

MODUS VIVENDI

A Way of Life



FACULTY PROFILE:
JILL TAYLOR

COMMENCEMENT 2024

PRESCHOOL DIG PROGRAM

**THE BEAR
CREEK
SCHOOL
MAGAZINE**

SUMMER 2024



MODUS VIVENDI

Summer 2024

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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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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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.

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To get text or email reminders for upcoming events, athletics team events, and special programs, sign up for alerts at tbcs.org. Click on the "bell" icon next to any upcoming event on the school's website calendar to sign up for an alert for that event.

BLOG

For an in-depth view into the happenings at Bear Creek, read our blog at tbcs.org/blog. To receive alerts when new articles are posted, subscribe to the blog by clicking the "bell" icon at the top of the page.

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.

MyBC

Students, parents, faculty, and staff can find a complete list of role-specific resources on our website. See MyBC at the top of any page on tbcs.org and log in.

ON THE COVER

Yuna C. '37 finds a worm during our preschool Discovering and Investigating God's creation (DIG) program. Learn more about the DIG program on page 22.

Photo by Cindy McCahill



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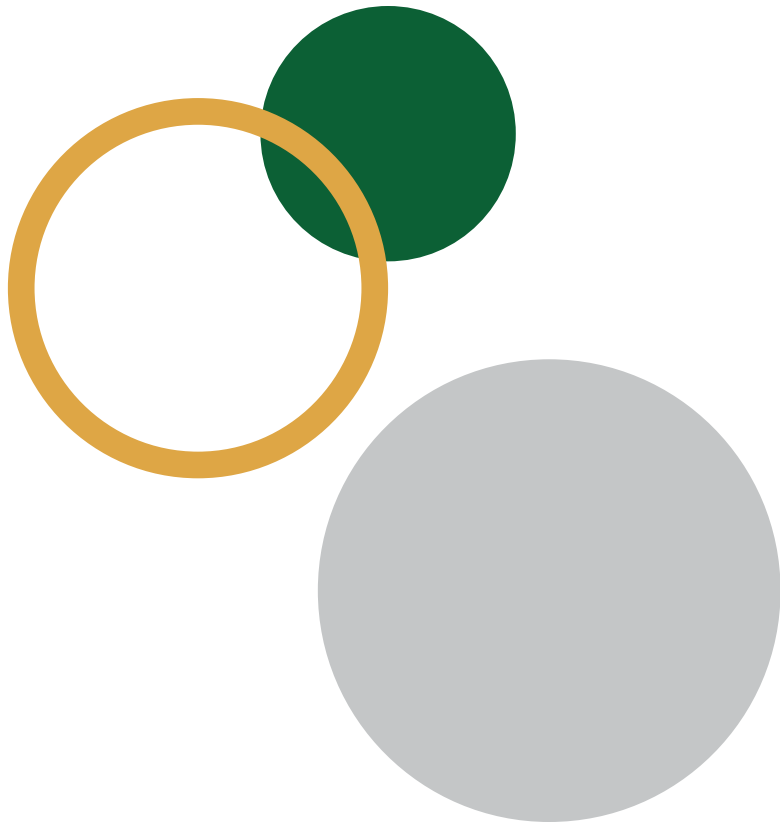
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See photos from Bear Creek's Lower School Grandparents Day

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COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS FROM THE HEADMASTER

By Patrick Carruth

Congratulations, Class of 2024. You have worked hard at The Bear Creek School, proving to be a class of excellence, determination, and grit (although I'm still not sure about that softball game victory). And now you stand at the end of your journey, and it's my pleasure to offer you one final word:

You. Have. No. Chance.

Now you may be thinking, and likely everyone in the audience is saying to themselves, this seems like a lousy way to begin a commencement speech. So maybe I should clarify with a story I recently heard from Pastor R.C. Sproul.

In my pocket I have a quarter.

- What is the **chance**, if I flip it, it will come up heads or tails? 100%.
- Okay, what is the **chance**, if I flip it again, it will come up heads? 50%. Right. You get it.
- And, finally, what effect did **chance** have on whether the quarter came up heads or tails? 0%.



When I flip the coin, it is impacted by the nature of reality—what scientists like to call physics—which determines its outcome: the angle of my hand before the flip, the force exerted on the coin at the flip and the location of that flip, the density and resistance of the air, where I choose to catch it, and so on, and so on. These forces are part of the material universe. They exist, they are something, they have being. But, chance is not a force. It does not exist. It is simply a word we use to describe the mathematical percentages of the material forces and their impact on the coin. Chance has no being. It is actually no-thing.

However, the modern world has grown accustomed to using this word to answer ontological and metaphysical questions.

Nobel Prize winning French biochemist Jacques Monod in *Chance and Necessity* writes,

It necessarily follows that chance alone is at the source of every innovation, and of all creation in the biosphere. Pure chance, absolutely free but



NATION PHOTOGRAPHY

blind, at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution: this central concept of modern biology is no longer one among many other possible or even conceivable hypotheses. It is today the sole conceivable hypothesis, the only one that squares with observed and tested fact. And nothing warrants the supposition—or the hope—that on this score our position is ever likely to be revised.

Similarly, Stephen Hawkings, English theoretical physicist, indicates something similar:

When people ask me if a god created the universe, I tell them that the question itself makes no sense. Time didn't exist before the big bang, so there is no time for god to make the universe in. It's like asking directions to the edge of the earth; the Earth is a sphere; it doesn't have an edge; so looking for it is a futile exercise. We are each free to believe what we want, and it's my view that the simplest explanation is; there is no god. No one created our universe, and no one directs our fate.

This leads me to a profound realization; there is probably no heaven, and no afterlife either. We have this one life to appreciate the grand design of the universe, and for that I am extremely grateful.

(As an aside, did you notice something still exists in Hawking's explanation—"before time?" But I digress.)

But if chance is no-thing, how can it be the origin of all things? Something cannot come from nothing. From nothing, comes nothing.

Compare that with the awareness of an objective nature of reality from Lise Meitner, Austrian physicist, who basically discovered nuclear fission:

Science makes people reach selflessly for truth and objectivity; it teaches people to accept reality, with wonder and admiration, not to mention the deep awe and joy that the natural order of things brings to the true scientist.

And she is right. We could all stand up here today wishing you good luck—or, as the French might say, *bon chance*—and we would be saying nothing to you at all. Instead, we'd rather you hear this:

You have no chance. You have the truth.

The Truth of Reality

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

The Truth of Humanity

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I
know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was
made in the secret place, when I was woven
together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days
ordained for me were written in your book before
one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How
vast is the sum of them!

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the
grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.
(Psalm 139:13-18)

The Truth of Reconciliation

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell
in him, and through him to reconcile to himself
all things, whether things on earth or things in
heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed
on the cross. (Colossians 1:19, 20)

During your time here at The Bear Creek School, we
aspired to show you this beauty, this goodness, and
this truth of the world and its Creator. As Frances
Shaeffer wrote,

If truth is one, that is if truth has unity, then
Christian education means understanding, and
being excited by, the associations between the
disciplines and showing how these associations
are rooted in the Creator's existence.... It is a
flaming fire. It is gorgeous if you understand what
we have in the teaching and revelation of God. If
we are going to have really a Christian education,
it means understanding truth is not a series of
isolated subjects but there are associations, and
the associations are rooted in nothing less than
the existence of the Creator Himself.

"Well, here at last, dear friends...comes the end of
our fellowship." Today, you begin a new journey. As
you take the next step in becoming the "individual
God intends," may you take it knowing we here at
The Bear Creek School love you. And may you be
compelled by Truth to bring wisdom, compassion, and
courage to a watching world.

Finally, know it is significant that you have no chance.
Instead, you have more. You have more than nothing.
You have something. Your life is more than chance.
It is sovereignty designed and appointed by a holy
God. You are more than a cosmic accident. You are a
glorious creation that mirrors the Creator of all things.

Congratulations, Class of 2024.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2024

Elizabeth Dawn Atwood‡***
Whitworth University

Pierce Thomas Bader‡***
Columbia University

Jacqueline Zhilan Bai***
University of Washington

Braelyn Lauren Baker‡***
Duke University

Christa Bashinski*
Grove City College

Sara Blattenbauer‡***
University of Miami

Sophia Blattenbauer‡***
University of Miami

Ian R. Carpenter‡***
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Baylor University

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Milica Powell***
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Claire J. Pruner***
Kenyon College

Hannah Grace Schwartz‡***
Vanderbilt University

Kobe Kiyomasa Shimada‡**
Baylor University

Shivoham Singh***
University of Southern California

Benjamin Thomas Smith***
University of Exeter

Quinn Abigail Smith**
Claremont McKenna College

Ellie Chong Stambaugh‡**
Western Washington University

Ella Marie Stutz‡
High Point University

Joonbeom John Suhr***
University of Washington

Ian Taylor**
University of Washington

Titus Josiah Urban‡*
Texas A&M University

Yulia Vasyura**
University of California, Santa Cruz

Finley Vinkemulder***
University of Utah

Grace Elizabeth Walker*
Brigham Young University

Abigail Madison Wong*
Elon University

Alexander Moses Wong
Baylor University

Coen Brian Yetter‡
Loyola Marymount University

Emory Ann Yetter‡*
Loyola Marymount University

Romeo Zixuan Zeng**
Georgia Institute of Technology

Clarie J. Zhao**
Scripps College

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

***SUMMA CUM LAUDE (3.9 – 4.0 GPA)

** MAGNA CUM LAUDE (3.75 – 3.89 GPA)

*CUM LAUDE (3.5 – 3.749 GPA)

FACULTY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

BY AMY BURNS

*May the words of
my mouth and the
meditations of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
O Lord my rock and my
redeemer.*

—Psalm 19:14

Pilgrimage

Today is an extraordinary day. This is the day you have longed for over these last four years, and especially, over this past year. This is the day you have looked toward while writing final papers, studying for AP exams, and preparing Capstone projects. It's the day your parents have been misty-eyed about since your kindergarten graduation. It's a momentous day for obvious and good reason. Today is the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another. It's the leap from adolescence to adulthood as you enter a time of pursuing your passions or figuring out what they are. It's this beautiful time of deepening, becoming more of who you are and who



you are meant to be. But it's not the start of your journey—you began walking on this path years ago. This is the continuation of the journey you are on.

Before we think about what lies ahead, please take a moment and think about all the beautiful, and perhaps ordinary moments, that have brought you here to this one. When I think back over these last four years with you, I think of “Lewisgard” lunches freshman year in Mrs. Price’s room, spending sometimes four hours every Monday with Pierce, Kate, and Jeremy; answering one of Joey’s many questions; marveling at Lydia’s creativity and drawings; reading your very lengthy fan-fiction stories which you willingly spent your Mid-Winter Break working on (which is why there is now a word limit for future classes); and being mesmerized by your incredible *Julius Caesar* performances. I think of our optional summer book club between freshman and sophomore year; sophomore year lunches outside while we listened to Braelyn’s perfectly crafted playlists; school dances singing “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun” and any Taylor Swift song; and asking Martin for weeks after my creative writing JanTerm if he had worked on his semi-autobiographical romantic drama. I think about talking with Michael about greenhouses and gardening on the way to Senior Blast, listening to Ben sing in the Northwest Boys Choir during Christmas time, marveling at Finn’s incredible nature photography, and so many other little conversations I’ve had with all of you throughout the years.

And now here we are. You are sitting on this stage, and it feels surreal. For some of you, you can’t cross this stage fast enough. For others, you want to savor every moment because perhaps what lies ahead is a little terrifying. You, most likely, feel so unbelievably and incredibly ready for what’s next, yet simultaneously unbelievably and incredibly unprepared. But think about it, isn’t this how all stories begin? The unwilling hero called upon to go on an adventure, feeling underprepared, underqualified, or—if you’re like Bilbo—just uninterested. But we aren’t the heroes in our stories—there’s only One who is. Instead, you and I? We are pilgrims. Pilgrims journey intentionally towards the sacred. Pilgrims learn spiritually while traversing the rocky, cloudy path or resting in lush valleys bathed in sunshine. Pilgrims journey both alone and together, sometimes with Virgil-like guides and sometimes by themselves. These past years, you’ve had your own guides who have taken you by the hand and lovingly guided you through classes, relationships, conflicts, and difficulties. But now, you are going into the unknown, without the people you’ve looked to as mentors, without your friends and community that’s





surrounded you, without the comfort of the home you've lived in. But fear not, for there are signposts that will direct you towards the way you should go.

If you've ever been lost, you know what a terrifying feeling it can be to, upon looking around, not recognize your surroundings and be completely and utterly confused. This happened to Mr. Burns and me on a family vacation in Venice, Italy. We were so excited to explore and so exhausted from the hours of traveling and jet lag. We found ourselves in the middle of Venice, turned around, with absolutely no idea how to head back in the direction we had come. Everyone's phone was dead, we didn't have a map, and the sun was starting to set. After getting ourselves even more turned around, we looked up, and on the side of a building was, in capital letters, "SAN MARCO"—Saint Mark's Cathedral. As long as we followed the signs, we knew how to get back on the right path and knew how to get home.

On this pilgrimage, there will be signposts,

things that point you towards the way you should go, things you can look to for guidance.

Goodness

One such signpost is goodness. Whenever you are lost or confused or feel you have lost sight of who you are, remember the virtues and qualities—the goodness—that people you trust and who love you have recognized within you. Your life has been filled with mentors, teachers, role models, parents and grandparents who love you,

and people who know you deeply. Remember the moments when we called out who you truly are, pointing out the way you compassionately listen to friends, the way you seek truth, the way you bring joy to every person in every hallway, the way you seek to be peaceful in a divisive world, the way you patiently work through difficulties, the ways that you reflect the goodness of God. Remember the goodness we've seen in you and remember that you are made in the image of a God who is good—and seek, then, what is good. It can be difficult to know what is good when the skies are dark and the way is unclear but seek out the One who in His very being is goodness, and you will find where you are truly meant to be.

Beauty

Beauty also directs us. Your life will have beautiful moments, moments you wish you could bottle up and experience all over again. These moments may be magnificent or they may be ordinary. These moments of beauty can be experienced in the vastness of creation or the smile of someone you love. Beauty can be

found in a song well-played or well-listened, in a story that speaks to your soul so deeply you feel known, in the way everything seems to work out the way you need, or in the way you are miraculously provided for in a time of desperation. Beauty causes our eyes to look not at the horizon in front of us, but to be lifted towards something—towards someone—greater and more beautiful than we can imagine. Notice the beautiful in the large and small, and let your gaze be lifted upward towards the God who is beauty Himself. Be as the Psalmist, who declares, “One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.” (Psalm 27:4) See the beautiful but see the Lord behind and above it all.

Truth

Now, we’ve talked about goodness, we’ve talked about beauty, we must talk about truth. Beauty and goodness—they direct us to truth. Truth, while a signpost, is also part of the destination. Because truth is not just an ethereal idea. Truth is a person—truth is Jesus Himself. Truth is Jesus, the God incarnate, the Good Shepherd. What is good and what is beautiful about Jesus is how he loves us and pursues us, and how nothing can separate us from Him. For, as Paul declares, “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39) No matter how far we wander nor how lost we become, no matter the darkness we experience within us or around us, Jesus leaves the 99 to seek out the 1. We, like sheep, have gone astray, but our Shepherd seeks us out. Jesus is the one who journeys with us, who leads us beside still waters, who emboldens us when we walk through the dark valleys of this

life, and who pulls us to the mountaintop and gives us the strength to carry on. Jesus is the one who, after we’ve squandered all that we have been given, still runs to us and embraces us as sons and daughters when we decide to come home. If there’s anything I want you to know, it’s that Jesus is more good and more beautiful than we can ever describe. Following Jesus doesn’t make life perfect; it’s not that by following Him the road becomes smooth and steady and easy, but with Him, your life is more good, more beautiful, and more true because you are connected to Goodness Himself, Beauty Himself, Truth Himself—Life Himself. If you want to know the way you should go, look to Jesus, because in Him you will find your true home.

So, Class of 2024, take heart. The road ahead is cloudy, maybe rocky and steep at times. But there will be vistas that can only be seen from the very top of mountains and beauty to behold in the valleys. Look for the signposts along the way—remember goodness, not just within you, but the One who is good; delight in beauty and let it direct your gaze to the beautiful One; and pursue truth, not just by asking questions and exploring ideas, but by pursuing the One who is Truth Himself. Have courage and rest in knowing that you have the wisest and most faithful, loving guide who walks with you and goes before you on this pilgrimage: the Good, Beautiful, and True Shepherd.

Amy Burns joined the Upper School English Department faculty in 2020. She is passionate about helping young people discover all that it means to be human and learn about the God we serve through literature. Through her vocation as a teacher, she combines her love for youth ministry and passion for education and literature. Amy holds a B.A. English from Colorado Christian University and an M.A. Curriculum and Instruction from University of Colorado.

REFLECTIONS FROM

Excerpts from Commencement Speeches

On my first day of kindergarten, I had only one goal in mind—to conquer the monkey bars. Twelve grades later, I am looking back on this journey, admiring how far I’ve come and appreciating how much further I am going to go with the wisdom I’ve gained from the Bear Creek experience.

Now one thing I’ve learned when doing the monkey bars is that you should never do them alone. In kindergarten, you make friends without even knowing what the definition of a friend is. But you understand that these people—people I am smiling at right now—are your new comrades, all walking along the same road and journeying across the same monkey bars.

Throughout the rest of Lower School and Middle School, most of my worries consisted of multiplication tables and what was for lunch the next day. As I entered Upper School, I knew I wasn’t

going to have recess anymore, but I certainly had more monkey bars to go.

But then my grip on the bars started to slip. COVID-19 reduced faces and smiles to a computer screen, and weekly hangouts became chats on Teams. But, as I walked through the halls, I noticed that even through the masks, I could see the passion that the teachers had for my education, and I could feel my classmates’ smiles radiating around the school.

From there, this community shaped me into the person I am today. Mr. Higley and I connected over our love for fitness, yet it was his theology discussions that helped me realize God’s purpose for my athletic career. Mrs. Dunn always had the most heartwarming hallway wave, and her spirited attitude in marine biology sparked and cultivated my own dedication to the sciences. Mr. Summers made his classes fun and engaging, but his insights on readings prompted me to think deeper about my own beliefs and worldview. God used every connection I made with a classmate or a teacher to show me what it means to live fully for Him in every aspect of my life.

Now, twelve grades—and twelve monkey bars—later, I’ve reached the platform that I once believed was eons away. As I’m looking down the line of handholds toward where I once started, I see how much stronger I’ve become, how much grip, grit, and courage I’ve acquired, and how many precious memories I’ve made. But most importantly, I was able to share this experience with my friends, peers, parents, and teachers. We were all learning together what it means to have wisdom, compassion, and courage. Class of 2024, I cannot wait to see what other monkey bars God has in store for us.



Sophia
Blattenbauer

THE CLASS OF 2024

I am a hoarder, plain and simple. My room is adorned with a mishmash of items that congeal into a vaguely cohesive vibe. These items are reminders of good moments, imprinted with people and places I love. I will continue to hold Bear Creek close to me, both in my memories and in the relics I take with me.

In ninth grade, I obtained a broken bust of Abraham Lincoln from Mr. Schuldt. I got my first relic of high school. Tor started gesticulating a little too much one day and whacked the beautiful bust right off of a shelf. Everyone had a laugh, Mr. Schuldt consoled him, and I managed to sneak Lincoln home.

Sophomore year was my initiation into two daunting activities: speech and debate and cross country. Through both, I have made lifelong friends and grown as an individual. From speech and debate, I have this cardboard cutout of Queen Elizabeth II. Liberated from Dr. Howell's wall by way of gravity, she became part of the speech and debate family. I would speak to her during online tournaments, and she would celebrate with us in the library. Dr. Sorensen helped me immensely to find the courage to elevate my voice, and the lessons learned in this activity will be carried with me forever—within the cardboard cutout of the Queen.

Cross country required a different kind of courage. I had to be willing to sweat my heart out while knowing I wouldn't necessarily be the best. Cross country developed my endurance, both physically and mentally. I learned that it doesn't matter how many people are faster than you, what matters is the effort you put in. From cross country I have a fat stack of bibs—each one with a race written on the back, a time, and a reflection.

In junior year, I continued with speech and debate and cross country, but the workload from school started to pile up. But Bear Creek builds within us wisdom: as the workload increases, we do not forget our friends or how to have fun. An item I take away from junior year is *El Capitán*. I do not know why this deteriorating skeleton got the name *El Capitán*, nor why he was in the French room.

And so, it is true—I am a hoarder. More trinkets will surround me as I age. I will continue to decorate my life with physical reminders. Not to be trapped in the past, but because this place has made me into who I am. These items will adorn my life forever, because hidden within each is a powerful memory, one where the Bear Creek community helped me evolve into the individual God intends. Growing older, my memories will fade, but looking around at my hoard, I will be so thankful I got to be a part of Bear Creek.



CINDY MCCA HILL

Oscar
Moe

Milica Powell



If you have ever been on a road trip, this might sound familiar. The car's all packed up, you pull out of the driveway, and...sit on the highway for a couple of hours. An anticlimactic beginning, much like my first year here. I had imagined what ninth grade at my new school would be like, and somehow Teams calls never factored into that. But the year went by.

The highway does too, and eventually, you're out of state. You start driving through new territory, but there are just trees everywhere. So, in order to escape the monotony, you have to learn to appreciate the trees. Tenth grade felt like ninth grade 2.0, but with Dr. Howell, I gained a new appreciation for Italian opera...I think. With Mr. Faris, we explored the theology of donuts—oops, I mean theology *and* donuts. In AP European History, we learned how to adjudicate fine calves and extravagant facial hair, and some really cool words like defenestration.

Finally, the trees end, and you get to the good stuff: hikes up mountains that perhaps hide sky-blue lakes. There were some tough hikes junior year that sometimes made you miss the trees. APUSH and bootcamp, *a la Norris*, were strenuous, but muscle-

building. One of my favorite hikes ended this year: being a Robinson House Head. It left me with new skills and amazing memories that I will cherish always.

Road trips, like hikes, also must end. So, the thrill of the return journey begins. The scenery is *all* the same as before, your legs feel cramped, and you've already listened to the same five CDs. So you take a couple of side roads to spice things up. Thank you, Ms. Huston, Ms. Bell, and all the professors for being patient shepherds on the Disneyland and Costa Rica trips. Not only were my legs very much exercised, but you pushed me to grow my view and way of interacting with the world, through song and Spanish—or both at the same time. Similarly, thank you, Mr. Summers, for putting up with our Capstone pranks and enabling us to interact faithfully and honestly with the world. Last, but in no way least, Mrs. Dunn. Thank you for enhancing the detail and knowledge with which I now observe the physical world. I will never see dirt, driving, mosquitoes, or flushing a toilet the same way (for the better).

Then come the last few days of the trip. You want it to be over, but also never want it to end. Then suddenly the car pulls into the driveway and the whole thing is over. You don't want to get out yet, so you sit in the driveway and reflect. Thank you to each one of my classmates for such a joyful and memorable high school adventure. Thank you to every teacher, administrator, janitor, and the people at the front desk for working hard to make high school the most spiritually and academically fulfilling experience it could be. Thank you for the chance to learn to grill, play volleyball, sing my heart out, and most of all, for helping me realize that finding our humanity in Christ is what the journey is all about.

Jaden Gao

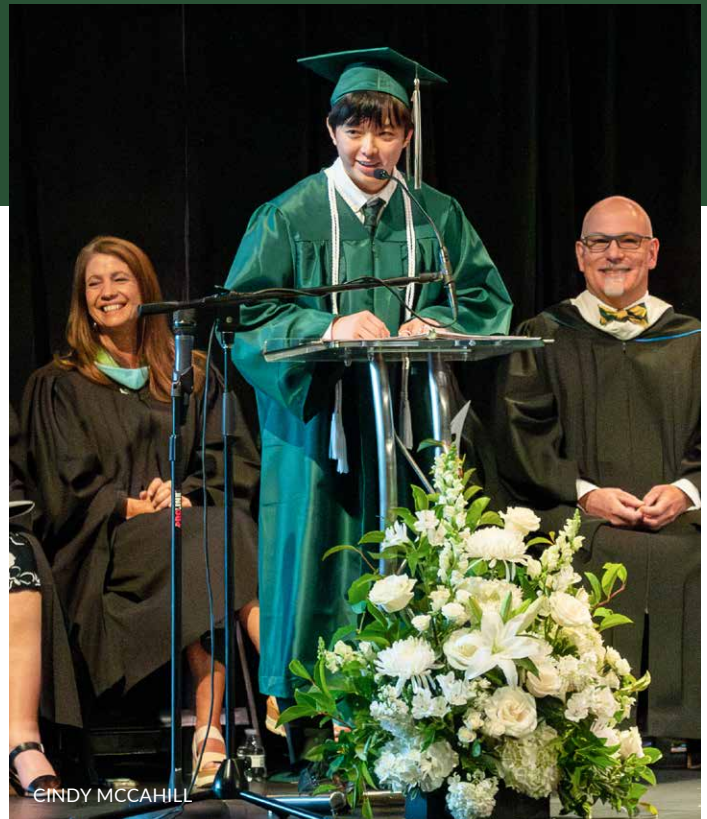
Eighteen years ago, I was a baby. Today, I am proud to announce that I'm still a baby. My face is still babyish and the same as my personality at times, but my curiosity is what truly makes me a baby. None of us have grown up, and we haven't finished learning about the world around us. As a past baby, I can confirm that one way that we explore the world is by putting things in our mouths. As a past toddler, I got much of my information from picture books or from tripping and falling. As a Bear Creek student, however, I learned through my teachers.

I entered this school in grade 6, and throughout Middle School, I was in an environment with lots of enthusiastic teachers. In sixth-grade Latin class, I remember the whole class chanting, "*Credo ut intelligam*. I believe that I may know." Looking back, I could only realize that this foreshadowed how the rest of my high school career would go.

I vividly remember having an actual Viking—known to all of you as Mr. Higley—teach my medieval history class back in Middle School. I had a minimal amount of interest in medieval history at the time, preferring to dabble in tanks and warplanes from World War II. Yet, to this day, I still remember Diocletian's treatment of Christians, Constantine's council of Nicaea, and that gigantic goat-head scythe he had in the classroom.

In ninth grade, Mrs. Thompson led a virtual band due to COVID-19, and when we returned to in-person learning, she had us play the bucket drums. I felt like a little kid again, whacking things with sticks. But we were whacking the buckets with musicality. She taught us from start to finish how to play the beats, and I still remember some of the choreography and drumbeats of the performance.

In tenth grade, I took Dr. Blakeley's AP Biology class, and I ended up finding my spark in learning as I



found myself diving into biology both inside and outside of the classroom, learning about protein structures and laboratory techniques.

In eleventh grade, I took Mr. Culbertson's AP Calculus BC class, in which I appeared in his midnight office hours more than once—way past my bedtime—and he was willing to help me through my problems no matter how tired and lost I was.

In twelfth grade, Mr. Summers taught us how to critique ourselves, instead of others, based on the books we read. I learned a lot about my own weaknesses, like being soft-spoken, and throughout the year, I attempted to step out of my comfort zone in different writing styles.

Throughout these many years, I've managed to find my interests, passions, and loves at Bear Creek. Now we, the graduating Class of 2024, can inspire the next generation of babies, toddlers, and adults to view the world in baby-like wonder and to stay curious.

Fun fact: When I first applied to the school, I fought tooth and nail to *not* go to Bear Creek. I had a nice thing going at public school. They had a cookie making class. I mean, c'mon. I bribed my hockey coach five bucks and a Jimmy John's to tell them I was illiterate... No dice. One of my essay prompts asked who I believed had the greatest impact on mankind. Let's be real, we all *know* you were looking for Jesus. So, I wrote about Alexander Hamilton. Despite my greatest efforts, I weaseled my way in and found myself amongst Bear Creek's sophomore class. On August 25, 2021, I heard the sound of Mr. Davison's bagpipes, and I knew I should have sold the illiteracy harder. Yet, in all honesty, I ended up loving it. Bear Creek taught me the beauty of change. Bear Creek taught me how to leave my comfort zone—not merely how to leave it, but how to excel without it.

It is so easy to get caught up purely crossing dates off the calendar. I mean, look at us. Graduates. How'd that happen? It is so easy to miss the beauty in each different day. Teachers like Mr. Summers, Mr. Urban, and Mrs. Dunn taught me to *see*. In autumn, when the trees turn to fields of orange and gold, how often do we miss that beauty? They taught me to *notice* it.



CINDY MCCAHILL

Teachers like Mr. Norris, Mr. Faris, and Mrs. Jackson taught me how to *listen*. There's so much beauty in a good story. After all, every person has one to tell. How often do we ignore that? They taught me to *hear* it. Teachers like Mrs. Price, Dr. Sorensen, and Madame Graves taught me how to *laugh*. Happiness holds so much beauty, and it is so universal. How often do we forget that? They taught me to *remember* it. These teachers are not the exception, but the rule. This community is one that caters to the heart and to the mind.

Bear Creek loves its Latin phrases. After all, who knows *imago Dei*, or the image of God? A saying that emphasizes our own value as reflections of our Creator. An institution that believes in that phrase shapes souls just as much as grades. A school that gives its students the environment to grow gives them the space to become the individuals that God intends. Goods all have an expiration date. But the relationships—the experiences—those are eternal and those are beautiful. Every individual is influenced by the lives that touch them, and here there are so many people who have touched my life. The friends I have made, I will always remember. The experiences I have shared, I will never forget. I would like to thank every member of the Bear Creek community for being a part of the person I have become. I am glad I never managed to foil my own admission.

Bear Creek is labeled a college preparatory school, but I find myself ready for far more than university academics. College is merely another step outside the box of my own comforts—another chance for growth. It is an opportunity to slow down the calendar and enjoy. There is so much beauty in where we have been, so much beauty in where we are, and so much beauty in where we are going. You just have to look for it. Bear Creek has taught us to *see*, to *listen*, to *laugh*, and above all, to always *learn*.

Christa
Bashinski



FACULTY PROFILE: **JILL TAYLOR**

By JoDee Ramirez

WHEN ASKED WHAT MOTIVATES HER, Jill Taylor said, “I am motivated by human connection and inspired by relationships with people. I find fulfillment in loving, serving, and bringing joy to people.” And she does just that. Jill has immersed herself in the joyful world of Bear Creek Preschool at Valley Campus, teaching P3 2-day and P3 3-day classes and two Cubs Club afterschool classes. She states, “I love having the opportunity to teach the youngest Bear Creek students. I get to welcome them into a safe and nurturing environment where they begin to learn what it looks like to go to school. I get to discover new things with them every day and experience the wonder that it is to be a child.”

Jill came to The Bear Creek School in 2022 after her husband accepted a job in the Seattle area. When looking for a new classical Christian school for her high school aged son, Ian '24, she was motivated to find a school that also had a preschool where she could work. Through faith and prayer, Jill and her husband found The Bear Creek School while searching online. She recalls, “I loved what I read about the preschool on the website: the philosophy, the mission statement, the curriculum. However, it was the people I met, beginning with my first conversation with [Preschool Division Head] Rachael Urban who showed me that this was a special place. I am so grateful that God brought us here.”

Jill developed her love of service when she was a child, serving alongside her mother in the children’s ministry at the church her father pastored in Springfield, MO. After graduating from college, she began work in a 3-year-old classroom as an assistant before transitioning to a Pre-K class at a Christian school in California. After taking several years off from teaching, having three children, and living in Florida and then the Philippines where her husband studied at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, God brought their family to Phoenix, AZ. Jill spent the next 14 years working at a private preschool teaching in both the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classrooms.

During her career as a preschool teacher, Jill has



come to recognize the importance of partnering with parents as she teaches young children. She states, “It is a privilege to walk alongside parents, who are often releasing their children into a school setting for the first time. It is important to reassure and encourage them through this process.” She sympathetically recalls her own challenges as a mother of young children as they transitioned to preschool. “It was a difficult process for me as a parent of young children and if I can comfort and lift that burden for parents, I count it a joy.” Jill’s emphasis on supporting parents and new students helps ease young preschoolers as they transition into a structured school setting and reassures parents that their child is well taken care of by a teacher who deeply understands the challenges they are facing.

Whether it be in the music or arts Cubs Club classes that she teaches, or her P3 2-day and P3 3-day classes, Jill enjoys exploring the world and fostering creativity with her students. “I love creating with my students. I love exploring movements and making music using bean bags, rhythm sticks, and instruments. I love getting messy and exploring color, shape, and texture in art. I love that when

"The thing I most value about the Bear Creek community is the people I have met. There is this deep and genuine desire to love well and to truly help students become the individuals God created them to be."



we create even in the simplest form, we bear the image of our Creator, and we can delight in our creation.”

One of the admirable qualities that Jill possesses is her constant desire to grow in her faith to become more like Jesus. She humbly states, “I am so grateful that God continues to work in my life, to bring me new experiences and teach me new things. I’m grateful that through the challenges of life that God’s grace continues to draw me near to Him. The more I trust the Lord’s work in my life, the more I see His faithfulness; and even now, I continue to become the person God intends me to be. It’s a journey, and I love being on this journey with Jesus.” It is with this attitude that she approaches her teaching at Bear Creek—she starts each day with the mindset of changing lives and shaping young children into the individuals that God intends.

When asked what she loves most about Bear Creek, “The thing I most value about the Bear Creek community is the people I have met. There is this deep and genuine desire to love well and to truly help students become the individuals God created them to be. I love being on that mission together with so many wonderful people.”



CINDY MCCAILL

Preschool DIG Program

By Holly Fritz, Science Specialist



CINDY MCCAHERILL

DIG is an acronym for Discovering and Investigating God’s creation, and that is exactly what preschool students do. Students in P3, P4, and P5 spend time in the classroom, in the outdoor garden, and in the nearby wetlands exploring God’s creation up close. DIG is a hands-on program in which the budding scientists use their senses to explore the world around them.

Every month, students use their senses to observe what is happening in the world. The first thing we teach them is that the main job of a scientist is to look around and ask questions as this is the heart of the DIG program—observing God’s creation through our senses.

On the surface, science and the Bible are not always paired together, and often in current events, they are pitted against each other. But if we look at history, there was no clear distinction between science, philosophy, and theology. Studying and exploring our natural world is a firsthand way to know God. Scripture is filled with examples of science. Genesis

always comes to mind when I am digging in the garden or wading through the wetlands in my rain boots with the preschoolers.

GENESIS 1:1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.



ALLEY FILES

GENESIS 1:11-12

Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so.

The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Why is it important for children to explore the outdoors? The impact of touch cannot be stressed enough. The brain connections deepen when all the senses are included in exploration of new concepts. Preschool students are developmentally primed for this type of learning. The look on their faces when they touch a worm, pick a pumpkin, touch the moss on a nurse tree, or see their radish sprout from the ground is the joy of learning manifested. It comes back to the idea that scientists ask questions,

and when we step outside into our garden or the wetlands the questions are abundant!

Using the scientific method, students use observation and prediction skills to explore their world and then analyze and draw conclusions about what they have learned. The beauty of God’s plan is that we see it woven into science in so many ways. God has a plan for His miraculous world. One way for students to see His plan in action is in the cycles they see in our everyday world.

Each month, students conquer something new in the garden or wetlands. Our overall learning objective is for preschool students to explore God’s creation. More specifically, they observe several cycles including the water cycle, the plant life cycle, and the cycle of seasons in the garden and wetlands.

In the fall, students look at the process of harvesting and decomposing plant matter in the garden and



ALLISON FLETCHER



ISABELLA KERR

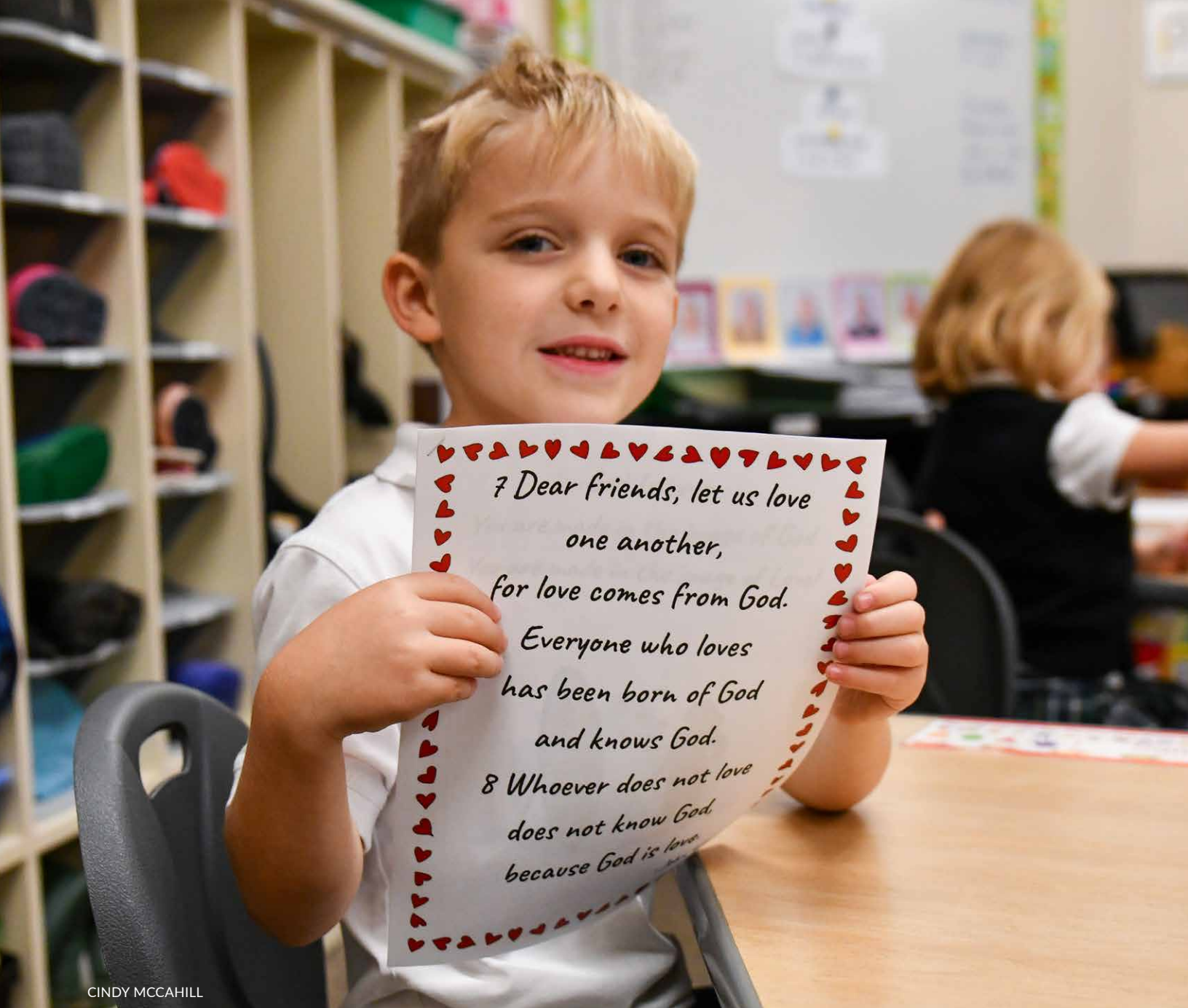
wetlands, using worms and pumpkins to explore these concepts. Our preschool scientists harvest the summer growth from the garden, dissect pumpkins, and start a worm farm.

In the winter, students explore the water cycle. They learn songs, paint weather art, and observe and track the weather using a rain gauge. In February, they enter an exciting part of the cycle in our garden as they begin to look at the parts of a plant, touching and labeling them. They sing and dance to songs and explore why God gave us plants. To explore the concept of photosynthesis, students make an edible flower with all its proper parts and then get to eat it.

This then leads to one of the most exciting times in the garden: spring sprouting. In March, students watch a bean sprout in the window and learn about everything a plant needs to grow. In April, students also sprout radishes in the classroom to plant in the

garden beds, culminating with a harvest in May when students pick and eat the bounty. Along the way, students use the scientific method to observe, ask a question, predict, watch the experiment, and finally draw a conclusion.

No matter what we bring to class, our preschool scientists are thrilled to touch, smell, taste, and listen to the science that is all around them. They are hungry for knowledge and new experiences, and every day we see young minds brighten with the possibility of what is happening in their world. If students leave the classroom and believe themselves to be scientists, then we have succeeded. If they look at their world with questioning eyes, then we have succeeded. But mostly, if they are excited about their world in a new way, then it has been a good day at DIG!



CINDY MCCAILL

Memorizing Scripture in

LOWER SCHOOL

BY KAREN BLANKENBECKLER
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

My third-grade Sunday School teacher challenged our class to memorize Psalm 23. She promised a silver dollar for anyone who could recite the entire psalm. I eagerly took up the challenge, not necessarily to earn the silver dollar or because I understood the value of memorizing scripture, but because I love a challenge.



After several weeks of practice, I proudly recited all six verses of Psalm 23 in front of my class. This was the beginning of my journey with Psalm 23. It started with the grammar phase of my learning which was rote memorization without deep understanding or application. This type of understanding would come later as I mulled over the psalm's meaning, applied it to my life, and pondered the depth of its message. Now, as an adult, I regularly dwell on the meaning of Psalm 23 and let it shape my heart, mind, and habits, but it all started in grade 3 with a Sunday School memory challenge.

Memorization of scripture is an important part of the Lower School curriculum at Bear Creek for several important reasons. First, brains are like muscles that grow stronger with use. Second,

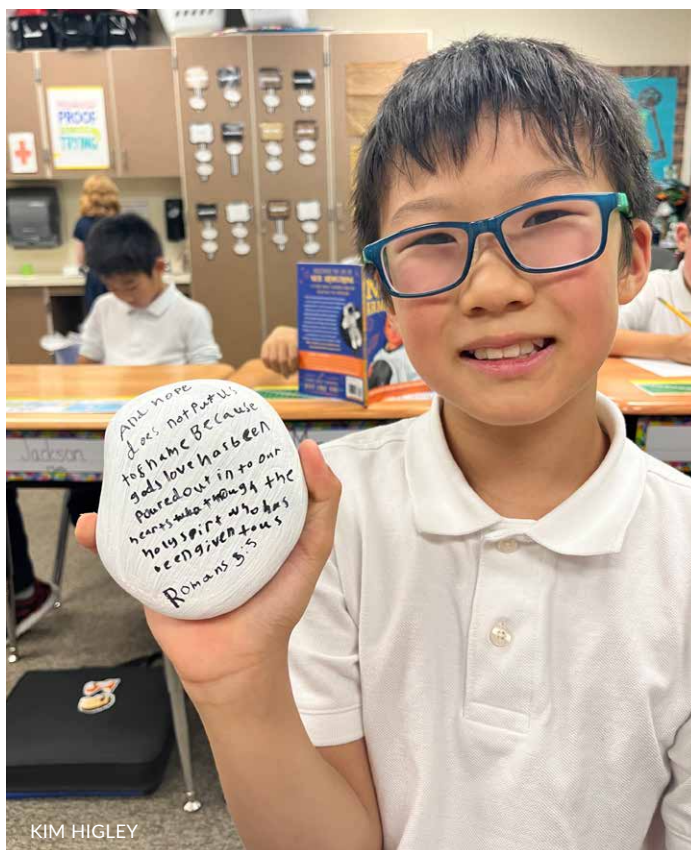
students learn to apply scripture now with their current level of knowledge. And third, memorizing scripture gives students the grammar-level knowledge so they can allow it to later shape them as they grow in wisdom and depth of understanding.

Because our memorization skills improve with practice, we do a lot of memory work at Bear Creek. It is important to understand the three strategies our brains use to retain information and move it into long-term memory. The strategies include using music to remember; applying the principles of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric; and lastly, repetition

and review. All three of these strategies are used in our Lower School memory verse program.

We have all had the experience of a song that you just cannot get out of your head or a jingle that sticks with you for many years. Our brains more easily remember things set to music, especially if the music is "catchy." For this reason, our memory verses at Bear Creek have been set to music. We sing the verses in class and in Chapel until the students can sing them on their own. These songs help students move verses into long-term memory.

Another way our brains move things into long-term memory is by putting the information into use. This is



The first poem of the year in grade 4 is "Stepping Stone" by R. L. Sharpe. Each student paints a stepping stone and writes the class verse as a tangible reminder of both the poem and verse.

the central idea in the classical approach of trivium: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. We first learn things at a knowledge or memory level. This is the grammar level of the trivium and is a large focus of our Lower School curriculum. We then apply and analyze the information in the dialectic level before we evaluate, communicate, and create at the rhetorical level. We start with rote memorization, but as students move through the years, they begin to analyze and apply until the memorized verses change their worldview and shape their hearts and actions.

Repetition, review, repetition, review! This cyclical process is what moves knowledge from short-term memory to long-term memory and is the basis of our Lower School memory verse program. Each verse is

practiced many times over, both independently and together as a class, until the memory pathways are strong in students' brains. Teachers find opportunities for students to recite the verse as they begin and end their school days, walk the hallways, and transition to new activities. Students also repeat the verse on their own as they prepare for the verse tests. As students commit new verses to memory, we continually have them review and repeat the previously learned verses. This process ensures the verses will long be remembered. One final way we utilize repetition and review is by cycling through the same memory verses every three years. This way, students will repeat and review the same set of verses two times during their Lower School years.



CINDY MCCAHILL

Kindergarteners receive their class verse from the senior class. Seniors visit the kindergarteners and help introduce their verse with songs, stories, and a project together.



JANEEN SORENSEN

Parents test students on their weekly poem and verse memorization.

Dear Friends
1 John 4:7-8 Class of 2024

Intro
♩ = 60
D

Verse 1
D Bm Em Em A7 D
Dear friends, let us love...one a - noth-er... for love comes from God.

10 D Bm Em A7 D
Dear friends, let us love...one a - noth-er... for love comes from God.

Chorus 1
19 G D Em D A D D A7 D
Eve-ry-one who loves has been born of God. Eve-ry-one who loves knows God like a dad. God is love.

25 D A7 D G D Em D A D
God is love. Eve-ry-one who loves has been born of God. Eve-ry-one who loves knows God like a dad.

31 A7 D A7 D Bm Em Em
God is love. God is love. Dear friends, let us love...one a - noth-er... for love

40 A7 D D Bm Em A7
comes from God. Dear friends, let us love...one a - noth-er... for love comes from

Chorus 2
49 D G D Em D A D
God. Eve-ry-one who loves has been born of God. Eve-ry-one who loves knows God like a dad.

55 A7 D D A7 D G D Em
God is love. God is love. Eve-ry-one who loves has been born of God. Eve-ry-one who loves knows

62 D A D D A7 D D A7 D
God like a dad. God is love. God is love.

The Class of 2024 composed a song for I John 4:7-8 to help the Class of 2037 learn their verse.

As disciples of Christ, we are being transformed through His power and the power of His word in the Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Just as God used my experience memorizing Psalm 23 when I was a young child to transform my heart and my mind gradually, we pray that the memory verses students learn during their Lower School years will be used to help them know and love God as they become the individuals God intends.

The scripture verses memorized in Lower School have been professionally recorded. The recordings are posted on the school website and are also available to stream on all popular music apps (e.g., Spotify, Amazon Music, iTunes, Pandora, iHeart Radio). Search for Nicole Klimisch, one of our Lower School worship leaders, to find Bible Memory Verses, Vol. 1, 2, or 3. Bible (NIV) copyrighted by Zondervan, 2011. Music copyrighted by Nicole Klimisch and Chandler Faarone, 2017.

Fostering Faith Formation in MIDDLE SCHOOL

BY JODEE RAMIREZ

BEAR CREEK STRIVES TO KEEP THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW PRESENT IN EVERY SUBJECT. Whether it is praying in class or connecting their topic to the wider narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation, Middle School faculty are always seeking to keep faith at the center of their teaching. When asked what is unique about how Bear Creek integrates faith into learning, Middle School Christian studies faculty Kevin Burns states, “I just think of intentionality. Everything we do in Middle School, and I would say as a school, is intentional.”

Burns goes on to explain how the departments at Bear Creek work together to create a cohesive learning model that helps students connect their subjects to the larger narrative of both the world and

their faith. For example, while grade 8 students are studying World War II in history class and reading *Animal Farm* in English class, Burns is walking them through the theological framework and moral arguments that were present during that time period. By connecting real world events, science, and art to their theological framework, students are encouraged to approach the content with discernment.

In addition to the worldview integration present throughout Bear Creek’s curriculum, the Christian Studies Department seeks to provide students with the tools that they need to become discerning, wise, and engaging scholars of the Bible. The Middle School Christian studies curriculum follows the dialectic stage of the classical education model as it prepares students to share differing opinions and



JANEEN SORENSEN

Students creating comics for Lower School students to give them practical and fun ideas on how they can live out the charge to “do good to all people” found in Galatians 6:10.



JANEEN SORENSEN

Students writing thank you notes and putting together small gifts for staff who support Bear Creek.



JANEEN SORENSEN



JANEEN SORENSEN

(Above) Kevin Burns, other Middle School faculty, or special guests present a message during each Chapel.

(Left) Students participate in Chapel by reading the weekly scripture in the midst of the student body as a reminder that Christ is present in their worship.



CINDY MCCAHILL

openly discuss the content they are learning in class. Grades 5 and 6 students are led through an exploration of the foundational stories of the Bible as they continue to grow their understanding of scripture. They primarily study heroes of the faith, the prophecies about Jesus, and the book of James.

Grade 7 marks the transition period when many



JANEEN SORENSEN

students develop the ability think abstractly. Students dig into deeper questions as they begin to study biblical theology based on the scriptural narrative from Genesis to Revelation. In their final year of Middle School, grade 8 students dive into the Gospels, the birth of the Church, and a thorough study of Revelation as they become more capable of understanding and utilizing nuance in their studies and discussions. Burns states, “Our curriculum builds really nicely in terms of giving them what they need depending on where they are developmentally.”

Beyond the Christian studies classes, Bear Creek strives to foster students’ faith formation through Chapel and extracurricular activities. Chapel is planned on a four-year rotating curriculum that covers the Old Testament, the New Testament, the life of Jesus, and the overarching themes and stories of scripture as a whole. Students are encouraged



JANEEN SORENSEN

Grade 7 students in Biblical Theology illustrated a story from the Old Testament and shared their finished projects with grade 1 students.

to participate in Chapel through scripture reading, joining the worship band, and the symbolic act of bringing the Bible into the midst of Chapel as a reminder that Christ is present in their worship. Additionally, Middle School students hear from Upper School students several times a year as they share their testimonies.

Middle School students have even found additional opportunities to grow in their faith and foster a Christian community at Bear Creek. Through a group led by faculty members, as many as 40 Middle School students meet in the library each Thursday during lunch and activity period for Bible study, prayer, and worship. Students volunteer each week and either Burns or another teacher in the Christian Studies Department works with them to choose a Bible passage, help them with interpretation and presentation, and prepare an activity for the Bible study meeting.



JANEEN SORENSEN

With Christian worldview integration, the intentionality of the Christian studies curriculum, chapel, and extracurricular opportunities, Bear Creek's Middle School students have myriad opportunities to grow in their faith to become the individuals that God intends.



A WORLD OF NEW EXPERIENCES IN COSTA RICA

COURTESY PHOTO

BY CATHERINE GARDINER, UPPER SCHOOL LANGUAGE FACULTY

~

“I did not come into twelfth grade expecting to go to Costa Rica. Yet there I was at the airport on a Thursday morning, approaching a sea of blue shirts in my own matching shirt. That was where the Spanish started. It didn’t end (except for a brief pause here and there) until the flight back home. To quote Profe Gardiner, my ‘Spanish muscle’ was thoroughly exercised and even a little sore after.” – Milica Powell ’24.

~

IN APRIL 2024, BEAR CREEK’S SPANISH FACULTY TOOK 21 UPPER SCHOOL STUDENTS on an adventure of a lifetime to Costa Rica, where they were immersed in Spanish language and culture. The trip was filled with so many firsts for our students: the first time to visit a Spanish-speaking country, the

first time to swim in the warm Caribbean Sea, the first time to see a pod of dolphins, and the first time to converse at length with a native Spanish speaker. During our 10-day trip, our stomachs were satiated with unfamiliar foods, our eyes impressed by the intense beauty of God’s creation, our ears strained to

understand the rapid-fire sentences blasting from our guide's tongue, and our minds stimulated to find just the right word and conjugated verb.

Because of our fun-filled daily itinerary, we were exhausted at the end of each day. From kayaking at the base of Volcán Arenal, surfing off the Pacific Coast, touring the canals of Tortuguero National Park and seeing its exotic animals (think crocodiles, monkeys, and tropical birds), we packed quite a lot into our Spring Break adventure. William Zhang '26 reflected:



“Every day something brand new was being thrown at me. One big takeaway from this experience, other than that Spanish is really epic, is that sometimes, these trips are really about the life lessons, the new experiences, and stepping out of your shell. I personally felt like my faith and trust in God was strengthened. Every time I did something new and foreign to me, that arrow prayer for aid and peace helped me stay grounded. I even enjoyed surfing and wiping out 9 times out of 10.”



We were also exhausted because our minds were stretched each day as we interacted only in Spanish. Milica Powell '24 mused on this beautifully in her reflection:



“One of the coolest aspects of the trip was the realization of my ability to speak basic, practical Spanish in everyday settings. One of my first experiences doing so was buying a coconut at a stand in Tortuguero. I asked for a coconut—easy. I asked how much does it cost? Basic. The lady at the stand said something rapid in Spanish—a question—something like “how many do you want?” I replied “one.” Fundamental. I asked if she had change for a five. She did, I said, “thank you,” and got my cut-open coconut with a straw. This interaction may seem simple, and it was. But it



COURTESY PHOTO

Adorned in traditional skirts, Hannah Schwartz '24 and Profe Gardiner learn the footwork of some of the typical folk dances.



COURTESY PHOTO

Students explored Tortuguero National Park by boat to observe its rich flora and fauna.



Students kayaked around Volcán Arenal before taking a refreshing plunge in the water.



Students enjoyed a surfing lesson in the Pacific Ocean.

allowed something cool to happen. The words just seemed to come out. They were words and phrases I had been taught from day one, and I didn't have to go through the process of thinking in Spanish, translating into English to make sure it made sense, and then practicing the Spanish in my head to make sure I got that right."



Beyond purely transactional encounters at markets, hotels, and restaurants, our students had the opportunity to truly embrace and engage the locals whom we encountered along the way. As David Smith and Barbara Carvill suggest in *The Gift of the Stranger*, Christian language teaching involves more than students mastering mere words but a manner of speaking that relates to others with the same Spirit in which Christ loves us. As a language instructor, this trip proved to me the importance of the "why" behind what we are doing in the Language Department at Bear Creek. Beyond creating effective tourists who have practiced phrases to successfully find the bathroom or equipping future entrepreneurs with the competitive advantage of speaking another language to land business deals, our students are learning how to probe the depths of human interactions and cross-cultural exploration by having the compassion to listen and the courage to initiate conversations. These are virtues that our class activities regularly practice and our curriculum intentionally builds.

In the years preceding our adventure abroad, our Spanish students have been growing in the wisdom of how to navigate and apply their linguistic skills in conversations and the compassion and courage to interact with native Costa Ricans. Learning to listen is a skill that requires much more than an auditory ability to hear a slew of syllables hit the tympanic cavity of the inner ear and register in Wernicke's area of the brain. Rather, it requires a welcoming disposition to value one's interlocuter as created in the *imago Dei*.

Prior to the trip, as Spanish III students learned about the history and culture of Costa Rica, they were also learning how to be hospitable strangers in our upcoming time abroad, strangers who would actively engage those they met with the love of Christ. We read *Bananas* by Carrie Toth, a novel based on the true story of Erik Salazar Mendez who, at a young age, was able to use his voice to meet with the Costa Rican president and speak with the legislature to demand reforms following the death of his brother due to the lethal pesticides used on banana plantations across the country. By reading Erik's story, speaking with him via a Teams call, and then watching a Spanish language documentary about the many victims of these pesticides, we learned to listen to the voice of a stranger, to enjoy their victories, and to empathize with their grief. This preparation sparked in our students a curiosity and, as Smith and Carvill suggest, an ethos of questioning to interact with others in meaningful ways while traveling in Costa Rica.

On the trip, I witnessed this play out each day. On our first night in Tortuguero, for example, a group of our students started to ask our waiter questions about his musical interests. Because of their questions, what started as a simple conversation grew, and the server shared his story about his missionary work in a nearby indigenous community. So impressed were the servers that, at nearly every hotel, the staff commented on the genuine interest of our students to use Spanish to speak with them. José, pictured right, commented that our students tried to only interact in Spanish, asked questions, and cared about those with whom they interacted.

I also witnessed the students' daring initiative to engage in relationships when our bus got a flat tire and we had to pull off to the side of the road. Students piled off the coach and immediately located shade under the awning of the nearby corner store where they bought homemade baked goods and drinks to find relief from the 110-degree heat. Behind the counter, peered the proprietors' shy son.



After a cooking class, students were introduced to native plants thriving in the volcanic soil surrounding Volcán Arenal.



Students smile around their waiter José after a successful conversation with him in Spanish.



COURTESY PHOTO

Students take a turn grinding sugar cane to make a refreshing juice.

Without skipping a beat, our students immediately welcomed him to play a game of Uno while we waited for our flat tire to be repaired. At first, he refused, indicating that he did not know how to play the card game, but the students insisted. While they could have easily passed the time playing on their phones or in the comfort of their English-speaking group, their invitation gave rise to a new friendship as Milica relates in her reflection:



“As we were playing, some of us jumped in...to show Aarón how to play. I asked him how old he was...I asked about his pets, his siblings, and his interests in video games. It was cool to discover how relatable he was to some of us, and yet he spoke so fast it was hard to understand him sometimes. His eagerness and joy at interacting with a bunch of strangers who hardly spoke his language shone through during our whole interaction. This chance encounter was very memorable for all of us, and especially, I hope, for Aarón as well.”



I also observed the students' compassion when we went to a local family's house to help encourage a dear woman battling cancer and grieving the loss of both her daughter and father. Our students quickly completed the tasks the organizer thought would take quite a bit of time and then asked if they could help with more tasks. She kept giving them signs to paint, and they gladly continued painting. Before heading to another family's house for freshly prepared pineapple juice and empanadas, students asked if we could pray for her. Gathering in a circle and seeking the Lord's healing was one of the highlights of our time in Costa Rica for so many students including Hannah Schwartz '24 who testified in her reflection:



“One of my favorite parts of our trip was the ability to interact with the Costa Rican culture and those



COURTESY PHOTO

Students painted an assortment of garden plaques as an encouragement for Seidy, a Costa Rican going through much hardship.

who live there. We got to visit the neighborhood of a woman named Seidy, who has dealt with major hardship in the last couple of years. As a response, her neighbors were rallying around her by cultivating a garden in her backyard, and we were called in to make signs for each one of her vegetables, produce, and other things she'll have growing there. Getting to paint simple Spanish words together with other Bear Creek students in order to benefit another created an overlap between our two cultures that emphasized the imago Dei idea—we are all valuable as we are all created in Christ. It was so special to get to help such an amazingly strong woman and sister in Christ.”



At the heart of Bear Creek's language program lies the goal of equipping students to effectively communicate in the target language, as well as the attitudinal formation to lovingly embrace our neighbor as Christ has loved us. Beyond the fun of horseback riding, ziplining, hiking, kayaking, dancing, and cooking lessons we experienced while in Costa Rica, this trip demonstrated that our curriculum successfully cultivates in students an ability to use questions as a means of opening dialogue and to approach others with a curiosity and respect in order to share God's love and gain the valuable gift of a unique perspective.

In all our Spanish language interactions, our students were essentially communicating to locals, "I want to meet you, to connect and communicate with you; I want to hear your voice; I want to know what it is like to be in your culture. I've started to walk toward you; I've gone through some rigorous and demanding discipline necessary to acquire your language, and I've begun to learn about your ways. Even though my steps in your direction are clumsy and faltering, I'm on the way, eager to engage you."¹

Lydia Christie '24 describes this beautifully in her reflection of our time abroad:



Henry Ramsden '25 is ready to serve the tortillas that the students prepared to go with our typical Costa Rican lunch "casado."



“The Costa Rica trip was full of so many things: confusion, laughter, friendship, and a lot of mosquito bites. However, the most important lesson I've learned is the beauty of connection...We are distinguished by very deep cultural niches, but love can build bridges. Having empathy and compassion for each other is key to true understanding. Learning any language can take considerable time and effort to master and so does the universal language called 'love.'”



¹Smith, D., & Carvill, B. M. (2000). *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning*. W.B. Eerdmans.

GRATITUDE GALA 2024



YOUR GENEROSITY helped to raise over \$900,000 to create spaces that inspire learning, creativity, faith, and community. Together we will help transform some of our most important spaces, including the addition of a new multipurpose space for all divisions, new locker rooms, and critical updates to the Main Commons, creating inviting and functional environments for our students and the entire school.

PHOTOS BY JANEEN SORENSEN

GRIZZLY OPEN



BEAR CREEK students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents of alumni all hit the links at Bear Creek Country Club in Woodinville on Monday, June 24, 2024, for the Grizzly Open. The event, sponsored by the Grizzlies Booster Club, raised funds to support Grizzlies athletics at Bear Creek.



PHOTOS BY CINDY MCCAHILL



COURTESY PHOTO

BLESSED BY THE DEPTH OF THE BEAR CREEK COMMUNITY

BY EMMA FIRMINGER '21

Last spring, Alla Comer and her husband Sam were invited to their daughter Eloise's grade 4 classroom in honor of her birthday. At the party, before the class sang, ate cake, and celebrated, Eloise's teacher paused and invited the students to pray over Eloise. The whole class folded their hands, bowed their heads, and closed their eyes. Alla and Sam did the same. They proceeded to listen to sweet young voice after voice offer up a prayer and blessing for Eloise. This innocent, pure, and honest moment was unlike anything they had experienced before.

This memory speaks to the most valuable thing about a Bear Creek education for the Comers: faith. Alla and Sam see a Christian faith fostered in their daughters not just academically but also by the accountability

and support of others. When the Comers enrolled their eldest daughter at Bear Creek in 2017, they quickly realized this school is not just a school. They see Bear Creek as a community of families who live out the school's mission and that invests in all three of the Comers' young daughters, academically, socially, and most importantly, spiritually.

As a room parent, Parent Rep, and engaged volunteer, Alla also experiences the blessing of the Bear Creek mission and peer group. Shared volunteering has provided greater depth to Alla's friendships with other parents in a unique way she would not otherwise have had the opportunity to appreciate. She sees that as the Bear Creek community trusts in the Lord together, trust among neighbors, families,

and students grows. At Bear Creek, no student is alone because no family is alone.

Alla and Sam recognize that Bear Creek was not built in a day, and the strength of its Christian identity did not blossom overnight. As a family, they invest in Bear Creek's mission per their conviction that the investments of previous generations of parents are what make the community what it is today. Their daughters reap blessings sown decades ago, and Alla and Sam are diligently committed to planting seeds and sustaining the field where future students may grow, flourish, and launch fruitful lives.

To the Comers, generosity is about abundantly sharing the gifts God has given them with others. For Alla, time has been the most rewarding gift she freely gives. Being on campus and serving her community has deepened her appreciation for her daughters' lives at school, and she understands how best to support them thanks to her proximity to this place they call a second home. Sam volunteers his time coaching basketball for Eloise's team, launching a chapter he will continue to treasure.

The blessings that are a result of the Comers' engagement at Bear Creek have even reached their extended families. On Lower School Grandparents Day, both Sam and Alla's parents joined the celebration. They enjoyed the children's performances and were celebrated and blessed by the event. Honoring past generations by engaging the present and investing in the future is a principle Alla and Sam embrace in this community, and they feel comfortable giving not just time but also financial resources because they see the return it gives both current and future students.

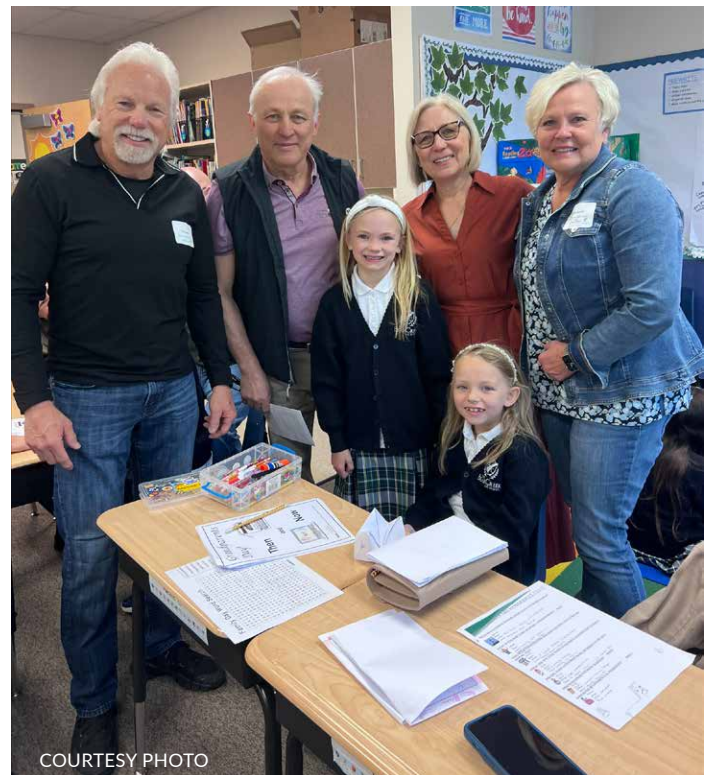
Throughout their years at Bear Creek, it is the tender memory of Eloise's birthday that sticks most powerfully on their hearts, because as parents, Alla and Sam feel they are giving their daughters the gift of being known by their school community. The Comers are grateful for the faithful mission of this community, and this community is grateful for them, too.



Moms Breakfast with the Headmaster



Sam coaching Eloise's basketball team filled with her classmates.



Lower School Grandparents Day 2024

COURT SHIMADA: THE JOY OF SERVING

BY EMMA FIRMINER '21

THE SHIMADAS HAVE BEEN GRIZZLIES FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS. Jenny Shimada teaches kindergarten while Miya '23 and Kobe '24 served as student leaders and graduated with K - 12 legacy honors. While the Shimadas have been part of the fabric of Bear Creek for many years, there is also a new Shimada legacy forming.

Court Shimada spent the last couple decades the same way many Bear Creek parents do: providing for his children's education but not actively engaged in community. Though he first joined this community when he married Jenny—even proposing in her grade 1 classroom (see our Summer 2023 issue for the full story)—he remained at arm's length from the school and understandably so. Corporate work was demanding. Long hours in the office were broken up by the occasional field trip, parent-teacher conference, Dads 'n Donuts, or grade-level drama productions. Back then, Court found himself at the school only about five times a year.

Now, however, Court finds himself at the school nearly five times a week. A behind-the-scenes kind of leader, Court recently chose to step away from corporate work and currently serves our Bear Creek community as part of his full-time volunteer mission. From once missing out on verse and poem memorization, he now leads the Strategic Projects Committee for Bear Creek's Grizzlies Booster Club with David Gilchrist. He just led the two-year Owens Field makeover, managing contractors and running a renovation operation HGTV would envy. He also enjoys signing up and serving on other Booster Club committees, whether helping in the Hungry Bear run by Nate and Barbara Chinn or at events run by Annette Clark and Torie Luedke. More recently, Court was invited by the Board of Trustees to serve on the



The Shimada family at Miya's graduation in 2023

Facilities Committee, which is responsible for the long-term planning for major facilities projects. He looks forward to contributing however needed.

But most rewarding is his time serving as a helper in his wife Jenny's kindergarten classroom. Court was unsure how his corporate skills would translate into the classroom, but Jenny leaned into his strengths and quickly put him to work. He relates to children well, and she knew he would encourage their growth, development, and love for learning. Court spends time listening to students read and helps with math activities, class parties, and field trips; he especially loves seeing Jenny in her element.

Court now also finds fulfillment in the many other volunteer opportunities at Bear Creek, whether that be health screenings, driving golf carts on Grandparents Day, event prep and cleanup, or flipping hamburgers. For him, the enjoyment comes from perspective. The perspective he has adopted is rooted in our Bear Creek identity oriented toward the mission of Christ: servant leadership. In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul delights in the humility of Christ as something for followers of Christ to imitate: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Court feels called to serve the body of Christ with

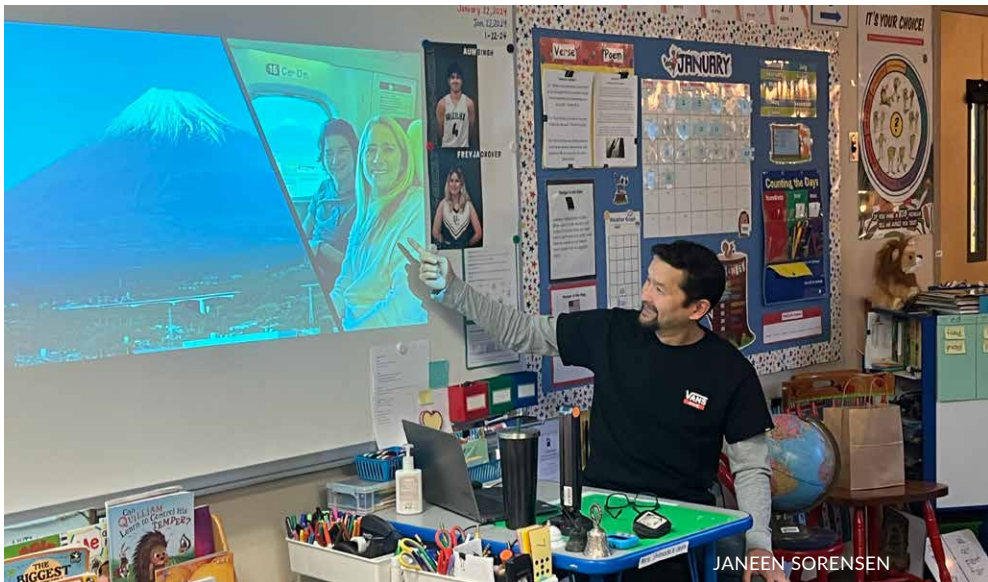
a mindset—a perspective—not of obligation but of a loving willingness to meet the needs of the community. It is a spiritual discipline of learning how Jesus lived his life.

Prioritizing volunteering has blessed Court not just when he is actively serving, it has also deepened his relationship with his family. In addition to directly witnessing his wife's excellence in the classroom, Court now co-participates with his children. He understands their experiences as students and leaders more deeply now that he is directly engaging the place they call home, sharing pride in seeing the school excel and sentimentality in seeing students become the individuals God intends.

While Court envisioned his life after corporate work on a beach, mountainside, or on a golf course finally learning to play, God had other plans. As he realized how much the Bear Creek community has given to his family, Court felt called to give back. Involvement revealed to him an intuitive but convicting fact: the more parents put into the school community, the more they will get out of it and the more it will mean to them and their family. All parents, regardless of skillsets, have the God-given ability to serve Bear Creek and strengthen the community that will serve their children in their most formative years. Court is grateful God gave him these opportunities to serve. The Shimada family has been strengthened through their joint legacy at Bear Creek, a place they now *all* consider home.



Court volunteered to work on the project to update the Owens Field scoreboard.



Court teaching a lesson about Japan to Jenny's kindergarten class.



Court helping a student during the kindergarten in-house field trip with Rick Hartman from School of Toy.

LOWER SCHOOL GRANDPARENTS DAY



IN SPRING 2024, we celebrated the special bond between grandparents and our students in grades K - 4. It was an excellent opportunity for grandparents to experience their grandchild's school life and see what makes Bear Creek unique.

PHOTOS BY SINI FERNANDEZ
AND JANEEN SORENSEN



INVEST IN THE FUTURE

Legacy giving is a powerful way to make an impact on tomorrow's world through the education of future Christian leaders—individuals prepared to engage the world with wisdom, compassion, and courage. Your thoughtful planning to advance the mission of The Bear Creek School will make a difference in the world your children, grandchildren, or even great-grandchildren will inherit.

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 by welcoming you into our Legacy Circle of like-minded donors.

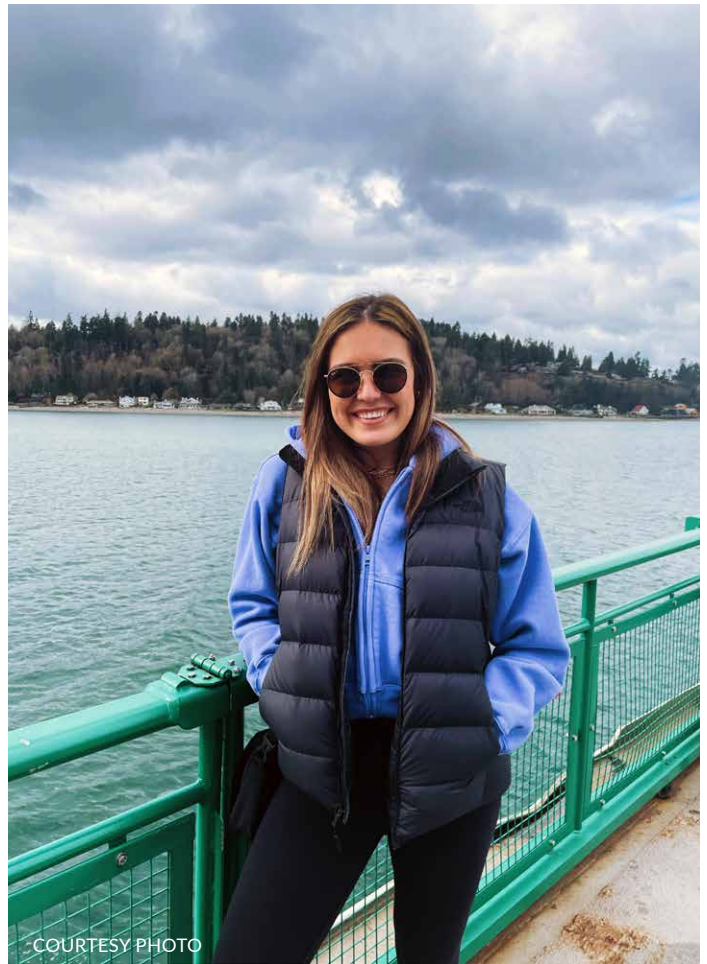
For more information about making a legacy gift in your will or through life insurance, property, or other assets, contact Mariana Keller, Vice President for Philanthropy and Community Engagement, at mkeller@tbc.org or 425-898-1720 ext. 340.

Hannah Bauermeister Class of 2016

BY CLAIRE DAVIS
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI
RELATIONS

Hannah Bauermeister graduated from the University of Washington (UW) in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in English. During her undergraduate studies, she volunteered at the Benaroya Research Institute in Seattle as part of the Diabetes Clinical Research Program. She gained experience working in research labs, including environmental health and a biophysics lab. Additionally, Hannah completed a sports medicine internship, collaborating with UW football, soccer, basketball, and volleyball teams. Her journey then continued as a medical scribe in clinics and hospitals across Seattle and Bellevue, where she gained exposure to family medicine, dermatology, rheumatology, and OB/GYN specialties. Currently, Hannah serves as a Research Coordinator in the Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine department at UW, contributing to a study on a new investigational drug for diabetic neuropathy.

Throughout this path to medical school, Hannah has emphasized the importance of God's timing. She states, "An important theme in my life over these past few years has been focusing and trusting in God's timing. We are not always able to see the bigger picture or make sense of things around us, so this journey has really reinforced how key it is to put one's faith in God, to know He has a plan and to have patience and confidence in Him."



Hannah's interest in the medical field was inspired by her grandfather, a retired physician and pathologist. During the grade 5 science fair, he assisted with her project titled, "Which Doorknob Carries the Most Bacteria?" Her grandfather always framed medicine within the context of how existing information could be used to help others. This process helped to emphasize the humanity in medicine—it's more than just biochemical pathways or processes; it is about improving lives through the knowledge we gain.

Hannah's love and appreciation of science was further fostered by the wonderful faculty at Bear Creek. She states, "I loved every single teacher I had at Bear Creek. I felt very blessed to have had such amazing faculty while I was there. Dunn, Bell, and Graham were my science teachers. Chemistry with Ms. Bell was a challenging class, but I was always met with encouragement. She always took the extra time to help me understand the material, thus setting me up for success in college. My teachers went that extra mile to help me succeed. It felt



like what I was doing mattered. It was intentional. They wanted to see the students succeed, and you knew you could count on them.”

At Bear Creek, Hannah experienced a strong sense of community and a robust support network. Growing up in an environment where teachers, peers, and families were deeply invested in her success motivated Hannah to not only believe in herself but also to trust God along the way.

Hannah stays in touch with fellow Bear Creek alumni by playing on a recreational co-ed soccer team consisting of alumni from the graduating classes of 2013 through 2017. They meet on Thursday nights at various soccer fields in the Seattle area. Additionally, Hannah participates in a book club with friends from her graduating class, where they meet and discuss their readings via Zoom. Lastly, she went on an exciting road trip from upstate New York to Washington, D.C. with a Bear Creek friend where they met up with other alumni

and all explored Georgetown together.

Currently, Hannah spends her days volunteering as a medical scribe at Lahai Health, a Christian clinic in Seattle. Lahai Health is dedicated to providing healthcare to underserved communities in King and Snohomish counties. Hannah expressed, “The opportunity to serve my community has been so special and has also shaped the goals I have for myself in medicine, which includes strengthening healthcare resources across Washington state.”

More recently, Hannah has received acceptance into the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine at Washington State University in Spokane, WA. She is excited to delve further into different fields of medicine through her program. Having already explored specialties in patient-facing environments, Hannah is looking forward to continuing this journey as she waits to discover the specific field to which she feels called by God.



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