



# The BEACON

News for family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2024-2025 No. 2

## HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, Head of School

### Faithfully Present, Courageously Good



- How does your school engage with your community and the culture around us?
- How do we develop skills and sensibilities in our students to be culture shapers and ambassadors of Christ?
- How do we cultivate wise use of technology that does not take away from the full life that God wants for us, that promotes creativity over mindless consumption, that balances convenience with the importance of critical problem-solving skills and strong work ethics, and that promotes joy and real relationships over a sense of value based on online activities?
- How can administrators better manage the stresses of leadership and hear God's voice amidst the increasing demands impacting schools?
- How do we lead in a divided world and how can we build bridges?

- How do we build a culture of belonging within our schools?
- Do students have a biblical and ethical framework on how to use artificial intelligence for good and with integrity?
- What do flourishing schools look like?
- How do we prevent our schools from becoming fearful about the complexity of the world and inwardly focused but lead them to courageously live out goodness in our community and culture through the Great Commission and the Great Commandment?
- How does your school support the movement of Christian education in other parts of the world, especially in less-resourced nations?

As I write this article, I am in Orlando for a special gathering of Christian school leaders called Converge (converge. education/about) with our principals, Renee McKeone and Brett Kilgore, and where questions like these are being posed to us. We, along with 750 other Christian school leaders from 25 countries, are here to be re-equipped. Just as many of us need times of refreshment, restoration, and strengthening in our professional lives (e.g., work conferences or training) or in our personal lives (e.g., marriage retreats or men's weekend), we came to meet God and have Him renew and inspire us in our leadership of Ann Arbor Christian. What an encouragement to be in the company of like-valued leaders who share in many common dreams, hopes, and challenges! As noted many times at the convention, we are stronger together.

As shared in the title, the convention's theme challenges us to be faithfully present and courageously good in our leadership and in the culture we build at our schools. We already do this at AACCS in many different ways. Classes have various community service activities, including our 2024 Multiplication Project (see article). In our recent science fair, we embraced our conviction that faithful Christians can excel in scientific thinking and achievements and still believe in a supernatural God.

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# HEADS UP

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In our high school, our Christian sexuality curriculum delves deeply into many critical areas, such as the authority of God and Scripture, marriage and sex, dating and friendship, pornography, shame, and LGBTQ+ topics. We discuss these topics through the lens of God's design for sexual integrity, wholeness, and well-being.

Throughout the convention sessions, they are spurring us on to think hard about how to find new and deeper ways to equip AACS students to love and transform our community and culture by engaging with it while exhibiting God's goodness. It is a good challenge that calls us out of our comfort zones. Please pray for Ann Arbor Christian so that we can continue to grow in being faithfully present and courageously good in an exciting season in the life of our school.



# BEYOND THE BASICS

## Squid Seekers Find Success in FIRST LEGO League Competition

By Meghan Kilgore, AACS Parent



Our 4th grade robotics team, the Squid Seekers, recently achieved an impressive victory at the FIRST LEGO League regional competition held in December. The competition, designed for 4th-5th graders, challenges teams to design and build robots using LEGO bricks and programming skills while also tackling real-world problems.

The team chose their name to fit this year's

theme of Ocean Exploration, bringing a fun, creative touch to their project.

The team, made up of 9 enthusiastic boys and girls, began their journey in September. They started by building missions for their robot to complete, such as retrieving a squid-shaped LEGO or lifting a coral nursery. Using a block-based programming language, the students programmed the robot to complete these tasks, testing and refining their designs throughout the fall.

In addition to the robot game, the team worked on an innovation project. They researched a pressing problem related to ocean exploration—coral bleaching—and designed a smart buoy to protect coral reefs. The students tested their design by consulting with experts and continuously improving it based on feedback.

At the regional competition, the team earned points in four key areas: the robot missions game, innovation project presentation, robot design presentation, and exhibition of FIRST LEGO League's core values, including teamwork, innovation, and cooperation. The team's strong communication skills and excellent teamwork earned them particularly high marks, helping them secure first place out of 33 teams.

Their success led them on to the State Championship in January, where they competed with enthusiasm and had a blast.

The team was sponsored by Bosch and guided by four fourth-grade parents: Alan Charlton, Shawn Hawley, Meghan Kilgore and Antoinette Naab. This group of newcomers to FIRST LEGO League demonstrated the power of creativity, collaboration, and hard work!

Parents and supporters interested in helping coach next year's team can reach out to the school.



## AACS Contacts 2024-2025

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# LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

## EYE LOVE AFRICA: Our Multiplication Project

By Renee McKeone, Main Campus Principal

Recently, Ann Arbor Christian School students were given the opportunity to participate in one of our larger scale service projects - the biennial Multiplication Project. This project gives students an opportunity to offer their own God-given gifts and abilities to the Lord, allowing Him to multiply that offering to serve others. This project is modeled on the biblical account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish and challenges students to think about their gifts and use those to create a project or perform a service that they can offer to the Lord. The school, in turn, invests in the students by providing seed money which could be used to fund their project.

This year's project recipient was *Eye Love Africa*, a medical missionary organization whose mission is to eradicate needless blindness by providing life-changing eye care operations, training, and equipping local African doctors to provide eye care. Dr. John Cropsey, medical missionary and Director of Clinical Training and Global Ophthalmology for the organization, is a longtime friend of AACS. His children have attended our school during their sabbatical years in Michigan. The committee knew we had chosen the right charity when we realized that the launch date for the project lined up with the date that the chapel message was already scheduled with the theme, "The Way Maker Heals the Blind". What amazing confirmation!

Dr. Cropsey joined our middle school chapel via Zoom. This provided real context for the project and provided understanding of the importance of the life changing work of *Eye Love Africa*. Students learned that \$200 can provide one cataract surgery in Africa! We used that marker to frame our project with the question, "How many surgeries can we provide?" Students who were able to participate were commissioned for their project on Grandparents Day during a special ceremony during the chapel service. Eighty-five students were commissioned, and \$310 of seed money was invested in their work.

The craft fair was held in December to sell items made by students. We had a wonderful assortment of baked goods and food products as well as a wide range of handcrafted items, including soaps, Christmas decorations, hand-made toys, jew-



elry and 3D printed items! The 2024 Multiplication Project was a tremendous success. Several independent service projects were also conducted both in and out of school. One student raised over \$200 collecting pop bottles and cans, while others held a hot chocolate and cookie stand at school. Students used their talents by babysitting, dog walking, and organizing bake sales in their neighborhood. Altogether, AACS students raised \$6,226.00 after repaying our seed money providing over thirty-one eye operations. Our funds are being used by *Eye Love Africa* in Rwanda to specifically provide eye surgery for children.

One family who was very active in raising funds was the Arnold Family. "When we learned that *Eye Love Africa* was the beneficiary of this year's Multiplication Project and that the funds would directly benefit children, our family went right to work. This cause hit close to home for us because our son, Josiah was born with a congenital cataract. We were blessed that he received the best care right away through Kellogg Eye Center. He would not be able to see out of that eye without the immediate, expert intervention. Our contribution to this year's Multiplication Project was a small way our family could say thank you, and we were thrilled to play a small part in helping children, just like Josiah, receive the care that they will need in order to see."



Projects such as this one are examples of the way AACS achieves our school-wide learner goals of developing "Faithful Stewards" who use resources to build God's Kingdom and "Willing Servants" who put the needs of others before their own and give freely of their time and gifts. We stand amazed at the power of God to multiply our efforts in building His Kingdom and restoring sight to the blind through the work of *Eye Love Africa*.

# SPORTS RECAP

## An Amazing Diversity of Coaches Led Our Winter Sports Season

By Bryan Diemer, Athletic Director

AACS is currently in the middle of a busy winter season with some sports having wrapped up, others approaching their league tournaments, and others just beginning. Throughout the winter months, AACS was able to support four levels of boys basketball, three levels of girls basketball, and two levels of boys volleyball between the months November and March. In particular, we are blessed by the diversity of coaches this season. As you will see below, God brought together quite an assortment of coaches who care about AACS and desire to give back to our school. We are grateful for our athletes, parents, spectators, alumni, and coaches for a full winter season. Go Eagles!

### Boys Basketball

The 3rd/4th grade boys basketball team had 19 boys participate, requiring a split of the group into two teams! They were coached by AACS parents Jim Mong, Nik Spasovski, Paul DeKraker, and John Nadzam.

The 5th/6th grade team this year was coached by alum Chase Anderson '21 and his father Ty Anderson. They finished with a 7-12 record overall. Meanwhile, the 7th/8th grade team had 17 boys participate and was coached by coach Amy Kachinko and parent April Bertin. They finished with a record of 5 wins and 15 losses.

The high school JV boys basketball team also recently concluded their season, finishing with an 11-4 overall record. Guided by head coach, Nolan Wolffis (husband to alum Lauren Mitchell '08), the Eagles now set their sights on a full varsity schedule next year and the opportunity to play in the MHSAA State Tournament.



### Girls Basketball

On the girls' basketball side, the season is currently in full swing. The 3rd/4th grade team is coached by alumni students Mina Reichert '22 and Ava Lindblade '22, taking the lead. Alumni Zoie Reichert '22 and Faith Palmbo '22 have also helped out when their own high school basketball schedules allow. All of the girls are graduates of the AACS class of 2022.



The 5th/6th grade team is in its second season of being coached by a father/daughter combination of AACS parent Emily Duggins and grandparent Keith Harr. The 7th/8th grade team is coached by AACS parent Christina Stoller in her 5th year of leading the program. All of the girls teams look forward to their upcoming league tournaments at the beginning of March.

### Boys Volleyball

Led by parents Stan Lee and Skye Schultz, the boys volleyball teams continue to garner interest during the long winter months. The 5th/6th grade team has 7 boys, while the 7th/8th grade team has 8 boys. The volleyball teams are in the early stages of the season, with games starting in March.

## Strategic Plan & Annual Association Meeting

**Please attend the Annual Association Meeting on April 29th at 7pm.** During this meeting, we will be providing updates and ways you can help AACS meet these critical areas for the school's future



Develop a master campus plan to strengthen the capacity for future enrollment growth

Improve staff compensation package in order to retain and recruit high-quality staff

Strengthen and expand student support services to meet the increased needs of a growing school and changing student population

Build more robust means to cultivate a spirit of giving to the school and to significantly raise financial giving to the school

Nurture relationships with like-minded and like-valued partners in our community and network



# #AACSLIFE



Check out photos  
like these on  
Instagram & Facebook



## GIVING UPDATE

### The Impact of Your Giving and Planning Ahead

By Wayne Sit, Head of School

- **Thank you:** For the first half of this fiscal year (July-December), we significantly exceeded our \$200,000 goal for the end of December. I am blown away by the generosity in financial support from the broader AACS community. We are filled with gratitude for contributions from our staff, parents, alumni students and their parents, grandparents, and many other friends of our mission. The mission of AACS is to provide a transformative Christian educational experience in Ann Arbor and surrounding communities. This also assists the school to address growing need for tuition assistance from families, sharpening insurance costs, and other budgeting needs.
- **Expansion:** The school continues to work towards identifying and securing property to physically expand AACS, including beginning preliminary work with architectural and engineering experts and speaking with lenders. While encouraging conversations continue, your ongoing prayers and engagement will be greatly appreciated and critical. More information will be provided with new developments.
- **The rest of 2025:** While 2025 is still young, please keep AACS in mind as you plan your giving for this calendar year. Your giving may include participating in our 3rd Annual Eagles Take Flight Golf Outing on Monday, May 19th, making a designated gift to support the growth of the AACS high school as it prepares for its third year, or providing financial support to one of the areas of our new strategic plan (see article).
- **Prayer:** Lastly and most importantly, your prayers are one of the most critical ways to support AACS. The value of your prayers is priceless and is never to be underestimated in its impact on us.



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  
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EAGLES TAKE FLIGHT  
GOLF  
OUTING



Monday, May 19, 2025

[annarborchristian.org/golffouting](http://annarborchristian.org/golffouting)

## BOARD UPDATE

### Collective Prayer for AACS

*By John Nadzam Board President*

Lately, I have been reflecting on the collective amount of prayers for Ann Arbor Christian School that have been and will be uttered to the Lord. There are daily prayers offered up within each of our families and in our children's classrooms. Then, there are regular reminders to pray at staff/school meetings, parent/teacher conferences, chapels, and various extracurriculars. I was even welcomed to participate on one of the regular morning prayer walks with a group of school moms around the building. Now, the school has launched a new initiative in which two or three grades are assigned to pray for AACS at home each week.

These are a few of the examples that continue to build upon the foundational prayers of dreaming and establishing the school we have inherited today. Prayers that align with our mission and vision to make generations of disciple-makers that bring kingdom influence to our world. Jesus reminds us to pray in a continual knocking and seeking kind of a way to our good and heavenly Father because He wants to bless us with good things (Mt 7). Praise be to God that many of our prayers have been answered! Thank you to all of you who love and serve our school. This is another reminder of embodied answers to prayers, big and small, right in front of our eyes.

We as the Ann Arbor Christian School Board also spend time praying at our monthly meetings. We pray over protecting our vision and mission. We pray for specific family and student situations. We give thanks to God for His goodness. We seek His comfort and wisdom in times of challenge or uncertainty. We ask for discernment for what next steps He would have for us.

As the Board heads into another year's budgeting cycle, would you take a moment right now to join us in praying for the Lord's provision, protection, and favor on our school for generations to come?

## A COMMUNITY GATHERED

### MLK Day of Prayer and Service

*By Heidi Eliason, PR/Development Assistant*

On Friday, January 17th, we invited our AACS community to join us on the main campus for a school-wide MLK program to recognize the importance of the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of faith and justice. The opening chapel was led by the high school students and featured worship, litany, prayer, skits, and narrations. The theme of the worship time was "Way Maker opens the prison doors," which is taken from Acts 16:16-34. The students identified with the Bible story about Paul and Silas' miraculous prison release, while also considering the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, which reminds us to be courageous in our faith and bold in prayer.

Following the worship service, the students were dismissed with their multi-age chapel families for a craft. The ten chapel families started this craft with the theme, "Together we put our hopes and dreams in Jesus." Each chapel family made a poster with individual hand tracings and then wrote their application of the chapel theme on their hands. The hands were then placed in the shape of a heart with a Bible verse in the center. These ten posters were placed together to create a mural which is now hanging on a wall in the gathering space. Psalm 34:13 was used on one of the posters and embodied the goal of this craft, "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it".

The second half of the morning centered around learning more about the Civil Rights Movement and service projects. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's 1957 Montgomery, Alabama speech was used as the theme for these projects when he said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?" Kindergarten through fifth grade students collected items to make 200 bagged lunches to be distributed by the HOPE Clinic in Ypsilanti. These

weren't simple bags, however, as the students hand-decorated the bags and wrote personal notes for each one. Sixth through tenth graders spent time together learning about homelessness in our community. This not only provided an opportunity to raise awareness of important issues, but allowed our two campuses to join together for a common cause. Middle and high school families generously donated items to create care packages for delivery to the Robert J. Delonis Center, part of the Shelter Association in Ann Arbor. Through these meaningful projects, students, and families put Dr. King's words into action, demonstrating compassion, generosity, and a commitment to serving others in their community.





# BEYOND THE BASICS

## When Was the Last Time You Experienced JOY?

By Brett Kilgore, High School Principal

This question was put forth to our middle and high school students in January during a special virtual assembly titled JOMO or “The Joy of Missing Out”. Presenter and award-winning author, Christina Crook, poses this question to all of her audiences, students and adults alike, in an effort to initiate authentic self-reflection and tee up the question that follows: Was technology present in that joyful experience?



Some report that technology indeed was present, but it is noticeably absent from the vast majority of responses Dr. Crook has gathered through the years of research. Instead, participants cite a variety of other joyful experiences: quiet time with the Lord, sports, hiking through creation, quality face-to-face time with a loved one, feasts amongst friends, etc. As a result, Dr. Crook has made it her goal to help her audiences cultivate more joy by raising awareness of our technology habits and promoting intentionality in our usage.

So what does that look like for our students at AACs, our families, and believers across the globe?

First, it is important for us to recognize a driving force that



makes our devices so difficult to put down: FOMO or “The Fear of Missing Out”.

Second, we would do well to remind ourselves, and one another, that the majority of our joyful moments are experienced offline.

Third, we should aim to take small, intentional steps that

help break the immense gravitational draw that our devices exert upon us.

How? Dr. Crook suggested our students begin by taking on one of her digital well-being challenges.

- Turn off notifications.
- Choose a grayscale option on our smartphone in lieu of color.
- Unfollow 20 accounts on social media.
- Remove social media apps from your phone.

Of course, finding digital well-being does not require us to reject technology altogether. Instead, Dr. Crook suggests that it is achieved when we use technology to promote three key outcomes: creativity (creating vs constant consumption), community (using to build relationships and collaboration), and care (extending love to others).

Together, let us empower our students (and ourselves) to embrace the joy of missing out and cultivate more meaningful connections amongst themselves, their community, and wherever God may lead them.

## SPREAD THE WORD

In light of a significant global shortage in educators, we could use your help to direct people to look at AACs for career opportunities. Everything that makes AACs a great place for families also makes it a remarkable place to work!

Join Our Team

A few needs next year include the addition of

- A fifth core middle school teacher
- New high school teachers as we add Grade 11
- An educational support specialist

Please direct people to our website to see current and future openings at [annarborchristian.org/careers](http://annarborchristian.org/careers).



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family and friends  
of Ann Arbor  
Christian School



The

# BEACON

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## ALUMNI PROFILE: CHASE ANDERSON

**Year of graduation from AACCS:** 2021 **Grades you attended AACCS:** Preschool-8th grade

**What high school did you attend?** Livingston Classical Academy

**Post-secondary educational plans?** I am currently exploring my options between the United States Coast Guard or college, with the intent to explore opportunities with the Department of Homeland Security.

**Favorite memories or experiences of your time at AACCS:** Being able to play baseball during my 8th grade year. Being a part of the Audio/Visual team. Going on field trips. The many great friends that I made at school.

**Special personal accomplishments since graduating AACCS?** Member of the National Honor Society. Four years of varsity baseball at Whitmore Lake. Playing in the baseball state semi-final game my freshman year on MSU's campus. Coaching the 5th and 6th grade boys basketball team at AACCS. Junior high band conductor at Livingston Classical Academy. Playing a basketball game during my freshman year at Little Caesars Arena. Children's Sunday school teacher at Ypsilanti Free Methodist Church. Two time MIAC academic all conference in baseball. Co-founder of Goodnews Collectors Club, a Christian outreach opportunity to spread the Gospel through collectors cards.

**How did your experiences at AACCS impact you?** I developed healthy relationships with teachers, friends, and the Lord. AACCS prepared me for hard classes and tough schooling. AACCS taught me to have a good work ethic and to give my best attitude and effort every day. AACCS gave me a firm foundation to tackle difficult social situations in high school.

