

THE CAIRN COMPASS

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



Spring
2026

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Confident and at Rest

By Kevin Huinink, Executive Director

What happens to us when we are woven together, in touch with everything there is to know of God? In his letter to the Colossians, Paul suggests that this connection leads to minds that are **confident and at rest**.

In a world often ruled by fear and anxiety, that rest can feel out of reach. I'll admit, I often feel that weight myself. There is so much to worry about, and the burden only grows heavier when we withdraw into ourselves. So, how do we answer that fear? We are called to weave ourselves together in love.

We see this calling in action every day at school. It's in the vital mental health support provided by our school counsellor, and in the simple rhythms of our classrooms; from morning meetings to shared play and closing reflections. These moments wrap each student in prayer and a community dedicated to loving one another better.

Do we always get this right? Of course not. But that is why we need this regular reminder: the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found when we are woven together in a tapestry of love.

"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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Our Deep Hopes

Cairn Christian School is a **Teaching for Transformation** (TfT) School. TfT is a pedagogical practice, a “distinctively Christian design framework that invites, nurtures and empowers both teachers and students to play their part in God’s story through engaging learning experiences.”

Teachers at Cairn Christian School design engaging learning experiences by starting with the question, “What is my deep hope?” Each teacher has a deep hope for their students. By anchoring classroom instruction to their deep hopes, teachers are connecting learning to God’s story, confident and at rest that their students are engaged in learning that

1. www.teachingfortransformation.org/who-we-are/tft-story

It is my deep hope to lead with an open mind and open hands, empowering others to love and work passionately, purposefully, and wholeheartedly.

- *Carolyn Bentum, Stoney Creek Principal*

My deep hope is that you will find joy as you take risks in a safe and loving environment where you are inspired to love, learn, and lead together in God’s world.

- *Joyce Koornneef, Smithville Principal*

My deep hope for my kindergarten students is that they will know that God created them and loves them. In response, I hope they will learn to love God, love others, and joyfully live this out through their work and play.

- *Katy Gray, Kindergarten*

is authentically connected to God’s story.

In Colossians 2:2 (MSG), Paul tells us: “I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch of everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds, confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God’s great mystery.” In their classrooms, students are part of a tapestry of love. Through their learning, students begin to be in touch with everything there is to know of God. The desired outcome is students who have minds that are confident and at rest. **Deep hopes help us guide our students to confident and restful minds, focused on Christ, and on their place in God’s story.**

My deep hope is that my Kinders will understand that they are known and loved by God, that they will show this love to others, and they will recognize they have an important role to play in God’s great big story.

- *Stacy Kok, Kindergarten*

My deep hope is that as we discover God’s creation, we can grow in love for him and share his love with others.

- *Erin Robson, Kindergarten*

My deep hope for my students is that they will know God’s love for them, and share it with others. Together we will wonder at His amazing creation and SHINE BRIGHT through our daily actions.

- *Jenelle VanderWier, Kindergarten*

My deep hope is that my students will delight in God’s beautiful creation, that they will learn who God is and come to love God with their whole heart, and that they will find unique ways to serve Him in their community.

- *Kirsten Vos, Kindergarten*

My deep hope is that every child would feel safe, loved and know they are a child of God with beautiful gifts to share in community.

- *Christine Winter, Kindergarten*

My deep hope is for my students to discover their own unique spark in their hearts, that lights the way, as they explore God’s great big, beautiful world!

- *Michelle DeBoer, Grade 1*

My deep hope for my grade 1 class is that as we learn and grow together, we will live as God’s disciples - seeking Him, finding Him, and joyfully sharing His love with those around us.

- *Dayna Winsor, Grade 1*

My deep hope is that students understand that they are loved and uniquely created by God, made to joyfully serve Him and others as they explore the world with curiosity.

- *Karen Bylsma, Grade 1&2*

My deep hope is that my students will joyfully explore and discover meaning in God’s world around them and share their delight with others as their learning grows.

- *Carol Struyk, Grade 2*

My deep hope is that we will open our eyes to notice God’s beauty and the opportunities He places before us. We will begin to understand God’s limitless love for us and in response to that love, explore ways that we can share that love with others.

- *Andrea Wiersma, Grade 2*

My deep hope is that together we would establish our piece of God’s Story and discover His loving plan for us in His Kingdom.

- *Sara Weaver, Grade 2&3*

My deep hope is that we would experience and know God’s love and that we would be inspired to learn, encouraged in heart, and equipped to live out our faith in this world.

- *Josie Burgess, Grade 3*

My deep hope is that my students find joy and evidence of God in the world around them.

- *Carla Teeuwsen, Grade 3*

Our deep hope for our class is that through the study of the Bible and God’s world we are transformed by the Holy Spirit to be salt and light to the world around us.

- *Danyse Nywening & Maria Tamming, Grade 3&4*

My deep hope for my students is for them to experience God’s love, to have a serving heart and to explore God’s creation with wonder.

- *Lesley Esau, Grade 4*

continued on page 4 →

We are people of hope. Not wishes or plans. And, more than just hope. Deep hope.

Deep hope represents why you followed the call to be a teacher in a Christian school. It aligns with the desires that parents have as they enroll their children in your school. It reflects the promises contained within your school’s mission and vision statement and points toward your place in God’s story.

And, within Teaching for Transformation, it is the first question we ask ourselves when we design learning experiences for our students: “What is our deep hope?”

It is our North Star that guides us on our learning journey within our Christian schools.



<https://www.teachingfortransformation.org/>

My deep hope is for us to live each day with grateful hearts filled with love, joy and wonder as we explore, discover and steward God's world.

- Karen Verbruggen, Grade 4

My deep hope is that my students know that they are fearfully and wonderfully made by God, created for beautiful work.

- Cardia Russell, Grade 4&5

My deep hope is that Grade 5 will joyfully explore and discover the wonders of God's world, seeing His handiwork in everything. As we discover these wonders our hearts will respond with awe and gratitude and seek to elevate God's world.

- Curtiss Straatsma, Grade 5

My deep hope is that my students gain a deeper understanding of how we are all interconnected in the community of God's big story.

- Linda Geerts, Grade 5&6

My deep hope is that as we experience God's love, we would ignite a heart of virtue and become passionate workers for His Kingdom.

- Clarissa Torrie, Grade 6

My deep hope is to walk alongside my students as they grow in love, grace, and curiosity for God's world, discovering their place in His big story and becoming agents of kindness and restoration in a world longing to be made whole.

- Jill Walters, Grade 6

My deep hope is that we can intentionally take the time to be still and know that God is at work in our lives and in the world around us. Knowing that God is always at work, we will be inspired to walk along with Him in His kingdom work.

- Eric Miedema, Grade 7

My deep hope is that you know who you are in Christ and you live accordingly.

- Kimberly Visser, Grade 7

My deep hope is that my students develop a mission mindset, listening to where God is calling them to serve and lead in His world.

- Michelle Nash, Grade 8

My deep hope is for my students to recognize that they are an active part of God's story, and that they will use the gifts He has given them to transform the world by serving others.

- Jacqueline Scholman, Grade 8

My deep hope is that my students feel a true sense of belonging and being fully known, recognize themselves as uniquely and wonderfully made by God, and are empowered to love, learn, and lead as part of His kingdom.

- Claudia DeHaan, Student Support

My deep hope for all who enter this room is that as perfectly created image bearers of God, you will experience love, belonging and being already enough, as you actively participate with your peers in God's kingdom.

- Freda Hoekstra, Student Support

As music makers and instruments of God, we are called to grow together in unity, reflecting His heart, unlocking the unique gifts He has placed within us, and sharing them as vessels of His love, creativity and healing.

- Jenn McKillop, Music

My deep hope is that we understand our bodies as part of God's good creation – worthy of care, capable of growth, and called to glorify Christ.

- Jeremy Kingma, Physical Education

My deep hope is that you will gain a new understanding and sense of how God made you so intricately and with absolute love.

- Hannelle Weverink, School Counselor



Hats, Mitts, and Helping Hands

By Dayna Winsor, Grade 1 Teacher

My deep hope for my Grade 1 class is that as we learn and grow together, we will live as God's disciples - seeking Him, finding Him, and joyfully sharing His love with those around us. Following in line with our class storyline, "Seek and Find," we have been learning that when we seek God, we also begin to notice the needs of others in new and meaningful ways.

During our learning on the daily and seasonal changes, students explored how the weather shifts throughout the year and how we adjust by dressing appropriately to stay warm. Through this learning, students began to wonder about those in our community who may not have access to warm clothing during the colder months. This led to a thoughtful and compassionate class discussion, where students recognized an opportunity to serve.

Eager to take action, the class decided to organize a hats and mitts drive in support of Helping Hands. Students took ownership of the initiative by creating and hanging posters around the school, spreading awareness, and encouraging others

to contribute. A few of our learning targets included:

- I can recognize how seasonal changes affect the way we dress.
- I can identify ways to help others in my community.
- I can share ideas and encourage others to take action.
- I can make an estimate and help count our collection.

Just a small idea turned into a meaningful community effort, and in the end, we collected 287 hats and mitts. More importantly, students experienced what it means to live out their faith in tangible ways - serving others with joy and compassion.

As a class, we are learning that when we seek and find God in our everyday learning, we can be confident and at rest, trusting that He is at work in us and through us. Grade 1, thank you for reminding us that even small acts of kindness can make a big difference, and for showing what it looks like to care for others with open hearts!



That's Who I Praise

By Sara Weaver,
Grade 2&3 Teacher



When I first heard the song "That's Who I Praise" by Brandon Lake, I was instantly struck by the richness of the Biblical connections throughout the song. I played it for my students and we made a list of all of the stories that they recognized from listening to the song. The list was long, and it only scratched the surface. It was there that the idea for a full song study came to life.

We used connections from our previous Bible project on the Names of Jesus as a launching point as we looked at all of His names. From there, we explored the characteristics of God to dig deeper into why we praise. Some students observations and conclusions include:

- "We praise God because He is kind, loving, joyful and perfect!" - Vienna M.
- "We praise God because He is the best." - Elliot D.
- "We praise God because He made us and the world." - Jack R.

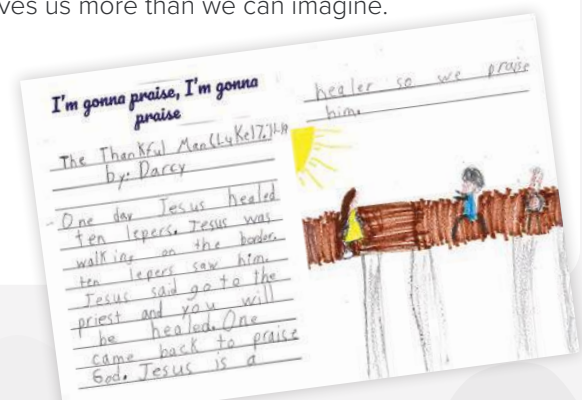
The next piece was the biggest. Students used a paragraph planner to summarize a story mentioned in the song. We learned about topic sentences, concluding sentences, how to make sentences more interesting, transition words and more to build a beautiful summary of each story. Students created



draft after draft as they continuously engaged in the editing process. Next they became illustrators of the story.

Finally, we got to explore what it looks like for people in our community to love like Jesus. We had visits from The Bridge, The Grimsby Life Centre, and Milk and Honey Coffee Co. and we were able to visit The Niagara Christian Gleaners and Community Care. This inspired us to find ways to love like Jesus, too, and one way was to sing at Shalom Manor.

Throughout this FLEx, students have continuously returned to the question, "Why do we praise God?" – Who is he? What is he like? Why is he worthy? As they engage with this question more and more, they are becoming more familiar with the God they serve – the God who loves them. As they gain a deeper understanding of God's personality, they can rest confidently knowing that the God they serve is loving, patient, caring, joyful, brave, holy, good, creative, and so much more. The more that we know God's character, the more that we are able to follow His will. We can rest in knowing that the God who created the world loves us more than we can imagine.



Our Deepest Financial Supporter!



We are deeply thankful for all of our donors, no matter if they give thousands, or if they give small amounts as they can. Each is important to the story of Cairn Christian School and enables us to live into our mission to inspire students to love, learn, and lead together in God's world!

Our largest donor, by far and away any measure, is our staff. Choosing to teach at a Christian School is an act of faith and an answer to a call, and it has a financial opportunity cost. Working elsewhere would simply pay better than working at Cairn. That doesn't make our staff better than anyone else, but it does place them as the most significant group enabling our schools to operate.

Using conservative estimates, the cumulative impact of the opportunity costs our teachers have borne over the past 20 years can be quantified at \$8 million. This does not include office staff, administrative staff, or paraeducators. If we were to extend this back to the origins of our schools, we know that this amount would be even larger!

Every single day that this incredible group of people show up to work with our students, inspiring them to love, learn, and lead together in God's world, we reap the benefits of their commitment, energy, and yes, their significant financial contributions.

Dare to Dream Jr.

Students in grades 4-8 in Smithville presented Disney's Dare to Dream JR., an uplifting 60-minute musical revue that follows an enthusiastic group of trainees on their first day at a fictional Walt Disney Imagineering Studio, where collaboration, creativity, and courage lead them to discover how dreams can unite, inspire, and make the impossible possible.

In addition to the joyful and inspiring production, all students in grades K-8 engaged in devotions and classroom activities connected to the musical's themes. These experiences emphasized the importance of dreaming big, recognizing God-

given gifts, and celebrating that each individual is uniquely created with purpose.

Proceeds from the Wednesday matinee, known as the "Our Dream Performance," were donated to charities selected by the student body through a nomination and voting process. Supporting others as they pursue their dreams is one meaningful way Cairn students seek to show God's love and serve the world.

Cairn Christian School enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to share an unforgettable celebration of faith, creativity, and big dreams.



I like being in the school play because....

"I love building relationships, giving children a safe place to create and explore, allowing others to take risks, try hard things and persevere. I smile when I see children encouraging others, setting and meeting goals, and watching the joy on performance nights. Seeing families so proud of their children and seeing the child feel accomplished is a precious moment. I love that all of the above is for the glory of God!"
-Christine Winter, Director and Producer

"I have loved getting to know the cast and crew while leading them through this challenging and exciting music, and I am incredibly proud of the growth and perseverance shown by every student."
-Jenn McKillop, Music Director

"...it encourages me to put myself out there and be creative with my talents."
-Miriam, gr. 8

"...I like to sing and dance. When I grow up, I dream that I can become a Singer so I can use the gifts that God has given me."
-Kylee, gr. 4

"...I enjoy drama and like being involved in the play behind the scenes and supporting the actors and singers. My dream for others is that all people can be included and valued in all aspects of life, especially individuals with special needs."
-Ally, gr. 7

"...then I can gain confidence and learn to sing louder. I also love to be with my friends."
-Thea, gr. 6

"...I enjoy dancing and performing front of an audience! When I grow up, I dream that I can be a director - I like making up stories and sharing them with others."
-Brielle, gr. 5

"...we get to sing and dance and see how God's story is woven through."
-Erica, gr. 6

"...I like plays and I like singing. When I grow up, I dream that I can be a director or an author."
-Julia, gr. 6

"...I like to see it unfold and I like being a part of something. I also enjoy dancing and acting. My dream for others is that they find something they enjoy doing as much as I like doing the play."
-Brighton, gr. 7

I think the Arts are important because...

"...it provides entertainment for the people watching and the people participating in the play."
-Kaylee, gr. 7

"...they give kids a chance to express themselves and show a different side of their personality."
-Lyon, gr. 8

"...people work hard and train to take part. It is also entertaining to watch. I feel proud to be a performer and it makes me happy."
-Isabelle, gr. 4

From the Board

By Matt Oliveira, Board Chair



As we move into spring, we are grateful to share some exciting updates with you.

The Executive Director Search Committee has been working diligently and has interviewed a number of potential candidates. We are hopeful to have news for you soon. In the meantime, the Board of Directors together with our Senior Leadership Team are thinking ahead and making plans for a successful 2026-2027 school year. Please continue to keep this process and the candidates in your prayers as we seek God's leading.

We are celebrating a milestone in the progress toward improved reliability of our transportation: we are thrilled to share that 2 of our new buses have arrived and are out on the road. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed time, funds, and prayer to the Driving the Way Forward campaign. Your generosity is a testament to the strength of this community and God's faithfulness.

Finally, we hope you'll join us for our Board Dinner on April 25. Come be nourished with a good meal, gathered in community to celebrate what God is doing here at Cairn. We would love to see you there!

The Board covets your prayers as we continue the work of directing our schools. Thank you for your continued support of our mission!



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.

WE LOVE, LEARN, & LEAD

WOVEN TOGETHER

April 25, 2026 at 6pm
Smithville Christian Reformed Church

Featuring:

- Dinner prepared by Chef Brad Rempel
- Plant Sale in support of Christian Education
- Stories celebrating the faith, learning, & love that God has and is weaving throughout our community!

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