# GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

*Home of the Patriots*

OCTOBER 2026

# IMPACT

*Inspiring students to **IMPACT** the world for Jesus Christ through an excellent educational experience from a Biblical worldview*




October
2

**REMINDER:**
**NO SCHOOL**
**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2ND**
**Teacher In-Service**





## THIS EDITION:

- "Setting Standards"
- SEW & House Kick-off
- Parent News
- Athletics
- Alumni
- Board
- Supporting GCS
- Praise & Prayer Requests
- Community Outreach
- Calendar

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(269)463-5545 INFO@GCSPATRIOTS.COM GCSPATRIOTS.ORG

# SETTING STANDARDS

It has been interesting leading a small Christian School. There are big complex problems that have been wrestled with for over 50 years. Yet it is not those issues that cause the greatest division and upset the emotions of our families. What really upsets students and parents tend to be dress code, gum policy, make-up rules, hair length standards, and the like. If you take a moment to think about it, there is some sense to why these things upset people. These rules can come across as judgmental over what individuals find acceptable in their everyday life. That judgmental component is the problem and the issue I would like to address.

The short version is that these regulations for our school are not declaring righteousness for life. Let's take sweatpants as the example. Sweatpants are not allowed in the secondary. That does not mean you cannot wear sweatpants at home or anywhere else, but not at school. There is nothing morally wrong with sweatpants, but for school we have reasons for them to be prohibited. Many times, Mrs. Colford and I have told students that school rules are for school. Our staff tries to communicate the difference between school rules and God's rules for life. Legalism is an easy thing to drift into.

Last week we had an Alumni from 2002 speak at chapel. He was shocked to see students in shorts and slides. He shared photos of his time at Grace and all the boys were in khaki pants and polo shirts. He shared how he and other boys had razors with their initials at the school office if they failed the facial hair inspection. Mrs. Colford and I lament over how much time is wasted on things that don't matter and yet if we say dress code does not matter or a food or drink policy does not matter, the condition of the school would quickly deteriorate. We would have a new set of complaints by families that would say, "How can my kids learn in this environment?"

So, all of this to say, we have rules that you may think are stupid. Okay, I get that, but these are the rules that we believe are necessary to keeps us from a chaotic environment. Quite frankly, these rules are not my rules alone. Were I to make the rules without the council of others, they would be much more stringent. However, the leadership of the school (administration, staff, and school board) work together to provide an educational environment that is consistent with Christian values. The book of Judges concludes with an unfavorable sentiment that "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Fortunately, we endeavor to do what is right in the Lord's eyes and we have His standards to reference. As far as the details of running a school are concerned, we have 50 years of experience and things have changed as our culture has changed. Handbooks are updated regularly.

Finally, we are called to unity in the New Testament even at the expense of our rights and preferences:

*"Do nothing out of selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interest of others. Having this attitude that was also in Christ Jesus…" -Philippians 2:3-4*

Benjamin Williamson
Administrator



# WATER BOTTLE PREAMBLE



Spiritual conflict has been an ongoing part of Grace Christian School over the decades. It is not expressed in prayer meeting or Bible studies, but rather in library books, science curriculum, various dress code rules, sports, and even water bottles. What I mean is these things (issues and concerns) are benign on their own and usually accepted for years but suddenly become a point of division, not for just a few, but many. Often, the Scripture implores the church to be united. Satan, the accuser, seeks to divide and devour. It is my goal to call us back to unity and, if possible, remove stumbling blocks.

I come from the garden hose generation and went to school with no air conditioning and one water fountain in the hall shared by six classrooms. And yes, I walked to school uphill both ways…. However, I say that to say that we really do not have a real problem. It is being manufactured by our convenience and how we want to be convenienced.

The heart of the water bottle policy is to manage liquid handled by developing humans so that we can focus on education and not spill management. There is no stage in life where we do not make mistakes, developing or "developed". We are only human. The following water bottle policy has been thought through from the staff that work with your children for what is best in our classroom environment. I ask that you would follow this policy. If you find that this policy in conflict with your family values, please call me so that we can establish grounds for exemption and what that exemption looks like.

Let us together consider Ephesians 5:2:

*"and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us…"*

Benjamin Williamson

-Benjamin Williamson
Administrator
269 910 0979

# WATER BOTTLE REMINDER

As we wrap up our first few weeks of school, we want to take a moment to clarify our water bottle policy. This is not a new policy - our handbook has long specified that students may bring a clear, spillproof water bottle containing water only. This year, however, we are being more intentional about enforcing the policy.

What seems like a small thing at home can be a big thing when magnified by many children in a classroom. There are very practical reasons behind this policy. We have experienced an increasing number of spills throughout the school day, and when students' bottles contain colored drinks, flavored beverages, or other liquids, those spills can leave stains and create time consuming cleanup and maintenance issues. Drinks that are high in sugar or caffeine content can also contribute to student behavior issues. Clear bottles allow staff to quickly see what is inside without interrupting instruction or taking valuable classroom time to check individual bottles. Additionally, we have found that stainless steel water bottles can pose a safety concern when dropped or handled carelessly, particularly for younger students who are standing near friends in line.

The spillproof feature is important. Bottles are frequently dropped, tipped over, left on desks, etc. A spillproof bottle helps protect classroom materials, student work, flooring, technology, and other school property.

PLEASE REMEMBER:



- Bottles must be clear/see-through (lightly tinted is okay).
- Bottles must be spillproof.
- Bottles should contain water only.
- Glass bottles are not permitted (even with silicone sleeve). Though glass may be see-through, it presents a serious safety concern if dropped or broken.
- This policy applies to all students, regardless of grade level.

We recognize that some families may have already purchased a clear water bottle based on the wording of the policy and may not have realized that a glass bottle would not be an acceptable option. We apologize for any confusion this clarification may cause. **To give families reasonable time to make any necessary changes, students will have until Monday, October 5, to have an approved water bottle at school.**

We realize that families may have different preferences when it comes to water bottles and beverages. However, school-wide policies are designed to provide consistency, safety, and practicality for our entire school community. For that reason, we cannot make individual exceptions based on preference.

If your child has a documented medical need that prevents them from using an approved water bottle, please contact the administration so we can discuss a safe and appropriate alternative.

With appreciation from teachers and staff.



# Parents

## A NEW WAY WE'RE KEEPING YOU IN THE LOOP!

This year, we're making better use of a feature in FACTS to help keep families informed about student behavior throughout the school year. When a teacher or staff member observes a behavior concern or minor infraction, you may receive a brief FACTS Behavior Report via email.

These notifications are designed to be quick and factual, giving you a snapshot of what was observed at school without requiring teachers to take valuable time away from their students to write a lengthy report. Many of these reports will involve relatively minor things, such as dress code concerns, gum, or other school expectations. While one incident report may seem small, repeated concerns can add up and may result in consequences according to our school policies.

For more significant concerns, parents may receive a more detailed email from a teacher when time allows. Even in those situations, however, you may first receive a FACTS email so you are aware of the concern as soon as possible. Parents can also log into the FACTS Family Portal, or FACTS Family App, at any time to view their student's Behavior Reports. Our hope is that this added communication will help us work together with you to recognize patterns early, address concerns, and encourage our students to make positive choices each day!

## WEBSITE CONTENT

We encourage you to get in the habit of visiting the GCS website:

**GCSPATRIOTS.ORG**

for valuable information, including newsletters, staff email addresses, calendars, announcements, documents and more.



# SEW 2026

## SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS WEEK
## 9TH – 12TH GRADES

Catching Fire

Our high school students kicked off the new school year at Michiana Christian Camp! This special time away gave us an opportunity to set a strong spiritual foundation for the year ahead. Students enjoyed team-building activities, chapel services, games, shared meals, and plenty of time connecting with one another. It was a meaningful way to build community, strengthen friendships, and begin the year focused on growing together in Christ!



Troy Cleland
Chapel Speaker







Mark Rutherford
Worship Leader

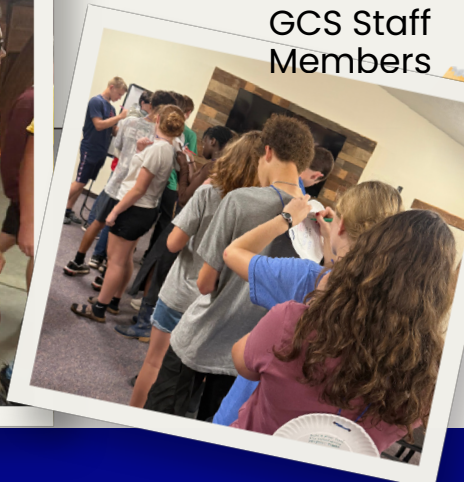








GCS Staff
Members



**Theme Verse: Jeremiah 20:9**

But if I say, "I will not mention His Word or speak anymore in His name," His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

# HOUSE KICKOFF



Our 6th - 8th grade students kicked off this year's House competition at Michiana Christian Camp on Friday, 9/11. This day was set aside to introduce students to their teammates and spend some time getting to know one another. Students enjoyed team-building activities, group games, some free time, and lunch under the pavillion. Throughout the year, students will compete both individually and for their house - stay tuned to see which team will be victorious at the end of the year!

| **Beth Kar** *House of the Lamb* | **Beth LeHem** *House of Bread* | **Beth Hakerem** *House of the Vine* | **Beth Shemesh** *House of the Sun* |
|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   |













## Coming in October

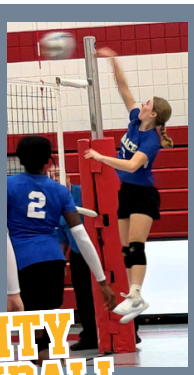
- Minute to Win it Mondays
- Fishbowl Fridays

COMING SOON



# Athletics

**Be sure to check the Athletic Calendar for upcoming game schedules!**


## Varsity Volleyball




## Congratulations 2nd Place at the Tournament




Seniors: **Hannah & Sara** Juniors: **Bethany, Erika & Alexa**
Sophomore: **Abigail** Freshmen: **Elizabeth & Lyra**





## Cross Country

8th Grade: **Benjamin** (not pictured) Sophomores: **Easton & Zooey**




## Middle School Volleyball




8th: **Anastyn & Emilia** 7th: **Ellie & Jordee-Renae**
6th: **Deborah** 5th: **Ashlyn**

GRACE CHRISTIAN PATRIOTS

## Cool Co-Ops

Cross Country

Twin City Sharks Football




## Twin City Sharks Football




# DRESS–UP DAY + FOOTBALL HOME GAME!



In an effort to promote student fellowship and school spirit, Student Council has designated Friday, October 9, as a dress up day. Stay tuned… next week they will announce the theme. That evening, our Patriots and the entire Sharks team will take on Bangor at 7:00 p.m. Any GCS student in grades 6th- 12th who attends will earn points for their current/past House Team. Come ready to cheer on the team! The cost to get in is $7. The game is at their home field, the Kohn Sports Complex located at: 6161 Cleveland Ave., Stevensville, MI 49127.

Student Council's goal is to have every secondary student there to keep the momentum from SEW going, enjoy some fellowship together, and support our GCS athletes. Let's pack the stands and show our school spirit!

## Alumni News



### WANTED: PEP BAND

Nothing says "school spirit" like a PEP BAND! Alumni and current students: If you are interested in participating in a pep band for home games, please reach out to info@gcspatriots.com today and let us know your name, graduation year, and the instrument you play!

We love to learn what God is doing in the lives of our Patriots! If you would like us to share His work in your life with the greater GCS community, we encourage you to send us your accomplishments and news, such as awards, births, graduations, marriage, moves, promotions and other announcements with us at info@gcspatriots.com. *Photos are appreciated, but not required.*

## Board

### 2026-27 GCEA BOARD MEMBERS

**Whitney Tinker** - President
*wtinker@gcspatriots.com*

**Nathan Hutchins** - Vice President
*nhutchins@gcspatriots.com*

**Trever Meachum** - Treasurer
*tmeachum@gcspatriots.com*

**Holly Crouch - Secretary**
*hcrouch@gcspatriots.com*

**Shirl Bontrager**
*sbontrager@gcspatriots.com*

**Marshall Downs**
*mdowns@gcspatriots.com*

**Laraine Fox**
*lfox@gcspatriots.com*

**Joel Layman**
*jlayman@gcspatriots.com*

**Ruth Malaka**
rmalaka@gcspatriots.com

**Brian Montgomery**
*bmontgomery@gcspatriots.com*

**THE NEXT GCEA BOARD MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 26 @ 6:30 PM.**

## Supporting GCS

### INSTRUMENT NEED



As we introduce students to band there is a need for good functional instruments. We may have a half a dozen clarinets and flutes on the shelf, but they need to be padded. If you have the skill to work on instruments we would love your help. We would share these instruments to the students that need them. If you have an instrument that is taking up space in your closet, please consider donating or loaning it to a student that could use it. Thanks for your consideration!




# GCS STAFF WISHLISTS

Mrs. Colford, Principal  Mrs. Corwin, High School
Miss Ally, Preschool 3  Miss Hemingway, TK
Miss Newell, Kindergarten  Mrs. Litten, 1st
Mrs. Tavernier, 2nd  Mrs. Wilkerson, 3rd  Mrs. Grey, 4th
Mr. Dill, 5th  Miss Erickson, Jr. High
Mr. Bradshaw, Strength  Mrs. Pullins, Music



# COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

Below is a list of things that need to be done around the school.
Is there something *you* could do?





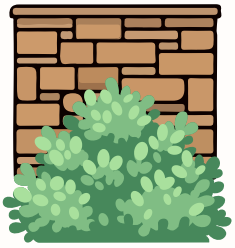
**Mowing:** We need a few volunteers to help us keep the grass mowed on our property.
**Bathroom Fans:** Need to be replaced
**Replace the Last Elementary Furnace:** (We have Furnace)
**Elementary Playground Updates:** Install balance beams & replace wood on roller
**Baseball Fence:** Repair/remove
**Insulate Gym's Heat Tube in Storage Section:** Creative ideas welcome.
**Stain Preschool Ramp & Decks**
**Sign Construction:** Brick work, and Landscaping











# GIVING OPPORTUNITIES





**Sound Board:** $900 for a digital Behringer X32
**2 Disc Golf Baskets**: $100/ea.
**Concrete:** $1800
**T-shirts:** $3188
**Security Upgrade (door lock):** $2500
**Mr. Stanbro's Classroom Carpet:** $900
**Fight Song Lyric Banner:** $214
**Curriculum:** $28,000
**Window Safety Film:** $1000
**2 Shipping Containers:** $2500
**New Copier:** $3500
**GCS Patriot Entrance Floor Mats:** $2,500








**GCS FIGHT SONG**

Onward Patriots!
Onward Patriots!
On to Victory!
We will always stand beside
and show our Loyalty.
GOLD and BLUE our colors true
We lift our banner high.
FIGHT! FIGHT! For GCS and Patriot Pride!

# Praise & Prayer



## PRAISE!

Congratualtions to Mr. & Mrs. Stanbro on the birth of their daughter, Scarlet Mira Stanbro. She was born at 10:59 pm September 25. She weighed 9lbs 11oz and is 20 inches long.

A donor has committed to giving a GCS teacher a much needed kidney for transplant! Please join us in praying for both the donor and the teacher at this time.

## THANKSGIVING

- We received a $25,000 gift toward student sponsorship
- The Schrages and Mr. Behr smoothed out the driveways and around walkways
- New volleyball net, donated by the Class of 2026
- Student Sponsorship need met
- Staffing needs met
- Carpet cleaning donated by Mr. Clean's Cleaning & Restoration in August




# Community Outreach




## VOLUNTEERS INVITED!

The Watervliet Church is getting ready for a fresh, new look! The first step is a **"Church Beautification & Clean-Up Day"** on **October 3,** starting at **9:00am.**

Lunch will be provided! Come ready to clean, organize, work together and start transforming our church at **7734 Paw Paw Avenue in Watervliet.**

## MICHIANA CHRISTIAN CAMP

Volunteers are needed for the Fall Festival on October 10th from 11:00am-4:00pm. Shifts are 2 hours long. Help is needed with carnival games, inflatables, face painting, parking, food service, clean up, and other tasks. Anyone can serve. The camp would love your help, and you get a **free t-Shirt** for serving. If you're willing and able, please contact them as soon as possible to get assigned to a shift. Call the office at (269) 683-4403; or email info@michianacamp.org or eric@michianacamp.org. Michiana Christian Camp is located at 7383 Steinbauer Rd., Niles, MI 49120.

Michiana
Christian Camp

# 2026-27 SUPPORTING CHURCHES

Below is a list of churches that are attended by GCS families. We are very grateful to the churches that support GCS through both prayer and financial gifts *(indicated in bold)*.

- Apostolic Lighthouse Church
- Berrien Center Bible
- Blue Roof Church
- **Bright Star Tabernacle**
- Calvary Bible Church
- Calvary Missionary Baptist Church
- Coloma United Methodist Church
- **Decatur Bible Church**
- Deeper Life Bible Church
- First Baptist Church
- First Church of God
- Freshwater Church
- Full Gospel Assembly
- **Hartford Bible Church**
- Hartford Church of God
- Lakeshore Christian Church
- Latter Day Worship
- LifeBridge Church
- **Midway Baptist Church**
- New Covenant Church
- New Day Church
- New Freedom Church
- New Hope Community Church
- New Jerusalem COGIC
- **New Life Baptist Church**
- **New Life Christian Center**
- **North Wayne Mennonite Church**
- Overflow Church
- Pioneer Memorial Church
- **Sister Lakes Community Church**
- **South Haven Church of Christ**
- St. Mary Catholic Church
- St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church - Niles
- **The Chapel, EFC**
- The River
- The Well Ministries
- Victory Life Church
- Volinia Baptist Church
- **Watervliet Free Methodist Church**
- Woodside
- Yore Community Church



## BUSINESS BOOSTERS

When you buy from or use the services of one of these businesses, they support GCS:

**Town & Country (10/5%)**
(10% for residential services, 5% for commercial services)
2179 Plaza Dr.
(269)934-8155
cheyenne@frazeeteam.com




**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

**T & C Water Treatments (10 or 15%)**
(110% for salt and parts, 5% for softener systems)
Softeners & water conditioning. Salt sales and delivery.
2179 Plaza Dr., Benton Harbor
(269)983-8156




**Tyler Automotive in Niles and Stevensville**
New Honda, Chevrolet, Kia, Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram, as well as pre-owned vehicles at each store. When customers contact Brandon Dockham directly and mention Grace Christian, $100 plus 25% of my commission will be donated back to the school.

Contact Brandon Dockham at (269)213-0410.

Donate Your Casey's Points to GCS!

# Grandparents Day

## Friday, October 30th




**9:00**-Breakfast **10:00**-Program
**11:00**-Classroom Visits & Photos



**RSVP* by October 23rd**

**info@gcspatriots.com/269.463.5545**

*Parents planning to attend must also RSVP and pay $5/person to offset the cost of breakfast.

# GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## 2026-2027 Calendar at a Glance*

**AUGUST**

27 Back to School Night, 5-7:00pm
31 1st Day of the School Year

**SEPTEMBER**

**4-7** **NO SCHOOL** - Labor Day
8-10 SEW Retreat (9th-12th)
11 Jr. High House Kickoff @ MCC, 9:00am-12:30pm
25 Picture Day
Twin Cities Sharks Homecoming

**OCTOBER**

**2** **NO SCHOOL** – Teacher In-Service
14 SAT/PSAT/NMSQT (10th-12th)
**15-16** **TK - 3rd Grade - NO SCHOOL**
**30** **Grandparents Day**
**HALF DAY – No Aftercare**
**End Quarter 1**

**NOVEMBER**

**2** **NO SCHOOL** – Teacher In-Service
3 Quarter 2 Begins
6 Picture Retakes
11 Patriots-In-Action
**17** **NO SCHOOL** – Parent/Teacher Conferences, 11:00am-6:00pm
**23-27** **NO SCHOOL** – Fall Break/ Thanksgiving

**DECEMBER**

3 Christmas Band & Choir Concert
16 Pastor Appreciation Day
**18** **HALF DAY**
**21-31** **NO SCHOOL** – Christmas Break

**JANUARY**

**1** **NO SCHOOL** – Christmas Break
4 School Resumes
15 End of Quarter 2
**18** **NO SCHOOL** – MLK Jr. Day
19 Quarter 3 Begins

**FEBRUARY**

11 Hearing/Vision Screening
**12** **HALF DAY** – Mid-Winter Break
**15** **NO SCHOOL** – Mid-Winter Break

**MARCH**

1 Hearing/Vision Rescreen
5 Kindergarten Program
6 GCS Open House
10 SAT/PSAT (8th-12th)
**17-19** **No School (7th-12th)** – Conference
19 End of Quarter 3
**22** **NO SCHOOL** – Teacher In-Service
23 Quarter 4 Begins
**26** **NO SCHOOL** – Good Friday
**29-31** **NO SCHOOL** – Spring Break

**APRIL**

**1-5** **NO SCHOOL** – Spring Break, continued
13 GCEA Annual Meeting, 6:30pm
23 Spring Concert, 7:00pm

**MAY**

6 Academic Awards Night
7 Elementary Musical
10-14 Elementary Spirit Week
14 Field Day @ MCC
12 Seniors' Last Day
20 Graduation Practice
21 Graduation Ceremony, 7:00pm
27 Last Day (7th-11th)
28 Moving Up Ceremony (TK-6th), 8:30am
**HALF DAY – No Aftercare**
End of Quarter 4
Cruise-In Car Show, 5-8:00pm

| SCHOOL HOURS | |
|---|---|
| EARLYCARE | 7:00-7:30am |
| PLEDGES | 7:50am |
| SCHOOL DAY | 8:00am-3:00pm |
| AFTERCARE | 3:15-5:30pm |
| HALF DAY DISMISSAL | 11:30am |
| *Office Hours* | *7:30am-3:30pm* |

*This calendar is subject to change.
Visit GCSPatriots.org for updates.

**GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**
325 N M-140, Watervliet, MI
(269) 463 - 5545
info@gcspatriots.com

Rev. 8/18/26/