

The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy
1820 Franwall Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20902
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<http://www.wcal.org/>

REFLECTIONS Larry Danner, Headmaster

On Looking Back One's Own Life

My three brothers were my constant companions and my greatest friends. One of our favorite competitions was an around-the-block bicycle race. Now, this was no mere bicycle race. It was a race for honor, dignity, and the right to ridicule the losers. One day, it was my good fortune to be in the lead. As I rounded the final corner, I looked back over my shoulder at the soon-to-be losers and I gloried in my triumph. Unfortunately, while looking back I failed to see the three large metal trash cans placed irresponsibly on our raceway. I turned around just in time to see the cans shine in the sun, but not soon enough to avoid their impact on my life. I went up and over, the bicycle went down and out, one can went this way, another went that way, and trash went everywhere. The moral of that true and tragic tale is this: If you spend too much time looking back, what lies ahead turns to garbage.

While not all backward glances lead to such an odoriferous ending, there are those lingering looks at our past that pose a danger to both our present and our future. Looking back can cause us to become overly impressed with our accomplishments, unduly distressed because of our failures, or tragically depressed because of unpleasant circumstances or unsavory people. If we are not careful, those unhealthy responses can become a pattern we pass on to our children. Their today will soon be their yesterday, and they will need to know how to respond to their successes and their failures, to tragic circumstances and trying people.

In dealing with his past, the apostle Paul had to learn how to deal with his triumphs, his failures, difficult circumstances, and people who harmed him. "But one thing I do," he says in Philippians 3, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

The key for Paul was the Cross, and that is the key for us and our children as well. If we teach our children to

focus on the Cross, they will recognize that the good in them and the good done by them is because He lives and works in them. Through the Cross, they will come to know that nothing is truly their own, that their looks, their athletic ability, their intelligence, their artistic talent, their charming personality, their sense of humor, their common sense all come to them as pure gift. They will then see that Christ isn't honored by their impressive accomplishments, but by their humility in those accomplishments.

Focusing on the Cross, they will come to understand that the guilt of their sin and the frustration of their failures went into the tomb with Jesus and that, when He came back out on the third day, He did not bring any of those things with Him. In accepting His forgiveness, they will forgive themselves.

Focusing on the Cross, they will find the endurance to last a day and a half in the deep and the strength to forgive seventy times seven. It is the Cross that will enable them to stand firm and to do that most difficult of things: to look at those that hurt them and, instead of pining for revenge, to pray for their forgiveness.

When looking back, look to the Cross—lest everything else turn to garbage.

On Looking Back From 1820 Franwall Avenue

In this building, God gave us twenty years of fruitful service beneficial to hundreds and hundreds of children and families, who are now multiplying our efforts as they raise their own families. Every school has its history of controversies, and the move into this rented facility was the occasion for controversy here. But we of this time, as we survey the two decades spent on Franwall Avenue, can only see this: God chose to place His hand on this school and its students and to do some part of His great work here, through our predecessors. And that enables us to look to the future with confidence.

Board Members not Bored

Your Board sees its responsibility in securing the future of the school, establishing policies and objectives for achieving our mission, and, finally, evaluating those achievements. The Constitutional changes approved by the Society in October paved the way for more effective operating practices within the Board of Directors. Previously, the standing committees were assigned various tasks that fell within or near their spheres of responsibility. Those committees, chaired by a Board Member, maintained a consistent membership and reported monthly to the Board. However, the long-standing committees with a fixed area of interest carried the temptation for directors to be over-involved in the operations of the school.

The revised constitution allows for targeted committees to be formed as needed, and for as long as needed. Such ad hoc committees, such as the Interim Site Planning, or Spiritual and Social Development committees were formed quickly, assigned a clear focused objective, and given a deadline. The ad hoc committees can be staffed more easily with the most appropriate volunteers, Board members, and employees to get the job done.

Guided by our strategic plan and feedback from the Society, each member of the Board contributed their list of priorities for action. The Board and the Headmaster organized that into a list of 14 areas of concern. We identified 21 specific tasks based on those areas of concern. Five committees have already been formed to address them, and are in harness. Today, the Board is actively engaged in the process of forming further committees and writing their marching orders. Twenty-one tasks that appear to call for immediate attention are more than we can and should try to handle at once. We request your prayers for the Lord's guidance for Mr. Danner and each of the Board members as we together strive to build for God's glory the finest Christian school in the region.

—continued on page 4



Lizard, artwork by Sarah Pankratz, 4th grade, complementing her studies on Africa



Parents enjoying the “Snow Ball,” a back-to-prom night organized by the students.

Kristina Soriano, 11th grade, won the *Excellence in Journalism* contest sponsored by the *Montgomery Village News*. Her winning article on our school's “Snow Ball” event was published in that newspaper, and is excerpted below.



How often do parents get to relive and celebrate the Prom—that special night of the nostalgic high school days? On January 25, the junior class proudly gave WCA parents the opportunity to revive their teen spirit at the “Snow Ball,” a back-to-Prom night designed to be reminiscent of proms from the 60s through the 80s.

The juniors, who planned the Snow Ball as a fundraiser for the senior trip, knew they had accomplished their goal when parents walked into an all-purpose room transformed into a winter wonderland and turned to each other with shocked whispers of “How on earth did they do this?” Guests enjoyed smooth chocolate mousse, cream puffs, strawberries dipped in chocolate, and songs from the past.

“I could dance all night!” Prom Queen Mrs. DiPiazza excitedly yelled above the laughter and blasting music. “It touches my heart that so many people can join with their kids and have fun together.”

When asked if this night was reminiscent of their proms, couples concurred that the Snow Ball was “more organized” and “five times better.” Among complaints were “my husband won’t dance” and sore feet.



Portrait, by Elizabeth Kenyon, 9th grade

The Academy Fund 2002-2003

Thanks to the generosity of many, WCA has received \$126,000 in gifts this academic year toward an overall goal of \$200,000. This is the first year since our school opened that it has been in a position to set aside a large portion of gifts for future needs; 80% of our capital/undesigned gifts are going into the Expansion Fund. A small amount of giving covers bond payments on our modular classrooms. These have been an excellent investment for us, providing some of our best classroom space for years, and remaining our assets to either take with us to another site or to sell. We have also upgraded our technology investment again this year with your gifts.

Parents and friends, we need all of you. We need strong support from the people of God today for the preparation of the people of God of tomorrow.

The day we sign a contract on either our permanent or our interim site (needed by June 2005, unless Montgomery County's budget woes slow their plan), you will know. In the meantime, we ask your prayers for the men and women in leadership here who are working tirelessly in meetings around the county to finalize plans. We would rather give you definite news, but we can say this: optimism is in order, and prayer is desired.

*—Robin U. Gropp
Director of Advancement*

New at the Auction: The Honorary Gift Tree

A number of our friends, concerned about our pressing need for a future site, have requested that some opportunity be given at the Promise Tree Auction for gifts to the Expansion Fund. Not wanting to diminish the benefit to tuition assistance from the auction itself, we have decided to use that venue to unveil an entirely different giving opportunity: honorary or memorial gifts to loved ones. Your parent, grandparent, child, or any other loved one will be named on the Gift Tree plaque to be placed in the hallway at school, as well as in this newsletter and other reports we publish.

At the auction, you will see a beautiful tree with "giving opportunities" hanging from it. For those unable to attend but wishing to honor a loved one, please call Robin Gropp at the school (301-649-1070).

Model UN

The mission of WCA is to educate our students to "occupy their places worthily in society, church, and state." Participating in the Model United Nations (Model UN) program helps us do that.

In the words of last year's Head Delegate, Avi de Silva, '02, Model UN gives students "the opportunity to solve the problems that the grown-ups cannot solve." Each student represents an assigned country-member of the UN and espouses that country's views in committees on security, economics, socio-political issues, etc.

For over five years, WCA students have participated in Model UN at the middle school and high school level. High school Model UN conferences are held throughout the world; locally the conferences are sponsored by the university teams at Catholic University, Georgetown University, American University, and George Washington University.

Students prepare by researching the issues assigned to their committees, and then propose solutions by working with the delegates from other countries. Model UN delegates must be ready to debate the issues with a thorough knowledge of the history of their country's position. Delegates must also work with other delegates in caucus, to create resolutions, and to persuade committee members to adopt their resolutions. At the February conference at Catholic University, Luke Johnston, '05, was recognized as an outstanding delegate on his committee!

The high school Model UN team is completely student-managed. Congratulations to Nathan Hoeksema, '04, and Stacy Van Dyk, '05, for their exceptional leadership of the WCA Model UN team!

Through Model UN, our students learn to engage the world as global citizens, as participants in the redemption of God's creation. Through this experience, our students are inspired and gain confidence to "occupy their places worthily in society, church, and state."

*—Jan Adams
Upper School Principal*

Destination: Imagination

One Team's Experience

The observation room is called to order. The judges are in place. The WCA middle school team is instructed one last time about the rules, because one deviation can mean the loss of points towards placing in the finals. Months of preparation and hard work hang in the balance. Folding chairs squeak as parents lean forward anxiously to hear every syllable.

For the *Destination: Imagination* competition, each team chooses a problem to solve within specific parameters, along with multiple caveats, that must be worked into the solution. Artistic interpretation, cultural relevance, and presentation are all a part of the score. As usual, our team chose an especially difficult problem: to design a weight-bearing structure within precise physical dimensions and a high degree of efficiency. No sweat. Or so it would seem.

Peering through the narrow strip of glass into the testing room, we parents saw team after team of participants leaving with heads down and shoulders slumped. We watched structures fail and discouraged students collect their fragmented designs to the polite applause of the judges and observers.

The clock started on the eight minutes we were allotted. My husband, Carey, assisted with the placing of the fifty-plus pound weights. One, two, three weights were carefully lowered, and still the structure held. Suddenly, just as the next weight was to be added . . . the timer went off! The whole team drooped with disappointment. Had we even qualified? Without seeing the other scores, we had no way to know. A judge indicated that the team could continue to "test" the structure by adding weights. Disk after disk was added, until an extender bar had to be applied. Then six more weights were added. As the last disk was lowered, the audience and the judges erupted into spontaneous applause. Our structure, weighing less than one ounce, had supported 665 pounds! The feeling in the room was electric. The weights were removed and the structure was examined. It had remained perfectly intact.

The exclamations continued during the awards ceremony as the examiners reported with glowing approval that this excellent project had won first prize! One judge later confided to our proud coach Robin Turner that the design even exceeded all the high school entries.

Hats off to all the hard-working teams. This is the third year in a row that a team from Washington Christian Academy has gone on to the state level of competition. Go Wildcats!

—Marilyn Hoobler
Parent 4

BOARD —continued from page 2

God has blessed our community and school with a headmaster of uncommon ability and leadership because, we believe, God intends greater things for our school. Teddy Roosevelt said "far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." Board and committee members do find it a great privilege to be asked to serve our school community in these roles.

—Sterling Mehring
Board Member, Past President

Congratulations to our winning teams!

This year, the *Destination: Imagination* competition took place on Saturday, March 8th, at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville. WCA teacher Winnie Langelaar was among the many volunteers conducting the competition. Two of our three teams have won a place in their divisions. The middle school team (Nathaniel Cavin, John Hoobler, Lindsay Powers, Kitty Robinson, Paul Troxel, Katie Turner, Christopher VanderHaak), coached by WCA parent Robin Turner, won first place, and the elementary school team (Samantha Calkins, Chris Granzow, Emily Hoeksema, Brian Menkis, Lillie Robinson, Eric Schweiger, David VanderHaak), coached by our art teacher Bette VanderHaak, won second place. These two teams will move on to the state competition to be held in Baltimore on April 5 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus.

Congratulations to both teams! Let's remember to support the teams with prayer as they move on to the state competition in April, and give thanks to God for His manifold blessings.

—Carol Parent
Lower School Principal



Our middle school *Destination: Imagination* team "scientists" Nathaniel Cavin and Paul Troxel demonstrate their invention in a skit performed at the regional competition.

The Generational Impact of Christian Schooling



More was lost to WCA than school days during the recent snowstorm. One of our founders, Dr. John Bouma went to his eternal rest on Feb. 17. Dr. Bouma and his wife Adriana have found many ways, even in recent years, to show their support for the school.

From 1957 to 1962, Dr. John “Jack” Bouma was chief of psychiatry for the CIA. He traveled the world treating CIA personnel, including agents whose necessary caution shaded into paranoia. Returning to Kensington, Maryland, he practiced psychiatry and psychoanalysis from his home until 1989. He also enjoyed photography as a hobby, and the school has displayed many of his photos throughout the years.

Jack and Adriana Bouma were members of Knox Orthodox Presbyterian Church and, along with other Knox parents, helped to found the Washington Christian School in 1960.

For Adriana, being involved in starting the school brought a particular satisfaction, as her grandfather sought to start a Christian school in Colorado, emigrating there from Holland, but was unable to find qualified Christian teachers in that area. She herself attended a Christian school in South Dakota, until it was forced to close.

Their five children, Sheila, Dana, Dirk, Paula, and Rhoda, attended our school. Rhoda and Dirk are themselves founders of Christian schools, Rhoda in Ohio and Dirk in Switzerland. “The impact of Washington Christian School on my life was huge,” Dirk said. “That’s why I’m starting this school in Geneva. I know how important it is.”

Those of us who watch our children thrive at WCA in the 21st century cannot say enough thank-yous to the men and women who sacrificed their resources and energies to found this school. May each generation of graduates build more of God’s kingdom.

—Robin Gropp

Dante at WCA

A month ago, WCA’s normally comfortable and friendly library underwent its annual transformation into the Dark Side. This year’s recreations of Dante’s Hell by the eleventh grade Ancient Literature class maintained, if not raised, the high standards of creativity, thoroughness, and detail set by previous classes. Students poured countless hours of labor into their projects, visualizing Dante’s *Inferno* according to their imagination through various dioramas, a functioning waterfall, a life-size coffin, architectural blue-prints, choose-your-own-adventure website, etc., allowing them to experience Dante’s imagery in a tangible, visual way, untapped by the written word.

But why do we bother to study, let alone reconstruct, Dante Alighieri’s model of Hell? As a Florentine political dissident at the turn of the fourteenth century, Dante was eventually apprehended and exiled to Ravenna. It was during his exile, in the pain of betrayal and disillusionment, that Dante composed the *Inferno*. The work is laced with political references, and Dante took great pains to find appropriate spots in Hell for all his enemies.

As I assigned the class to envision their own models of Hell, I instructed them to concentrate more on categories or types of sins than on the sinners themselves. As we remember the biblical injunction to leave judgment up to God, how should we evaluate the project of an author assigning his contemporaries to levels of Hell? Is this act justified as parody in a literary context if it is not justified in life? How does our knowledge that all are sinners and that separation from God is only conquered through grace affect our view of Hell? Inasmuch as Dante’s *Inferno* provokes these and other

important questions, it is well worth studying. We study Dante because his works are “good literature,” well-written, and asking universal questions about what it means to be human, how to make sense of evil and pain—in ourselves and in others—and how to become reconciled to God. The *Divine Comedy* is the journey of Dante, the pilgrim, but it is also a universal human journey. Dante’s literary art helps us confront crucial questions, whether or not we agree with his answers.

—Janel Kragt
Teacher of Ancient Literature



Laszlo Korossy combined technology and art in an interactive website to interpret Dante’s *Inferno* through paintings and sculpture of past centuries (www.korossy.org/inferno).

From Here and There

100-Days-of-School Day was fun-filled and educational for our first grades. Many activities centered around the number 100, including counting out and then eating 100 of various treats.

Second Grade Annual Spring Program is scheduled for May 7, to provide enjoyment for the families and great experiences for the students.

Simple machine inventions were prepared by the 3rd grade students, and exhibited in the school's hallways last month for the delight and education of all.

Using the Internet is now part of the assignment for 3rd grades, as they prepare their research paper on animals.

Rocks and layers of earth was a recent study subject in the 4th grades, with classroom experiments, and a visit to Discovery Creek to examine rock formations outside, as well as in a cave, and even inside a volcano.

King James' Royal competition of sailing ships was an exciting event for the 5th grades, enriching their English studies as they sailed the ships they made "from scratch" on "Blackbird Pond," which they also prepared themselves, complete with "hurricane" winds.

A "**math quilt**" with geometric patterns is being prepared by the 5th grade students, utilizing their studies in geometry.

The "**Maryland cake**," another great tradition of the 5th grades, will be assembled from the individual counties on April 4th. It's worth seeing and sampling.

The **2nd Annual Valentine's Day Poetry Reading** was yet another great event organized by the 5th grades. We hope this will become a continuing tradition that other classes might also attend and benefit from.

Grandparents Day is planned for March 28. The children are looking forward to having their grandparents visit.

"**Moms-in-touch**" parents continue to pray every Thursday for issues relating to our school families.

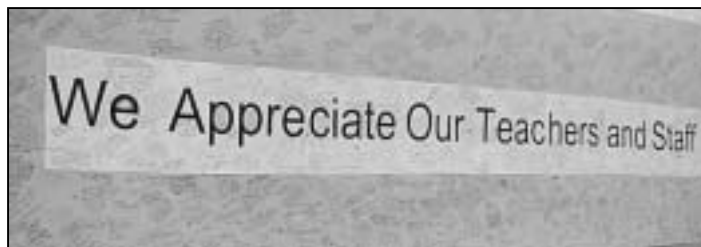


Our Town

By Thornton Wilder

A WCA Theatre Production

Friday, May 30, at 8 p.m.
Saturday, May 31 at 7 p.m.



"Notes and flowers on my desk, a whole week of elegant breakfasts, a Valentine's lunch, hundreds of personal notes covering a ten foot banner—this was how our thoughtful parents expressed Teacher Appreciation last month. We were all spurred on in our commitment to our students," said Marcia De Young, our Second Grade Teacher.

In February, Samantha Eileen Curtin, 8th grade, received an award for her poem, "When I Look at You," and was inducted into the International Society of Poets. The poem has been published in the book, *Mythology of the Heart*. It has also been recorded on a CD set called *The Sound of Poetry*.



When I Look at You

When I look at you, all my worries seem to break free.
When I look at you, your eyes seem to comfort me.
When I look at you, I know everything will be all right.
But now I cannot look at you anymore.
I could only look at you before—
Before you came and took your life away;
Before you decided to drink that day.
You said it wouldn't hurt to have one drink,
But, after another and another, your world started to sink.
You should have asked for someone to drive you home,
But you didn't and got behind the wheel alone.
When you were driving, you passed a stop sign,
but didn't slow down.
Now you're lying dead on the ground.
Now when I look at you, I can't because you're dead,
But now I look into the eyes of God to ease my pain instead.

To Ponder

"We can either prepare to meet our God, or face the fact that we will meet Him unprepared."

—Dr. Robert Norris, Fourth Presbyterian Church
Sermon, November 18, 2001

Coram Deo

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;

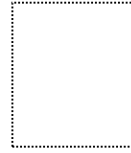
that He protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit His purpose for my salvation.

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.

Heidelberg Catechism, First Question and Answer

The Messenger

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1820 Franwall Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20902



For the benefit of the Tuition Assistance Fund
Please join us for the Washington Christian Academy's

PROMISE TREE AUCTION



Saturday, March 29, 2003
6:00 p.m.

Albert Einstein High School
1113 Newport Mill Road, Kensington, MD

Hors d'oeuvres and Dessert

Free Admission

Auction Catalogs are available online at www.wca1.org.
In addition, you may call the school to request a copy.

Childcare available. Call the school office at 301-649-1070 by March 25