEY SPASOVSKI

As a student at Ann Arbor Christian School for eleven years, I am excited that I get to attend the new high school, and I can't wait to experience it.

This is one great reason I'm excited to be going to high school here: community. While at AACCS, I have been able to be a part of a great community of teachers, classmates, and parents. This community helps me to feel "at home" while at school as it also supports me in harder times, and I'm really excited I get to maintain this community through high school.

As someone who really loves AACCS, I'm also happy that I can contribute to it by being in the first high school class. Since I have been able to go to AACCS for so long and have enjoyed my time there thoroughly, I am glad I have this opportunity to give back to the community that has given so much to me. Helping my school and my teachers and giving to them in this way is part of how I say thank you. It is also exciting to be part of something new that hasn't been done before. As the first class, we will be remembered as some of the people whom God called to start the AACCS high school. We will in a way be helping those who come after and are blazing a path for them. Finally, I am glad to be part of starting the first PK-12 Christian school in Ann Arbor. In doing this, I believe I contribute to God's kingdom. This is what I find most exciting of all.

So, in conclusion, I'm happy to contribute to AACCS as the first class to give thanks, to be part of something important, and to carry out my faith.



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