

The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy

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REFORMED DISTINCTIVES AS APPLIED TO EDUCATION

A series of seven articles by Sterling Mehring, President of the Board of Directors

I. COVENANT CHILDREN

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . . for the promise is unto you and your children," (Acts 2:38-39)

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

"Child of the covenant I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." These words spoken by a minister of the gospel are familiar to every member of a Reformed congregation. They are in response to the parents' pledge to be covenant keepers (Ps. 103:17, 18). The parents commit to raise this child of the promise in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). The congregation is called upon to make its own commitment to actively support the parents in these covenant responsibilities. The sacrament of baptism could become an empty ritual. Yet, in those fellowships where these commitments are taken most seriously, it is common to find a community of love and support for dedicated parents. Inevitably, these are also the ones most committed to Christian schooling. Individual members are reminded that they maintain a responsibility for all the children.

Who are the Covenant Children?

All children of at least one believing parents are sanctified (I Cor. 7:13-15), although fallen (Rom. 3:23). These children, while not necessary regenerate, are set apart in the eyes of God from those under His wrath. A believing parent establishes a household in which God promises us that the usual and expected result of faithful covenant keeping will be faithful, obedient, and believing children (Ps. 103: 17). Parents are blessed with promises

and challenged by awesome responsibilities. *please turn to page 5*

OUR TEACHERS AND STAFF

Faculty Development Days. Are Faculty Development Days merely days off for students and teachers? Wasted time that should be used for teaching students? Time-out for teachers and administrators to calm rattled nerves? Students and parents wonder what the faculty accomplishes on these Faculty Development/Professional Days. Here are some ways teachers and administrators spend these special times (not an exhaustive list, but a sampling):

1. A guest speaker, a psychologist, discusses how to recognize students who may have learning disabilities and what are the treatment possibilities.
2. Teachers meet as grade-groups to discuss academic progress of students and necessary schedule or classroom modifications.
3. Teachers work on refining the curriculum: for example, curriculum outlines for fall quarter were reviewed and rewritten on Nov 9.
4. Teachers and administrators dialogue with a guest speaker, Ron Grosh, (Paidea, Inc) seeking to expand our understanding and application of our philosophy of education from the Reformed world and life view at the WCA Faculty Fall Retreat.
5. Teachers meet with peer coaches to discuss individual observations of teaching styles, strengths, weaknesses, etc.
6. A representative of the county school system describes how to document and evaluate WCA students for county learning services.

These days permit WCA faculty to work and plan as a team to assess and improve the WCA educational program. These days for learning, communicating, and planning as faculty benefit WCA students. Recently, on Nov 12-13, WCA administrators attended the MACSA Conference in Lancaster, PA. Each of us attended six or more classes that directly applied to our current WCA position; I was privileged to be at a six-hour course on "The Internet as a resource for teachers and students." One immediate benefit for WCA students is the enclosed list of sites for homework and research assistance! All

these sites have been determined to be reliable and several are award-winning sites; some are produced by students, elementary through college! Note particularly <www.nosweat.com> and

<www.refdesk.com/index.html> (260 search engines, 19 categories!). Parents, this is your window to work with your WCA student at home to develop research and computer skills while expanding substantive learning.

--Janice B. Adams

Associate Headmaster for Academics

CLASSROOM NEWS

Early Childhood Classes. The traditional First grade/ Kindergarten Thanksgiving Feast was held on November 25. One group dressed up as Native American Indians and the other like Pilgrims.

Upper Elementary Classes. Mrs. Bratt's 6th grade praises God for the Lows' safe return from China with a baby girl. The baby visited the classroom and was held by all!

Mrs. Brown's 4th grade class (as well as some other classes) collected items for those who are suffering the effects of Hurricane Mitch. Mrs. Brown will be taking the items to Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, MD.

Upper School. The 7th and 8th grade drama class (led by Mrs. Riffert) performed a **Reformation play** for the lower school chapels on October 27. The play was set in Wittenberg, Germany at the time Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door. The action of the play begins when a family meets Johann Tetzel and buys indulgences from him. Then, that family joins the crowd gathered around the church door, wanting to find out what the Theses are all about. As the play continues, Martin Luther walks over to the crowd and answers their questions, explaining that the indulgences are wrong, and that the only way to have salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. The play also included a definition of "indulgences" to help the lower school understand one of the issues of the Reformation.

--Jessica Holtrop

8th grade Drama student

On November 5-6 the high school students took a welcome break from academics to focus on the spiritual life at the annual **Rehoboth Beach retreat**, at a bed & breakfast on the shore. This year they studied how to live consistently as "the godly man" or "the godly woman." After separating into groups, the men discussed seeking and evaluating true heroes, while the women discussed the source of individual worth. After an evening worship

session, the students celebrated Agur Adams' birthday and took a late-night beach walk. They met again for joint worship in the morning and broke into small groups to discuss the motivation and spiritual dangers of substance abuse.

Following lunch, they departed for WCA, encouraged and inspired to follow the Christian walk.

--Christina Mason

11th grade Journalism student

SCHOOL LIFE ACTIVITIES

Upper school information night. An opportunity for the parents of 5th-8th graders to learn the details about WCA's middle and high school program. Come to the Library on Thursday, December 3 at 7:30 PM, where administrators, teachers, parents, and students will tell all.

The Friends of the School Banquet. The dinner was delicious, the evening was inspiring, and the Board and Administration are so pleased with the loyalty and commitment that so many of our parents and friends have expressed in many ways. The Banquet is the one event of the year when we come together to celebrate what God is doing at WCA. Thank you all for sharing in this occasion. Special thanks go to Helen Dana who prepared the delectable dinner for more than 120 people. I really don't think the event would have come to fruition at all without the managerial efforts of Julie Linden, who joins me in thanking our helpers Diane Bratt, Howard Bushouse, Ana Creque, Patricia DiPiazza, Kati Korossy, Derek Linden, Steve and Colleen Lynott, Sue McCotter, Connie Mehring, Sterling Mehring, Linda Olthoff, Kevin Verbrugge, Jean Visy, and Tamara Woroby. Support for the printing and mailing came from Barbara Drew, Yvonne Hollis, Ray and Lois Colie.

We loved having Nick Robb among us again, giving testimony to the WCA educational experience. We were also entertained by the lovely voices of Hannah Adams, Susanna Brockman, Kristin Lynott, and Stephanie de los Reyes, who sang Mendelssohn's "Lift Thine Eyes."

Dinner was served and dishes were washed by our high school students--whose help we deeply appreciate!

--Robin Gropp

Director of Advancement

College Visits. I recently returned from a trip with seven WCA juniors and sophomores visiting five Christian colleges in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio. As expected, the trip was a lot of fun and exposed our students to college options not previously considered by most who attended. Visiting these campuses, the students lived like college freshman for a weekend and they got a

glimpse of the next stage in their lives. It was motivational, frightening, and insightful all at the same time. These students understand better the academic preparation they are now receiving. They saw the promised land of life after their teen years. It was interesting and satisfying to learn from them that though they had fun at what they considered a "party school," they were more attracted to the schools they felt offered a Christian atmosphere conducive to learning and helpful in their Christian growth.

This experience holds a lesson for all of us. The students gained much from catching a glimpse of what lies ahead. Likewise, a visit to the symphony or the opera, a trip to the stadium, a walk through the National Art Gallery or Hirshhorn Museum could be an inspiring experience to the budding musician, athlete, or artist. I encourage each of us as parents to augment the WCA field trips by availing ourselves of the multitude of athletic, cultural, historic and artistic expediences available in our own back yards.

On another plane, our children should also catch sight of what lies ahead as children of the Heavenly King. This includes regular, joyful worship in the house of the Lord, fellowship with believers of different generations, and time with parents who themselves enjoy the Lord. This way our children would learn that their faith is not a series of "do's and don'ts" but rather a season of preparation for a lifetime of knowing God and enjoying Him forever.

--James H. Koan, II
Headmaster

Moms in Touch. Moms in Touch are keeping in prayer the portable classrooms, of course, and the Low family as they adopt their new daughter from China. We have another praise to the Lord for a gracious provision He made to two fellow members of Moms in Touch, even though the need was not specifically spoken amongst us. Lisa Fred desperately needed a car pooling solution, while Charlotte & Andy Fitzgerald, currently residing in Kensington, were house hunting, and were thrilled to find a home where their children would be in the same neighborhood as their dear first cousins. But then Charlotte too, needed to find car pooling arrangement. When she checked in the office who might live in the area of their new home, she discovered that one of her prayer partners from Moms in Touch --you guessed it!-- Lisa Fred lives just around the corner from her. Praise God, for He is good.

PTF. If you are a parent of a WCA child, you already belong to the PTF! The Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF) plays a big part in drawing WCA families from many

different churches into the fellowship that makes our school unique. We are families from many different churches drawn together by our desire to provide our children with an outstanding education in a Christian environment, to develop in them a Christian worldview. Believing that the responsibility of educating children belongs primarily to the parents, the PTF at WCA exists to support parents in this task and to nurture a caring community which will advance the mission of WCA. In order to accomplish this the PTF will:

- Be an advocate of parent involvement in the classroom.
- Be an advocate of parent involvement in the advancement of the school.
- Establish and strengthen relational ties within the community.
- Carry on traditions important in the life of the school (class room and school wide).

Look for details in future Messengers about the many ways PTF accomplishes these goals.

We just had our Christmas Bazaar, a favorite tradition of our school, on November 21. We hope you enjoyed it and found some new friends as you participated in it.

Reformation Sunday. All Christian churches, with the exception of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, have their roots in the Reformation. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. This started the great revival of the Reformation. We celebrate its anniversary on Reformation Sunday, the Sunday in October nearest to the 31st. Many churches in the greater Washington area traditionally gather at Wallace Memorial Church on Reformation Sunday for worship and fellowship, to give thanks to God for what He did in the 16th Century. This year the speaker was Dr. Eric Alexander from Glasgow, Scotland. He spoke about the ways contemporary evangelical churches departed from the God's ways: "the truth is marginalized, the preaching is psychologized, and salvation is considered a product to be sold." He called the Christians back from this worldliness to the biblical basis, to the "sola"-s of the Reformation: Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), Solus Christus (Christ alone), Sola gratia (grace alone), Sola fide (faith alone), Soli Deo gloria (for God's glory alone).

At this wonderful event our high school provided the refreshments and serving for the fellowship after the service, according to our long tradition. With this we desire to say thanks to all those churches in our area who support the Reformed education at our school. Glory be to our God!

Athletics. We are in a very interesting stage of our

athletic program development. We have successfully completed our fall programs that included teams in girl's soccer, boy's soccer, and crosscountry. Although this was our first year for these teams, we were well represented in every aspect of competition. Our most important focus is in our student-athletes' spiritual growth and development. Our scriptural foundations are in 2 Tim. 2:5 and Luke 16:10-12. We do not compromise Christian standards for success.

As we head into the basketball season, we have three teams going forward in excellence. The girl's Varsity consists 7th-12th grade girls. They are extremely talented and will bring an exciting brand of basketball to the school. The boy's Varsity team, 9th-12th grade boys, make up with hard work and intensity what they lack in size. Our J.V. boys (6th-8th grade) will be the foundation for our future Varsity boy's team. We have a lot of talent, some size, and a great amount of enthusiasm.

Come out and enjoy this year's athletic teams as we strive to glorify Jesus Christ in all that we say and do!

--Coach Jay L. Barnhart
Athletic Director

The Booster Club. The Booster Club is sponsoring a Basketball Family Night on Saturday December 5, from 6:30-10:00 PM at the Laurel Boys and Girls Club in Laurel, Maryland. The event is designed to introduce this year's basketball teams, recognize the fall sports teams, provide an opportunity for fellowship among WCA families and raise funds for the athletic program. Proceeds will be used to offset costs related to winter basketball and spring soccer and track. For more information, contact Julio Barreto at 301-431-0235.

Christmas Drama Musical The upper school choir and drama class (led by Mrs. Diane Young) will perform Dennis and Nan Allen's *Code Red*, on December 8 and 10 during chapel services. Parents, families, and friends are welcome! It also will be presented at the Presbyterian Church of the Atonement on December 6 at 6:00 PM. This fun and funny musical also presents a serious and provoking message during this busy holiday season. The setting is today, and the characters are a group of ordinary high school friends.

WCA Children's Choir. We are preparing for our first performance this season on Sunday December 6, at Miss DeYoung ' church, the First Baptist Church of Rockville. We will sing "Light One Candle" and "Children, Children." For our next "concert" we would like to invite everyone to Wheaton Plaza on December 12 at 12:00 PM. On December 15, we may sing in the Elementary Chapel at 8:40-9:20 AM. For info call Miss DeYoung or

Miss Kuik.

SOCIETY AND BOARD

The fall society meeting. The meeting was held on October 19. It was a testimony of the Lord's blessings and goodness toward our school, and it inspired a sense of excitement as the leadership presented the current status and future vision for our school.

Sterling Mehring reported that the modular classroom units soon will be in place to alleviate the crowded conditions brought on by record enrollment.

Jim Koan, Jan Adams, and Carol Parent presented their duties within the recently reorganized administrative leadership. Now each of them is responsible in their own field for *all* grades, preschool through high school. Significant positive effects are already evident.

Robin Gropp discussed her work in recruiting new families and unveiled plans for the 1998-99 Academy Fund Drive.

Dorry Kenyon gave an update on the ASCI accreditation process and the development of a reference library on Reformed education. The Education Committee also is working on the integration of our creeds and catechism into the Bible curriculum.

Howard Bushouse shared how the Society Membership Committee, in addition to handling the day to day concerns of Society membership and meeting organization, plans ways to better inform new school families about the background and purpose of the Society. To this end, a Society Information Page will be added to our own WCA web site which will soon be completed.

Paul DiPiazza, on behalf of the Finance committee, presented an updated budget projection for the current school year. Several friends of the school have purchased bonds to enable us to purchase the modular classrooms instead of renting them.

Technology upgrade Jim McCotter and others have been working to provide the school with more and faster computers. Financial resources are very limited so we need your help. Jim and others have donated used equipment and software that will be very useful to the teachers, students, and staff. We need more software and hardware, new or used. Many older systems can be upgraded to Pentium 233 level or higher at a cheaper cost than buying a new system. Functionally an upgraded system is just as good as a new one. If you have an old computer, monitor, or software, please let us know. Ask your friends and relatives. Many people throw away potentially useful equipment not knowing that a simple upgrade will transform what seems obsolete, to current technology. We especially need copies of *Windows 95* or

98. If you have switched from 95 to 98 please donate your old copy of 95 since we have a few computers that have no operating system on them. If you know the Linux Operating system, we need your help too. If you can help with any of these, please call Jim McCotter at 301-816-9838.

The Season of Giving. Generous gifts and pledges are arriving daily for the Academy Fund Drive, furthering the work of the school and encouraging the hearts of the laborers. Your children, blissfully unaware of the school's fiscal needs, are the most direct beneficiaries of these gifts. Many thanks to the parents and friends who have already responded. If you haven't pledged your support to the school yet, here are some reasons why you should:

- Even small gifts make a difference in your child's education.
 - Teachers know they are valued when large numbers of parents support the school beyond tuition.
 - If you receive tuition assistance, you can still include the school in your almsgiving plan. The suggested entry-level Gideon's Band gift is \$39, one dollar for each year the school has been open.
 - Major donors, foundations, and corporations want to know the percentage of parents who give to the school. Small gifts attract larger ones.
- Remember too that your *designated* gifts and pledges are the clearest communication you can give to the leadership of the school about your priorities.

Meet this challenge!

Pledge or give by January 31 and your gift will be doubled! A small group of donors (a few parents and a teacher) are offering to match up to \$20,000 given or pledged by January 31.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

You may place your positive suggestions, questions, and up building comments in a box so labeled in the entrance hallway, near the office.

ETC...

Want to volunteer but haven't been called? Call the office, and let us know.

If you have news to share that will encourage the school community, contact Kati Korossy at 301-946-2414 (e-mail <zoltan@pol.net>), Jackie Jones at 301-649-3842, or your homeroom parent.

Interested in a bulletin board for personal services/items that are needed/offered within our school family? It would be very nice. Could any of you help to

make a plexiglass covered bulletin board for this purpose?

DID YOU KNOW...

that volunteer mom Maureen Rosetta single-handedly maintains the soda-machine? She finds low-priced sources for sodas and enables the school to earn approximately \$200 per month, which supplements our art program and buys coffee, etc. for our teacher/parent workroom. Thanks, Maureen!

CHILDREN, *continued from front page*

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IN A SCHOOL?

Mission

Christian schooling based on Reformed principles does not necessarily demand teaching only covenant children. An "evangelistic" school model is valid and needed. In the providence of God we hope He raises up the resources for many. But it is important to be clear on what the mission of our school is. For our founders and leaders it is a question of priority. We are a covenant school because our first priority must be supporting godly parents in their covenant responsibilities.

Community

Parental responsibility takes on new dimensions when the role of the professional is cheerfully acknowledged to be delegated by the parents. Parents and others within the Reformed community form a confessing society that elects a Board. That Board and the various committees, made up primarily by parents, oversee the administration of the school. *Parents are not just "involved". They, as a community, establish policy.* We are a self conscious, cooperative community where none can comfortably rest in the role of consumer.

Enrollment

Entrance to our school is open to all covenant children of normal abilities whose parents are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to enroll in our school. It would be disobedient to discriminate based on race or tribe, to make distinctions where Christ has not. Likewise we do not seek to enhance our program by accepting only the brightest or gifted. So how do we achieve excellence? The world's path would be to take only the best. Christ our Redeemer calls us to embrace all covenant children (Matt. 19:13,14). Christ the Lord calls us to a real discipleship of the mind, will, and heart (Col. 2). Ability grouping and individual attention allows students to

progress through a challenging curriculum at their pace. Retention in our program depends on the voluntary submission of parents and students to the disciplines of learning and obedience.

Protectiveness

The child will be shaped by a culture. God established the family to be the primary culture of the child. We fail in our covenant responsibilities if we fail to consciously construct a biblical culture in our homes. The school supports the family in *deliberately* ordering the culture of the community and classroom. As students approach the age of

discernment (the age when we expect them to discern the body of Christ in the elements of communion), the student should be taking a greater role and responsibility for the culture he lives in and creates. Our objective is to equip culture shapers, who have had the advantage of living in, conforming to, and loving a true biblical culture.

High Calling

God's special care of covenant children should impress on us the greatness of this work which counts forever. Our children are eternal beings and our faithfulness as covenant keepers ripples down the generations as blessings or judgement. Our responsibilities are great, but the educators are our beloved co-laborers. Being a teacher "is the noblest of occupations" according to Erasmus. We can attract committed professionals because we honor their sphere of authority and abide by a protocol of courtesy. Because the stakes are high we apply the principles of Matthew 18 in the spirit of Ephesians 4.

If you are interested in further reading about the covenant responsibilities and promises we would suggest two books. Be forewarned, these may challenge more than comfort or entertain.

"Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Childrearing" by Douglas Wilson, Canon Press

Further Homework Assistance S

Ask Adam at <http://remus.rutgers> computer-science student at Rutgers

"The Family: God's Weapon for Victory" by Robert Andrews, WinePress Publishing.

BOOK REVIEW

Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind* I believe this book is a must for all Christians who want to apply their faith more effectively to their daily lives. The main premise of this book is that within the Christian community there no longer exists a Christian world view, the so called "Christian mind," that is applied to all areas of life--politics, education, business, medicine, etc.--and that gauges all issues from an eternal perspective. Blamires states that "we Christians in the modern world accept, for the purpose of mental activity, a frame of reference constructed by the secular mind and a set of criteria reflecting secular evaluations" (pg. 4). Blamires is proven right by the fact that in our century the greatest thinkers and prophets are not Christians. He also gives a call for and a vision of how to develop the Christian mind.

--George Sanker

TO PONDER

The first question and answer from the Heidelberg catechism (which is one of the founding documents of our school):

"What is your only comfort in life, and in death?"
"That I belong--body and soul, in life and in death--not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of His own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that He protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit His purpose for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him".

Coram Deo



Adam Moore, a 20-year-old students in kindergarten through

high school. Mr. Moore and some volunteers personally answer the queries.

Homework Help at <http://www.startribune.com/stonline/html/spacial/homework/> The site is maintained by Star Tribune of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and has electronic bulletin boards for various academic subjects where students can post questions. The boards are monitored by volunteer teachers and experts, who try to post answers within 24 hours.

Homework Help for Kids at http://members.aol.com/Jiskha/Homework_Help/ The site offers tutorials and overviews on about a dozen subjects from language arts to computers. If you still have questions after reading the overviews, you can post a message on the site's bulletin boards and a volunteer will answer it. The professional-looking site was created by Leo Galleguillos, a 14-year-old in Ohio, but 200 volunteers help answer the questions.

Junior Antihomework League at <http://www.jahl.org> This site this year was created by a group of kids fighting for a world where there's no such thing as homework. In a nod to the fact that their campaign isn't likely to succeed, though, the site has a hefty list of links to homework help sites.

Schoolwork Ugh! at <http://www.schoolwork.org/> The site was assembled by a crew of librarians from the Library Association of Rockland County, N.Y., this site offers links to helpful academic Web sites into a few dozen categories.

B.J. Pinchbeck's Homemade Helper at <http://tristate.pgh.net/~pinch13> Contains nearly 300 news and reference sites compiled by a 10-year-old boy and his father.

Ask an Expert Page at <http://njnie.dl.stevens-tech.edu/curriculum/aska.html> Here, experts tackle elementary to college-level questions in math, physics, technology, and other fields.

6th Grade Brain Drain at <http://www.zygomedia.com/61wc> Middle-schooler Patrick White's list of help sites for math, science, English, and Social Studies.

Saxon's Website at <http://www.saxonpub.com> contains basic facts practice, online activities, and math enrichment. You may also ask help with any specific problem, problem sets, tests, or quizzes via e-mail at <info@saxonpub.com>

Reference Sites

Webster's Dictionary at <http://c.gp.cs.cmu.edu:5103/prog/webster>

Britannica Online at <http://www.eb.com> Although a subscription site, they allow free trial use.

OnLine Calculator at <http://www.math.scarolina.edu/cgi-bin/sumcgi/calculator.pl>

Rogert's Thesaurus at http://humanities.uchicago.edu/forms_unrest/ROGET.html

Bartlett's Quotations at <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/bartlett>

Math Dictionary at <http://www.mathpro.com/math/glossary.html>

The Virtual Reference Desk at <http://thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/reference/index/index.html>