



# ECHOES

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## It changed my life

**WORDS OF WISDOM, HUMILITY, GRATITUDE, AND JOY FROM THE CLASS OF 2018**

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
AND ADVANCEMENT

**Being a student at  
Smithville Christian  
High School changes  
teenagers' lives.**

***How do we know?***

***They tell us.***

About one month before they graduate, Grade 12 students are handed their portfolios. In these folders, they find four years' worth of artefacts (some digital, some actual) that they have chosen to save – one from every course they took. They are asked to pick three from the pile of roughly 30, and reflect on what and how they learned.

That reflection is turned into a speech and is shared on Portfolio Day in front of a panel of at least three people: a teacher, a board member, and a member of the community. Being a portfolio panelist is a joyful experience – getting to hear from the students firsthand. But reading through the speeches (this year, there were 58 of them) is equally joyful. It is also humbling and enlightening. These teenagers are wise and thoughtful and discerning. They understand themselves and they understand they have a role in the kingdom of God. They are grateful for the financial investments and sacrifices that made it possible



*Continued on page 2 ...*

Continued from page 1...

for them to attend a Christian school and they are grateful for the ways in which their teachers poured into them. They are thankful for practical, project-based learning, for the friendships they made, and for the sense of Christian community they experienced. They learned that a loving, caring community doesn't just happen, and that they have a role and a responsibility in creating it – both at Smithville Christian and in the communities that will follow in their lives.

Many students share their best work, using it as an opportunity to celebrate their gifts. But many students share

artefacts that were born out of panic, struggle and conflict, seeing in the process the importance of persistence, teamwork, and encouragement. Some students even share their failures, wisely demonstrating that sometimes the most important lessons are learned in the things that go wrong.

Many students see God's hand at work in their lives, and sense God's calling for the future. They talk about how their faith was nurtured, challenged, or grew. And some students – especially international students – encounter Christianity for the first time. Turn to pages 4 & 5 for three students' stories about their spiritual transformations.

And many students articulate how being a student at a Christian school changed them for the better, giving them confidence, security, and joy. Turn to pages 6 & 7 to read the testimony of Joshua Moraal, valedictorian of the Class of 2018 and Wednesday morning funnyman, on how he went from being the shyest student in the school to a weekly costumed crusader for student council.

Read on for some excerpts from this year's portfolio speeches. Do you want to be a portfolio panelist next May? Contact Principal Ted Harris: [tharris@smithvillechristian.ca](mailto:tharris@smithvillechristian.ca).

## STUDENT COMMENTS

When we got our portfolios back our whole class was together and there was lots of laughing and smiling because we were reminded of the things that we had done over the past four years and the memories we had made in each of our classes. We were able to laugh together about how much we have changed and matured.

*I have learned that what I love to do can bring glory and praise to God.*

IT REALLY IS UNIQUE THAT TEACHERS WANT TO CREATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH EVERY STUDENT AND STRIVE TO HELP EVERY STUDENT CREATE THE BEST WORK THAT THEY CAN.

*I have been very blessed by my experience here at Smithville Christian.*

**I realize how blessed I am to be here.**

*Smithville Christian has encouraged me to stay strong in my faith and has set me up for success in university and life after.*

**I wish to use my abilities and gifts which God has given me to serve him, no matter where I go. I feel confident going into the future with God leading me. I am ever so thankful for what God has been doing in my life through this school.**

**You will find great people and great friends that help you grow as a person.**

**I FEEL CONFIDENT THAT I AM ABLE TO LIVE AS A LEADER WHO IS ABLE TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES ON WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG**

**I was amazed at the teacher's patience. My classmates were unbelievably amazing. I was transformed, not only spiritually but also practically.**

*My four years at Smithville have been a major time of growth, relationally and spiritually. Not only have I learned things like math concepts and studied novels, I have also learned more about God and who he is in my life.*

*My Smithville Christian experience has been amazing.*

*Most importantly, I grew in my relationship with God. I am so thankful for my teachers and friends who supported me and helped me to grow and learn to become a more faithful follower of Jesus Christ.*

# Bursary Testimony

The Smithville Christian community helped me grow in my faith, overcome the obstacles in my life and brought me best friends. Smithville has motivated me to work harder, with the endless support from my teachers and peers. I am so thankful for the opportunity I was given in Smithville. I was one of the students whose family has been blessed by the bursary and I could never thank the school's supporters enough because they are a big reason why I was blessed with this Christian high school experience. When I look back on the student I was in Grade 9, I can say how extremely thankful I am for having such supportive teachers. The teachers at Smithville Christian are here to help you succeed and they will do everything they are able to do in order to ensure that every student gets the opportunity. From the first day of Grade 9 to the end of the year in Grade 12, the teachers are always motivating you and pushing you in the direction of success. Smithville has taught me to put my all into everything because it is worth the effort. . . Smithville has taught me that it is important to be yourself and to love yourself. Most importantly, Smithville has taught me to put my faith at the centre of everything. I am so thankful for the past four years at Smithville and I wouldn't trade them for a thing.





# Meeting Christ and learning about Christianity at Smithville Christian

**Smithville Christian High School is a Christian school, and everyone who teaches or works at the school is a Christian. But not all students who enrol are Christians and, especially for those students who come to this school from abroad, attending chapel, worshipping, praying and learning about God can be brand-new experiences. For some, being at Smithville Christian is the first time they have encountered God's love for them and the saving grace of Jesus in a community of Christians. Here are three students' accounts of what that was like, edited for clarity and to remove identifying information.**  
- Marlene Bergsma

"In Smithville Christian's Grade 12 Capstone Course I realized that there are many problems between countries, religions, and people, and I started to think, 'What can I do to solve those problems as a student?'

I thought that terror, war and pollution are problems too big to think about myself. I usually ignore what is going on in the world and focus on my benefits. However, when I was discussing world issues with my classmates, I realized that there is always something to do as an individual. It was a meaningful chance to know my responsibility as a person who lives on the earth, and the Capstone course became the best class among all the high school classes for me.

We tested our worldview based on coherence, correspondence and authority, and I was pretty confident that my worldview is clearly true. But then I found some errors, and I was very depressed and confused because my old worldview was broken at that point. I did not know what I needed to do and lost the purpose of my life. I even could not sleep well. I felt that I needed to solve this problem as soon



as possible. Then I slowly thought about Christianity.

I have heard about Christianity since I came to this school but I never tried to think about this religion carefully. There were some moments that I felt curious about Christianity but I always tried to ignore it. I worried that if I admitted Christianity is right, my old worldview would be broken. However, my worldview was already broken. I finally accepted Christianity as my worldview. After I accepted it I was not depressed anymore and Capstone class became more interesting to me.

I feel that my life is more valuable than before and I feel a sense of belonging to this school. It took me many years to realize the errors of my old worldview and accept Christianity but now I feel comfortable and at peace with God. I am so thankful to God that I came to Smithville Christian High School and met many friends and teachers who are important to me and will remain so forever."



I like that I'm going to Smithville Christian High School. I think our education is awesome and our community is great. I have learned a lot of things from our school. I learned English, I learned how to socialize with other people and I learned what Christianity is. Every class has an aspect of God in it. I never went to church before coming to Canada, so for me, going to chapel and Bible class were hard times for me. But lots of people at Smithville helped me with it and later I started to accept the culture and it was actually fun and something new for me.

I learned how to communicate with people, how to do group work, how to solve problems, how to accept other cultures. For international students, just studying in Canada is a big deal. I learned how to get through all kinds of problems. It is hard. Smithville Christian High taught me more than just studying with books. It taught me community and God.



*If I hadn't come here I would not have heard the words of God.*

*Smithville Christian changed me a lot over a short period of time. Smithville Christian and the church community here influenced me a lot – you can see God working through the items in my portfolio and having an influence on the end result. What I learned is that even in rough times God will help you and he has a path for you. When I was attending other schools I never would have imagined how much a right and loving community can change you in more ways than I can count. My faith has shown many new options for me to choose from and I can't wait to explore them all.*

*I have found another path to follow and that is the path to Jesus Christ. I will stay on it.*

# "This school brings out the best in you"

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVANCEMENT



In the fall of 2014, Joshua Moraal was a newly minted high school student who didn't want to be there. Anyone who met him in those days quickly realized that this was a young man who was having a hard time flourishing. Joshua knew it too. In fact, he wanted it that way. Fast forward a few years, and Joshua is making a student council announcement at Wednesday chapel every week in a different costume each time! He's also the star of the school play, and has been voted class valedictorian!

## ***What happened?!?***

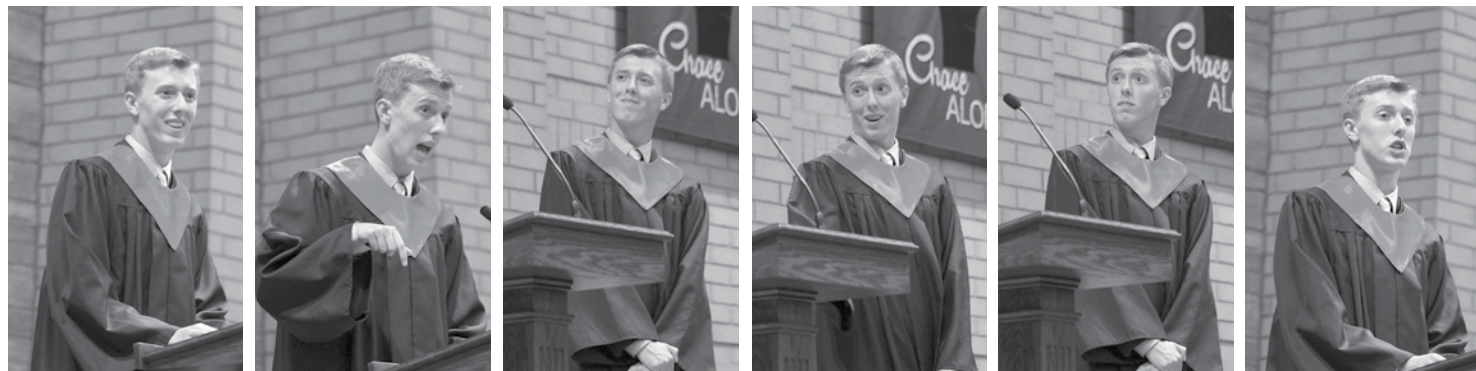
Here is the transformation of Joshua Moraal, as told by Joshua Moraal, in a testimony he shared at the January Open House.

**Greetings one and all, my name is Joshua Moraal and I'm going to be sharing a little story.**

I'm going to be honest, three years ago I would have been the worst person to choose for this job. In the months leading up to Grade 9, I was terrified. Not normal pre-high school scared. I was the only person in my class who absolutely despised the idea of a new school. I kept telling myself that I would

never be able to make friends. It had been 10 years since I last had to make friends. I had completely forgotten how. I decided I would just be a lone wolf. Little did I know, I was setting myself up for failure.

I remember the first day of school, I got on the bus thinking it was the beginning of the end. I trudged to the back seat and sat down. Before I could turn my head to look out the window I heard a voice. The voice of someone talking, to me. I turn around and there's a Grade 12 high school student talking to me. He asked me if I was one of the new Grade 9s. I responded with a quiet, "yes." He extended his hand with a smile, "Welcome to Smithville Christian."





He gave me one of the firmest, friendliest handshakes I've ever received.

And then I got to school. I walked down a hallway full of smiling, talking people. Some people I knew, some I had heard of, and others I had never seen before in my life. I can't remember how many people said hi to me that morning, but I do know it was more times than I have fingers to count on. All of this happened before class started and I still ruined an entire year for myself.

This is the friendliest, most welcoming school there is but I still managed to convince myself that I should be avoiding people. Every day I heard, "Hey Josh, sit down for a while." and "Josh! What's up?" But I decided to walk circles around the halls. The funny thing is, no matter how hard I tried to deny myself happiness and friends, the people at this school didn't give up on me.

In Grade 10, a few guys in my class hit a soft spot of mine. Minecraft. They had made a multiplayer server and they asked me if I wanted to join. After some thinking, I decided, what do I have to lose? This was the start of something new for me. Some of my fondest memories were formed talking and building with these guys. It was then that I saw what this school was really all about.

Belong, Believe, Succeed was never just a cheesy tagline. It was a description. An observation. A simple truth. Ever since that revelation, I've felt more belonging than I have ever felt before in my life. I've made friends, I've laughed, and I've become involved. And of all titles to be given to me when I made it into Student Council, I was given Director of Communications. This school brings out the best in you. I'm living proof.



# *Congratulations Class of 2018*



Trevor Aantjes



Michael Anderson



Marijke Boerefyn



Hailee Boks



Nisha Breukelman



Danica Buys



Anna Cho



Spencer Damm



Rachel de Jong



Rebekah DeHaan



Bailey DenBak



Curtis Dieleman



Brennan Dykstra



Keiley Dykstra



Harrison Exelby



Michelle Fan



Meagan Hanemaayer



Tyler Heeg



Max Hwang



Sally Jeong



Mirna Khoury



Nancy Lim



Kaitlin Lunshof



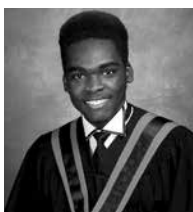
Leanna Meinders



Shannon Mellema



Joshua Moraal



Toussaint Mushegera



Lau Mussa



Rachel Rahm



Owen Ricker



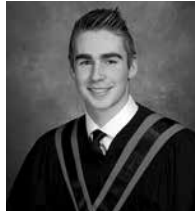
# PROVERBS 16:9 "...THE LORD ESTABLISHES YOUR STEPS."



Esther Salomons



Hilde Sanders



Tyler Scholman



Arthur Song



Marissa Talsma



Shannon teBrake



Ethan Vahrmeier



Matthew Van Geest



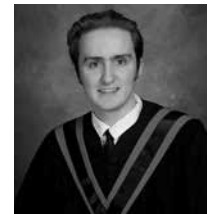
Jordan Van Herwynen



Tawnya Van Hoorn



Nicholas Vanderlinde



Ben Vanderwal



Noah Vanderwal



Julia VanderWier



Owen VanHuizen



Zachary VanRyn



Gabi VanSoelen



Michael VanStaalduinen



Mikayla Veldman



Angela Voortman



Skynye Wang



Sara Weaver



Joanna Wu



Haben Yohannes



James Yu



Charlotte Yuan



William Zhu



Hannah Zondag





## Award winners of the Class of 2018

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| West Lincoln Town Council Citizenship Award<br>– <b>Tyler Scholman</b>                          | Niagara Peninsula Energy Inc. Fund at the Niagara Community Foundation Award<br>– <b>Joshua Moraal</b> |
| Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award – <b>Anna Cho</b>                               | Groff's Photography Bursary<br>– <b>Michelle Fan</b>   |
| Smithville Christian High School International Student Award<br>– <b>Lau Mussa and James Yu</b> | TopMarks Scholarship Award<br>– <b>Hailee Boks</b>   |
| Royal Canadian Legion Branch 393 Poppy Fund Bursary Award<br>– <b>Marissa Talsma</b>            | Canadian Citizenship Award<br>– <b>Joshua Moraal</b>   |
| Royal Canadian Legion Branch 393 Bursary<br>– <b>Meagan Hanemaayer</b>                          | Smithville Garden Club Scholarship<br>– <b>Marijke Boerefyn</b>  |
| Michael VandenDool Scholarship Award<br>– <b>Hannah Zondag</b>                                  | Edward and Lois Carter Edwards Bursary<br>– <b>Meagan Hanemaayer and Ben Vanderwal</b>                 |
| Royal Canadian Legion Branch 393 Ladies Auxiliary Award<br>– <b>Bailey DenBak</b>               | Governor General's Award<br>– <b>Sara Weaver</b>   |

## Athletic Plaques

Awarded to the students who have accumulated 45 extra-curricular athletic points, having been involved in a wide variety of sports throughout high school.

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Nisha Breukelman</b> | <b>Nicholas Vanderlinde</b> |
| <b>Danica Buys</b>      | <b>Jordan Van Herwynen</b>  |
| <b>Rebekah DeHaan</b>   | <b>Owen VanHuizen</b>       |
| <b>Leanna Meinders</b>  | <b>Mikayla Veldman</b>      |
| <b>Owen Ricker</b>      |                             |
| <b>Shannon teBrake</b>  |                             |

- Marijke Boerefyn**  
**Hailee Boks**  
**Spencer Damm**  
**Rachel de Jong**  
**Meagan Hanemaayer**  
**Mirna Khoury**  
**Joshua Moraal**

- Tyler Scholman**  
**Matthew Van Geest**  
**Jordan Van Herwynen**  
**Owen VanHuizen**  
**Mikayla Veldman**  
**Angela Voortman**  
**Sara Weaver**

## Activity Plaques

Awarded to the students who have accumulated 25 extra-curricular, non-athletic points, having been involved in a wide variety of activities throughout high school.

## School Plaques

Awarded to students for outstanding performance and participation in both school athletics and school activities.

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Nisha Breukelman</b> | <b>Tyler Scholman</b>      |
| <b>Spencer Damm</b>     | <b>Jordan Van Herwynen</b> |
| <b>Mirna Khoury</b>     | <b>Owen VanHuizen</b>      |
| <b>Joshua Moraal</b>    | <b>Mikayla Veldman</b>     |
| <b>Owen Ricker</b>      |                            |

# Helping Christian schools now and in the future

BY TONY KAMPHUIS, PRESIDENT AND CEO  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION



## **"How can we help?"**

That is often the first thing we say when we receive a phone call here at the Christian School Foundation. The responses from our callers can be varied and surprising.

Since we are a Foundation, our primary focus is on helping schools discuss medium and long-term gifts with their support community. We believe God has planted in the hearts and minds of many of His followers, a conviction that He can use Christian schools and their graduates to expand the influence of Christ in our culture. Christian schools are going to thrive in the long term if regular folks like us respond to God's prompting in this way.

Sometimes the help schools request is for something a little more immediate: "We



Tony Kamphuis,  
President and CEO



Henry Koornneef,  
Executive Vice-  
President



Meghan VanPelt,  
Executive Assistant

would love to have Stephen and Joanne Levy (influential Christian educators) come lead a seminar at our school. We

are inviting other schools as well. Can you help us?" or "We have a family that includes a child with special needs. That family – with all their children – belong here. Can you help?" or "We have some families who really struggle to afford our school. Can you help?" As often as we can, we say, "YES!" (If you would like to increase our ability to say "YES!" please connect with Tony Kamphuis at [tkamphuis@christianschoolfoundation.ca](mailto:tkamphuis@christianschoolfoundation.ca).)

Sometimes we are asked for help that is a little more broad.

## **Q. "What are some good ideas for getting the word out about our school?"**

**A. "Why not come to our Development Day in October? We're bringing in Jim McKenzie, who has some great experience in that field!"**

## **Q. "We want to do a better job of connecting with our alumni...can you help?"**

**A. "I think so. Let's partner on an improved alumni-tracking program so you can let your graduates know about the exciting things happening at your school!"**

The fertile minds and committed hearts of the leaders in our member schools means we get to hear all kinds of ideas. Finding ways to partner with others in order to strengthen the Christian education movement takes nimbleness, openness, and a willingness to put our schools' needs out there in front of God's people.

Watching God work when we do our part with faithful hearts makes the work of the Christian School Foundation a real delight. Join us! "Delight" is especially sweet when it is shared!





# CLASS OF 2018

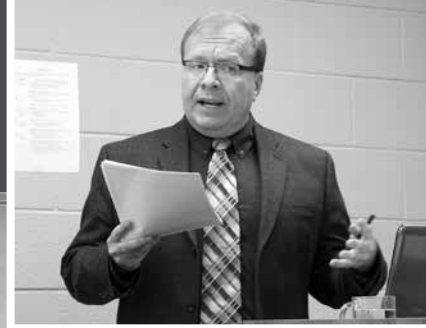






# For the Love of Technology

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER, STUDENT SERVICES



## ***“Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?”***

was an article that caught my eye a while back, referring to a book written by Jean Twenge an American Psychologist studying generational differences titled, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us*. Twenge's theory in a nutshell is that our children are part of what she calls the “iGen” the generation growing up with the smart phones and other devices that occupy most of their time and that they are remarkably different from any other generation.

At Smithville Christian High School, we are going into our third year of 1:1, a program that equips each student with their own laptop. We see the ever-present reliance on phones, tablets and computers in the classroom but also in the lives of our teens outside of the classroom. Technology is a tool that few schools do without and few students can avoid in future occupations. We love our tools, and, as educators and parents we must also recognize their power and influence in the process. The Bible doesn't talk about some of these 21st century inventions specifically, but its overall message is still relevant.

In our efforts at Smithville Christian High School to learn more about the impact of technology on our students, and as part of our research

& development focus on mental health this year, we invited Dr. Doug Needham from Redeemer University College to speak to our staff about teen mental health.

Needham outlined the characteristics of the iGen and shared research on and concerns about the steady increase in mental health issues presenting in high schools. Needham believes “we are on the cusp of a mental health crisis,” and outlined the symptoms and possible causes: the pressure of school and the increase in social media and technology. The difference between iGen and previous generations is that of technology's ever-present place in our lives, at school, at work and at home. Needham spent a significant amount of time with teachers on “how we can help.” This resonated with our staff in their roles as teachers, but also for us as users of technology.

The two big ways that teachers and parents can help our teens navigate technology are: reducing screen time and reducing the stigma toward mental health. Whether or not these two are connected, the benefits of these two solutions separately or together may be the answer to using technology and navigating our mental health crisis in the 21st century.

The home and the school can work together on these areas of support as our teens navigate through high school and as we encourage God's kingdom here and now for our students at Smithville Christian High School.



## Two main solutions for reducing mental health stressors

## How we can do that:

1. Encourage a reduction in screen time
2. Reduce the stigma toward mental illness

- Teach self-compassion and forgiveness
- Encourage a focus on the positive
- Encourage spending face-to-face time with those who are important
- Encourage decreased exposure to media that promote a luxurious lifestyle
- Advise adolescents to stop comparing themselves to other people
- Encourage service to others
- Advise adolescents not to immerse themselves in negative media
- Advise adolescents to avoid overthinking (and instead turn to others)
- Advise adolescents to combat anxiety and depression through TLC ("Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes" – sleep more, get outside, exercise, eat healthy diets, get a hobby)
- Encourage realistic expectations

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