



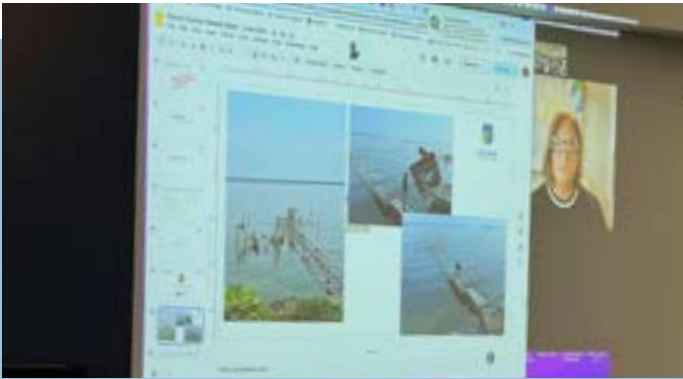
The

# BEACON

News for families and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School 2024-2025 No. 3

## HEADS UP by Wayne Sit, Head of School

### Bigger Than All of Us



Recently, some of the high school teachers and high school parents joined together for a small retreat that we called “A Hope & A Future,” inspired by the quilt in the Gathering Space that was made when the main campus was built. With two years under our belts, the high school community gathered to share, dream, collaborate, fellowship, and pray as we mark the halfway point to graduating Ann Arbor Christian’s first high school class in 2027.

During that time, one of our two speakers was Jennifer Thompson, the CEO of Christian Schools International. During her Zoom time with us, Jennifer provided a simple but very impactful analogy directed to our new high school, but I think it has application for all of AACCS during this season.

Jennifer shared photographs of a dock being built on a lake at her family's cottage. It started as a metal frame in the water. Then, piece by piece, wooden slats were added, extending the dock a few feet each time. With each new section, they were able to take another few steps forward to build the next section. When one family member tried to install the dock each spring, it was incredibly hard to do alone, but, when other family members joined the effort, the

work became easier. Like this dock, the high school is being built one section at a time. It was not pre-built, and we are not just continuing something that already existed. We are literally building it as we develop plans for it, and the work is easier when we do it together.



Furthermore, Jennifer shared that it was her father who had the dream of building a family cottage where the entire family could gather. However, before the dream came to fruition, her father passed away. He never met some of the grandchildren and great grandchildren who are now coming to this family cottage, but it was his vision years ago that laid the foundation for their family to enjoy this cherished place.

Immediately after Jennifer spoke and signed off, I actually began to unexpectedly weep. The room went silent for a while, and then a parent shared aloud that what is happening is bigger than all of us. For about a minute while I stood in the front, I was overwhelmed with emotion: gratitude for the earliest generations of AACCS who started our school nearly 35 years ago (founding parent Al Kraker was our other speaker), the past three years (one year of planning and two actual years of operation) of joys and heartaches in starting a new high school spilling out of me, being in a room with teachers and parents walking along this journey with me, and feeling the enormous privilege and responsibility of thinking beyond our own time at AACCS and thinking about the generations after us, even



those yet to be born. Having his own similar experiences, a parent who is starting up a church himself approached me at the end of the retreat to share words of comfort, understanding, and encouragement.

*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.

Continued from page 1

For all of AACs, we are building God's school together. We make plans with our best God-given abilities, but we take one step at a time, and each step allows us to move forward a bit more. We pray together because we need God to be a part of every fiber of AACs, and we desire His will to be done. Through our prayers, giving, encouragement, dialogues, and labor together, we plant and grow seeds that not only nurture our own children's time at AACs or our own employment at AACs, but also prepare the school to serve future generations. This is the long-term nature of kingdom-building work.

I can not echo Jennifer's beautiful words as well as she did, so I encourage you take 10 minutes to listen to her yourself by scanning the QR code. I believe God's encouragement through her will also inspire you.



## AACSLIFE



Check out photos like these on Instagram & Facebook



# LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

## Year-End Recap: Walking With Jesus, The Waymaker

By Manuela Mansour, Spiritual Life Coordinator

“

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous!  
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.  
For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

— Joshua 1:9

”

With the school year concluded, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the special chapel year theme that we had, *Walking With Jesus The Waymaker*. We have walked hand-in-hand with Jesus, our amazing Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, and Light In The Darkness. We have walked through many stories of the Bible filled with faith, hope, and love that have spiritually enriched the students' hearts, minds, and their personal faith journey. It has been such a privilege to witness their understanding and faith in Jesus grow.

Throughout all our chapels, we embarked on a journey through powerful biblical narratives, each showing us how Jesus is our Waymaker.



We witnessed God's miraculous power as **Moses parted the Red Sea**, paving a way where there seemed to be no way. We saw His provision when He sent ravens to **provide food and drink** for Elijah in the desert, a testament to His promise to never leave us nor forsake us. The **healing of the blind man** reminded us that Jesus is a Miracle Worker, bringing light to darkness. The courage of **David facing Goliath** reminded us that, with God, even the impossible becomes possible and we can face our giants. We followed **Mary and Joseph's journey to the manger**, and that God always has the perfect plan.

The resilience of **Paul and Silas in prison**, singing praises, demonstrated how God's light shines even in the darkest circumstances. We were inspired by **Daniel in the lions' den** and **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace**, witnessing God's miraculous protection. **Jesus' power to calm the storm** illustrated His authority over nature. Jesus' **Crucifixion and Resurrection** revealed The Way made through His ultimate sacrifice on the cross for us, bringing light to darkness. Finally, reflecting on **Jesus as our lighthouse** brought everything together, reminding us that He is the Light of the World, guiding us, working miracles in our lives, keeping His promises, and shining His light on our path.



It has been my joy and honor to spiritually lead your children as we explored what it means to walk with Jesus. I pray that your summer will be filled with plenty of smiles, rest and His peace.

# BEYOND THE BASICS

## Halfway to Our First Graduating Class of 2027

By Brett Kilgore, High School Principal

As noted in the cover article, we are delighted to mark the completion of two years of Ann Arbor Christian High School. In less than two years, God willing, we will graduate our first high school class!

With year two concluded, here are some of our highlights from this past year:

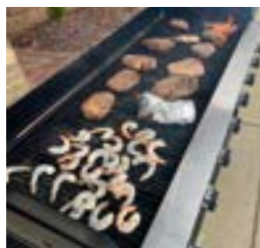
- Our four core teachers continue to be among our pioneering staff, with five part-time teachers working alongside them.



- We had another successful year in athletics that included girls' volleyball, football, soccer, basketball, cross country, track & field, and even a participant in crew. Some of our students even

earned their first varsity letters and purchased jackets this year as their teams participated in varsity-level games. And let's not forget those amazing pep rallies and Homecoming Spirit Week!

- We enjoyed chapel every other week, with some desire by students to see weekly chapels.
- We continue to try to maximize our new mindset: Take advantage of our smaller size to be nimble and to create unique opportunities that are easier now and that will become more difficult as our enrollment increases. This included our Exploration Days (see below), Bring Your Own Meat/Veggie Thursdays (when we grilled lunch), and steak & burger days for exam week.
- Exploration Days were a big hit this past year. They were designed to expose students to different career paths after high school and hear how faith can play into these fields. This year, we visited Bosch, Google, the University of Michigan Survival Flight base, the College of Creative Studies in Detroit, Weingartz, Genthe Automotive, Quinn Evans Architects, the historical Michigan Central Building, Meadowlark Design + Build, and Homes Campus. We hope to kick off next fall with a visit to Hope College and Calvin University.
- In what might become a growing tradition, the high school



attended two great theatrical productions at the Wharton Center at Michigan State University: *Les Miserables* in the fall and *Hamilton* in the spring.



- New student groups were started, including a student council, board game club, and pickleball club.
- The SOAR parent group remains very involved, including organizing the second annual fall barn dance and a homecoming event.
- The school took its first official PSAT this spring and has started to prepare for its first college-level classes for next year: Advanced Placement U.S. History and a dual-enrollment English course for juniors that will earn college credit through a partnership with Grace Christian University in Grand Rapids.
- The school hopes to hire an all-school educational support specialist who will spend part of their week at the high school.
- Please check out the second high school yearbook at each campus' reception area.

As we prepare for our first junior class next year and welcome in a sizable freshmen class, we ask for your continued financial support and prayers as we continue the work to become the first PK-Grade 12 Christian school in Ann Arbor. Prayer requests include:

- A spirit of unity, investment, prayer, and fellowship to permeate the upper campus community with the joys and hard work of building a new high school
- A spirit of oneness across both campuses
- The school hopes to purchase land adjacent or near the main campus to bring our entire school onto one master campus
- More students to join grades 9, 10, and 11 over the summer
- Having the resources to serve different academic needs and interests of our students
- The provision of teachers who love high schoolers and are passionate about our pioneering work, including an individual who can assist with career and college counseling
- Our junior class as they begin to contemplate about life after high school
- Planning for both JV and varsity teams next year
- Transportation solutions for our growing needs
- Curriculum planning and development for all high school grade levels

## AACS Contacts 2024-2025

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# FIELD DAY

## Living Out S.H.I.E.L.D.

By April Bertin, Field Day Co-Coordinator

What does it look like to be a good loser? I posed this question to AACs students at the main campus in the days leading up to Field Day 2025. Each class was sent a video to view, which discussed what it looked like to not be the best, to lose with grace, and to cheer on their classmates in their successes. After watching the video, classroom teachers led a discussion on what it meant to be good sports and friends. Each class was then challenged to write their own statement sentences on sportsmanship, which was written onto a uniquely-shaped, cut out poster board.



What came next is something I hope will become a new AACs tradition for field day. Established by our previous coordinators, sportsmanship has always been valued at field day for many years. Building on that, we are going to take it up another level moving forward. As the student body gathered for the kick-off assembly for field day, I talked with them about sportsmanship. I then called up 10 students: each one was nominated by their classmates and teachers as someone who represented what a good teammate, friend, and student looked like. I asked each student to read their class' statement, and we then posted each class's uniquely shaped poster with their sportsmanship statement on the gym wall until all of the pieces fit together to form a shield.



This newly formed S.H.I.E.L.D. is a representation of what the AACs sporting community strives to be known for: *Sportsmanship, Humility, Integrity,*

*Enthusiasm, Leadership, and Determination.* As I reminded the students, none of these characteristics require any athletic ability. All it requires is for them to show up each and every day for Christ and for each other in order to run the race in a manner glorifying to Christ: to lead by example, to play fairly, to stay hungry but stay humble, and to have that competitive fire in their eyes but also be excellent cheerleaders of others' wins, even in the midst of their own defeats.

This year on field day, AACs made a renewed declaration for years to come as an entire school coming together for one common goal: Be the best we can be in the classroom and on the field together and to embody the S.H.I.E.L.D. each and every day because it is not (and should not be) a one-day-a-year action. It's an everyday, intentional behavior.

# BEYOND THE BASICS

## Passion Project: Turning Dreams Into Reality

By Julie Straight, Middle School Lead Teacher

You have probably heard the phrase, "Follow your passion." For the middle school students at AACs, this isn't just a saying - it is an opportunity. Every year, 7th and 8th graders participate in a unique elective called the *Passion Project* during the third quarter.

This elective gives students the chance to explore something they truly care about. Whether it is a completely new interest like crocheting or coding or a skill they have already begun to enjoy, like playing the guitar or making great coffee. The goal is



to dive deep into something that excites them. Some students even choose to make a difference in their communities through service projects, turning their passions into meaningful contributions.

Once students select their project ideas, the real fun begins: research. They also get to decide how to present their findings. Will they demonstrate a new skill they have mastered? Will they showcase their baking creations? Or will they unveil a final product that reflects their hard work? For an hour each week, students immerse themselves in research, creativity, and experimentation, all while keeping their end goal in mind.

As the quarter progresses, they track their progress, fine-tuning their work and preparing for the big presentation. By the end of the quarter, students present their projects to a panel of judges and their peers, showcasing what they have learned and how they have applied their knowledge. Our judges include staff members, parents, and friends of AACs - many of whom have experience with their own small businesses or special interests that have turned into lifelong hobbies.

It is truly inspiring to witness the unique interests and talents that God has given our students. Each year, we are amazed by the projects they create and the depth of knowledge they acquire throughout the process.



We love to see how these projects can spark creativity and ignite a sense of purpose in our students, fostering both personal growth and a deepened love for learning. And who knows...some students may very well find a new lifelong passion—or even their future careers.

# GOLF OUTING

## Eagles Take Flight - Take 3!

By Dawn Geldermans and Lisa Hawley, Golf Outing Coordinators

Our third annual **Eagles Take Flight** golf outing was a huge success all because of you! We had over 100 golfers, brisk weather, and some fantastic fellowship filled with current families, alumni, founding families, grandparents, and friends! It was great to see such a wonderful cross-section of the broader AACs community together not only as golfers, but also as sponsors and volunteers.

Congratulations to Team Straight Shooters (Adam Gross, Josh Vaudt, Mark Hake, and Justin Lesch) for winning this year's outing!

Thank you to all the golfers, volunteers, and sponsors for helping us raise *nearly* \$40,000 for AACs Athletics to be used next year. Together, we earned enough funds to purchase an outdoor bleacher system for the soccer field, new volleyball nets, custom padded athletics chairs for teams, and additional new uniforms for our student athletes as our program keeps growing!

Also, a big thank you to Lake Forest Golf Club for an unforgettable day! We get to do it again next year on **May 18, 2026!**

*The school wishes to extend our heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to Lisa Hawley and Dawn Geldermans for their leadership of this event. Over the course of our first three golf outings, we have raised about \$100,000 to support our athletics program.*



## GIVING UPDATE

### The Impact of Your Giving and Planning Ahead for 2025

- **Thank you:** Your support allowed us to exceed our giving goal for the 24-25 year, and we are immensely grateful. The mission of AACs is to provide a transformative Christian educational experience in Ann Arbor and the surrounding communities. This also helps the school address the growing need for tuition assistance from families, sharpening insurance costs, and other budgeting increases.
- **Expansion:** The school continues to work towards identifying and securing property to physically expand AACs, including finalizing preliminary work with architectural and engineering experts and speaking with lenders. While encouraging conversations continue, these conversations can be complex, and your ongoing prayers and engagement are greatly appreciated and critical. More information will be provided with new developments.



- **The remainder of 2025:** While we are just over halfway through the 2025 calendar year, please keep AACs in mind as you plan your giving for this calendar year.
- **Prayer:** Lastly and most importantly, a Christian school can't be truly Christian without prayer. Your prayers are one of the most critical ways to support AACs. The value of your prayers is priceless, and its impact is never underestimated. For us, living out prayer this year included bringing back a Pastors' Appreciation Breakfast after a hiatus of many years and connecting the event to the National Day of Prayer. We appreciate the time of prayer and fellowship with nearly 20 local pastors who gathered with us in May.



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phone to give online.





## BOARD UPDATE

### 'Buy Dirt' - Facilities Task Force Update

By John Nadzam, AACs Board President

This summer, our family is continuing its tradition of selecting a family song to listen to together. We have chosen *Buy Dirt*, which is a simple, catchy country song about money. Specifically, it is about not buying happiness, but focusing on "buying dirt" wisely to provide a foundation to put down roots, lift up prayers, add limbs to your family tree, and see the measurable fruit of making these your priorities.

As I reflect on one of AACs' strategic priorities of expanding our facilities and developing a master campus for all grades, our family song has an obvious connection. Biblically, we can trace God's gift of "the land" given to His image bearers to stewarding our world and spreading fruitfulness from Genesis through the great commission of Jesus in the New Testament. This is our Father's guidance for us today as well, made possible by Jesus through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And it is exciting that we have an opportunity to take the next step in AACs' journey.

As you read this, while we continue to explore other leads, members of our facilities task force are now actively in negotiations with adjacent neighbors, which we alluded to during April's Annual Association Meeting. The task force is made up of several board members, Wayne Sit, parent and commercial real estate business owner Tom Gritter, and parent and the president of *Meadowlark Design + Build* Melissa Kennedy. These negotiations are more complex than we anticipated and will take time, but we are seeking to approach our conversations with careful thought and counsel. We want to consider the best interest of AACs while conveying respect for the owners. We can only do this while keeping prayer as the center focus. **As a result, we eagerly invite our school community to join us in prayer for God's favor and the Holy Spirit's guidance. We pray that our expansion efforts would be in line with God's heart for His kind of fruitfulness.**

## THEATER CLUB

### Standing Ovation! Theater Club Students Shine in "Annie, Jr."

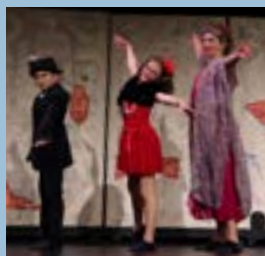
By Jimmy Arnold, Theater Club Director

The reviews are in, and everybody is raving about the AACs Theater Club production of *Annie, Jr!* Our theater program underwent a few changes this year, but the outcome was an exciting year that culminated in a show that was successful

across all metrics. Some key changes included a new leadership team, moving the venue to 242 Community Church in Ann Arbor, and folding the program under the school's umbrella. All of this allowed our theater club to make huge strides in our production value and present two amazing performances.



This year, our hope was to foster a supportive environment where our students felt comfortable exploring God's creativity. We spent time discussing the Westminster Shorter Catechism concept that "man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever." We learned that God is glorified when we come to each rehearsal prepared, encourage our castmates when they are struggling, forgive ourselves when we make mistakes, and give our best effort to God and each other. The cast saw that God gives each of us unique gifts and talents, and that using those gifts to glorify Him is one of the most fulfilling experiences.



We are so grateful for all the support and help from the entire AACs community. This was an incredible year with tons of success, fun, growth, and enthusiasm. This cast was so talented, and their gifts were on full display onstage this year. The audiences were full of energy and incredibly supportive of our young actors. Our parents were willing to serve and pitch in towards the goal at all stages of the production. The AACs staff and administration were relentlessly supportive of the theater club leadership and cast. In addition, we had an amazing team that provided leadership and support with directing, music, dance, singing, props, staging, finances, marketing, and other key logistics. Morale and excitement around the theater club could not be higher. Thank you for embracing us as we onboarded a new team.

We are already in the process of planning next year's production. We are excited to build upon a successful show and capitalize on the momentum from this year. Our parents have provided positive feedback along with areas where we can improve, so we will be shaping the 2026 production over the summer months. We invite the entire AACs community to join us as we continue to strive for new levels of excellence in the AACs Theater Club.



# BEYOND THE BASICS

## Spring Athletics Flourish at Ann Arbor Christian School

By Bryan Diemer, Athletics Director

Athletics at AACS continues to provide a variety of athletic opportunities for students from grade 5 through high school. This past spring season, AACS was able to offer Boys Baseball and Co-Ed Track & Field at the main campus, as well as Co-Ed Track & Field at the high school level. In total, AACS saw a total of 62 students participating in a spring sport in 5th-10th grades. In addition to the aforementioned sports, AACS also offered a co-operative opportunity at the high school level with Father Gabriel Richard for baseball and softball in the spring.

### Boys Baseball

At the middle school level this past season, the boys baseball team, coached by alumni parent and assistant athletic director Ty Anderson, concluded with a 3-3 record. The 8th graders on the team completed their middle school careers as the winningest group in the program's history.

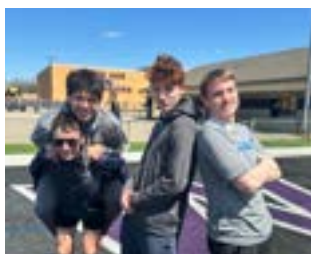
### Track & Field

Additionally, the middle school track team, under the direction of alumni parent and longtime coach Shannon Waroway, also saw significant development and improvement throughout the season.

These programs introduce younger students to competitive sports, emphasizing fundamental skills and a positive environment. Throughout the season, our dedicated coaches help foster characteristics such as Sportsmanship, Humility, Integrity, Enthusiasm, Leadership and Determination. These are known around the AACS athletic program as the S.H.I.E.L.D.



The high school Track & Field team this past spring was coached by Pam Stom in her second year leading the program. Consisting of four athletes, AACS was able to connect with the Christ The King homeschool team in order to share resources and offer more students for practice. These four students consistently achieved personal records throughout the season and set new school records as well.



### High School Sports Preview

Although no high school students participated in the baseball or softball co-ops with Father Gabriel Richard, a co-op renewal was signed this spring. Renewing the co-op between the two schools will allow AACS students to participate in Boys' Soccer, Boys' Football, Boys' Hockey (a new sport being added next year), Boys' Baseball, and Girls' Softball for the next two years. In addition to these co-ops, AACS is also excited to offer Golf at the varsity level, starting in the spring of 2026. The golf team will be coached by grandparent Jim Warring. AACS will be supporting 10 varsity sports at the high school level next year, five of which will be AACS teams, and five of which will be co-ops. In addition to the varsity teams, AACS is planning to offer JV Girls' Volleyball and JV Boys' Basketball during the 2025-2026 school year. Go Eagles!

## SPREAD THE WORD

Next year's needs include the addition of:

- K-8 Music Teacher
- K-6 Spanish Teacher
- American Sign Language instructor for high school (part-time)
- Educational support specialist (part-time)
- High school teacher for English and theology
- High school college/career counselor (possibly part-time or in conjunction with other responsibilities)
- JV boys' basketball coach
- Bus driver (part-time)

Join Our Team

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



News for  
family and friends  
of Ann Arbor  
Christian School



The

# BEACON

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## ALUMNI PROFILE: ANDREW CHEN

**Year of graduation from AACCS:** 2021 **Grades you attended AACCS:** K-8

**What high school did you attend?** Skyline High School

**Post-secondary educational plans?** Majoring in Professional Flight and Aviation Management at Purdue University.

**Favorite memories or experiences of your time at AACCS:** I would always look forward to chapel every Friday, singing my favorite songs and interacting with Scripture in new ways. I really enjoyed 5th grade camp at Howell Nature Center and had so much fun being a reading buddy and a preschool buddy with two siblings. I also had so much fun leading a chapel family in 8th grade and going on the day trips to Our Lady of the Fields, an escape room, and Cedar Point with the class.

**Special personal accomplishments since graduating AACCS?** Earned private pilot's license in 2024, won the Master Musician Award, National School Choral Award, and the Academic Innovation Small Learning Community Award. Music directed a show (Hometown: Teen Edition) at Skyline.

**How did your experiences at AACCS impact you?** AACCS challenged me to really deepen my faith and find new reasons to wake up every morning. I really treasure the friends I made at AACCS and look back on all the fun, laughter, and activities fondly. I still keep in touch with many of the people I met at AACCS.

