

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

Likes, dislikes, uniqueness

Have you noticed that not everyone shares the same sense of taste? Each of us experiences life uniquely. We grow in distinct ways and each of us eventually forms his or her own personal likes and dislikes. I am sure you have yours, and I know I have mine. A list of my dislikes would include talking on the telephone, large crowds, or loud noises; long speeches at banquets, smokers in lines, red lights, or nose rings; good books that end too soon and bad sermons that do not; strongly held convictions by the ignorant or the freely shared opinions of the uninformed; songs that contain no discernible music nor decipherable lyrics; turbulence, being late, indoor animals or outdoor toilets; biographies of dull people, public attempts at humor by the unfunny, or turning into parking spaces from the right; parents who correct their children in public and parents who do not correct their children in public; dining with those who talk with food in their mouths, slow cars in the left lane on interstate highways, talking during movies, beets, sour cream, sushi, or yogurt.

My likes would include Friday nights at high school football games, symphonies, museums, and plays; fresh coffee, pleasant conversation, and good movies; the grandeur of the Rockies, the mystery of the sea, nearly all sports, black pepper, and J. R. R. Tolkien; a good foursome on a fall day, fireplaces in winter, the flash of lightning, and the sound of rain; theology, classic hymns, eccentric kids, and cooked cabbage; the quiet of the early morning and the beauty of the late evening; homemade biscuits, chocolate chip cookies, Buster Keaton, old books, and babies.

What do our likes and dislikes tell us? They remind us that there comes a time in our lives when we realize that we are different, a moment when we first understand that not only are we not like everyone else, we are, in fact, not like anyone else. That recognition is both exhilarating and frightening. It brings with it a budding sense of identity, but also a discomfiting feeling of uncertainty. As our children meander through the pre-teen and teen-age years, they need to learn what it means to be an individual. More importantly, they need to learn what it means to be an individual Christian. An important step in that process is

—Continued on page 4

Walking by Faith, Not Site

It is my privilege this year to serve as president of the WCA Board. And it is a particular privilege in light of the strong commitment to WCA I see all around me. The most visible manifestations of this commitment recently have involved our school's physical sites: current, future, and interim.

The current site has always been an encouragement to me. Anyone who has spent any time watching the students, faculty, staff and parent volunteers go about their business knows what I mean. Facility Supervisor Frank Phillips's enthusiasm is not man-made. Neither is that of the teachers, who faithfully ensure that their classrooms are powerful places of learning and edification. As for the students, I remember a group from the Upper School waiting tables at last year's Friends of the School Banquet. Yes, they were noisy like most teenagers. But they were also gracious, polite, and seemed happy, quite unlike what is often reflected in the larger teen culture. There's a character reflected in our students that, as Larry Danner might say, supports the fact that we have Christ's name on our school.

—Continued on page 4



Principal, Mr. Zimmerman, greets Nurit Martin-Cameron, 4th grade, before school.

Teaching at WCA

In some schools, teachers are referred to as *masters*, while heads of the various divisions—lower, middle and upper school principals—are designated *senior masters*. These titles resonate with my view of a school as a collection of scholars—masters of their disciplines—who, in turn, are mentored in the craft of teaching by others “senior” to them in experience and expertise. Such designations serve as powerful reminders of a school’s primary purpose: to bring growing minds in contact with other minds that have embraced the life of learning and have traveled further along on that journey.

As principal of Washington Christian Academy, I see much in my job that is stimulating and worthwhile: the chance to work with teachers devoted to Christ, the opportunity to guide the ongoing development of the school’s academic program, and the prospect of sharing with our community and with the larger community the compelling argument for Reformed Christian education. But as the term “senior master” reminds us, principals should be teachers as well, and I feel privileged to add to my “job description” that I teach a Humanities course to juniors here at WCA.

The course, which traces the evolution of Western thought from the ancient Greeks to the modern period, aims at providing an understanding of the various “world-views” that have emerged over that time: the classical, the medieval, the modern, and the post-modern. Interdisciplinary in nature, students are challenged to see more and more the subtle relationships and interplay between the various components of a culture—its philosophy, its literature, its art, its music—and to understand the common assumptions and beliefs behind them. How does the Parthenon reflect Greek ideas of justice and order as seen in Plato’s *Republic* or Aeschylus’s play, *The Eumenides*? How do both a Gothic cathedral and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* reflect the synthesis of faith and reason taught by Thomas Aquinas? In addition, the class provides an opportunity to consider major events and thinkers in light of our faith. Why was a

Christian world-view essential for the rise of modern science? How does Christian hope speak to the existentialism of Sartre and Camus?

Such an approach, wholly consonant with the Reformed belief that “all truth is God’s truth,” allows us to explore boldly all aspects of the creation, seeing the hand of our sovereign God wherever truth is encountered while exposing false beliefs and ideas as they are held up to God’s Word. Such a course has the potential to equip our covenant children both to understand and to respond to the challenges posed by an increasingly secularized culture. And as our students wrestle with these questions, it is my prayer that they will come to see the Christian faith alone as capable of providing answers that truly satisfy.

There is no aspect of my job more important than helping prepare our students to meet and counter our culture’s prevailing mindset with the mind of Christ. I would appreciate your prayers for me and for our faculty as daily we engage in this critical task.

—Bill Zimmerman
Principal

Philanthropy: Our Tradition

Most countries have well-defined industrial and agricultural sectors, as well as government and military. The United States also has something else: a huge nonprofit sector. The nonprofit sector, fueled by philanthropy, promotes choice, innovation, and excellence. That’s why we have private schools. People gave gifts so that there could be different kinds of schools, trying different models, and sometimes achieving something stellar.

“Faith-based initiatives” are a new topic in political debate, but Christians have always been philanthropists. Historically, the church comprises most of the foundation of the non-profit sector. Throughout history God has accomplished his kingdom building in various ways and places. In the United States, he has brought generosity to the fore in a way that has encouraged the overflow of our affluence into institutions that benefit many people.

—Continued on next page

Meet our new teachers and staff



Aimee Griffin
School Secretary



J. Parker Griffin, III
History
Theology



Lisa Hansen
Secretary



Brenda Ritsema
History
Geography



Mary Wagner
Physics



Gary Yagel
Theology/
Apologetics

In 1953, this school was born—in philanthropy. By 1960 when it opened, the school owned property—before any tuition had been collected. Gifts built the first classrooms, and the giving has never stopped. The school that doesn't attract gifts from its parents, grandparents, friends, and alumni, will be like a house no one maintains. When a harsh wind blows, how will it survive?

Schools with a future receive three kinds of gifts: annual, capital, and planned gifts.

Planned giving is putting us in your will or using one of the mutually advantageous vehicles now available for estate planning. Some families have included the school in their plans. Recently the school was a “secondary” beneficiary, when a school family received a bequest and tithed from it to the school.

Capital giving buys property and builds or improves facilities. Schools also use capital gifts to develop new programs. Usually special campaigns are conducted to attract funding for large projects. People often look to their assets to make a capital gift.

Annual giving is for everyone. Schools ask parents, grandparents, alumni and friends to give every year. At WCA we call it the Academy Fund drive. When every family gives something, we start to look good to foundations. The people who know us best have voted with their checkbooks.

Most schools seek annual gifts to make up their budget shortfall. WCA departed from that prevalent but unfortunate tradition several years ago. Your annual gifts to the school flow right into our capital budget underwriting every change for the better and helping to secure our future site.

It's our privilege to live in a country with a robust philanthropic tradition. It's the privilege of WCA families to send our children to a fine Christian school that other people founded, other people nurtured along, and many people are now supporting. It's the privilege of WCA parents and friends to join the 50-year tradition of philanthropy at our school.

—Robin U. Gropp
Director of Advancement

WCA's Largest Gift

Last month a friend of the school donated two attached houses in the District of Columbia to WCA. The school expects to realize approximately \$150,000 upon resale of the houses. We are most thankful.

Friends of WCA Banquet

Join us for an evening of celebration and commitment.

*Friday, October 10, at 7:00 p.m.
Women's Club of Chevy Chase
7931 Connecticut Avenue*

*Address by Dan Vander Ark
Executive Director
Christian Schools International*

*R.S.V.P. in the school office or by calling
301-649-1070
The cost is \$18 per person*

Dan Vander Ark is the executive director of Christian Schools International, which serves 400 schools in the United States and Canada. Formerly he served as principal of Holland Christian High School and as an English teacher. His own education began in a three-room Christian grade school, and continued later at Calvin College (B.A.), the University of Nebraska (M.A.), and Western Michigan University (M.A.). His publications include From Mission to Measurement, Helping the Hurting, and 12 Affirmations: Reformed Christian Schooling for the 21st Century.

WCA parent and master chef Dave Calkins will cater the banquet again this year. Menu will include horseradish-herb filet mignon, citrus-dijon salmon, and margarita key lime pie with graham-pecan crust and two-berry coulis, among other things.



Josh Gazo playing WCA's new Steinway piano

for them to come to embrace a critically important concept: acceptance.

First, they must learn to accept their uniqueness, to become comfortable with the discovery that they are different. This acceptance should not become an excuse for a casual capitulation to the sinful nature; rather, it should strengthen them to become the individuals that God wishes, regardless of external pressures that would transform them into something other than the image of Christ. They need to be reminded that they are not formed out of a common mold, but rather are fashioned and designed in unique splendor by the Master of the Universe.

Teaching our children to accept themselves, however, is only part of the job. They must also learn to accept others, especially those who seem “different.” As God has designed them, so He has designed their classmates and peers. Individualism is the asserting and exalting of oneself above others. Individual Christianity is the acceptance of oneself and of one’s fellows as unique creations of God and living accordingly. This is an acceptance that must be overt, demonstrated in kindness in both word and deed. It is an acceptance that forbids the mockery, cruel teasing, and gossip that are so common and so painful among adolescents.

Young people need to recognize that individuality is a gift from God. They also need to know that individual idiosyncrasies, preferences, and tastes are not sacred; however, the bond that ties us together in Christ is. In that sense, as they come to understand acceptance, they will come to see it for what it is, a way of doing what Jesus commanded when He said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”



Pen and ink art works. Top: self-portraits of Kristen Seymour, 9th grade, and Beth Mehring, 12th grade. Right: Badger, by Rebecca Wagner, 10th grade.

The Franwall Avenue site also reminds me of the generous gifts of parents and friends over the years, who have paid for new floors, doors, and roofs. This same covenant community has, by lightening its calendars and/or checkbooks, enabled us to have nicely landscaped grounds, sports teams, music and drama programs, field trips, and many other extras that make WCA the special place it is. If you haven’t figured it out by now, we have a good thing going here.

Our time at Franwall Avenue, however, will not go on forever. Our landlord, the county school system, has plans for this site. As you know, the WCA administration, the Board, and other parents have been working diligently for several years now to identify and pursue acquisition of long- and mid-term sites to support the ongoing mission of WCA. This ad hoc team has been moving us toward making the Batchellors Forest property our new home. While we do, by God's grace, now have the property under contract, there remain numerous financial, political, legal, and engineering challenges. One by one, our team is finding solutions to them. Our progress toward plan approval is on or ahead of schedule. Let us thank God for what he has already done, and remain in prayer.

Before we get to that future place, we will need to move from our current home. Our goal, in fact, is to solidify our plans for an interim site by the end of this semester. Board and committee members with expertise have kept abreast of visiting properties as they become available. Numerous sites have come to our notice, including schools, commercial spaces, and even a retired bakery.

These are exciting and unprecedented times for WCA. But the God we serve is the same yesterday, today and forever. The changes on the horizon promise to challenge us, excite us, discourage us, bless us, and even tempt us to stray from the vision with which we’ve been entrusted. Let us all determine to stay focused on Him who has brought us together and on His mission for WCA:

To educate covenant children from a Reformed, Christian perspective, developing students’ God-given abilities so that they may occupy their places worthily in society, church, and state.

If you would like to become more involved in our site selection efforts, please contact any member of the Board. Regardless of your ability to contribute to this effort in a physical sense, your prayers on behalf of WCA are desired. Up-to-date information will be shared at the October 27 Society meeting. Until then, remember to walk by faith, not *sight*.

—Mark Steimer
Board President

Alumna Teacher

Brenda Ritsema, our own alumna from 1993 (Silver Spring Christian Academy then) returns to us this year to teach in the middle school. Brenda is the daughter of Irene Ritsema, our former school librarian, and Gordon Ritsema, a founder and former board member of Silver Spring Christian Academy (SSCA).

Brenda attended Calvin College, where she roomed for one year with one of our 6th grade teachers, Katie Waterhouse, and took a student aiding class with our other 6th grade teacher, Diane Bratt. For the next four years she taught third grade at Whitinsville Christian School in Massachusetts. In the spirit of it's-a-small-world-after-all, Brenda tells me that faculty member, Sherry Kuik, and faculty spouse, Rachel Schaefer, also hail from the Whitinsville area. She has also taught fifth grade at Lighthouse Christian School in Gig Harbor, WA, where, however, she met no one from WCA.

As a former teacher at SSCA myself, I had Brenda in Physics and Geology classes. I remember talking with her about books. She told me how much she enjoyed listening to her mother, Irene, read aloud to them on family treks. (Irene still reads aloud – now for her grandchildren.) I asked Brenda what she likes to read these days, and she replied with unabashed pleasure, “English literature, you know, as in Jolly Old...” She then, without pause and with much delight, quoted the first couple of lines from Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Pied Beauty*:

GLORY be to God for dappled things,
For skies of couple-color as a brindled cow.

What a great opening! It brings a smile to both face and heart. She went on to say that she liked his use of language and his appreciation for the *sound* of words.

Brenda's comic sense was so highly developed, even at the tender age of sixteen, that she engaged in Physics humor:

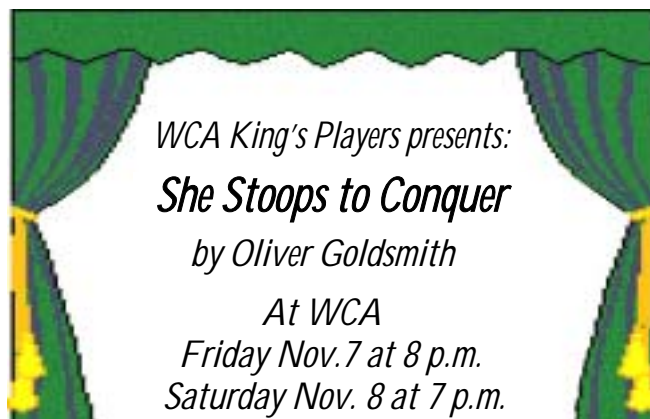
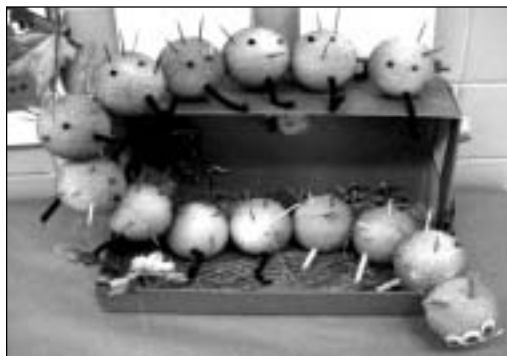
Mrs. Wagner: What's “nu,” Brenda?

Brenda: “v” over lambda.

(That answer, for the nonscientific public, is derived from the relationship between wave velocity and its wavelength and frequency: $v = \lambda\nu$) I saw Irene in the school library recently. I asked her, “What's nu?” She replied “v over lambda” without missing a beat. “That's a favorite in our house,” she said. It is gratifying to know that even after twelve years, some things have stuck.

—Mary Wagner
Teacher, Physics

**Caterpillar by
Justin Hayward,
2nd grade**



WCA Theatre and Journalism Programs Join National Capitol Area “Cappies”

This fall will mark WCA's entrance into the Cappies program, or Critic's Award Program. WCA Newspaper students Elizabeth Mehring, James Hoobler, James Cavin and Sarah Huntzinger will be trained by Washington Post staffers to critically review area-wide high school theatre performances and submit them to the Post for publication. WCA's production will be advertised in the Post and reviewed by other high school's newspaper students. Some of the best reviews will be selected for publication in the Post, and reviewers will nominate actors and productions for annual “Tony” type awards at a gala Kennedy Center event. We are thrilled to be participating in this program and to rub shoulders with other high school theatre and journalism departments throughout the region. God is indeed very gracious to us.

—Amanda Westley
Teacher, Drama Director

Elementary students chart summer reading results

The 2nd through 5th grade students spent the first few sessions of library class tallying the books they had read from the summer reading list, which had four categories: fiction, non-fiction, picture book, and biography. After recording the titles of the books read, I asked each student to name a favorite. We **noticed** that students enjoyed sharing the list of what they had read. We **felt** that students often read the first book in the less familiar categories. And it **seemed** that a fiction book was most often chosen as favorite.

However, a more scientific understanding of the results will soon be available—from Mrs. Robinson's third graders. Since the class was just about to study graphing in their first math unit, they used the chart of summer reading to create a bar graph from the raw data!

—Nancy Keegan
Librarian



Our seniors' cherished wish is finally fulfilled: they have a comfortable place to relax, study, hang out, eat lunch, etc. Parent donations furnished the room.

Student Journalist

Senior Kristina Soriano has been taking the Journalism and Newspaper electives at WCA for four years, and the knowledge and skill she has gained are already launching her into the Journalism career she hopes to pursue.

She has landed a job as reporter for The Village News, the community newspaper for Montgomery Village, in Gaithersburg.

In February, Kristina entered a high school journalism contest sponsored by the newspaper, submitting a feature article she had written for WCA's Paw Print Press about the dance that students hosted for WCA parents in January. Kristina won first place, beating out students from Watkins Mill High School in Gaithersburg, who took second place, third place, and honorable mention.

At the beginning of the summer, Kristina contacted the paper about a summer job, and she was hired as one of the very few teenage reporters. She continues to write for The Village News during her senior year at WCA, with story topics including the college application process, a feature on a young Indian cultural dance performer, and an interview with a Miss Maryland finalist.

"She clearly loves writing and enthusiastically accepts any assignment you offer her," says Stacy Sneider, editor of The Village News. "We are lucky to feature her writing."

Kristina plans to major in Journalism in college, and would one day love to start her own architectural design magazine.

—Karen Frank

Teacher, Journalism and Newspaper

Washington Christian Academy Annual Christmas Bazaar

*Saturday, November 22nd
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.*

Fun, food and fellowship for the whole family

"Where else but in the

Netherlands can you get such good Bantet and Olie Bollen?"

From Here and There

Kindergarteners visit Rockhill Orchard in October to harvest pumpkin and to learn about the fruits of Fall.

Second graders complemented their studies on butterflies by watching them to emerge from chrysalis, "making" their own in art class, and visiting Brookside Gardens.

Fourth graders are collecting stuffed bears again, attaching a message and their picture to each, and then Josh McDowell Ministries will send them to children in Russia along with a gospel message. The students pray for the recipients of their gifts.

A new baby was born into our school family: a sister to Sholape and Funmi Tinubu, 1st and 4th grade.

This year, Moms-In-Touch will systematically pray for every student and staff member, as well as for our community, our nation, and for any additional prayer requests. Fathers, mothers, and grandparents are welcome on Thursdays, 8:30-10 a.m., in Frank Phillips' office. Continue to pray with them, especially for the mother of Hannah Baas, 1st grade.

Our students promote the image of our school, and of the Kingdom, by their new neat look on field trips by wearing white WCA polo shirts.

All Presbyterian churches of the area gather yearly for a Reformation Sunday service, organized by Wallace Church. As the church moved, the service will be held at the University of Maryland Chapel. Our high school students traditionally host a reception after the service.

To Ponder

"Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It has seemed to me fit and proper that God should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people...."

"I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November as a day of Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

From Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation, 1863

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

Washington Christian Academy

1820 Franwall Ave.

Silver Spring, MD 20902

