



The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy

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REFORMED DISTINCTIVES AS APPLIED TO EDUCATION

Fifth in a series of seven articles by Sterling Mehring, President of the Board of Directors

This is a series of seven articles on those biblical convictions that are historically affirmed by the rich Reformed tradition, and have a strong and direct influence on the educational project of WCA.

You may get copies of last year's *Messengers* in the office, if you missed any of the previous articles. You may direct comments and questions to the Board of Directors.

V. Man the Sinner - What it means to teach students in Adam. Part One.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6:5

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the purity and simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. 11:3

"The conviction of our sin, is the most important conviction that we can have." Robert Murray M'Cheyne

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Total depravity, for some, is an embarrassing concept, a relic of an earlier, less enlightened era. It is a doctrine denied explicitly by society's intellectual elite, and implicitly in the assumptions of our secular institutions. This conviction is rejected in secular school systems, in nearly all literature, and other cultural expressions.

--continued on page 4

OUR TEACHERS AND STAFF

Welcome our new teachers! Music is now taught in all grades by two excellent music teachers. K-4th general music and 5th-6th grade instrumental music is taught by *Mrs. Fransch*, who also continues the Jazz and Band instruction in the Upper School. *Mrs. Fanara* is teaching 5th-6th grade general music, and offers choral music to 8th-12th graders. She used to teach music appreciation to our high school students in SSCA.

We are blessed with a new Kindergarten teacher, the energy-filled *Miss Shoemaker*, and a new 5th grade teacher, *Miss Mary Minor*, who spent her first year after graduating from Covenant College teaching in Africa, before joining us this year.

There is a new friendly face in the library also. A long-time friend of WCA, *Mrs. Keegan* has been involved in the life of our school since the beginning of WCS, when her siblings were students there. She has served WCA ever since, on the Board, on various committees, and many other ways. Her husband is a second grade teacher in Washington D.C., and their two children attend WCA. God's special grace to us placed in Nancy's heart leaving her insurance agent job to become our new librarian. Her training in education, her knowledge and interest in literature, her organizational skills, and her love for children and God are invaluable in that position.

We welcome all of them, and pray for God's gracious blessing on their lives, and the joy of fulfillment of their call.

Staff Needs. Athletics: Due to the ongoing medical issues with our AD and PE teacher, Mr. Jay Barnhart, we have found it necessary to seek out a new AD for the remainder of the school year. This part-time position will require 4-10 hours per week and a knowledge of the athletic opportunities and resources of Montgomery County. Perhaps you or someone you know might be interested. If so, please contact the school office immediately. In the meantime, we offer our thanks to Rev. Bratt and Mrs. Rosetta for helping with the soccer teams. **Latin:** Dr. Katalin Korossy has been ably filling the void, while we are seeking God's provision for a permanent Latin teacher. If you have any leads for this part-time position, please let us know.

James H. Koan, II, Headmaster. The 1999-2000 school year kicks off with a record enrollment of 358, the influx of nearly 100 new covenant children and a renewed commitment by the faculty and administration to offer the very best educational program to our students.

In keeping with that commitment, this year the faculty, administration, and school community will engage in a process of self-study, which Lord willing will lead to our school being accredited next fall by two nationally recognized organizations: the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Much work above and beyond the call of duty will be required of all engaged in this process. At the conclusion of this self-evaluation, we will have achieved the national recognition appropriate to an outstanding educational institution like WCA. In addition, we will have an accurate assessment of our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities as a school on which we can build for the new century at WCA.

Thank you in advance for your prayers and for your positive response to requests for assistance and input.

Janice B. Adams, Associate Headmaster for Academics.

The Associate Headmaster is responsible for every aspect of the academics at WCA, N-12. This includes curriculum, scheduling, technology, and academic enrichment. It is the goal of our current curriculum development efforts to create a smooth academic ramp from preschool to the level of SAT and National Merit achievement that has become common among our seniors. Currently, our elementary teachers are comparing our curriculum with the Core Knowledge Sequence, a well-proven curriculum developed by Ed Hirsch, author of *Cultural Literacy*. We expect WCA students to work with rigor at their ability level through ability grouping at each grade level. Our goal is to produce Christian critical thinkers who are able to participate in the redemption of culture and "...demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God... [to] take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Some specifics about our current school year:

Upper School: Math courses now range from pre-Algebra I, through Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus and Differential Equations, with a wide distribution of students from 5th-12th grades. For example, there are 5th graders in pre-Algebra 2, 8th graders in Algebra 2, etc. A recent Washington Post article stated: "To do well on the SAT, high school students should take four years of college preparatory math... in a sequence that ends in at least pre-calculus, but preferably calculus."

WCA Language offerings include French, Spanish, German, and Latin; these languages will be available through the AP level. We have refined our Latin course to expose our students to ecclesiastical & classical Latin, while embracing the best of the ancient Roman culture. Latin is fully integrated with 7th grade Language Arts by the use of *English Grammar for Latin Students*. Our teachers of modern foreign languages applaud our Latin program for strengthening the ability of students to learn and appreciate the modern languages.

Lower School: Expanded use of Wordly Wise is helping us to begin a consistent approach to learning vocabulary from 3rd-6th grades. We are preparing 6th graders for 7th grade Latin by identifying English words with Latin roots.

We will continue our interdisciplinary reading challenge for elementary students, who are capable of reading beyond the curriculum in science, social studies, and literature. We expect to see broader participation, as teachers use book reports as the first introduction to interdisciplinary reading. Groupings for math are more refined with classes on grade level and above grade level for each grade, due to the presence of two teachers at each grade level. Elementary teachers exhibit the best of team-ship, as each team is free to organize the grade level to best utilize the strengths of the team. Parents of elementary students should expect that any "teacher conferences" will involve both grade-level teachers.

Carol Parent, Director of Teacher/Student Development.

Mrs. Parent provides teachers help with meeting their continuing education requirements, and with various ways to meet the individual needs of all the students. This includes a variety of testing, making referrals for special services, providing materials and research assistance, observing and instructing one or several students in the classrooms, etc. She also offers an assortment of services to parents throughout the year.

This year, WCA is pleased to provide each student in 1st through 12th grades with the *Premier Agenda/Planner*. Realizing that a student who "plans to learn must learn to plan," we have instituted the use of these in all classes. There are four levels of the Planner: Primary (grades 1 and 2), Elementary (grades 3-5), Middle (grades 6-8), and High School (grades 9-12). Each level has an identical blue and white WCA cover. Our school has four goals in mind with the use of the planners. They are:

- 1) To improve the student's academic performance
- 2) To encourage student responsibility and accountability
- 3) To assist the student in tracking homework assignments and grades earned
- 4) To improve home/school communication, relating to the student

Students are expected to follow a few carefully enforced guidelines for planner use:

-The student will have the planner with him/her daily in every class

-The student will record all homework assignments and earned grades in his/her planner on a daily basis and will be allotted sufficient time by teachers to do so

-The planner will be used as a primary communication tool by parents and teachers, so it should be checked daily. Random checking and rewards by the administration and teachers will encourage the above expectations, and we appreciate the assistance and support of parents as we team together to take full advantage of this new resource.

Robin Gropp, Director of Advancement.

Parents, have you ever learned the mission of WCA? It is worthwhile homework. Our mission is to educate students from a Reformed, Christian perspective, drawing from a broad spectrum of the Christian community and developing their God-given talents so that they may worthily occupy their places in society, church, and state.

Isn't that what we really want for our children, that they grow up to be citizens who participate fully in the Lord's work on earth in their own time? Many people love that mission and help us to fulfill it by directing a portion of their tax-deductible charitable giving our way. Are you one of them?

Keep this in mind: your tuition covers the basic operating expenses of the school. Your gifts make possible all the improvements to facility and program that our students enjoy: modular-classrooms, a new roof, fresh paint, new science equipment, etc. As a group, parents, your generosity far surpasses all other donor groups.

Parents are the "closest in" group of donors—those who know the school best. Other donors want to know that many of you believe in the school enough to donate, no matter the amount. Questions about this? Ask me.

Enjoy an evening of celebration and commitment
Friends of the School Banquet
Saturday October 23 at 5:30 p.m.
Silver Spring Christian Reformed Church
(Corner of Arcola and Kemp Mill)
Address: Dr. Joel Nederhood

STUDENT LIFE

Kindergarten. Our very own Brown Bear goes home every night with one of us. He learns about us, and we learn many great lessons from him, for example, when we saw all the troubles he caused when he left our room without permission, and made a lot of mess by eating his honey at places he was not supposed to.

Elementary School. The 2nd graders visited the "Wings of Fancy" butterfly garden at Brookside Nature Center, and made great caterpillar models that move. Check them out in our hallway.

In 5th grade we have already completed a project on earthquakes and volcanoes. Look at our posters! We also signed an ambitious reading contract to help us develop a love for reading, and conducted interviews with people who immigrated into the USA.

In 6th grade we are posting postcards from all over the world, along with the map, to widen our horizon. You may want to help us with our collection.

Upper school. see *US Update*

Volleyball. WCA has added Girls Volleyball to our array of Varsity and Junior Varsity sports offered this fall. Miss Katie Bosscher is the coach of an enthusiastic group of 7th-12th grade girls. Watch the *Koan Zone* for announcements about games or pick up a schedule outside the main office.

WCA Children's Choir. On October 5th, Miss Kuik and Miss De Young will start this after-school choir of 2nd through 6th graders, to sing for God's glory in nursing homes and churches.

ALUMNI. *Sandy Ritsema* arrived safely to Bundmalinga, Uganda, where she is now teaching. There is gunfire nearby to be heard some nights, but she feels God's presence with her, and she is greatly enjoying teaching the several children in her care. Please, pray for her continued safety and blessing. Letters, cards, packages can be sent to: Sandra Ritsema, World Harvest Mission, P.O. Box 383, Fort Portal, Uganda, East Africa. Look for this column, as we regularly report on the lives of our alumni and alumnae.

SCHOOL FAMILY NEWS

Publications. As our school has grown, it was necessary to maintain good communications via various publications. The teachers in K-6th grades send home weekly notes to each home. All Upper School families receive via mail the white *US Update*, containing info on assignments by grades, events, achievements, etc.

The goldenrod-yellow *Koan Zone* is sent home weekly to all families via backpack-mail, and contains up-to-date information we need to know on all administrative

issues, school calendar, schedule of sport games, other events, etc. The monthly blue-colored *Messenger* contains "family news," and various materials pertaining to our educational mission. The *Development Update* contains information about the various development programs at WCA, and is mailed to all families 3 times a year.

PTF. The Parent Teacher Fellowship would like to welcome all new families and those returning, as we begin another year together in the Lord. We would like to encourage parents to check in the school's office, or find the Homeroom Parent for your child's class to volunteer to help out throughout the year. There are many different opportunities, depending on your talents, circumstances, and time. You may help with driving on field trips, planning class parties, helping teachers with copying, sorting papers, etc., etc. There seems to be a correlation between the scholastic success of students and their parents' involvement in the life of their school. The many families, parents and grandparents involved in our school's life make this school so special. We are grateful to God for His good work in progress here at WCA.

Karen Lees, Board liaison to the PTF

Booster Club. Did you know WCA has a Booster Club? The Booster Club is a parent organization designed to support and promote the athletic programs of WCA. With the support of our WCA Community last year, the Booster Club was able to provide transportation for WCA athletes, purchase some unbudgeted items for various teams, and sponsor the Annual Sports Banquet. The WCA Wildcats are very dear to our hearts. You may want to join us in supporting them. Go Wildcats!

Yvonne Hollis

Service Connections. In order to help each other to carry the financial burden of tuition, we desire to keep a roster of businesses and services run by school families. By patronizing the entrepreneurs within the school community, we help one another and also promote the interconnectedness of school families, providing a more nurturing environment for the children. Please, leave your business card or info in the office so we could develop a useful resource listing.

Moms in Touch. We meet weekly for prayer for our school and school families. You may contact Jeri Lowe with prayer concerns. At this time, 7th grader *Luke Johnston* and his family especially is on our heart, as Luke was just diagnosed with cancer. Also, *Mr. Barnhart* has been having back problems, and many of our teachers have ailing parents to care for. Let all of us hold them up in prayer before the throne of our gracious Father.

SOCIETY AND BOARD

WCA Society. The highest governing authority over WCA is the Society. When the first Reformed Christian schools were formed over one-hundred years ago, they were governed by their churches. But later they began to opt for government by a society of church members who were especially interested in the welfare of the schools and their responsibilities for educating their children from a Christian perspective. Society governance allows the school to be independent of any one particular church congregation, and provides a more stable and far-sighted vision by enfolded of many older Christians who see the future of the church in its

covenant children.

WCA was founded by, and has always been governed by, the Society, and welcomes new members and the wisdom they bring.

The WCA Society elects the Board of Directors, and passes judgement on its major decisions in triennial meetings. The Board, in turn, appoints standing committees, comprised of Board members, Society members, and school community members, to carry out many of its specific duties and to advise the Board.

The Society holds, as its basis, the *Holy Bible*, as interpreted by several Reformed standards, including the *Westminster* and *Belgic Confessions*, the *Heidelberg* and *Westminster Larger and Shorter catechisms*, and the *Canons of Dort*.

Anyone who is in agreement with these and other founding principles of the Society, and who has a desire to devote their time and talents to the general promotion of Reformed Christian education through the work of WCA, is encouraged to join the Society. To do so, you must submit an application to the Society Membership committee of the Board of Directors. Applications can be obtained from the school office, from the chair of the Membership committee, or you can download a copy from the WCA Web site at <http://www.wca1.org> (follow the link to "Society"). The first Society meeting of the 1999-2000 academic year will be held **Tuesday, October 5**, at 7:30pm in the All Purpose Room at the school. In addition to reports by some of the Board committees and the Headmaster, a highlight of the meeting will be a Keynote address by Mr. Dan VanderArk, entitled "From Here You Can See Forever." Mr. VanderArk is the Executive Director of Christian Schools International (Grand Rapids, Michigan). Don't miss it!

Howard Bushouse, Chair, Society Membership committee

Reformed Heritage Seminar. C. H. Spurgeon once said, Reformed theology is nothing other than biblical Christianity. Three Thursday nights, September 23, 30, and October 7, we can deepen our understanding of this biblical reformed faith, and how it relates to everything we do at WCA. Rev. Bratt will speak on the first two evenings on the Reformed faith, and on the third evening Mr. VanderArk will talk about the educational implications of our faith. Highly recommended to all parents.

Heritage Library at WCA. The reformed worldview is non other than seeing all aspects of life through the glasses of God's Word, the Scriptures. This includes our approach to education, as well. In addition to the above seminar, you may further learn about the philosophical and educational basis of our Christian school by checking out some of the materials from the WCA Reformed Heritage Library!

The self-checkout library, established last year, is located in the main office, and is divided into four sections: Reformed Theology, Classical and Christian Education, Christian World and Life View, and CSI and ACSI Recommended Books on Education. It contains books, magazines and audio tapes. A white binder by the collection contains a short abstract on each title. The

most basic material within each section is marked with an asterisk (*). Use the library for the benefit of the children, and for the glory of God. It is our sincere hope that the library will be a blessing to many in their service to the Lord.

Education Committee

Man the Sinner

--continued from page 1

What it means to teach students in Adam

Despite that, Christians recognize that the depravity of man or the defilement of "all the parts and faculties of soul and body," is the one Christian doctrine that is empirically verifiable. The problem is there for all to see, and Christianity has a way to account for it. For the theologically minded Christian, it is a most encouraging conviction. The orthodox affirmation of total depravity recognizes the radical character of the "problem" of the human condition. It describes the vast gulf between our collective dreams and our inability to escape the prison of sin. Our meager striving, the vast catalogue of human solutions, and the mighty institutions of man appear nothing like the bridge we know we need to a just and righteous society. Encouraging? Yes, because our total inability and disinclination on a human level gives way to a radical and divine solution. Total depravity refers to the extent of sin in our lives, rather than the degree of it. Our conviction is not that man is as bad as he could be, but that sin has infected every department of man. Man in his totality is depraved and disinclined to desire the good and obey God. Sin's corruption is evident in our emotions, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and choices.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IN A SCHOOL?

Now, if we believe that every descendant of Adam, whether parent, teacher, or student, is "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil" (Westminster VI:4); and we believe that the corruption of sin is so radical that it has affected and defiled all the faculties of our souls; then we expect our school to be different from the institutions with more popularly accepted assumptions.

Discipline is part of the Curriculum

Sin is no surprise. We expect it and program for it. A Christian school teaches obedience through loving discipline. Although children do not like to acknowledge it, discipline is an evidence of our love for the child (Prov. 13:24). By it we are directing the covenant child in the way of eternal happiness (Prov.23:14). Discipline proceeds from love and is calmly exercised to direct the student back into fellowship with God and others. The primary issue is submission to God and His laws. The goal is obedience that comes from the heart, an obedience that is motivated by a recognition of God's authority and the desire to obey His commandments. We do not expect the child to be good naturally. He has to be trained in obedience. Apart from the work of the Spirit, there is no willingness or ability to obey God. But children of the covenant can respond to discipline and experience true repentance.

--See Part Two in the next Messenger

TO PONDER. Discussing on what basis he believed in God, C. S. Lewis said, "I believe the sun has risen, not because I see it clearly, but because by its light I see everything else."

Coram Deo

Ask any seventh graders what this phrase means!