



Beverly Heights
Presbyterian
Church

scattered seeds.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022



We're building a SCHOOL?

BY PASTOR NATE DEVLIN

You've probably heard by now that Beverly Heights is building a school. After a successful start to the kindergarten year, a feasibility study was conducted to discern the possibility of expansion. After receiving the results of the study, our Session several months ago approved the creation of a K-5 program that will be run on the B-level of the church this coming fall.

Having heard this news, it would be entirely understandable if some of you are asking the question, "Why exactly are we building a school here at Beverly Heights?" It's a legitimate question, and one I hope to begin to answer here.

There are some immediately obvious reasons, the most important being that the Session believes, through prayer and study, that this is the Lord's will for our church and for our community at this time. Additionally, the education of children has long been an integral part of the ministry of Beverly Heights. In many ways the creation of

this school is simply a continuation of long-standing commitments that have always been a part of our identity.

But specifically, I want to share with you one reason why I believe now is the time to renew this tradition of education here at Beverly Heights: building a school is on mission.

During my 18 years here, I have heard many folks in our church, as well as in my neighborhood, lament over what they observe as significant changes in the values, priorities and attitudes among the families of our community.

"This isn't the Mt. Lebanon of 50 years ago," they'll say. "It wasn't like this around here when I grew up," or "they never taught that in the schools when I went there." Typically, the "change" in question is always judged to be a negative one; with things becoming more worldly, more secular, more liberal, less traditional and less Christian.

Recently, I've been puzzling over this

phenomenon. What changed, exactly? What happened to Mt. Lebanon or Upper Saint Clair, or to the South Hills?

In other parts of the country demographic changes have pressured cultural ones. Texas, Florida and Tennessee are all experiencing influxes of residents from places like California or New York. And with new residents comes new values, often progressive values.

But this is not the case in Pittsburgh. The demographic data shows that most people who grow up in Pittsburgh stay in Pittsburgh, and those who move away come back. Returning to Pittsburgh happens so often, in fact, that it's been dubbed the "Pittsburgh Boomerang Effect" (honestly, google it).

So, our community has not been overrun by outsiders, but still our community has changed. Why?

There are probably several reasons,



but one significant cause I'd like to suggest is that our public schools have been a principal conduit of this change. It is through the schools that the values, priorities and attitudes of the state are promoted. We should be careful to recognize that the state does indeed possess a worldview. It is materialist, secular, progressive and increasingly hostile to the norms and traditions of the family and church.

The state seeks to train our children in its worldview so that they will grow up to be good citizens of the state, equipped with all of the affections and attitudes necessary for successful lives within the state. As pastor Voodie Baucham wrote, "We cannot continue to send our children to Caesar for their education and be surprised when they come home as Romans."

Here in Pittsburgh, the children we educate today will become the citizens of Pittsburgh tomorrow. And how they are educated will most certainly inform the kinds of neighborhoods we will have

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in the future.

But what if a child was educated in a distinctly Christian education through the ministry of a local church? Only a church can train children to be good citizens of the kingdom of God, so that their lives radiate the glory of God and bestow the blessings of the kingdom of heaven as they take residence in our neighborhoods.

It is the church, in partnership with the family, that has the responsibility to make Christians. The state can't do this, clearly, but neither can private parochial schools. Only the church can raise up Christians for the glory of God and for the sake of the world, and for our local neighborhoods.

So, to educate the kids of our church and those of our communities is to be a church on mission. Such a noble mission has the power to change our community, and since this is God's mission, His change can only be good. And so, we build.



It's time to make DISCIPLES.

BY KYLE BENNETT

I used to be a college professor. Chair of the Philosophy and Theology Department, I was living the dream. Except I wasn't. I quit in my tenure year. I couldn't do it anymore. I was tired of the feigning. I was dismayed by the machinations. This wasn't education; I wasn't teaching.

I had come to see that many of my students and colleagues had a "GetGo" philosophy of education: "Get In. Get Out. Get Going." That is, "Get into my school of choice. Get my degree. Get on with my life." Education had become a stepping stone. The diploma was the goal.

People didn't always have such a utilitarian view of education. Nor did they see schools as neutral spaces. The key texts every student had to study were carefully selected. Parents knew the teachers and trusted them. Adult influence and mentoring were

assumed, encouraged and celebrated.

Nowadays parents don't even know the first name of their child's teacher. The classics have been ousted by provocative critical theorists and iconoclasts. Teachers play movies when kids get stressed.

All of this is forming our kids a particular way, and I don't like what I'm seeing. I want to see things change, and I want to be a part of that change. I believe Beverly Heights Christian School can spearhead that change. I want to forge a new path for Christian education in America.

There are a lot of options out there for schooling, I know. Why would we do this? Why would anyone choose us? What are we offering that they aren't? The answer to these questions can be summed up in three themes: *people*, *place*, and *practice*.

People

We will be a school that encourages partnership and transparency between parents and teachers. Parents will know the first names of teachers. They will know what books the teachers are reading to their kids. The same values will be cultivated in the lunch room as around the dinner table.

We will have a faculty that sees mentoring and discipleship as part of their calling as teachers. It's not enough to be qualified and certified to instruct. We also want people who can mentor and disciple our young ones in the image and likeness of Christ. It's about making Christians.

Parents will be invited to volunteer in the school and offer any assistance they are able. Teachers will have daily conversations with parents,



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update them weekly via email, and host monthly parent-teacher mingles. We will encourage Christian friendship among teachers and parents.

Place

We could rent space down the street. But housing our school in the church signals and symbolizes who we are and what we're here to do. We are the church and we're here to make worshippers – intelligent, compassionate, active followers of Jesus.

How we arrange the classroom matters. We'll be deliberate about having students grouped in desks or around a table to remind them every day that they are members of the Body of Christ – a learning community, not self-reliant individuals trying to be the smartest in the room.

We'll cap all classes at 12 students to foster intimacy and individualized attention. We'll have combined classes to encourage accountability and responsibility across grade levels. Older students will be "reading buddies" working alongside younger ones.

Practice

We'll be thoughtful about our daily routines. We'll have morning worship in the sanctuary every day. When the Lord returns and the end arrives, all of us will be transformed into full-blown worshippers. Worship is what we're going to do forever. It's our future. We're going to start practicing now.

We'll create opportunities to cultivate Christian friendship over lunch and during gym class. We'll encourage students to care and pray for each other and give them time to do so.

Our classes will offer unique instruction. Students will learn American history, but also church history. They'll hear about George Washington, but also Polycarp of Smyrna. They'll sing the Pledge of Allegiance, as well as All Creatures of Our God and King.

How we "grade" and evaluate will also be taken captive for Christ. Teachers will send home report cards, but they will also keep portfolios with all of the student's work to walk parents through the growth and development of their child over the course of the year.

It's time to bring education back to the church. It's time to make disciples. It's time to take captive all of the itty-bitty, nitty-gritty things that form the heads, hearts, and hands of our children. The future of the church, family, and state depends on it.



Christians are made. WE EXIST TO MAKE THEM.

FAQS ABOUT OUR NEW SCHOOL

Holly Devlin

Holly is the kindergarten teacher here at Beverly Heights. She has been a teacher to many children over the last 20 years, including her own. She studied Elementary Education at Geneva College where she met her husband, Senior Pastor Nate Devlin. She sees teaching as a calling from God. In everything she does in the classroom, she seeks to please the Lord. A seasoned Christian teacher, Holly is passionate about helping her students learn, grow and know God and His great love for them.

Mande Brodzinski

Mande will teach the combined first and second grade class. She received her Elementary Education degree from California University of Pennsylvania and holds a Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate, with certification in Elementary Education (K-6). She has classroom experience ranging from pre-K, where she worked at the University of Pittsburgh Child Development Center, to public elementary schools where she taught across grade levels. Most recently, she has been a caregiver and teacher for the Mom's Day Out program at Beverly Heights.

Kyle Bennett

Kyle is the new director and principal of our preschool and school. A former college professor and pastor, Kyle has taught philosophy, theology and ethics at Christian universities in California and New Jersey. He has a PhD in Philosophy, an MA in Theology (both from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California) and a BA in Youth Ministry (from Geneva College in Beaver County). Kyle formerly served as youth pastor for several years at a church in Florida. He is the author of *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World* (Brazos Press, 2017).

Karen Kress

Karen will teach the combined third through fifth grade class on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. She has a degree in elementary education from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville with K-9 teaching credentials in mathematics and social studies. She holds a Pennsylvania teaching certificate. She taught fifth through eighth grade math, science, religion and literature and K-8 technology at St. Andrew's Lutheran School in Park Ridge, IL for eight years. She has served as the student council advisor, electives coordinators and ran a lunchtime chess club. She has also coached and refereed high school and middle school volleyball.

Rebecca Sparks

Rebecca will teach the combined third through fifth grade class on Tuesday and Thursday. She received a degree in History while completing the requirements for elementary licensure from Meredith College in Raleigh, NC. She returned to Meredith to complete Master's programs in Elementary Education and Gifted and Talented Education. Rebecca has taught third, fourth and fifth grades over the past 13 years in NC, ND, CO, and, most recently, in Peters Township. She is excited to have the opportunity to invest in the children of our community and to come alongside them as they learn to be worshipers of God.

Our new school faculty and administration.



How will this be funded?

The school is funded primarily through tuition. An education fund was established by the Session to help with startup costs in the first year. We are also investigating additional funding through the Earned Income Tax Program administered by the Association of Christian Schools International, an organization to which we belong.

How much is the tuition?

\$6,480 per student per school year, first through fifth. Kindergarten is \$3,645 per year per student. The school has an internal scholarship fund to help offset tuition costs for those who qualify. (The preschool has different rates.)

How will any deficit be made up?

At present, there is no deficit. In order that our schools (both the preschool and K-5) may receive certain legal protections, they are a ministry of our church, fully run and fully supported by Beverly Heights Church. People who wish to donate monies to the school, specific for use in this ministry, can do so by contacting Katie Parrish, our financial administrator.

Are there students registered for next year? If so, how many?

The kindergarten presently has 10 registered students (limited to 12). For the combined first and second grade, there are eight registered students presently (limit of 12). For the combined third, fourth and fifth grade class, there are six registered students presently (limit of seven).

Where will the students be taught?

On the B level. Kindergarten students are in room B-10, where they were for their inaugural year. The first and second grade class (combined) will meet in room B-17. The third, fourth and fifth grade class (combined) will meet in room B-14.

When is the first day of school?

Monday, Aug. 29.

Is there a board? If so, who?

The Session is the board for the school, as it is for the preschool.

Is there any missional emphasis?

The mission of the school is to make

Christians by engaging the families of our congregation and our surrounding communities.

How is this different from another Christian school?

The vision for Beverly Heights Christian School is one in which we are educating children as the church, leveraging all the distinctions, strengths, liturgies, pedagogies and benefits of the local church. We are not, in a sense, a parochial school.

Are there plans for future expansion?

Expansion is entirely dependent on whether or not the Lord blesses and multiplies this ministry and leads the Session to discern that an expansion is necessary. While there are hopes for expansion, no plans exist at present to do so.

If I'd like more information about the school, whom should I contact?

Principal Kyle Bennett, whose contact info is: kyle@beverlyheights.org; cell 626-590-2136. An information packet is available for prospective parents, which Kyle can provide upon request.

It all comes down to trust.

Six hundred thousand men plus women and children with their possessions and livestock found themselves in an unfathomable situation.

Behind the people of Israel was the pursuing army of the Egyptians whose harsh slavery they were escaping. The Egyptians had horses and chariots and thousands of armed foot soldiers. They were led by a Pharaoh who was filled with anger over being tricked by the escaping Israelites.

In front of them was the Red Sea, as Moses called the people to follow him into the water. Imagine what the talk was like among the people of God at that moment? I doubt that all 600,000 were enthusiastic about the journey that lay before them. It was daunting and scary. In the minds of some, I suspect they thought the plan, or what little they knew of it, was just plain crazy.

And yet “the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left” (Exodus 14.22).

While we don't have any record of the conversations between the leaders of Israel's tribes or between husbands and wives and family friends, it's not too difficult to imagine what was said as they waited their turn to wade into the water:

- Does our leadership know what they are doing?
- Can we trust their good judgment, wisdom and abilities to get us where we are going?
- Is God in this venture?

• Do I have the faith to walk down a path I've never trod before?

The people had endured 400 years of slavery. Life was as harsh as it could possibly be.

The people continually cried out to the Lord for deliverance and regularly pressed Moses and Aaron about the solutions they were considering. But in the midst of their

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discontent and suffering, there must also have been fear, disagreement and worry over the life they knew in Goshen and what they were being asked to do moving forward.

“We're going to follow a cloud during the day and a fire in the sky at night? Whose bright idea was this? Does anybody think this will work?”

Against the litany of questions, problems, disagreements and concerns – which were valid and too easily dismissed as faithless disobedience – there were also realities that were too easily forgotten by God's people.

They are realities that are oh so very important to be remembered when lovers of God prepare to engage in what seems like an insurmountable task:

- What are the promises of God that we know He will never forsake?
- How has God demonstrated His power and love in our midst?
- How has God led us through new and scary adventures in the past?
- Is God wanting to walk us down this path in order to bring glory to Himself?

What must also be underscored is the role that Moses, God's chosen leader, played in His divine plan to use the people to glorify Himself in this great enterprise we know as “the exodus.” Has God really spoken to Moses and does Moses really know what God wants the people to do? Does Moses have what it takes to get the people out of Egypt, across the wilderness and onto the threshold of the Promised Land?

At the end of the day, it boils down to trust.

Trust in my ability to discern God's plan.

Trust in the leadership God has raised up for His people to attempt great things that stretch one's imagination, understanding and even agreement.

And trust in the Lord Himself, who has promised that through both good times and bad, He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Rick Wolling is pastor emeritus of Beverly Heights Church.