

# MODUS VIVENDI

*A Way of Life*

CLASS OF 2020

FACULTY PROFILE:  
STEPHANIE MEYER

CAPSTONE PROJECTS  
À LA REMOTE

THE BEAR  
CREEK  
SCHOOL  
MAGAZINE

FALL 2020



# MODUS VIVENDI

*Fall 2020*

*Modus Vivendi* is translated as a way of life or a manner of living. The Bear Creek School seeks to develop individuals for whom the classical ideals of excellence in all things, love of learning, spiritual commitment, and self-discipline have become a way of life.

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*Modus Vivendi* is published twice a year by The Bear Creek School. If you are interested in writing for *Modus Vivendi* or have comments or questions regarding the publication, please contact us at [modusvivendi@tbcs.org](mailto:modusvivendi@tbcs.org).

*The mission of The Bear Creek School is to provide a high-quality, Christian liberal arts education in a nurturing environment that will enable each student to become the individual God intends.*

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### THE BEAR FACTS

Each Friday during the school year, *The Bear Facts*, Bear Creek's weekly newsletter, is emailed to current parents, faculty, and staff. *The Bear Facts* contains news and announcements from each of the school's divisions and from the athletics department. Previous posts are archived and searchable on the school website at [tbcs.org/bearfacts](http://tbcs.org/bearfacts).

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### ON THE COVER

Harry Davis '24, learning remotely with Benji, a friend's dog. See pages 28-29 for an article about remote learning from a student's perspective.

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# WHAT'S INSIDE



## **FACULTY PROFILE: STEPHANIE MEYER**

*Read about how Middle School science teacher Stephanie Meyer brings science concepts to life.*

*Pages 20-21*



## **INVESTING IN BEAR CREEK**

*Meet the Xin family.*

*Page 31*



## **ALUMNI RELATIONS**

*Welcome to Ashleigh Roth '16, our new Alumni Relations Manager*

*Page 41*

## **CLASS OF 2020**



- 6** GrizzliesTogether
- 7** Congratulations to the Class of 2020
- 8** Reflections from the Class of 2020
- 15** Faith, Hope, and Love in the College Journey

## **LEARNING TOGETHER**



- 20** Stephanie Meyer: Science, Dirt, and Bold Mistakes
- 22** Capstone Projects à la Remote
- 26** Class Memory Verses: A New Tradition
- 28** Stuck at Home

## PHILANTHROPY



**31** Meet The Xin Family

**32** The Impact of Generosity

**33** Meet Our New Owls

## ALUMNI



**34** Alumni News and Class Notes

**36** Beth (Graham) Patterson, M.D., Class of 2009

**38** Miya Higashiyama, Class of 2013

**39** Derian Williams, Class of 2018

**40** Ansel Sanger, Class of 2005

**41** Welcome to our new Alumni Relations Manager

# GRIZZLIES TOGETHER

By Patrick Carruth

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of *Modus Vivendi*. It would not be an overstatement to say that the past eight months have been unlike any other in the history of The Bear Creek School, and likely in your own life as well. In early March, Bear Creek made the decision to close our buildings and move to remote learning. At the time, we hoped it would prove to be a temporary situation, but, over time, it became apparent that we would need to continue teaching remotely for the remainder of the school year.

I am indebted to our faculty and staff for making such a swift transition and for the way in which they developed and embraced new and innovative ways of teaching in order to help students continue to be successful learners in a remote environment. Their concern for each student as an individual made the spring semester a time of positive growth and development. I am also grateful to our students and parents who approached remote learning with curiosity, perseverance, commitment, and good humor.

Reflecting back on the prior months, and looking forward to the ones to come, I am reminded of the strength that comes from knowing that the Lord is sovereign, and that the Gospel calls us to love one another in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. That *agape* or *chesed* manifested itself abundantly throughout the spring—sometimes in fun and virtual ways—but always rooted in our identity as a community in Christ. The generous outpouring of support for Bear Creek families economically affected

by the pandemic, evidenced through the Bear Creek Responds Grant Fund, was heartening and a gracious example of compassion for our neighbor.

We have heard countless stories as well of how our Bear Creek community—parents, grandparents, parents of alumni, and alumni—have also played important roles during this difficult time. From sewing hundreds of face masks to serving on the front lines of health care and in all types of essential businesses, we see a community filled with wisdom, compassion, and courage at work and in service to others in myriad ways.

We are now in the midst of a new school year, balancing the health and safety of our teachers, staff, students, and community with the need to educate our students in the best way possible. At the time of this writing, we have made significant investments in health and safety infrastructure as well as technology tools in order to enable students to attend school either in person or remotely, according to the individual needs of the family. We will remain flexible to adjust to changing circumstances in creative ways, while staying focused on our students' education and our mission. While our methods will necessarily be different, they will still be true to our mission to provide a high-quality, Christian liberal arts education in a nurturing environment that enables each student to become the individual God intends. I am grateful to each of you for your partnership in this endeavor.

**#GRIZZLIESTOGETHER**

# Congratulations to the Class of 2020

Brielle Alexandra Baker\*  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Katherine Rhea Bieber‡  
*Gonzaga University*

Jace Ryan Blankenbeckler‡  
*Aurora University*

Spencer Rock Boeh  
*Purdue University*

Justin Hanul Cho  
*Purdue University*

Lauren Isabelle Egger\*‡  
*University of Oklahoma*

Emily Nadine Fridman\*\*\*  
*University of Washington*

Rylan Vaughan Gauthier\*‡  
*Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo*

Alec John Helzer\*\*‡  
*Texas A&M University*

Samuel Herold\*‡  
*Colorado State University*

Andrew Justin Woo Hom\*\*\*‡  
*Vanderbilt University*

Matthew McGrath Jensen\*  
*Baylor University*

Yiteng Jiang\*\*\*  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Finn Bode Johanneson‡  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Liliana Michelle Kim\*\*\*‡  
*University of San Diego*

Brandon Reid Krabach  
*Calvin University*

Kathryn Elizabeth Kranz‡  
*Baylor University*

Lauren Rose Lozier\*\*  
*University of Washington*

Rita Wai Pui Luk\*\*\*  
*Georgia Institute of Technology*

Xiran Lyu\*\*\*  
*Northeastern University*

Liam James Massey‡  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Annemarie Kristen Mullet\*\*  
*Linfield College*

William Patten\*  
*University of New Mexico*

Travis Michael Roth\*\*‡  
*University of Washington*

Lauren Abby Shen\*\*\*

David Austin Sherrer  
*St. Olaf College*

Jordan Matthew Snook‡  
*Grand Canyon University*

Bouke Jacob Spoelstra\*\*  
*University of Southern California*

Nelson Y Sun\*\*\*  
*University of Washington*

Josie Lillian Walsh\*\*\*‡  
*Texas Christian University*

Malcolm Isaac Weaver\*  
*Santa Clara University*

Audrey Faith Wright\*\*  
*The University of Texas at Austin*

Haotian Zhang\*\*  
*University of California, Irvine*

Ryan Tianyun Zhang\*\*\*‡  
*Carnegie Mellon University*

Yizhen Zhao\*\*  
*Whitman College*

\*\*\*SUMMA CUM LAUDE (3.9 - 4.0 GPA)

\*\* MAGNA CUM LAUDE (3.75 - 3.89 GPA)

\*CUM LAUDE (3.5 - 3.749 GPA)

‡LEGACY HONORS (BEAR CREEK  
STUDENT FROM KINDERGARTEN  
THROUGH GRADE 12)

## *In Memoriam*

Chaz Jacob Bruner  
Joseph Wayne Whitlock



# Reflections from the Class of 2020

**Lauren Egger**



Many images come to mind when I reflect on a mission trip I took to El Salvador last summer that punctuate that experience in my memory—for instance, meeting the people who formed our medical/dental team, coming from all over the country, with backgrounds as varied as the homelands they represent. I can still see the faces of the Salvadoran patients who came to the clinic each day, and even replay the steps of each dental procedure we performed to help alleviate their pain. Yet what stands out to me the most are the nightly team meetings back at our hotel when we reflected on each day. Though often deliriously tired from the long hours and humidity that depleted our energy so quickly, these meetings sparked a renewed enthusiasm for the whole group because it was our opportunity to share our *God-sightings* from the day.

We defined God-sightings as moments when the presence of God and His hand at work were unmistakably obvious. Over time, I have realized these

God-sightings helped crystalize the meaning and purpose of my experience and gave me perspective to see how I was involved in a greater plan. A plan where I felt I was partnered with the Lord in helping to achieve His good work for His ultimate glory. What I learned however, is that this partnership required both eyes of faith and feet of action. To truly have a God-sighting, you must look at events through the eyes of faith, knowing He is orchestrating something bigger, even if we cannot see it in the moment. But that is not all; it also takes feet of action that allow us to put that faith into play and bring this divine partnership to life. It is with this same perspective of searching for God-sightings that I began to reflect on my journey through The Bear Creek School.

I have attended Bear Creek since kindergarten, so you can imagine the volume of memories that flood my mind as I reflect on the past thirteen years, and the difficulty that comes with attempting to highlight just one experience, event, or milestone that has defined my time at this school. If you have been a student at Bear Creek, you can picture some of these scenes: the excitement of bringing school supplies to the annual ice cream social (recently Cookies at the Creek). Or the pride we felt wearing our dress uniforms on a special field trip, while being told we were ambassadors of our school, out in the real world, and we had a reputation to uphold. Perhaps the joy of receiving a character award in front of the student body and parents at chapel, humbled that your character was recognized and honored by the administration. These are experiences many can relive through the lens of their personal Bear Creek journeys.

However, the things I feel shaped me the most are the special memories I hold in the category of God-sightings, where His presence was so clearly demonstrated by His people, leaving me feeling known, loved, and accepted. These God-sightings have given me the unshakeable assurance that He has been intricately



involved in shaping the individual I have become in my time here at Bear Creek.

My earliest memory of one of these moments came in Mrs. Erickson's kindergarten classroom. I remember a particular morning when I arrived at school feeling anxious and insecure. I don't really remember why, except that my dad was leaving for a trip that day, and for some reason I felt more vulnerable than normal. I tried to stifle the tears during our daily Bible reading, but after being excused to the restroom and still not able to collect myself, Mrs. Erickson saw what I needed before I knew I needed it. Mrs. Erickson used her eyes of faith and feet of action to meet my need for a little extra attention that morning. I remember she took me into her lap while we finished Bible time, giving me the security and love I so desperately needed that day. Though I may not remember every detail of that morning, I remember the way Mrs. Erickson made me feel, interrupting her class plans to show me I was safe, loved, and known. My six-year-old brain couldn't quite comprehend it all then, but that memory remains in the forefront of my mind because I had the same feeling I experienced on the mission trip—a sense that I was part of something much bigger—something perfectly orchestrated by God. Through Mrs. Erickson, I got a taste of what it must be like to be held, comforted, and known by God.

I think about my junior year when I was faced with a complicated injury and forced to trade my aspirations of a wildly successful year into thoughts of surgeries, pain meds, and how I was going to get around the school. Dr. Wright and Ms. Carhart came to my rescue that year, even driving to my house to meet with me about how to keep up my momentum. Because of their tireless and sacrificial efforts, we were able to coordinate a hybrid between Running Start and Bear Creek that allowed me to focus on healing as well as academics. Not only did they have the compassion to work with me, even giving me a disabled parking spot, but they also showed great courage in diving into something completely new for me and the school. Their wisdom in executing this plan with my best interest in mind made my junior year go

more smoothly and successfully than I ever could have hoped. It was their eyes of faith and quick feet of action that made the year impactful despite a major setback.

Last fall, I had a God-sighting in one of the Godliest women I know, Mrs. Whitlock. I received an envelope from Mrs. Whitlock that contained a laminated leaf we had drawn our fourth-grade year, along with a special note from her. In this note, she told us that every year, from fourth grade until our senior year, she had hung those leaves from her classroom ceiling. Not only was I amazed that she had seen these little works of art as special enough to hold onto and display every fall, but the fact that she had also committed to faithfully pray for us far past the moment we left the walls of her classroom was so touching. The note and encouragement came with great meaning, knowing in particular the heartbreak she has personally endured, yet she still shines as one of the brightest lights for God's kingdom. Mrs. Whitlock is truly a God-sighting all on her own.

I firmly believe that these God-sightings are not exclusive to me, nor are they limited to just the examples I've listed. My hope is that I have painted a picture for how God can be seen in this school, and I encourage my fellow classmates to also try on this lens and consider the possible God-sightings in your own journey—as a class, I know I can point to a few. We all were given a God-sighting in the way the Class of 2018 created a book of handwritten notes full of encouragement and hope for us as we faced another loss during our sophomore year. Or the way Ms. Dennison reached out to the girls by organizing our weekly lunches, seeing a unique opportunity to do something special for us. I know those of us in art could see God in the incredible effort Mrs. Osborn put into making this year special and celebrating the time we had together.

The story isn't over yet, and we may not fully understand why we face certain hardships until we get to heaven. But my prayer is that, as a class, we can know that even amongst the incredible losses we have endured,

whether it was our friends that are now awaiting us in heaven, or the time taken away from our senior spring by COVID-19, God is present and working His plan through it all. It is my greatest hope that the heartbreak we have experienced has planted seeds of compassion in our hearts as well as an awareness that life is fragile, and that relationships and time are treasured gifts. Let me encourage you with Romans 8:28: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”*

As we close this chapter of our journey at The Bear Creek School, I feel confident that the process of both learning scholastically and continuing to mature in wisdom, compassion, and courage has occurred. I believe it is to God’s honor and glory that we have been raised in a place filled with eyes of faith and feet of action, and it is only because of His overwhelming presence in this school that we have been able to pursue becoming the individuals He intends. This process doesn’t have to end along with our high school careers. I challenge us all to continue living with eyes of faith and feet of action because I know with certainty that, with a heart open to the Lord, there are God-sightings ahead.

### Lili Kim



I’ve always known that there was something special about being a part of the Class of 2020. In Lower School

and Middle School, I thought it was fun just having a pattern of numbers: 20, 20. It was going to be easy to remember this year when I’m old and gray and not as, let’s say, mentally stimulated as I am right now. A simple 2020. Throughout my thirteen years at Bear Creek, and the growth I’ve experienced alongside my fellow classmates, I know now that our class is not special because of the aestheticism of the enumerated year we are graduating, but instead the amount of *fight* and *love* that we have.

First, I’ll speak of **our fight**. I was always the smallest kid in the class in Lower School, and honestly, I may still hold that title today: 5’4”—and that’s with two-inch heels. I never thought I had a lot of fight in me. My fight was like a little creature on my shoulder that would sit still and quiet, holding its breath until it could go back to sleep. My fight went with me everywhere, but as soon as I needed to speak up or stand up for something, my fight curled up in a ball and sat on my tiny shoulder, leaving me without anything to do or say.

As I moved into high school, my class and I were forced to wake the sleepy fight creatures on our shoulders to prepare for battle, whether we wanted to or not. Together we have overcome loss and heartbreak that is hard to explain. But we made it through the journey together, and the sun still rose once the weary night passed. My fight became our fight. It grew from being a small sleepy creature on my shoulder to a large companion my class and I shared.

The other thing that makes our class special is **our love**. I don’t mean the sappy kind of love you see in fairy tales or Hallmark movies. Ours is a love created simply by time spent together in fellowship—the fun we poke in class, the times spent yelling at sports games, or having heated debates in art history class over whose Play-Doh sculpture is superior. These and more exhibit our unique type of love. Like the sleepy fight creature, our love was not always so big. It fluttered around like a tiny moth on my first day of kindergarten, not knowing on whom or what to settle. At some points, I felt like I lost my fluttering love; it was as if

it had gotten tired and flown away. Yet, being able to spend days laughing with fifteen friends, barely fitting around one cafeteria table, or borderline dangerously sprinting around a pool table in one of our Senior Blast games, this small fluttering creature grew, and just like my fight, I am able to share it with everyone.

It would not have been possible to grow these two companions of ours if not for the environment in which they were raised. Bear Creek has taught me about the importance of a tight-knit community, and how it is necessary to share in it in order to become your own person. Every individual within my own journey has become a part of who I am today. I have learned that you must reach out to others to grow yourself; or rather, you cannot grow in character—in fight, and in love—alone. It will be easy to become islands as we leave our small community to jump into the community of the world. And while islands are comfortable and safe, they are stagnant, and evidently, they are lonely. Jumping into a diverse whirlpool of people will be the only way to grow ourselves further.

And although we have a great deal of growing left to do, much of it was done in the halls and classrooms of Bear Creek. Without the philosophical discussions our class had with Mr. Davison, I would not know the importance of pushing yourself to think beyond the limits set on you. Without sharing in community with my friends, I probably wouldn't be the mediocre ping pong player I am today. And without the inspiring zeal Mr. Norris infused into our rhetoric classes, I probably wouldn't have become comfortable with public speaking.

So while we physically depart from our Bear Creek community, we will continue to bring it with us in the shape of our fight and love creatures, knowing that while there are communities out there ready to mold us into adults, Bear Creek was the one that allowed us to grow every which way as unique individuals who share in fight and in love.

## Xiran (Sharon) Lyu



As I have only come to The Bear Creek School for three years, my personal experience cannot resemble the ones of most of my classmates. However, I believe that my experience is a fair representation of the ones of international students who come to the United States for an education. We are seeds that are planted on foreign soil, thousands of miles away from our homeland, seeking to learn, to grow, to thrive.

So, what have we learned here?

For me, I have learned wisdom through accumulating knowledge. I have learned about calculus, chemistry, and Christianity. I got to know Charles Darwin, C.S. Lewis, and Caravaggio. I have been introduced to the Magna Carta, photosynthesis, and Español. I was impressed by Nietzsche, St. Augustine, and Abraham Lincoln. I think, academically, I have somehow succeeded. Thus, from The Bear Creek School, I have learned knowledge, and when knowledge accumulates, I have learned wisdom.

What else have I learned? I have learned about compassion by being a part of our community. What is our community? Our community is our House system where everyone strives to put on as much of their unique House color as they can on House Color



Days and tries their best during Icebreaker and House challenges. Our community is the annual food drive where everyone brings as much canned food as possible to the school and is eager to help people in need. Through getting to know what our community is, I learned what compassion is. Through being a member of our House system, I have learned compassion. Through participating in the food drive, I have learned the compassion we all have for other people in society. Thus, from The Bear Creek School, I have learned about compassion: the compassion between us on campus and the compassion we have towards the world.

Lastly, what have I learned? I have learned about courage by trying to merge into this new culture. Learning about a completely different culture is a weird experience. For instance, when someone says a joke that you simply don't get, just imagine how embarrassed you are when everyone EXCEPT YOU is laughing. You can just sit there and do some fake facial expressions (with a little humorous acting during the actual joke). At this point, one needs the courage to ask, "What is the point of the joke?" I mean, you don't want to be "that" person, right? So, when I was getting to know the culture here, it really took me some courage to ask "what, why, and sometimes, huh." When I was trying to introduce my home-culture to people here, it took some courage to do that, too. Every time before my performances during I-Fest and the Evening of Classics, when I tried to introduce Chinese musical culture, I shook because I was always so nervous. Mostly, I just asked myself, "Why did you even sign up?" However, after I finished performing, I felt thankful. I was not only thankful that the school and the International Club offered me such wonderful opportunities to share my home-culture, but I was also thankful for being courageous enough to step onto that stage and share my culture with everyone. Thus, from Bear Creek, I have learned about courage, the courage to ask, "Huh?" and the courage to go onto the stage.

In short, I am thankful for this place that has cultivated me for three years—The Bear Creek School—the place that has taught me what wisdom, compassion, and

courage are. I am thankful for my parents, all the teachers, whether I sat in your class or not, and also for each one of you.

I am grateful. Thank you.

### **Bouke Spoelstra**



I imagine Bear Creek as a small village of little houses, and if that's the case, then the Class of 2020 would be a tornado that sweeps through the town. I had this neat little plan for my high school experience: it was a straight line that involved getting good grades, not getting in trouble, getting my diploma, and getting out. It did not go according to plan.

Our class is messy. I think the boys set a new school record for the most times having to meet with Mr. Carruth. We probably broke the most rules and caused the most grey hairs among faculty, too. Honestly, I feel like all the teachers should have gotten complimentary stress balls before we came in.

But life was messy, too. Our little class of 34 people went through some of the worst things imaginable. In our first two years of high school, we lost two of our brothers, Chaz Bruner and Joseph Whitlock. That wasn't in my plan. That wasn't in any of our plans. Together, we



were broken. Together, we mourned. But in the midst of our pain, we found strength in each other, in our togetherness. We offered shoulders to cry on, ears to listen, voices to pray, and hands to pick up those who had fallen. Through our suffering, we found that we were stronger as one. When life was messy, we were there for each other. So yeah, we broke rules. We made mistakes. We fell. We're messy. But we own those mistakes. We own that mess, because making mistakes and making a mess are part of living every day to the absolute fullest. And for every mistake there's a lesson, and every time we fell, we got up stronger—together.

I can't remember a single day that I came to this school when I didn't laugh. There's a quote by Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, that says, "I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will, I'll go to it laughing." I don't think there's a better quote for our class. Every challenge we faced, we faced smiling and laughing. And if we couldn't laugh, we remembered the times when we could. We carry Chaz's and Joe's laughter with us: I can hear it now. Even in quarantine, we found ways to make each other laugh with funny videos. Through laughter, we showed that the mess of our lives had no power over us.

Now, as Mr. Norris taught me, I end with a call-to-action. My friends, please never lose your laughter. Please never stop being messy. You have spent these last four years living hard, squeezing the life out of every day. Don't stop now. Remember, in the words of Mark Twain, "Apparently, there is nothing that cannot happen today." One thing I learned in statistics is you can't say something will never happen. There's always a chance, even if it's small. There's a chance a million dollars could fall through the ceiling and land right in front of me with a name tag that says "Bouke." But really, it's your life, it's your mess. Make it happen. But whatever you do, never forget the ones who picked you up, the ones who laughed with you, and the ones who cried with you. Never forget that we are stronger as one. As the actress Audrey Hepburn said, "The best thing to hold onto in life is each other."

## Nelson Sun



Here's the (supposed) formula for a good Senior Reflection: state what you *thought* Bear Creek would be, and then talk about how that initial perception was wrong, and how you became a better person because of what Bear Creek actually is.

How to do that? Well, I could...

Ok, ok, ok, Mr. Norris, I won't write a clichéd essay ever again please don't kill me...

(Is Mr. Norris gone?)

Scratch that idea.

I have this one very distinct memory from ninth grade. Conceptual Physics, Room U110, Block 1. As part of the design process for one of the projects (I'd like to say that it was the Rube Goldberg project, but I'm not sure), we did something called "C-sketching": in 10 – 15 minutes, draw out three ideas for how to implement the project at hand. Sounds easy enough, right? Heh... heh... heh...

I am (or at least, was) a very uncreative person. Math? Science? On it. Follow a set of instructions? Cool. Come up with something new? Good luck, Nelson.

I failed miserably. In fact, I failed so miserably that I left

the room *in tears* because I couldn't accomplish what everyone else proved was a simple task.

Thankfully, Mrs. Graham didn't give up on my case. Fast forward to just a few months ago, in the same classroom, for Engineering this time, and I'm doing C-sketches without tears—not without difficulty, but hey, I'll take it. Marked improvement.

I'm sure we've all heard this thousands of times, but the mission of Bear Creek is “to provide a high-quality, Christian liberal arts education in a nurturing environment that will enable each student to become the individual God intends.” When I think of Bear Creek, sure, I think about the education—some of my fondest memories include four years of math team (where “eerily similar” answers were acceptable apparently), Latin compositions (think roasting but in another language), Office Hours (don't ask), and APUSH review sessions (with food!). But an equally important part of Bear Creek is the nurturing environment aspect. My experience with C-sketching is an oxymoronically sad positive one *because* Bear Creek is an environment where I can... well, screw up. I'm so thankful to everyone—faculty and students—for forgiving me for my loud voice, my in-class emotional episodes, and, most importantly, my serial sneezes.

As we all plan to move on (to college, I would imagine), I hope that we at least take away this idea of a nurturing environment. (Ok, I hope we'll take away much more than that, but that's beside the point.) Sure, one individual generally doesn't have much power to change the atmosphere of wherever we end up. But despite that, in our daily interactions, we can and should choose to build each other up. That's our calling, isn't it? To love your neighbor as yourself? Such an attitude is beneficial to everyone around us. Take the kindness and love that you have received from everyone here and pay it forward, wherever you will be next month, or next year, or even next decade. I'm sure that we all can think of at least one moment (if not several) when another person's extra caring towards us has done something profound in

our lives. I, for one, cherish those moments.

We have all completed a great milestone in finishing high school. But we are all here in part because of an environment where we build each other up. So, let us help others complete their milestones by being what Bear Creek has been to us, and doing what Bear Creek has done for us. And, God willing, let us love others as He first loved us.



Audrey W. '20



Andrew H. '20

COMMENCEMENT PHOTOS BY CINDY MCCAHERILL AND JANEEN SORESENSEN.



# FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE IN THE COLLEGE JOURNEY

BY RYAN SUMMERS

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## INTRODUCTION

Greetings and thanks to the Board of Trustees, Bear Creek administrators, faculty and staff, alumni, parents, relatives, and friends. And, congratulations, Class of 2020! In the next 12 minutes I want to try to show you how you will need faith, hope, and love in your college journey.

## FAITH AS VISION

When I make salsa, I tearfully chop the onion first. But later the tomato, cilantro, pepper, and lime come along and everything gets fragrant and tangy. The first three minutes of this address are the onion—hopefully the tangy fragrance will come by the end.

Albert Camus laments: “I want everything to be

explained to me or nothing. And reason is impotent when it hears this cry from the heart. The world itself, whose single meaning I don’t understand, is but a vast irrationality. If one could only just say: ‘all is clear’ then all would be saved.”<sup>1</sup>

That resonates, doesn’t it? We love clarity; in fact, here at Bear Creek we teachers live by the motto “predictable and supportive.” The problem that Camus points out is that we can’t say “all is clear,” and we more often find ourselves saying with him, “I don’t understand.” When a genius like Camus says that “human reason is impotent” and that the world “is but a vast irrationality,” we have something to be concerned about.

The more recent existentialist work *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams makes a



similar point by depicting a group of pan-dimensional, hyper-intelligent beings<sup>2</sup> who design a supercomputer named Deep Thought. They want to know once and for all “the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything.” So they ask Deep Thought, and it processes for 7.5 million years. The answer it gives to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything is, wait for it...42. Adams wants us to see that figuring out who we are and how we should live isn’t merely a function of processing power—not even geniuses like Malcolm and Nelson could come up with an algorithm that tells you what your identity and purpose are.

Most of what is truly important to human flourishing is, in fact, invisible to the natural human eye and unquantifiable by a calculus of our own making. Severed from transcendence, our sight isn’t clear enough, our wisdom isn’t deep enough for life’s journey. In the next leg of your journey, college, you will experience a perplexing freedom, a freedom that will often feel like a vast jungle expanse of intermingled terrors and delights—many of which will be nearly impossible to distinguish *a priori*. Which fruit nourishes and which kills? Which snake is harmless and which is the deadliest predator within a hundred miles?<sup>3</sup> Which guy is hitting on you and which actually does want to practice his foreign language with a real person?<sup>4</sup> They look nearly identical. Imagine being given autonomy and trying to navigate such a wilderness by yourself. The dead

reckoning of your human reason and five senses just isn’t going to cut it. You need a guide or...*Google Maps for the Soul*.

This vexing quest is a tale told in many myths from many cultures—take, for example, one we all know, Odysseus. He’s trying to get home through the ever-changing, vast terrains of land and sea, but getting side-tracked, side-swiped, tempted, betrayed, tangled, transformed, disoriented, shipwrecked, spellbound. Without Athena, he isn’t going to make it. He is not self-sufficient. He’s just a man. It’s all of us. Searching for direction, searching for home.

It is the testimony of human culture that we need something transcendent, something with bigger perspective, something above our own context to be our vision. We don’t need freedom to know the way home; we need faith. Stratford Caldecott suggests: “Faith opens reason to a transcendent horizon; it assures reason [and Camus] that the world as a whole does make sense; it encourages reason to aspire to a greater truth.”<sup>5</sup> As Augustine urged us, “believe so that you may understand.” Having eyes is not the same as seeing; and even seeing doesn’t guarantee vision. Faith imparts divine vision to human eyes.<sup>6</sup>

That was the onion. And the sting was that your raw<sup>7</sup> human faculties are outmatched by life’s complexities. So, you need faith to see. Now I want to suggest that you also need hope.

## HOPE AS A CALL

In her book *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, Tish Harrison



Liam M. '20, Finn J. '20, Matthew J. '20, and Brandon K. '20





Audrey W. '20, Lauren E. '20, and Josie W. '20

Warren asks readers to imagine what it would be like if travelers forgot their *telos*, their final goal, their destination? What if we decided that this vast jungle expanse is all we've got, and just settled down, popped up a tent and started hunting for dinner? What if we said this trail is "all that is or was or ever will be."<sup>8</sup> That would be like Odysseus hopelessly staying on that enchanted isle, prisoner to Calypso, and never returning to Penelope or Ithaka. He must sail for home; in fact, the gods order him to do so.<sup>9</sup> Hope says that we are a people "on the way." Hope allows us not to expect permanent fulfillment from temporary pleasures.<sup>10</sup> Hope is what benevolently keeps us from being completely satisfied by that new girlfriend, those straight As, or that Seattle internship. Hope politely reminds us that our tents won't last forever.<sup>11</sup>

To that end, God has not left us without pointers, reminders, signs, and prompts that our paths are meant to lead us somewhere. There is within all of us a hopeful witness of transcendence, and that witness often gets activated or tripped by the goodness, grace, and beauty of the material creation. In fact, all things here can be evidences of transcendence since

they all come from the hand of the Transcendent One.<sup>12</sup> God has littered, speckled, and seeded this world with signs of hope,<sup>13</sup> trail-markers along the way, which call up homesickness<sup>14</sup> in our souls. Let me give some specific examples.

For some of us, it's art that reminds us of our *telos*. Aren't there certain paintings, statues, buildings, photos, and songs that stir up in you a desire for another time and place? They seem like portals through which imagination can access something beyond, somewhere you want to be. C.S. Lewis makes this point by having Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace get pulled into Narnia and on to Prince Caspian's boat, the *Dawn Treader*, through a painting. The kids are transported from Harold and Alberta Scrubb's back room to the transcendent homeland of the true king, through art.<sup>15</sup> Or take food: certain tastes or smells arouse a metaphysical appetite even as they satisfy a bodily one—if anyone wants to celebrate the transcendent call of carnitas nachos afterward, let me know. Or what about the beauty of nature? The smell of the forest, the lapping surf of the beach, lazy snowflakes loitering under a streetlight.

Think of these material realities as church bells<sup>16</sup>—calling you to come and adore, come and worship, come and meet with the sacred transcendent. And when you follow the church bells and find them, you realize the bells aren't the thing you're looking for. They're just the reminders, the prompts. You are led *through* them, not to them. If you expect from the bells what you get from the God of the bells, you only ever experience the temporary pleasures of sight and sound, and your soul's longing will remain unmet.

God is calling us to journey to Himself, and He guides us through his lavish and mysterious gifts of material reality.<sup>17</sup> Those calls stir up a hope that can lead us along our *telos*. The red-wing blackbird by the pond, the Monet print up in your dorm room, John Mayer's Stratocaster<sup>18</sup> at midnight, the bacon-double cheese burger—they are signals of hope that can direct you to the transcendent as you journey.



Emily F. '20

## LOVE AS GUIDE

Here's what I've suggested in parts one and two. We are teleological creatures, who sense a transcendent purpose in our lives and connecting with the source of that transcendence is like going on a journey. On that odyssey we need faith to focus our vision, and we need hope to follow the church bells of food, nature, and art that direct us to transcendence. Faith and hope give us direction to a *telos* greater than 42.

But we need one more thing. You see, faith can be like opening your eyes while swimming in a lake. It's hard to know for sure what you're always seeing. And hope, likewise, can ghost you like a student during a remote-learning English class. Signed in for attendance, sure enough, but with the mic muted and the camera off all you can see are those glowing blue initials. Could there possibly be something greater than faith and hope for your journey?

And the answer is yes! Of faith, hope, and love—love is the greatest, St. Paul tells us.<sup>19</sup> Love is so essential to our lives that all of our souls are desperately belting out the Foreigner lyrics, “I want to know what love is. I want you to show me.”<sup>20</sup> And that cry of our hearts is evidence that we were made to be loved—our craving shows the existence of a possible satisfaction. Our inability to find that possible satisfaction here in this realm points us to find it in Someone *beyond* this realm.<sup>21</sup> But how can we know Someone beyond this realm, when we are still in this realm? Unless he came here? Isn't that what Love would do: go and

find the beloved even at great cost to itself.

The Christian story says that Transcendent Love became a local who grew up in our landscape, walked the trails of our journey, and knows what it's like to sweat with anxiety, to get pricked by a thorn, to get a stitch in his side, to get bitten by a snake.<sup>22</sup> And because He came from the transcendent place and has eyes and ears for the things of *His* homeland, He can remind us daily of the glory of our destination. He knows the terrain and the *telos* of the journey firsthand. What would you give to have a guide who is a gentle, empathic local servant,<sup>23</sup> one who is as you now are, and also one who is a wise, authoritative transcendent Prince,<sup>24</sup> one who is as you will one day be?<sup>25</sup> Then we would know what love is; we would have seen it and heard it. What Good News! Then, as Camus said, “All *would* be saved!”

Christianity affirms that Christ is that Servant Prince, who is two natures in one Person, Love Incarnate, the Transcendent made flesh, come to lead His people home. “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9). This is the Good Word: that Love has come and the Servant Prince wants to walk with you now and forever.

Seniors, your journey of the next four years will no doubt contain surprises and trials, exhilarations and setbacks. Would you consider putting your faith in the Transcendent One for vision, tuning in to His calls of hope for direction, and grasping the hand of Love Himself for companionship—because if God himself is for you, who can prevail against you?<sup>26</sup>

Mr. Summers joined the Upper School faculty in 2015 and teaches Honors Senior English and AP Literature and Composition. He was selected by the senior class as the Class of 2020 Commencement speaker. His passion is learning with students and discussing the great ideas in the great books. When not exploring worldview or talking about literature, he can probably be found in the Fitness Center training with the Bear Creek athletes. He holds a B.A. English and a M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction, both from Penn State.

COMMENCEMENT PHOTOS BY JANEEN SORENSEN AND SINI FERNANDEZ.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>From his 1955 essay “An Absurd Reasoning” in *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

<sup>2</sup>These beings project a three-dimensional form here on earth as mice.

<sup>3</sup>I’m thinking here of how difficult it would be in the jungle to know what’s edible and what’s dangerous, but I’m also trying to connect that with the idea of Eden (the pre-fall garden/jungle) and the idea that our freedom, even in pristine nature, doesn’t lead to flourishing: we eat the wrong fruit and don’t always recognize our true friends or enemies.

<sup>4</sup>In high school, I joined the Spanish club because I wanted to have more time with a certain young lady. In the yearbook, you can see me in the Spanish club picture, standing right next to her. *Que Bueno!*

<sup>5</sup>From *Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the Foundations of Education*.

<sup>6</sup>2 Corinthians 5:6 – 7, “We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.”

<sup>7</sup>I was really pleased with this pun on the salsa metaphor.

<sup>8</sup>Carl Sagan’s famous summation of the cosmos.

<sup>9</sup>That’s from book V, where Odysseus is stranded on Ogygia. The gods send Hermes to tell Calypso to let him go home. We might think Odysseus would be happy living on a mythical island with a beautiful nymph who loves him, but Odysseus knows he’s not doing what he’s made to do—he’s missing his telos as a king, father, and husband. Arduous travelling, and not resigned hedonism, is his call.

<sup>10</sup>I’m paraphrasing some ideas from James K.A. Smith’s *On the Road with Saint Augustine* here: “The heart’s hunger is infinite, which is why it will ultimately be disappointed with anything merely finite. Humans are those creatures who can never be fully satisfied by anything created.”

<sup>11</sup>2 Corinthians 5:1 – 4 : “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

<sup>12</sup>James Corkery talks about this sacramental view of “every created reality... being a bearer of transcendence” in his essay, “Detectives of Grace in the Adventures of Scholarship.”

<sup>13</sup>My verbs are inspired by Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “Pied Beauty”: “Glory be to God for dappled things... all things counter,

original, spare, strange... fickle, freckled.” For “He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise him.”

<sup>14</sup>G.K. Chesterton: “The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the wrong place, and my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring... I knew now... why I could feel homesick at home.”

<sup>15</sup>Lewis illustrates the inadequacy of a materialistic worldview by having Eustace nearly drown as the children enter the waters of Narnia through the painting. Eustace’s disbelief in myth and fairy tale results in his not being equipped to live in an enchanted land.

<sup>16</sup>I got the image of seeing creation as full of church bells from Tish Harrison Warren.

<sup>17</sup>James 1:17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

<sup>18</sup>Fender actually makes a John Mayer signature model strat.

<sup>19</sup>1 Corinthians 13:13: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

<sup>20</sup>From their 1984 release *Agent Provocateur*. The song’s 293,940,131 plays on Spotify are a testimony to its cultural resonance.

<sup>21</sup>This is Lewis again, from *Mere Christianity*.

<sup>22</sup>I’m doubling the imagery here to reflect the journey metaphor but also the very physical pain Christ endured at Gethsemane and Golgotha, ultimately crushing the head of the serpent who stung him.

<sup>23</sup>Isaiah 52:13 – 15, Christ as suffering servant.

<sup>24</sup>Isaiah 9:6: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

<sup>25</sup>1 John 3:2: “We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

<sup>26</sup>Romans 8:31 – 35: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”



# STEPHANIE MEYER: SCIENCE, DIRT, AND BOLD MISTAKES

BY KATIE GOMULKIEWICZ '13



Since her childhood as a cornfield girl from Illinois, Stephanie Meyer has loved being outside and learning about God's creation. During college, her love of science was cast while studying biology and chemistry. Stephanie met her husband Shane in college as well. After graduating, Stephanie taught for four years in Illinois and Colorado before moving to the Seattle area where she began the next chapter and focus of her life as a mother. Over the course of eighteen years, however, Stephanie learned about a small, Christian school in the area—Bear Creek. At the time, she was not ready to jump back into teaching full-time, so she dipped her toe in the water by stepping in to substitute periodically. “Bear Creek felt like a family,” Stephanie shared with me, and when a Middle School science position became available in 2018, she applied.

Back up to 1980. When Mount St. Helens erupted, Stephanie recalls buying every magazine with an article about the eruption that she could get her hands on. “I was a big *National Geographic* reader as a kid,” she told me, so teaching Bear Creek's Earth Science and Engineering Design course felt like a natural fit. “I always want to make learning

real to my students,” she told me as we discussed the variety of creative projects the eighth graders complete in her classroom. During the water cycle unit, Stephanie teaches her students about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and challenges them to propose a solution for prevention or clean up. “It was so meaningful to watch the students realize, ‘I might make a difference someday.’”

Stephanie loves to take science from theory to practice, using the design process to bring science to life. “When students don't just memorize scientific facts or methods but understand why, for example, you need to record or replicate data, then it becomes more than a bland method,” Stephanie shared with me. To this end, every year Earth Science students merge theoretical knowledge with practical application through the earthquake-safety building project. This group project provides a space for students to understand how their scientific



Stephanie (right) hiking with Bear Creek colleagues Kaley Fry and Jan White.



knowledge of the earth can be put to practical use, in this instance advising on secure building structures for an earthquake-prone area of the world.

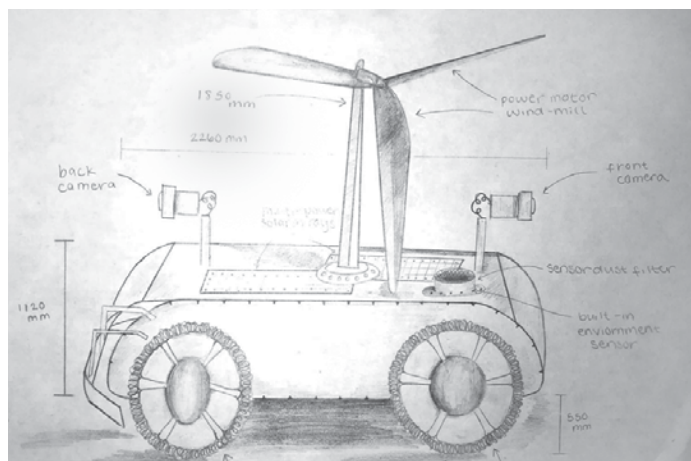
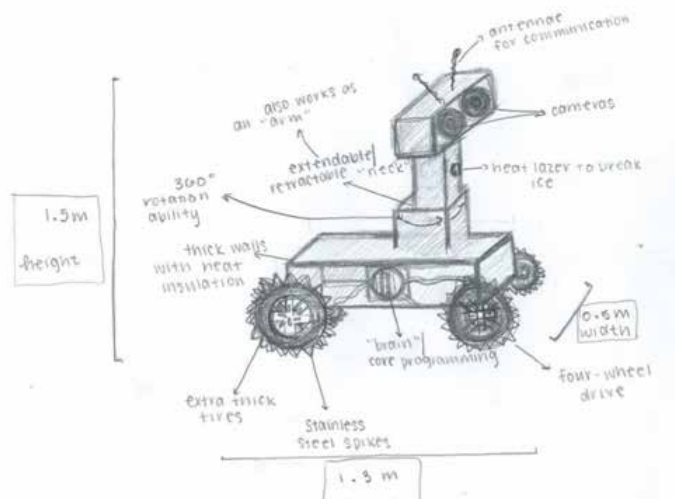
Since Stephanie's class is so hands-on, the sudden and unexpected transition to remote learning this past March could have been daunting. However, Stephanie shares that the students "were amazing at shifting gears," and she worked hard to continue teaching the design process, even from a distance. Sadly, the earthquake project had to be put on hold, but in its place was a new, creative project for the eighth graders to tackle.

In May, a team of NASA astronauts successfully launched in the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from American soil and were delivered to the International Space Station. In conjunction with this major milestone in the fusion of government and corporate science, Stephanie's students also cast their eyes towards the heavens. Stephanie assigned each of her students a solar system body and asked them to design rovers for exploring their assigned celestial bodies. (See prototypes on right.) Even remotely, Stephanie brings science from the page into the real world.

Stephanie's care for her students is evident in every lesson, in every project, in every interaction. "I want students to know they can explore in my classroom," she told me. Stephanie explained, "I remind my students that this is a great time to make mistakes and ask bold questions." As a Middle School teacher, Stephanie knows that she is more than just a teacher, but a mentor. She told me her knowledge of memes and inclusion of quirky jokes in her lessons help keep her (and the students) laughing. Even during remote learning, Stephanie relished the opportunity to learn and grow alongside the eighth graders. "This is a fun time to remember that science matters."

In addition to teaching from home, Stephanie also did quite a bit cooking last spring. "I've been learning some new Thai recipes," she told me. "The key is always more sugar and more fish sauce!" In a homage to her childhood, Stephanie has also

been hiking, much like the little girl with sticks in her hair and dirt on her face, she still loves being outdoors. It has been many years since she collected Mount St. Helens magazines, but that love of learning has not dimmed; if anything, it has grown. Stephanie is excited about her new crop of grade 8 students. There is no doubt that over the course of the year they will grow, laugh, create, explore, make mistakes, and, most importantly, learn about the world just outside the classroom windows.



Mrs. Meyer joined the Middle School faculty in 2018 and teaches grade 8 Earth Science class and the Digital Storytelling elective. She loves passing along the wonder of God's amazing world to her students, taking special delight when students have "A-HA" moments. When not with her fabulous students, Mrs. Meyer loves to read and enjoys hiking and long walks in general, especially when it's raining. Mrs. Meyer is recharged by time with her husband and two daughters. She holds a B.A. Biology from Anderson University.

# Capstone Projects à la Remote

By Rob Sorensen, Ph.D.

**FOR ALMOST TWENTY YEARS**, Bear Creek seniors have concluded their last year in high school with a Senior Capstone Project. These projects allow students to develop and pursue a personally selected, self-directed venture during the last three weeks of the spring semester. Some students choose to immerse themselves in a new skill—like learning to knit or to bake bread—while others extend one of their interests into a new area—like writing music or developing a smartphone app. Many students produce works of art or independent research. Each student is asked to design a project that builds on his/her unique interests, exhibits a significant level of personal challenge, and advances his/her ability to articulate how his/her worldview has been explored, challenged, or changed by the experience. In this way, students demonstrate that they can take ownership of their own learning as they finish their high school experience.

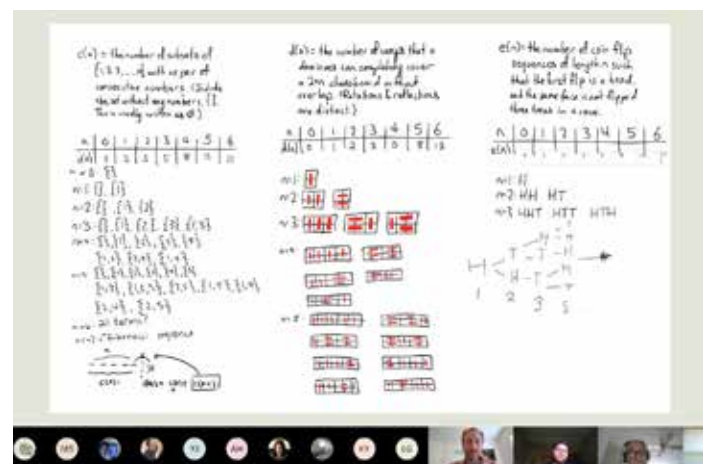
Capstone projects have become a cherished part of the Bear Creek experience, and when it became clear that remote learning would continue through the end of the school year, seniors, their teachers, and administrators had to think through how to

accomplish the important work of the Capstone projects in a new and challenging environment. This required some thoughtful changes to the typical process in order to both preserve the benefit of a student-directed project and comply with public health requirements.

Seniors design their own projects and submit a formal proposal in February, so when remote learning began in March, many seniors had already begun to make plans for their projects. And as remote learning continued, students started to recognize that their original plans, many of which included travel or large group activities, were no longer feasible. Despite this, there was a great deal of support for continuing Capstone projects from both students and faculty. Grade 12 faculty, led by Senior Capstone Project coordinators Kristin Dennison and me, worked closely with seniors to adjust projects so they were achievable during remote learning. Some students were able to retain much of their original proposals, but others had to completely redesign their projects. Eventually, all our seniors were able to develop projects that both fit their interests and goals and were possible within the confines of remote learning.



Annemarie M. – Upcycling and Refurbishing Items



Nelson S. – Designing a High School Mathematics Course



Faculty members Dr. Rob Sorensen, Dr. Karen Wright, and Mike Faris watch Kate B. present Mustang Crisis.

To accommodate the unique challenges of the spring of 2020, seniors were given additional class time to work on their projects. Seniors typically dedicate themselves full-time during the last three weeks of the semester; however, in 2020, we allocated an additional two weeks to the senior projects. With the extended timeframe, students had more flexibility and could devote themselves to additional planning as well as needed rest and reflection.

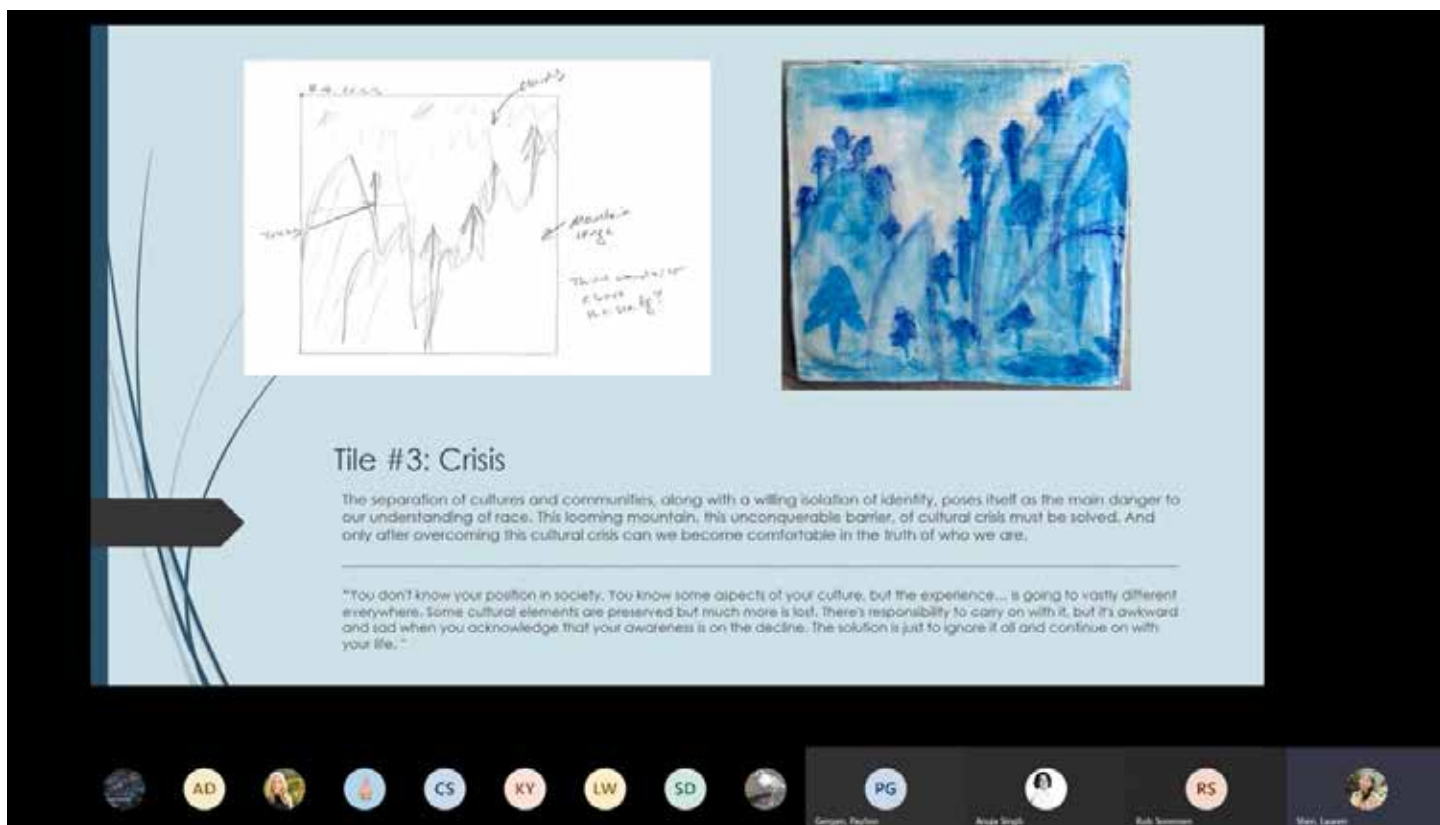
Each senior is assigned a teacher, administrator, or staff member to act as mentor throughout the project. Typically, students meet with their advisors at least twice a week. Since face-to-face meetings were not possible, seniors met with their advisors through video calls. Many advisors set up virtual spaces in Microsoft Teams for their assigned student's project, allowing not only video calls but also the sharing of documents and other resources. Since one of the requirements for Senior Capstone Projects is that each student maintain a journal which is shared with his/her advisor, this feature was very helpful.

Perhaps the most significant part of the Senior

Capstone Project is the oral defense. Each student is assigned a half-hour timeslot to present his/her project to a panel of teachers and administrators. Students explain what their projects entailed, what they learned through the process of designing and executing their projects, and how their worldviews have been explored, challenged, or changed by the project. After the presentation, the student answers questions from the panel and the audience of fellow students and guests. These presentations are a significant highlight during the last week of school for many students and provide not only the opportunity to see what seniors have accomplished with their projects, but also feature our students' creativity and hard work. We are always encouraged to see how students extend their own interests into projects that have value for the larger community.

Maintaining the student's public presentation experience was very important to the Capstone faculty as we re-imagined the experience for this senior class. Since in-person presentations were not an option in 2020, we turned to Microsoft Teams. Our hard-working technology coach, Linda





Lauren S. – The Stories of a Yellow Girl: Utilizing the storytelling mechanism of Chinese porcelain for modern tales.

Graham, spent hours setting up online meetings for all the students' presentations. Linda also recruited a host, skilled with the technology, for each student presentation. The host was able to help the student and panel troubleshoot any technological issues that arose. It was also important to us that parents and other guests have the opportunity to attend the students' virtual presentations, and the technology enabled us to provide links to those who wished to attend virtually.

Students had two options. They could make their presentations live during their allotted timeslots and answer questions immediately after, or they could show a pre-recorded presentation and then answer questions live. This flexibility allowed students to hedge against potential technological hiccups and gave many students the reassurance of being able to carefully prepare their remarks in advance of their actual presentation.

One particular benefit of hosting student presentations online was that it was easy to record every presentation; that way, members of the Bear

Creek community interested in student projects, but who may not have been able to attend at the appointed time, could still watch the seniors' presentations.

Another unexpected result of online presentations was the creativity demonstrated by students in overcoming the limitations inherent in presenting virtually. On the whole, presentations were more visually rich than usual, perhaps reflecting students' realization that online presentations are a strongly visual medium. Many students took advantage of the ability to pre-record their presentations by using innovative digital tools to create remarkable video recordings. We saw a number of very impressive presentations that could not have been easily accomplished in a more typical face-to-face environment.

Perhaps because of this level of forced creativity, an unprecedented number of projects were awarded honors this year. Honors projects included producing a professional-quality magazine promoting



environmental awareness and advocacy, writing a pilot episode for a TV show, and exploring how traditional Chinese pottery could help express a modern identity. These projects and others recognized as honors-level are particularly worthy of honor not only for the content, execution, and outcome, but also because these students accomplished them with a demonstrated high level of excellence while overcoming the challenges of the unique and unexpected conditions of the spring of 2020.

Unanticipated challenges have a way of forcing us to rethink some of our habits and assumptions. As Senior Capstone Projects Coordinator, this past spring's experiences have left me with a number of things to consider for next year's Capstone projects. First, during remote learning it was necessary to develop innovative ways for students, faculty, and advisors to communicate and collaborate throughout the course of their projects. I hope we can continue to use some of these tools even when they are no longer the only options. I was also impressed with the value of allowing students to prepare their

presentations in advance and would like to consider whether some variant of this option might be made available to students during more traditional "live" presentations in the spring of 2021. Also, the ability to easily record each student's presentation proved valuable to both faculty and families.

Completing Senior Capstone Projects under the strictures of remote learning was not anybody's first choice. Nevertheless, the Class of 2020 demonstrated their mettle through challenging circumstances to produce Capstone projects that made me proud to be their advisor. I am encouraged as these young men and women prepare to lead in the future.

Dr. Sorensen has been on the faculty at Bear Creek since 2001, teaching in the history department and coaching speech and debate. He is a scholar of the Protestant Reformation and his book, *Martin Luther and the German Reformation*, was published by Anthem Press in 2016. Rob and his wife Janeen have three children attending Bear Creek, Paul '23, Matt '26, and Claire '29. He holds a Ph.D. from Faulkner University.



Lili K. – The Making of a Magazine: The Local Environmentalist

# CLASS MEMORY VERSES: A NEW TRADITION

By Kristen Gephart

**ONE OF THE WAYS WE PREPARE** our students to be ready to live lives of wisdom, compassion, and courage is to help each student build strong foundations that will guide virtue-imbued thinking and facilitate virtue-filled impact.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."  
Proverbs 9:10

Psalms 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

Scripture and a deep relationship with God are this powerful foundation and where we start as educators at The Bear Creek School.

Each graduating class at our school, kindergarten through grade twelve, has a specific class verse that travels with them throughout their experience at Bear Creek. The goal is for students to know and develop a connection to these verses and, by the time they graduate, to have memorized their class verse, understand its context, history, and meaning, and feel a personal connection to it.

Karen Blankenbeckler, Vice President for Academic Affairs, conceived of this idea and shares, "Memorizing scripture has been a part of the Bear Creek curriculum since I began teaching at the school in 1990. We knew if we capitalized on students' abilities to memorize at a young age, they would have those words in their hearts for a lifetime. Even if they do not fully understand the depths of the words, the verses are in their minds and written on their hearts to draw upon later." In 2012, we further developed the Lower School and Early Middle School curriculum to include memory verse strands that are repeated and reviewed on a three-year cycle, to strengthen the verses in students' long-term memory.

The idea to have one verse that stays with a student throughout his or her entire time at Bear Creek is the most recent addition to our memory verse curriculum. As students move through Bear Creek from the grammar stage through the dialectic and on to the rhetorical stage, we believe students will experience a profound impact in having a class verse that they not only memorize but discuss, seek to understand deeply, and apply as they mature. Additionally, we believe the verse will shape students because it is a verse shared in community. We are not meant to only have private worship nor to keep our faith private, but to be communal in our faith. By having a class verse that stays with a grade level throughout the years until graduation and hopefully beyond, we pray this community bond will strengthen their faith commitment. As it says in Romans 12:5, "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

Starting in the fall of 2018, this concept developed into a new tradition. As part of their Christian studies class kick-off, seniors visit the kindergarten classes and hand off their class verse to this new Bear Creek generation to carry with them on their school journey. On the day when the seniors step into the kindergarten classes, you can feel the enthusiasm in the air as kindergartners meet these "big" Bear Creek students with wide eyes, while seniors reminisce about the beginning of their school journeys. "We love the idea of students leaving a legacy by passing on their verse. By having our seniors give their class verse to the kindergarten students, we pass on the faith. The seniors encourage and spur on the younger students to love the Lord with all their hearts, souls, and minds. When kindergartners receive their verse from the seniors, they join in a community of faithful students who love our Lord more through knowing His word," shares Blankenbeckler.



The Class of 2020 passed down their Scripture verse to the kindergartners, Class of 2032:

*“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” Romans 5:5*

Where might you see or hear these verses? Class verses are posted in Lower School and Early Middle School classrooms and are part of the memory verse cycle each year, and each grade level and division seek to help students engage with the text in meaningful ways. Students in grades K – 6 recite the verses occasionally together in Chapel and at special moments like the end of year Honors Assembly. Middle School students also see these verses posted in their spaces and recite them at the beginning of the school year during Convocation and at the year-end Honors Assembly. Middle School and Upper School Christian studies classes examine these verses and exegete the passage or passages to support students in developing a rich understanding and then pursue applying the verses to their lives in reflection activities. Upper School student representatives have started engaging in conversations about how to make their class verses meaningful to their peers, and the

verses are shared at Convocation and on documents related to graduation. This year a parent included the class verse in cards to graduating seniors.

Our hope is that the most prominent place this verse resides is in the soul of each of our students, and we pray this verse, travelling with each student, represents the many verses, the many practices, and the many encounters with the Living God on his or her discipleship journey.

Mrs. Gephart joined the Lower School faculty as a teacher in 2010 and now serves as Lower School Division Head. She and her husband Jeff have two boys, Alex '18 and T.J. '21. She is passionate about the mission of The Bear Creek School and loves the intersection of faith and learning that is pursued here. Kristen believes the impact of a community of adults invested in students' lives at a young age can impact them forever! She holds a B.A. Speech Communication from University of Washington and a M.I.T. from Seattle University.



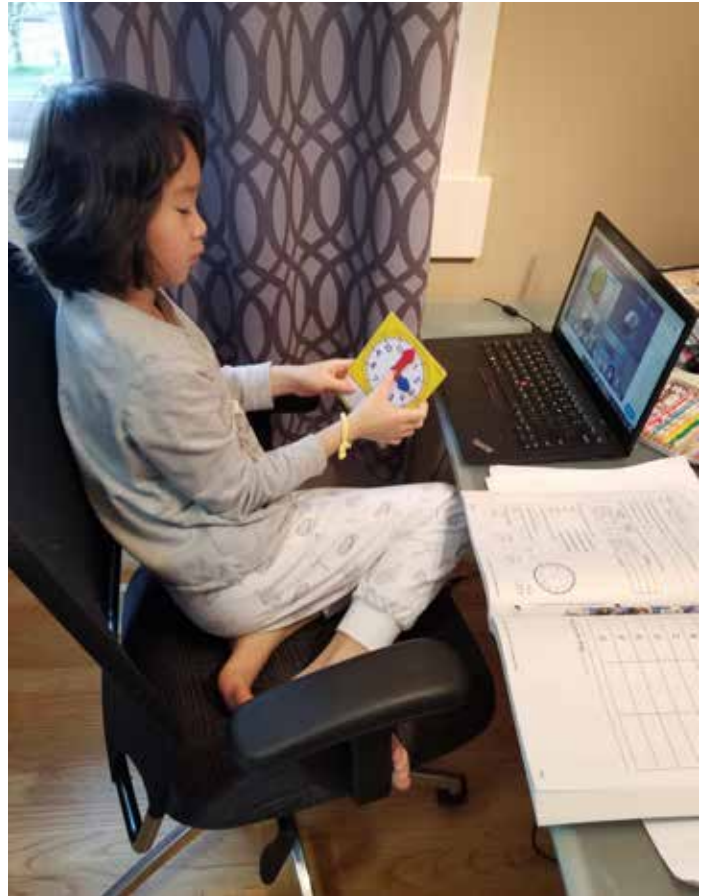
# STUCK AT HOME

By Claire McArthur '21

**SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, THE NEW CORONAVIRUS TOOK A NASTY HOLD ON WASHINGTON STATE.** Before we knew it, schools were closed, parks were closed, and restaurants were closed. Everything was closed, closed, closed. With the blink of an eye, life was turned upside down. To be honest, before this mass closure, I walked around school hoping we would have a cancellation. The idea of being at home for two weeks to rest and relax sounded like a dream. Little did I know two weeks would turn into four weeks, and four weeks would soon turn into the remainder of the spring semester and into the fall. I and many students had no clue what the impact of all this would be like.

At the beginning of March, the Bear Creek community was notified school would close for two weeks out of an abundance of caution. While this was a hard decision to hear, and I am sure difficult to make, everyone agreed it was for the best. While watching news about the struggles the public school system was facing as they too closed, I felt an enormous amount of gratitude for the work our school had put into preparing the online platform.

The beginning of remote learning was difficult for everyone. It was extremely odd to be sitting at my desk and not engaging in the normal classroom banter. I found myself, out of habit, reaching to talk to my classmate, but then realized I was at home. Sebastian Gomez '23, said that, "It was tough to be alone all day" and "I miss time to socialize." Bella Hayton '21 noted, "It was like my world stopped spinning. I didn't know what to do with myself." Students at Bear Creek are very busy. From sports teams to clubs to office hours to homework, there is a sense of go, go, go. But with this getting cancelled and that getting postponed, life had come to a standstill.



Chantal W. '31

But while life seemed to be stopping, behind the scenes were our beloved teachers, keeping the show rolling, but this time from home. Never before had I realized the true gift of the teachers at Bear Creek. Each week Upper School students were surveyed, and the last question was "What would you like your teachers to know?" I always answered this question, "I miss them!" Regarding school, Alysse Quin '21 notes, "Being in a classroom provides an experience that cannot be replicated by online school—the ability to ask questions in the moment, the inside jokes born—you can't replace it." While everyone is feeling like a piece of the Bear Creek community has been taken away, it is still there and running, albeit through Microsoft Teams video chats. In this new and unprecedented time, students and teachers have taken up the challenge to stay connected and involved in the lives of others.

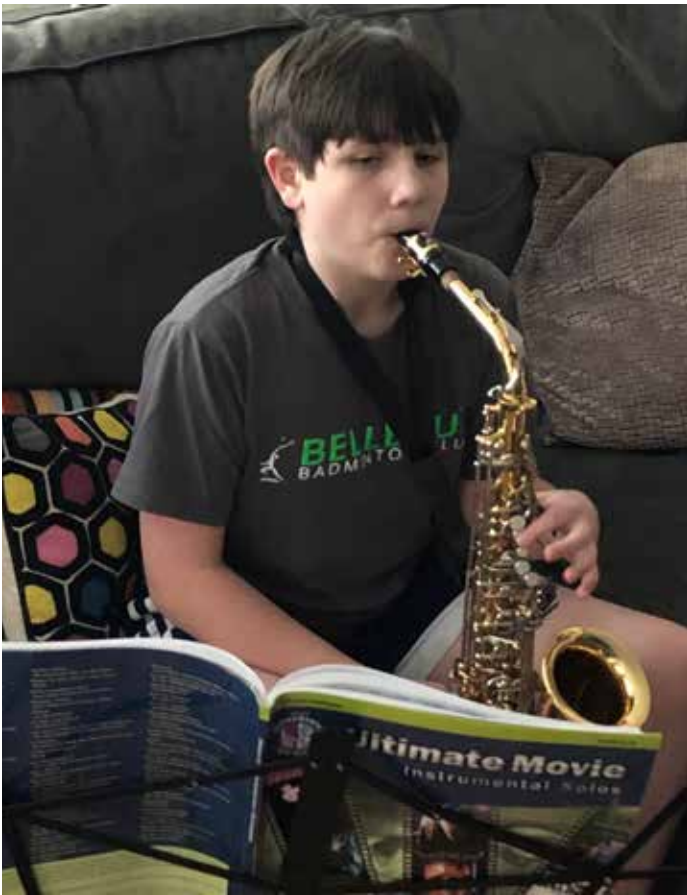
New forms of community and connection range from Facetime calls to Teams meetings to letters to drive-by birthday parades. While it has felt odd, and often



Molly S. '29



Zhiyuan C. '29



Dominic M. '25



Addie C. '25





Ayden A. '26

lonely to be without dear friends, I have also come to a greater appreciation for our school community. In March, I was dismayed at the idea of being stuck in my house with no friends allowed to visit. But I still feel the Bear Creek connections thriving and growing, although now over various virtual platforms. Weekly House group check-ins and encouraging messages from ASB officers have become an amazing fill-in for meetings, events, and simple interactions we all seem to miss so much.

In this situation, I often find myself reminiscing about not doing this or focusing too much on that. Hindsight can show us what we truly appreciate and value. If you could go back to December, what would you tell yourself? Would you say put the phone down, or get outside, or value time spent with friends? I know I would tell myself to do all three of those things. Isabella Dedomenico '21, a junior, says, "I really wish I held a greater appreciation for just human interaction. I would've hugged my grandparents and friends a little more if I knew I wouldn't be able to see them for months." McKenna Mullet '22 says she would, "stop complaining about how bad March may be and stop wishing for no

school." Bella Hayton '21 reflects, "Hug your friends, go out late at night, talk to the people you walk by on the street. When you focus so hard on the future, you miss what's right in front of you."

It can make us sad to focus on what we did not do before lockdown. It can make us sad to feel like we are missing out. Yet, we were given this enormous stretch of time—time to reflect, time to regroup, and time to rest. Although the ping pong table sits unused, the halls are no longer bustling, and the library is no longer full, they soon will be. While coronavirus has kept us in our homes, it has not kept us from spreading love and joy, whether through a Facetime call, a letter in the mail, or a special delivery. Coronavirus has not destroyed our community, it has instead strengthened it, making us more aware and grateful for those we too often take for granted.

Claire McArthur started attending Bear Creek in 2008 as a kindergartner. Now a senior, she leads the News Team and serves as Robinson House Head, YoungLife student leader, and captain for Bear Creek's varsity girls soccer team. She got involved with News Team as a junior and has several articles posted on Bear Creek's blog ([www.tbcs.org/blog](http://www.tbcs.org/blog)). News Teams provides Upper School students opportunity to highlight the amazing things going on at Bear Creek.



# Meet The Xin Family

**"WE ALWAYS BELIEVED IT WAS GOD WHO LED US TO BEAR CREEK,"** says Mary Xin. She and husband Evan express their gratitude to have found a school where their four children—Sophia '25, David '31, Michael '32, and Angela '34—will have a strong academic foundation while learning how to live out their Christian faith. In 2015, when searching for a school for their oldest daughter, Sophia, then in second grade, they were looking for more than just an academic challenge for her and her siblings, but one that would also integrate their faith. They were surprised and pleased to learn that Bear Creek's tuition was among the lowest of the top-five independent schools in Washington that they researched and consider it an excellent value. The school is also very close to their home, offering an easy daily commute. It was a clear choice for them to enroll Sophia in third grade, and later their other children, and they have not looked back.

With children spanning Preschool, Lower School, and Middle School, the Xins have a broad window into the breadth and depth of Bear Creek's educational scaffolding. The family appreciates the individualized curriculum and believes Bear Creek has the best learning resources and the best teachers. Like so many Bear Creek families, Mary and Evan treasure the unique combination of a high-quality Christian education and rigorous academics for their children.



Equally as importantly however, they are grateful for Bear Creek's sense of community. "Everyone in this school is filled with love. When we enter school, we feel like we are surrounded by love!" Mary exclaims.

Mary and Evan are deeply involved in the Bear Creek community and are frequent visitors to campus during the day and at the many community events. Mary tries to volunteer as much as she can, although she worries about her fluency in English. While Evan's

job keeps him very busy, he makes time most mornings to walk his children to their classrooms and attend parent events. "We believe it is very important to be an active part of The Bear Creek School community," they state.

One of the many ways they express their appreciation and love for the school is by investing

philanthropically in the school through their donations to the Annual Fund and the Auction. "We thank God for taking care of our family. We are happy and healthy. And we should share His kindness with other people." They teach their children about the importance of generosity as well. "We think generosity is an ability, responsibility, love, and happiness," concludes Mary.

The generosity and commitment of the Xin family continues to bless Bear Creek in many ways, and we are grateful for their continued involvement and dedication to our school's mission.

# THE IMPACT OF GENEROSITY

**WHAT A YEAR!** Despite unique circumstances, we have much to celebrate. Thanks to the generous support of our community, Bear Creek raised over \$480,000 for our ALL IN Annual Fund and over \$300,000 through our auction which was conducted online for the first time ever. Donations to the Annual Fund supported learning beyond the classroom, our robust arts and athletics programs, and financial assistance. Our community's generosity also allowed us to pivot quickly and effectively to remote learning and preparations for the fall.

The auction proceeds were directed towards the Bear Creek Responds Grant Fund, to help those families facing financial hardship from the COVID-19 pandemic remain part of the school community. Although we don't have captivating photos of bidders at the auction this year, we want to share some fun statistics that demonstrate the deep community connection inspired by this unique online event.



Bear Creek is also thankful for the impact made by its faithful volunteers. From the Trustees to Parent Reps, PTF and Booster Board members and event helpers; from Mentors and Room Parents to Art Docents; and all those who chaperoned a field trip, baked treats, listened to poem and verse recitations, served hamburgers in the Hungry Bear, translated materials, organized drama costumes or sheet music, staffed the Grizzly Gear Shop, supported a team or club, helped in a classroom, decorated the campuses for Christmas, served on a committee, connected with prospective families, or worked behind the scenes to make an event or project possible, thank you! We truly could not accomplish our mission without the thousands of hours and incredible gifts and talents you share with our students. You are the heart of our community.

The generosity of our community blessed each student, faculty, and staff member at Bear Creek in profound ways, and we are deeply grateful. We look forward to partnering with you again, in traditional as well as creative new ways, in the coming school year.

## A GIFT FOR THE AGES

Gifts such as bequests or trusts are meaningful ways to leave a legacy while helping to educate future generations of Bear Creek students, preparing them to engage the world with wisdom, compassion, and courage. If you have already made a provision for The Bear Creek School in your will or estate plan, please let us know so we may say thank you and recognize your generosity.

For more information contact Debbie Marchione, V.P. for Philanthropy and Community Engagement, at [dmarchione@tbcs.org](mailto:dmarchione@tbcs.org) or by calling 425-898-1720 ext. 339.

## MEET OUR NEW OWLS

To enhance remote and in-person synchronous learning, Bear Creek has invested in a Meeting Owls camera system for each classroom. The Owl system integrates students learning remotely with those in the physical classroom by projecting images of remote participants on the wall and by streaming in real time the sounds and visual activity in the classroom to students at home. Controlled by the teacher from a laptop, Owls help to build solidarity and interconnection among class members and provide an integrated learning experience for all of our students while maintaining privacy in a secure online environment. Like many of the other technology investments of the past six months that enabled remote learning, purchase of the Owl system was made possible thanks to our community's generous donations to the Annual Fund.





# ALUMNI NEWS AND CLASS NOTES

2014

## Caleb Alleva



Caleb and Karrah Alleva welcomed their first child, Judah Christopher, on May 7, 2020. They reside in Pensacola, FL, where Caleb is an Ensign in the U.S. Navy training to be a pilot.

## David Broaddus



David finished his service in the U.S. Peace Corps, teaching mathematics and science in a high school in a northern Namibian village, and

has accepted an offer from Urban Teachers to teach in an inner city school in Dallas, TX, for four years. Urban Teachers is affiliated with Johns Hopkins University, and David will also be earning his Master in Teaching during this four-year period.

2015

## Rebecca Carlson

Rebecca graduated from Hillsdale College with a B.S. in Philosophy in spring 2019 and has completed her first year as a Ph.D. student studying philosophy at the University of Southern California.

## Matt Miller

While working as an intern at Hoopfest in Spokane, Matt had the opportunity to work with both Hoopfest and Gonzaga University to create a short video about his experience working with Hoopfest. The goal of the project is to show the various internships in and around Spokane for prospective students who are considering attending Gonzaga. He also wrote a short piece describing what Hoopfest means to him. Matt hopes Bear Creek juniors and seniors consider staying in-state for college because sometimes staying closer to home isn't all that

bad. Matt thinks Spokane is more than just a big town in Eastern Washington; it's a special place, and the people who live there are some of the best people he has met.

[www.spokanehoopfest.net/intern-spotlight-matt-miller](http://www.spokanehoopfest.net/intern-spotlight-matt-miller)

## Mike Lau



Mike Lau graduated summa cum laude from Santa Clara University with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He has been accepted into a master's program at Darwin College, University of Cambridge, England. He aspires to contribute to international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by developing technologies and policies to bring green power to a national scale electrical grid. He is living in Cambridge, England, and was selected for the May 2020 Student Profile in The Bridge, the IEEE Honors Engineering magazine. [hkn.ieee.org/news-and-announcements/the-bridge](http://hkn.ieee.org/news-and-announcements/the-bridge)

2016

## Sam Humphries



John Lee '16 and Sam Humphries '16

Sam Humphries graduated on June 13, 2020 from the United States Military Academy as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Sam received a degree in Math with a counter-terrorism minor and will be attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the fall on a Lincoln Labs fellowship. While at MIT, he will work towards his M.S. in Operations Research and will study computer vision and artificial intelligence at Lincoln Labs. Sam will begin his official Army service, having branched Military Intelligence with Infantry detail, after graduate school. Fun fact: Sam and Bear Creek classmate Kevin Zhou '16 will be roommates in Boston in the fall!

## John Lee

John Lee commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army on May 23, 2020. (See photo with Sam Humphries '16.) His graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point was held on June 13. John received a degree in Mathematical Sciences with a minor in Applied Statistics. He was assigned to the highly selective Army Cyber Branch. In late summer, he started an eight-month basic officer leadership course at the U.S. Army Cyber Command headquarters in Augusta, GA.

## Madeline Mott



In June 2020, Madeline graduated remotely from Santa Clara University with two degrees: a B.S. in Sociology and a B.A. in Studio Art, plus a minor in Spanish Studies. While her last quarter at Santa Clara did not end the way she anticipated, she is honored

to call herself an SCU alumna. Having had the chance to study abroad, intern with the office of State Assembly member Evan Low, and serve as president of the SCU equestrian team, she can honestly say she will miss every bit of her college experience. Following graduation, Madeline will stay in Silicon Valley to start a position at Experien Group, a medical device company in San Jose, CA.

## Eric Rosu



Eric started a job as Associate Media Producer at Dundon Motorsports in Gig Harbor, WA, in May 2020. He graduated from Gonzaga University with a degree in Media and Broadcasting Studies.

# SERVING ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE PANDEMIC

## BETH (GRAHAM) PATTERSON, M.D., CLASS OF 2009

By Debbie Marchione



**WHEN BETH (GRAHAM) PATTERSON '09 CHOSE TO PURSUE EMERGENCY MEDICINE**, she did so because she was drawn to the variety involved in the specialty, which enables her to serve a broad cross-section of the population with a range of medical needs and procedures. When she graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in medicine, she could not have imagined that her work in spring 2020 would narrow to a single focus: COVID-19.

As a second-year resident working in three different hospitals in the Bronx in New York City, Beth spent three months fighting the virus for her patients nearly non-stop. While residency is always challenging, the pandemic made it even more difficult.

For over two months, nearly all the patients Beth treated came in with severe cases of COVID-19. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was (and still is) in short supply, and Beth was required to use her N-95 mask all day, covering it with a surgical mask for each patient, to keep the N-95 “cleaner”

for possible future re-use. One of her colleagues organized a drive, called Goggles for Docs, to get ski goggles donated, as they fit more tightly and are more comfortable than safety glasses, so she wore goggles under a face shield. Between waiting in line for her one N-95 mask and donning all her hot, uncomfortable PPE, and carefully doffing the cleaning equipment, and changing into clean scrubs, managing her PPE added an extra hour to her twelve-hour shifts. Additionally, she was often unable to take breaks, even to eat or drink, since she would have had to leave the ER to do so.

Adding to the discomfort of the PPE, and the stress of an overflowing emergency room, Beth also struggled sometimes to connect with her patients on a personal level. “All the PPE we have to wear creates barriers. I look like an alien with it on, and it’s hard for people to hear my voice through all the layers of face coverings, even as I try to be reassuring. It was also difficult to comfort COVID-19 patients when there was often little we could do to help them. Beyond that, we were also concerned about our own safety as providers.”

Although the number of COVID-19 patients in the emergency room has dropped significantly, Beth shares that she and her co-workers are still required to wear the full PPE each day. “We just don’t know what the person’s health status or exposure to the virus might be when they arrive, so we have to be very cautious.”

To cope with the incredible stress, Beth credits her strong support system of her husband, Jade (pictured with Beth), parents, and faith. Upper School faculty member Linda Graham, Beth’s mother, organized her





Dr. Patterson wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE).

students and Bear Creek faculty and staff to pray regularly for Beth and her ER colleagues. “The prayers are a big source of encouragement,” Beth reflects. “I’m protected by more than just a mask, and there is a lot of peace in knowing that.”

Beth relies heavily on her husband, as well. Taking careful precautions, they have been able to remain together in the same apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Beth changes clothes completely at work after a shift, then when she arrives home, she removes her clothes just inside the door, then goes directly into the shower. Jade cooks her meals and encourages her to sleep and exercise. He provides an abundance of love and emotional support.

When asked to reflect on her path to this moment in her life and career, Beth comments on the influence of Bear Creek, which she attended beginning in grade 6. “Bear Creek taught me to love learning and to think critically, which has been such an important

factor in my studies as well as in the work I do. And I definitely appreciate the way Bear Creek faculty and school leadership took an interest in my life and invested in me as a person. Mr. Carruth met with me monthly during my senior year when I served as ASB President. I don’t remember all that we talked about, but I do remember being amazed that he would invest so much of his valuable time in mentoring me. It was meaningful and significant then, and I do think it helped set me up for success. I also really value the sense of community at Bear Creek,” Beth continues. “I’ve learned that it is hard to find and replicate that.”

Finally, Beth notes the importance of gratitude in life. During the most intense weeks of the pandemic, the restaurant community in New York organized daily meals for health care workers during each shift, for which Beth and her colleagues were enormously grateful. Another way the people of New York supported first responders was the nightly “ClapBecauseWeCare.” Each evening at 7:00 p.m., residents took to their balconies, terraces, fire escapes, and the streets to show their appreciation for the workers by clapping hands, blowing horns, clanging pots and pans, anything to make a joyful noise to show their appreciation for the frontline workers. Beth notes, “It was so encouraging to be driving into an overnight shift and hear the streets erupt with applause. It created this incredible sense of community even as we were all physically separated.” She also comments that patients and their families seem to express a little more thankfulness for their care now, even though emergency room visits can be exhausting and difficult. “A little gratitude goes a long way,” she notes.

## Miya Higashiyama, Class of 2013



**MIYA IS CURRENTLY PURSUING A MASTER OF MUSIC DEGREE** in voice and opera performance at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music. This year she covered the

role of Orlovsky in *Die Fledermaus*, sang *Messagiera* in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, was a member of the Bienen Contemporary Ensemble under the direction of Grammy-winning director Donald Nally. Last summer, she sang with the Janiec Opera Company of the Brevard Music Center. Since they could not perform the entire opera live, Miya participated in a masterclass for the role of Aldonza in *Man of La Mancha*. She also performed the role of Dater #55 in the world premiere of the opera *Zoom: Speed Dating Tonight!* by Michael Ching and Dean Anthony.

While living in Chicago and when not studying, she serves the music ministry program of Kenilworth Union Church as a mezzo/alto section leader. During the pandemic, she moved back home to Sammamish, WA, to finish spring

quarter but continued to lead and serve the church by helping produce the weekly virtual choir for Sunday services. As a section leader, she distributes the music for each member to individually record his or her part and upload it to Google Drive, puts the virtual choir together by layering the audio, adding each voice one at a time, and then formats the picture visually so that viewers can see everyone in frame. After all the parts are aligned, Miya then adjusts and evens out the sound, and then the video is put in the online Sunday service. It takes about twice the amount of work and planning to make music virtually than live, but she believes it is completely worth the effort. Miya will continue her video editing into the next academic year for Kenilworth until it is safe for musicians to reunite.





## Derian Williams, Class of 2018

### WHILE STUDYING AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY,

Derian has been part of the Student Robotics Club on the Mars Rover Team. The goal of this club is to qualify for and participate in the University Rover Challenge that takes place each June in the Utah desert at the Mars Desert Research Station.

During his freshman year, Derian was one of two people working

on the electrical design of the power distribution and drive train of the rover. While it was his first experience designing electrical systems, he learned a great deal of practical knowledge, and together his team qualified for one of the 36 spots in the international competition. In 2019, Stanford's team went on to place third overall, creating Derian's favorite college freshman memory. The team was eager to do better in the 2020 competition.

During his sophomore year, Derian led a team of freshmen and

sophomores on the electrical design of the rover, replacing most of their previous electronics with a more modular design. Once again, the team qualified for the competition (100 schools were vying for 36 spots); however, due to COVID-19, the competition itself was cancelled. This club has given Derian some amazing experiences and has taught and inspired him more than any class. He highly recommends club participation to Bear Creek graduates because of potential unforeseen, fantastic experiences.







# OPENING UP TO SOMETHING NEW

## ANSEL SANGER, CLASS OF 2005

By Debbie Marchione



**IN 2018, ANSEL SANGER '05, AND HIS WIFE JOSIE** decided they wanted to expand their horizons and learn about different ways of being through living in and experiencing another culture. “We wanted to get out of our comfort zone and gain insight about what could be possible,” Ansel said. They realized they had an opportunity to take a year away from their real estate business (Sanger and Sanger) and made plans to teach English in China, hoping to broaden their perspectives and more deeply understand the Asian cultures from which many of their clients come.

Once in China, however, they quickly realized that

teaching English was not accomplishing their goal of truly feeling like a part of a community. They were working many hours and had limited time to travel, which was another one of their goals for their time in Asia. So, they left their jobs and traveled for a time around China and southeast Asia, including Vietnam and Cambodia.

Ansel and Josie decided to move to Cambodia and discovered a co-working space where they met entrepreneurs from a variety of countries. They also connected with high school students from Liger Academy, an innovative school that brings together high-potential students from around Cambodia in a project-based learning model. Ansel and Josie volunteered in the school, assisting with the groundbreaking girls’ sports program as well as helping the students create and promote a Kickstarter initiative to fund a low-orbit satellite development program that would be the first space project in the nation. Josie, who was a teacher prior to joining Ansel in real estate, was particularly excited about their involvement with the school. “Having been homeschooled, I’m open to a lot of different education options, and I love the way that

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Above: Ansel and Josie explore a temple.

Above left: Ansel and Josie at the Great Wall of China.

the students were empowered to work on projects that not only helped them learn, but that also make a big impact on their community.” Ansel was able to share the Cambodian students’ project with Bear Creek students and faculty through teacher Linda Graham, with whom he has continued to stay in touch. Most of all, the couple treasured the sense that they were becoming a part of the community through their involvement with the school.

After several months living and traveling in Cambodia, the pair moved to Bali, where they discovered a very active and diverse ex-pat community. “Meeting people from all over the world—artists, creators, entrepreneurs—and experiencing the synergy and collaboration happening in the co-working spaces was really inspiring, and it opened our eyes to what work could be like,” reflects Ansel. “It motivated me to look at other ways of expanding our business and our income.” During their time in Indonesia, besides traveling, both continued their work with the Kickstarter campaign for the Liger Academy, and Josie learned beginning coding skills while Ansel started writing a book.

Their time in Asia also provided Ansel and Josie an unexpected opportunity to reflect on their faith. “We often felt culturally isolated which was difficult,” Ansel notes. “We were fortunate in Bali, which is mostly Hindu, to find a small group Bible study led by a couple

from Idaho. It gave us a sense of community and a common ground for experience, which were really important to us.” In addition, they noted how much the daily practice of Hindus centers on their religion. “It really made us pause and consider our own day-to-day ways of living our faith.”

They returned to the U.S. in December with a broader understanding of the world and their place in it, as well as having grown in their relationship and their faith. Josie comments, “I discovered a new willingness to question things and be open to answers even if they were unexpected or didn’t fit with what I thought I knew.” Both agree that their sense of isolation that arose from not understanding the culture and the language, made them rely on one another differently, and they grew a lot in their marriage. Ansel gained a broader cultural lens which has pushed him to think about “how I can personally expand our own circles to be more diverse and ask more questions about why certain inequities exist in our communities” as well as understanding that “not everyone wants what we have in American culture.”

Both Ansel and Josie are excited about the new connections, insights, and perspective they gained from their time away and are actively looking for ways to incorporate their experiences into their business and their lives.

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## *Welcome to our new Alumni Relations Manager*



**BEAR CREEK IS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME ASHLEIGH ROTH '16** as our new Alumni Relations Manager. She stepped into the role filled by Lori Lee, who retired this year on June 30. Ashleigh graduated from Seattle Pacific University in March 2020 with a B.S. in Psychological Science. She brings a wealth of experience with storytelling and engagement through social media, as well as plenty of ideas for building on our existing alumni programs and connecting alumni with the school and one another in new ways.

You can contact Ashleigh at [alumni@tbcs.org](mailto:alumni@tbcs.org) or 425-898-1720 ext. 324, or stop by the Farmhouse at Redmond Campus to say hello. She welcomes your ideas and would love to meet you virtually or in person!



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Redmond, WA 98053

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# Be **ALL IN** with us!

The Annual Fund directly impacts faculty and students year-round by helping provide a robust learning experience.

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Your generosity will allow us to be creative with our programs and be flexible and responsive to changing or new needs that may arise during the year.

Thank you for funding amazing learning opportunities every day!

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