

The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy
1820 Franwall Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20902
Tel: 301-649-1070, FAX: 301-649-9863, www.wca1.org

FROM THE HEADMASTER. Every new school year brings a major flurry of activity that includes new schedules, changes in the facility, new families, new teachers, and, in this case, even a new Headmaster. We had a good start to the school year with enthusiasm, a positive tone, and excitement about celebrating the 40th anniversary of the school, on October 21 (see page 3).

We are very thankful for the new faculty that the Lord has sovereignly brought to the WCA community: Mrs. Donna Troxell (Grade 3), Mr. Bryan Austin (Theology and Algebra), Miss Amy Strickler (Latin, Extended School Care Director), Mr. Wade Simons (Computer Keyboard, Math, and Extended Care), Mr. David McGlone (PE), and Miss Karen Myers (Office Manager, Registrar, and Journalism). Please look for more about these teachers in future issues of the *Messenger*.

We are very grateful to the parents who participated in the Parent Survey conducted last spring. One of the most tangible results of your expressions was our concentration on facility improvement, which is now quite evident throughout the school. Major attention has also been given to the cleanliness of the building, and a new phone system was installed to facilitate communication. Please express your appreciation to the Board for the allocation of funds to accomplish these needed changes.

We also reorganized our administrative team to achieve greater clarity of organization, and more sharply defined responsibility with corresponding accountability. The changes are detailed in our new *Parent and Student Handbook*.

In the next issue, we will review our goals for this year, including the vital Strategic Plan that the Board is currently developing for the future of WCA. We are excited about God's provision, and look forward to being a part of His gracious work this 40th year of Washington Christian Academy.

Ron Whipple
Headmaster

LONG AGO...NOT FAR AWAY. More than forty-five years ago, a group of parents, young couples, and singles met in the Fellowship Hall (basement) of the Washington D.C. Christian Reformed Church. The purpose of this meeting was to form a Christian School Society, and to begin working toward the establishment of a Christian Day School in the DC/MD area. Many who were there had already caught the vision of, and had the commitment to, Christian education for their children, being products of the Christian education movement themselves. The existence of those schools had antedated by decades the formation of the Washington Christian School Society. But although there were well-established Lutheran and Roman Catholic schools in the area, there was no Christian school which was uniquely Reformed in its basis, and governed by a society of believers.

Like-minded people were invited and urged to join the group, and, oh, yes, "Send money!" (Some things *never* change!) A steering committee was formed and a membership charter and Constitution were drawn up. Many committees were formed: property procurement, publicity, finance, etc. Board members were elected.

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The Washington Christian Academy Bus

REFORMED DISTINCTIVES IN EDUCATION

A series of Articles from our Board of Directors

PART VI. MAN, THE IMAGE OF GOD: WHAT IT MEANS TO TEACH ETERNAL BEINGS

“God created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image,” Westminster Confession IV.2

“What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.” Psalms 8:4-6

What Is The Difference?

Orthodox Christianity stands at odds with the assumptions of our culture. The secular assumptions that man’s beginnings are accidental, that his lonely path in the universe is determined by chance, and that his destiny is silence and oblivion have not lead to the personal liberation hoped for. Secular humanism sought to free man from Divine scrutiny, submission, and judgment in order to elevate him and give him expressive freedom. But instead, it created a popular culture that is increasingly bleak, coarse, and gloomy. Two weeks before his death, Albert Einstein issued a statement with Bertrand Russell, stating, “Those who know the most are the most gloomy.”

The reformers, however, emphasized the real dignity of man. Christianity gives the only durable basis for human value and dignity by proclaiming man to be like God. But like God in what way?

Immortal Beings

“God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Genesis 2:7

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the Sprit shall return unto God who gave it.” Ecc. 12:7

Only God is eternal by nature, but at creation He made man with a living soul that will never die. Pondering this, C. S. Lewis writes, “...remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption which you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations...There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these

are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.”

God created man for an eternal purpose, which gives him meaning and significance. Therefore, what we do now, and how we treat each other, counts forever.

Made in God’s Image

What does it mean to be in the image of God? First of all, man’s moral nature, spiritual nature, and mind are unique in creation. The image of the triune God is also seen in the relational character of man: his fulfillment in marriage and his persistent desire for community. Furthermore, man’s job description in the creation covenant (Gen. 1:28) casts man as God’s representative. Man is the very image of an invisible ruler, which is how Moses’ contemporaries used the word *image* in the ancient near east. Man is important because of the reflective dignity of God. The higher we elevate God in our thinking and our lives, the more seriously we will take man, and value each individual.

What Difference Does It Make In A School?

All ideas have consequences. We see the consequences of modern humanistic ideas in secular schools. But what would be the result of God-revealed ideas in a school?

Eternal Perspective

The mission of our school is significant because we are educating eternal creatures, shaping their character for eternity. The word *character* literally means an enduring mark or an imprint. If we are going to write on eternal souls with indelible ink, we want to be thorough, careful, and methodical.

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THE WCA FACELIFT. Something felt different as I entered WCA a few weeks ago, on the first day of my fifth year at this school. It wasn't the hallway that seemed more crowded than ever. That was to be expected. It wasn't all the new faces I saw alongside all my old friends. It was something that I couldn't put my finger on. Then, as I entered the All Purpose Room for Chapel, it struck me: the floors were new, and they weren't only new in the APR, but all over the school! There were other changes besides the new floors that gave the school a totally different feeling. The newly painted pillars in the front of the school with their brick bases also added to the new feeling, not to mention our very own beautiful yellow bus, parked in the front, and the

new roof that is now almost completed. There was definitely something in the air. WCA looked better than ever.

I feel that the new look of our school makes a difference for everyone at WCA. I take pride in the appearance of my school, and I am glad that WCA has received a bit of a facelift. Maybe it's the shiny floors that make the biggest difference, or maybe it's the "Wildcats" sign that hangs across the ceiling in the main hall. I'm not sure what makes us the happiest, I only know that I am thankful to go to WCA, and any improvements that are made on the building make me take an even greater pride in my school.

*Susanna Brockman
Junior*

**Celebrate with Us:
40 Years of Commitment to the Covenant
Children**

Visit www.wca1.org to R.S.V.P. online and to
view our guest list
or R.S.V.P. by calling 301-649-1070
(Can't come? We very much desire to hear from you
anyway.)

School Visits

School is in session
Friday, October 20, until noon,
and visitors are welcome.
Elementary Chapel will be held at
9:30, and tour guides will be
available 9:00-11:30 a.m.

**Friends of the School
Banquet**

Saturday, October 21, 2000, at
6:00 p.m.
At the School
\$15 per person
Address: Rev. Richard N. Ellis

Reunion Coffee

Saturday, October 21, 2000
10. a.m.-noon, at the school
Join students, parents, and teachers from your era to remember
what God has done and reflect on what He is doing

LONG AGO...NOT FAR AWAY, *continued from page 1*

Many are the memories, both corporate and individual, of the prayers, patience, and perseverance from that period before the first ringing of the school bell. That bell opened the door to the three classrooms in the little 'White House' (no longer there) on the Arcola Avenue property where the Arcola Campus of Yeshiva of Greater Washington is presently located.

Before that first school day, walls had to be knocked down, partitions put up, desks (the old-fashioned kind) and floors had to be sanded, the furnace and plumbing inspected, windows secured. The symbolic old oak tree needed to be trimmed, a second old house (condemned) had to be burned down by the MCFD, and the field mowed. Curriculum needed to be determined, textbooks selected, teachers appointed, and pupils enrolled. All of the above occurred – not likely in that order – but sort of all at once. Along with some early blood, sweat, and tears, much excitement and eager anticipation accompanied the opening, in September, 1960, of the Washington Christian School.

Through all of these early beginnings, to say nothing of growth, transitions, and achievement through the years, God's blessing was and is continually invoked, His faithfulness constantly recognized, His guidance earnestly sought, and His forgiveness humbly requested.

May the God of all Grace spiritually and materially bless all aspects of Washington Christian Academy - its supporters, parents, and families; its Administration and Staff; the Society and Board Members; and, perhaps most of all, its students: PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE! Soli Deo Gloria.

*Mentey Slager
Founder*

TRADITIONS, TRADITIONS. Those schools most successful in impressing their worldview on their students are rich in traditions. Traditions help keep the memories and values of the school near one's heart for life. Traditions strengthen the ties between students, parents, staff, and alumni.

We have several traditions at WCA which have enriched our community for many years. Once again we are busy planning for this year's Bazaar, which will be held on November 18th, and preparations have been started for the Promise Tree

event. As our school grows, we value input from those who have gone before. If anyone has memories of special traditions that were part of WCS in years past, or has a suggestion for what might become a great future tradition, please send those ideas to Robin Gropp, our director of Advancement, at rgropp@wca1.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Connie Mehring
PTF coordinator*

SHARING PROMISE TREE MEMORIES.

The tradition of Promise Tree auction has been a part of WCA for more than 20 years. It has been held at Silver Spring Christian Reformed Church, at our Franwall location, at the Church of the Atonement, and (last year) at Einstein High School. First, there was an actual tree to which all promises were attached on a piece of paper, then removed at random to be auctioned off. Later, as the number of items grew, the promises were listed in a booklet. In the early years, every promise was auctioned aloud, but then, the silent auction section has become increasingly more significant, shortening the evening and allowing for more items to enter. Originally, a dinner preceded the auction, therefore the event was called the Promise Tree Dinner. Then, the name was changed to Promise Tree Auction to follow a change in menu: finger food allowed more movement, facilitating both bidding and fellowship. Sometimes we've enjoyed a specific theme or color scheme to our décor. Our accounting/check-out process has progressed, also. Early on, it kept us at school far into the night, but has become much more smooth with the help of automation.

We have only sketchy records of its early history. As we approach our 40th year, wouldn't it be fun to gather some recollections of past Promise Tree auctions? If you helped organize or participated in Promise Tree Dinners in the past, let us hear from you about the year, the location, who was the auctioneer, and what special thing you remember about the evening!

*Nancy Keegan
Librarian*

PROMISE TREE 2001. The Promise Tree Auction supports our growing tuition assistance program. All income from the event is used to make an excellent Reformed education more accessible for covenant children. Last year, we auctioned off 212 items and raised a record \$23,175 for our

tuition assistance program, enabling many students to attend our school, who could otherwise not afford it. The many goods and services of the live and silent auction were donated by school families, teachers, classes, friends of the school, supportive corporations, and local businesses.

Promise Tree is a fun and memorable evening we look forward to each year. Be sure to mark your calendar for this year's Promise Tree on Saturday, April 28, 2001, and if you desire to volunteer to acquire donations or to help at the event, please contact us via our web site, by mail, or by phone.

*Jean Visy
Parent*

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. As we begin our 40th year of operations at Washington Christian Academy, we desire to use the collective experience of our past to plan for our future. It is, of course, due solely to God's faithfulness and provision over those 40 years that we can look back with a sense of satisfaction and thankfulness for the great strides that have been taken since Washington Christian School first opened its doors in 1960.

We are now a Pre-K through 12th grade institution, employing over 40 staff and faculty members (many of whom hold advanced degrees in their particular field or in education in general), and educating 360 students who represent dozens of church homes throughout the metropolitan Washington, DC area. In addition to school-wide music, art, and physical education programs, we are now able to offer students courses in several foreign languages, advanced placement high school classes, and electives that include band and chorus, science, math and chess clubs, drama, yearbook, journalism, and photography. We also now field athletic teams in basketball, volleyball, cross-country, soccer, baseball, tennis, and track. Academically, our graduates earn consistently high SAT scores, and have gone on to be accepted at many high-quality colleges and universities throughout the region and the country, preparing to serve God's Kingdom with their utmost. Most importantly, we strive to fulfill our mission that every child eventually would occupy his or her place worthily in society, church, and state.

It would be easy and tempting at this point to say to ourselves "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years; take life easy." We must never forget, however, that everything that has been

accomplished has been a gift from God and we must continue to be good and faithful stewards of all that has been given us. From a practical point of view, the blessing of a continually growing student population has placed an ever increasing burden on the current school facilities, which is now bursting at the seams with programs and people. One of the most critical tasks currently before the Board of Directors is to work out a solution to this problem; whether it be moving our high school to another location, renting a bigger building, or buying a building, they look to God for guidance and provision.

We must also continue to nurture and develop our faculty and staff, providing for more comprehensive and stable programs, with a particular need to provide for those covenant children who have learning disabilities. Finally, as Reformed Christians, we must be diligent in our efforts to continue to provide an overall educational program that teaches our students to see God's hand at work in every area of creation and their lives, and to subsequently approach all aspects of their daily adult lives in a manner that is both pleasing to God and seeks to further His kingdom here on Earth.

We say, "Thank you and God bless you" to the thousands of parents, students, staff, and school supporters who have prayed, sacrificed, and worked so hard and given so much over the past 40 years to make Washington Christian Academy what it is today. "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

*Howard Bushouse
Board President*

FROM AN ALUMNUS. I graduated from Washington & Lee University School of Law in 1999, and am presently serving a two-year clerkship with a federal bankruptcy judge in Virginia. I also recently married a wonderful Christian woman, and she and I are actively involved with our church, serving with the youth group, and participating in a weekly Bible study. My time at WCA (SSCA) was an integral part of my educational and spiritual development. The education I received helped teach me the lordship of Christ over all of life and left me well-prepared for college and law school. My relationships with students and faculty encouraged me in my faith and challenged me to excel. In short, my time at WCA has prepared me for life in the body of Christ and in the pursuit of my legal career.

*Calvin Smith
Class of 1992*

Of all people, we have a compelling reason to be sure that our curriculum includes all aspects of the educational mandate. We intentionally cultivate the students' character, affections, minds, and bodies. The Greeks gave great attention to defining the *Paideia*, the total *corpus* of what must be conveyed to the next generation so that they could be called educated. This became a national project and a great intellectual achievement – so much so that even after their political influence was lost, they still ruled the minds of the world. They became the “educators of the world.” Today, the world does not have a comprehensive *Paideia*, but Christians have an affirmative mandate to provide a truly comprehensive and biblical *Paideia*, encompassing all aspects of knowledge, to convey to the rising generations all that is true and good and beautiful, to make them truly educated. Such Christian education glorifies God, dignifies man, and builds up society.

Significant People

Christianity abolishes distinctions of value. In the eyes of God, and therefore in our own as well, all are equally valuable: teacher, parent, or student. Our different roles require each of us to submit to others in different ways, but all of us submit to a rule of respect for God's image. This affects the standards of courtesy and respect we expect from, and give to, students, as well as to each other. This also determines godly discipline (both in the school and in the homes), which focuses on offense against God and his standards, and not on human preferences.

Educate the Whole Child

The founders of our school made a particular point in their concise statements that we must educate the whole child, not only his mind and body. The image of God is multidimensional, so we intentionally seek to cultivate all the capacities God gives the student. The mind must be cultivated, because it is the primary vehicle for contact with God. It is so significant that God communicates to us in human language. God revealed himself in the Word of God; his Son is the Word made flesh. Language is built into the very mind of man - it is part of being the image of God. So the expert use of language is central, therefore we teach Latin and we highly esteem reading and writing composition skills. We want each graduate to leave the school with a love of books, and with an able use of language.

In addition to training the mind and the body, a curriculum fully integrated around the Word of God ensures the nurture of the moral and spiritual natures of the student, which is further effectively influenced by the wise choice of imaginative literature. We acknowledge the spiritual dimension of life in every class.

Individual Attention

We strive to instill real respect based on real accomplishments that meet a standard. Empty assertions of self-esteem leave teacher and child ultimately dissatisfied. To help each child realize their full potential, it is important to “consider their frame,” as Charlotte Mason is fond of saying. Individual learning styles are carefully considered, especially in the early grades. Placement, curriculum and homework standards are designed to be developmentally appropriate. Our tradition of volunteerism in the classroom and our commitment to small class sizes are consequences of these convictions.

For further reading we suggest:

C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, Simon and Schuster, 1996. (available in our WCA Heritage Library)

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter IV, with Scripture references. (available in our WCA Heritage Library)

J. I. Packer & Thomas Howard, *Christianity, the True Humanism*, Regent College Publishing, 1985.

*Sterling Mehring
Vice President, Board of Directors*

TO PONDER. “[Faith ought to be] the central organizing companion to other kinds of knowledge...Christian scholarship and institutions are necessary, so the insights of the gospel can judge critically the academy and the culture, as well as the church. The only alternative is to allow the church to be judged by the academy, and the gospel to be judged by the culture.”

Mars Hill interview with James S. Burtchael,
Author of *The Dying of the Light:
The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their
Christian Churches* (*Mars Hill Audio*, Vol. 36)

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