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ECHOES

Keeping the right reminders in front of our eyes

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

It's important to have the right things in front of our eyes.

I'm glad when I can set my eyes on my beloved wife at the end of a long day. It is a good practice to set our eyes on scripture to understand our connection with God and the story of His people. Getting outside to catch a glimpse of God's majesty is a great way for the beauty of nature to inform our minds and spirits. It's also good to interact with art in our

school and in our homes; it lifts our spirits, challenges us, and connects us with beauty.

There are things that we like to place on the walls of our school that remind us what our school is about. The Belong. Believe. Succeed. posters remind us of the mission of our school and invite everyone in the building to be a part of making it happen.

Then there are specific statements which remind teachers what drives us

as Christian educators. It's not that we quickly forget these things, but having them in front of our eyes does something to reignite our passion for what we do.

There are two things that are being placed before the eyes of our teachers this year. First, our purpose and core values statements are being put up in the work stations of every teacher. They read as follows:

Continued on page 2 ...



Our Core Purpose: To train students to live as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ.

Core Values: As Christian educators, we will direct our passion and collegiality to uphold these values:

- **Belong:** We will pursue Belonging by (a) accepting, valuing and respecting students, colleagues and others, and by (b) being intentionally present with students.
- **Believe:** We will pursue Believing by (a) embracing a sense of God-inspired wonder, and by (b) pouring God's grace and goodness into the lives of students, colleagues and others.

- **Succeed:** We will pursue success by (a) recognizing the goodness and giftedness in every student and colleague, and by (b) encouraging grit and growth in ourselves and others.

Because these statements are written chiefly for teachers, they are posted to meet the teachers' eyes in their work spaces.

The other thing being placed before the eyes of teachers are their own personal mission statements. Because we want the passions of our teachers to be worn "on their sleeves," these statements are also posted in learning spaces, so that they meet the eyes of students and visitors. We hope they are the subject of overt discussion in classrooms. They are also posted



OUR CORE PURPOSE

To train students to live as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ.

CORE VALUES

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- **Belong** We will pursue Belonging by (a) accepting, valuing and respecting students, colleagues and others, and by (b) being intentionally present with students.
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in the personal Edsby profiles of all teachers. Let me model transparency by including mine here:

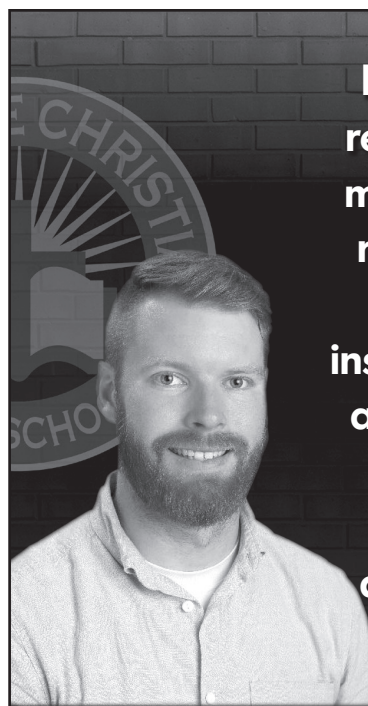
"I will strive to be present with students, supportive of teachers, and to lead the board, staff, and school community as we find new ways to train students for the Kingdom of God."

These personal mission statements aren't secrets that others need to discover or decode; we want to share them and talk about them. In fact, we need to be accountable for doing what we say we do, which is why our teachers are expected to talk about these things



**My mission is
to empower
special needs
and at-risk
students
to become
successful
image-bearers
of God in His
Kingdom.**

MICHELLE SLUMP-HOUWER



**I will strive to
reflect Jesus to
my students by
relying on His
guidance to
instruct, support,
and challenge
students to
holistically
develop their
potential.**

STUART BENDER

with students. If we aren't clearly doing what we say we're doing, it may be that we are enrolling students and partnering with families under false pretenses.

We are encouraging one another as teachers and leaders to look at what's before our eyes every day. Before we set our eyes on the wonderful students gathered before us every day, it is helpful to have a daily reminder of the work we are together called to do. It is our prayer that what we display on our walls shapes the character and instruction that are evident to our students every day.



Creating outposts of goodness and beauty

WHAT INSPIRES CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TEACHERS?

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVANCEMENT



Once a year, hundreds of Christian school teachers gather over two days in Hamilton to connect, learn, and be inspired. The 2018 convention was held at Redeemer University College in late October and was organized by Edvance – the newly formed leadership organization for Christian teachers, administrators and school boards in Ontario. The keynote speaker was Curt Thompson, MD.

As a neurobiologist and psychiatrist, Thompson says brain research shows that the brain development that happens in the first 20 years of a human's life is the most formative, and "things that have the deepest roots have the longest influence." These formative years can be the source of our deepest brokenness but they are also when teachers are having the greatest impact. He said his own children tell him often that their Christian education was formative in shaping them.

Thompson told the over 500 teachers in Redeemer's auditorium that the Latin roots of the word educate mean "to lead out," and that their role as Christian educators is to help shape students into "outposts of goodness and beauty."

When the Psalmist says in Psalm 145 that he "will meditate on your wonderful works," the most wonderful works of God are the humans God has made, Thompson said. Therefore, part of a Christian teacher's role is to meditate on God's wonderful works: the students who are placed before them.

Just as God hovered, moved, or swept over the chaos in the Genesis account of

Creation, so do Christian school teachers sweep over the (sometimes) chaos of their classrooms, helping create beauty and imagination in the lives of their students. But just as God created the Earth by being vulnerable (Genesis 2: 15-17) and by being relational (Genesis 1: 26), so teachers must be appropriately vulnerable and in relationship with their students. As much as they might prefer order, the truth is "we don't have it all under control, the way evil would like to convince us we could or should," he said.

And just as God got hands-on and down in the mud to create humans, so teachers' creative work with students is personal, risky, and messy. "Relationship is essential, fundamental to humanity," Thompson said. Vulnerability is necessary for creativity too.

"Vulnerability is who we are and what we are called to display in order for great acts of creativity" to be possible, he said. "The expansion of our imaginations cannot happen by ourselves. It requires interaction with other people."

After the government inspection

WORDS OF GRATITUDE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN TEACHERS

BY WILL LAMMERS, DIRECTOR OF LEARNING



(Excerpted from comments shared by Director of Learning, Will Lammers, during the professional development session the morning after Smithville Christian High School teachers successfully passed an Ontario Ministry of Education inspection.)

I want to thank each one of you for your preparation for this inspection. I don't thank you because of the documentation you prepared for the day – because the expectation was that you had the documentation ready.

Rather, I thank you for the ways in which you graciously dialogued with and expressed yourself to the Ministry of Education inspector in meaningful and positive ways. The inspector shared with me on more than one occasion that she learned great teaching and learning strategies from several of you teachers, and expressed her appreciation for your thought and insight with comments like, "You should lead a workshop!"

At the end of the day, the inspector finished her report to us by saying we are a good school. This comment matters, and it comes as a result of the work that each of you shared.

Yet, the word "inspection" carries negative connotation, because embedded in the term is the idea that inspectors will seek out bad things, or perform some kind of a stress test when they come. Because of that, it is important to reflect on how an inspection affects our professional work after the inspector

is gone. When I consider my own experience as a teacher, I did not always feel good about the quality of work I shared with inspectors in the past. However, I knew that after the experience, I had a choice to make. Either I could embrace the opportunity to improve in my own practice, or I could ignore opportunities for growth. I realized that when I embraced opportunities to improve, I became a better teacher, and the ways in which I communicated with students also became better.

Congratulations on your preparation and accomplishments, but it doesn't end here. I challenge each one of us to use our bi-annual inspections as opportunities to reflect on how each of us personally can embrace growth as a mindset. That's our job after all: using this mindset as a way of encouraging ourselves, each other, and our students to continually pursue growth.



Feeling the alumni love

BY FRED BREUKELMAN, VP OF STUDENTS

For a teacher, there are few things better than hearing from former students who look back on their high school experiences and recall them as good times.

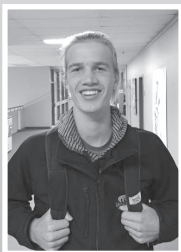
I recently had the opportunity to spend a day at Redeemer University College in Hamilton, where a number of Smithville Christian alumni came to talk to me. What a joyful experience it was. Here is some of what they said:

Quin Regnerus

(Class of 2016, currently studying Business at Redeemer)

"I am loving Redeemer – the community feel is very similar to that of Smithville Christian. You really don't know or value the relationships you have at high school until you leave!

"While living at Redeemer, when I'm hanging out with my buddies, we share stories of our



high school experiences and I hear about how my friends are speaking negatively about their high schools, and after listening for a while, I'm like, I can't relate! I loved my teachers, we had some great conversations! They cared about more than just my school stuff, and they cared for my school stuff too of course. We would banter and hang out! The community we had at Smithville Christian was amazing!"



Rachel deJong

(Class of 2018, currently studying Psychology at Redeemer).

"I miss our World Issues Grade 12 Geography class!

"Transitioning to Redeemer has taken some time, it's good, it's good, but it's really allowed me to reflect on what I had when I was in high school.

"I wasn't always the easiest person in high school, especially in the first few years, but I really started to value the message I was hearing and the effort that all the



teachers would put into their classes and the relationships that they had with the students.

"The teachers were 'dope' man! Like I could talk to them about real stuff and they would treat me like a real person... not just a student. You know what I mean? We would have conversations about stuff that didn't have to do with school and the teachers would take time to talk with the students; they cared about me! Knowing this made me care more about school and made me want to get involved!"

(Editor's Note: Rachel was proudly wearing her Smithville Christian AV sweatshirt – a beloved item of clothing she was NOT allowed to wear while a student at Smithville Christian, because it was not part of the approved uniform.)

Got a story to tell?

We love alumni stories. If you have a story to share about how God has been working in your life or how Christian education shaped you or prepared you for the life you are leading today, we want to hear it! Contact us at mbergsma@smithvillechristian.ca.

Stay in touch

Help us keep our alumni database up-to-date so we can keep in touch, include you in prize draws, or invite you to special events.

Email us at alumni@smithvillechristian.ca to notify us of changes to email or mailing addresses. Please also tell us if you're interested in being a Career Day speaker and on what topic. Your journeys may inspire others.

Welcome to new students

A DEVOTION FOR GRADE 9 BLAST 2018

BY MARGARET HORVATH, ESL TEACHER



My name is Margaret Horvath. I am the mother of two Smithville Christian alumni and I teach ESL, literacy and business. I love this school.

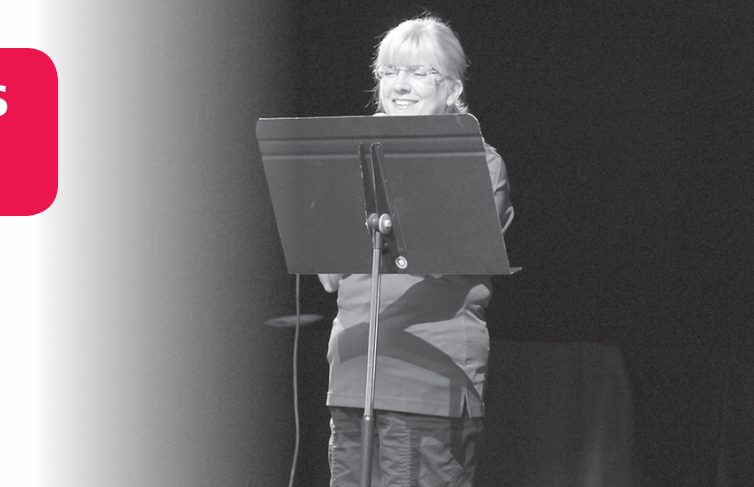
Why? At Smithville Christian, I see students accepting themselves for who they are and embracing the uniqueness of how God made them. I also see students celebrating the uniqueness of other students. It's beautiful! I wish I had had that experience in high school.

When I was growing up, I was not one of the more popular kids. I got teased for being small, for wearing glasses, for being smart, for trying to do the right things and for not wearing the "right" clothes. Besides being teased, sometimes I was even bullied.

I couldn't change who I was because that's how God made me, but I often felt sad and lonely. I had some really good friends, though, and they loved me just the way I was. That felt really good. My family also loved me for who I was, but I wanted others to love me too.

At 13 years old, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour at a Vacation Bible School that one of my friends had invited me to attend. I started to learn that God had made me unique—with my own set of talents and giftedness, and that He wanted me to use those things to be my own person and bring Him glory by embracing who I was. In high school I joined Student Council, Yearbook, and Photography Club, and was a peer tutor and the team manager and scorekeeper for my twin brother's basketball teams. I started exploring the gifts and interests that my Creator had placed inside of me, and I was happier.

After high school I went to university. For five summers through university I worked as a Customs Officer at the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie. I discovered that being small was sometimes helpful when I was searching inside cars and trucks. I discovered that



being smart and detail-oriented helped me do my job really well. Two different times I discovered large amounts of drugs that were hidden in secret compartments of vehicles. My supervisors were really pleased with how well I did my job and told me I was really good at it.

After university, I finished my teacher training and was able to achieve my lifelong dream of becoming a teacher. I love my job, and I have discovered that I can do it well especially because of the things that I used to get teased about. The way God made me also helps me in my relationships with my co-workers, my family and my friends. God has shown me that what I used to think were weaknesses are actually strengths and ways that I can bring Him glory. I have learned to embrace who I am, and I am much happier for it.

In your time here:

- Understand and know that **YOU BELONG** here. Students and teachers here will celebrate **YOU** for the unique way that God has made **YOU**.
- Explore your own interests in classes, on teams and in clubs and find out what you are really passionate about and good at.
- God has created you to be who no one else can be. You are one of a kind, and you are **SPECIAL** and **LOVED**. It's time to embrace your uniqueness and let it shine to bring God glory!

Welcome to Smithville Christian!

WELCOME



David Awad



Katrina Baturin



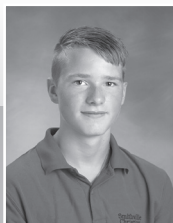
Sadie
Bennet-Chamberland



Delna Blake



Alia Breukelman



Willem Buist



Wilhem Caissie



Jessica Cullen



Elijah de Jonge



Jesse DeBoer



Seth DeHaan



Ethan Dekker



Derek DeKleine



Joshua Demask



Nathan DenBak



Chloe Devries



Ella Exelby



Tade Fashola



Ayden Garner



Steven Ghaly



Ryan Gilks



Haley Glasbergen



Jacob Griffin



Alicia Heeg



Cheyenne Heeg



Darren Heerema



Jacoba Hoekstra



Tori Hultink



Dolu Johnson



Kendra Kikkert



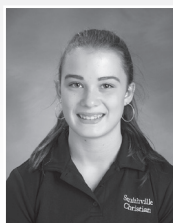
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Cole Langendoen



Madison
Lapenna Wierenga



Kayla Loerts

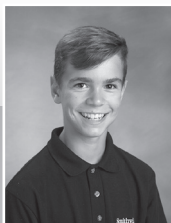


Kaitlyn McMullin

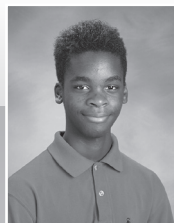
GRADE NINE!



John Micael Kok



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Alexander Mushegera



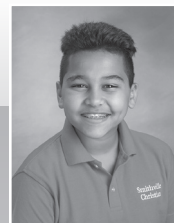
Jade Posthumus



Liam Roelfsema



Lauren Santos



Steven Sharobim



Scott Snyder



Nathan Teeuwsen



Taylor Thies



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Colby VanderWier



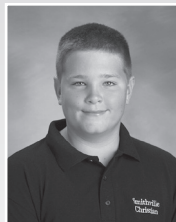
Kate VanderWier



Melanie VanderWier



Lauren VanHuizen



Ethan VanTuyl



Jayden VanTuyl



Seth VanTuyl



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Hope Veldman



Monique Vellenga



Naomi Wagter



Kelly



Aidan Whitehead



Connor Wiersma



Hannah Woodland



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GRADE NINE BIKE TRIP





Building trust

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER, HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES



In the Bible, trust is often found in the context of fear. When we are afraid it is difficult to hold onto the fact that God is near and that he goes with us. We may know it intellectually, but we may not feel it emotionally. Jesus knew he could trust his father, yet in the garden of Gethsemane knowing that his crucifixion was imminent he asked God to “let this cup pass.” Was Jesus afraid?

A new school year ushers in unknowns and we often fear those unknowns. Who will my friends be? Will I make the team? What will my classes be like? How will I know if I am ok? Where can I go if things are not ok?

Jesus knows our fear – and he promises to go with us. This is not a guarantee that our

problems will go away but it does mean that God will be there with us and through the storm. At a Christian school we strive to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Student Services is a place at Smithville Christian where all students can access support on a personal level during the school day. The role of Dave Wonder and I as guidance counsellors is to assist with planning for education, for career and for life. We facilitate students’ knowing, exploring, making decisions, setting goals, achieving goals, and making transitions. We work hard to break down fear by building trust and walking with our students. Our hope is for students to access support even when they are afraid.

Building trust is an integral component of this journey. Trust takes time and it takes courage. Our door is open – come on in.



Time to plan your reunion?



Did you graduate from Smithville Christian 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, or perhaps even 35 years ago? The classes of **1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014** are all celebrating milestone anniversaries in **2019**. If you’re in one of these cohorts and would like to reconnect with your classmates to catch up, celebrate, and reflect, why not plan a reunion?

Smithville Christian High School is pleased to help you get in touch with your classmates, offer free space to hold your event, and provide a cake and mementos to you and your guests. Just contact Marlene Bergsma at mbergsma@smithvillechristian.ca to begin planning.

The same is true for alumni of Beacon Christian School. Your memories and experiences deserve to be celebrated too. Smithville Christian is partnering with Beacon Christian School to make space, cake, and treats available for your reunions. Contact either school to get started.



Members of the 2018-2019 Smithville Christian High School student council on their annual planning retreat at Jericho House on Lake Erie: Jeremy DeBoer, Nathan Gerryts, Esther Kok, Mark Sharobim, Steven Ghaly, Micaela Felvus, Patrick Ghaly

Student leaders seek to amplify student potential

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT

BY JEREMY DEBOER, STUDENT COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

On September 24 - 25, members of Smithville Christian High School Student Council went on our annual retreat. There, we planned the year's events and appointed roles. Most importantly, we decided on our theme for this year. Student Council chooses a theme every year to shape our leadership and to inspire our fellow students. This year our theme is "I am more than a ____."

The blank can be filled with whatever people tell you your limitations may be – more than a student, more than a follower, more than my age. We chose this theme because it amplifies the idea of student potential. This is huge. Students need to understand that they are the future of the world, and just because they are young does not mean that they can't make a difference.

Our goal is for students to realize that they are more than what others label them as. In today's day and age, people, especially teenagers, feel pressured to fit certain roles. This pressure is exactly what we want to challenge. We want people to be

comfortable with who they are and what they want to be. Allowing students to get into the mindset that they can be more than what they may think enables them to open up and flourish. By empowering students to break through their limitations, they will be well-prepared to shine like beacons – not just in school but also in their everyday lives outside of school. In the end we hope that every single student is able to confidently say, "I am a child of God."

Romans 8:37: "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (NIV)



Mustard seed math

BY TONY KAMPHUIS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION



We want Smithville Christian High School to be used to expand the influence of Christ in our culture. Even if our culture doesn't understand our faith-based motivation, we want to show love for our neighbours in tangible ways. Our school can be this kind of positive influence for the public good both directly – by being active contributors in the influential realm of education; but also indirectly – by graduating students who act out their faith in agriculture, medicine, parenting, business ownership and more. A strong Smithville Christian High School provides vibrant learning experiences for its students so that God can use us to develop their faith, shape their character, and mold their hearts and minds.



To be that kind of school, we need to displace any fear of scarcity with a confidence in God's provision. In talking about these things with Foundation folks, you will hear reference to "Mustard Seed Math".

The Mustard Seed Society is all about publicly recognizing how dependent our school is on God's provision. Our supporters who have been moved by God to establish some sort of planned gift – usually a bequest – are added to our Mustard Seed Society listing, either as anonymous or as named supporters. We have a goal of identifying 50 such gifts, given to strengthen Smithville Christian High School as it achieves its mission. We have no idea what the size of each of

those gifts might be. It doesn't really matter, because when God adds His blessing to our gifts, even if they are as small as mustard seeds, they will have a powerful impact. That's the way it works with God's Mustard Seed Math.

When our school leadership sees the way God has gone before them, moving in the hearts of His people, preparing for what our school might need, how can we help but recognize His powerful provision? How can we do anything except proclaim, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow?"

God provides mustard seeds. Then, when His people offer them up for God's Kingdom work, He multiplies their impact through Mustard Seed Math.

The Mustard Seed Society is a list of supporters who have arranged a gift for Christian education, and can be found at www.mustardseedsociety.ca.

These supporters are evidence of God's provision for Christian schools!

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