

The **Messenger**

Washington Christian Academy
1820 Franwall Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20902
Tel: 301-649-1070, Fax: 301-649-9863
<http://www.wca1.org>

REFLECTIONS Larry Danner, Headmaster

PILGRIMS IN A STRANGE LAND

Psalm 137 is a beautiful poem, a song of pathos reflecting the quiet ache of suffering long endured. The psalm is the tale of God's people in a foreign land, and it addresses the difficulty of being godly in a godless world. It is the song that is likely to be the hymn of our children in the 21st century, a song of difficulty they will find hard to sing.

There is a subtle yet significant distinction between problems and difficulties. Problems have solutions and can thereby be ended. Difficulties, however, have no easy solutions, but are a part of the living and breathing of life in a fallen world. Problems challenge our intellect and intuition. Difficulties do more; they challenge our character.

Living for God in a godless world is not a problem to be solved, it is a difficulty to be endured. It will never be over; it will never be easy. Psalm 137 identifies three dangers that contribute to that difficulty. First, there is the danger of losing heart (vs.1-4). The psalmist records that the people of God were being mocked by the unbelieving society that surrounded them. The oppression of continuous ridicule took such a toll on them that in their despair they cried, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Second, there is the danger of compromising our faith (vs. 5-6), of losing the uniqueness of biblical theology and worship by mingling it with other faiths or by giving way to the material ease of the pagan lifestyle. Third, there is the danger of becoming bitter in the face of prolonged injustices (vs. 7-9), a resentment that comes from seeing the unjust go unpunished and the righteous go unrewarded.

Our children are growing up in a society where those same three dangers make it difficult for them to live a godly life. Almost daily they see Christianity heckled, and that ridicule and mockery is an insidious destroyer of their confidence and courage. The prestige of the world's wisdom and the pomp of its wealth tug at the interests and allegiances of our children's hearts, making it hard to be true to the Gospel and the demanding life to which genuine

—continued on next page

Psalm 137

- 1 *By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.*
- 2 *There on the poplars we hung our harps,*
- 3 *for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"*
- 4 *How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?*
- 5 *If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.*
- 6 *May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.*
- 7 *Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"*
- 8 *O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us—*
- 9 *he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.*



Erica Gropp, Lauren Minite, and Nathan Hoeksema in the December 6 and 7 performances of *You Can't Take It With You*, another delightful production of our WCA King's Players.

—HEADMASTER

—continued from page 1

faith is sometimes called. Frustration at the inequities of life becomes a piper calling our children to the dark dance that waltzes from doubt to cynicism to fatalism.

How indeed will our children be able to sing the Lord's song in this strange land? They will be able to do it because God has not left them to sing on their own. He has given our children parents—you and me—and, by His grace, we can make the difference. We can sing the song for them and with them. We can teach them the truth of the Gospel so that they can recognize that the flashy half-truths of the world are nothing more than whole lies. We can talk to them of the courage it takes to withstand the ridicule that can be so devastating at their age. We can be candid about the appeal of the things of this world and equally candid about the price attached to them. We can teach them not to expect quick or easy solutions to things that are difficult. We can teach them that although we do not have an answer for all of the inequities we see in this life, we do have a response: faith, a faith that says that although we may not always see what God is doing, and although we may not always understand what God is doing, we can always trust what God is doing.

The Lord's song is the song of the Gospel, a song of courage, perseverance, and trust. You, like I, want your children to sing that song with passion and conviction, and, by His grace, this they will do. They will do it in spite of the difficulties because they learned how from you, one verse of life at a time. △



A leaf-bird by Schuyler Clark, 4th grade, is one of the many beautiful creations our students made from God's beautiful creation of colorful Fall leaves

The Role of the Christian School in our National Life

The Friends of the School Banquet on October 19 both delighted our palates and deepened our commitment to Christian education. The filet mignon prepared by parent Dave Calkins was, in the words of our headmaster, "so good you wanted to just keep it in your mouth and not swallow." But the profound thoughts on Christian schooling Dr. Glen C. Knecht offered will have a more lasting effect. He is the Pastor of Congregational Care at Fourth Presbyterian Church. Excerpts follow.

The prophet Isaiah taught us by the Holy Spirit that the people of God are the substance or core of the land. When he prophesied the judgment to come upon the land, he saw that there would be a stump remaining after the national tree was felled.

If God's people are the essential vitality of the nation, then they need to be conscious of that key place, be intentional about it, rejoice in it, and prepare for what that role means in reference to their Christian schools. [The schools must] prepare and train the very vital heart, the stock, the substance of the nation....[Here are some of the ways] we must prepare our young people in Christian schools to be that holy stock:

- They must know who they are and where and when they live....And they are set in the 21st century by God's design. James Boice and Franklin Graham, two mighty servants of this age are the products of Christian schools that made them ready to bear the heavy weight of Christian leadership in this hour.
- The way we train our students is the way they will serve their age. We teach by the way we administrate and counsel and develop the school as well as by the classroom lessons we teach.
- We must teach them to keep God's priority first—that is the home...Our goal is to build strong marriages, parents, and dynamic singles out of those whom God sends us as students.
- They must know the humility of sacrifice....We must beware of pride about what God has done, lest our students absorb that pride and seek great things for themselves instead of seeking to be servants of the land.
- Our goal is to produce servants who can become leaders....Our students need a *metanoia*—a change of mind—from doing their will to doing God's will; from wanting to be something great to being a servant; from fitting in with the world to changing the world.
- Our students need a keen biblical view of the church....Let them become mighty churchmen and churchwomen in the days to come.
- They are to see their life and work eschatologically, that is, thinking of the generations to come....

To be God's people, the vital center of American life, is a tall order....And to prepare our young people to be the stock of the nation is an even taller one. Our resource is the blessed Holy Spirit and our Matchless Master. If we would serve Him, we must follow Him.

The best is yet to be for the Christian school in America. At its best, it will be a shaper, a refiner, and a beautifier of our national life—for God's glory. △



On the Way to 200K

We are grateful for gifts from new friends and old, from parents and grandparents, in envelopes dropped off by neighbors and in envelopes mailed from thousands of miles away. Our goal, \$200,000 is still distant, but the Academy Fund is off to a strong start.

How does God move hearts? Some of the reasons we hear for giving to WCA are as follows:

The inspiring vision. The noble task of preparing the next generation to wear the mantle of Christian leadership, starting right in the Washington area, captivates many who want their lives to count toward building God's kingdom. People suddenly find time in their schedules to serve on committees that plan for the school's future, and they find ways to redirect some of their family revenues to the school.

A thankful heart. Parents and grandparents watching their beloved little ones unfold into thoughtful young Christians sometimes "overflow" with gratitude. Not uncommonly, the overflow takes the form of gifts either to help students afford tuition or to pave the way for future WCA students though gifts toward land and buildings.

Starting new programs. Many donors have had a hand in funding the early steps in our athletic program. Our theatre program is benefiting from designated gifts in its first two

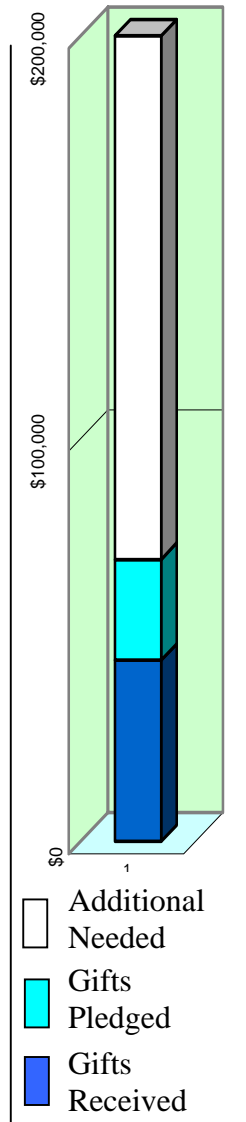
years. Technology got off the ground at WCA in a similar way. (Note: the WCA music department does not yet own a Steinway piano.)

Solutions. You have responded with simple kindness in the past to our need for a new roof and other repairs or upgrades to our facility. We consider it God's mercy that we have no needs of this kind this year.

Oh, give me a home...Some of us have never known WCA when it had enough space (i.e., from 1982 until 1996). Since 1998, we have been pursuing a dizzying number of ways to expand our facilities, on site and off. You helped us add our modular buildings. You are helping us pursue the beautiful site in Olney and several others. We are thankful for the significant funds that you send to our Expansion Fund for this purpose. Further, a new urgency faces us with our landlord, Montgomery County Public Schools, has announcing publicly its intention of reoccupying this building in 2005.

Tax Deductions. God has favored us with a government that rewards charitable giving. Thank Him for this each time you write a check to WCA, our church, or any nonprofit.

In the Development Office, we try to set realistic goals, and we let you know all about the needs, plans, and vision of the school. Then we pray, because God is the one who moves hearts and who knows where each family should direct its charitable giving.



-Robin Gropp
Director of Advancement



Jonathan Menkis, 3rd grade, at Mount Vernon, in George Washington's fanning chair

SOCIETY. The October meeting of the WCS Society was a pleasure to attend. New families and old, faculty and founders all joined the amicable discussions and enjoyed fellowship together. The newly formatted Constitution and Bylaws passed unanimously. The purpose of the changes was to bring our documents up the current "best practices" standards recommended for nonprofits. The main changes are the division into two documents (Constitution and Bylaws) and a few strictures such as term limits for board members and the requirement that nominees to board service not be spouses of full-time employees. We invite all to read the new documents at our website at www.wcal.org. There was also good news regarding our continued pursuit of the Gandel property. While we don't yet have a signed document, all parties have agreed in principle to the contract's terms.

-Howard Bushouse, President of the Board

...at the Bazaar Some come for the Dutch pastries, lovingly made by founders and friends. Others, with ages in the single digits, come to bounce and drape cotton candy across their mouths. The WCA Christmas Bazaar gave pleasure to our school family, once again. Many thanks to Pam Garren for organizing the entire event. Thanks to parents for countless hours of help, to teachers for use of their rooms and their oliebollen cooking skills, to Camp Sunshine for providing the moon bounce. Δ

Rachel Steen's Top Ten

Last year I was a student, finishing college, and now I'm a 4th grade teacher! Some parents, students, and other teachers have commented on how I'm usually smiling. I guess the reason is that I'm actually having a good time.

I was asked to write an article about what it has been like to be a new teacher at a Christian school. I have decided to sum up my experience with a top ten list of the blessings of teaching fourth grade at WCA. So here goes (in no particular order):

1. *God's sovereignty.* As an excited and occasionally insecure and overwhelmed first-year teacher at Washington Christian Academy, I have been confident and sure of this: God has truly called me to WCA. After hearing about the job opening, I began to research the school, and became excited. My own great-great grandfather, Klaas Kuiper, was mentioned on the WCA website! I had been considering teaching in Chicago, but God worked within me, so that suddenly I was hoping for a job at WCA.

2. *Supportive colleagues.* After I was hired, I received only kindness and help from the whole staff. Mrs. Parent has been encouraging me with ideas, prayer, even notes and gifts. Peppy Brown, the other fourth grade teacher, uplifts me everyday with her relaxed style, her creativity, and her love for the students.

3. *Students.* I have enthusiastic, cheerful, and often rather live-wired students to work with each day. This is a real blessing for someone teaching for the first time. They truly desire to learn, which makes them fun to teach!

4. *Prayer.* Each morning, I hear the prayer requests of the students and then we pray for one another. What an

important part of being in a community together—praying with students, with parents at conferences, and with the faculty at our weekly devotions. I am thankful for a God who wants to hear all our concerns.

5. *The end of the terrifying time of the sniper attacks.* What a relief it was to take the students outside for recess again, and to be able to enjoy the changing colors of fall.

6. *Parents.* I was more than little nervous about parent-teacher conferences, but these meetings ended up being a highlight of the school year. I learned more about my students, and I also was able to see how families are working with their children.

7. *Teaching.* The actual practice of teaching new concepts and helping students understand language arts, science, math, history, geography, and the Bible, is incredibly satisfying work, especially when this exploration of creation can be carried out freely acknowledging and praising the Creator.

8. *Chapel.* I love chapel Thursdays. What a blessing it is to hear the WCA elementary students praising God together in song.

9. *Laughter.* Whether in the teacher workroom or when something funny is said in class, I have so appreciated those moments of laughter with others.

10. *Recognition as a teacher.* Early in the year I was eating at a local pizza place and jotting down notes about a lesson for the following day. A boy came up to me and asked, "Are you a teacher? You look like a teacher." Wow! He could tell! I'm not sure what gave me away, but I realized at that moment that this is a profession through which I feel blessed to serve God. △

A Well-Churched Community

Everyone who applies to WCA learns that we are a "covenant school." This means that the school exists to support the church, especially the future church. Every WCA family is a "churched" family. Over the years, WCA has intentionally developed a rich network of friendships with many church communities—and this has been our strength.

Three churches in the Reformed tradition hold primacy in our history. It was the Washington, D.C., Christian Reformed Church (CRC) that first "got the bug." The CRC invited Wallace Presbyterian Church and Knox Orthodox Presbyterian Church to partner with them to found our school. In 1960, after seven years of preparation, The Washington Christian School (WCS) opened. While attracting mostly students from Reformed churches, the school welcomed Christian families from a broad spectrum of denominations, just as it does today.

Our founders determined for us a special relationship with the

—continued on next page



WCA "won" a visit from the turkeys here gawking at Mr. Danner because we had so many students in attendance at Fourth Presbyterian's Thursday Breakfast Club.

historic Protestant faith. By requiring our Board and Society members and staff to affirm the Reformed confessions, they ensured the school would continue to be guided by a Reformed perspective on education. Our students learn all subjects as under the sovereignty of God. As they examine human culture, they distinguish godly efforts to subdue the earth (Genesis 1:26) from hurtful and self-seeking human endeavors.

Since the Washington, D.C., CRC planted its daughter church near the school, the Silver Spring CRC has also enriched our community with students, teachers, board members, and gifts. WCA thankfully receives quarterly love offerings from the Silver Spring CRC and regular gifts from the missions budget of Knox.

The Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda holds the distinction of sending us the most students: forty-four currently. Other churches that send large numbers of students are Silver Spring CRC with twenty-three students, Wallace Presbyterian with twenty-two students, Presbyterian Church of the Atonement with eighteen students, and Derwood Bible Church with fifteen students.

About one third of our students attend Reformed churches today. The next largest group is Baptist, with fifty students from many different churches. We have fourteen Methodist students, nine Lutheran, seven AME, and seven Roman Catholic students. Currently 121 churches send us our 371 students.

Wallace played a second founding role in 1986. School parents and church members pooled their talents and resources to found Silver Spring Christian Academy for students in grades 9-12 at a time when WCS ended at the 8th grade. In 1996, the two schools merged and was named Washington Christian Academy.

We are also thankful for the many churches that have shared their facilities with us for school events, often free of charge.

The pastors of our local Reformed churches often share their gifts with us by speaking in chapel. Occasionally, we turn to them for support of other kinds. On September 11, 2001, and during the recent sniper attacks, pastors from Atonement, the Silver Spring CRC, Shady Grove Presbyterian, and other churches arrived on campus to help in any way they could.

Perhaps the greatest gift our churches have given us is prayer. From 1953 to 2002, it pleased God to bring the school into being, sustain it through hardships, and pour His blessings on us in response to the prayers of pastors, church leaders, and laity. We bless our founders who planned for us to be a “well-churched” community.

Our mission is truly a mission to the Church. We desire to help families raise the next generation of servants and leaders for the Church.

–Robin Gropp

Director of Advancement



If you would like to donate an auction item or service for the Promise Tree Auction, please contact Jean Visy by February 1st at JVisy@comcast.net. Donation forms are available in the school office.

Big Weekend in March

This year Grandparents’ Day and the Promise Tree Auction will occur on the same weekend, with Grandparents’ Day on Friday, March 28, and the auction on Saturday, March 29. We hope that many out-of-town grandparents and friends will be able to join us.

Grandparents’ Day is an opportunity for grandparents or special friends to come to the school during a school day and see our teachers and students in action. Students glow when their grandparents enter the classroom. The Promise Tree Auction is, of course, one of the most fun and memorable events of the year, with the proceeds benefiting the tuition assistance program (and thereby enabling a third of our students to attend WCA).

Now, we know that on Saturday night parents will be tempted to leave grandma and grandpa home to baby-sit, and that grandma and grandpa may also be tempted to offer these services. Therefore, we will be offering babysitting at WCA during the auction. Promise Tree has always been an “adults night out,” and our definition of “adult” has no ceiling!

Mark your calendars for this special weekend of March 28 and 29.

–Jean Visy
Parent

WCA Events for All Our Friends COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Upper School Christmas Chapel, Dec. 12, Thurs., grades 6-8 at 9:20 a.m.; grades 9-12 at 8:35 a.m.

Lower School Christmas Chapel, Dec. 19, Thurs., 9:30 a.m.

Open House, Jan. 10, and Feb. 7, at 9 a.m.

WCA Society meeting, Jan. 30, Thurs., 7:30 p.m. (Babysitting available).

College Application Process Workshop, March 22, Sat.

Grandparents’ Day, March 28, Fri., 10 a.m.-noon

Promise Tree Auction, March 29, Sat., 6 p.m., at Einstein High School



Laszlo Korossy, Junior, is promoting PalmPilots at our WCA Bazaar to anyone interested, even to our guest, Curious George, and our sport teams' mascot, the Wildcat.

From Here and There

Perfect Math SAT Score. Congratulation to Jon Bratt for this exceptional academic feat.

Commended Scholars. Two of our seniors, Jon Bratt and Leah Harford received this prestigious award from the National Merit Scholarship Program.

National Poetry Contest Winner. Samantha Curtin, 8th grade, placed third with her poem, "When I Look at You."

Organization by Palm. Palm Pilots and other PDAs are gaining popularity at WCA. This new technology is helping our students to become more organized, and it also facilitates their academic development. Laszlo Korossy, 11th grade, is an avid promoter of these handy devices, and a willing resource for help, tips, and advice to all who are interested, students, teachers, and parents alike. See his article in our student newspaper, *The Paw Print Press*.

Booster Club. The enthusiastic parental support group of our sport programs is now headed by Walter Gray. He succeeds Yvonne Hollis, Julio Barreto, and Maureen Rosetta, who developed the Club over the past years with their sacrificial wholehearted work.

WCA's Volleyball Team won the league championship with an undefeated season. Go Wildcats!

WCA's Fall Sports Program Awards Celebration. The "Awards and Dessert" event was held at the Church of the Atonement on November 16.

Moms in Touch. Interested parents continue to meet on Thursdays for prayer. They faithfully pray for the needs of our school and communities. At this time we pray especially for Sherry Baas, mother of a kindergartener, who has been facing serious surgeries, and for Nancy Keegan, whose father recently went to be with the Lord.

Chapel on the Road. The 3rd grade classes presented the first chapel program of the year, performing a four-act play about attentiveness. Later, they performed the play for the Senior Saints group at Church of the Atonement. The students did a tremendous job in spite of some last minute changes, and the Senior Saints were delighted with our "stars." The 3rd graders also made Thanksgiving cards to give to the audience. In God's perfect plan, one of the students' cards was given to a Senior Saint who happens to be a friend of this student's grandmother. She wrote back to our 3rd grader to personally thank him for his Thanksgiving message. Third-grade teacher Mrs. Susie Robinson described the event as an intergenerational blessing to teachers, children, and senior saints alike.

Thanksgiving. As we celebrated Thanksgiving in our classes and with our families, it is worth to revisit the original proclamation of this national holiday by Jefferson. It is in our website's Archive to remind us of the great Christian heritage of our country.

Spanish. The Upper School Spanish students visited the 3rd grades and playfully taught them some Spanish words, including the names of animals. It was delightful.

Reading. The 3rd graders are reading 100 books by early December so Scholastic Books would donate 100 books to needy children, while parents of our kindergarteners "race" to read to/with their children every day.

Great Field trips. Although our plans had to be modified due to the sniper attacks, many classes had the opportunity to expand their learning with field trips. Various classes went to the Meadowside Nature Center, Baltimore Aquarium, Mount Vernon, the Baltimore Museum of Industry, and Accokeek Colonial Farm.

Crisis Pregnancy Center. Mrs. Brown's 4th grade council is collecting diapers and other baby items for the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Rockville. They will deliver the items and tour the facility before Christmas break.

To Ponder

It was our sorry case that caused the Word to come down, our transgressions that called out His love for us, so that He made haste to help us and to appear among us. It is we who were the cause of His taking human form, and for our salvation that, in His great love, He was both born and manifested in a human body.

—On the Incarnation, written in 318 A.D. in Egypt by Athanasius, when he was about 20



Coram Deo

Question 35. What does it mean that He “was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary”?

Answer. That the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took upon Himself our true human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary through the working of the Holy Spirit, so that He might also be the true seed of David, like His fellow men in all things, except for sin.

Question 36. What benefit do you receive from the holy conception and birth of Christ?

Answer. He is our Mediator, and, in God’s sight, He covers over with His innocence and perfect holiness the sinfulness in which I have been conceived.

This page of The Messenger is usually devoted to the first Question and Answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, a statement of faith that we desire to write on the heart of each of our students. In the Thanksgiving-Christmas issue, however, we place here those questions of the Heidelberg Catechism which would help us properly prepare our hearts to truly celebrate the birth of Christ, and to make us humbly thankful for the unspeakable grace of God.

-Editor

The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy
1820 Franwall Ave.
Silver Spring,
MD 20902

