# The Crusader Chronicle



WHITINSVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

# **Bowler Named** Sarah

#### "Each role I've undertaken at WCS, from student to parent, alumni, teacher, and principal, has deepened my love for this community."

# **Head of School**

Sarah (Plumb) Bowler has officially accepted the role of Head of School, marking a significant milestone for the school community. The announcement, made on January 12, 2024, has been met with enthusiasm and anticipation as Sarah transitions from her role as Interim Head of School, a position she has successfully held since July of 2023.

"Sarah, a proud graduate of WCS (Class of 1995), brings not only a deep connection to the school, but also a wealth of experience and a proven track record in educational leadership," said Erika Johnson, President of the Board of Trustees. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Applied Science, a Bachelor of Arts from Gordon College, and a Master of Arts from UMass Lowell. With 22 years of dedicated experience in education, including serving as a Curriculum/Campus Coordinator in Qingdao, China, Sarah is a Massachusetts licensed administrator, further solidifying her credentials.

Having joined WCS in 2010 as an elementary teacher, Sarah's commitment and passion for education led her to be appointed as the Preschool/ Elementary Principal in 2015, by then Head of School, Lance Engbers. Throughout her tenure at WCS, she has consistently demonstrated a heartfelt dedication to guiding students on a path of holistic education, emphasizing not only academic excellence, but also spiritual and personal growth.

Expressing her gratitude and excitement about the new role, Sarah shares, "I am grateful for the support and encouragement I've received, and I am excited to make the shift from Interim to Head of School. Each role I've undertaken at WCS, from student to parent, alumni, teacher, and principal, has deepened my love for this community. I look forward to partnering with our families, faculty and staff, and faithful supporters as we strive to fulfill our mission, relying on God for wisdom and guidance."

"Our work with CACE (the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education) was instrumental in helping the search committee engage our community, identify the needs of WCS, and ultimately determine that Sarah is the best person to serve as our next Head of School," said Erika. "Sarah has been a member of the community in a variety of roles, each with their own unique perspective and experiences. We are thrilled that her leadership in Christian education will allow Whitinsville Christian School to deliver upon our mission, as we draw close to our 100th anniversary in 2028, and embark upon the next 100 years."

#### WHITINSVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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# **The Crusader Chronicle**

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# Serving with Sarah Bowler PURPOSE

t is with delight that I step into the role of Head of School at WCS. I am grateful for the opportunity to deepen my commitment to a school that remains dedicated to the mission of Christ-centered education.

One of my favorite things about WCS is the joy-filled community. There are some mornings when the joy actually feels palpable in the hallways, when the students enter with a spring in their step and are greeted by name with a warm welcome as they head down the halls. Teachers who genuinely delight in teaching, staff who embrace their responsibilities with cheerfulness and diligence, and volunteers who serve with exuberance all create a vibrancy that can be felt. This warmth, collaboration, and shared commitment to providing an exceptional Christian education is truly special. We are not merely an assembly of individuals, but a strong community bound together by a common purpose.

This year, we have expanded our work with Teaching for Transformation and you can read about three of our FLEx (Forming Learning Experiences) projects in this issue. Our cover represents another FLEx Project, the Preschool and Elementary School Food Drive. These projects are transformative educational experiences that go beyond traditional classroom learning. They empower our students to apply their knowledge, skills, and faith to real-world situations. The impact is profound, as students not only acquire academic knowledge, but also develop a deep sense of purpose and responsibility in God's world.

Our alumni stand as a living testimony of Christian education. I'm thankful to Benjamin Moore for sharing his story, including his struggles, in our alumni feature in this issue. Stories like Ben's affirm the transformative impact a Christian education has on shaping resilient, compassionate, and purpose-driven individuals.

The winter issue of *The Crusader Chronicle* recognizes our donors from the 2023 calendar year. I extend my deepest gratitude to each person who plays a pivotal role in supporting our mission. Your generosity enables us to enhance educational experiences, implement innovative programs, and create a nurturing environment where students can flourish. It is through your support that we can continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of our students and the broader community.

As I begin this role at WCS, I am focused on my Deep Hope for WCS which is for each member of our community to be seen as an image-bearer of God, committed to intentional nurturing of holistic growth, so that we are equipped for restorative action in God's world. This is not just a hope for our students, but for our families, faculty, staff, and alumni - each person who has experienced the impact of education at WCS.

I look forward with great anticipation to all that God has planned for WCS, as we continue to provide an education that transforms lives through joy-filled partnership.



"...each member of our community to be seen as an image-bearer of God, committed to intentional nurturing of holistic growth..."



# HOMEGOMING 2025





# GIVING DAY RAISED

\$110,000

# FOR THE WCS FUND

Giving Day kicks off the WCS Annual Fund drive and we were incredibly blessed by our generous donors who gave more than \$110,000 to allow us to continue with our mission at WCS!



e were thrilled to have *Ben Moore (Class of 2003)* help us kick off Homecoming by opening our Pops Concert on Thursday evening and performing at our Alumni Reception. Ben lives in Nashville and is now performing under the name Benjamin Salt and he is a recording artist, songwriter, and actor. You can read more about his story on page 6.

The weather forecast moved our Homecoming activities indoors but we still enjoyed games, face-painting, athletes competing, musicians rejoicing, alumni reminiscing, traditions being honored, students dancing, and community gathering. At Saturday's Alumni Reception we heard from Board of Trustees President, *Erika Johnson (Class of 1996)*, and Interim Head of School, *Sarah Bowler (Class of 1995)*.

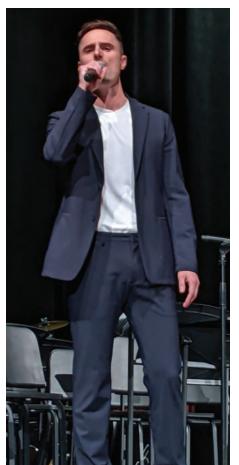


# **Benjamin Moore Finds Harmony I in Music and Faith**

As a Christian school, WCS teaches the themes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration in many classes, in many ways. Our own lives also follow these themes, and we are thankful that *Benjamin Moore (Class of 2006)* has shared his story.

Ben, now performing as Benjamin Salt, returned to the Whitinsville Christian stage at our Pops Concert, the opening event for Homecoming 2023. To round out his WCS Homecoming, he also performed at an alumni reception, and sang the National Anthem at the Friday night volleyball game. "I loved being back at WCS," said Ben. "It reminded me of so many meaningful connections and friendships. I enjoyed being on the cross country team, not because I loved the sport, but because I loved the camaraderie of the team. I know it can be challenging being a Christian in Massachusetts, but you can feel God's presence at WCS, He's still working here."

Benjamin discovered his passion for music during his time at WCS, thanks to the encouragement and guidance of his dedicated music teachers, Franz and Joanne Kuder. He fondly remembers his WCS experience as the catalyst for his musical journey. "The Kuders are just amazing teachers, and wonderful people. I was so encouraged and supported in my pursuit of opportunities." These sentiments are shared frequently by WCS alumni. "I learned so much about singing technique, and Mrs. Kuder's Music Theory course provided an incredible head start for my college courses."



Ben enrolled at Olivet Nazarene University and began pursuing a degree in Marketing with a minor in Music. But life took an unexpected turn during his college years when his parents divorced. "It broke me. The stability I had relied on was shattered." He decided to drop out of college and embarked on a journey that eventually led him to the Chicago area, where he "got involved with the party scene and lost myself in addiction."

It wasn't until 2018 that he began to turn his life around. He became active in theater in Chicago and started to feel the stirrings of faith and spirituality. Witnessing tragedies and hardships made him reflect on the fragility of life, prompting a profound realization: it was time to reconnect with his faith.

"In May of 2019, I knew I needed to give my life back to Jesus." He made the decision to return to Olivet to complete his degree. "By the time the pandemic started, I felt my faith dwindling again. I didn't want to be the seed that was thrown down on hard ground. I felt a calling leading me to Nashville, although I didn't initially plan to pursue music there." In Nashville, he found a welcoming church



community at Nashville Life Church. "I was warmly welcomed, and discipled by men of God, who were mature in their faith."

As his faith deepened, he began making connections in the music industry, setting the stage for his forthcoming album. "My EP, The Mess I Made, was released on November 3, and my first album will be released next year. The album, not surprisingly, is about what happens after you choose Jesus. I believe true faith is one's own journey, and one's own realization. I feel so blessed to be sharing my music and my journey."



# ~FLEX PROJECTS ~

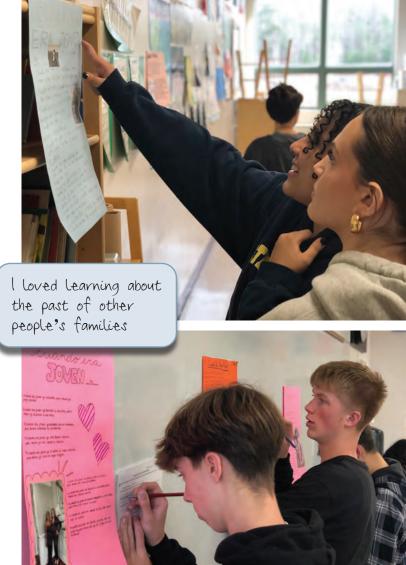
Innovative approaches to teaching are continually emerging to transform traditional teaching methods and cultivate engaged, lifelong learners. Teaching for Transformation (TfT) is one of these approaches and WCS is in its second year of a three-year implementation. One of the core practices of TfT is the FLEx Project, opportunities for the learner to engage in "real work that meets a real need for real people." These projects

go beyond conventional lesson plans, fostering a holistic learning environment that emphasizes character formation, critical thinking, and real-world application of knowledge. As they delve into these FLEx projects, our students see how their work in the classroom can impact the community around them, and help them become empowered contributors to society.

# Cuando Era Joven ~ Connecting Generations

Kelly Penning's Spanish II students are celebrating the diversity of stories. Each student is exploring their own childhood and comparing it with their current life, sharing the differences. The next part of the project involves comparing someone else's life (at least two generations older) to their life now, sharing the differences. The final written project must, of course, be completed in Spanish. "I loved doing this FLEx project with my students," said Kelly. "It is an adaptation of a project I usually do each year. But, with a TfT focus, I was able to be more intentional with my learning targets and essential questions." Students learned to celebrate the diversity of stories and build relationships with others. "I loved learning about the past of other people's families, along with my own, and how Miss Penning tied that into learning how to speak in the past tense," said Kacy Brochu, sophomore. "The life-giving nature of having different generations interact and share stories was a blessing for me to observe!" said Kelly.





# LET'S CELEBRATE ~

# **Black History Mathematicians**



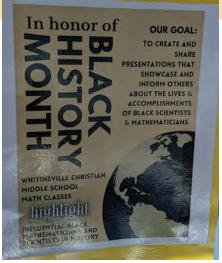
Heather Holgate's Deep Hope (another TfT core practice) for herself and her students is to courageously explore and do mathematics, discovering order and patterns in God's creation, and applying those discoveries to solve real problems for real people. As a middle school math & Bible teacher, she wants her students to see the beauty of mathematics in their everyday lives, and how they can use it to solve real problems for real people.



"Researching how other mathematicians have gone before them and how their courageous explorations have uncovered amazing discoveries shows students what they are capable of doing," said Heather. In this FLEx, students conducted detailed research about the life and work of their chosen African American mathematician or scientist. "Students researched the math and science their person uncovered and used in their work. When we were finished, the students told me they enjoyed the project, advocating for others, persevering when things are difficult, and doing a small part to help restore relationships." Her students shared reflections such as, "Euphemia Haynes' story shows that you can overcome anything. She did things that were not expected of African American women. She worked hard to get a real education, and she... used her tal-

ents to teach and to push to desegregate schools. She was passionate about Black children getting a real education and made a big impact on the world." and "I struggle with how unjustly my scientist was treated and how others took credit for her work. This project has me thinking deeply about how I can be a Justice Seeker and how I might have brought a little piece of fixing and restoration to a broken part of our history by letting others know of her great work."

"Students communicated how their mathematician or scientist impacted and influenced the world despite adversity, inequities, and sometimes grave injustices," said Heather. "This FLEx exceeded my expectations, opened up deep learning opportunities, and made a lasting impact on students and me as their teacher!"







# TEN DAYS OF KINDNESS ~

# **A Countdown to Christmas**



Julie (Wiegers) Fredericks (Class of 2015) and Jane Kulesza teach kindergarten, a group that is always full of a special kind of energy at Christmas. This year they launched ten days of acts of kindness to serve our school, families, and the greater community. "Our goal for our FLEx Project was to show the love of Christ, and how much we care for our community," said Jane.

Ten Days of Kindness began on Monday, December 11, with the task of writing "Jesus Loves You to Pieces" on a piece of paper, and giving it to a family member. Other tasks included giving compliments, designing holiday bookmarks to donate to the library, singing carols at school, walking the cross country trail to feed birds, and making thank you cards for the custodial staff and lunch volunteers. "We often recognize when we see someone showing God's love, and students are quick to point out when someone showed them love," said Julie. "I have found that my students this year are quick to serve, eager to help their classmates, and work hard to show God's love through their words and actions within our classroom, school, and community."

"I love our ten days of kindness because I can tell we are making people feel loved through their smiles." Kindergarten Student

# D & Y S





real need for real people."

# Christmas Events

Christmas at a Christian school is such a special time. The hallways are filled with artwork reflecting the season, the sounds of Christmas music from the music rooms, the smell of gingerbread cookies baked by the lunch ministry team, and the energy of students who are ready to celebrate their family's traditions.

# Christmas Concert

The WCS Christmas Concert returned to Valley Chapel this year, and our community filled the pews! This beautiful evening of music brought together the middle and high school bands, choirs, and orchestras.









# **Living Nativity**

Whitinsville Christian Preschool students create a living nativity scene, telling the story of Jesus' birth.







# **Light It Up Christmas**

Jay Bragg Basiner (Class of 1999) brought his Light It Up Christmas concert to WCS for an evening of stories, songs, and a lot of Christmas cheer. Jay shared his memories of the Kuders who sparked his love for many types of music. He was joined on stage by WCS classmates, Steve MacIndoe and Joe Muscolino and closed the evening by performing with WCS's Vocal Ensemble.







As we prepared for Christmas break, the WCHS Theater Production class staged three performances of *A Christmas Carol*. This classic Dickens tale tells the redemption story of Scrooge, after he sees the true spirit of Christmas, and realizes that God has blessed us - everyone.





# **WCS Dutch Apple Pies**

# **An Autumn Tradition**

The 2023 Dutch Apple Pie sale means familiar sights such as boxes being assembled by racing middle school students, workstations being prepped by our dedicated pie committee, and Lance Engbers - ready for work in the Krull! This year, 5,000 pies were prepared and distributed by hundreds of parents, grandparents, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members working together to make this wonderful event possible and that's why we love to call this event a friend-raiser in addition to being a fundraiser! We also donated more than 500 pies to community organizations through the Paying it Forward with Pies program. We are incredibly grateful to our Apple Pie Committee and hard-working pie day leaders for a great event!

Lance Engbers, retired Head of School, lent a hand wherever needed.



pies to area first responders.









**Kelly Belucio** ES SAS



**Christine Cote HS Science** 



**Bethany Desrosiers Kendall Gaouette** ES Aide



**HS SAS** 



**Abby Graves** HS Math/Science



Margaret Hendrikse Terri Manty **HS Math** 



Lunch Manager



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Rosa Orazine HS World Language



**Justine Rogers** ES Aide



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**Becky Snoeyink** MS ELA



Erin Thakkallapalli ES Aide



Kate Vriesema LMC Coordinator



**Kate Whitsitt** ES Aide

#### **NEW ROLES AT WCS**

Tamara Boras - ES Art

Monica Carty - ES Library and ES Faculty

Evropi Chatzi - SSP Teacher

LeAnn Condon - ES Aide

Elisabeth Goodson - Assistant SSP/Elementary Principal

Jason Keith - Director of Facilities

Sara Korber-DeWeerd - HS English

Kathy Rios - Director of Guidance and International Programs

Heather Rufo - Director of Development

#### ALUMNI NEWS

#### **WEDDINGS**



Nathan Casey (Class of 2014) and Carolyn Fenerty were married in August of 2023 in Plymouth, MA.



Joshua Vander Baan and Katelyn Lashley (both Class of 2018) were married July of 2023 in Uxbridge, MA.

#### **ENGAGEMENTS**



Philip Skinner proposed to Veronica Rios (Class of 2017) in December of 2023.



Jay Basiner (Class of 1999) and Rachel Brotheridge got in engaged in December of 2023.



Matthew and Amanda (Lukowski) Clark (Class of 2007) welcomed Jack Bristol in July of 2023.



Andrew (Class of 2010) and Ellie Dykstra welcomed Malcolm (Mack) John in April of 2023.



Tyler (Class of 2012) and Natalie Vanden Akker welcomed Maverick in September of 2022 and celebrated his baptism on his first birthday.



Engle (Class of 2012) welcomed Hadley Louise in Avery Mae in May of 2023. September of 2023.



Nathan and Heather (Irwin) Dave (Class of 2003) and Samara Jellesma welcomed



Will and Emily (VandenAkker) Shannon (Class of 2009) welcomed Cameron Christopher in July of 2023.



Derek Kats (Class of 2007) and his wife, Alexa, welcomed Madeline Mae in November of 2023.



Lucas Foppema (Class of 2007) and his wife, Laisa, welcomed Allisia in January of 2024.

#### **CONDOLENCES**

Nancy (Wiersma) Rooks (Class of 1946) of California passed away in September of 2023.

Robert Carl Jongsma (Class of 1946) of Michigan passed away in October of 2023. He volunteered countless hours to help build Whitinsville Christian School.

Rev. Allan Jongsma (Class of 1947) of Michigan passed away in February of 2024.

Eleanor Baker (Class of 1948) of Whitinsville, faithful WCS volunteer, passed away in January of 2024.

Trena DeJong (Class of 1951) of Sandwich, MA passed away in February of 2024.

William (Bill) Schotanus (Class of 1951) of Michigan passed away in July of 2023.

Henry (Hank) Ebbeling (Class of 1953) of Whitinsville, lifelong member of Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church, passed away in August of 2023.

William (Bill) Vierstra (Class of 1953) of South Carolina passed away in January of 2024.

Carolyn (Oosterman) Preble (Class of 1970) of Massachusetts passed away in October of 2023.

#### **NOMINATE A DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS**

We are now accepting nominations for this year's Distinguished Alumni Award. This award was established in 1999 to recognize individuals who have distinguished themselves in their business, profession, or vocation, and through their actions have demonstrated concern for, and service to, their community and to God. Please submit your nomination, including a paragraph describing why you feel they are a good candidate, to advancement@whitinsvillechristian.org.



Please scan this QR code to share your news with us and keep your contact information up-to-date. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

#### DONORS

We are grateful for our generous donors. This donor list reflects gifts given in the calendar year 2023.

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Lorraine Wiersma

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