

March 14, 2025

COMMUNIQUE

Monthly

THIS EDITION

- ◆ “Introducing the Way Forward”
- ◆ Thanksgiving Pages
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Athletics
- ◆ Yearbooks
- ◆ Donuts for Dudes
- ◆ Upcoming Events



ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION

Saturday, March 22, 2025

DOORS OPEN 2:30 P.M.

**SILENT AUCTION
BEGINS
4:00 P.M.**

**LIVE AUCTION
BEGINS
5:30 P.M.**

REGISTER TODAY!
www.silentauctionpro.com



SPRING
into
AUCTION

TEXT G1347 TO 8889909876 TO RECEIVE A LINK TO SIGN UP ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE.

BBQ Pulled Pork sandwiches, pasta salad, mac 'n cheese, homemade cookies, and a drink available for just \$8.50!



“Inspiring students to impact the world for Jesus Christ through an excellent educational experience from a Biblical worldview.”

ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCING THE WAY FORWARD

This last December I sent a letter to our Association and supporters about the need to make some changes to the business model at Grace Christian. We followed the call for help with two open GCEA meetings where families and supporters were invited to share ideas and support. The school board is thankful for the care and support these families have for our school. On February 11th, the school board met to vet a budget and proposal for the 25-26 school year. They approved both and we have been in the process of communicating and implementing the new plan.

The coming changes affect the middle and high school. Our middle school goes back to being a junior high of 7th and 8th grade. The 6th grade goes back to being an elementary classroom. There is very little to no change with the elementary and preschool. The change is predominately in the Jr. High, High School and Administration.

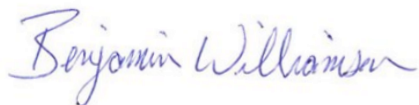
Our Jr. High and Highschool is moving to a hybrid model of in-person and online classes. During the 80's our school was built on the ACE (Accelerated Christian Education) program. We eventually left that program for a more traditional classroom experience. It turns out that the traditional classroom is a much more expensive option due to the need for more staff. Over the years, the ability and enthusiasm to pay for that experience has waned. We are going back to personalized education. Technology is a multiplier. The development of the ACE experience by multiple publishers provides many dynamic options for schools and students alike. In short, we will be able to provide more educational options (a personalized education) for our students for less money. Included in this Communiqué is the letter sent to parents and students about the FAQs of our new program. Our administrative changes include one less paid staff and shuffling/reducing other responsibilities. The role of administrator will continue to be unpaid.

It is difficult to communicate all the nuances in a letter. In light of that we are going to be expanding our Communiqué to include a new digital component, a podcast of sorts. Even the Communiqué is going hybrid. Our April Communiqué will have a YouTube link where Mrs. Colford, myself and a parent will discuss some of the details for next year's Jr. High and High school expectations. The best thing about this whole changeover is that we started early. It is not June and we are not scrambling. We will have a well-organized and thought out plan for the fall. Undoubtedly, there will be bumps and issues to work through, but we should have a better than balanced budget which means we can turn our attention to making the educational experience better instead of figuring out how we are going to make payroll.

There are few things as challenging as leading a small Christian school. A man I respect is resigning from his school as he shared with me his fatigue of continual bombardments that often come seemingly from nowhere; it is difficult to hold up under this kind of pressure. Please pray for your school and for our staff. They all set their financial ambitions aside to serve here. Pray for our staff that will be looking for another job because of these changes.

We believe that spiritual conflict exists. There's always a reason to divide, yet we are instructed to be unified through love and humility, Philippians 2:1-7.

With God the future of Grace is bright,



Benjamin Williamson
Administrator

Thanksgiving Page


- ◆ A 2002 20' Proline boat with cuddy cabin has been donated to the school for resale.
- ◆ Thank you Anchor Signs for updating our school banner! We really appreciate your support!
- ◆ Positive feedback to State of the School letter.
- ◆ Sewer repairs made by volunteers that love GCS.
- ◆ \$40,000 year end gift!
- ◆ \$5,000 year end gift!
- ◆ UPDATE: The furnaces have been purchased and will be picked up this week. A donation of \$30,000 was given to the school for the purchase of 3 new furnaces.
- ◆ Efforts made by students, staff and guests working together to set up and tear down for the Christmas concert were a huge blessing!
- ◆ GCS received \$1,234 in grant money from the 2024 Nonpublic School Reimbursement Section 152b state grant.
- ◆ GCS has been awarded the Filter First grant for \$10,298 that will help us meet new state water filtering and testing requirements.
- ◆ The Chapel sent a work group that painted the elementary hallway.
- ◆ Patriots-In-Action raised \$10,871 for our school
- ◆ In October, we were able to hire a PE teacher with Watervliet through the Shared Time* program.
- ◆ \$4,000 (half of the amount needed) was donated toward replacement gym doors. The \$4,000 given was intended to inspire a matching gift. Would you consider helping us get this significant need met?
- ◆ Title money was obtained to enable our teachers to benefit from professional development training last week at the Michigan Association of Christian Schools (MACS) Conference.
- ◆ An anonymous donor covered the fee for GCS student athletes to participate in Twin City Sharks football.
- ◆ In August, we were able to contract two teachers with Watervliet through the Shared Time* program.
- ◆ Heart of Cook Grant \$5,000 for the purchase of a new commercial refrigerator.
- ◆ Anonymous donor gave \$2,000 toward student sponsorship.
- ◆ Mr. Clean's Cleaning and Restoration cleaned our carpets to prepare for the school year.



- ◆ Thank you to those who have brought in school supplies, paper, pencils, facial tissue and cleaning supplies for classrooms.
 - ◆ School furniture was donated by a St. Joseph business man.
 - ◆ The thrift store hit their first anniversary on August 12th and in this first year contributed about \$53,000 to the school scholarship fund.
 - ◆ We received a \$15,000 gift to put toward student scholarships last year. This year we have many other sponsors who have picked families to support. Sponsorship for the 2024-25 school year is complete.
 - ◆ Roy's Computer Repair and the Nuismer family for their generosity in helping to update our network infrastructure.
 - ◆ Many hands came together to help get the building and grounds ready for students.
- * *Watervliet is covering the salaries of these teachers through an elective program with the State.*

MUSIC

MUSIC AT GRACE

 Our music program has been very active this year, experiencing a variety of music-related options, some for the first time. For pictures and details of these incredible opportunities for our students, please read the "Music at Grace" document attached to the Communiqué email.



ATHLETICS



WWW.GCSPATRIOTS.ORG

Some of our high school students have joined co-op teams for soccer and baseball this spring! For details, be sure to check out our [Athletic Calendar](#) on the GCS website.

1ST TEAM ALL-CONFERENCE

Anna earned 1st Team All-Conference honors for her performance on the 2024-25 Our Lady of the Lake/Grace Christian School varsity basketball co-op team!

Congratulations, Anna Williamson!

Girls Basketball 1st Team All-Conference



Anna Williamson

APRIL MENU

The April menu is now available on our [website](#). Please email one completed menu for each child to info@gcspatriots.com at your earliest convenience. **MENUS ARE DUE MARCH 21.**

Name and Grade		APRIL 2025 GCS MENU				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY		
1 NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK	2 NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK	3 NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK	4 NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK	5 NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK	<p>News Please submit by checking the line next to "Salad Bar" option if your student would prefer to have salad bar for lunch. If your student takes both entrée and salad bar, the cost will be double.</p> <p>Check the line next to the entrée your student will be having, as well as the drink line if they are taking a drink as well!</p> <p>Fresh fruit and vegetables will be offered as sides daily.</p>	
6 _Sub Sandwich _Drink _Salad Bar	7 _Tacos _Drink _Salad Bar	8 _Baked Potato Bar _Drink _Salad Bar	9 _GCS Bowl _Drink _Salad Bar	10 _Pizza Bagel _Chs _Pep _Drink _Salad Bar		
13 _Chili Dog _Drink _Salad Bar	14 _Nacho Bar _Drink _Salad Bar	15 _Sloppy Joe _Drink _Salad Bar	16 _Grilled Cheese _Tomato soup _Drink _Salad Bar	17 NO SCHOOL GOOD FRIDAY		



2023-24 YEARBOOKS

The 2023-24 Yearbooks are finished and ready to order! We tried something new and made two separate yearbooks, one for the Preschool - 5th grade and one for 6th - 12th grade. The elementary yearbook is a softcover, 36-page book for \$20.00. The secondary yearbook is a hardcover 98-page book for \$40.00. Orders must be turned in to the office or to Ms. Rutgers by March 28th. Checks need to be made out to Grace Christian School.



Donuts
with
Dudes

Monday, March 24th

7:30 – 8:30 AM

In the Gym at Grace Christian School

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL EVENT TO
CELEBRATE THE DADS, GRANDPAS, UNCLES, OR OTHER
IMPORTANT MEN IN YOUR CHILD'S LIFE!

Please RSVP to ptf@gcspatriots.com





AMAZON WISH LISTS

If you are looking for ways to bless our staff, check out the links below:

[Mrs. Colford, Principal](#)

[Miss Erickson, Middle School](#)

[Mrs. Corwin, Preschool](#)

[Mrs. Tavernier, 2nd](#)

[Miss Newell, Kindergarten](#)

[Mrs. McBride, Music](#)

[Mrs. Wilkerson, 3rd](#)

[Mrs. Grey, 4th](#)

2024-25 Business & Industry Partners

If you are interested in partnering with Grace Christian School's Business & Industry Program, please contact info@gcspatriots.com for details.



2024-25 GCEA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:

Whitney Tinker, President
wtinker@gcspatriots.com

Joel Layman, Vice President
jlayman@gcspatriots.com

Trever Meachum, Treasurer
tmeachum@gcspatriots.com

Holly Crouch, Secretary
hcrouch@gcspatriots.com

Shirl Bontrager
shirlbontrager@gcspatriots.com

Marshall Downs
mdowns@gcspatriots.com

Laraine Fox
lfox@gcspatriots.com

Nathan Hutchins
nhutchins@gcspatriots.com

Ruth Malaka
rmalaka@gcspatriots.com

**THE NEXT GCEA BOARD MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON
MONDAY, MARCH 24 @ 6:30 PM.**

AMERIGAS

Amerigas Customers can support GCS without paying anything extra!
Simply visit [this link](#) and enter your account information and the **School ID# 680389884**
and AMERIGAS will send \$0.02 on every gallon of propane you
purchase to benefit Grace Christian School!



BUSINESS BOOSTERS

When you buy from or use the services of one of these businesses, they give a portion of your purchase as a gift to GCS (but only if the receipt is turned into the GCS office).

Featured Boosters of the Month:



Town & Country Electric Service (10/5%)

(10% for residential services, 5% for commercial services)

2179 Plaza Dr.

Benton Harbor

(269) 934-8155



Roseland Organic Farms & Market (10%)

Organic beef, chicken, pork, dairy and other organic items

60200 Daily Rd., Dowagiac

(269) 445-8769



Family Vision Associates P.C. (10%)

Optometric exams, eye glasses, contact lenses and solutions, Not to be used in conjunction with any other discounts, nor for ophthalmology & vision training.

Drs. Sisson, Fortenbacher & Dudley

2904 Division St., St. Joseph

(269)983-2020



Oxi-Fresh Carpet Cleaning (10%)

Bryan Bailey

bryan@oxifreshswmi.com

Commercial Sales: (269)206-2149 Cell: (269)277-0357

2024-25 SUPPORTING CHURCHES

We are very grateful to the churches that not only pray for us, but financially support GCS as well.

- Bright Star Tabernacle
- Decatur Bible Church
- Hartford Bible Church
- New Life Baptist Church
- New Life Christian Church
- North Wayne Mennonite Church
- Sister Lakes Community Church
- South Haven Church of Christ
- The Chapel, EFC
- Watervliet Free Methodist Church



GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

2024-2025 School Year*



AUGUST

- 12 Secondary Info Night, 6:00 pm
- 22 Back to School Night, 5:30-7:30 pm
- 26 First Day of School
Quarter 1 Begins
- 30 NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.

SEPTEMBER

- 2 NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.
- 4-6 SEW Retreat (Grades 9-12)
- 20 Picture Day

OCTOBER

- 2 HALF DAY
- 3-4 NO SCHOOL - Teacher Conference
- 9 NMSQT Testing (Grades 10-11)
- 16 Patriots-In-Action Day
- 18 Grandparents Day, Half Day,
No Aftercare
End of Quarter 1
- 21 NO SCHOOL - Teacher Record Day
- 22 Quarter 2 Begins

NOVEMBER

- 5 NO SCHOOL -Parent/Teacher
Conferences, 12:00 - 7:00pm
- 14 Picture Retakes
- 16 Apple Pie Making Day
- 27-29 NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER

- 6 Christmas Concert, 7:00 pm
- 18-19 Exams/HALF DAY (Grades 6-12)
- 19 End of Quarter 2
- 20-1/5 NO SCHOOL - Christmas Break

JANUARY

- 6 NO SCHOOL - Teacher Record Day
- 7 Quarter 3 Begins
- 20 NO SCHOOL- MLK Jr. Day

FEBRUARY

- 14-17 NO SCHOOL - Mid-Winter Break
- 18 NO SCHOOL Teacher In-Service
- 21 Homecoming/Alumni Game

MARCH

- 7 Kindergarten Program/Round Up
- 7-8 ACSI Music Festival
History Fair
- 8 Open House, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- 13 End of Quarter 3
- 14 NO SCHOOL - Teacher In-Service
- 17 Quarter 4 Begins
- 22 Annual Benefit Auction
- 31-4/4 NO SCHOOL - Spring Break

APRIL

- 7 M-Step Testing Begins
- 15 GCEA Meeting, 6:30pm
- 18 NO SCHOOL- Good Friday
- 21 NO SCHOOL - Easter Monday
- 24 Spring Concert, 7:00 pm

MAY

- 5 Blood Drive
- 8 Secondary Awards Night
- 9 Elementary Musical
- 15 Elementary Field Day
- 23-26 NO SCHOOL, Memorial Day
- 28-29 Final Exams/HALF DAY
(6th-12th only)
- 30 Moving Up Ceremony
(TK-5th), HALF DAY,
NO AFTERCARE
End of Quarter 4
Cruise-In, 5:00-8:00 pm
- 31 Golf Outing, tee-off 8:30 am

EARLY CARE	7:00 - 7:30 am
PLEDGES/PRAYER	7:50 am
SCHOOL DAY	8:00 - 3:00 pm
AFTER CARE	3:15 - 5:30 pm
HALF DAYS	Dismissal: 12:00 pm

OFFICE HOURS 7:30-3:30 pm

*This calendar is subject to change. Please visit GCSPatriots.org for current calendar.

UPCOMING EVENTS



 **versiti**TM
Blood Center of Michigan



GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
Community
BLOOD DRIVE

Hope springs
eternal

**DONATE
BLOOD**

May

05

2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

GCS STUDENT COUNCIL PRESENTS THE SECOND ANNUAL

CLASSIC
Cruise-In
Pre-1990s

**Tell your
friends!**



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

FRIDAY
May 30
5-8 PM



\$90/golfer includes:
Snacks & Lunch,
Fellowship, Door Prizes

**ANNUAL GOLF
OUTING**

Sponsored by:



**PRIZES FOR: Long Drive, Closest to Hole, Longest Putt &
Best Approach Shot**

Saturday, May 31st
Indian Lake Hills Golf Course
7:30 A.M. Check-In / 8:30 A.M. Tee Off



SIGN UP YOUR TEAM TODAY!
gcs patriots.com

Questions?
info@gcs patriots.com
269.463.5545

FAQ LETTER

(referenced in Mr. Williamson's letter on Page 2)

Middle/High School Families,

Here are some basic answers to some of the big picture questions. As details develop, we will be communicating with you when pieces of the puzzle settle in.

Does hybrid mean I don't come to school? No. The middle/high school will have school every day from 8:00-3:00 just like any other year. Hybrid is not less, it is different; it gives us flexibility to offer more options with less on-site staff.

Will we have chapel? You will notice a pattern in the responses. Yes. School for the middle/high school will be very similar to school you have this year. You will have chapel, student council, sports, class sponsors, GCS missions trip, Patriots in Action, Grandparent's Day, Pastor's Appreciation Chapel, Homecoming, Spirit Week, concerts, Awards Night, Graduation, SEW for high school, and House Project for middle school. There are probably other items I am overlooking that are part of the GCS experience.

Will I be sitting behind a computer all day? No, you will not be sitting behind a computer all day. We will be scheduling onsite electives like band, choir, gym, GCS strength, and Bible (not an elective) to break up the day. This will be most important for the middle school. Highschool students will have more choice as to how their day will look.

What is a digital classroom? There are several excellent Christian curriculums that have been in development for 40 years. Grace Christian at one point built the upper school with the ACE program which is still in existence today. The ACE program was the model and foundation for many other curriculums. There are some huge advantages to using a national curriculum and instruction. Tens of thousands of students are successful with this education every year. There is a standard pacing and homework load that has been vetted. We are selecting a variety of curriculum to provide an education that is right for you and the educational goals you and your parents have.

So, what are the changes? (Middle School)

- 6th grade goes back to the elementary and 7th and 8th grade make up the middle school.
- 7th and 8th Grade (especially at the beginning of the year) will work together through the math, science, English, and social studies curriculum under the direction of the classroom facilitator.
- As each grade is dismissed to their electives, the facilitator will have opportunity to work one on one with each grade.
- As the school networks with our churches, we will recruit volunteer tutors to come in regularly to help students with different subject areas.
- Homework should be accomplished in class. Students will be expected to use the time given for homework to work on it in the classroom. While there may still be some homework and occasional project work, the current homework load will be greatly reduced.

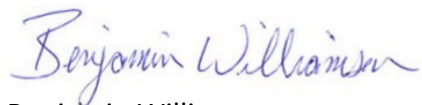
So, what are the changes? (High School)

- Simply more options. Historically, Grace has been a college preparatory school and encouraged high academic standards. That has alienated some students. We will maintain an academically challenging curricular pathway as we introduce a new option for a general education pathway.
- We are developing partnerships with Van Buren Tech so our Juniors and Seniors may be enriched by skill-based learning should they choose.
- We will be expanding our dual enrollment to include Spring Arbor University so students can earn Christian college credits while in high school.
- Homework should be manageable depending upon the work load you choose to take on.

What is this going to cost? Tuition cost will initially come down \$500. You know that the driving force behind this change is to get our financial house in order. I want to develop a progressive tuition rate where as our high school increases in numbers our tuition rate comes down. At 28 (projected) students for next year the tuition rate is \$7,500. Every 7 new high school students would bring tuition down \$500 across the board, up to 50 students. Meaning, if we had 50 students in grades 9-12 tuition would be \$6,000. This is obtainable because our average middle school class size is about 12. We would set up something similar for the middle school.

There are a lot of moving parts. We appreciate your questions. We ask for your support and understanding. I believe this is the means by which we grow out of our problem. I understand that not everyone is or will be excited. Our school is not left with much of a choice and in December this was not on my radar. However, as I made my plea to the GCEA many different conversations directed us towards this model and confirmed that this provides a bright future for our school. Unfortunately, most people's first impression of this idea is bad. There are too many questions and bad experiences. As those questions are answered and experience teaches us how to address previous hang-ups, those critics become advocates.

I hope in time that will be you too,



Benjamin Williamson

Administrator