COMMUNIQUÉ

Monthly



THIS EDITION

- "Speaking Openly"
- Student Spotlight
- Thanksgiving Pages
- Curriculum Meetings
- Mission Trip 2026
- Staff Updates
- National Bible Bee
- Summer Camps
- Upcoming Events
- Community Events & Information

@Romeo's Scenic Views



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

ADMINISTRATION

SPEAKING OPENLY

I like to think that I do not tell people what they should think or what they should do. I rather present evidence and let the case speak for itself. I am beginning to think that is working against me as I try to lead the school to a firm financial footing. I see those actively serving the school (school board, volunteers, and staff) as being in a role similar to the Apostle Paul as he describes in his 1st letter to the Corinthians, 4:9-10:

"We have become a **spectacle** to the world, both to angels and men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ, we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor."

Too many times I have heard about people who are connected to Grace ask someone actively involved in the school if it is going to close. I am frustrated to the point of anger when I hear about 'those who are rich in this present age' (I Timothy 6:17) withholding financial support to our school because they do not want to throw money into a sinking ship. If we were able to receive half of the support of those withholding it we would not be a sinking ship. They are living out a self-determined prophecy at the expense of the next generation.

I do not know all the reasons why the Evangelical Christian Community is determined to maim itself. In my short time at the school I have seen serious supporters and multi-generational families turn their back on Grace over petty Romans 14 squabbles. Where is the Love that covers a multitude of sins? (I Peter 4:8) Where is the pursuit of the things that make for peace? (Romans 14:19) Do we not have enough enemies in the world around us? How many other Christian schools do we have in our area? Do you know the Lutherans and Catholics are licking their chops at the prospect that Grace Christian would go under? Why is that? Because there is no other Christian School to choose; your next best option is them. The local Evangelical Community is pretty much apathetic to whether or not there is a Grace Christian School. A mere 2% of our annual support comes from local churches. The majority of the individuals who support us on a monthly basis are 70+ and live on a limited income.

The miracle within the context of this "sinking ship" is that our students are getting a superior education compared to their public-school peers. It's not even close. There are families here who financially have no business having a private education, yet God provides. We have excellent teachers who work at 50% of what they could earn in the public system. Our high school of 20 students fields athletic teams that beat public schools that pull from 150. Our music program gets the attention of the director of Cornerstone University. Besides all of this, our students are ministered to daily to know the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ. There is no one who does that better in the Berrien/Cass/Van Buren County. Often times it feels like we make thousand-dollar repairs with creativity and a Burger King value meal. And we (Christian Community) would rather watch the ship sink and critique the ones trying to save the ship than get involved. That is very American. Please pull out your camera and start recording.

Do we need money? Of course, we are selling Christian Education to people who are not in the time of life where that kind of money is disposable. Grace Christian has operated under these difficult circumstances for 50 years; not much has changed, but you are hearing clearer communication about them. There is a concerted effort to be less financially desperate. Let's grow past this! I know I have brought attention to that which exacerbates the sinking ship feeling, but that is the beginning of correction. I am fairly certain there are 20 people who consider themselves friends of Grace

who are rich by the world's standards. The challenge for these 20 individuals is to help right the ship by each committing to a \$10,000 pledge, to be fulfilled once 19 others have joined them. That way no one is left hung out to dry and those investing in the next generation can be confident that Grace will be here tomorrow. This will allow our balanced budget to do its job. I and another will begin the pledges of \$10,000. Please help us find 18 more.

For many others, giving a \$10,000 gift is only a dream. Our Ambassador program is looking for \$50 monthly donations. Our development committee would be happy to set you up with this by calling the office or emailing cleach@gcspatriots.com.

Thank-you for listening; as always, I am happy to answer questions and listen to correction.

Benjamin Williamson

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Administrator

MIDDLE SCHOOL HOUSE WINNERS





Standout Student

(earned the most House points)

February: SAMUEL VALENTI
March: NOAH FULLER

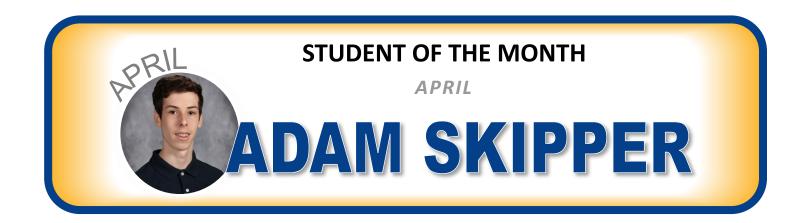


(for awarding the most House points)

November: ROBIN MCBRIDE

December: SARAH ERICKSON





Celebrating \$100,000 donated!

This week Reclaimed by Grace broke the \$100,000 giving mark and has given \$103,410 since opening in August 2023!



We want to thank the 100s of people that have contributed and the nearly 100 different volunteers who have helped us since opening!

Together it is making a difference!

Thanksgiving Page

- Our amazing PFT provided our staff with breakfast and lunch for Teacher Appreciation Week!
- We had several people come and donate blood on May 5th.
- Thank you to the many who donated to the auction!
- 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.



2025 GCEA MEETING

For those of you that may have missed the 2025 GCEA Meeting on April 15th, you can watch the video of it here.

THERMOSTAT REQUEST

GCS is in need of four wifi thermostats. If you are able to provide one or more of these devices, you may use the following link to order:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3N9ITAKCSQK3H?ref =wl share. Thank you!



MUSIC



CAPITOL PERFORMANCE

Mrs. McBride and the $8^{th} - 11^{th}$ grade band members are traveling to Lansing on Tuesday, May 20^{th} to play for visitors to the Capitol building.

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.





CURRICULUM INTRODUCTION

As explained in the last Communiqué, the new curriculum has been chosen for next year's 7th - 12th grade students. Parents and students are encouraged to attend the introductory meetings **this coming Thursday, May 15th**. The junior high meeting for upcoming 7th and 8th grade will take place at 6:00-7:15PM. The high school meeting for upcoming 9th - 12th grade is set for 7:15 - 8:15PM. We look forward to introducing you to the curriculum!

MISSION TRIP

GCS is sending next year's juniors and seniors to Guatemala with Casas Por Cristo for the biennial mission trip. They will leave on Sunday, March 22 and return on Saturday, March 28. Parents and students, please attend the mission trip meeting next Tuesday, May 20th at 6:30PM.



A LETTER FROM MR. MROCZEK



I am getting married and moving to Ann Arbor. I am currently waiting to hear back from a shared services program in the Brighton school district, which is in the Ann Arbor area, which is similar to the one Grace has with Watervliet. If God has that in his plans for me then I will be splitting time teaching PE at Our Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran as well as another school in that district. As for plans outside of teaching, I will be hoping to find a basketball coaching opportunity in that area as well. I am grateful for the opportunity Grace has given me and all the people I have met and helped me through this time in my life. I am looking forward to seeing what God has planned for me, in my growth of faith as well as helping others grow towards the Lord.

A LETTER FROM MR. SCHWARZE

It has been my honor to serve as Bible teacher at GCS since the fall of 2015. I have, after much prayer, counseling, and thought, taken a position teaching Bible at Tristate Christian School in Dubuque Iowa. This decision was made in order to allow my family to move to the same region as our parents. I have rejoiced in serving the GCS community these last 9 years, and I thank you for the joy and privilege of serving at GCS.



A LETTER FROM MRS. MCBRIDE

Dear GCS Family,

It is with mixed emotions that I sit and write this brief letter announcing my retirement from teaching. I have been on staff at GCS for 15 years and it is my belief that God brought me to the school and He is now the One calling me out. Leaving GCS is not by any means easy. I have seen hundreds of students and friends come and go. I have always loved directing the band and performing concerts and programs. It has always been about the ministry and praying that I could help students know Jesus better. But now there are others needing me. My parents are nearing 90 years of age and their mobility is declining rapidly. At this point in my life I am going to keep the fifth commandment and "honor my father and mother." They attended many concerts at GCS and always supported me. Now it's time for me to take care of them.

Grace Christian School is an awesome school and one I have been very proud to be a part of. I pray that my band students will not see this as a time to give up, but a time to encourage the teacher who will become their director. And although I may not always be able to come and see how "my kids" are doing, it is my hope to see them as they continue to perform in the coming years.



Mrs. Robin McBride

STAFF UPDATES

In the April Communique I talked about how as an administrator I would like to crazy glue parts of the school in place like in *The Lego Movie*. As you have read from above we have beloved staff making big changes in their lives that affect their employment with us. We are thankful for each one, whether it has been one year or many. Grace Christian will continue to trust our God to provide, and I am happy to report how some of our positions have been filled and we wait with peaceful expectation for the others to be filled.

6th **Grade**: With the secondary restructuring, we needed a 6th grade teacher. Mr. Stanbro, our current Science teacher, will make that transition to the upper elementary school. Mr. Stanbro has been another strong Bible oriented male role model. We are thankful that he will continue to serve here.

High School Bible: I am thankful for the opportunity for Mr. & Mrs. Schwarze to be closer to their family. I am especially glad for his children in that they will be near their grandparents. I am also thankful that we have an excellent teacher stepping into the Bible teacher role. We are familiar with Mr. Wellin's pursuit of teaching excellence, but most are not aware that he has taught Bible previously. We are again thankful.

Shared Time Programing: Our shared time program with Watervliet allowed us to have 3 or our staff paid for with public school money. It has been a huge blessing. Watervliet is not going to continue that partnership with us. Which sounds like bad news, but it actually is great news. With Watervliet's release we are able to partner with another school district. I'm in communication with Brighton Public Schools to establish this relationship. Brighton is a much bigger district and as a result we will have many more choices to offer in the future, but for next year we are looking for:

- o **Physical Education**: We have a strong lead for this position, but nothing is official.
- o **Music**: With the announcement just today. We are beginning our search for a Christian State-qualified teacher.

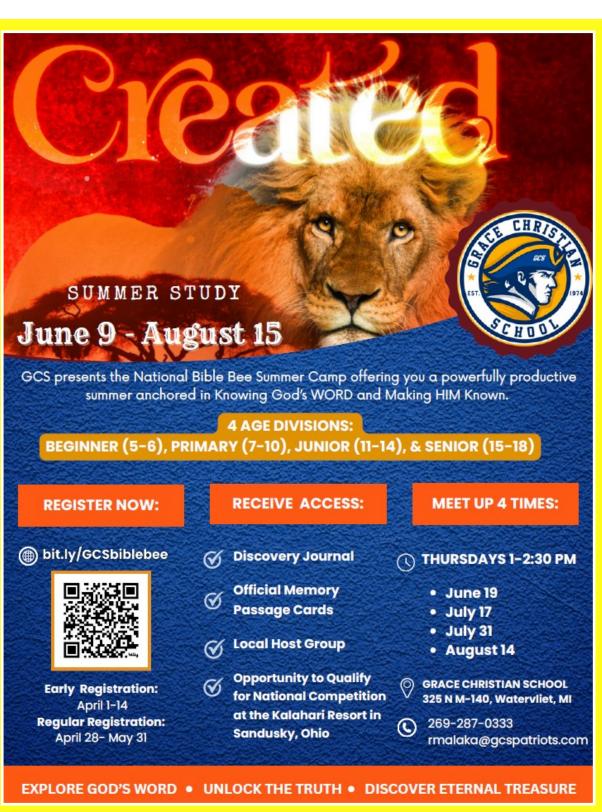
"God is God and I am not" is what I tell myself when I feel the pressure of things that are outside of my very limited control. The scriptures say "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). When we pay attention we see how He demonstrates His love and care for us.

Benjamin Williamson

Seyonin Williamson

Administrator





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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.















Signs & Custom Graphics

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

Ifox@gcspatriots.com

Nathan Hutchins

nhutchins@gcspatriots.com

Ruth Malaka

rmalaka@gcspatriots.com

THE NEXT GCEA BOARD MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY, MAY 19 @ 6:30 PM.

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:



T & C Water Treatments (10 or 15%)

(10% for salt and parts, 5% for softener systems) Softeners & water conditioning. Salt sales and delivery. 2179 Plaza Dr., Benton Harbor (269)983-8156



Zbattery.com (5%)

Batteries, flashlights, chargers 1826 Hilltop Rd., St. Joseph (269) 983-7155



Peerless Canvas Products, Inc. (5%)

Custom canvas products (boat covers, awnings, tarps) 2355 Niles Road, St. Joseph 269.429.0600



Cheyenne Chernugel, Realtor (10%)

10% of any commission proceeds will go to Grace Christian School when this ad is mentioned.

269.252.6595

cheyenne@frazeeteam.com

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





AUGUST		DECEMBER		APRIL		
12	Secondary Info Night, 6:00 pm	6	Christmas Concert, 7:00 pm	7	M-Step Testing Begins	
22	Back to School Night, 5:30-7:30 pm	18-19	Exams/HALF DAY (Grades 6-12)	15	GCEA Meeting, 6:30pm	
26	First Day of School	19	End of Quarter 2	18	NO SCHOOL- Good Friday	
	Quarter 1 Begins	20-1/5	NO SCHOOL - Christmas Break	21	NO SCHOOL - Easter Monday	
30	NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.			24	Spring Concert, 7:00 pm	
		JANUA	RY			
SEPTE	MBER	6	 NO SCHOOL - Teacher Record Da	y <u>MAY</u>		
2	NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.	7	Quarter 3 Begins	5	Blood Drive	
4-6	SEW Retreat (Grades 9-12)	20	NO SCHOOL- MLK Jr. Day	8	Secondary Awards Night	
20	Picture Day		,	9	Elementary Musical	
		FEBRU	ΛDV	13	TK-2nd Grade Field Day	
OCTOBER		14-17		15	3rd-5th Grade Field Day	
2	HALF DAY	18	NO SCHOOL Teacher In-Service	23-26	NO SCHOOL, Memorial Day	
3-4	NO SCHOOL - Teacher Conference	21	Homecoming/Alumni Game	28-29	Final Exams/HALF DAY	
9	NMSQT Testing (Grades 10-11)		J		(6th-12th only)	
16	Patriots-In-Action Day	MARCH		30	Moving Up Ceremony	
18	Grandparents Day, Half Day,	7	: Kindergarten Program/Round Up		(TK-5th), HALF DAY, NO AFTERCARE	
	No Aftercare	7-8	ACSI Music Festival		End of Quarter 4	
	End of Quarter 1		History Fair		Cruise-In, 5:00-8:00 pm	
21	NO SCHOOL - Teacher Record Day	8	Open House, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm	31	Golf Outing, tee-off 8:30 am	
22	Quarter 2 Begins	13	End of Quarter 3			
		14	NO SCHOOL - Teacher In-Service			
NOVE		17	Quarter 4 Begins	EARLY CARE 7:00 - 7:30 am		
5	NO SCHOOL -Parent/Teacher	22	Annual Benefit Auction			
	Conferences, 12:00 - 7:00pm		NO SCHOOL - Spring Break	PLEDGES/	PRAYER 7:50 am	
14	Picture Retakes	J1-7/4	110 Jelioot - Spring break	SCHOOL I	DAY 8:00 - 3:00 pm	
16	Apple Pie Making Day			AFTER CA	ARE 3:15 - 5:30 pm	
27-29	NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break			HALF DAY	ys Dismissal: 12:00 pm	

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

Grace Christian ASKETBA

FOR BOYS & GIRLS 1st - 12th Grade (Next Year)

JUNE 9TH - 13TH 1st-4th Grade: 9:00AM-10:15AM

5th-12th Grade: 10:30AM-12:00PM

LEARN BASKETBALL SKILLS, TEAM PLAY, & MORE

Please fill out attached permission slip and return it to the main office ASAP.



REGISTRATION

GCS STUDENT COUNCIL PRESENTS THE SECOND ANNUAL



50/50 RAFFLE

Pre-1990s

T-SHIRTS



FREE ENTRY &
ADMISSION

FRIDAY May 30

5-8 PM

CALLING ALL CAR ENTHUSIASTS!

Join us as we kick off summer with our second annual Classic Car Show! No entry fee for vehicles and free admission for spectators. Donations will be accepted and will go towards maintenance of our gym floor.

FOOD
TRUCKS
crumbl Cookies
Ben's soft pretzels

Wood, Stock
& Grill

GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

cr

MORE INFO:

325 M-140 WATERVLIET, MI

cruise-in@gcspatriots.com



\$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



Questions?

info@gcspatriots.com

269.463.5545

REGISTER YOUR TEAM TODAY!



2025 Our Lady of the Lake Girls Basketball two week Summer Camp Registration Form

Age Groups:

1st Group 5:00-6:00pm: 3rd - 6th Grade 2nd Group 6:00-7:30pm: 7th - 12th Grade

Dates:

Week 1: June 9-12 Week 2: June 16-19

- Cost of camp is \$40 (includes t-shirt)
- Athletes/Parents can bring registration form and money to the Athletic Office at the HS by May 31 or via email to Coach Mary by May 31
 - If registration form is received after May 31, campers might not receive T-Shirts.
 Forms and Money can still be brought to the first day of camp
- Camp will be held at the Our Lady of the Lake High School/Middle School Gym at 915 Pleasant St., St. Joseph, MI 49085
- Camp will be conducted by the Our Lady of the Lake coaching staff, led by head coach Mary Vojtko, as well as high school athletes
- Players must wear proper gym clothes & shoes with their hair pulled back
- This camp will include an emphasis on ball handling, shooting, and fundamentals
- Camp is based on what grade the student will be in during the 2024-2025 school year

Athlete Name(s):

Grade(s):

T-shirt Size(please specify youth or adult sizes):

Guardian's Name:

Guardian's Phone Number:

Coach Mary's Contact Info Email: mvojtko@ollakers.org







BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASH

The Berrien County Health Department will host a Back-to-School Bash in both Benton Harbor and Niles this summer.

Each event will offer:

- School-required hearing, vision and dental screenings
- · School-required immunizations
- · Fun activities

Simply stop by for screenings and immunizations – no appointment needed.

Aug. 21, BENTON HARBOR

8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. at BCHD 2149 E. Napier Ave.

DETAILS TBD, NILES

Watch bchdmi.org or Facebook for details.

Summer clinics – by appointment

Can't make it to a Back-to-School Bash? Visit one of our summer clinics for school-required hearing, vision and dental screenings. The schedule is:

COLOMA

 June 18 – Coloma Community Schools Administration

EAU CLAIRE

July 29 – Lybrook Elementary

STEVENSVILLE

- June 12 Hollywood Elementary
- June 17 Roosevelt Elementary
- Aug. 12 Stewart Elementary

WATERVLIET

June 24 – South Elementary

NILES

- June 9-10 Merritt Elementary
- Aug. 5 Northside Child Development Center

Scan the QR code to schedule your appointment.

Questions? Call Melisa Jordan at 269.926.7121, ext. 5293.





BEAT THE RUSH

GET YOUR SCHOOL IMMUNIZATIONS AT BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

ATTENTION PARENTS OF

Incoming Preschoolers - Kindergarteners - 7th Graders - Out of State/Transfer Students

CALL TODAY (269)926-7121 to make an appointment

Monday/Tuesday in Benton Harbor 2149 E. Napier Ave. Benton Harbor, MI 49022 Wednesday/Thursday in Niles 1205 Front St. Niles, MI 49120

For more information visit our website at: bchdmi.org

