



# EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

SCHOOL BOARD  
NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Brad Pastoor | School Board President

This year marks the 23rd year of covenantal Christian education here at Eastside Christian School! We are very thankful to God for the opportunity to educate the children that He has blessed us with again this year. The school board has been busy over the past months overseeing the operations of the school and ensuring that the school was ready to open its doors for the first day of school. The Board has spent much time over the past six months hiring a new principal and we are very excited to see Mr. Jim Holstege take up this at Eastside. We are thankful to God for providing us a man who is excited to begin this work and who clearly has a love and heart for the cause of Christian education.

We are also very thankful to our retiring principal, Mr. Pete Adams, for his many years of service and sacrifice for the sake of Christian education. Both Pete and his wife, Marilyn, have been very instrumental in the operation of Eastside Christian School since the school first opened its door 23 years ago. We are thankful to them and to God for bringing them to our school and for all of the work that they have done for our school!

We pray that God will bless Jim in his new role as principal, as well as all of our wonderful staff, as we work together in this coming year to educate and nurture our covenant children to reflect the mind of Christ.

## 1ST-3RD GRADE FIELD TRIP | BOULDER RIDGE WILD ANIMAL PARK





## MEET THE NEW PRINCIPAL

Mr. Jim Holstege

July 16, 2019 is the day I walked away from my former life, that which was very familiar to me! Prior to that day and going back to my earliest childhood memories, I lived in the realm of agriculture and horticulture. I grew celery for Campbell Soup Company on a farm I owned in the northwest corner of Cascade Township, and later I owned and operated greenhouses in the same area. My wife, Kathi and I raised our children there, where in their youth they learned what farm and greenhouse work was all about. We sold our flowers and herbs, along with antiques and home décor gifts, through our retail shop called Everlasting Blooms. For 37 years this was our life, and along with a bump in the road here and there, it was a good and happy life! Our situation was perhaps unique for modern times in that we were something called a family farm...something that is becoming extinct in modern America. Nevertheless, in God's care, we made a living with our children at our side each day. As a family, we have memories that we hold dear!

I am the oldest son of my parents, Leonard and Marcia Holstege, and have two brothers: Len (Tammi) and Tom (Fiona). I am married to my high school sweetheart, Kathi VanDenBerg, the love of my life. We have four married children: Dan (Leah), Nate (Sarah), Lynn (John Kalsbeek), and Joe (Lisa), who are raising our 11 (and soon to be 13, the Lord willing) grandchildren.

So, you ask: How did Jim Holstege, lifetime farmer, become the Principal of Eastside Christian School? I will admit, I did not see this coming! God, in His wisdom, directed the events of my life by bringing me to Cascade Township from Byron Center as a nineteen year old young man and keeping me there, as I have mentioned for 37 years. When Eastside Christian School started 23 years ago, He laid it on my heart to join the association, become a supporter, and send my children there. Through this, I became and remained connected to Eastside. After our children married and took up the work God called them to do, (which did not include our greenhouse business!) it became clearer and clearer to Kathi and me that it was time to call it quits. Just as God directed the events earlier in my life bringing me to Cascade Township, even so He continued to direct everything in His perfect wisdom, so that by August, 2018, our business was closed, our property including our house was sold, and we were settled into our new home in Grandville.



Meanwhile, Eastside Christian School started a discussion about forming a new part-time position called Director of Development. The discussion included the possibility of merging the (part-time) Principal position with it, bringing the two roles into one full-time position. Since I was serving a term on the Eastside Christian School Foundation Board, I was aware that this discussion was taking place. Never did it occur to me that this could be in my future. One day about two years ago, while driving down the highway, Kathi and I discussed what was a common subject at the time: How are we going to sell our place? When that time comes, what will I do next? Kathi said, "I think it would be great if you could find a job working on behalf of our churches in some capacity." I said, "Yes, that would be really great. I'm aware of some discussion taking place over at Eastside School, but I'm not the right person to fill that role!" Kathi said, "I think you are. You need to ask some questions!"

Well, asking a couple questions led to a couple interviews, which led to my acceptance of the Director of Development position in September 2018. Coming into the school last year was a source of great joy to me in so many ways, especially the interaction with God's people: the young as well as the old. When Mr. Adams announced his decision to step down as Principal, and as I prayerfully considered whether I possess the gifts, I decided to apply, trusting that God will direct both the board and me through this. When I was offered the full-time position as Principal/Director of Development, effective August 1, 2019, I gladly accepted. Two months into the work, I have much to consider, much to absorb, much yet to learn. With your patience, I am doing just that. I love my job!



## FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Jim Holstege

The Eastside Christian School fiscal year ended on August 31, 2019. We are pleased to report that the financial needs necessary to run and operate our school were received. Our parents were faithful in paying their tuition obligations in a timely manner, with nothing outstanding. The support drive goal, through many love gifts, was met and exceeded. The Eastside Christian School Foundation, in God's good providence, was able to contribute significantly by means of its investment earnings. Many give quietly of their time and abilities, saving the school from added expense. Additionally, the Promoters continue to be an active group, raising funds to help pay for so many necessary "extras" - items that fall outside of the normal operating budget. Thank you all for your love and support! Together, we give all thanks and praise to our God, who "do[eth] exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

As we consider and face a new year, we ask for your ongoing support. We ask that you continue to remember the cause of covenantal, reformed, Christian instruction that takes place here at Eastside. We need your prayers. We need your gifts. To those of us who are already supporters, and who desire to help in an extra sort of way, we present a couple ways you might consider.

First, as the school building and facility ages, needs may and do arise that are outside of the normal operating costs to run the school. The time may quickly come when we will have to incorporate some of these needs into the budget. We appreciate your consideration now and in upcoming years to help offset some of these expenses, and to minimize future impact on the school budget.

A second way to help give extra support to Eastside is to consider giving to the Eastside Christian School Foundation. The Foundation has now for several years pledged significant financial support to the school through two separate grants. The *Annual ECS Grant* has been issued each year for the past twelve years to help with the operating budget of the school. Additionally, the *Tuition Assistance Grant* has been given for the past six years to directly lower the tuition bill of every family sending their children to Eastside. These financial gifts from the Foundation have proven to be a great benefit and blessing, for we acknowledge they come from the hand of God. The reason we ask you to consider giving to the Foundation is to help assure and enable this pledged support for the future. The Foundation board is aware that a higher principal balance is necessary in order to continue at this same level of support for years to come.

We place all trust in our great Provider. We pray for our daily bread as it applies to each of us individually, and as it applies to Eastside Christian School. May He bestow upon us the earthly means from His treasure house, and the spirit of a cheerful giver. May we, with the psalmist, make a joyful noise unto the Lord, and know that [He] hath made us, and not we ourselves. He gives to us in abundance. May we likewise give in abundance!

## PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN | ZOO TRIP





## MADELYN MONSMA | SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Mr. Jim Holstege

Twenty years ago (1999) two of our supporters endowed a Calvin (College) University scholarship for the benefit of Eastside Christian alumni. All Eastside Christian School graduates are eligible to receive The Gerald DeVries, Eastside Christian School Scholarship that is awarded annually and exclusively to Eastside alumni. The purpose of this scholarship is “to improve the opportunity for Eastside Christian School graduates to receive an education at Calvin.”

The 2019 scholarship recipient is Madelyn Monsma. Madelyn graduated from Eastside in 2015 and from Covenant Christian High School in 2019. She is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church. Madelyn has just begun her first year at Calvin and is enrolled with a double major- Spanish and Elementary Education. I asked Madelyn about her reason for selecting a Spanish major. She said, “I really took an interest in Spanish as soon as I began to study it in high school. It is a useful language to know and I want to be able to communicate better with it. Also, if I could somehow bring Spanish into my classroom someday that would be great!” This past summer, Madelyn joined the group from First Church that went to Mexico along with Rev. Cory Griess and Prof. Ron Cammenga to meet with and encourage fellow reformed saints there. This certainly was a special opportunity for Madelyn in so many ways.

I also enquired into her desire to become an elementary school teacher. Madelyn said, “I am pursuing Elementary Education because after praying about it many times, I feel called to become a teacher. God has given me the love of many subjects that I could see myself teaching to kids one day. I know how important it is to teach in a Christian school and show how amazing God is. I look up to the godly examples of my past teachers and hope to have the same impact on others!”

Awarding the scholarship to Madelyn and helping her along the way to become a teacher, the Lord willing, in our Christian elementary schools is all by itself very special indeed. What makes it even more meaningful is to know about Gerald DeVries, the man after whom the scholarship is named. Jerry DeVries grew up in Randolph, Wisconsin. During his childhood, Rev. George Lubbers was the pastor in Randolph Protestant Reformed Church. Jerry (and his brothers) became friends with the Lubbers children, including sisters Agatha and Greta, friendships that lasted a lifetime. As adults, these three childhood friends found themselves together on the northeast side of Grand Rapids, united in their love and support for our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

Particularly, they were united in their desire to start and support a new Protestant Reformed Christian School, one that became known as Eastside Christian School. Jerry and Pat DeVries along with Tom and Greta (Lubbers) Newhof and several others were instrumental in helping bring Eastside Christian into reality, and in the fall of 1997, the doors opened for the first time. Only a few years later Jerry passed

The Gerald DeVries, Eastside Christian School Scholarship has been awarded to twelve different Eastside Christian School alumni, since 2002-03, for a combined total of \$39,425.00 from the earnings of the original endowed gift. The recipients are:

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|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Andrew Schimmel</b>   | <b>Jordan Newhof</b>    |
| <b>Jordan Eldersveld</b> | <b>Audra Miedema</b>    |
| <b>Kyle Thompson</b>     | <b>Molly VanBaren</b>   |
| <b>Daniel Schimmel</b>   | <b>Melissa VanBaren</b> |
| <b>Joseph Holstege</b>   | <b>Jeremy VanBaren</b>  |
| <b>Joel Miedema</b>      | <b>Madelyn Monsma</b>   |

The dollar value of the scholarship is determined by how much investment earnings is made on the money specified for the scholarship. Anyone interested in increasing the scholarship can do so by giving a tax-free gift to Calvin University, specifying the Gerald DeVries, Eastside Christian School Scholarship.



Madelyn Monsma poses in front of the Fine Arts Center at Calvin.

## MADELYN MONSMA | SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT *continued....*

away on December 8, 2000. To honor and continue Jerry's legacy of love for helping others afford Christian education and to further support their shared vision for Eastside Christian, Tom and Greta endowed the scholarship at Calvin and named it after Jerry. This same man, Gerald DeVries, is Madelyn's grandfather, the grandfather she never knew. Four months after his death, Madelyn was born on April 14, 2001.

To receive this scholarship named after her grandfather is something Madelyn cherishes. "While going through the admissions process, it was pretty special to me that they [Calvin] knew the name of my grandfather and the name of Eastside Christian School, because of the scholarship that is in place."

Madelyn, we are delighted for you and about you. We pray that God will guide and bless you in your studies at Calvin, and that one day, you will press into service this training as you enter a career of teaching in one of our covenantal Christian schools, to His glory.

## FALL HAPPENINGS | SEEN AROUND SCHOOL

**Top and Bottom Left:** Art class with Mrs. Kuiper gets colorful!

**Top Middle:** Mr. Holstege debuts our new school logowear. The logowear is subsidized by the Promoters to keep it affordable! Hats, tshirts, sweatshirts, and pullovers are available for both students and adults. Call the school if you are interested in placing an order!

**Bottom middle and bottom right:** Mrs. Haak dissects a cow eye in science class, to the delight of the 1st-3rd students.

**Top right:** The Preschoolers pose for a photo on the first day of class. Special welcome to Olivia Pastoor, Jenna Kleyn, Charissa Griess, Ian Tanis, and Henry Kuiper!





## NEW FAMILY WELCOME

Mr. Jim Holstege

We give a hearty welcome to the Ross and Kristi Beckwith family! Ross and Kristi have four beautiful children, three boys and one girl. Micah, the oldest, joins us in the first-grade room, and Natalie has begun her year of kindergarten. We're so happy to see them here, mixing with their classmates. Still at home with Mom are Luke, who is three years old, and Samuel, who is three months.

Ross and Kristi live on the northeast side of Grand Rapids (in the Rockford/Belmont area), the same general area where Ross spent his youth. Kristi grew up in the Ada area, as Kristi Dykstra. Her father Al Dykstra, was a beef cattle farmer. She attended Ada CRC and went through Ada Christian School. Ross grew up going to school in the Rockford school system. While in high school he developed a passion for cooking and the culinary arts, triggered primarily through working at a restaurant owned by his father. He even enrolled in a culinary school in New York. They met each other while attending the same church and have now been married for over eight years.



THE BECKWITHS

Ross became familiar with the Protestant Reformed Churches through several means. He gained information by having conversations with people who were not necessarily Protestant Reformed themselves. He found literature and books to read. He became acquainted with Rev. Griess while Rev. Griess was a seminary student and kept himself connected by listening in on Rev. Griess' sermons. When Rev. Griess became the pastor of First PRC the Beckwiths started attending the worship services, and are in the process of joining.

Ross has worked in the food service management business and has driven truck for In On Time Trucking. He desires a career in the culinary field and has been searching for a business opportunity either in that or perhaps something entirely different. In the meantime, he has been helping acquaintances with a variety of jobs that have come his way, from high end window washing, to painting, and more. His priority is to his family and he is looking for that right job that will keep him close to home.

Ross and Kristi...Micah and Natalie...we say again, welcome to Eastside Christian School! We pray that we may be a blessing to one another in this year, and for many years to come.

## PROMOTERS' FALL ACTIVITIES



The Promoters of Eastside has a fall filled with fundraisers. Eastside supporters spend three days making over 1100 sticks of blanket. (Ask a dutch friend if you don't know what that is ... and then try some and you will be hooked!) The blanket sale is a popular and long-standing fundraiser for our school, with many familiar faces coming back year after year to help make the dutch treat.

Stop&Shop is scheduled for Saturday, November 9. New this year - we will be offering Do-It-Yourself classes in addition to a selection of vendors to shop from. The Promoters tested the DIY class idea this past spring with Ladies' Day Out (pictured far left). It was a success and well received so we are offering classes again!



## ANNUAL BIKE HIKE

Debbie Baldwin

The Bike Hike is an event often featured in the Fall Newsletter. Each year when planning content for the newsletter, the joke is "Well, there's always the Bike Hike." So maybe it's a tired story, but after after going along for the first time myself this year, I have a renewed respect for this school tradition. All students in grades 4th through 8th go for a 20 mile bike ride - riding from Kirk Park to the Grand Haven State Park pier and then back to Kirk Park again. The bike hike requires stamina that pushes especially the younger students (and let's be honest - many of the accompanying adults) to their physical limits. I rode along this year, and the first 10 miles there were fairly pleasant. The pace was moderate (at least for my group - we split up into four groups according to age and ability) and the route was often scenic. But after a stop at the Grand Haven pier with the entire group, I found the 10 miles back to be exponentially more difficult. The hills loomed larger and each mile felt longer than it had on the way to the pier. I noticed many students tiring, seemingly experiencing the same struggles. In the end, we all made it back to Kirk Park - many by bike, a few via Mr. Adam's famed Victory Wagon. The older students came in first, a close group of junior high students that were by now very familiar with the route and did not need bother with pacing themselves. The sixth and fifth graders made it next, clustered into small groups, some more tired than others. Behind them came the fourth graders, with smaller bikes and smaller legs, who gave it their all, and looked tired but happy as they munched on well-deserved hot dogs. Mr. Jim Holstege captured it well in the Eastside Monday note, where he addressed the eighth graders:

**Dear Owen, Gabrielle, and Tanner,**

**Friday you went on your fifth and final Bike Hike as a student at Eastside! I watched how you completed the trip with ease. I also watched the fourth graders who went for the very first time, and who finished, but with a little strain and difficulty. Do you remember your first time? As you grow older, the Lord is adding strength and stamina to your bodies. Do you see that this is true and that it is from your Creator? As you reflect in the years to come, remember the beauty of the wetlands, the majesty of the trees along the path, the splendor of the Lake Michigan shoreline, and what a wonderful Creator is our God!**

**Top left:** The three eighth graders get ready for their last bike hike. **Top right:** Chase, Seth and Eric take in the channel. **Bottom right:** Students pose by the pier before heading back to Kirk Park. **Bottom left:** Students check out the view at Kirk Park. Because of high water levels, there is almost no beach to speak of, so the Eastside tradition of tug-of-war on the beach did not happen this year.





I have been asked to write some things about myself, especially in relationship to our Eastside Christian School.

Though I was brought up to believe in God, which I did in a distant way, I did not understand until early college days that all things revolve around our personal relationship with our Father God. After some years of floundering in Arminian thinking, Marilyn and I were both drawn to the Reformed faith. We joined the Lynden PRC back in 1980 and after a few years I was able to fulfill youthful daydreams by being an instructor at the Covenant PR school there.

Our family grew in number and age and got to the point where the girls were ready for high school, but there was not a Protestant Reformed high school in Lynden ready for them. That was one of the significant reasons we began considering a move to Grand Rapids. And then a phone call came "out of the blue" from Meribeth Newhof expressing the possibility of a new school starting in Grand Rapids and therefore there being a need for teachers. Well, you know the outcome of that conversation.

Much of the appeal regarding Eastside was that it presented an opportunity to start with a new work from scratch: opportunities to originate good traditions, work with other colleagues facing the same challenges of a new-born school, and pitching in together with the new families (all the families and students were new) to get this thing off the ground and flying.

It was exciting times, those first days, weeks, and years. We started in First Church's basement, with the "rooms" being areas walled off by moveable partitions. With only 26 students at the beginning, it more than worked. Plus, we were able to take advantage of our situation as our "travel agent" Kristi Thompson managed to book educational and enjoyable field trips every week, it seemed.

More time and more students meant the need for more room that was provided at our new school building. Did this mean that we would have less and less of our family-friendly atmosphere? No. The interior design of the building itself promotes an open feeling, but especially we as a staff worked to maintain the positive relationships with students and parents.

I was hired to work primarily with the older students in their math, science, and history studies. Though there can be an appeal for a teacher to work at the higher grade and academic levels, I have enjoyed being a part of their lives when they were still in the "moldable" stage (before the dating, cars, etc. of high school). However, it has been the case in my life that even though I would be content to be left alone almost forgotten in a small classroom, I have been needed to also take on the principal role. Agatha Lubbers got us off to a good start in that position, followed by Judy Feenstra, me, Dave Mahtani, me, and now Jim Holstege. We are in good hands. Or better expressed, the Lord has provided Eastside abundantly all through these years, with great staff, support from parents, and most of all students (this year the most ever, with more to come!)

Now I am working semi-semi-time, meaning a few hours in the morning taking care of recess, tutoring needs, and whatever else. This means more time for grandparenting, visiting the saints, and somehow or other squeezing in time to hit golf balls a few times a week. Long-term, I hope to refine some of the presentations that I have done in the past to be able to communicate to broader audiences key ideas in education from our Reformed perspective. As is expressed in Jim's article, the Lord has His perfect plan for His people, so we walk in faith, not by our limited sight.

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### 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR THEME:

What is your 20/20 Vision?

**Open Thou mine eyes, that I might behold wondrous things out of Thy law. Psalm 119:18**