West Side Christian School

# echo Newsletter

FALL 2026

*Growing Students' Minds. Guiding Servant Hearts. Glorifying Jesus Christ.*

## A NOTE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL MR. MCNAMARA (MR. MAC)



**Shalom: The Purpose of Christian Education**

**Shalom** is a profound Hebrew word most commonly translated as "peace," used traditionally as both hello and goodbye. However, its biblical definition stretches far deeper than the mere absence of conflict. It encompasses wholeness, well-being, prosperity, and security. True shalom represents the world exactly as God intended it to be—a state the theologian Nicholas Wolterstorff summarizes as "four-way-flourishing" (Flourishing between God, others, self, and creation).

This holistic flourishing is at the very heart of Christian education. At West Side Christian School, our mission is to faithfully educate children in a way that complements the home and the church. We have no desire to merely shelter our children from the world; instead, we seek to prepare them. By intentionally connecting faith to all facets of life, we equip our students to become kingdom builders in the workplace, higher education, the church, and their future families.

We teach our students to use their intellectual gifts and skills for the benefit of others rather than for selfish gain. This is rooted in our true identity: we were created on purpose, and for a purpose, because Christ is our Savior (Eph. 2:10).

While our world does not yet experience perfect shalom, we are blessed with glimpses of it every day in our community. At WSCS, we pray for the Holy Spirit to help us as we strive to **Grow** our students' minds, **Guide** their hearts, and **Glorify** Jesus Christ in all we do. This is who we are, and who we have been called to be, since 1883.



## GENEROUS COMMUNITY

West Side Christian School and its Educational Foundation have experienced several consecutive years of strong giving, and we are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our community.

There are several reasons for this continued support. First, our donors have a deep heart for West Side Christian School and its mission of educating young minds for kingdom service. Some have also chosen to make significant gifts during their lifetime so they can see firsthand the impact their generosity has on WSCS and its Foundation.

Others are taking advantage of tax benefits available through charitable giving, including directing a distribution from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) directly to a charitable organization such as WSCS.

Whatever the reason, we are grateful for every individual and family who sees West Side Christian School as a worthy organization in which to invest. Your generosity helps strengthen the mission and ministry of WSCS for generations to come.

# growing students' minds



## LEARNING TO KNOW AND LOVE GOD'S WORD

At West Side Christian School, we are excited to introduce a new Bible curriculum for our students, *Love God, Love Others*. While God is praised, discussed, and woven throughout the school day, our Bible class time is often a favorite part of each day!

Our West Side Christian teaching staff loves teaching Bible class, and this year, they are excited to use *Love God, Love Others*, created by children's book author, filmmaker, composer, and teacher Eric Schrotenboer. This context-centric Bible curriculum helps our teachers and students explore God's great, good, and redemptive story—and discover their role in it.

The curriculum includes a Parent Page on the *Love God, Love Others* website, providing at-home questions for each unit, conversation starters, the big ideas from each unit, and practical ways to live out the Bible lessons together as a family.

We are excited to grow together as we learn more about God, His Word, and His plan of salvation. May God use *Love God, Love Others* to train all of us for His mission and help bring about the restoration of all things!

## WHEN LEARNING STEPS OUTSIDE

What happens when a classroom has no walls? At West Side Christian School, learning often steps outside - and when it does, students discover that the lessons they are learning in the classroom are all around them.

Outdoor education is not an "extra." It is the bridge between the classroom learning and the world God created, giving students opportunities to take what they are learning outside, experience it firsthand, and bring their discoveries, questions, and new understanding back into the classroom.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts that comes from learning outdoors is the invitation to slow down, look closely, and stand in awe and wonder at the beauty and goodness of God's creation.

A butterfly fluttering by. Cicadas singing in the trees. A seed beginning to sprout. A harvest pulled from the soil. The changing color of a leaf. The unexpected discovery beneath the forest log.

These moments remind us that our outdoor spaces are more than gardens, forests, wetlands and pathways. They are powerful tools within these learning spaces where students extend classroom learning, apply new skills, and discover experiences they carry with them back into the classroom and beyond into their everyday lives.

Through these experiences, God is growing students' minds, guiding servant hearts and initiating them to see and tell of His glory in this world.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8



# guiding servant hearts

## NEW FACES, FAITHFUL HEARTS

At West Side Christian School, we believe some of the most meaningful moments in a student's education happen through the people who walk alongside them. Our teachers and staff have the opportunity to encourage, challenge, pray for, and point students toward Jesus each day. This year, we are excited to welcome eight new members to our WSCS family who are ready to do just that.

We are especially grateful to welcome Patrick McNamara as our new Head of School. Patrick brings a heart for Christian education and a desire to serve our students, families, and staff as we continue to grow together in Christ.

Our newest teachers and staff also bring a wonderful mix of experience, creativity, and passion for working with students. Leah Fikkert joins our Young Fives team with eight years of experience in early childhood education, while Emily Rolls brings a heart for helping young children discover who God created them to be.

Robert Dotson joins our sixth-grade team teaching Bible, science, and social studies. Susan Oatis will share her love of art with students from Young Fives through eighth grade, Monica Van Houten joins us as our Spanish teacher, Catherine Estes is leading our orchestra and Brenden Stephens brings his love of technology to our school as our Technology Assistant.

Each brings unique gifts and experiences, but they share a common heart for serving students and glorifying Christ. We are thankful to welcome them into our WSCS family and look forward to seeing how God uses them to encourage, inspire, and guide our students this year.



# glorifying jesus christ



## GROWING AND GLOWING BRIGHTER IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Our theme, "Growing and GLOWING Brighter in the Light of Christ," was rooted in John 8:12: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Throughout the week, students had opportunities to worship, open God's Word, reflect, and talk about what it means to know Jesus as the Light of Life. Through daily devotionals, classroom conversations, chapel, and time in the garden, students were encouraged to go beyond simply learning about God's Word and consider how His truth applies to their everyday lives.

One special part of the week was discovering the connection between the way plants grow and produce fruit and the way Jesus' love and light shine through our lives as the Fruit of the Spirit grows in us. Students reflected on what it looks like to stay close to Jesus and allow His light to shape us as we grow in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Most importantly, Spiritual Emphasis Week gave our students space to pause, listen, reflect, and draw closer to Jesus. We pray the lessons and conversations from this week will continue to take root in their hearts long after the week has ended.

Jesus is with us. Jesus loves us. Jesus is the Light of the World.

May our students continue to grow and GLOW brighter in the light of Christ each day.

West Side
Christian School

955 Westend NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

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/wscsgr @wscsgr wscsgr.org school@wschristian.org 616.453.3925

## "A STAFF READY TO GROW STUDENT MINDS, GUIDE SERVANT HEARTS, AND GLORIFY JESUS CHRIST"

