

Dear Escondido Christian Families,

The following letter from Superintendent Joel Phillips and Head of Schools Matt Conway is divided into three parts:

- I) The History of Escondido Christian School
- II) Why is Christian education so important?
- III) Plans for future school development

You may be tempted to skip to Part III to find out about the future plans for the school. We would describe Part III as the “dessert.” Some exciting things are happening. However, we all know that eating dessert first spoils the dinner. Likewise, the dinner only makes dessert taste that much better. Therefore, we are putting our teaching craft into practice and incentivizing this “assignment.” All students whose parents read from top to bottom will receive free dress on Thursday, June 6th. Once you reach the end simply click the box confirming that you have read the letter and press submit. Your child(ren) will be automatically registered for free dress on Thursday, June 6th.

PART I - The History of Escondido Christian School

In 1930, Escondido Christian Church (ECC) was established, and in 1946, its education program, Escondido Christian School (ECS) began under the guidance of Pastor Thompson and his wife Evelyn. As the school grew, the need for space became evident. During a prayerful search for a new location, Sister Thompson felt led by God to a plot of land on Valley Parkway. This land was owned by a wealthy Dutch dairyman who, after encountering Sister Thompson, generously donated the land for the church and its school. This act of kindness led to the construction of a new facility, and the dairyman himself recommitted his life to Christ, remaining faithful until his passing at 102 years old.

Both the church and school eventually faced growth challenges on East Valley Parkway and sought a new location. While driving past Ash Street, the pastor at that time, Harold Woods, discovered a spacious plot of land with lime groves that seemed perfect for their needs. However, he was confronted by the landowners who initially refused to sell. Upon hearing the purpose for which the land was needed, the couple agreed to sell it to Escondido Christian at a remarkably low price. By 1975, 33,000 square feet of usable facilities were constructed on the current property (Ash and Idaho), completely debt-free.

Under the leadership of Dr. Coleman Phillips, the church and school expanded its property by acquiring five additional acres to the south, extending the property all the way to 17th Avenue (Felicita Ave.), and securing sewer rights for the entire property. Between 1982 and 1993, the facilities were expanded to over 63,000 usable square feet. Despite these expansions, we are once again needing more space.

After the confusion and cultural convulsions associated with COVID, wave after wave of growth from families seeking a Christ-centered learning environment for their children has left Escondido Christian out of facility space. We've made the most of our existing, yet aging buildings, but we now sense a calling from God to innovate and expand in order to meet the current and future demands of PS-12th grade Christian education.

PART II - Why is Christian education so important?

Andrew Breitbart famously said that “politics is downstream from culture.” Some might be tempted to place one’s hope in the political machinations of our leaders. However, if what Mr. Breitbart says is true, that hope is misplaced. The reality is that politics is a lagging indicator. Things change in our politics because our culture has already changed. So looking at it from the other direction, political activity is simply a reflection of our culture.

What is culture then? Culture is that which we cultivate — or allow to be cultivated for us. Culture sets the pace in society. It's what we as a society lionize, what we idolize. But upon careful examination, culture seems to flow from something. There seems to be a “first step” that it originates from. **There is a reason why culture develops the way it does and that first step upstream from culture is religion. Society isn't created in a vacuum, it is grounded in faith; faith in something.**

For many, many years the fountainhead of our society was Christianity. Our founding as an American society was unmistakably Christian. Beginning with the colonial period, continuing through the founding years, and well into the nineteenth century, we as a people collectively called upon God to guide us as we built society. We diligently sought out and incorporated His revealed Word as we cultivated our civilization. This is not to suggest that every American was a Christian or that because someone was an American they must be a Christian or that there weren't missteps. However, by and large, our society's success was due to our reliance upon God. Consider the following quotes from some of our beloved leaders of the past.

“It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible.” -
George Washington

“Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest, of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.” - John Jay (first chief justice)

“In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed.”
- Noah Webster, preface to An American Dictionary of the English Language

There was a time in our lives when this sounded like pie in the sky, a myth. That is because in our lives it is a product of government education. That's right, maybe like many of you, we've attended public schools growing up. It wasn't until we attended a Christian university that we began to discover our founding was in fact, at its core, Christian. We also went on a journey to understand how it was that we could

grow up in a Christian home and be a member of a good church and still believe that our country, and to a greater extent Western civilization, was the product not of diligent, God-fearing people, but rather “enlightened” secularists. What we have discovered is that for the last 100+ years, we have been lied to by an atheist government school system bent on hijacking education and reshaping it for nefarious purposes. What are those evil purposes? To replace God, and any virtue grounded in Him, with moral relativism and chaos. If this sounds a lot like Genesis chapter 3, it is because that well-known takeover attempt by Satan inspired it. Government schools have taken a page out of Satan’s playbook. We realize that this is a harsh statement. However, the sooner we as the people of God can understand this reality, the sooner we will reject government schools and their attempted takeover of our society.

Some might think that the takeover is complete and that there isn’t much hope left for saving our society. **However, the good news is that there is hope for our culture! That hope is grounded in our Savior and King, Jesus Christ!** As we mentioned, societies don’t just “pop” into existence. They are cultivated, meaning they are planted, nurtured, pruned, and eventually bring forth fruit. When a society seeks to capture the truth of Jesus Christ and incorporate it into its “bloodstream,” great things happen. Instead of a passive mindset of allowing an atheistic culture to happen to us, we as Christians need to take an active mindset of building culture. The job of culture building sounds daunting, but it is as simple as passing God on to the next generation. When one generation is faithful to raising their children as the apostle Paul would say, in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord,” a virtuous culture grows a little. When the next generation follows suit, that same culture grows a little more, and so on. Cultures like these will eventually produce people like William Wilberforce (politician, abolitionist), Blaise Pascal (mathematician, physicist, writer), John Wycliff (professor, Bible translator), Dorothy Sayers (novelist, playwright) Booker T. Washington (former slave, author, educator), J.R.R. Tolkien (writer), Charles Spurgeon (preacher), and so many more God-fearing movers and shakers.

Earlier we suggested that culture building is simple. Let us expand on that. It is and it isn't simple. It's simple in the sense that all parents need to do is teach their children about God. God gives us His Word. Feed them His Word — simple. Where it can, and does, become difficult, is when outside forces mock and even become hostile towards virtuous culture building. **If there is anything that we have observed or learned in the last four years, it is that there are movements afoot that are completely opposed to anything having to do with God. The serious Christian must acknowledge this and have a plan.** As Christian educators, we are honored to be part of a wonderful tradition of partnering with Christian parents. For many decades now, God has been faithful to ECS as we have navigated various cultural movements, good and bad. The cultural movements of today are profoundly immoral. We must be ready for this. We are asking that our parents “know what time it is” and act accordingly. Now more than ever, we feel that God is calling us to steel our resolve and to be men and women serious about handing over a more virtuous culture to the next generation.

What does this look like practically? God's Word spells it out to us with no questions left:

*“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. **And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.** You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” -*

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

Pray with your children, talk about the Bible together, and make church a weekly habit. Don't let anything distract you. You are your children's parent, no one, or *thing*, else is. This includes the school you send them to. Unlike the government school system, we (ECS) are not attempting to supplant your authority in their lives. Our goal is to help you be obedient to God and His Word by delivering Christ-centered

instruction to your children. This all amounts to a very good plan. It is the plan that, by God's grace, will create future generations committed to Christ and virtue, not chaos.

PART III - Plans for future school development

Everything described above is the foundation for what we feel God is leading us to next as a school. The following is only effective as long as parents, teachers, staff, and administrators keep their eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

To help facilitate future school development, we want to activate our parents and other community members. We have created two main funds to help accomplish this. The first fund we would like to make you aware of is the **LIONS FUND**. Aptly named for our fearless mascot, this fund will give our families and community members the ability to contribute to school security, maintenance projects, and scholarships.

Security Infrastructure Upgrades

Since the COVID period, ECS has been growing in enrollment year over year. We are thrilled and grateful that God continues to send families to ECS. We desire to be good stewards of all that God has given us, especially the most important gift, our children. With that in mind, we are moving forward with two significant security infrastructure upgrades; perimeter fencing and security cameras.

The vision for perimeter fencing includes fencing that would be placed along San Pasqual Valley Road from the Fellowship Hall down to the corner of our property at 17th Avenue. You may have noticed the tree service clearing out many eucalyptus trees for the last couple of weeks. We are doing this in preparation for fencing and better security. In addition, we have recently installed three barrier gates at our driveways. These are necessary for security, especially at night. We hope to soon upgrade these barrier gates to automatic gates for ease of access.

In addition to fencing, security cameras will be installed at key strategic viewing locations around the exterior of the campus. This will allow us to have an “eye” on the entire campus through desktop and phone app access.

As you can imagine, these two upgrades will be expensive. We are pursuing grant money through a Homeland Security program to accomplish these upgrades. This can be a lengthy process. If parents and community members want to give to these efforts to expedite the process, they may do so through the **LIONS FUND**.

Security Infrastructure Upgrades Estimated Cost: \$225,000

Deferred Maintenance Projects

There are portions of the campus that are approaching 50 years old and require repairs and upgrades. Many of our buildings have had recent roof replacements as well as HVAC upgrades, but more is needed. Also, as you are aware, we recently discovered a small-car sized hole in the ground under an area of our lower parking lot. To remedy this problem, plans are in place to repair the area from the base of the ramp to the dumpsters with a new culvert. If parents and community members want to give to these efforts they may do so through the **LIONS FUND**.

Deferred Maintenance Projects Estimated Cost: \$800,000

Endowment/Scholarship Fund

Every year the school budgets for a small financial aid fund. In recent years, this fund has ranged from \$45,000 to \$50,000. Every year we will have families inquire about financial aid. Some of these families can manage tuition costs with the small amount that the school can offer. Other families cannot. We want to see this change. We would like to make ECS more available to more families. Rather than turning down good families, we want to say yes! Another function of the **LIONS FUND** is an Endowment/Scholarship Fund which allows parents and community members to help make Christian education through ECS a reality. Through this

function of the **LIONS FUND**, our goal is to provide 5 times the current amount of available financial aid money.

Endowment/Scholarship Fund Goal: \$250,000 annually

Building Projects

In addition to the **LIONS FUND**, we have also created a separate **BUILDING FUND**. We are the most excited about the potential for new facilities and building upgrades as our program continues to expand, especially into the high school levels. Below are a handful of needs/wants:

- Gymnasium - There are a wide variety of needs/uses, including CIF-level sports, indoor PE activities, rainy day recess, and so much more. This is one of our top priorities.
- Upgraded facilities for our dynamic musical theater program
- Additional classrooms
- Redesigned athletic fields capable of handling spectators and a variety of sports
- Upgraded maintenance and storage areas
- Additional parking to accommodate the new facilities

Taking on new building projects can feel overwhelming, especially when just starting. However, we sense “the iron is hot” and NOW is the time God is calling us to begin. We have formed a building committee and will have our first meeting this month. This committee is made up of individuals focused on ECS’s well-being, and includes ECS leadership, parents, building development professionals, and key church leadership people. We will be presenting our ideas to this group and asking for their commitment to helping make these ideas a reality.

New Master Plan

The first step this committee will take will be the production of a new master plan through the help of an architectural company. The new master plan will take into account, not only updated county permitting and codes, but will also articulate

in design form all of our wants and needs. This process will be very important for helping us understand what is possible and what is not.

New Master Plan Cost: \$100,000 to \$150,000

Building Cost

The amounts for various buildings/facilities will become more clearly understood through the master plan development process. However, parents and community members are still able to give to this fund in anticipation of the eventual building projects. A rough estimate of the cost for the major projects is as follows:

Gymnasium: \$7M to \$10M

Musical Theater/Sanctuary Upgrades: \$3M to \$6M

Additional Classrooms: \$3M to \$5M

Upgraded Sports Fields/Facilities: \$1M to 3M

Upgraded Maintenance and Storage Facilities: \$500K to \$2M

God has been faithful to ECS for many decades. We believe that He will give us everything we need to do the job he has asked us to do. As we have outlined in this letter, we feel that our job is to assist our families in raising a generation who will make an impact on our society for Him. We are excited to see what He will do!

We have one final request. Please join us in prayer to the God of the universe as we entrust these plans to Him. "In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." (Proverbs 16:9)

With much love, Joel Phillips and Matt Conway

