



The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2023-2024 No. 3

HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, Head of School

Covering Planning with Prayer



The CSI site team that endorsed our re-accreditation. Please scan the QR code to hear their support. Please also read the Accreditation article.



In the last issue of the Beacon, I wrote about Ann Arbor Christian School's process of writing a new five-year strategic plan over this summer. The plan focuses on the five strategic areas that the school's leadership has prioritized: addressing facilities needs, retaining and recruiting high-quality teachers, strengthening fundraising efforts, growing our ability to increase student support needs, and building more intentional relationships with like-minded and like-valued partners in the community. In addition to the strategic plan, our recent re-accreditation with Christian Schools International generated its own school improvement plan that will advise some of the school's direction in the next five years. In both cases, the plans are meant to advance our mission and core values into the future.

We will use our God-given gifts and resources to develop these plans to the best of our ability, but in the end, it is not our plans but the Lord's will that we seek for Ann Arbor Christian School. It

is not by our own might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord that we will grow and thrive. We need to trust in God to define what is good for us rather than our own human metrics and ideals. As new plans begin to take shape for the school, we can trust

that the Lord is already working ahead of us and preparing Ann Arbor Christian School for the hope and guidance He has for us.

“Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.”

— Proverbs 19:21 (NIV)

To keep us rooted in God with our planning, I welcome and urge our broader school community to enter into a season of intentional prayer for Ann Arbor Christian School. If you are receiving this Beacon, we invite you to join this prayer effort and extend the invitation to others. Prayer must be a hallmark of our school and the foundation of our decisions. Through prayer, we ask for God's provisions for our needs and protection from forces that seek to harm. Prayer also fosters an intimate two-way conversation with God as we share with Him and listen for His voice. Prayer invites God into the happenings at AACS - from the small to the large.

To help, please scan this QR code to see a beautiful prayer guide made by an AACS parent and board member. We hope you will print it out to use now through the rest of 2024.



BEYOND THE BASICS

Celebrating a Successful Re-accreditation

By Wayne Sit, Head of School

Thanks be to God! I am delighted to share that after a three-day visit to our two campuses in April, the Christian Schools International (CSI) accreditation site team unanimously and enthusiastically voted to recommend that the entirety of Ann Arbor Christian School, including our new grade 9, be accredited with CSI. As standard procedure, their report and recommendation will be sent to the CSI Accreditation Commission this summer for formal approval. This marks our fourth successful accreditation cycle with CSI, and we remain grateful for the partnership with them as well as the other CSI schools throughout the state of Michigan.



While site team members do not need to be affiliated with CSI schools, most generally are. Members of our seven-person site team came from the following CSI schools: Holland Christian Schools (PK-12), Lansing Christian School (PK-12), The Potter's House School (PK-12), and Zeeland Christian School (PK-8). The 7th member of the team was Bob Ause, a long-term AACS substitute teacher for 8th grade science last year and the recently retired science department chair from Greenhills School (6-12) located in Ann Arbor. The site team chair came to us directly from CSI as our regional accreditation coordinator for this and future accreditation cycles. This was an amazing site team who was passionate about Christian education, intelligent, insightful and brought a broad skill set and expertise. In addition, they were a fun loving group that added a lot of joy to our staff.

This particular accreditation cycle was different from previous cycles because of the inclusion of our new high school. The high school was highlighted several times by the team for the great work already done and work that is in progress, the quality of the start-up space at Grace Ann Arbor North Church, the spirit at the upper campus, the commitment of the families who joined, and the wonderful group of teachers who make up our pioneering staff. Over the next few years, AACS will submit updated high school curriculum materials yearly to CSI as part of our annual reporting. However, the high school already enjoys the same accreditation status as the rest of AACS. This means our first seniors applying to college in the fall of 2026 will be doing so from an accredited high school.

Another exciting opportunity for AACS, in addition to our CSI accreditation, is the submission for dual accreditation with Cognia (formerly AdvancedEd), a leading accreditation organization for private schools across the country. This opportunity is due to a reciprocity arrangement they have with CSI. The additional accreditation will boost the credibility status of AACS as we prepare to graduate high schoolers in 2027.



Thank you for your prayers and support during our accreditation cycle. I would like to give a special thanks to Renee McKeone for chairing the process on the school's end. Let's all give thanks together to our God for reaching another major milestone for AACS.

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“ The heavens declare the glory of
God, the skies proclaim the work
of His hands.

— Psalm 19:1 (NIV)

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On April 8th, students at Ann Arbor Christian School had a once in a lifetime opportunity to experience this glory in an amazing way. The path of the 2024 total eclipse fell just outside of our state, with only one small section of southeastern Michigan falling in the path of totality. At 99% of totality, we knew students would benefit from experiencing this incredible phenomenon. However, middle school science teacher Mary Wiland recognized that 99% totality was also not 100% totality. She could not pass up the opportunity to take her seventh grade earth science students to Toledo, Ohio, which was in the path of 100% totality for this once in a lifetime experience.

With six adventurous parent chaperones, a zealous science teacher, the building principal, and 24 excited seventh graders, the group left Michigan around 9:00 AM to head toward Ohio. No one knew exactly what to expect in the way of traffic or if the selected viewing area would still have parking when we arrived, but we headed south with anticipation regardless. Along the way, the group stopped at Maumee Bay State Park and Magee Marsh along Lake Erie.

Around 2:00 PM, the group first started looking at the sun through their eclipse glasses. Students observed the changes in their view of the sun as the moon's shadow began covering the sun from the first contact of the partial eclipse. We heard students calling out, "Wow! That is so cool!" and "Look at that! It looks like just a bite is taken out of the sun!" Making these observations first hand made earth science truly come to life!



In the final minutes before totality, the students were gathered to sit and watch. An awe fell over the group as we watched the sky change and as the horizon turned a sunset shade of pink and orange, and we felt the temperature begin to fall as the total eclipse began. Someone started a count-down, and our voices joined theirs in counting down the seconds to totality. Everyone spontaneously cheered. As the moon had now completely covered the sun, we were able to remove our eclipse glasses. The few minutes seemed to stretch out

BEYOND THE BASICS

A Once in Lifetime Experience

*By Curriculum Director Renee McKeone and
Science Teacher Mary Wiland*

as we took in the experience, gazing at the beautiful sights of the glow of the corona, Bailey's Beads, a circle of bright lights around the moon and listening to the sounds in the marsh. While many birds and animals quiet down during a total eclipse, we had a very different experience in the marsh. The nighttime insects and frogs began to sing quite loudly, filling the air with their voices. Everyone, young and old, soaked in the moment, gazing at the amazing beauty and taking in the awesome precision of our God who orchestrated these celestial movements. All too soon, the "diamond ring" appeared, a gorgeous bright light signaling that the total eclipse was ending as the moon's shadow pulled away. We put our glasses back on, and suddenly it was light again. Totality was over, and the moon's shadow moved on through the phase of third contact. It was bright outside, the frogs and insects stopped singing, and the eclipse was over. Many students exclaimed that it was an unforgettable experience. One student even shared that it was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

Meanwhile, back in Ann Arbor, at 2:45 PM, parents were invited to pick up their children and head to the field with solar glasses to observe the partial eclipse. While not totality, it was still an amazing opportunity for students. The view in Ann Arbor with 99% of the sun covered was quite a sight to behold!

Experiences such as these are what sets Ann Arbor Christian School apart: teachers who go above and beyond to plan events that inspire "engaged learners" with first-hand experiences in science, but also develop "rooted Christ followers" as we look to the author of creation.

There will not be another total solar eclipse near Michigan until 2099, which makes this truly once in a lifetime experience for many members of our community!



BOARD UPDATE

Our Hope in God

By Nik Spasovski, Board President

The verse 2 Peter 3:8 says, “Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day.” This has always fascinated me. It’s incredibly hard to grasp the concept of a thousand years as a human being, isn’t it? A single day is easy to comprehend, but a thousand years? Yet, for our God, such a vast span of time is a trivial matter. This makes me wonder not only what God has planned for AACS next year, but what does He have in store for the next 5 years, 10 years, 100 years, or, dare we imagine, the next 1000 years?

I am confident that He has great plans for our school and community. The next verse, 2 Peter 3:9, talks about how God is not slow in keeping His promises, but is patient, desiring that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The kind of students we hope AACS nurtures are those who are quick to cling to God’s promises, who come to a genuine saving faith early in life, and who share God’s love with the world, helping more people come to repentance.

As my time serving on the AACS board and as board president comes to a close this month, I find myself reflecting on these past years. It has been an honor to serve in this capacity, and it has been a remarkable four years. We navigated the challenges of a global pandemic, celebrated our 30th anniversary at a wonderful gala, gathered input and conducted research to enhance our school’s security, experienced record enrollment for three consecutive years, launched our long-dreamed high school, successfully achieved reaccreditation, and continue to look ahead to what God has in store for us next. We invite you to join us in believing in God for the great things He has planned for AACS in the years to come.

A COMMUNITY GATHERED

Honoring God with Art and Music

By Becca Arnold, Art Teacher and Manuel Mansour, Music Teacher

The Ann Arbor Christian School’s annual end of the year Spring Fine Arts Program is a wonderful celebration of the students’ hard work throughout the year in both art class and music class from kindergarten to 8th grade. The evening opened with the art show showcasing two pieces of art from each student in the Gathering Space and hallways. Families enjoyed walking around viewing the masterpieces, leaving complimentary notes for the artists and completing an art investigation scavenger hunt. The show included a diverse collection of drawings, paintings, fiber art, and ceramics. Students could be seen smiling proudly as they stood next to their artwork and posed for photos. The school was filled with joy and pride as families celebrated the creative achievements of their children. The event highlighted the importance of nurturing artistic talent from a young age and reinforced the community’s commitment to supporting the arts.

Psalm 100:1 says, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence with singing.” The concert portion of the program was a joyful noise indeed! The program began with an energetic piece, Joyful Noise, including kazoos and drums performed by the entire student body. This was followed by a series of individual class vocal and instrumental performances showcasing the students’ skills in various instruments, such as percussion, xylophones, recorders and ukuleles. Each performance was a testament to the hard work and dedication of the students. As the program drew to an end, the students came together once more to sing The Blessing, which is a beautiful reminder that God is always with us and for us and that we can declare His truth over our lives, families, and others. The students dedicated this special worship song to honor Mrs. Becky Johnson for her 30 years of service to AACS. It was a delightful evening of making joyful noise unto the Lord!



GIVING UPDATE

Ways to Support AACS Halfway Through 2024

By Wayne Sit, Head of School



Amazingly, we're already more than halfway through 2024. With the school year behind us, we have now entered summer break. As we enjoy this time, we continue to trust in God's constant presence and guidance between academic years.

Planning out your year-end giving for 2024:

As you consider your year-end giving for the remainder of 2024, please keep Ann Arbor Christian School in mind. Your contributions can be a general gift, a designated gift (such as supporting the growth of our high school as it prepares for its second year or providing tuition assistance), or a gift of stock. Whatever form your generosity takes, we are deeply grateful for your prayerful consideration in the coming months.

Prayer over the summer and into the next school year:

Lastly and most importantly, your prayers are one of the most impactful ways to support AACS. These prayers are priceless and their impact profound. To assist you, please scan the QR code to access a beautiful prayer guide created by AACS parent and board member, Amy Brink. We hope you will print it out and use it throughout the rest of 2024.



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.



Supporting AACS Athletics

By Lisa Hawley & Dawn Geldermans, Golf Outing Coordinators

Our 2nd annual Eagles Take Flight golf outing was a huge success! We had 100 golfers, beautiful weather, and fantastic fellowship filled with current families, alumni, founding families, grandparents, and friends.

Congratulations to Team CanonballIIIIIIII (Josh Birk, Sam Apple, Jeff Bird, and John Cannon) for winning this year's golf outing! You all crushed the competition with -16 under for the day!

Thank you to all the golfers, volunteers, and sponsors for helping us raise over **\$38,000** for AACS athletics! Together, we earned enough money for an outdoor scoreboard on our soccer field, a kitchen grade ice maker, and new uniforms for our student athletes. Lastly, we want to give a big thank you to Lake Forest Golf Club for an unforgettable day.

Please save **May 19, 2025** for next year's Eagle Take Flight golf outing!



LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

Endings and Beginnings

By Becky Johnson, Spiritual Life Coordinator

As I face retiring from Ann Arbor Christian School after 30 years, I have a mixture of emotions: gratitude, grief, joy, sadness, worry, and anticipation. The sadness and grief are evidence of how important this place has been in my life, and the loss I will experience as I leave a job that was so much more than a job. It was a calling, a vocation, and a ministry. I will miss my colleagues, the students, the families, and the sense of mission and purpose.

Looking back over the past 30 years, I am also filled with gratitude. Gratitude for a school that encouraged me to use my gifts and challenged me to grow. Gratitude for God's sustaining grace during those early years when I was creating integrated curriculum and doing experiments late at night before trying them out with the students! Gratitude for the support my own parents provided during my career. Gratitude for the kindness of families who blessed me with meals, gifts, and words of encouragement!



What aspects of AACS caused me to stay for 30 years? I love that AACS is an interdenominational school! This school would not have existed 100 years ago. It is no small miracle that people from over 40 different churches and many different denominations (Christian Reformed to Lutheran to Catholic to non-denominational) are able to work together in love and unity to fulfill the mission of Ann Arbor Christian School. My faith has been enriched by working closely with my brothers and sisters from other churches.

The integrated, hands-on curriculum that appeals to a variety of learners has been another reason I have loved working at AACS. Teachers have sought to make connections between subject areas through the lens of a biblical worldview. Helping students connect all of life to God is vital. Bible class is not simply an isolated subject, but encourages faith to be woven into all aspects of curriculum and day-to-day life at AACS.

Finally, I have deeply appreciated the community aspect of life at AACS. From teachers eating and praying together, to parents volunteering in so many areas of the school, to prayer gatherings when there is a need, the strong sense of a loving community is palpable when people walk into the building. I am so grateful for the deep friendships I have made over my years at AACS.

Years ago, I read a book which described the decline of many Christian schools and institutions over the course of our country's history. The author suggested that the change happened when the focus shifted from being Christ-centered to being academically excellent and successful. These two things should not be mutually exclusive. I am grateful for our school leadership's commitment to keep Christ at the center of all that we do. Dedicating resources for the Spiritual Life Coordinator position was one way that the school demonstrated that commitment. It has been such a privilege to not only teach in the classroom for 23 years but to also serve as the Spiritual Life Coordinator for 13 years.

In my 30 years on staff at AACS I have seen the school grow from four classrooms to a preschool-grade 10 school. I have seen it grow from modular classrooms to our current main campus building and to launching a high school. I have witnessed the development of sports programs and other extracurricular activities. Throughout my 30 years the mission has remained the same: to offer a Christ-centered, academically excellent education that challenges students to live and act in society as committed followers of Jesus Christ.

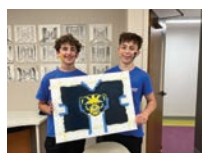
As I anticipate the end of my formal time at AACS, my prayer is that each member of the school community will continue to guard and protect what the Lord has given. As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:13-14, "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us." This means faithfully praying for the school and for our school community and working through conflicts in a way that honors the Lord. This means staying faithful to God's Word and relying on the Holy Spirit as we continue to strategize for the school of the future.

Reflecting on endings and beginnings, I have been comforted by the final "I AM" statement made by Jesus in the book of Revelation. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. All of our own beginnings and endings are encompassed by Jesus, The Beginning and The End. He has already gone before us. Therefore, we don't need to fear our own endings and beginnings, but we can entrust ourselves to the one who holds all endings and beginnings in His Hand.

EVENTS & NEWS

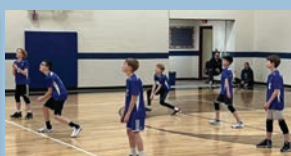
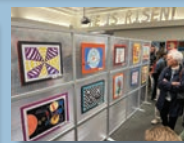
Student Artwork at Popular Coffee Shop

We are excited to announce that, since May, our AACS high schoolers' artwork has been on display at the Common Cup, a popular non-profit coffeehouse run by University Lutheran Chapel in downtown Ann Arbor. This is a unique opportunity for our students to showcase their work to the Ann Arbor community. So, grab a coffee date and drop by to view the freshmen class' gallery of art! You can view and purchase their artwork until the end of August!



#AACSLIFE

Check out photos like these on Instagram & Facebook



News for
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of Ann Arbor
Christian School



The

BEACON

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ALUMNI PROFILE: MIA YANKONIS

Year of graduation from AACCS: 2020 • **Grades you attended AACCS:** 2nd-8th grade

What high school did you attend? Father Gabriel Richard and Skyline High School

Post-secondary educational plans? Eastern Michigan University to study elementary education.

Favorite memories or experiences of your time at AACCS: When I first moved here from Germany, everyone was so welcoming. I still remember the Skype calls we had with AACCS while we were in Germany. Everyone was so nice. I loved Mrs. Boettcher's story times during middle school. Because my class at AACCS was small, we were really close and it felt like family. My closest friends are the students I met back in second grade.

Special personal accomplishments since graduating AACCS? I love to babysit and volunteer at my church's children's ministry. I also took education classes at Skyline and joined a club related to teaching.

How did your experiences at AACCS impact you? When we first moved here, I did not speak English, but Mrs. Mayoros went above and beyond to help me adapt and feel welcome. Throughout my entire time at AACCS, all the teachers left an impact on me and taught me lessons. Whether a class Bible verse or a life experience they shared with us, AACCS influenced my life. It made me realize that Mrs. Mayoros and AACCS are the reasons why I want to be a teacher.



To give: annarborchristian.org/give



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