

Remarks by Jim Whiteman January 3, 2022

Communicated to our WCA Association via video

Hello, WCA family, and Happy New Year! I trust you had a terrific Christmas enjoying family and friends and celebrating the mind-boggling gift of Emmanuel – God with us.

As we begin another calendar year, I would like to share some exciting news and trust you will listen VERY carefully for the next ten to twelve minutes.

For the past ten years our school has grown over 10% each year with few exceptions. When the Lord first called me to serve WCA in 2011, we were grades K-8 with 78 students. We prayed to get to 100. Oh, be careful what you pray for! In 2015 we birthed a 9th grade to pave the way for a high school program. This was a bold move of faith on the part of our Board and the five families that said “count us in.” In 2016 we opened our Pre-Kindergarten program. In 2017 the Lord allowed us to purchase this campus and we immediately began a physical remodeling. This, too, was a step of faith and God provided funding through His generous people who understand why a school such as ours is vital. In 2018 we turned our then cafeteria into our current kindergarten rooms and what we call Eagle’s Landing.

We celebrated our first high school graduation in 2019. In 2020, God provided modular classrooms to relieve some crowding. We named these four adjoining rooms “The Timbers.” That is what we endeavor to grow at WCA – tall trees with deep roots and a broad reach.

As this current school year began, by God’s goodness and the generosity of his people, WCA was graced with a building addition to complete our early childhood wing.

Today, we have 292 students and expect about 315 next year at this time. In six years, God-willing, the class of 2028 will graduate with approximately 30 students and our total student count will likely be well over 400. At that point, our school will be nearing its critical mass of 450 students, averaging 32 students per grade level.

The physical growth has allowed for a deepening of the core curricula and co-curricular programs we offer. In the Grammar School, we recently added nature education, typing, and American Sign Language. The arts are increasingly enriching and shaping the affections of our children. Clubs and elementary athletics are blossoming. We have been growing our ability to provide our rich Christ-centered curriculum for students with differing abilities. This effort is called *Semper Crescente*, Latin for “Always Growing.” Our desire is to see all of our students always growing in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Our Grammar School is in a very good place.

While our Grammar School is well established, the Upper School (7-12) is still very young. Its structure, vision, and curricular depth is growing in the humanities, sciences, mathematics, logic, rhetoric, theology, the arts, languages, athletics, and elective opportunities. The Christ-honoring culture continues to sweeten. Over the next six years, the Upper School will more than double in size and its curricular program will mature. Our Upper School is in a very good place, poised for what is to come.

God has assembled a Board of Trustees that is thoughtful, prayerful, and also growing in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The board and our leadership team recently completed a strategic plan and vision for the future that, among other things, includes resourcing our Upper School, providing increased training and compensation for our dear teachers, expanding our commitment to diverse learners, and helping other classical Christian schools in our area flourish. We are working on an exciting campus master plan to meet our facility needs. This will be revealed in the near future. I simply want to emphasize that our excellent board works hard and is focused on WCA's future under the guidance of our mission and the word of God. By God's grace, we are in a very good place.

What I have shared so far – growth in numbers, program, and structure -- will be *meaningless* unless those of us involved – parents, staff, the leadership team, trustees, and generous donors – are submitting ourselves to God's word and our Lord's loving plan for his people. If we talk a good game but do not seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, we become what the apostle Paul describes as noisy gongs or clanging symbols. However, *together*, with fervent prayer and a humble commitment to God's word, the local church, and one another, we become a bright light in a dark world. I pray that your commitment to a biblical and classical Christian education for your children will only get stronger in the months and years ahead.

There is something else about the future I would like to share.

When the Lord led me to head Westside Christian Academy in 2011, there was, well, quite a story behind it -- just like there is a God story behind WCA's founding families and every teacher that has stepped up to lovingly give their all to this work. In the last eleven years, the Lord has allowed me the privilege to hire nearly every one of our current employees as we have gone from fifteen to over fifty on staff. Each one serving at WCA has their own story as to how God brought them here, according to his timing and his ways. Each colleague has added to my own growth as a Christ-follower.

Over the last five years, God has added teachers, support staff, an admission director, our two principals, a director of philanthropy, a finance director, a director of operations, and others. We are in a good place with really good people because we serve an amazingly good God.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 3 we read that there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. You know that passage – a time to be born, a time to die. A time to plant, a time to sow. A time to mourn and a time to laugh, etc. A few years ago, I began to ask and pray through the question "When will it be time for me to start a new season and step aside as head of school and hand the baton off to another?" I looked at where the school is heading and what will be needed in a leader. After all, leading a school of over 400 is much different than a school of one or two hundred. In considering my age (I'll be 66 this spring) and the needs of my own family, I informed the board in 2020 that June of 2023 seemed the right time for me to retire. I now share this with you - that my plan is to retire as headmaster at the conclusion of the 22-23 school year, a year and a half from today.

Our Board members have truly stepped up in planning for WCA's future in anticipation of this change. Together, we have created tangible goals that are currently being realized and we are standing on the truth that God is faithful and has plans beyond what we are able to see. I am quite excited about the future of this special school we call Westside Christian Academy. We are in a good place.

We all have important work to do in the next year and half and I do not intend to slow down as I approach this particular finish line. I hope you will join me and the board in a commitment to prayer, encouragement, and joyful service in fulfilling our school's mission until Jesus returns. The writer of Hebrews begins chapter twelve with these words: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...*

Let's keep running together and see what our gracious God will do!

And now here is Philip Amos, WCA's current president of the board of trustees.