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6488 SMITHVILLE RD.  
P.O. BOX 40,  
SMITHVILLE, ON  
L0R 2A0  
PH. 905.957.3255  
FAX 905.957.3431  
smithvillechristian.ca

CONTACT:  
MARLENE BERGSMÄ  
mbergma@  
smithvillechristian.ca

# ECHOES

## Growing better and bigger

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

It seems that in any conversation about how our school is doing the question "So how many students do you have this year?" will surface. I have to admit that when the school isn't growing, I'm not all that excited about answering. Conversely, when it is growing, I am bolder in sharing details about our increased numbers.

This could be the article where I talk about how there are so many more important things to ask about than the numbers. But it's not. Instead I would like to spend some time sharing why the numbers do matter to us. An increase in student numbers *is* an indication of how well we are doing, and it brings to the forefront certain characteristics that we are constantly striving for. Let me share a few of them.

*Continued on page 2 ...*



*Continued from page 1...*

**As a belonging community,** we want to be a school that welcomes people. When guests come, we want our students and staff to get used to welcoming them, immediately as they arrive and continually while they are here. When new students join our classes, we want our teachers and students to work hard at making sure that things go well for them in the transition. Though we are not perfect at this, we work hard at it and do quite well. We do this because it is the right thing to do, but the result of focusing on being welcoming is growth.

**As a belonging community,** we want to make sure that we are accessible to those who would not be able to afford full tuition. We challenge

our supporters every year to give so our bursary program has the funding necessary so that every family needing help will be able to receive it. We do this to serve one another as members of one community, but it also results in growth.

**As a belonging community,** we want to make sure that families from a diversity of ethnic, school and church backgrounds feel welcome at our school. We try very hard not to make anyone feel like an outsider. We try not to use acronyms, we avoid ethnic jokes, we seek to understand and celebrate other cultures, we enroll international students, and we don't assume everyone goes to the same church. We do these things because we want to respect all members of our community, but the result of it all is growth.

**As a believing community,** we work hard at the meaningful integration of faith and learning. We work at fostering in our students a sense of awe directed at their creator, we celebrate the beautiful things that God enables his image-bearers to create, we strive to have our students do work that matters, we confront the spirits that are pervasive in our culture, and we foster faith expression in our chapels. We do this in order to be faithful to God in education, but it also endears us to Christian families, which results in growth.

**As a community seeking success,** we work hard to share our story. We work hard at having an on-line presence, we take a lot of pictures and find ways to share them, we use Edsby vigorously to bring parents and students



into conversations about learning and school life, we want to do more to connect with our alumni, and we pour out our hearts to the Christian community in our Echoes. We do this to allow God's people to have an entire village around them to help raise their children, but it also results in growth.

**As a community seeking success,** we want our students to learn well and be well-prepared for what the Lord has in store for each of them. We work hard to make sure that students are in the right courses, that their teachers know them as learners, that their learning is relevant and enjoyable, that they are given meaningful feedback in their learning, and that they are well guided in their pursuit of further education. We do this because we believe every image bearer is worthy of considerable attention, but working at these things also results in increased student numbers.

I grant that I have seen years when, despite doing many of the above things quite well, we nevertheless did not see growth. That being said, I am very glad to say that I have conversations all the time with new or prospective families who notice the kinds of things mentioned above. Those families are in our school because of the things our community has valued and worked hard for. By God's grace this has allowed us to grow. What is the benefit of growth? It positions us to bless more lives and thereby have a greater impact on the kingdom of God. Please pray that our growth will continue for the sake of Christ and his kingdom, and please continue to be part of the effort to make our school and its programs known to Christians who could be blessed by it.

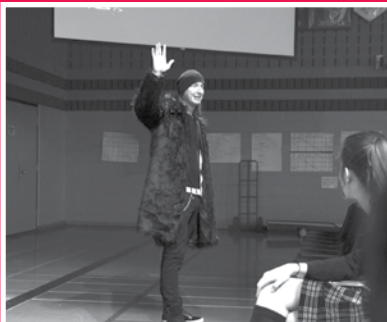
## Who is missing from this picture?



Three out of every ten students at Smithville Christian High School are able to attend this school because of the generous support of the donors who contribute to the Annual Bursary Campaign. Mark your calendars for Friday, March 2, 2018, and plan to attend the Bursary Bash, our annual celebration of what students learn and experience at Smithville Christian High School, and the impact that a Christian education has on them and this world. This year's celebration will feature student testimonies, alumni stories, art and music, in a casual dining atmosphere. Seating will be limited so reserve your spot by calling or emailing the office at 905.957.3255 or [office@smithvillechristian.ca](mailto:office@smithvillechristian.ca). Tickets are \$25 per person or sponsor a table of eight for \$200. Doors open at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 6:30 p.m. Don't miss this: it promises to be one of the highlights of the year.

# Spiritual Emphasis Week is a good week at Smithville Christian

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS



This year's daily chapel speaker was Mike Gordon, an ordained pastor with an itinerant preaching ministry with Youth For Christ. Gordon amused, entertained and challenged students, staff and guests to consider God's place in their lives, to carefully choose the path they are on, to forgive their enemies, to prepare for trouble and to act in ways that reflect Jesus.

The week has an impact on the school, said spiritual life director Gord Park. Grade 12 students led small groups, the school's three student praise teams led in worship, our Chinese language missionary came every day to interpret chapel messages for our Mandarin-speaking students, and many students took advantage of the prayer room.

Following Spiritual Emphasis Week, a few students started a weekly Bible study and discussion group.

But perhaps the biggest proof that Gordon had an impact on students was Student Council president Josh Moraal

showing up at chapel the following week dressed like Gordon. LOL.

Here is a summary of one of Gordon's talks. Other chapel talks can be found on the school blog at <http://smithvillechristian.blogspot.ca>



Joshua Moraal, a member of Student Council executive, dresses like Mike Gordon during morning announcements the week after Spiritual Emphasis Week.

# Do you have God in your life? Or do you have God as Lord of your life?

During the first chapel of Spiritual Emphasis Week 2017, students at Smithville Christian High School were asked to consider the role of God in their lives.

Speaker Michael Gordon told students that he always likes to take trends one step further and make them ridiculous.

For example, Gordon took the ugly Christmas sweater tradition and turned it into his own ugly Christmas fur coat tradition. Every fall, he combs the women's section of a local thrift store looking for "a new animal to adopt" which he then wears to parties and special events all season long.

"But once Christmas is over, I take my fur coat off and lay it aside," Gordon said. "For how many of us, is that what we do with Jesus?"

Gordon said the English translation of the creation account in the book of Genesis contains 11 references to the Creator as "Lord God," signifying God's Lordship over everything.

**Genesis 2: 4-25**

**LORD God created the heavens and the earth**

**LORD God had not sent rain on the earth**

**LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground**

**LORD God had planted a garden in the east**

**LORD God made all kinds of trees grow**

**LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden**

**LORD God commanded the man**

**LORD God said "It is not good for the man to be alone. . ."**

**LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals**

**LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep**

**LORD God made a woman from the rib**

But in Genesis 3, the serpent refers to God as simply "God." Gordon said that distinction – between the Lord God and simply God – is the difference between "Lord God of your life" and "God in your life."

Is God "just God" who you believe exists, and who is, "like this coat, something you can put on and take off?" Gordon asked the students. "Maybe we say we are Christians, but is he Lord? Am I submitting to him in every aspect of my life? Is he Lord, or is he just God?"

And if he is "just God, the next question you have to ask is, 'What did you make Lord in your life instead?' "



Gordon said when he was a teenager and started attending a church youth group, he enjoyed hanging out with the youth pastor and the Christian teens on a Saturday night. "I knew how to put the coat on, in fact I was quite good at it."

But once the event was over, "what everyone didn't see was what I did when I left at 10 o'clock, when I went to hang out with a group of friends. He wasn't Lord of my life then."

Gordon asked students to examine their own lives. "When you look at all the areas of your life, especially when you step out of this school, is he Lord God, or just God?"

Gordon concluded with a prayer asking God to remind us to ask ourselves the question every day: "Are you Number One or have I made someone else Number One?"



*From left, Cardus education program director Beth Green, award sponsor John Rozema, award winner Gord Park, and Cardus president and CEO Michael Van Pelt.*



*Gord Park and his wife, Cathy.*



*Gord Park receiving his award from Michael Van Pelt, Cardus president and CEO, with John Rozema, left.*

## Teacher excellence at Smithville Christian

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Students at Smithville Christian would be pretty quick to tell you their teachers are awesome. But they're not the only ones who think so.

Gord Park, Smithville Christian's spiritual life director, play director and long-time drama and English teacher, is recognized across the province as being an excellent educator.

Park won the 2017 John Rozema Award for Excellence in Teaching of Creative and Performing Arts. He was named the winner, and received a \$5,000 prize, at a gala awards ceremony in Burlington in June.

Park was nominated by the board of directors of Smithville Christian, and his contributions to excellence were documented in a submission by principal, Ted Harris.

Park's annual spring plays "are renowned for their excellence. . . and every one engages viewers on a faith level," Harris wrote. "The core values of the school are always affirmed by choices he makes as a director."

Park's role as spiritual life director shapes the experiences of students, Harris wrote, with many Grade 12 graduates saying that weekly chapels had a major impact on their lives. In addition, Park has taught drama for 37 years with energy and a focus on creating a supportive atmosphere while building character and community. "He makes it clear there is a distinct difference in how one teaches dramatic arts in a Christian school."

Park also had to prepare a description of his work, and he wrote how every dramatic performance is an act of worship "because God created us as creative beings. It's why we do what we do . . . for the glory of God."

The prize money is meant to be used for the ongoing professional development of the winner, and Park says he plans to use the prize to immerse himself in Shakespeare in the land of the bard's birth.

The John Rozema Teaching Excellence Awards recognise excellence as an ongoing investment into the life of a Christian school community and a positive public

contribution to the common good. The awards are named for and sponsored by Sarnia business leader John Rozema, esteemed for his commitment to both local and global issues, and for his support of institutions such as Sarnia Christian School. The Awards are administered by Cardus and presented in partnership with the Christian School Foundation.

*Award ceremony photos are courtesy of Cardus.*

Once Park was short-listed, Cardus also produced a video describing his work. It can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d568MKvU1Xs>.



*Gord Park at the 2017 Rozema Awards for Teaching Excellence with all of the shortlisted nominees.*

# Coaching by design

BY MARLENE BERGSMA,  
DIRECTOR OF  
COMMUNICATIONS AND  
ADMISSIONS



Teachers' lesson plans at Smithville Christian include program goals – statements of purpose that connect the details of what is being learned about geography, literature or science, to students' lives as image-bearers of and co-creators with God.

And sports at Smithville Christian are approached with similar purpose.

It's not about winning, said athletics director Fred Breukelman. Of course, Smithville Christian's coaches strive for skill development and competitive advantage, but they also stress integrity, honesty and Christ-like attitudes. Student athletes get it, and others notice, Breukelman said.

At the Brock University Invitational Tournament in October, the Senior Boys Volleyball team was named the most sportsmanlike team of the tournament. Doug Hayes, the Brock University Men's Volleyball coach and tournament convenor, along with members of the Brock University men's team, chose the Storm for top honours from the 16 teams competing, said Gina VandenDool, the team's staff sponsor. The boys were chosen because of their teamwork and the positive relationships with referees and other teams, both on and off the court.



When Smithville Christian teams travel, staff at restaurants and hotels remark on how polite and well-mannered they are, Breukelman said. "Our kids receive compliments all the time."

That character is largely a result of school culture, said Breukelman, and also the way coaches guide, mentor and pray with the students. Breukelman, who coaches two volleyball teams, said he always ends pre-game prayers with "May we make God smile with the way that we play." He said students take it to heart, and "wear Christ on their sleeve."

On top of all that, Smithville Christian's athletes do win. Both the Senior Boys Volleyball team and the Senior Girls Basketball team qualified for OFSAA this year, with the boys finishing fifth in the tournament and the girls winning the consolation championship. Turn the pages for photos of the teams in action.

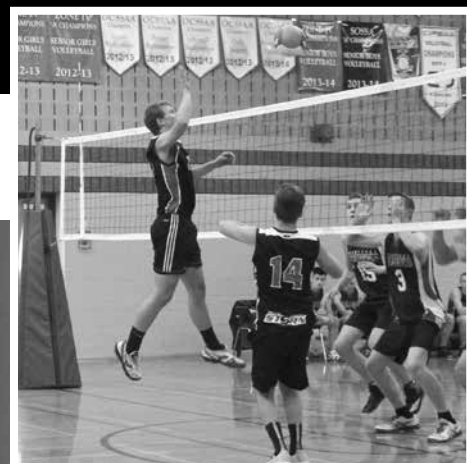
# SENIOR BOYS VOLLEYBALL



*Front row, from left: Eric van den Boogaard, Derick Breukelman, Nicholas Vanderlinde, Clay Elzinga, Jordan VanHerwynen. Back row: Coach Tim DeVries, Riley VanSteekelenburg, Owen VanHuizen, Tyler Glasbergen, Connor VanderKuip, Jayden Talsma, Jake Boekestyn, Coach Rob Greenham. Missing from picture is staff sponsor Gina VandenDool.*

Congratulations to members and coaches of the Smithville Christian High School Senior Boys Volleyball team, who won the Zone IV and SOSSA championships and qualified for OFSAA, the provincial championships, which were held in Toronto in November. **#GoSTORM!**







Members of Smithville Christian High School's senior girls' SOSSA championship basketball team, front row from left: Shannon teBrake, Nisha Breukelman, Terin Hultink, Faith Ludwig, Olivia Vermeer, and Rebekah DeHaan. Top row, Hannah Zondag, Leanna Meinders, Julieanne Buist and Danica Buys. The team's coaches are Ted Harris and Tawnia Hultink. The team travelled to Timmins in November to compete at OFSAA, where they were the consolation champions.



# SENIOR TIGHTBALLS



*Congratulations to the Senior Girls Basketball team on a great season. The team went 24-8 overall and accomplished the three goals they set out to achieve: the Zone IV A championship, the Ontario Christian School championship and a berth into OFSAA. The icing on the cake was winning the consolation championship at OFSAA in Timmins, where the team won four of their five games. The team also shone the light of Christ in everything they did. Team members include, front row from left: Shannon teBrake, Nisha Breukelman, Terin Hultink, Faith Ludwig, Olivia Vermeer, and Rebekah DeHaan. Top row, Hannah Zondag, Leanna Meinders, Julieanne Buist and Danica Buys. The team's coaches are Ted Harris and Tawnia Hultink.*

# Learning conferences are for learners

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

**Once a semester, like most schools, Smithville Christian High School hosts learning conferences. Some people might be tempted to call them Parent-Teacher Interviews, but there's a good reason why that's a bad idea.**

At Smithville Christian, we want learning conferences to include the learners.

## Why?

Because learning conferences are about student learning, and the conferences simply have a better result if the learner is present, said Principal Ted Harris. "We do so much to get students to take ownership of their own learning; why would we convene an actual meeting about their learning without having them present?"

Although some parents might hear from their students that coming to a learning

conference is something they want to avoid, or that they would be the only student there, that would be neither good nor true. Parent Christina Bezemer, who has been attending learning conferences with one or more of her five children for more than a decade, says she took her oldest son with her to the first one during his first semester in Grade 9. "I assumed it was a thing, and I am so glad I did," she said. "Watching him interact with the teachers helped me understand how my student felt about the teacher and vice versa."

Bezemer said she learned so much "just by observing" that now she always makes her kids come. "It's not really optional."

"Seeing teachers interact directly with your child gives you a better understanding of what is actually going on," she said.

And if your child is doing well in school, it's "an opportunity to be encouraged to

keep up the good fight." It's a one-on-one look at a child's work to see what they can improve. And there is always something to work on: not necessarily assignments, but perhaps an attitude toward self, teacher, classmates or their future.

Bezemer said she believes it's the parents' responsibility to support their children in their education and it's "the child's responsibility to take the opportunities provided by God and their parents to begin to shape their own future. It gives the kids ownership and helps them to take responsibility for their own education."

And if it seems awkward or tough, just treat it like another lesson.

"This is a real-life, skill learning opportunity, like a job interview or job review," she said, but it's happening in a safe place.

Imagine that – a school being a place where everyone learns!





# The wheels on the bus – making a Christian high school education accessible to more students

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

**For some students, it's now easier to get to school than ever before.**

**Our strategic planning of the last year has brought about increased accessibility to our school by way of enhanced bus routes.**

Last spring, we pinpointed potential growth areas within a reasonable distance of our school. Three of the four top growth areas were in Hamilton nearest our catchment area, including Binbrook and parts of Stoney Creek.

At the same time that we were doing our research, we saw a marked increase in inquiries from these very areas. The result is a new bus route to meet this need.

The new route begins in Binbrook and picks up elementary and high school students as it continues its run through the Paramount area on the way to Upper Grimsby and eventually to Smithville. In addition, other existing bus routes have been adjusted to gather students from other parts of these growth areas.

Our partner Christian schools (Beacon Christian, Dunnville Christian, and NACE) do a great deal to provide transportation for families who want to get their children to Niagara-area Christian schools. We are so grateful that they see helping high school families as an extension of their mission, and the route revisions this year have brought us new students from new territories.

So what's the next part of the strategic plan? We plan to partner with NACE to inform more families to the west that they too can experience the blessing of Christian education. Help us spread the word!



# Taking the first step

JOSHUA MORAAL, STUDENT COUNCIL

The theme Student Council has chosen this year is "Taking the First Step." We created this theme based on the Bible text Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Martin Luther King Jr. said "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." We were inspired, and our desire is to inspire the student body in building community.

To help remind the students to take the first step, Student Council will be showing a video to the school every month. Every month we will be taking the first step into ... something new each month. So far we have encouraged students with September: "...getting involved"; October: "...being thankful", November: "...taking time" and December: "...giving gifts" which, by the way, do not have to cost anything. We want students to know how – in line with the school's Spiritual Life Theme: Standing Strong – it is important for us to not forget to take the first step. When we take the first step into something, the rest always follows.

This year's theme demonstrates our determination to help further God's Kingdom, one step at a time.



# A Message of Hope

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER,  
HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES



- Anxiety is a feeling of
  - Fear is a response to
  - "Associated with survival for fight or flight"
  - Can be connected to
  - Excessive and persistent
- American Psychiatric Association  
Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Arlington, VA

Hennie Schoon, the Dean of Students at Redeemer University College, speaking on the topic of anxiety at a Thursday morning staff research and development session.

Last spring, students at Smithville Christian High School participated in a Canada-wide research project, the Cancer Risk Assessment in Youth Survey (CRAYS). CRAYS data is being collected on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, to understand Canadian trends in a variety of youth issues. As a guidance counsellor, a few areas that stood out for me in our school's results were bullying and mental health.

The results were released in June 2017 and were shared with staff. They indicated that 33% of our students reported having been bullied in the last month. The top area was non-verbal attacks (being ignored, left out or excluded) with the second being verbal attacks (being teased, threatened, having rumours spread about you). With the prevalence of technology and social media, bullying has become even easier. The sad reality is that this is not just a school problem and it can have an effect on students' long term mental and physical health.

Our results are comparable with national averages. While we would like to believe that things are different in a Christian community, the fact is, we are all broken. Christians are not immune, and we know

this is true because we experience it in our homes, workplaces and communities. But there is one life-changing difference for Christians: Jesus saved us from our brokenness and that gives us hope. That's the big difference at a Christian school.

We are addressing bullying at Smithville Christian; we always have and probably always will. As guidance counsellors, we revamped our anti-bullying presentation this year and shared it with the Grade 9 class. We are working with students in groups, individually and in all grades. We have

already engaged the staff in two of three sessions on mental health in the classroom planned for this year. We are not done. We know that we need to continue to work on these areas not only because of the results of this survey, but because, until Jesus comes again we will always be broken. So, for now on this side of heaven, we need to keep working and we need to keep reminding all our students that there is hope and his name is Jesus.



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cell: (905) 929-6783

214 Broad St.  
Dunnville, On N1A 1G2  
(905) 774-7576  
fax: (905) 774-9479

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