



# ECHOES

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## What's the purpose of life?

MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

There's no point in working hard at school, doing your homework or even being nice to others, students at Smithville Christian High School were told in the first chapel of Spiritual Emphasis Week 2015-2016.

At least that's true if you are inclined to agree with John Lennon, the former Beatle whose song,

"Imagine" longed for a world without heaven, hell or religion, said Paul Vandenbrink (Class of 1992) who was this year's Spiritual Emphasis Week speaker.

*Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today...*

*Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too*

Vandenbrink said the ideas expressed in Lennon's lyrics were part of a cultural push "to get rid of religion," to create a society where there is no afterlife, no God.

"Lots of people agree that the world would be awesome if we could get rid of God," Vandenbrink said. "They think God is bad for

*Continued on page 2 ...*



...continued from page 1

humanity, that he's a killjoy, he's got rules, he's angry and judgey."

But according to the teacher who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, a life lived completely on the horizontal plane, as if there is no God, is meaningless, he said.

<sup>1</sup> "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher.

<sup>2</sup> "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

<sup>3</sup> What do people gain from all their labours at which they toil under the sun?

<sup>4</sup> Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

<sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

<sup>6</sup> The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.

<sup>7</sup> All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

<sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome, more than one can say." (Ecclesiastes 1: 1-8)





"Without God, life sucks, then you die," agreed Vandenbrink. "It's like listening to an entire Adele album in one shot. It's beautiful, but it's such a downer."

What do people gain from their labour? Vandenbrink asked, quoting Ecclesiastes 1:4. "Some of you are getting As in school. You work hard, you do your homework." Others join sports teams or serve others.

But it's all meaningless because nothing is new and nothing lasts, and within a few generations all of us will be forgotten, he said. Recycling is useless because the planet is doomed anyway, chasing after pleasure only reveals how insatiable humans are, and nothing for which we strive will completely satisfy.

"But what if the story doesn't end there?" he asked. "What if there is more?"

Many years after the teacher of Ecclesiastes wrote that all of life is meaningless, another teacher made it possible for us to know that what we do right now does count – "it counts forever."

In the subsequent chapels of Spiritual Emphasis Week, Vandenbrink considered the value of the pursuit of pleasure (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 and 3:9-14), pondered the presence of injustice and suffering (Ecclesiastes 8:14 – 9:16), and wondered how we can cope with anxiety and uncertainty (Ecclesiastes 11:1-6).

In the final chapel, Vandenbrink said if life without God is meaningless, pleasure can't satisfy us, the world is full of injustice and anxiety is pervasive, how should we live?

He said the answer can also be found in the writing of the teacher.

"Fear God and keep his commandments, that is the whole duty of everyone," Vandenbrink said. "After 12 chapters of questioning materialism, hedonism, existentialism and nihilism it all boils down to one thing: fear me and keep my commandments." It may seem simple, but it is "piercingly profound."

Each chapel included a time of worship led by one of the school's three student praise teams, followed by lunchtime discussion groups led by Grade 12 students. On Wednesday, the school hosted Girls' Night Out and Guys' Night Out. Read more about the chapel talks on the school blog: [smithvillechristian.blogspot.ca/](http://smithvillechristian.blogspot.ca/)



**SPIRITUAL  
EMPHASIS  
WEEK  
2015-2016**



## Why bother?

As a Christian school staffed with Christian teachers who infuse everything with the light of God's word, why do we bother with Spiritual Emphasis Week? It's expensive, messy, chaotic and time-consuming. It throws the schedule out of whack.

But it's worth it, said spiritual life director Gord Park.

"It's like an in-school retreat," Park said. "We get away from the usual routine and we have an opportunity for daily worship and chapel and small groups."

There's something about messing with the regular schedule that works, he said. "God speaks to us when we change it up," Park said.

Park said Grade 12 students demonstrate leadership, students connect chapel messages to what they are discussing in class, and students take advantage of the prayer room. During Grade 12 portfolio interviews each June, students often talk about the effect that Spiritual Emphasis Week has had on their faith journeys.

At Smithville Christian High School, Spiritual Emphasis Week is a highlight of the school year, Park said. "It impacts kids in a unique way."



Guys' Night Out



SPIRITUAL  
EMPHASIS  
WEEK  
2015-2016



Girls' Night Out





# Making it mean something

For students who don't speak English as their first language or who aren't familiar with Christianity, Spiritual Emphasis Week can be baffling and overwhelming.

That's why Smithville Christian High School is partnering with a Chinese missionary to help share chapel messages in a way they can understand.

Yanyan Wu, a missionary with Ambassadors for Christ in Canada, based at Brock University, comes to every chapel at Smithville Christian, including the five days of Spiritual Emphasis Week. She meets with Chinese speaking students after each chapel, explaining the message and answering any questions they have. She also provides a Chinese translation and summary of the chapel message, which is shared with students. She and her husband also host a weekly Chinese-language Bible study at school, and invite students to attend the Friday night gathering they host in St. Catharines at Brock.

Here's an excerpt from one of Yanyan's chapel translations.

同学们，你们好！以下是今天chapel的内容，如有问题请来信或电。

丰盛生命



Mr Park 举了一个例子。有一个农夫种了一颗无花果，叶子非常茂盛，在结果的季节却一个果实都没有。于是这棵无果树毫无价值，只有被丢弃，砍掉。那我们的生命如何才能丰盛呢？

于是Mr Park又举了一个例子就是摩西。（出埃及记2章-3章/10节）这里清楚说明摩西的人生因着神得到翻天覆地的改变。从被丢弃的婴孩到王宫的王子，从王子到逃犯，逃犯到牧羊人，牧羊人到神的仆人，神的仆人到以色列的领袖。从摩西的例子我们可以看到要有一个丰盛的生命必需明白神，认识神！也要知道自己是谁，生命的意义是什么！

因此Mr Park 总结要有丰盛的生命必需明白与遵行以下几点：

1 神没有忘记我们；2 神渴望我们看到祂；3 神等待我们回转；4 神渴望我们跟随；5 神是圣洁的；6 神邀请我们靠近祂；7 神的应许不改变；8 神的呼召；9 神总是看顾我们；10 神爱我们；11 在神里我们是自由的；12 神造我们让我们享受自然；13 我们要明白神赞美神；14 我们被神邀请与祂建立关系；15 我们可以经历神的应许就是祂的恩典；16 神造我们有美好的旨意

那么什么是丰盛生命的记号呢？也就是说怎样证明你是一个有丰盛生命的人？（加拉太书5章22，23节）告诉我们有一个丰盛生命的人应该有的特质就是：仁爱，喜乐，和平，忍耐，恩慈，良善，信实，温柔，节制。

同学们，以上的特质你具备几个呢？求神帮助我们！

God bless

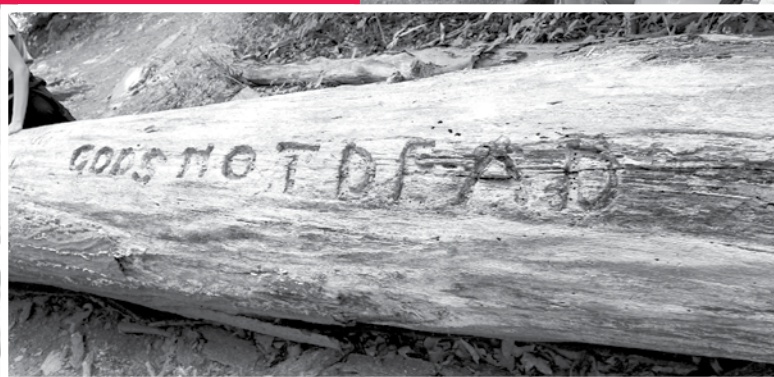
yanyan







# *Grade Nine Bike Trip - Niagara Falls*











## Buoyed by community

For the fourth time in five years, Smithville Christian High School's senior boys volleyball team qualified for OFSAA – the provincial championships of high school sport.

It was an accomplishment dreamed about at the start of the season, said staff sponsor Gina VandenDool, but the team's success at the tournament, held at Ryerson University in Toronto in November, was a surprise.

"We ended up meeting the silver medalist, Woodland Christian High School, in the quarter-final round," she said. Getting that far exceeded expectations.

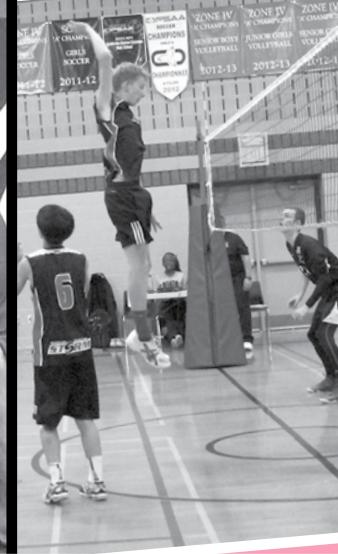
"Our goal was to get to OFSAA, but to get as far as we did was not something we could have imagined in September," she said.

"It was all about hard work and dedication," VandenDool said, plus being buoyed by a supportive community.

"It was the encouragement of the community. It wasn't just these guys, it was also the community," she said. "As a team, we certainly felt it."



# SENIOR BOYS VOLLEYBALL AT OFSAA



# One Student + One computer = 1:1

TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

Smithville Christian High School has big plans for our students and the way they use technology. As we train students to live as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ, we use technology every day as a way to access information, to communicate, and to generate products which demonstrate understanding and creativity. It has become critical that students have access to technology all day, every day.

For years we have facilitated the use of technology by making devices available for students to use, first with labs, then with portable class sets. But just as one could not imagine an office without a device for each person, so too has it become increasingly difficult for students to use technology on a "sign-out" basis. Our experience and our research into best practices at other schools has led us to adopt a 1:1 technology program.

"1:1" is a term used to indicate an educational environment where each student has use of a dedicated device for improved achievement of the school's learning goals. In our case, beginning next school year, each student will have use of an Apple MacBook which, upon graduation, will become the property of the student.

## FAQs:

**What are you buying?** We are buying the 11-inch MacBook Air.

**What are the benefits?** The 11-inch MacBook Air is portable and lightweight. It

powers up quickly and is a fast machine. It features an exceptional battery which can last all day when fully charged, and the computer's life expectancy will allow most students to use it well beyond high school.

**Why a lease? How will it work?** The school will buy MacBooks at competitive educational pricing and lease them to students for ¼ of the cost of the machine over four years; no profit will be made. The cost of the lease will be set for four years for each Grade 9 class, and is expected to be about \$300 per year. The cost will be added to tuition and student fees each September. Leasing will make the machines affordable and will ensure that all parties have a stake in their care. In some cases, this arrangement may also offer insurance benefits in case of theft at home or at school.

**How is the program being phased in?** The program will begin with distribution of MacBooks for all Grade 9 students every year, beginning in September 2016. This will make stewardly use of existing

technology in the school and will make the transition manageable.

**What about students in Grades 10 to 12 – can they buy in?** No. The school is planning to provide MacBooks for only Grade 9 students each year and to new students who join these students in later grades. Staff time is required to manage this program, and this needs to be allotted in a stewardly way. As before, other students may bring their own devices, which will continue to be maintained by the students and their families.

**What will happen to existing computer labs?** The desktop computers in our two labs and the class sets of laptops and iPads will remain in use until all students have MacBooks by the fall of 2019. Because many older students already have devices and all Grade 9s will have MacBooks, the labs will become even more available.

**Q. What will happen when there are problems with the MacBooks?** Most problems that students encounter can be fixed at school in fairly short order. We are





making plans for how a team will be trained to support students and teachers. We are also investigating possibilities for off site repair agreements for more complex problems. Damage which clearly results from accident or negligence will be the responsibility of the student/family.

**Will students use the MacBooks in every class, every day?**

No, but they will be required to have them at school and charged every day ready for use for every class.

**Will students be able to bring the MacBooks home?** Yes. Students can use the MacBooks as if they were their own according to the rules of the family.

**What about summer and other vacation time?** There may be times when the MacBooks need to be briefly maintained by the school, possibly in early summer. If this happens, there will be plenty of advance warning. Otherwise, the MacBooks can be used by students as if they were their own.

**Can a Grade 9 student opt out or bring another device?**

No. All students will be required to participate in the 1:1 program. Because of the many educational advantages to 100% participation, we are making it mandatory.

**Will students need a tablet or phone in addition to the MacBook?** No. Though students may bring a phone or tablet, there will be no such expectation, and such devices may even serve as distractions.

**Will the MacBooks replace textbooks and binders?** We will not be a paper-free school and still recommend that students have binders available for each class. The landscape is changing but we're still using textbooks.

**Will students still need calculators for Math?** No. Math teachers will be acquiring class sets of calculators when they are needed. This will spare some expense for incoming students.

**Will the student need to purchase a carrying case?** The school will provide a soft, protective case, which will allow the MacBook to fit easily into a backpack.

**Will the school or parents have control of what is being accessed on the MacBook?** The school will completely set up each computer before it is passed to the student. Student downloading and on-line access will be carefully controlled and limited by the school. Parents will have choice regarding the extent of on-line activity outside of school time.

**Will the students need to purchase any programs or install**

**any applications for the MacBook?** No, all necessary programs and applications will be installed or made available by the school. Students will have very little latitude for additional downloading, and there will be no additional expense for educational software.

**What about students who join a class after Grade 9?** Students who join a class after Grade 9 will also participate in the program. The lease arrangement for these students will be calculated in keeping with the duration of the program of studies at our school.

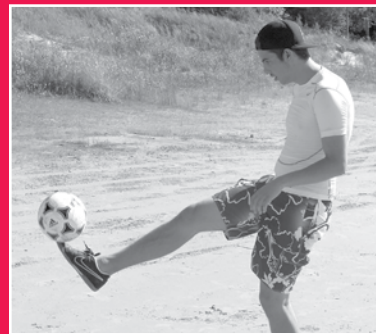
As you can see, there are a host of details for us to work through as we prepare to roll out our 1:1 program, but these details do not detract from our excitement at the prospect of offering this program to our students. Let us know if you have more questions, but we are eager to get started!







# Grade 12 Retreat





# Smithville Christian High School connects with the business community

Smithville Christian High School is proud to be part of the West Lincoln business community, and has been a member of the West Lincoln Chamber of Commerce for many years. In keeping with our commitment to our neighbours and the great relationships the school has with many local co-op employers, Smithville Christian is pleased to annually sponsor the Small Business Breakfast – usually in partnership with the Niagara Association for Christian Education. This year, in addition to short presentations from Marlene Bergsma of Smithville Christian High School and Kevin Huinink, principal of Covenant Christian School, the keynote speakers at the breakfast were ALL alumni and parents of Smithville Christian High School.

Wayne Schilstra, ReMAX Escarpment Realty Real Estate Broker, (Class of 1983) gave an informative and inspiring talk on the economic indicators of the local real estate market – including the youthful demographic of West Lincoln, the number of families from outside the area who are buying homes here, the impact on local business and shopping patterns.

Meanwhile Kevin VanderWier (Class of 1994) and Jason VanderWier (Class of 1989) of PostTime Services talked about

the philosophy of innovation and can-do customer service that informs their successful family business.

Smithville Christian High School is proud of the way its alumni are taking on leadership roles and making contributions in their communities.

If you have an alumni story to tell, contact us. We love to hear how our graduates are making a difference – in big ways and small.



Kevin Huinink



Kevin VanderWier



Jason VanderWier



Wayne Schilstra

## Q. WHEN IT'S CHRISTMAS AND YOU HAVE A SPECIAL EVENT, WHO CAN YOU CALL TO DELIVER THE RIGHT KIND OF ATMOSPHERE?

### A. A Christian high school choir!

The Smithville Christian High School Choir made its second guest appearance at the annual Christmas concert of To The King Male Chorus. But the choir was also invited to present Christmas music, including an audience sing-along, at Martindale Place Retirement Residence in St. Catharines, and to sing Christmas music at the Township of West Lincoln's staff appreciation dinner.

Audiences at Martindale Place and the Township dinner appreciated the choir's performances, thanking the students with gifts of refreshments. West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner also gave students Tim's cards, and tweeted his thanks to his followers.

It's nice to know that as a Christian school our choir is known for its ability to present repertoire that celebrates our Saviour's birth.







Douglas Joyner @MayorJoyner · 4 Dec 2015

Thank you @SmthvileChrstn Choir for performing 2nite for our WL Township Appreciation Dinner!



2 2



## PUT YOUR NAME HERE!

Find out how you can be included in the next issue of Echoes.

Contact Marlene Bergsma at [mbergsma@smithvillechristian.ca](mailto:mbergsma@smithvillechristian.ca)

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