



# The FALCON

ARBORBROOK CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Volume 2, Issue 1

## A LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Welcome to the second volume of *The Falcon*. In



this edition, we focus on our lower school, giving a chance for Kindergarten through sixth grade to shine. These primary years are so important as we instill habits in our youngest learners that will guide them for their lifetime. As you examine these pages, consider our recently revised mission statement: *Arborbrook Christian Academy*

*partners with parents to equip, encourage, and empower students to develop godly character, pursue lifelong learning, and love the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Enjoy!

Dr. Andrew Zawacki  
Head of School

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## A LETTER FROM THE LOWER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The lower school years here at Arborbrook look very different from any other school in the Charlotte area. Our core differences, rooted in our Charlotte Mason philosophy, mean students not only receive instruction in standard core classes, but receive a much richer education through the arts, nature study, and living books.

We can't avoid engaging with our technology-based culture. Yet our students are taught how to slow down, observe, and appreciate creation in various ways throughout the week. This is done through sketching the details in a budding plant, recreating a famous work of art with watercolors, or describing the mood of a piece of classical music. To balance out the higher-level thinking and discussion opportunities, we keep lessons intentionally brief while offering plenty of outdoor time for play and learning. Our aim is to create a genuine love of learning, where a child's curiosity is the driving force in seeking knowledge.

That knowledge is not a list of facts to be memorized, but involves ideas, people and cultures. Historical events and traditions are fleshed out. For history, students visit Sacagawea in the forest, or become gold prospectors for the afternoon, or learn a traditional colonial dance. In science, they watch caterpillars transform into butterflies, and seeds into various foods. In older grades, students study chemistry, physics, and anatomy through engaging experiments and class projects.

Charlotte Mason said, "The habits of the child produce the character of the man." Behaviors, including respect, obedience, and truthfulness, are discussed and expected from every child at Arborbrook. Teachers not only educate the intellect, but the whole child, including their social and emotional development. Classroom devotions allow each class to discuss the biblical principle being taught in Assembly, and how it personally relates to them and their classmates. We are so thankful for the opportunity to start and end each day in God's Word. —Kristen Woodman ■



## UNIQUE CHALLENGES MAKE LOWER SCHOOL ASSEMBLY THEME ESPECIALLY RELEVANT

When fifth grade teacher Diane Rhoades settled on “Making Godly Choices” as the assembly theme for the 2019–2020 school year, she had no way of knowing how God would call on Arborbrook students (and teachers, for that matter) to apply the lessons in a trying time.

Rhoades’s reason for selecting the topic was fairly straightforward—it was one that easily lent itself to a variety of sub-topics.

“Last year we did the theme of ‘one anothers’ and that was a little bit of a challenge because a lot of those sub-topics could be somewhat similar. *Be kind to one another* sounds a lot like *love one another* sounds a lot like *encourage one another*,” she laughs. “So it required some creative thinking to find fresh applications for those verses.”

This year, however, she found herself with the opposite problem—she had to narrow down the infinite number of ways Scripture calls on us to make godly choices in our daily lives to only thirty assembly periods.

Whatever challenges the theme posed, however, it now looks to have been a providential choice. Students say both the in-person assemblies that took place before the coronavirus necessitated distance learning and the online gatherings since then have helped prepare them for an especially challenging spring semester.

Third grader Catie Matheson says the fears and frustrations she’s been experiencing while stuck at home have had her thinking back to a January assembly titled, “Making the Choice to be Bold.”

“It was about the prophet Elijah and it doesn’t mean you should be bold as in rude,” she explains. “It’s a way of showing you trust God even when things seem hard or

scary. It means to be brave.”

Life in the midst of a pandemic has also had sixth-grader Jonathan Thiel thinking back to January, to Dr. Z’s personal testimony about forgiving his father. “I’ve had a hard

time forgiving, too. But now you’re hearing all this stuff about people losing their mom or dad or other relatives. So you never know when you might not have another chance to forgive someone.”

Thiel’s sister, fifth-grader Peyton Thiel, says the most valuable teaching to her was one of the most recent—when Dr. Z encouraged us all to make the godly choice to rejoice in tough times. “I think about it when I hear more bad things in the news,” Thiel says.

All of the students say that while they’re always excited for a chance to

see their classmates over Zoom, they can’t wait to be together again in person. “My mom says I’m an extrovert, which means I like to be around a lot of people.” Matheson says. “So this is really hard for an extrovert!”

Rhoades shares their longing. “It’s been a blessing to have the option of meeting for assembly online,” she says. “But as soon as you see the faces, you’re also left with a feeling

of, ‘Oh, I miss my people!’ It makes you think you’ll treasure the time when we’re finally able to be together all the more.” ■

**I** t’s been a blessing to have the option of meeting for assembly online. But as soon as you see the faces, you’re also left with a feeling of, ‘Oh, I miss my people!’

—Diane Rhoades  
Fifth grade teacher



## NATURAL KNOWLEDGE—TAKING ARBORBROOK STUDENTS FROM APPRECIATION TO INTEGRATION

The great 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian Charles Spurgeon once preached, “He who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest revelation of His divine mind, wrote also the first book, the book of nature. To wise men, the one illustrates and establishes the other.”

Using the book of nature to illustrate and establish Scripture studies, as well as other academic disciplines, has always been a significant element of the Charlotte Mason practice at Arborbrook. However, this year new nature studies teacher, Carina Brossy, is using her background in global studies, languages, and curriculum design to further integrate the outdoors into all aspects of classroom learning.

“I really like to partner with other teachers and cross-pollinate,” Brossy says. “So I’ll look for ways to create a space for what we’re doing outdoors in not just science, but also the literature the students are reading and the math they’re doing. It’s all about how I can complement the work of the other teachers.”



With each grade, Brossy is focusing on a different component of the natural world that will allow students to build on their knowledge as they progress. For example, first grade emphasizes seeds and seasons, and second graders learn about ecosystems and interdependence among plant and animal life. From there, students begin developing more complex, collaborative projects, like the year-long butterfly program Brossy has been working on with the third grade as part of their “everything that flies” focus.

The project, called “Journey South” involves students printing out and designing life-sized monarch butterflies. “We put them in a packet and actually mail them to Mexico at the same time the monarch butterflies are migrating,” she explains. “Then in the spring, we’ll receive new butterflies from a Canadian school when the butterflies are coming back. So there’s mapping integration. There’s also culture and language integration because our class also sends a larger ‘butterfly ambassador’ that the students write on, describing our culture in Spanish.”

The assignments grow more intensive as the students get older. “What we learn from the outdoors starts with nature appreciation,” Brossy says, “But then we move into stewardship. The fourth graders have been learning about vermiculture and growing worms. The fifth graders are composting. Because eighth grade is focusing on



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leadership and stewardship, their year will culminate in an outdoor survival project.”

Ask the students about nature studies, and nearly all mention one especially satisfying part—harvesting and eating food from the garden!

Fifth grader Lydia Myers is new to Arborbrook this year and says nature studies has become her favorite subject: “I really enjoyed making muscadine juice and getting to have the feast where we ate salads and all the other things we’d grown in the garden.”

Her brother, seventh grader Luke Myers, is also a fan of the gardens and

Arborbrook’s wholistic approach. “I’d done nature studies before and really liked it,” he says. “But in the past, it was things like nature journaling. Here, I loved being able to dig the sweet potatoes out of the bed. They were massive—I was stunned!”

Luke’s an even bigger fan of what his class did with the sweet potatoes. “Really the best part was making sweet potato pie,” he laughs. “It was extremely good.”

Brossy says that joy in creation is what nature studies is all about. “The Lord brings us through all sorts of seasons in our lives. Some seasons we feast. But we also have dry seasons that leave plants withered and needing pruning. Through that we



have new growth. In so many ways, He teaches His deepest lessons through creation.” ■

## Making Godly Choices—A Student Essay, written by Taylor Knight, 5th Grade



I remember when our class did assembly for the week. We did a skit about Jeroboam and Rehoboam and how Rehoboam didn’t choose wisdom. Rehoboam listened to his friends instead of listening to the wise men, and that cost him the kingdom of Israel.

After we did that skit, I realized how important it is to actually listen to God and the wise people in your life if you want to make godly choices. Then, I thought about how hard it must have been for Rehoboam to make a choice. Even though he made the wrong one, it wasn’t what he intended.

That’s how it sometimes is in our lives, too. There are choices we must make, but it can be very hard to decide because of different influences. Take this, for instance: Jeroboam had to make the choice to either listen to the wise men or listen to his friends. But there could have been good reasons to choose either side. Maybe Jeroboam wanted to listen to the

wise men but didn’t want his friends to get mad at him. Or maybe he wanted to listen his friends but knew that the wise men would give really good advice.

So you see, there are always things that can tempt you to make one choice over another. To make a godly choice, we have to stop and pray to God to give us the strength and knowledge to make the best choice we can.

A real-life situation might be something like a friend telling you to take a piece of candy from your teacher’s candy jar without asking. You know you shouldn’t, but you don’t want to hurt your friend’s feelings. I know how hard this can be, and I think a lot of you do, too. I’ve been faced with other situations similar to this. So, I encourage you; don’t be hurried in making decisions. Stop and ask God to help you make the right decision, and you’ll be grateful in the long run. ■

## Fall Production: *The Phantom Tollbooth* — An Adventure in Fun

Boredom. It's the bane of every childhood. It was also, in some ways, the villain of this year's middle school play, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, a musical with a sprawling cast and speaking parts for everyone, including the talking dog. While the Tollbooth, based on the book by Norton Juster, isn't overtly Christian, new Arborbrook drama teacher, Tammie Butt, says there's spiritual truth to be found in the story. She believes the journey of Milo, an uninterested boy with plenty of time on his hands, dovetails well with Psalm 90:12, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom," and Psalm 119:105, "Thy world is a Lamp unto my feet and a Light unto my path." Butt, who owns Charlotte Christian



Theater Company, has been directing for ten years. She's been costuming plays at Arborbrook for the last few years, and she picked Tollbooth as her first show here because it demonstrates, "the importance of words and numbers, as well as the importance of working together." She adds, "It's a story that has some lessons about wasting time and losing our sense of purpose and proportion." The story kicks off with young Milo (played by Daniel Spear) lamenting the doldrums of an uneventful day. This opens him up to the attacks of menacing demons (in fearsome makeup) who demoralize him further. But the story really takes off when a mysterious Tollbooth (Isabella Laws) arrives and transports Milo to a magical world of words and numbers, kings and princesses, and the one pet every child wishes they had: talking dog Tock (a very spirited Pierson Pitts). The new land gives Milo a purpose—to save the singing princesses Rhyme and Reason (real life sisters Ella and Lila Jones) and reunite quarreling brothers, King Azaz of Dictionopolis (Weston McIntosh) and the

Mathemagician (Caleb Wigfall) of Digitalis.

Pierson Pitts leads the way as dog, Tock. A boisterous Tollbooth cast brought big song-and-dance numbers. There was no boredom to be found in the audience once the show started. Both Acts One and Two were packed with lively songs that showcased the entire cast in choreographed numbers. Behind the scenes, Butt says she left most of the performances in the hands of high school students Lucas McIntosh and Elle Surprenant. With more than twenty cast members having to share microphones, they were tasked with the revolving parade of mic switches. And according to Butt, they got a first-hand experience of what to do when things don't go as planned.

Fifth grader Taylor Knight said she found a lot to relate to in the story. "It made me see just how important it is to actually

get out in the world and do things. If you don't, you might end up never wanting to do anything, and you could end up missing out on things."

Still, all good things must come to an end. And fifth grader Peyton Thiel says that even though she was sad when the show was over, being in *The Phantom Tollbooth* taught her that "when one adventure is over, it just means it's time to find a new one." ■



## Getting to Know You—Arborbrook Welcomes New Teachers



### **Rachel Hyatt**

*P.E. Teacher*

*What were you doing before you came to Arborbrook, and what brought you here?*

I played a year of college volleyball before getting hurt. Then, I left that school and went to UNC–Charlotte and graduated last December with a Bachelors in Psychology. My friend Kathryn Hooks used to work here, and we both coach at Carolina Union Volleyball Club, so she let me know about the position. I’ve done a lot of camps over the summers with kids, so I knew it would be a great fit.

*When you’re dealing with the kids, what’s something you do or say to let them know you mean business?*

I blow the whistle when I need to get everybody’s attention. Two short whistle blows: “beep–beep!” means “Eyes up here!” One long, drawn–out whistle is: “Uh, oh! Something’s going wrong!” and everyone knows that.

*What’s something about you that the Arborbrook community may not yet know?*

I grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Hendersonville. The leaves in Charlotte are not as impressive as they get in mountains, but I still like it here better. ■

### **Jillian Meyers**

*Kindergarten Teacher*

*What were you doing before you came to Arborbrook, and what brought you here?*

I was in Lexington, KY, but I grew up here, so I knew about Arborbrook from my childhood. Before coming to Arborbrook, I was homeschooling my four kids and directing a classical conversations community. I’d started two of them, and had been directing, planting, and equipping homeschooling families to be successful. I came to Arborbrook because we were relocating to follow my husband’s job. As it turns out, my resume was here before there was a position!



*When you’re dealing with kids, what’s something you do or say to let them know you mean business?*

When I’m most desperate at home and my kids aren’t contributing or doing as they should, I sing LeAnn Rimes’ “How Do I Live” and they just know I’m really desperate! It’s like, “Come on, can you do what you need to do without me?” I won’t sing any for you right now, but I can break out in karaoke at home! It’s a little more Mary Poppins–ish here at school.

*What’s something about you that the Arborbrook community may not yet know?*

Some people find it unique that I designed and sewed my own wedding dress. That’s something I love to do. It brings me a lot of joy to do handy crafts with the kindergartners here, because it’s a little piece of creating, and that’s what I love. ■



## **Carina Brossy**

### *Nature Studies Teacher*

*What were you doing before you came to Arborbrook, and what brought you here?*

I was homeschooling my kids. I was doing contract work in global education with UNC–Chapel Hill and Queens University and creating food tours to places like Costa Rica. I also have a podcast, *Our Edible Stories*. And I’m still doing those last three things—life is busy!

*When you’re dealing with kids, what’s something you do or say to let them know you mean business?*

Previously I taught foreign language, and I’m still always looking for ways to sneak that in. So when the students want to go outside, I’ll tell them something like, “If you’re ready, touch your head. Touch your nose,” and so on. And then I’ll tell them, “Say ‘Si. Senora’.” And they know to do that now.

*What’s something about you that the Arborbrook community may not yet know?*

My first job out of college was working as Disney characters! [Laughing] All the ugly ones! It’s based on your height, so I did a lot of the male characters: Eeyore, Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum. ■

## **Melissa Harding**

### *Fifth Grade Teacher*



*What were you doing before you came to Arborbrook, and what brought you here?*

We were in Australia, and I was teaching at a Bible college called Capernwray. Our family went down there for a year, and put a pause on life. We traveled around Australia and New Zealand and taught. Then we decided to settle in Charlotte.

Before we even went to Australia, I’d heard about Arborbrook. I felt like my kids were going to go there and I was going to work there before we even saw the building.

*When you’re dealing with kids, what’s something you do or say to let them know you mean business?*

We have a saying in our classroom, “Speak life!” When I say “speak life,” that means someone hasn’t been—to either themselves or somebody else. That means we mean business. We need to change our thought process, and we need to change what we’re saying.

*What’s something about you that the Arborbrook community may not yet know?*

I’m an author. The name of the book is *Mother Hen Flew the Coop*. It’s about letting go of the standard of perfection we have as moms and learning who we are as daughters of Christ, and discovering the unique moms He’s created us to be! ■

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# ARBORBROOK

by the  
*Numbers*

1

*Arborbrook's ranking on Niche.com's list of "Best Private Schools" in Union County.*

9

*Arborbrook's ranking on Niche.com's list of "Best Private Schools" in the Charlotte area.*

10

*The number of conference championships Arborbrook has brought home.*

34

*The number of student actors in the lower school fall production, The Phantom Tollbooth.*

44

*The number of plant species grown in Arborbrook gardens.*

