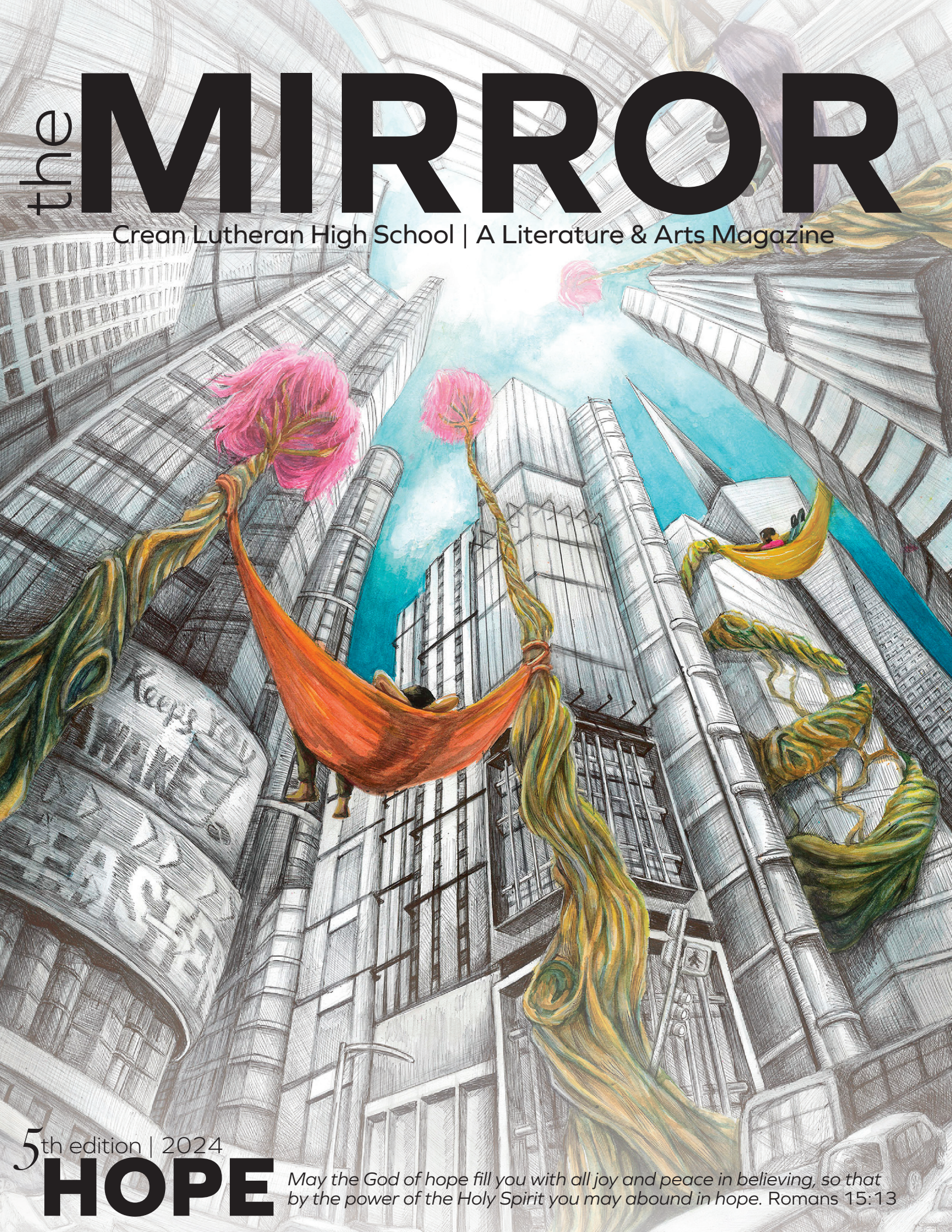
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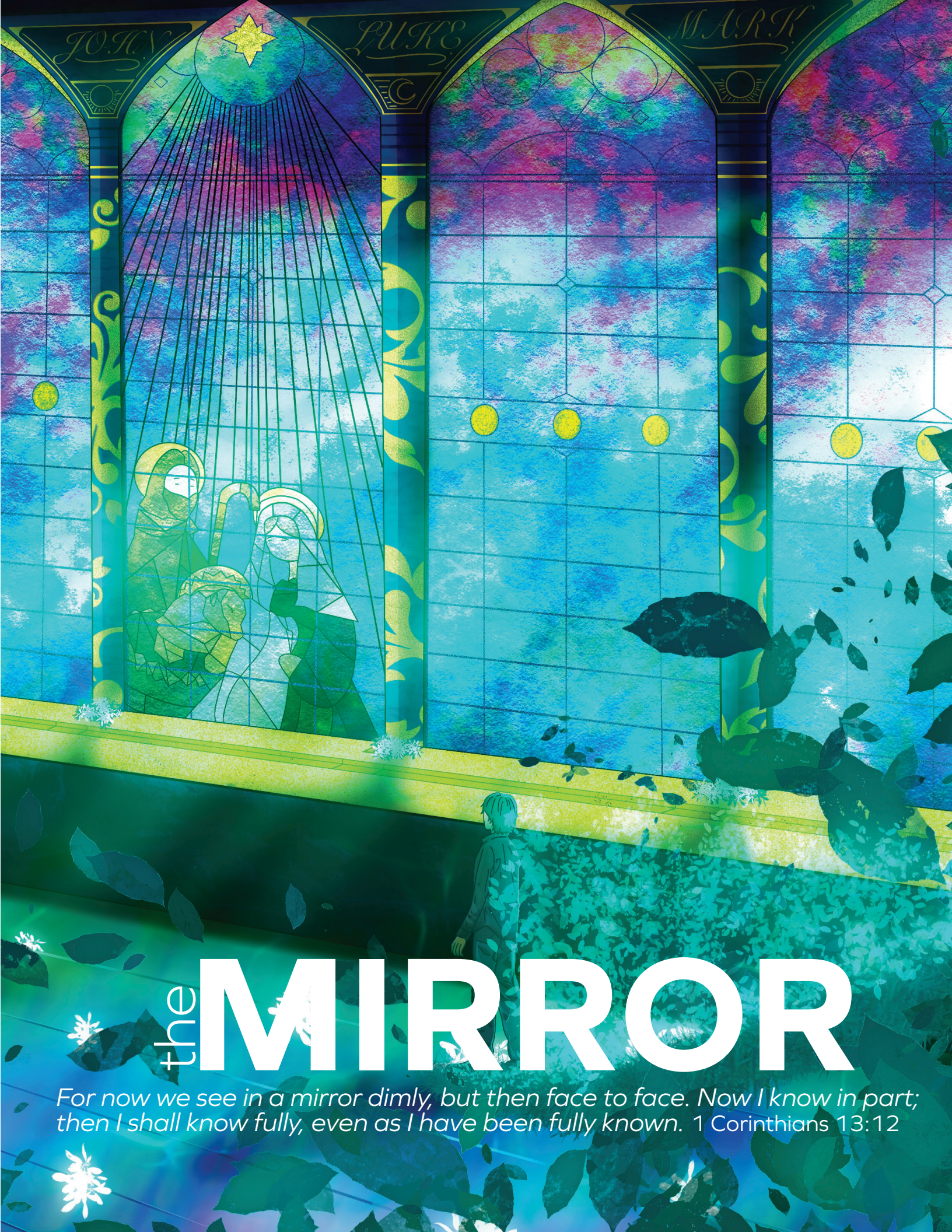
Crean Lutheran High School | A Literature & Arts Magazine



5th edition | 2024

HOPE

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13



the MIRROR

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

from the EDITOR

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -
-Emily Dickinson

Hope is a variety of metaphors: a steady rock, a comforting shepherd, a ray of light, a wave lapping gently on the shore. Hope is a songbird, placed in our hearts by our Savior, Jesus Christ. As David, despairing, calls out to the Lord, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me" (Psalm 23). No matter how hopeless our circumstances may seem, or the dark valley that we tumble into, our God gives us great hope. The Lord "restores" and "comfort[s]" each of us even in the darkest of times, and never leaves nor abandons us (Psalm 23). The Holy Spirit works within us, filling us with joy and peace, so that we "may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

In this year's edition of *The Mirror*, our students reflect the embodiment of hope in their pieces. Claire Lee's Cover *Photosynthesis* reveals a hopeful, brilliant ray of light piercing through the fast paced, gray landscape below. The Back Cover *Paper Hope* illuminates the building blocks of hope and carefully constructed paper origami cranes, both illustrating the beauty of an artist's creation. Grace Jin shares that her inspiration for the piece comes from the story of a young girl, Sadako and her journey with leukemia, illustrating her "perseverance and lively spirit." Grace continues, "The bright colors and building blocks which spell out 'HOPE' are symbols of youth, and hopefully encourage and give a reminder of maintaining a hopeful spirit in our world today." Through these pieces, we learn more about God's creation and His path for our lives (Autumn's Painter, Troubled Path, The Path to Tomorrow), the weight of darkness illuminated by His light (One True Hope, Spes Fiduciae, Esperanza, Lonely Nights on an Endless Winter Road), and the uncertainty of the future in contrast with God's promises and security (Our Memories, Seed of Hope, Sunflowers).

This is my sixth year as an English Teacher at Crean Lutheran High School, my first year as the Editor of *The Mirror*, and I am filled with hope for our students at this school. Students are faced with numerous challenges, unrelenting societal pressures, and increasing expectations on an insurmountable scale. And yet these students withstand the storm, trusting in Jesus Christ for their security and identity. They remind me daily what it means to be kind, to be patient, to be hopeful. I hope and pray for our students here at Crean Lutheran, that they may know God's love "fully" as they are "fully known" by God (1 Corinthians 13:12). I hope each artist feels inspiration, excitement, and awe in the works they create, and I hope that their works of art and literature bring you a sense of comfort, joy, wonderment, and of course, *hope*.

In Christ,
Jessica Jaeger

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Special Thanks To:
Crean Lutheran English Department
Crean Lutheran Art Department
Dr. Jenny Lark, Vice Principal of Academics

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Reflection | Toya Liu '24 | Oil

Autumn's Painter

by Grace Williams '24

The other day, I decided to walk through the forest behind my house. After a long summer of heavy, humid air and blazing sunlight, it was like a breath of fresh air to feel the weather change. For the first time in ages, clouds blanketed the sky and a breeze swept through the trees. The minimal draft wasn't cold, but I welcomed it after the stale summer days.

It was in the forest that I came across the painter. I have seen artists along the path, setting up easels to sketch the treeline or find inspiration from nature. But this man had no canvas. He was painting the leaves.

He held a comically large palette covered with swaths of paint in every color imaginable. The man dipped his brush into a golden amber, then reached up and spread the paint upon a dull green maple leaf. I watched in surprise as the amber spread amongst the other leaves, like a paper dipped in watercolor. The tree, once a tired green from long days in the summer sun, was set ablaze. It shone golden in the afternoon light.

The painter appeared proud of his handiwork.

"Do you paint the trees?" I asked. In retrospect, the answer was glaringly obvious.

"Yes!" the man responded. "At the changing of the seasons. They are some of my favorite artworks."

"What else do you paint?"

The man pointed upwards, past autumn leaves and spindly branches. It was sunset, and the sky burned with a fire that rivaled the maple trees. Ribbons of pink clouds hung in the sky, backlit by the day's final sun rays. It stole my breath away.

"Sunsets are another favorite," the man said.

"And what more?" I asked.

He motioned for me to follow him and joyfully set off through the trees, leaves crunching underfoot. I watched as he masterfully painted the white specks onto red mushrooms. Sweet-smelling persimmons ripened at the touch of the brush. Robins sang as they alighted on branches to receive cinnamon-shaded feathers. I was watching the painter single-handedly summon the arrival of autumn.

At every final stroke of color, every finishing touch of his brush, the painter deemed his creation "one of his favorites."

"Surely you have a favorite. I mean, all your work is lovely. But there must be something you painted that you love more than all the rest?" I urged.

I thought he would say the trees with their wash of yellows and bronze. Or the burning sunset and birds above. Or maybe the ladybug he was delicately painting black spots onto. I felt out of place, like I had stepped into one of the imposingly magnificent paintings displayed in the museum.

But the painter just raised his head and smiled. "The creation I love the very most…

Well, that would be you."





Through a Lens | Joanne Kim '26 | Oil

Don't You Know That There's Hope

by Cora Fox '27

I never told anyone when I was alone
I always told myself
There's no place to go
But back then I didn't know
That you were hope

I almost told someone the thoughts inside my head
But they just weren't good enough
So I hid them instead
But back then I didn't know
That you were hope

Through the smoke
Through the tears
There was nothing that I could see
I just couldn't sense You
Right there in front of me

I just I wish could've told myself:

He's right there
I know you can't breathe
that weight on your shoulders
Is too much for you to keep

He's right there
You don't need to look far
There's no need to lose yourself
Just to find where you are

Cause He
Fought for you
Taught for you
Died for you
Lived for you

Just so you know that there's hope



Living in a Daydream | Audrey Nielsen '26 | Photography



Noeul | Esther Chung '24 | Photography

One True Hope

by Jaden Lee '25

This poem was written after meditating on John 15:26 and Matthew 17:20-21

Thousands of years past holiness
Only remain is our lowliness
Man's trust in Yahweh slowly fades,
Though His works remain through time's cascades

In a world weighed by sin and shame
Where wicked is what man proclaims
In a world so dark and mean
Shimmer of light was seen

Savior who can move the mountains
God who turns rocks into fountains
God descends to rescue and to bless,
By Him, we find true righteousness

Now Holy Spirit keeps His eyes on us
In every heart, God Himself resides in us
With boundless grace and love from above
The Spirit descends like a gentle dove

In this world where darkness often prevails
Hope emerges, hands pierced by nails
The beacon that guides us through the night
Shows promise of the Lord in the eternal light

Cruising Under the Moonlight

by Chloe Hsu '25

Enchanted. That's what it was. It was as if the world was blanketed in a serene silence, the only sound the song of the gentle winds. Nighttime was always my favorite time of day – beautiful, dark, tranquil. The full moon was big, bright, and bold, declaring its presence with its brilliance. It transformed the land as snippets of moonlight struck through the gaps of the dense forest surrounding the open snowy path. The snowflakes fluttered down - each as unique as the one before, behind, and beside it – dancing along to the song of the breeze. As more danced down from the skies, it dotted the already snow-covered mountain like powdered sugar.

Looking upon all this from above, seated on my creaking ski lift slowly gliding towards the top, I felt a sense of appreciation and awe at this peaceful view. The soft creaking of the ski lift, the whispers of the breeze, the spontaneous thump of my snowboard bumping against the bench, and the gentle scraping of the few other snowboarders sliding below were peaceful acoustics that added to the scenery all around me. The frigid air filled my lungs as I took a deep breath and leaned back into the lift. What a wonderful feeling it was to feel so small against the world's immensity. As I rocked upwards, the moon seemed to grow clearer and brighter, as if I were drawing closer and closer to the heavens above. The bottom of the path seemed to fade away as I gradually reached the end of the ski lift, boarding to the edge of a steep slope.

Standing at the tippy top of the mountain on my snowboard, I peeked over the edge to gauge the trail. Lights softly illuminated the path below, revealing the beginning of a yawning slope, leaving the rest unknown. Each breath clouded the air, and every shift in weight brought forth the creaking of my snowboard. The frigid air bit against my already pink cheeks, but I felt warmth in my soul like a glowing ember. Peering down, I felt a rush of excitement pushing my body forward, bringing me over the edge of the slope.

With a rush of adrenaline, I pushed off, and the snow beneath my board crackled and hissed. My speed began increasing, yet the world around me sharpened as my senses heightened. The edges of my board carved sharp arcs along the soft powder. The wind whipped at my hair, and I whooped with delight at the freedom of controlling my body at such a speed. My heart pounded in my ears, beating wildly yet steadily within me. Yes, this was the feeling: the joyous, wild freedom that could not be contained. With every swing, every turn, every jump, I became a blur of wild nature – and I felt liberated.







Whale Be | Helen Zhang '25 | Printmaking

Our Memories

by Ashley Wong '23

To my sister and senior year:

The day you leave for college,
My dear pet fish dies;
We hold a pensive funeral
While Mom cries and cries.

Leaving me to sit in my memories,
A dead body flushes down the drain
An hour before you leave me as an only child
An hour before you board your plane.

At five and seven, do you remember
How you tried to drown me in the pool?
At fifteen and seventeen, do you remember
Talking and laughing as we drove to school?

Like a lightbulb flickering, memories are inconsistent.
3000 miles apart in distance and two years apart in age,
I wonder where you are and what you're doing;

Are you still the same or did you change?

The day I leave for college,
There is not much I can guarantee
But I can promise you that
I'll carry all of our memories close to me.





A Day at the Zoo | Jayden Kwak '26 Photography



Sweet Tooth | Juwon Kim '24 | Acrylic

My First Home

by Taylor Brady '25

I close my eyes and breathe in the fresh salt air as I roll down the window of my Nana's old red car. The air fills my lungs, and I swear I can taste the saltiness of the ocean. The familiar smell of pine trees and fresh rain immediately brings me comfort and creates a flood of memories from years past. I take in my surroundings as we make the long, two-hour drive from the airport to my Grandparents' house in the small town of Seabeck, Washington. I point out the old water park where I used to go as a kid on hot summer days and the hospital where I was born as if I don't pass by them every year when I visit. The whole car simultaneously holds its breath as we pass over the Tacoma Bridge, and even though I always run out of breath before we get to the end, I tell everyone that I made it so I can make a wish.

As we get closer to our destination, I stare in awe at the breathtaking view of the mountains towering above the clear ocean water. I look around at the trees that showcase all the shades of green you could imagine and the vast array of plants and flowers that dot the outline where the forest meets the shore. I listen to the sound of the waves crashing on the rocks and the chatter from fishermen docking their boats for the evening. The cold air hits my face and an overwhelming feeling of calm sweeps over me.

We finally arrive and drive up the old stone path to the house. There are so many memories from my childhood everywhere I look. There is the old tire swing that used to hang from a tree in the backyard before it broke a few years ago. There are huge piles of dirt on the side of the house that my Papa used to tell me were elephant graves so that I would stop running up and down them. There are different shapes and sizes of seashells that I would bring home from the beach when I was little that still line the stone steps up to the front door.

The forest surrounding my Grandparents' home looks like it could go on forever, making it feel like I'm in my own little world. The constant rain leaves everything glistening as if it were made of glass. Deer roam through the forest and occasionally prance up to the house just to eat my Nana's roses, which she is, of course, very fond of.

The inside of the house has remained the same since I was a little girl. Memories fill the halls and every room, from the piano in the living room, where my Nana attempted to teach me to play worship songs, to the staircase where my Aunt and I would ride the spare mattress down the steps until bedtime. The kitchen always smells like freshly cooked food, and you can count on my Aunt to fill the house with music for us to dance to. We play Scrabble on the dining room table until one of us quits from losing, and then we pick a movie from my Nana's collection of old John Wayne DVDs to stay up late watching. My time there is always filled with love and laughter, and I fondly anticipate my trip there every summer.

I was born not far from my Grandparents' house, and although my parents moved us away after a couple of years, Washington has always felt like home to me. I adore every part, from the constant cover of clouds and rain to the rocky path from my Grandparents' house to the beach.

The stress and responsibilities of life begin to pile up as I get older, and I look to my time with my family as an escape from reality. I know that no matter what happens, I can find peace at my Grandparents' house in the blooming and serene state of Washington.

Spes Fiduciae

by Noah Lee '26

Hope is many things
For some it is
A light that leads the way
Through darkness

For others it is the reason
A desire may be fulfilled

For others it is a
Feeling of relief
In time of hardship

But to all hope is
Not simply a desire
It is an expectation -
A belief in the future

It is a candle in the darkest nights
A firm anchor securing the soul

Sometimes it is difficult to find hope
In hardship and despair
But true hope is unseen
It is never lost

Hope always endures
There is a future ahead

No matter the circumstances

Hope will surely lead us
Through the darkness
As we anticipate the light





A Pond at Huntington Library | Lucy Liu '26 | Watercolor

Esperanza

written by Amelia Albelo '27, translated into Spanish by her father.
This bilingual poem is dedicated to Latinos and Latinas everywhere. May we all remain in hope.

H o p e
Is hands that feel blindly in the darkness
As they search for the light
That provides peace and understanding.

E s p e r a n z a
Is when everything in the world spins like a hurricane,
Chaos and fear thrown in every direction,
Yet someone sees a symphony, orchestrated to perfection by the Great Conductor.

H o p e
Is the tides of the ocean.
No matter how violently the waves are pulled into the depths,
The sea always returns to the sand.

E s p e r a n z a
Is falling onto my knees,
Crying out to God when He seems silent,
Even when I cannot see.

H o p e
Is looking into the clouded eyes of someone
Buried in the crushing avalanche of pain
And finding a spark.

E s p e r a n z a
Is a protest in the streets
As passion sings through the voices
Of the visionaries and the world-changers.

H o p e
Is looking past myself
And seeing the world through the eyes
Of another.

E s p e r a n z a
Is a tender, brave little plant
Underground
That dares to break free.

Esperanza
Son las manos que sienten a ciegas en la oscuridad
Al buscar la luz
Que provee paz y entendimiento.

Hope
Es cuando todo en el mundo gira como un huracán,
caos y miedo tirado en todo dirección,
Pero alguien ve una sinfonía, dirigida a la perfección por el Gran Conductor.

Esperanza
ISon las mareas del océano.
Cuan violentas las olas son tiradas a las profundidad,
El mar regresa siempre a las arenas.

Hope
Es caer de rodillas
Clamando a Dios cuando Él está en silencio
A pesar de no poder ver.

Esperanza
Es mirar en los ojos nublados de alguien
Enterrado en la devastadora avalancha de dolor
Y encontrar una chispa.

Hope
Es una protesta en las calles
Mientras la pasión canta mediante las voces
De los visionarios y los soñadores.

Esperanza
Es ver más allá de mi ser
Y ver el mundo a través de los ojos
De otro.

Hope
Es una delicada, valiente plantita
Bajo tierra
Que atreve a liberarse.

continued on page 23





The Black and White Fallacy | Ari Choe '23 | Mixed Media

Hope is in heartache.
Hope is in joy.
Hope is in
A prayer
A song
A poem
A dream
A vision.
High on the mountain tops.
In the depths of the valley.
In a crowd.
In solitude.
Fueling rockets to the moon.
Reaching for the stars.
Oxygen rushing into my lungs,
Carbon dioxide rushing out.
The beating of my heart,
expanding and pounding
inside my chest
with
the steady beat of a marching band,
the endurance of a marathon runner,
the strength of the waves,
pulsing with the
joy
and
unpredictability
of
life.

I see hope captured in these pictures
In the great works of our God
In our universe.

La esperanza está en la angustia
La esperanza está en la alegría.
Esperanza está en
Una oración,
Una canción,
Un poema,
Un sueño,
Una vision.
Al tope de las montañas.
En la profundidad del valle.
En la multitud.
En la soledad.
Mandando los cohetes a la luna.
Alcanzando las estrellas.
El oxígeno invadiendo mis pulmones,
Dióxido de carbono escapando.
El latir de mi corazón
Expandiendo y contrayendo
En mi pecho
Con
El continuo latir de una banda de marcha,
La resistencia de un maratonista,
La fuerza de las olas,
Pulsando con el
Gozo
Y
La
Imprevisibilidad
De
La
Vida.

Veo la esperanza capturada en estas imágenes
En las gran obras de Dios
En nuestro universo.



Old Man | Logan Erickson '25 | Photography



Seed of Hope

by Eugene Ban '26

Today was a tiring day like yesterday.
I closed my eyes and got lost in thought.
Darkness, exhaustion, loneliness, a burden that weighs me down.
When the dream seems far away and out of reach, I wonder if happiness is mine.
Feeling the wind, I slightly open my eyes.
A greeting towards me, a little attention, pleasant weather and sky.
A tiny seed of hope.
It will lead me to a day that is different from yesterday.

Sanctuary

by Xichen Liu '25

In the dark emotionless night, a small hidden sanctuary, a hidden dimension away from the chaos of daily life. The small world rests in the brightness of days and works its magic when the fireball of the sky sinks beneath the mountains. The magical world attracts me in the darkness of the day and lures me into its presence like a fish attracted to bait. Once I fell into its magical lure, I began the journey to its embrace. With every step I take, the world seems to whisper words of encouragement that only appeal to me.

Upon arrival, the dim glow from the table lamps leaks out a warm, inviting hue against the cold, hard floors of the house, the sanctuary begging me to step into its presence. In the first step into this hidden sanctuary, my feet are greeted by the plush carpet, plush as a polar bear's fur. It hugs the feet with such tenderness, like the welcoming embrace of a puppy. The reflective glass hanging on the wall reflects a beaten-down boy. Next to the reflective glass is the familiar wooden surface. On its surface, a stack of paper filled with stories of the West and the adventure to everland. Opposite the wooden surface, a narrow window is tightly shut, covered by the delicate silk curtains blocking out the brightest shines.

Combined with the soft hum of crickets outside, the sanctuary invites the beaten-down boy towards the comfortable embrace of the bed. And oh, the bed! The centerpiece of this haven, draped in soft white sheets, so plush it gives the illusion of a cloud amidst the sanctuary. The plump and inviting pillows cradle the head from the weight of stressful thoughts, like a baby cradled in a mother's arms. Just one more step, and I can lay on this cloud. Upon impact, I find myself sinking into its depths, allowing it to hug me in its warmth as the day's stresses melt away, replaced by dreams. With the embrace of this gentle beast, the world fades away. It is a personal sanctuary, a place of healing. Whether wrapped in comforting blankets or catching a quick snooze, the cloud is a simple necessity; it is truly a centerpiece, welcoming all beaten-down creatures to its tender embrace.

The combination of the bed and the layout of this sanctuary is the hidden gem to me and only me. There are billions of sanctuaries on the face of the Earth, but only one belongs to me. This sanctuary is the keeper of secrets, and where my personality spills and paints this sanctuary in my image. Every object placed and kept in the space has a purpose of being there. However, some, like my mother, see this sanctuary as a horrible, disorganized dumpster fire. But I do not care what others say; to me, that is the personality of this space. This sanctuary has experienced essential moments in my life. Each time, in this sanctuary is a tale of its own, different experiences and emotions. Even though my feelings have changed from my darkest days to the happiest of days, my space has never changed. It is still the same old space that I trust.

As a fireball sneaks up the mountain, its orange glow breaks the darkness and fills the room with a red or orange light. The magic of the sanctuary is slowly taken away and replaced by the brightness of the day; thirty minutes before seven, the shelter wakes me up, and it is time to leave. Oh! Even when I am away, the memory of its gentle embrace stays with me, reminding me of its comfort. It's not just a sanctuary; it's an ATM of dreams, a cherished cover where the heart finds its place and the soul connects with the heavens. In this world of endless hustle and noise, this haven is rare, and it becomes more than a physical space; it's an emotion, a sentiment, and a timeless embrace of warmth and familiarity.

Whether I call it a sanctuary, space, gentle beast, or hidden dimension, there is one universal name for this space: it is my room, my bedroom.



Vibrant Death | Claire Park '25 | Tinted Charcoal



This Must be the Place | Daniel Kurimay '24 | Photography

Troubled Path

by George Pearsall '24

Traveling along a path of tribulation,
We thirst in feeble desperation
For a river yet unseen,
Yet a river sure to appear
As sure as the grass is green.

The road is laden with pebbles and stones
Too small to stop us
Yet big enough to hurt our feet.

We stop beside the path
The stars above ensure our moment of rest,
They shine, glitter, and die in a blaze of glory,
As sure as day is to come again.
A moment to sleep on the green grass
Reflects back on the path already traveled.

Let us rise as the sun surely rises again
Taking time to wake,
But moving again with haste.
Have faith in the river not far ahead, brothers and sisters alike,
Let hope and ambition fill the mouths of those who thirst.

We yearn for the end of the trial,
Knowing not what lies on the way
Yet the blissful conclusion is certain
As sure as the river flows to the sea.

Sunflowers

by Ludovica Mannella '24

I like to think sunflowers are optimistic
The way they always reach towards the sun
And there's always fields of them
Never one just standing alone

It's quite inspirational
They always look for the light
No matter how hopeless it is
Even in the depth of the darkest night

I wish to be like a sunflower
Positive, even through the lows
And I wish I would still look for the sun
no matter where the wind tries to blow

The future is scary, and it's also close by
but that's no reason to fear
With a little positivity and a few smiles
I'll be brave, as the unknown nears

It would be a little easier if I knew
I have to trust, although I wish I could see
Not just where I am right now
but where I'm going to be



Celebration | Gwendolyn Mo '26 | Photography

The Path to Tomorrow *by* Nathan Kuo '24

Franz Kafka once said, "I have the true feeling of myself only when I am unbearably unhappy."

It was April, and the clouds had engulfed the sky completely. It was the time of the year when the entire town turned gray. On this particular day the clouds had taken ominous forms, and rain showered violently against the surface of the earth. Nobody would have ever thought to exit the warmth and comfort of their homes to brave such a heinous storm. And yet, here I was in spite of it all, trudging through wind and water, remembering a quote from a man who believed life was meaningless. I was all that existed in this gray, gruesome world.

Perhaps there was some truth to Kafka's words, or perhaps that was what I wanted to believe. I remembered life being so pleasant and rose-colored in days that had long since passed. Now it seemed as though only despair awaited me. In the walk of life, I had been thrown off course so many times that I barely knew the path I was supposed to take anymore. Due to twisted circumstances, I was homeless, hungry, and utterly alone.

There was a place I would always go during days like these. At the end of a dirt trail hidden by trees and marshland was an abandoned gazebo with a set of benches. I cherished that place because of how hidden it was; nobody would be around to force me back into the cold of the storm. At that place I could close my eyes and let sleep wash over me like a gentle river.

When I finally arrived at the gazebo, I laid down my belongings (only a tattered blanket and an empty coin pouch) and sat down on a bench that faced a large old sycamore tree. I watched as droplets of rain trickled down from its leaves and dispersed into nothingness. When my eyes finally grew weary, I reached for my blanket and covered myself. I gazed downwards into a murky puddle of water below me and stared at my reflection. My hair was overgrown and my skin was tortured by the storm. Nobody would even recognize me as a human being at this point.

"Nobody…" For some reason, I felt inclined to utter the word aloud.

When I was about to close my eyes, a strange phenomenon occurred. The raging storm around me became silent, and the rain appeared to have been frozen in place. Mesmerized, I observed my surroundings until I noticed a figure walking towards me: a man with long brown hair, wearing a coat and jeans, holding a white umbrella. He was here, in a place where nobody should have ever been. My instincts told me that I needed to run. He had surely seen me here several other times and had come to take me away. I could never let that happen.

"Don't be afraid, I come in peace!" When the man said this, sound returned and the rain resumed. He jogged over to where I was resting, set his umbrella down, and took a seat at the bench adjacent to me. We sat together in silence under the rain for a while. This man had a different aura about him. I sensed no hostility from him, unlike many other people I had encountered through the course of time.

"It's rare to see anyone walking outside on a stormy day like this," I said to the man.

"You seem to be enjoying every second of it." The man turned to face me, and I looked him in the eyes for the first time. They were glowing with kindness and sympathy.

"I enjoy being in nature," replied the man. "I can't help but be astonished by the intricacy of it all."

As the man said this, he stretched out his hand, and a little bluebird fluttered down from the trees and landed in his palm. The vivid azure color of its feathers illuminated the gray world around us. I was astonished at the way this man seemed to perfectly coexist with nature. He stretched out his hand once again, and the bluebird returned to the trees. "You also seem to be someone who appreciates nature's little details," he said with a smile. I had never encountered someone who had spoken to me so kindly. For some reason, I felt like I could tell him anything. The man stood up and offered me his hand.

"Shall we go for a walk?" he asked.

"I'm afraid there isn't a path available for us," I explained. "The majority of this place is abandoned, anyways."

The man seemed unfazed by my remark. He glanced at me with his eyes of kindness and gestured for me to follow him. "I believe Franz Kafka once said, 'Paths are made by walking.'" Before I knew it, I found myself in a forest. I was confused as to why the man had led me to such a dreary place. "Perhaps it would be better if the rain had stopped," pondered the man. He glanced longingly at the sky as if speaking to the clouds themselves.

Suddenly, the rain stopped, and rays of sunlight poured out from the sky. The forest was illuminated, and I realized that it was lush and beautiful. I stared at the man, bewildered. "Surely, that was not a coincidence just now. Who exactly are you?"

The man continued to walk. "Come with me and I will tell you about myself." As we ventured deeper into the forest, I listened to the man's story. "I was a teacher," he said. "I ministered to people all throughout the world. Unfortunately, there were many who denied my teachings and accused me of being a fraud. I was hated by many."

"What exactly did you teach that made people hate you?"

The man turned to me and smiled. "I simply taught them the truth. Some people could not accept it, and their hearts were hardened. However, many people chose to believe in me, and they became my students. We traveled and spread the good news together."

"Where are your students now?" I asked.

The man closed his eyes. "They are somewhere far more incredible than this earth."

"You speak as though you know everything about the universe."

"Would you believe me if I told you that my Father created the universe?"

I was astonished by his claim. "Are you insane? No man could have created the universe."

The man glanced at me yet again with his eyes of kindness. "Earlier you asked why people hated me."

"I'm sorry. I just can't understand all of this," I admitted.

We walked in silence until we came across a hill that overlooked the entire town. It was the most spectacular view I had ever seen. "You know," I said, "you're pretty lucky that you got to travel the world with all your students. I've never had the money to travel, let alone anybody to travel with. Heck, I'm homeless for crying out loud."

The man nodded sympathetically. "I know how much you've struggled."

"You know?" I lashed out at him in a fit of rage. "You don't know anything about what I've gone through! You don't know a single thing about me!"

The man was unfazed. "I really do know how much you've struggled. I know that when you were a child your dream was to own a company like your father. I know how hard you worked to make that dream a reality. I know that after you graduated college, you started a small business with your best friend. I know that when your business started to become successful, your friend betrayed you and stole everything from you. I know that ever since then you could never trust anyone around you, and that despite your greatest efforts to recover from the loss of your business, you could never really work the same way you used to. I know that your parents eventually gave up on you, and that you have been homeless ever since they stopped supporting you financially. And I know that this must have all been truly devastating to you."

I was paralyzed with disbelief. I opened my mouth to reply to him, but no words came out.

"However, I also know that you are kind. I know that you appreciate things that others turn a blind eye to. I know that you wish to be understood by others, even though you feel as though nobody understands you. And I know that deep down you have been clinging to the possibility that there is still hope for you. The man spread out his arms and embraced me. "I knew you from the day you were born."

I couldn't stop the tears from spilling out of my eyes. I hated crying. I hated feeling so weak. Yet I knew this man wouldn't hold it against me. "How can I be assured that there's still hope for someone like me?"

The man placed his hand on my shoulder. "If I told you that I walked across water, opened the eyes of a blind man, and raised a girl from the dead, would you believe me? If I told you that I myself died and rose again so that you and many others could be spared from death, would you believe me?"

I smiled. "Considering all the other miracles you've done today, of course I would believe you."

The man smiled back at me. "Then truly I tell you, there is hope for you today." With a wave of his hands, all of the clouds that remained in the sky dispersed in an instant, revealing a blazing sunset that flared like a mighty flame over the view of the town. I had never seen such a beautiful sight. "I hope that you remember this day," said the man. "Seek me, and you will find hope and eternal happiness."

This entire time I had thought that the person in front of me was only a man. I knew now that he was someone with far more power than I could ever imagine.

"Who…are you?" I asked.

The Son of the One who created the universe gazed at me with eyes of infinite grace.

"My name is Jesus."



Psalm 121:1-2 | Derek Zhang '25 | Photography



Ocean | Nathaniel Lowell '24 | Photography

Storming the New Year

by Ruthie Harkins '24

Written masterpieces drown themselves in minutes.
Awards on the walls of my room,
heavy sinking anchors,
splash like fallen whales,
marry the sea.

Tons of any year are sinkable,
temporary friendships, unfinished speeches.
Royal whirling waves of days,
so little is a shell.

Coming up for air never to be seen again,
what once made sound never to be heard from again.
I start piecing driftwood into shapes.

A drizzle, a shower, dancing drops of rain,
only the things I didn't manage to break
make a rainbow after the downpour dies.

Lonely Nights on an Endless Winter Road

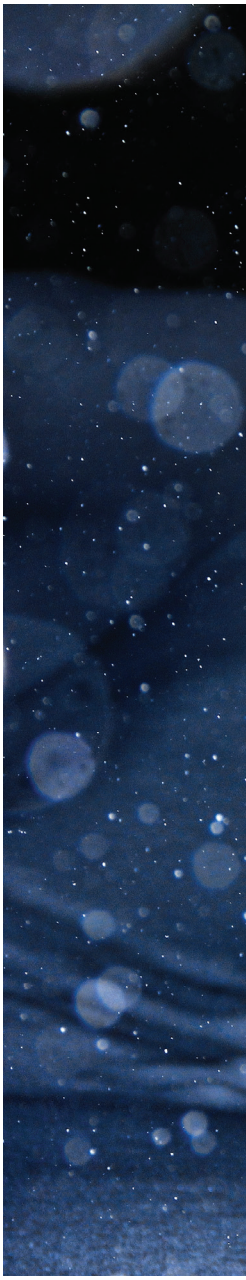
by Ryan Lee '26

Lonely days walking on the endless winter road...
Where I will go, where I will be, I do not know
Moving in mindless steps, approaching an abandoned abode
Opening the door, escaping the boundless snow

I find myself lost, freezing from the bitter cold
The end is far, and the road, unknown
Unable to cross the gate, the threshold
But through love, faith or grace, a hope, a spark was shown

A single light in the path, a path through the dark
An outcast separated from the rest,
The final steps, the final embark
Slowly step by step, with purpose, I progressed

Lonely days walking in the endless winter nights.
Saved by the warmth of our Savior's light





Snowed In | Evan Shaignineik '25 | Photography



With Your Wind to the World | Hany Jang '25 | Mixed Media

New York State of Mind *by* Lucky Matties '25

Humid raindrops drizzle over the red brick town, as I watch the pink poofy tulle dresses and brain-shattering patterned hats soak in the rain. Extravagantly dressed women of all ages glide through the streets as if it were the bright blue sunny day it was twenty minutes before. Men carrying racing forms swivel their heads in every direction searching for a TV screen to capture the race. They finally find a screen illustrating ten horses dressed in the rainbow, painted with individual numbers racing around a dirt-filled oval track at lightning speed. The screen only depicts a portion of the event happening in real-time if the men would just turn around. The heat, the rain, the horses, the dirt, the exhilaration, the exhaustion, the outfits, the men, and the women could only be seen in the place I long for each summer: Saratoga, New York.

This city is the home I did not get the privilege to live in, but I grew up in. Saratoga is a lively, old town in upstate New York. The city is filled with culture, history, and family. I have a map of this home tattooed on my brain. When I was young my summers were spent in the middle of the town upon one main street painted with boutiques and cafes, where quaintly dressed women and children rule the roads. On a blistering day, the pavement burns the plastic soles of high heels. A few blocks down a new generation of kids graze the grass, sweating and screaming in Congress Park. The ducks dive through the chilled pond as families and couples scatter quilts and blankets to settle into the sunset. In the evening the twinkling lights stretch from building to building acting as stars. The saying is New York City is the city that never sleeps but obviously, those people haven't been to Saratoga.

As the summers grew older so did I, and I longed to live each day alongside my dad and brother at the star of Saratoga. Saratoga Race Course is the focal point of the city and my life. The overbearing oak trees break apart the sunlight and the sky creating a canopy over the picnic tables, grandstands, and paddock. When each sunny day inevitably floods with gloom, rain, and lightning, the sound of "New York State of Mind" by Billy Joel fills the atmosphere. The racetrack holds my childhood in its turf and dirt. It has felt my feet as I run from my brother in Hide and Seek Tag, my hands as we play Texas Hold'em, and my heart as I watch my older brother and cousins grow out of their childhood, without me.

Saratoga lives on for the dainty women, the anxious men, and my little cousins, but the tune has inevitably changed. Billy Joel's "New York State of Mind" has morphed into Jay-Z's "Empire State of Mind" and the song I so vividly remember embodying the essence of the track is forgotten. My older more mature cousins whom I prayed to embody, grew out of our naive games and became adults, while I stayed behind gathering the playing cards they discarded. Suddenly I caught up and now watch as my little cousins take over our territory and create their own childhoods. The memories will forever be embedded in me and have given me a love for the place I call home. This little red brick, humid, summer town called Saratoga will forever be the setting of my childhood and continue to play its part in the generations to come.

from the STUDENT EDITORS

For the fifth edition of *The Mirror*, we have decided to collect art and literature submissions that focus on the theme of HOPE. Our theme verse, Romans 15:13, says, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Our hope is found in Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. Hope gives us purpose and meaning in life. We pray that this year's collection fills you with a sense of hope for whatever lies ahead in the course of our daily lives.

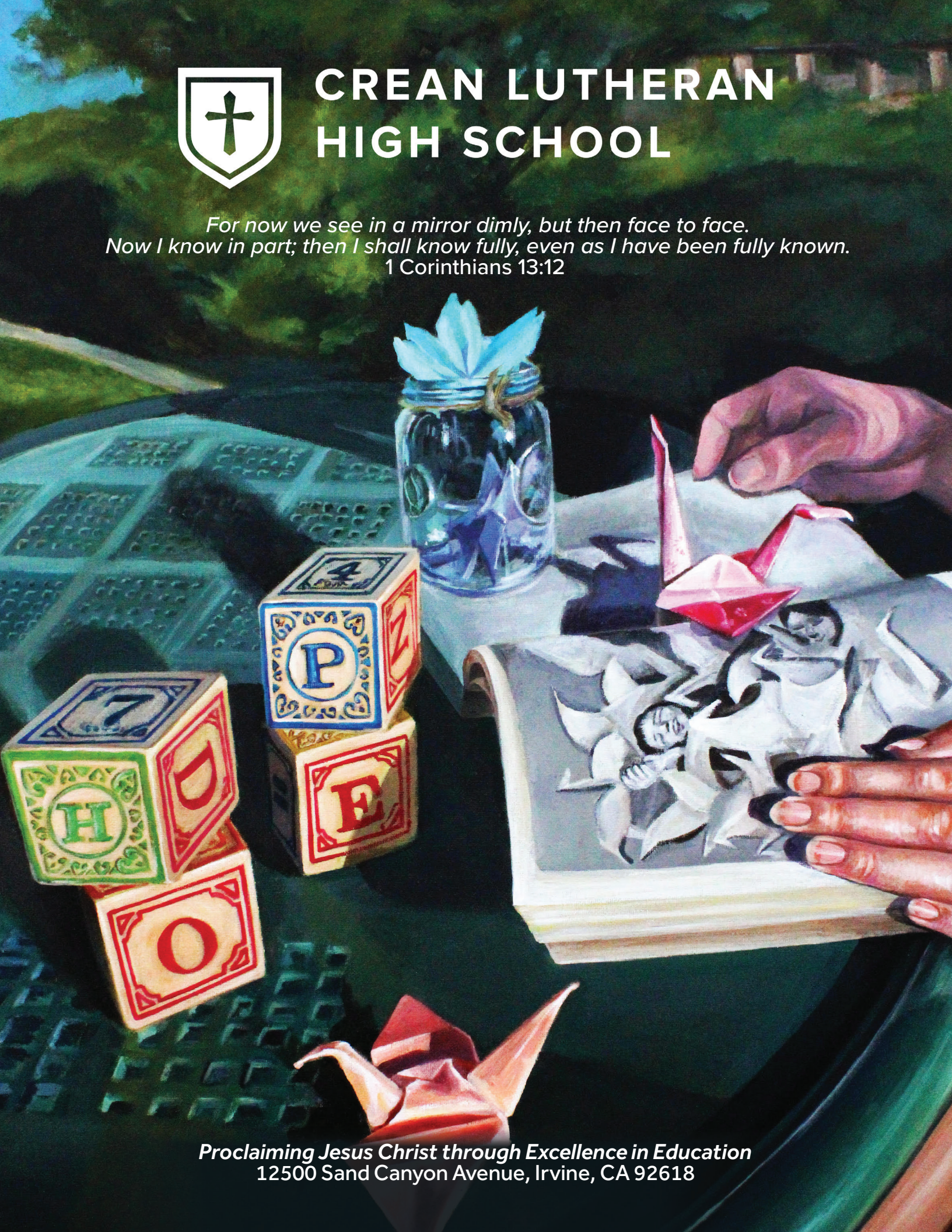
Many of our featured pieces were specifically chosen for their joyful tone. The poem "Spes Fiduciae" meditates on the meaning of hope to different people, while alluding to our common hope in Christ. "Autumn's Painter" and "The Path to Tomorrow" demonstrate how God reveals Himself even in mundane situations. The people coming together in *Through a Lens* remind us that Jesus brings hope to all humanity. The joy of hope is further expressed in the warm colors and close perspective used in the photograph *A Day at the Zoo*.

Serving as Student Editors for Volume 5 of *The Mirror* is a privilege we have deeply cherished. Throughout this experience, we have been captivated by the remarkable skills and creativity of our fellow classmates. Their artistry has encapsulated the theme of hope and profoundly inspired us all. We hope that this edition of *The Mirror* reminds you to always trust in the Lord and have hope in Him, despite whatever life brings you.

In His love,
Julianne Kam, Michelle Lee, Kayla Reed,
Chloe Robinson, and Surina Silva



Song of Worship | Chloe Robinson '24 | Printmaking


CREAN LUTHERAN
HIGH SCHOOL
For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.
Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
1 Corinthians 13:12
Proclaiming Jesus Christ through Excellence in Education
12500 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, CA 92618