



EASTSIDE

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

SCHOOL BOARD
NEWSLETTER
FALL 2023

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

MR. JIM HOLSTEGE

Oh, the blessednesses of the man!

This is a good literal translation of the opening line to the Book of Psalms, in Psalm 1:1. Oh, the blessednesses of the man (woman or child)! Who obtains these blessednesses? We who are planted in Jesus Christ... "like a tree planted by the rivers of water." We who delight in the Word of God and who meditate in that Word, day and night. Being planted in our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall prosper in vigor and beauty, renouncing the company of the ungodly and bringing forth much fruit to His praise and glory. This is our focus this year, as we study and discuss Psalm 1 together at Eastside Christian School.

In God's goodness, we are enjoying a smooth and happy year. Peace and harmony reigns among parents, board, and staff! We were pleased to come together earlier this school year on September 13, to go over a few changes that have been put into place. What follows is a summary of some things we discussed.

For the third time in our school's history and according to God's providence, we do not have a Kindergarten class this year (1998 & 2013 were the two prior years). As we contemplated the 2023-24 school year, Lydia's gifts and availability of her time, we agreed that she could be a great benefit to the needs of Eastside by assisting Kristi in the 3rd & 4th grade classroom. Lydia and Kristi have been collaborating, with Lydia teaching some of the 3rd grade classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, while teaching her Pre-School students during the afternoons. This arrangement has been going very well.

Our Art teacher, Kim Kuiper, proposed some really neat ideas for her 7th & 8th grade students, which combines her traditional Art curriculum with computer technology. We are excited to give Kim's suggestions a try. The Lord willing, Kim will provide her own description of the class in our next newsletter.

Our school library has received considerable attention for the past few years. We have a committee of volunteers who worked to purchase additional books that are of appropriate content and reading level for our students. We are grateful to them for their dedicated work. The Education Committee made a big decision to switch from Accelerated Reader to ReadnQuiz. ReadnQuiz is a computer based tool we use in our endeavor to promote library use, promote the fun of reading, and to motivate students to read as many books as they can. Lorelei Thompson has been a superb librarian, helping and encouraging the students along the way.

With Michelle Pipe's decision to step away from teaching and directing our Choir, we begin a new era with our very own Andy Kuiper taking up this role. Andy and his students gave their first public performance during Grandparents' Day chapel on October 27. We are very thankful to God for the gift of music and for the many good means He has given us to teach music to our students, for His glory.

Ericka Pastoor extended her offer, and we readily accepted, to help teach some of the PE classes. Ericka has been coming in weekly, on

Friday afternoons to work with our 1st/2nd and 3rd/4th students. We appreciate her organized planning and efforts to teach basic coordination skills to our youngsters.

One other important matter we discussed in our September 13 meeting has to do with improvements we are striving to make in the area of school security. We reported that we are working with the Grand Rapids Police Department to improve upon our crisis response planning. Additionally, we are seeking to make physical changes to our building to increase security. Because all of this requires funding, the Eastside Promoters has agreed to use this year's online auction (February 7) toward this good cause. Please consider donating and/or bidding this year!

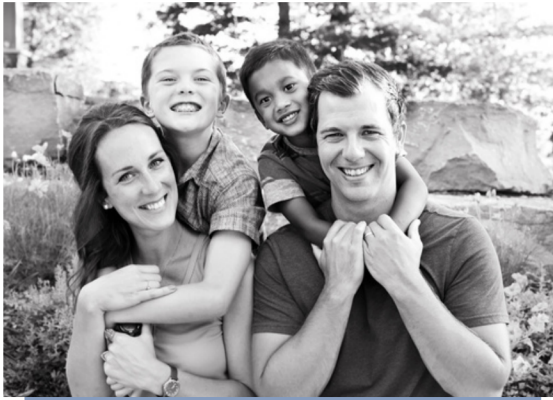
May we continue to rejoice and be thankful to our Father for the abundance He showers upon us each and every day. May we never stop to count our blessings, one by one.

VOLLEYBALL



The sixth through eighth grade girls finished their second volleyball season, this year under the coaching of Kristen Schimmel. The girls improved significantly over the course of the season.

NEW FAMILY WELCOME



Hello Eastside friends and families, I was asked to tell a little about our family since we are a new family to Eastside. My name is Lisa, and my husband is Joe. Both of us grew up in West Michigan, and were blessed with families who valued Christian education. Joe even went to Eastside as a young boy. Joe and I started dating when we were in high school and got married in 2011. We had Jacob in 2014, and he is a 4th grader now with Mrs. Kristi Thompson. Benjamin is our 4-year old and he was adopted from the Grand Rapids area in 2019. He enjoys living so close to Eastside and loves peeking through the woods at all the fun happening during recess time. Joe is the pastor at First PRC so many of you might know him as Rev. Holstege. We just joined First church in the spring; Joe had been the pastor at Zion PRC in Jenison for 5 years before this. It is a blessing to be able to be a part of First Church and Eastside school, and after some adjusting this summer Jacob is really enjoying his friendships at Eastside and the routines of school life. I am thankful to be a stay-at-home mom to my boys, and I definitely keep busy with family, church, school, and other activities. Some of our favorite things to do as a family are hiking and exploring different places as a family and spending time outside. We look forward to getting to know you all more.

FROM THE BUILDING COMMITTEE

As we begin a new school year, we look around at the familiar sounds and faces. We can be comforted by this familiarity of the building and the people that dwell in it, but if you look closely you will see small differences all over the place. Children grow older over the summer and change in appearance and grow in maturity and teachers hone their skills and maybe make slight changes in their teaching style or technique. If you look closely you will also see that the school has changed slightly as well. Over the summer the building committee took on some necessary changes to create a more functional space for the resource room and give the kitchen a much needed upgrade. In Mrs. Meidema's room, storage cabinets and a countertop were installed to add to the storage capacity and free up some much needed floor space for more desks. The countertop created even more usable desk space and an area of storage for the laminator, freezer, and projector cart. In the kitchen area, the changes were more aesthetic but much needed as well. The countertops were replaced with a new laminate top and a drop-in sink and faucet was added. The area was also freshened up with a new coat of paint. Many other smaller projects were performed to maintain the building as well but they were not glamorous enough to put into print 😊. The Building Committee would also like to extend a hearty thanks to all who contributed to the Summer Cleaning Bee and all the financial assistance that was provided to make these changes possible.

SECURITY COMMITTEE UPDATE

The security committee has been working over the past year to identify security weaknesses and address areas that need improvement. To date, the following action items have been completed by the committee:

- Toured our school and grounds with a police officer from the Wyoming PD for initial impressions and suggestions.
- Toured our school and grounds with a representative of the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD). At this meeting, we received feedback on our grounds and current security practices, as well as suggestions on needed improvements. We worked with the GRPD on documentation and received a School Security Assessment Report from our contact in their Crime Prevention Unit.
- Wrote an Emergency Operation Plan that was filed with the Grand Rapids Police Department. The plan includes descriptions of the building and grounds, detailed blueprints of the school, and details on offsite gathering places. If a crisis situation occurs, the GRPD will have this information on file for quick access.
- Researched and compiled a Crisis Response Manual, which includes well thought out action items and procedures for a variety of situations - intruder, medical emergency, staff/student death, etc. It also includes a list of individuals (teachers, staff, pastors) who may be called on to form a Crisis Response Team to address a particular situation.

DISGUISE- A-TURKEY CONTEST

- Installed vinyl letters on interior and exterior doors for wayfinding in an emergency situation. GRPD was consulted for the numbering /lettering system.
- Purchased walkie-talkies for the classrooms as a way to communicate in an emergency situation. Teachers and staff will be instructed to use them on a daily basis to ensure the devices stay in working order and staff knows how to use them.
- Installed a Blink doorbell with a camera on the front entrance as well as cameras on the upper parking lot and back driveway. The Blink camera for the front entry is considered a short-term solution for quick and easy communication with anyone at the door. The Blink cameras on the parking lot and back driveway will remain.

There is much more on the committee's list. Teachers and staff underwent Active Shooter Training with the GRPD this November, and we continue to refine our lockdown and flight procedures.

There are needed improvements to the building (based on the School Security Assessment Report) that the committee has researched and received price quotes for:

- **Bullet-resistant coating on doors and windows** | Bullet-resistant coating would buy some time in an active shooter situation
- **Buzzer entry system for door with closed-circuit camera** | A buzzer entry and camera system would allow staff to see who is at the door while remaining out of sight, and also communicate without opening the door
- **Wayfinding signage** | The school building is difficult for outsiders to find, and in an emergency this could become a problem
- **Stop the Bleed kits** | Medical kits for each classroom
- **Parabolic mirrors in the hall** | Two mirrors mounted in the hallway will allow teachers and students to be able to view around a corner
- **Trim bushes and trees** | Bushes should remain trimmed to less than 4 feet high, and trees branches should have a seven foot clearance from the ground, to keep a clear view from inside the school of people approaching

At the School Board's request, the Promoters has approved using the funds from this year's auction towards security needs. The full cost of the proposal coming from the security committee is \$33,045, with the bullet-resistant coating and the buzzer entry/camera system the most expensive items by far.

The committee recognizes the cost is high, and yet firmly believes the improvements are needed. We ask you to consider this need, and support the online auction on February 7, or reach out directly to the school if you would like to contribute financially to our goal.

One Eastside tradition that is very popular with the students is our annual Disguise-A-Turkey contest during the Thanksgiving season. Students are given a black and white printout of a turkey which they create an elaborate disguise for, to ensure the turkey is not eaten for Thanksgiving dinner. Over the years the turkeys have been turned into presidents, astronauts, musicians, famous paintings, and many other creative objects. The students have fun looking at all the turkeys as they come in.



AUGUST 31, 2023 PICNIC ON THE PATIO

GRANDPARENTS DAY



IN MEMORIAM

Many of us will remember Picnic on the Patio as our last evening with Jerry Van Baren, and representative of the dedication that Jerry had to our school community. As a long time Foundation member, he was instrumental in forming and shaping the Foundation into what it is today - an entity that helps secure the long-term future of the school. As secretary of the Foundation, he stood up at the Picnic to give the customary short speech on behalf of the Foundation. When Jim Holstege asked him if we needed to bother with a microphone, Jerry responded with a wink and said, "Nah, I'll just give it the ole' Gise." Channeling the voice of his late father Rev. Gise VanBaren, he spoke up loudly to deliver his speech to the crowd. He talked about how the Foundation "functions like the widow's cruse of oil;" the Foundation has donated money to the school that is generated by investments, but the Lord has blessed the fund such that the principal has not been diminished. Much work was done by Jerry, but all glory was given to God.

God took Jerry to his heavenly home very suddenly less than two days later on Saturday morning, September 2. Jerry's absence is felt in our Eastside community, and we are immensely thankful for his life of service and dedication to kingdom causes.

Also present at the Picnic was Agatha Lubbers, the first Administrator of Eastside, serving the school for 11 years until she retired in 2008. At a crucial time in Eastside's history - the very beginning - Agatha offered her services as Administrator to ensure the new school's success. Agatha devoted her life to Christian education, spending 50 years as a teacher and administrator in Grand Rapids area PR schools. Agatha met her LORD and Savior Jesus Christ face to face in Heaven on November 2, 2023. She was 91.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." MATTHEW 25:21