

HEAD LINES

A Monthly Message from Chip Denton, Head of School



August 2019



Dear Trinity Community,

This is Trinity School's twenty-fifth year. It seems like a good time to remember our beginnings. How did Trinity School come to be? If you asked a dozen founders, you'd get a dozen stories. Here's mine.

In 1994 the educational landscape in Durham was very different than it is now. Some of us who had children entering elementary school in those days were agonizing over our educational options and opportunities. Some of us started in the Durham public schools but found the experience disheartening. My wife, Desirée, and I had friends who tried other options: local secular independent schools (which had waiting lists), local church-affiliated schools, and homeschooling. There were no charter schools, no magnets, no online options back then. Desirée remembers a meeting of homeschooling families at the home of Nancy and Fred Brooks and much buzz about the need for a new school in the area.

Sometime in the fall of that year, an acquaintance of mine sent me an essay called "The Lost Tools of Learning." He and his wife had enrolled their child in a new classical Christian school in Orlando, Florida, called the Geneva School. I remember the Sunday afternoon I sat out on our back deck in Chapel Hill and read Dorothy Sayers's essay on education. The inspiring vision of what education could be was in stark contrast to what we had experienced, and I remember saying to Desirée, "This is what I want for our children."

In the winter of 1994–1995, we invited ten people to join us for a series of meetings to explore the possibility of a new school. We read a number of articles and books on education. We heard about Charlotte Mason from Kathy Tyndall. And at some point the more practical among us, like Jim Lamont, looked around at the rest of us and asked, "Are we just going to talk about this, or are we going to do something about it?" Thus was set in motion a flurry of action: finding Hope Creek Church on Erwin Road, which was willing to rent us space; doing a dog-and-pony show at local churches to share about the vision for this new school; getting down to work on curriculum (Jane Adams and Kathy Tyndall, along with Nancy Brooks, did the lion's share); enrolling the first students (Ben and Davis Murphy); hiring the first teachers (including Rita Davis, long-time Trinity fourth grade teacher); and working with an attorney to draw up articles of incorporation. Those articles were adopted on May 22, 1995, which I suppose is the official birthday of Trinity School.

Please turn over...

The first Board of Directors met pretty much every other week back then, often until almost midnight. We all had day jobs, and there was no one but the Board to run the school, so we had a lot of work to do. (This is, by the way, *not* the way to run a school, but with a start-up, you do what you have to do.)

By God's grace, we opened Trinity School in September 1995 with 39 students in grades K–4 (including two combined classes) and three teachers. There was no school administrator (we didn't have the funds), and we owe a great debt of gratitude to Joe Voshell, the pastor of Hope Creek, who helped to keep things in order during that first year. (I remember to this day his genial complaint about "the recorders from hell.")

As I look back, it's amazing that we made it. Our budget was so lean, our fundraising almost nil, our administration nonexistent. But we had some Big Ideas, and they sustained us. Two memories stand out as signals that this rich and unhurried classical Christian school might take root and bear real fruit: the success of our first auction (whose proceeds were used for need-based financial aid) at Fearrington House, when many came out to support the vision; and our first Grandparents Day in May 1996, when I stood in the back of the sanctuary at Hope Creek, listening to the students sing the *Tallis Canon*, wrestling with whether I should take the job as headmaster. Fred Brooks had chaired our search committee that year, and at the end of an unsuccessful search I found myself at breakfast with Fred talking about whether I should make a career shift and try to lead this school.

Bill Cobey, who came along shortly after that first year to chair the Board, used to tell me, "The greatest assets of any institution are the people." Indeed—great is the number of dedicated Board members, donors, teachers, leaders, parents, and students who have passed through this place. Trinity has served over 1,600 students in our first twenty-four years.

I hope to tell more chapters of the Trinity story in this year's *Headlines*—it's a good story. I'll end this chapter by mentioning the prequel to Trinity School. Back in the early 1980s, three men (David Spence, Bill Cobey, and George Coxhead) planned and prayed about starting a new Christian school in this area. They even went so far as to court a potential headmaster. But the time was not right; people weren't ready. A decade and a half later, two of those people played key roles in the school they hadn't known they were praying for. The story we are a part of is bigger than we know.

As we enter our twenty-fifth year, let us give thanks to God for his faithfulness to the school over a generation, and let us pray that we can be faithful stewards to guide this vision of Trinity into the next generation.

Non Nobis,



Chip Denton

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