Fall 2013

Insight

The Magazine of
Coventry Christian Schools

Where Jesus is LORD

Focus on the Performing Arts

A Dickens Christmas

The Cricket on the Hearth & Old Cheeseman's Christmas

US Premier performances of
two short adaptations of Charles Dickens'
Christmas stories. By Jason Rip
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Saturday, Dec 7 @ 2pm (Show only)

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Where Jesus is Lord

by Paul Q. Fisher, M. Ed.

As I write this, it has been just two weeks since some 900 people gathered together in the Sunnybrook Ballroom for the largest event in our school's history. No less than half of that audience was composed of guests who have never heard our message before. It was an exhilarating evening for the board, faculty and staff, parents, students, and alumni in attendance as we celebrated the commencement of our 30th year of educating for life.

The size of the event was due in no small part to our featured speaker, Dr. Benjamin Carson. In February, at the National Prayer Breakfast, Dr. Carson energized Americans mostly on the conservative side of the political spectrum with his pointed critique of the more liberal policies of the Obama administration. While our school certainly does not endorse all that Dr. Carson has said or will say, on October 13, we were thankful that he had attracted such an enthusiastic following—not because we necessarily want more Americans to jump on his bandwagon, but rather because he attracted hundreds of our neighbors to our Founders Dinner, where we were able to speak as pointedly as Dr. Carson, not on national politics, but rather on the necessity and superiority of classical and Christian education as the best option for parents wanting to equip their children to remain faithful and meaningfully engaged in a society that is increasingly hostile toward the lordship of Jesus Christ.

I thank God that we are partners together in a school where Jesus is Lord!

Every school has a lord. Economic utility. Upward mobility. Funding. Test scores. Unions. Taxpayers. If Jesus is lord of our school, what will that mean for the way we teach our children? What truths must be central to the curriculum? What methods of instruction and discipline demonstrate an understanding of what the human child is and how he will best learn? What kind of person ought a teacher to be? The answers to these questions must serve one purpose and one purpose only: the lifelong and wholehearted surrender of our children to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

In this issue Jill Barton, Dean of Academics, and Dr. C. Todd Meredith, humanities instructor and faculty development instructor, will explore some answers to these questions. We will remember the profound influence of John Niehls, one of a handful of key supporters who have helped to make 30 years of educating for life possible. We will spend some time with alumnus, Brandon Custer, who is practicing discipleship by following Christ to Rwanda and China. The Coventry Kids will inspire us with their commitment to loving local children through Project Purpose. As you read through this issue, I hope you will be as impressed as I was by the unifying theme of God's sovereignty. New teacher, Abigail Fehr, has written a beautiful reflection upon God's tinkering with us to craft us into the people he recreated us to be in Christ. He is indeed lord of our school and continues to astonish us by taking us places that only He could envision thirty years ago. Thank you for sharing your time with us as you read another issue of Insight. I thank God that we are partners together in a school where Jesus is Lord!

Walk Humbly with Your God

Remembering John Niehls

by Jill L. Barton

On Wednesday, October 16, a great friend and supporter of Coventry Christian Schools finished the race marked out for him. A celebration of life service was held for John Niehls in the CCS Events Center on Saturday, October 26. John's contributions to CCS were far more than financial, although those were significant. His spiritual influence and wisdom graced our board of trustees for the years that he served there. The legacy of faith passed down to his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren has been a blessing to two generations of Coventry Kids, and all three generations of his descendants are integral members of the CCS family, attending as students, teaching in our classrooms, coaching our athletes, serving on our board and administration. Our dean of academics, Jill Barton, grew up knowing John and Doris Niehls on a more personal level. She shares her reflections with us in this issue of Insight.

To a great extent, parenting children is not so much what we teach our children directly ourselves, but also involves those to whom we expose our children and the examples they provide. When I was growing up, our close, country neighbors were John and Doris Niehls. Not only were they neighbors, but they were also family in Christ. As my parents married and settled in their small town in Pennsylvania, my father had moved away from his home in South Carolina and my mother's own parents had passed. My parents had two young daughters to raise, and John and Doris Niehls became my adopted grandparents, mentors, and my own nurturers in faith throughout my lifetime. John knew and walked the words of Micah 6:8. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."

The memories that I have of Grandpa Niehls are steeped in the sunshine of the open kitchen on the farm, with the brown tile floor, and his chair and newspaper that were waiting for him every day. I have fond memories of seasonal activities in the kitchen with Grammy Niehls canning, preserving, baking, and cooking, and Grandpa arriving home amid the cooking and activity of the kitchen to greet my sister and myself as we were spending time at the farm. He would greet the dobermans in the mud room, greet his wife with affection, and I would anticipate his greeting to me, feeling shy but special as he always made a fuss over my sister and myself. The deep and abiding love that John expressed in his satisfaction with his home and wife, was clear even to my childish eyes, and those visual examples of faithful living were the standard bearers and confirming examples of the lessons and sermons of my own father and mother. My parents knew that the strength of the message we share in Christ is borne out in those with whom we surround our children, and their legacy left an imprint on my young heart, but it was greatly enhanced and clarified by the living testimony of John Niehls. Love, family, and hard work were all synonyms for John. There was great joy to be had in the daily expression of faithful living and enjoyment of our blessings in Christ, walking humbly with God.

The import of Grandpa Niehls' Bible study space, habits, and devotion to the word of God in his own household made quite an impression on me. His walk and deeds expressed the charge of the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them on the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." In his faithful daily walk, John showed that he regarded himself as a humble child of the King, and was seeking to be led himself by the Lord and to lead all in his surroundings as a faithful servant. His own example as a patriarch helped and still helps me to better appreciate

and understand the Old Testament histories and messages of patriarchs who pass down the word of God to all under their influence. Though I may not remember what was said exactly at those dinner table meals consisting of things like chicken fried steak, vegetables from the garden, and always, always made complete with bread and butter, it was clear to me that John's family: his children, their wives, and his children's children, were unified in spirit and beliefs from the examples of faithful parents.

John Niehls's love of God and his understanding of the value of each of us taught me lasting lessons about both my own and others' eternal value. I cherish his questions to me as I was growing up in the church. Who else, but John, would ask a preadolescent girl like myself what she thought of the visiting preacher's sermon and her impression of that same man's fitness to be our preacher? The fact that he cared to ask spoke volumes to me about what it meant to shepherd and taught me that God himself regards us all as precious. John's devotion to the church in desiring the office of an elder and in shepherding God's people was a tireless example to many. Passing along the heritage of faith, working to guard hearts against the temptations of the world, teaching Scripture, and fellowshipping with family are hallmark traits of John Niehls' leadership and life's work. The call to do the work of the church and he and Doris' giving hours upon hours of time and devotion to maintaining the family life of the church provide us who remain with a charge to keep. "Keeping it between the ditches" was a favorite expression of Grandpa Niehls, and it exactly encompasses the message of Micah 6:8 and John's oft repeated charge to any and all in earshot, especially his family: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."

The Lord God in his mercy and wisdom provides us our temporary family by blood, and our family in Christ for now and eternity. I and countless others have been blessed by John Niehls' faithful and daily walk that modelled for us the lives of our forebears in faith showed us how to "keep it between the ditches" and that until we can meet again as faithful family members of our Father God.

While Faith Guides the Journey, PTO Supports the Path

by Nichole M. Tucker, PTO Chair

Proverbs 22:6 tells us to "start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." Yet, while we raise them up and strive to provide the best path for them, we can only hope that we have steered them in the right direction. Today, as I reflect upon my own life's path, I recognize the efforts and dedication put forth by my parents and past teachers that helped me to develop into the person I am today. Like many of us, I find that who I've grown to become falls within many roles – I am a Christian, a wife, a daughter, a friend, an employee, etc. Herein, however, I'm going to focus upon my role as a parent.

As a parent and the PTO chair for Coventry Christian Schools, I feel deeply blessed and enthusiastic about the opportunity to help lead and grow our group of Parents, Teachers and Others. While I know that this article will reach many families, my hope is that each reader will recognize that it is intended to be more of a personal conversation between us. I hope for this because I believe that each student here has a mother, a father, a grandparent, host family or a guardian that is raising them up, loving them, striving to "start them off on the way they should go," as best as they know how. To those readers I profess, "I can relate!" Raising a child is not a smooth-sailing job. There are defeats, second guesses, and feelings of helplessness that we are bound to go through. Nonetheless, it is one of the most rewarding roles we'll ever get to have. We get to see the beauty in staying up late just to watch a baby sleep, we get to feel the warmth that radiates from a confident smile. And, we know the importance of a simple, "guess what?" at the end of a school day. With that said, I find that the teachers, staff and administrators here at CCS can relate with us too. They are truly dedicated to educating for life. Therefore, what I want to converse with you about is fairly simple: PTO needs you.

The PTO's executive committee is passionate about supporting the needs of our school. We know that the teachers, staff and administrators here go above and beyond the standard call of duty for the benefit of students. They are committed to families and the mission of partnering with us to help nurture our children in the faith, hope and love of Jesus Christ. They help us to help them learn "the way they should go", namely serving God and others, and they do it with the commitment of a calling rather than the simplistic duty of a job title. You'll often find them working late, bringing in supplies from home and volunteering to help in various regards. PTO wants to support their efforts and yours by strengthening the bridge between home and school. Membership with the PTO doesn't come with requirements. Rather, it offers opportunity. It gives people like us an amplified voice. Take our recent Volunteer Interest Survey for example; it provided us with the input needed to develop the goals you wanted to see expeditiously brought to fruition. As a result, a couple of our newest action items are to raise enough funds to purchase a professionally designed permanent sign for the front of our building (replacing the banner) and to create a school spirit store. We also love that students are enjoying newly purchased musical instruments, preschoolers are playing on an improved playground, and classroom requests are getting fulfilled. So, I ask you, from the role of a parent, an optimistic chairperson, and someone who can openly relate, will you join with me and PTO as we partner with each other to show our children the way they should go?

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart." - Elizabeth Andrew

Medieval World

It's Not Just Window Dressing

by C. Todd Meredith, Ph. D.

Advocates of Christian education often aspire to transform the culture in which they live. They seem to assume that enough of their graduates, placed in key leadership positions in church, government, business, academia, and the media of mass communication, will over time exert sufficient influence on the direction of the nation so that America will be—either finally or once again—a Christian society. But just as often, Christian educational institutions devote little attention to the questions of how to Christianize a society or what a thoroughly Christian culture might look like. It is exactly these questions which are addressed by a study of the European Middle Ages. The time period extending from roughly A.D. 400 to A.D. 1600 provides us with an actual historical case of a thoroughgoing and long-term attempt to Christianize a culture on a broad scale, from art to politics to philosophy. Its successes and failures provide instructive examples for thinking Christians today who are interested in claiming their world for Christ. Oddly, the study of medieval history, literature, and thought is largely neglected by Christian secondary schools. At the Christian school I attended, medieval Europe was briefly treated in a high-school world history course I took as an elective, and Beowulf and Chaucer were on the syllabus in my excellent eleventh-grade English class, but that was all. In light of this general neglect, Coventry Christian Schools may seem out of step by focusing for two full years on the time period which bridges the gap between classical antiquity and the modern era. Accordingly, a brief apology for medieval studies may be in order.

> To a great extent, we cannot understand what it means to think like a Christian unless we grapple with Augustine and Aquinas.

Christian schools are usually enthusiastic about propagating the "Christian worldview." But if we are interested in how to think like Christians, it can hardly escape our notice that what we now call the "Christian worldview" was forged during the Middle Ages as great thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas brought the gospel of Jesus Christ

into dialogue with secular philosophy. To a great extent, we cannot understand what it means to think like a Christian unless we grapple with Augustine and Aquinas. The relationship of sacred doctrine to every other discipline and the relationship between faith, learning, and life are central concerns in the work of these great philosopher-theologians. A sincere study of their writings will both stretch and surprise us, leaving us both sharpened and humbled.

Christian schools are usually interested in finding uplifting alternatives to the vulgar, empty, nihilistic art, literature, and cinema produced by a large segment of the contemporary creative sector. But if we want to explore Christian art and literature, we would do well to examine the creative imagination of the Middle Ages, when artists themselves first began to explore what Christian poetry, Christian sculpture, Christian romance, and Christian drawing could be. Norse sagas and French romances, English miracle plays, the works of the great poets Dante and Chaucer, challenge us to rethink what themes are appropriate for Christian art and how those themes might be effectively treated. Those who "Christianize" texts merely by bowdlerizing them are often shocked at the subject matter in medieval poetry. As for sex and violence, the medievals were very matter-of-fact about murder and adultery, but these acts were clearly painted as sin, and their tragic consequences were clearly shown. As for low humor—well, the

medievals clearly thought that flatulence was funny. We disagree at our peril.

Christian schools are often interested in their graduates' attaining influence in the political realm. But if we are interested in the Christianization of politics, it would be wise of us to look back to the very first attempts to Christianize civil government. Figures like Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, and Thomas à Becket raise questions about the justice of warfare, the appropriate relationship between church and state, and the violence inherent in politics. Figures like Francis of Assisi model possible alternative approaches to social change. How can the church have a genuine impact for good in the broader society without sullying itself in the process? One thing is clear from a study of medieval history: there is no easy answer to this question.

So, especially given that there is no neatly packaged program from James Dobson, R. C. Sproul, or D. James Kennedy on how to Christianize a culture, I heartily commend to all the study of the history, literature, and thought of medieval Europe. If, as the sage has it, experience is the best teacher, then even better is experience recorded and reflected on.

THE LOST ART OF Recitation

by Jill L. Barton

As Coventry Christian Schools has undertaken to adopt all things classical, we have implemented a daily recitation period for each of our kindergarten through grade five grammar school students. Recitation time signals the start of each school day yet is a term and practice that is relatively unknown for many. In school days of the 19th century, students were often drilled by class or individually as they experienced a multi-grade level setting in a one room school house. Today, recitation involves learning and repeating the truths and knowledge of multiple grades of students as well. As we start our day, students take their place at the front of the chapel or on the stage and stand ready to recite songs, poems, maxims and scripture in unison led by me, the dean of academics. While this tradition is new at CCS, it has quickly become a joyful facet of the learning process and a unifying feature of our culture of learning. As we have settled into a recitation routine, we have developed the ability to rapidly recite, sing and say historic, Biblical, scriptural, scientific, mathematical, and grammatical truths. At our recent Grandparents' Day, students proudly recited or sang the following, one right after the other:

- books of the Old Testament
- books of the New Testament
- apostles song
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- colors of the rainbow
- Scientific classification system for animals
- Sing Hosanna!
- If You are Happy and You Know it!
- Wise sayings - "go to the ant you sluggard...consider her ways and be wise," "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver," "dig….deep." "a job worth doing…. is worth doing well," "no….excuses sir!," "love your brothers….and your sisters too!"
- Preamble to the Constitution
- and a lovely little poem entitled "Our Lips and Ears"

If you your lips would keep from slips,
Five things observe with care:
Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,
And how and when and where.
If you your ears would save from jeers,
These things keep meekly hid:
Myself and I, and mine and my,
And how I do and did.

Recitation has its roots in centuries worth of oral tradition. Hearkening back to before the time of bards and wandering minstrels, the oral tradition of passing along values and facts as a valid source of wisdom and understanding creates valuable experience, relationship, and detail remembrances that the hearers carry to their acquaintances. Ancient literary works, such as *The Odyssey*, were meant be memorized; gifted artists memorized thousands upon thousands of lines of verse. Sophists and philosophers used oral tradition to posit their thinking, and were often paid to impart their wisdom to their students, often from the steps of the first academies. While we do not seek to memorize thousands of lines, generally students today are excused from or not even exposed to memorizing what was once common fare to their grandparents during their schooling. Historical dates, lists of presidents in order, and books of the Bible were all once common fare and quite normal for any school child to have drilled as basic forms of knowledge.

Generally accepted practice in many schools currently gives place to multiple topics of more shallow introduction, as school has taken on more of the role of the teacher of all things, including topics that were once the realm of normal parental instruction. Given the denial of the truths of the Bible and the insurgence of politically correct notions that are so influential in public settings, good curriculum tends to be diluted and watered down in order to teach the current agenda and educational plan espoused by political talking heads. Certainly, valuable truths and historical facts are present when we look for them in the mainstream curricula, but

the dilution of education for the good of the masses simply does not allow for teaching unifying truths in a concrete core of history and understanding of the truths of God's creation.

Classical education seeks to educate students in a common core of its own. This common core is the core of understanding and wisdom that comes from the study of history and literature through time and the truths of science and mathematics through direct experiences. It revives the understanding of the etymology of words through instruction in Latin and logic, and teaches the art of rhetoric and apologetics. At the core of each student should be significant stores of understanding that serve to illustrate the timeless teachings of Christ and offer a defense of the truth when countered by opposing viewpoints. In order to lay a foundation for this lofty goal, grammar school students are taught to embrace and enjoy lessons that build their ability to remember, and to recite and repeat facts and details that will be further understood in their future studies in the schools of logic and rhetoric.

The merits of recitation are many and are intentionally cultured:
1) **We express the joy of learning together over time.** Students struggle to remember something heard only once, but over days begin to remember and then feel very accomplished as they can rattle off what was once completely foreign to them.
2) **We pass along the values of our school and home culture, teaching Biblical truths and affirming work ethic.** "A job worth doing….is worth doing well." "Hustle….to help out."
3) **We practice the essential skills of diction and elocution.** Students learn to speak individually and collectively in a precise manner that requires poise, encourages confidence, and emphasizes enunciation.

4) **We foster student leadership.** Students experience leading others as they are called upon to recite independently or as a class.
5) **We encourage confident public speaking.** Students learn to stand in front of a large group with poise and presence and to experience speaking publicly without fear.
6) **We sharpen memory.** The capacity to remember is expanded to greater depth and length. Students practice acquiring many lines worth of wording and prose to accomplish a recitation piece and learn to enjoy embracing that challenge.
7) **We grow linguistic capacity.** Beautiful patterns of language, rhythm and varied vocabulary discovered and tasted. Students learn that knowledge is delightful and is theirs. They learn to decipher new kinds of language and are not intimidated by it.
8) **We establish relationship.** The give and take between recitation leader and student engages each child in a relationship with authority figures within the school. Whether classroom teacher, dean or recess monitor, the relationships that our children develop with the adults chosen by their parents is valuable. The recitation period requires students to interact daily with the dean guiding their education, providing connections for future mentoring and instruction.

Our students are quickly learning to embrace the recitation period. Younger students feel wise beyond their years as they share with their families the knowledge they are mastering. Older students are charged with leading the entire school, setting the example for the younger students, and sharing their own ideas for what ought to be included in their recitation times. We will continue to refine and develop our methods and content for recitation period. We look forward to gathering more and more essential knowledge and rotating through a plan that helps us to keep items previously learned fresh.

SOCCER MADNESS

Coach Hunsberger's Soccer Empire

by Amy Minemier, 11th grade

The crowd is anything but hushed as the middle school boys soccer team warms up for its homecoming match against Concord. Cheers fill the sidelines as the players take the field, and everyone roars as the first goal is scored. While such enthusiasm is to be expected from the CCS family, the eagerness of those on the field has reached a new peak. For the first time in CCS history, a sports team has become so popular that there are two full teams of players ready to take the field, and it is easy to see why.

Jeffery Hunsberger has been coaching the middle school boys soccer team for two years and has dedicated much of his time and effort into making the program the best it can be. He now fields two teams during the traditional fall soccer season, two winter indoor teams, and offers spring scrimmages against local club teams. When asked why he is so invested in the program, Mr. Hunsberger says, "I wanted them to have a chance to win and get better and create a better program so they could enjoy [soccer] as much as I do."

Coach Hunsberger's enthusiasm and extreme level of commitment has encouraged an overwhelming response from students and parents alike. There are now fundraisers, corporate sponsors, and an army of soccer moms ready and willing to help out. The players themselves have even taken cues from their coach's style of dress, as was evident on the team's "dress up" day, which featured players sporting bow ties.

His influence on them has made a noticeable impact. Never before have such a large number of students been so thrilled to be on a team. Even though the season has not been perfect, Mr. Hunsberger makes it clear that he would rather his team play well and lose than win without effort. This has been made plain to all of the athletes, who are taking great pains to make their coach proud. First year student Thomas Ford (7th grade) says, "People actually care about the team here."

Thomas truly seems to have summed up this year's season. The players have developed a great respect for their coach and he a fondness for them. Everyone is very excited to see what will happen with each of these players as well as the soccer program in the coming years. **Go Eagles!**

EVERYTHING IS SANCTIFICATION

by Abbie Fehr

What is Sanctification?

I became a teacher at CCS because I wanted to be sanctified. This is an awkward thing to say because, at first glance, sanctification seems to have nothing to do with children or teaching. However, when sanctification is defined as 'becoming more holy' or 'becoming more like Jesus,' things begin to make more sense.

In his various epistles, Paul talks significantly about sanctification. His letter to the Romans is a powerful picture of God's glory in providing the Gospel. After talking about the devastating effects of sin, He uncovers the glorious truth that Jesus overcomes sin's deadness and brings new life. In chapter 8, he speaks about what this life is like:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:28-29).

We can see from this that our sanctification is not only guaranteed but that everything in our lives is meant to make us more like Jesus.

Sanctification is Guaranteed

In verse 29, Paul asserts that God's people are "predestined to be conformed to the image of [God's] Son." This predestination is God's business rather than ours. We can't do anything that will shipwreck His plans to grow us in holiness.

This comforts me a lot in my teaching. I make many mistakes and face a steep learning curve as my first year at CCS unfolds. God knows this, and as a loving Father, has promised to fully accomplish that sanctification within me. This takes so much pressure off of my shoulders! I can trust God to accomplish His will within my life.

Everything is Sanctification

But sanctification is not always pleasant. In verse 29, Paul says that "all things" work for the good of God's people. Not some things. All things. Good and bad.

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield addresses this in her book Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert:

"Many of the 'things' we will face come with the razor edges of a broken world. You can't play poker with God's mercy—if you want the sweet mercy then you must also swallow the bitter mercy. And what is the difference between sweet and bitter? Only this: your critical perspective, your worldview" (Butterfield 125).

As a new teacher, I have better days and worse days, but most days are just plain hard. Often, it's my perspective that makes a particular day feel good or bad. Yet, because of the Gospel, I know everything that happens in my life is for my good. My past, present, and future all belong to God.

So, at the beginning and end of each day, I find myself asking the question, "Father, what do you have for me in this?" This is not a question rooted in despair. Rather, it comes from a confidence that God knows what He's doing and that—in good days and bad—He will be faithful to work all things out in my life and in the lives of my students for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory.

Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012. Ebook.

Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001. Ebook.

LEARNING TO LOVE

Coventry Kids Serve in Project Purpose

by Rachel Kratz

With his shoes kicked off and his tutor Connor looking over his shoulder, 2nd grader Mujahid works on creating a bar graph on a busy Wednesday at Project Purpose. Connor patiently reminds Mujahid to remain focused on his math homework so that they can finish and read a book together. As I watch them work, I can tell that today was a rough day for Mujahid, and he is taking his emotions out on Connor, but Connor bears it with love and patience. He does not once raise his voice or show a hint of frustration, but rather quietly tells Mujahid that he is almost finished. When Mujahid's bar graph is completed, Connor guides him to pack up his backpack, helps him change into his soccer cleats, and walks him down to his soccer practice.

Connor Smale, an 11th grade student at Coventry Christian Schools, and Mujahid began working together two years ago. Serving as a volunteer tutor with Project Purpose has not always been easy for Connor, but he continues to serve because of the loving relationship that has formed between them. To Mujahid, 17 year-old Connor is his big brother, his role model, his best friend.

Demonstrating Their Faith

Secondary students at Coventry Christian Schools (CCS) have a unique opportunity to serve their community. They are encouraged to serve as after-school tutors to an underserved kindergarten-5th grade students who are enrolled in Project Purpose. Since Project Purpose occurs in their own classrooms, CCS students do not have to go far to serve. Presently, over 20 CCS students serve as tutors to the underserved students who live within the school's community. Project Purpose provides an opportunity for students to complete their 40 hours of required annual community service, but more importantly, it provides an opportunity for them to demonstrate their faith through service.

The nature of Project Purpose requires the CCS students who serve to lay their own needs and desires aside. They, like Connor, must show abundant patience to the student they serve. The Apostle Paul's words to the church in Philippi are transformed from words in Scripture into directions on how to serve. These students obey Paul's words in Philippians 2:3-4 which read "in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others." As they work alongside their young students, CCS students are expressing the nature of Christ living inside of them.

They see their students' struggles in school, and it humbles them. They hear their students' stories, and their worldview is expanded.

They watch their students become frustrated, and they respond with patience. At a young age, they are learning how to be the hands and feet of Jesus on a day-to-day basis. These secondary students are learning how to be patient in times of frustration. They are learning how to rely on their Father for support. This is learning that cannot occur in the classroom. Through their service, these students are authentically learning how to be Christ to their neighbors.

Growing in Their Knowledge of God

Zach Evans, a 9th grade student at CCS, began serving because he felt God calling him to join Project Purpose. After arranging a ride home from tutoring, Zach signed up to serve 5th grade Nasir. Nasir brags to his friends that his tutor is "the magician." While Zach may awe the students with his magic tricks, he is much more than a magician. He is Christ to Nasir; he shares with Nasir words from Scripture in order to encourage and disciple him. Working with Nasir is not always easy, but Zach remains confident that he can do all things through Christ's strength.

Through serving with Project Purpose, CCS students grow in their knowledge of God. Some, like Zach, memorize Scripture with the purpose of sharing it with their student; other students pray daily for the student they serve and patiently watch as God works in their students' lives. They do these acts not for their own gain, but rather to advance God's kingdom.

As they serve, these students come to depend on God to give them the words to say and the ways to act. The difficult moments with their students, of which there are many, cause them to rely on God; through relying on God, their knowledge of him grows. During the difficult moments, they must choose to respond as Christ would respond. They respond with humility and patience, knowing that they may be the only light of Christ their students see.

Valuing Their Education

Charis Wise, an 11th grade student at Coventry Christian Schools, quietly tells her 4th grade student Zahirah that she can indeed read the book in front of her. Zahirah reads the words aloud to

Charis with confidence because she trusts that Charis will not pass judgement on her reading. I watch as Charis helps her decode the difficult words and guides her to make meaning of what she is reading. Each week, Charis tells Zahirah that she is smart and that school is important. Through their conversations, Charis reminds Zahirah to work hard at school as this will take her places in life. Charis not only tells these things to Zahirah, but also models them for her. She is an example to Zahirah of what a dedicated student looks like.

Coventry Christian students understand that they are blessed to receive a faith-based education; they understand it so well that many choose to share this blessing with underserved students. As students themselves, CCS students are a model to their students of the power of education. Their dedication to their education makes them role models to the students they serve. Many Project Purpose students want to be just like the older CCS students they meet; they see their tutors as their big brothers and sisters. They listen to the words their tutors speak; the CCS students who serve with Project Purpose know this and live up to what is expected of them from their student. As they help their students memorize state capitals, solve math problems, or read a chapter book, they are empowering their students to succeed in their education.

The Coventry Christian students who serve through Project Purpose are using their own education to bring hope to the underserved children in their school's community. Their knowledge of who God is grows as they come to depend on Him. They demonstrate Christ's patience and humility as they serve on the easy and the hard days.

To learn more about supporting Project Purpose, please visit www.project-purpose.org.

ANNUAL State of the School Report

by Paul Q. Fisher, M. Ed.

Our mission statement speaks of partnership. It is our desire that our annual state of the school report will strengthen that partnership by providing all of our stakeholders with vital information regarding the current state of all key facets of the school program and a glimpse into our collective future in this shared ministry.

Where we see challenges, we value your ideas and contributions to the solutions to meet those challenges. Where we see victories, we ask that you join us in thanking God for his provision. Where we see stagnancy, we ask that you would join us in seeking innovation and growth through prayer and service. We welcome your thoughts and questions and hope that this report will foster productive dialogue.

Character and Spiritual Formation

Measuring the effectiveness of our efforts in character and spiritual formation is always challenging. In truth, we believe that the true measure of success will be exhibited by the long-term discipleship of our alumni. It is difficult to quantify that in this kind of report. However, we can assess whether we are being intentional regarding fostering the spiritual growth of our students. Our teaching and discipline continue to be focused upon shepherding children's hearts rather than controlling their behavior. The Gospel is our model for how we serve as ministers of reconciliation on behalf of our students. The grammar school's morning recitation period provides our younger students with daily lessons in character, etiquette, scripture, and discipleship. The secondary school house system continues to develop into an effective model for mentoring and discipleship, cultivating a spiritually-focused student culture and engaging nearly one-fifth of secondary students in active spiritual leadership roles within the student body. The senior mission trip has been redesigned into a high school mission trip led by the senior class. This year's seniors will take our students and faculty members back to Mexico to provide a house for a family in need.

Church Partnerships

Our student body comes from 18 denominations represented by 77 Christian congregations. The greatest representation is from Chesmont Church of Christ, Northpointe Community Church, and Christ's Church of the Valley. These three congregations provide

20% of our student body. 15% of our families self identify as non-denominational and are the largest segment of our Christian population. The largest denomination represented in the student body is Church of Christ, providing 11% of the student body.

The faculty is comprised of seven denominations, with the largest representation coming from the Church of Christ at 21%. However, 58% of the faculty is comprised of those claiming to be non-denominational or simply Christian. All other denominations represented in the faculty comprise less than 5% each.

Parent Relations

The most important partnership initiative we have between school and home is that of our weekly prayer meetings. Mothers meet on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. for prayer and fathers on Fridays at 7 a.m. Jill Barton, Dean of Academics, facilitates the moms and Paul Fisher, Headmaster, facilitates the dads. We are pleased to announce the launching of the accounting module of Parents Web. Parents can now view and pay their accounts online, significantly improving our customer service by making tuition and all school-related costs more transparent and easy to manage. In 2012-13, Our Parents, Teachers, and Others organization (PTO) raised $34,277 for parent-selected initiatives and resources for the Coventry Kids, including $5000 in instruments for the music program, a drum set for the secondary praise team, classroom resources and equipment, and playground enhancements. The Sports Boosters contributed over $13,000 to our student athletes. Finally, the Performing Arts Boosters was established in the spring to increase opportunity, quality, and student involvement in band, strings, drama, chorus, and general music.

Curriculum

In grades 7-12, the Great Books integrated humanities curriculum is in its fourth year of development. For 2013-14, Dr. Todd Meredith has developed and is implementing Omnibus V for our rhetoric program (grades 11-12). Latin and Logic courses have been expanded, providing more mandatory credit hours in both. We have completed the adoption and implementation of a grammar school Western Civilization curriculum for grades 2-7. Shirley English has been implemented to improve the rigor and effectiveness of our grammar and composition instruction in grades 1-8. In the logic (grades 6-8) and rhetoric (grades 9-12) programs, Forensics, courses in public speaking and debate, and Academic Preparation, an academic coaching class, have all been added to the course schedule. Comparative Worldiews, which was taught on a rotating schedule to grades 9-12, has been reintroduced as a senior course to be offered annually. A concert band elective was added to the existing band program. Some 40 students are enrolled in piano, strings, and voice, while another 60 participate in chorus and band. This spring, the grammar school's first full-length Shakespeare play, A Midsummer Night's Dream, will be performed in the chapel. Regarding curriculum review and research, the curriculum committee has recommended implementation of Singapore Math, which, if approved by the board, would be implemented gradually, starting with the kindergarten in 2014. The committee will review the existing science curriculum in 2014-15. College Board SAT scores continue to climb toward our 5-year goal set in 2009, with current student performance outpacing all 12 districts that bus to our campus and all private schools in that same radius from campus with the exception of The Hill School, whose selective admissions process makes comparison difficult.

Athletics

Our commitment to utilizing sports to facilitate the making of disciples of Christ has been blessed by record student participation in sports, with middle school participation at 79%. We continue to play in the Atlantic Coast Christian Athletic Conference (ACCAC) with nine other Christian schools. We now field eleven interscholastic teams.

Enrollment and Recruiting

The Lord has blessed us with the highest single-year enrollment increase in at least 15 years. With a 12.6% increase from 2012 to 2013, our student enrollment now stands at 335 and growing. Student recruitment for 2013-14 is focused upon building a distinctively Christ-centered parent and student culture. This is being accomplished by focusing first upon local churches as recruitment pools. Merit-based scholarships have been developed for students who demonstrate Christian leadership and academic merit, and discounts have been established for parents who work in Christian ministries. While we are still missional and invitational toward non-Christian families, our primary recruiting focus is in the Christian community.

Facilities

The North Coventry campus has been sold to the Spring Valley Community Church. The sale completes our move to a one-campus model and strengthens our financial footing as we seek to expand and grow at the Lower Pottsgrove campus. The board-sponsored facilities committee is developing a long-term strategic plan for addressing the following goals: protecting assets, enhancing learning spaces, improving security, and providing for enrollment growth.

Finances

The 2012-13 fiscal year ended with a surplus of $57,000. The 2013-14 school year is expected to net a surplus of $65,000. The board's commitment to establishing a cash reserve of 15-20% of a year's operating budget will be helped tremendously by this positive trend. At the close of 2013-14, the school should have a 6.5% cash reserve. Independent School Management (ISM) research shows that the most stable independent schools operate with just such a reserve. Additionally, the school has historically been 75-80% hard-income driven, meaning that we had to fundraise the 20-25% difference between tuition revenue and expenses. The 2013-14 school year is now 99.5% tuition-funded. Research points to 95-100% tuition-based operations as essential to school stability. Financial aid discounts were held at the 2012-13 levels for 2013-14 as well. The school's debt has been refinanced to take advantage of record low interested rates, saving $20,000 per year in interest costs. The financial position of the school is strong.

Accreditation and Memberships

Our accreditation with the National Christian School Association (NCSA) and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS) will be renewed in 2014. The school will go through a comprehensive self-study and accreditation team visit in 2014. We continue to be members of the Mid-Atlantic Christian School Association, which provides our students with interscholastic academic and athletic opportunities and our teachers with

professional development. New for 2013-14, we have become members of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS). This membership will expand opportunities for academic competition and fellowship for our students and professional development in classical content and methodology for our faculty. Also new for 2013-14, we have become members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), the largest evangelical Christian school association in the world. Membership provides us with student and faculty resources of a large school system because of the collective power and synergy of the thousands of member schools.

Project Purpose

Project Purpose is in its third year of serving the underserved students and parents in our community. As of the publication of this report, 61 students have been matched with mentor tutors. 70 volunteers are working in the program, including 20 CCS students, 9 faculty members, and 2 board members. The ministry is now funded by Spring Valley Community Church, Journey Church, Chesmont Church of Christ, Northpointe Community Church, Parkerford Church, and Abundant Life Bible Church, Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, and the Patricia Kind Foundation. The greatest financial support thus far has come from the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, which contributed over $43,000 to this year's programs. Project Purpose now includes school-year tutoring and mentoring, Wednesday after-study dinners, Project Garden in the summer, and Summer Scholars credit completion program and original credit courses.

Praise God for His Provision!

"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced wealth for me.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today." Deuteronomy 8:17-18

Advancement Update

by Mark E. Niehls

Susquehanna Bank Joins Businesses Supporting Scholarships to CCS

In October, Susquehanna Bank delivered a check for $10,000 as a part of their participation in Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (EITC). Pennsylvania businesses have committed $17,000 to fund scholarships for Coventry Kids for the 2013-14 school year. Colorworks, Inc. contributed $4000 and CSX Transportation another $3,000. This program allows businesses in PA to direct their tax dollars to the scholarship organization of their choice. One year commitments result in a 75% tax credit while two year commitments earn a 90% tax credit. For more information on how Pennsylvania business leaders or their companies can earn this tax credit while funding scholarships for a classical and Christian education, contact Mark Niehls in the advancement office at markniehls@educatingforlife.com.

Homecoming 2013

This year's homecoming began on Friday, October 11th, with several hundred grandparents braving the rain to come out and attend school with their grandchildren. They were treated to breakfast and then attended chapel and classes with their grandchildren. Saturday, October 12th, started with the PTO-sponsored pancake breakfast followed by the fall festival for the entire family, featuring fair games, inflatables, a petting zoo, and a Ford Model T. The middle school boys soccer team and both volleyball teams pleased the homecoming crowd with wins over conference opponent, Concord. The alumni gathered at Camp Manatawny to experience the camp's new climbing wall and zip line and held a retirement party for "Big Blue," everyone's favorite omnibus.

2013 Founders Dinner Raises $26,000

On Sunday, October 13, homecoming weekend closed with over 800 in attendance at the 30th Anniversary Founders Dinner at Sunnybrook Ballroom, where Paul Q. Fisher, Headmaster, presented the annual state of the school address. David Curtin (8th) and Charis Wise (11th) presented speeches, and alumnus, Cory Trego ('10), delivered the alumni address. The featured speaker for the evening, Dr. Benjamin Carson, delivered a speech entitled, "Faith of Our Fathers: the Role of Faith in American Education." His message challenged the audience to embrace our faith and the role it ought to play in our personal lives, the civic life of our nation, and specifically in educating our youth.

Eric Metaxas To Speak at 2014 Founders Dinner

Eric Metaxas, the author of the New York Times #1 Bestseller, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, will be the keynote speaker at our 2014 Founders Dinner in October, 2014. The final date, venue and ticket sales for the 2014 Founders Dinner will be announced in the late winter or early spring of 2014. Metaxas was the keynote speaker at the 2012 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC, an event attended by the President and First Lady, the Vice President, members of Congress, and other U.S. and world leaders. Along with his colleague John Stonestreet, Metaxas is the voice of BreakPoint, a radio commentary that is broadcast on 1,400 radio outlets with an audience of eight million. In a decidedly eclectic career, Eric Metaxas has written for VeggieTales, Chuck Colson, and the *New York Times*. He is a best-selling author whose biographies, children's books, and works of popular apologetics have been translated into 18 languages.

CCS 10th grader, Samantha Gray, with Dr. Benjamin Carson

Metaxas has been featured as a cultural commentator on CNN, MSNBC, and the Fox News Channel and has discussed his own books on The History Channel, C-Span's Book TV, Glenn Beck, and Huckabee. He has been featured on many radio programs, including NPR's Morning Edition, and Talk of the Nation, as well as Hugh Hewitt, Dennis Prager, Bill Bennett, Kerby Anderson's Point of View, and The Alan Colmes Show.

He is the founder and host of Socrates in the City: Conversations on the Examined Life, a monthly event of "entertaining and thought-provoking discussions on "life, God, and other small topics," featuring such guests as Dr. Francis Collins, Sir John Polkinghorne, Baroness Caroline Cox, N.T. Wright, Os Guinness, Peter Kreeft, and Dick Cavett. Socrates ITC was mentioned in a front-page story in the New York Times. The New Canaan Society, of which Eric is a founding and current member, was also mentioned in the article.

2013-2014 Coventry Kids Annual Fund:

Fundraising efforts are off to a good start this year with staff contributing over $23,000 to the school's Coventry Kids Fund. When combined with EITC contributions and the Founders Dinner revenue, the Coventry Kids Fund drive for 2013-14 is within $15,000 of reaching the goal of $78,000. Please consider making an end-of-the-year gift to help us finish the drive this calendar year. Doing so will allow the school to utilize the Coventry Challenge 5K in March to raise funds for other initiatives that will make an immediate impact upon educational and extracurricular opportunities for the Coventry Kids. Thank you to all of our friends and donors who generously give and sacrifice on behalf of the Coventry Kids.

by Lexie Hallman, 8th Grade

Why Do Bad Things Happen?

Have you ever wondered why bad things happen? Maybe you get sad and depressed and try both good and bad things to make yourself feel better. Sometimes we blame it on God and ask him, "Why?" We often ask these questions a lot in life. The three main reasons why I think bad things happen is because God allows it. He gives us a choice to do what we want, and He does it for our own good.

The main reason bad things happen is because God allows it. In the biblical book of Job, Job loses everything. God allows him to be tested by Satan. Job still had faith in God, and his faith grew stronger through tragedy. Job himself said, "The Lord gave and has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (1:21). In Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve also demonstrates that God allows bad things to happen. God could have refused to allow Adam and Eve free will, but instead He gave them the choice, and the result for them, like us, was rebellion. They sinned, and we have all come under the resulting curse.

However, they still had a choice, and so do we. God didn't stop them from sinning because He wants us to have a choice. In the garden, the serpent told Eve regarding God's command to not eat from the tree, "You will surely not die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, she ate it and gave some to her husband." Eve was deceived into believing that God did not want what was best for her. God wants us to choose Him always because he knows what is best for us. No matter what we're going through, God wants us to turn to Him. When we choose to follow God, we become happier and more secure in who we are in God.

Sometimes that happiness and security come through hard times. Bad circumstances and tragedies happen for our own good. God allows them because they make us stronger in our faith. Joseph became stronger in his faith by being sold into slavery, being falsely accused, and by being put into jail. In the midst of bad circumstances, we need to remember that God is sovereign. He rules over all. He does things for a reason. Maybe God wants us to learn new things. He can teach us lessons that we can apply to our lives. Then, we can be a light to the world. God will use us to help others go through what we went through. We can teach them the lessons we learned through our own struggles.

Bad things happen because God allows them. He gives us free will because He loves us, but we have to be careful to make the right choices. When we make the wrong choices, He helps us to learn from our mistakes. We should not dwell upon bad things but should look to God for help and continue our walk with Him. He will help us and make us stronger along the way.

Alumni Spotlight

One Step At A Time

by Paul Q. Fisher, M. Ed.

"I'm kind of a laid back person," explains Brandon Custer ('08), but not as much as people think." It's a reasonable conclusion for friends and family who have watched as Brandon moved from Pennsylvania to Florida to Arkansas to Zambia to Rwanda to China over a six-year period. How's that working for him? What about career development? "Everyone is so fixated on developing a career. The obsession is just as big if not bigger here in China. There is nothing wrong with specialization, but there are people everywhere—in every walk of life—that you can pour your life into. You can work with your hands. . .whatever is noble." Two jobs after graduating from Harding University, and Brandon Custer ('08) is still exploring how God wants him to spend his life, and he doesn't really have an answer yet. He knows he is still on the journey.

At CCS, Brandon was a standout, earning academic excellence honors in a highly competitive class that produced a physicist, a marine biologist, and an aspiring physician now in medical school, so Brandon is not someone who cannot go and get a career if he wants one. Brandon's favorite class in college was organic chemistry, and he nearly earned a degree in biochemistry. His coursework was typical for premedical or pharmacy students, but he confesses, "I hate being a student. I never asked whether I should go to college. I just knew I was supposed to. I liked science, so the rest is history." The thought of continuing his education after graduation from Harding was entirely unappealing as he was ready to leave the ranks of students. Ironically, he has spent his adult life thus far as a teacher, first at Kigali International School in Rwanda, where he taught math and science, and then at Jianghan University in Wuhan, China, where he is teaching the English language.

Prior to studying overseas in the Harding in Zambia (HIZ) program, Brandon assumed he would study medicine after college. While in Zambia he worked in medical missions, working in clinics and administering vaccines and witnessing firsthand the human price of AIDS. While in Zambia, he served at an old-time mission in an agricultural community. The experience was surreal. "I was shocked. All of your preconceptions differ from reality. One child I held one day and the next he was dead from AIDS, laying on a board." His experiences in Zambia helped him realize that medical care was not his calling, but they provided him with a fresh perspective on human cultures and suffering. He considered teaching in an African country because he was so moved by discovering that there were still such superstitious, animistic people who had no empirical knowledge of the natural world. He also had opportunity to travel to Uganda and Rwanda, where he visited the Kigali International School. As graduation day approached back at Harding, Brandon recalled his time in Kigali and visited the school's website. He discovered that the school was looking for a biology teacher, and upon graduation he was on his way to Rwanda.

Brandon hoped to develop friendships with the Rwandan people, and he was eager to share the Gospel with the friends he hoped to make while teaching there. This proved far more challenging than he had anticipated. The Rwandan people have suffered much, and they are relationally wounded. Brandon reflects upon his experiences, "Rwandans are very different from the Ugandans and Zambians that I met. Very reserved. One man told me, 'We don't trust anyone. We don't trust our own wives.'" Rwanda has a patron-client society, making it extremely difficult to have friendships across socioeconomic boundaries. Whenever he

would begin to develop a friendship with an African, Brandon would soon discover that he or she was an ex-patriot from another country. He laments, "I was not as immersed as I'd like to have been. I'd look out my classroom window and have to remind myself, 'Oh yeah, I'm in Africa.'"

In February of 2012, Brandon's sister, Jessica ('04), proposed that Brandon follow in her footsteps and teach English in China. Jessica had been fruitful in sharing her faith as an English teacher in China, building authentic relationships there through her work. Those authentic relationships were what Brandon was struggling to find time for in Kigali. The school simply did not provide the resources necessary for him to do anything more than work himself to fatigue, and he spent nearly 100 hours per week in his classroom. The school did not compensate its teachers, who were essentially missionaries that needed to raise their salaries annually in order to teach there. "I wanted to do more direct ministry with people, and I was not successful doing that in Kigali," he explained. "So why not China?"

Brandon began exploring teaching in China by emailing an inquiry to Jianghan University, and before he knew it, he was being offered the job. "I was really eager to go, and I knew that there were three Americans teaching there for the same reason I wanted to." What reason is that? He could not say. Skype is monitored by the Chinese government, and any references to mission work during our interview could be detected by the government, leading to sanctions, so we spoke in code.

Brandon is in China to share his faith with those who do not know Christ. He is not alone. Thousands of American Christians are teaching English in China as a means to a much more important end. In his spare time, Brandon practices his Chinese and invests in relationships. He plays basketball with the college students and has lunch with them to try to build relationships. He looks for those who are actually thinking about the meaning of life, who are reflective. So many young people are plagued by assumptions about life's purpose. Brandon explains, "I'm talking like 18, 19-year olds who have never had any freedom in their lives, and they don't focus on anything serious. They are partying—looking for romance, etc. They don't question why they do what they do. I want to ask them the big questions they have not thought about."

He finds the most receptivity with post-graduates because they have finally arrived at their destination and now realize that they still don't know the point of life, while the younger students have not yet experienced the realization that they are chasing the wind.

Brandon's first year as a Christian abroad in China was difficult. This year has been better because he has found a fellowship group there. We avoided the use of the word "church" and any other overtly religious words. He explained, "I'm in a corner of the city where there aren't many of us, but I now have a group I party with every week. We went swimming with someone, and it was the first time for me. Very convicting. They had never been wet before." In case it escapes the reader, a paraphrase of Acts 2:38 in Brandon's code would read, "Change the way you party, everyone, and go swimming to have your troubles erased, in the name of a Middle-Eastern carpenter, and you will receive the carpenter's spirit." Any clearer?

So has Brandon discovered his calling? He is encouraged by recent successes and is feeling more and more at home in his role as English teacher missionary. In his estimation, the verdict is still out, "I came in thinking I need three years to see if I'm effective at teaching English. First year, you're just adjusting. Chinese logic is so hard to understand—the way they think through things. If by the third year it doesn't feel like a fit, I'll look elsewhere. I could see myself here for another 17 years or gone after my third year." The uncertainty doesn't really bother Brandon. When he gets up each morning, he reminds himself that today might be the day he dies. Pretty sobering first thoughts for any day, but his experiences in Zambia, Rwanda, and China have given him perspective. "There is nothing worth worrying about. Life is so unpredictable and short. We're a vapor in the wind, here today and gone tomorrow. When you just see the way that people live elsewhere and the concerns that they have—they aren't what we worry about. It's a matter of trust. I've never known the next step—maybe the next step, but not two steps. Things just always work out for those who trust Him with the most important things." I think we know who "Him" is, and trusting Him most often means taking one step at a time.

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