

THE CAIRN COMPASS

Inspiring students to love, learn, and lead together in God's world.



Fall
2025

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Woven

By Kevin Huinink, Executive Director

You are important to us! This message is the heart of Paul's urging to the Colossians. Weaving one another into a tapestry of love requires intentionality, but when we are in touch with everything there is to know about God, we will be confident and at rest.

The Cairn Compass will follow our theme verse in each issue this year, starting with 'Woven'. Our staff and students have been asking themselves, 'Who is excluded? Who doesn't feel like they belong?' and following on wondering how we can weave these 'others' in.

In this issue, you will see how our students and staff experience that intentionality at the beginning of the year through regular habits. You will also be invited into our story, as we intentionally engage and weave you into the work we do.

Turn the page into the tapestry that is Cairn Christian School!

"I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else."

Colossians 2:2-4 (MSG)



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A Warm Welcome

Open Houses

Before the calendar even turned to September, both campuses hosted Open Houses to welcome families to the 2025-2026 school year. Backpacks filled with school supplies and smiling faces flooded the hallways and spilled into the classrooms. Calendars were handed out, treats were enjoyed, and connections were made with both new and familiar faces. In Smithville, new families wore red nametags and returning families wore blue nametags, encouraging an intentional weaving of community by ensuring new families

were welcomed. In Stoney Creek, families were invited to select a piece of cloth or ribbon and inscribe it with the names of their family members to contribute to a school-wide weaving. **Open Houses provide an opportunity for students and their families to be welcomed into the schools by staff and also for the community to be woven together.**

First Day of School

September 2nd was the first day of the 2025-2026 school year. **It was a joy-filled day, filled with intentionality, meant to include and enfold**

each person who walked through the doors of our schools. Bus drivers cheerfully greeted students at the beginning of the day. Families were welcomed at drop-off and invited to chapel. Office staff graciously responded to all the questions and ensured things went smoothly. Teachers purposefully designed activities to ensure all children felt belonging and paraeducators lovingly supported children in a variety of ways.

Opening Chapels

There was a buzz of excitement and expectation as our principals led our school community in our

first chapel of the new school year. Each of our campuses began the year with a school-wide chapel, including a time of praise and worship, a devotion reflecting our school theme: Woven Together, and a warm welcome to staff, students and families, especially those who were joining Cairn Christian School for the first time. **These school-wide gatherings are evidence of a community being woven together, inviting each person into our vision of inspiring a diverse and unified student body to love, learn, and lead with God's grace, bringing Christ's love to the world.**



In the Classroom: Relationships First

If you ask any student at Cairn Christian School how they begin and end their day at school, they will respond with “morning meeting” and “closing circle.” For many, it’s their favourite part of the day. These intentional interactions are **one of the ways we weave**: each student is an integral part of their classroom community and belongs!

What is a morning meeting?

- An intentional practice of beginning the day together as a class
- A time of devotions and prayer
- A time to greet each other by name
- A time to learn about each other: What does each student love? What interests them? What do they get excited about? What are their gifts? How has God worked in their lives and how is He continuing?

What is a closing circle?

- An intentional practice of ending the day together as a class
- A time of prayer
- A time to reflect on the day

Relationships form the foundation for excellent learning. Teachers know that if we get relationships right, learning will come much more effectively. Just as Jesus emphasized the importance of relationships, that’s how we endeavour to live as well. In our classrooms, relationships come first. It is one of the ways that we live out our mission of inspiring students to love, learn, and lead together in God’s world!

Student quotes:

A morning meeting happens at the beginning of the day when we answer the morning question so that we can learn more about each other.

We have morning meetings so that we will have a good day. We read a devotion and have a question and say good morning.

A closing circle is a time to pray and sing a closing song. When we pray, we give prayer requests.

Closing circle is when you pray to God and close before you leave for the day. Sometimes we say jokes.

We greet our neighbours with a handshake or other greeting. We get a question and talk about it, like on ‘Would you Rather Wednesdays.’ We pray. Sometimes we play a game. On Mondays we share highlights from our weekend. I like playing games because they are fun! Morning meetings make you feel loved!





Staff CREW: Weaving Each Other In

By: Danyse Nywening, Grade 3&4 Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator, Stoney Creek

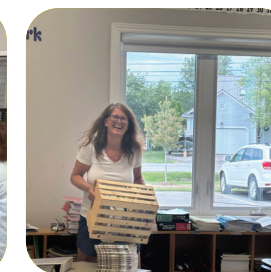
In their book, *Flourishing Together*, Lynn E. Swaner and Andy Wolfe write, "... education at its core is about people—nothing more, nothing less." People, as fellow image bearers in the Kingdom of God, are at the core of our mission at Cairn Christian School. The people we work with matter and are all an important part of the team. Because of this, we intentionally call each other CREW. Our schools are working to ensure that each member of our staff CREW knows that they are valued and that they are never on their own in the important work they are doing.

This year's Cairn wide theme, "Woven Together," clearly captures the heart of CREW. Through the Holy Spirit, we are being woven together as a community of believers and a community of practice. What does this look like for the staff CREW at Cairn Christian School, both in Smithville and in Stoney Creek? It looks like:

- the Senior Leadership Team designing professional development to strengthen our understanding of each other at our annual Ball's Falls retreat
- a gift given to each staff CREW member by the Senior Leadership Team to symbolize the school's theme

- collaboration between campuses through the Educational Leadership Team to support each other's programming
- mentorship for new staff members
- Cairn spirit wear given to new staff members
- staff devotions every week
- divisional staff meetings to discuss curriculum
- treat days
- hallway check-ins with each other
- gathering for coffee in the staff room before or after school
- underground CREW spirit days (will the students notice?)
- secret birthday buddies

And it looks like a staff CREW walking the hallways prayerfully, with intention, to be the hands and feet of Jesus to each other and to their students. Being woven together as CREW enables us to work together in our pursuit of inspiring students to love, learn, and lead together in God's world!



From the Board

By: Matt Oliveira, Board Chair

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year. As we launch into a new year, we are excited to bring you an update in light of the school theme: Woven Together. The school theme is timely as we seek unity in Christ during a season of transition.

We congratulate Kevin Huinink, our current Executive Director, on his new position as a Lead Consultant for Chisel Consulting. We are grateful that Kevin is able to continue in a part-time capacity with the school while we look for our next Executive Director. To achieve the reduction in capacity, Kevin is delegating some of his work to other capable staff so that he can continue to lead our schools. Thank you, Kevin!

An Executive Director Search Committee has been meeting regularly, and applications are being received for Cairn Christian School's next Executive

Director. Please continue to keep this committee, the process, and the candidates in your prayers as we seek God's leading.

This year, the Board will continue to focus on strategic initiatives and ensure that our schools' long-term health and direction are on track. As a policy governance board, the work we do on policies is important in directing how our schools are run.

The Board covets your prayers as we do the challenging, necessary, and beautiful work of directing our schools. We also want to encourage and challenge you to commit to the work we do financially in our upcoming Fall Drive: An Invitation to be Woven in. We thank you for continued prayers and support of our mission!



Driving the Way Forward Update

In the previous edition of the Cairn Compass, we extended an invitation for you to invest in our "Driving the Way Forward" campaign. As you may know, our bus fleet has been facing increasing challenges with reliability. In the past five years, we've had to replace and maintain consistently our growing fleet of 15 buses that serve both campuses and the high school as well. As maintenance costs rise, the situation has become unsustainable. More breakdowns and delays are not only frustrating, but they're also putting a strain on the service provided to our families.

Our Plan: New Buses, New Reliability

Through our Driving the Way Forward Campaign, we're working to replace our fleet with new, reliable buses that will:

- Reduce Downtime: Fewer breakdowns and more consistent service.
- Cut Costs Long-Term: New buses mean lower maintenance, which allows us to reinvest in better service.

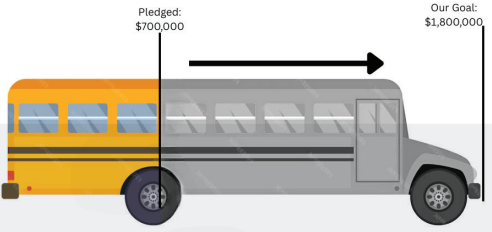
Why It Matters

This initiative is about making sure that our transportation service remains reliable and ready for the future, bringing students to Cairn Christian School to be inspired to love, learn and lead together in God's world. With your help, we can provide better service to everyone who depends on our buses, while also reducing long-term costs.

Thank you for your support!

We thank you for your generosity to this campaign and are excited to share the progress we (you!) have made so far! We are committed to keeping our community informed and updated as we work towards our goal of \$1.8 million. **In just a few short months, we have raised more than \$700,000 in pledges and contributions!!** THANK YOU!

We're excited to keep this momentum going, and we truly appreciate the support of our community. Thanks so much for being a part of this journey with us! If you would like to know more, or would like to get involved, contact Adam Bylsma at adamby98@hotmail.com



An Invitation to Be Woven In

You are an important part of our story. With your support, Cairn Christian School can continue to offer the transforming education it provides. Henri Nouwen, in his book "A Spirituality of Fundraising", writes about this sacred bond between those who give and those who use those gifts toward a mission:

"When those with money and those who need money share a mission, we see a central sign of new life in the Spirit of Christ. We belong together in our work because Jesus has brought us together, and our fruitfulness depends on staying connected with him. Jesus tells us: 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing' (John 15:5)."

As you read this, can you hear the 'weaving together' in our Kingdom work together?

In just a couple of weeks, you will receive an invitation to give to the work of Cairn Christian School and our mission to inspire students to love, learn, and lead together in God's world. This invitation through our annual Fall Drive is an invitation to be a part of our story. We look forward to sharing our stories with you, inviting you to join us in our big beautiful story called Cairn Christian School.

The Cairn Compass is a quarterly newsletter distributed to the Cairn Christian School supporting community.

Our Mission

Inspiring students to love, learn, and lead together in God's world.

Our Vision

To be the leaders in education by inspiring a diverse and unified student body to love, learn, and lead with God's grace, bringing Christ's love to the world.



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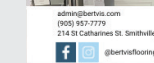
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