

## Reflections on 17 Years

**DON KLEPSER**



**OVER THE COURSE OF MY PAST 17 YEARS AT CONCORDIA LUTHERAN SCHOOLS OF OMAHA,** I have been a parent, coach, board member, vice president, president, delegate, association congregation president, and volunteer. With the graduation of my daughter, Ella, and the end of my second six-year stint on the Concordia Board of Directors both happening in May, my interactions with the school will certainly change. It is certainly not a farewell, but it is time to step back and let others take the lead.

I hope and pray that someone, maybe the parent of a kindergartner, reads this and is inspired to follow my

path or, even better, create a new path of service to the schools. I never intended or expected to serve on the Board or in any kind of leadership role. I just knew that my kids would go to school at Concordia. I supported the school's mission, and I wanted to be involved. God put me where he wanted me to serve the schools, and I give all thanks and praise to Him for allowing me to be a small part of this ministry. It has been a blessing to see how God has watched over these schools. To that end, I would like to share some of the miracles I have seen over my 17 years.

With few exceptions, operating a parochial/private school means ongoing and regular financial challenges, and Concordia is no exception. For many of my early years on the Board, we really should have listed "miracle" as one of our revenue streams along with tuition, congregation support, and fundraising. I am not sure many people appreciate how dire the situation was in some of the early years, particularly coming out of the Great Recession. And yet, every year, God not only provided, but allowed the school to grow. Whether it was a donor with little or no connection to the school providing a large estate gift, a wireless company deciding 156th & Fort was the perfect location for a cell phone tower, or a foundation making a timely endowment because someone had a connection to Concordia, I have been amazed at the mysterious ways God has worked to support this ministry.

God's blessings for Concordia go well beyond helping the school to balance its budget in times of need. He has also allowed the Jr.-Sr. High to expand from a half-finished horse barn to the campus that it is today. That includes at least three major expansions and renovations all paid for by donors and gifts. When Concordia Academy was in search of a home, a pharmacy chain bought a piece of property from St. Mark that allowed the church to expand, including building a gym. This is the current home of the Academy.

In the same way, Concordia has been blessed with the right people at the right time. From CEOs and Heads of School, to teachers, staff, and volunteers, God continues to move people's hearts to serve this school. And that is what makes Concordia's ministry special. It is not facilities or finances. It is people, who come together in Christ, that make Concordia special. The sacrifices I have seen parents make to send their children to these schools, the staff that continues to give of themselves, and those who have done so much more than me for the schools, but with none of the recognition, are what I have cherished most about these last 17 years.

When I first joined the Board in 2006, I prayed that God would give me the wisdom and the energy to leave Concordia better than I found it. Despite me, God has made that happen. As I step back, Concordia is in a much better place in terms of enrollment, finances, and facilities. All of which puts it in a better place to fulfill its mission of creating students who are faith secure, world ready, kingdom leaders.

I am excited to see what God has planned for the next 17 years.

*In Christ, Don Klepser*



## Why We Chose Concordia

**NATHAN AND TIFFANY RUPE** have experienced many education options in Omaha and, in the end, Concordia has met their needs and expectations for a strong education and a Christ filled environment for their three children. The family has had their children; Mason (12th grade), Ella (2nd grade) and Deacon (1st grade) enrolled in several different school districts in Omaha and then became part of the Concordia family in 2020.

In anticipation of Mason entering high school, the family relocated within Omaha to a school district they hoped would be a good fit. However, the reality was not the experience they had hoped for and heard about. Nathan shares that, "Within a month, Mason was questioning his faith and hanging out with friends that were not great influences. We were also surprised that the expectations by the school for Mason to submit homework on time were very low. There were no consequences for late or missing work." This disappointment led to the Rupe family once again looking for a change. When they visited Concordia they were pleased with the environment and the curriculum. Although Mason was not happy at first to make the change, he had a huge change of heart and attitude within the first month. Nathan and Tiffany are very thankful that their son has found his way back to his faith and is surrounded by other believers on a daily basis at Concordia. "The teachers and students took Mason in and he was quickly one of the family," says Nathan.

At first, the family only intended to send Mason, but with a lot of prayer and discussion they decided to make the big commitment and send all three children. Nathan says he really felt like God was telling them to send all three of their children. They did like their local elementary school but they realize now that God's name was never mentioned. "If parents are busy working and they don't teach their children about God, they will never hear the Gospel message." Tiffany says that their two younger children are so proud to talk about Jesus. She says, "At the Academy Jesus is in everything, they mention Jesus all the time when they come home."

Once they made the commitment and registered their children, the family was blessed to receive scholarship dollars that have greatly helped relieve the financial stress of three student tuition bills. "I believe that once we obeyed God, he provided a way for us to send our kids. Those scholarship dollars made a huge difference for us," says Nathan. In addition, Mason qualified for an additional scholarship that made things even better!

The Rupes have felt very welcomed by other families and have become involved in various areas at Concordia. Tiffany volunteers by serving lunch at the Academy once a week and is part of the "Moms in Prayer" group. When asked what they would tell others about the difference between Concordia and their past experiences, they quickly mentioned the Christ centered atmosphere, the strong and challenging curriculum and then the sense of family.



An alumni initiative began on July 16<sup>th</sup> to encourage our alumni to consider supporting the Forward With Faith Capital Campaign. The initiative spans seventy days and has a goal of raising \$70,000 or more! Class captains for each year have been recruited and will be reaching out to their classmates to share information about the campaign. The Dunklau Foundation has generously offered to match any alumni gifts to the campaign up to \$70,000, giving the alumni the opportunity to actually raise \$140,000 towards the campaign. Thus far, alumni have donated over \$6,000! The 70 in 70 program will wrap up on September 24<sup>th</sup>, the same date as the 2021 Homecoming football game! Forward With Faith has received \$2.28 million in pledges to date!



# Growth At Concordia & In Life: *Josiah Wood*

**Josiah Wood** was part of the 2011 graduating class and has many great memories from that time. After graduation he attended Huntington University in Indiana for a degree in Film Production. For his last semester of that program, Wood attended the Los Angeles Film Studies Center. Although he loved living in California, he made the difficult decision to take a job back in Omaha with King of Kings Lutheran Church. Wood was excited about the opportunity to be a video editor.

That move back to Omaha also brought Amanda, his wife, into his life. She also works at King of Kings and is the Director of Student Ministries. They are expecting their first child, a son, in October!

Time spent in band with Mr. Klemp was always enjoyable for Wood. He loved the day to day classes, band tours and the activities of the Tri-M honor society. "There was always lots of laughter but it was still an environment full of learning." Wood also enjoyed Mr. Senechal's classes, where he first discovered his love for storytelling and the film making process.

Wood summarizes his time at Concordia with the word "growth". With the ability to participate in numerous extracurricular activities and receive a strong Christian education delivered by excellent teachers and staff, growth was naturally going to occur. Wood believes that spiritual growth and the strong foundation that Concordia provided was an important part of preparing him for college and adulthood.

## "Anything Goes"

Over the Memorial Day weekend the final event of the 2020-2021 school year took place, the high school musical production of "Anything Goes" was performed. Audiences were thrilled to be able to attend the Concordia spring musical once again after Covid cancelled the public production of the 2020 musical. We give thanks for the leadership and hard work of Jim McKain and Peter Klemp who directed the production.

## Endowment Workshop **Learn How to Leave Your Legacy**

Most people have loved ones they wish to remember in their estate plan. Most Lutherans also support ministries that are important to them, including Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha. Yet few really know the best way to give everything they want to give to their loved ones, make a gift for ministry and avoid paying out high taxes. You may be reluctant to attend a workshop/seminar for fear you will have your arm twisted, will receive a sales pitch or will receive non-stop calls in the future. None of those will be true when you attend a workshop led by Craig Stirtz, who offers numerous educational workshops each year through the LCMS to congregations as a free gift. If you do not have a will, have not created or reviewed your estate plan in the past 5 years, you want to consider a gift for Concordia Omaha, or if you want ideas on how to reduce taxes and give more to your family, join Craig at one of his upcoming endowment workshops.

**Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church** in person or virtually on September 26 at 12:00pm. Call 402-895-1500 to register.  
**Zion Lutheran Church** Hampton, NE on October 31 after service. Call 402-725-3320 for more info.

## *The Numbers Are In!*

Current enrollment numbers are looking quite strong for the next school year. In total, we have 543 students enrolled as of the end of July. More specifically, this is 163 students at the Academy, 132 in Jr. High, and 248 for Sr. High. This reflects 72 brand new families at Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha!

### **JOIN US AT A MUSTANG FOOTBALL HOME GAME:**

Mustang Mingle Scrimmage . Friday, Aug. 20 @ 7 pm

**CHS vs Scotus** . Friday, September 3 @ 7pm

**CHS vs DC West** . Friday, September 24 @ 7 pm  
**HOMECOMING**

**CHS vs Fort Calhoun** . Friday, Oct. 15 @ 7 pm

**CHS vs Boys Town** . Friday, Oct. 21 @ 7 pm



## CONCORDIAOMAHA.ORG

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA  
LUTHERAN SCHOOLS OF OMAHA  
FOUNDATION **SUMMER 2021**

### Foundation Board

*Mr. A. William "Bill" Kernen-Chair*

*Mr. Del Toebben-Vice-Chair*

*Mr. Lee Handke*

*Mrs. Gail Hawkins*

*Mr. Brandon Newhouse*

*Mr. Lloyd Probasco*

*Mrs. Gaye Lynn Schaffart*

*Mr. Dan Vehle*

**Ex Officio Members:**

*Mr. Rob Cooksey*

*Mr. Aaron Sailer*

## Welcome!

We are blessed to welcome several new staff members to the Concordia family.

**Ms. Victoria Jones (alumni)** .

2<sup>nd</sup> grade

**Mr. Phil Vogel** . Ignite Teacher

**Mrs. Becky Niemack** .

Additional Kindergarten teacher

**Mr. Darin Larsen** .

Jr. High English

**Ms. Rebecca Helmer** .

Sr. High English

**Mrs. Audrey Sado** . Sr. High

Social Studies Jr. High PE

**Mr. Nate Hancock** . Part-time, Sr. High Social Studies

**Mrs. Mandi Erslund** . Part-time, Jr. High Textiles

**Mrs. Diane Linkugel** . Full-time, Administrative Assistant

## Farewell, Class of 2021!

On May 16th, sixty-six young men and women graduated. Of those graduates, twelve were students who had attended Concordia from K-12th grade. As a class, they were offered just over \$4.4 million total in college scholarships and the top 25% of the class received a 29.75 or higher score on the ACT. They will be attending schools such as Augustana University, Clarkson College, Colorado Schools of Mines, Concordia University Nebraska, Creighton University, Dordt University, Grand Canyon University, Hastings College, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Metro, Nebraska Wesleyan, Northern Vermont University, Oklahoma State University, University of Kansas, University of Michigan, UNL and UNO. In addition, two graduates are joining the US Military.

The following week, Concordia Academy "graduated" 23 fifth graders. The K-5 school has increased enrollment over 19% from the '19-'20 school year to the '21-'22 year. Additional classroom space is being utilized for the next year with a second kindergarten class and the growth of the multi-age Ignite program. We thank God for the opportunity to reach more students with the good news of His saving work for us!

