

# THE TORCH

a Kalamazoo Christian Schools Publication

SPRING 2021



## Face to Face Learning

# THE TORCH

The TORCH is published twice a year with the purpose of fostering strong ties between the schools and their alumni, supporters, and friends supporting Christian education. Published by Kalamazoo Christian School Association. Please inform the Association Office of address changes.

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#### MISSION

##### Kalamazoo Christian Schools

– an academically excellent Christian community equipping, inspiring, and challenging students to love and serve Christ in the world.



**KALAMAZOO  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOLS**

Undeniably Christian. Academically Excellent.

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## Welcome from Marc

**Marc Verkaik,**  
Elementary Principal & Lead Administrator

We recently passed the one year mark since the day we quickly shifted from in-person to online learning. We are grateful that our students could return to in-person learning, although this required new teaching methods, masks and social distance protocols. As you read these pages, I hope you see evidence of the Lord's tremendous work at Kalamazoo Christian Schools and our continued commitment to our mission.

This year's faithline, **Justice Seeking**, reflected on Micah 6:8 "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

During a focused 5-week experience, students reflected on the meaning and explored different perspectives of justice seeking. Students studied Biblical characters who sought justice for those marginalized by the culture and they explored Americans who stood up to injustice, changing our world. We encouraged students to consider how they would respond to real life situations of injustice and our families supported local nonprofits who pursue justice in their missions.

We desire justice lived out through the Biblical mandate of loving our neighbor to become a part of our students' Biblical Worldview as they grow in their understanding of God's plan for their lives.

While we continually seek the Lord's calling and plan for our lives, we also strive to provide the best education for our families. We recently completed our five year accreditation process, which ensures we are on solid ground and moving in the right direction. Through this process, we surveyed families, staff and teachers to look at what is working and areas we need to improve. This work will guide our efforts over the next 5 years and will provide us with a road map for sustained excellence. We will share this work on our website in the near future.

Thank you for your support of Christian Education during these unprecedented times and enjoy this latest edition of the Torch.

Blessings to you and your family,  
Marc Verkaik





## Face-to-Face Time

Masked smiles couldn't hide the happy eyes and joyful greetings of teachers, staff and students as they returned to the 12th Street and Stadium Drive campuses on August 18, 2020. Even with the suspension of activities like sports and field trips, and continued safety measures such as masks, hand-washing, surface-sanitizing and distancing, the returning community felt relieved and grateful to resume a sense of normalcy to their school days.

At the writing of this article, Kalamazoo Christian had celebrated 154 days of in-school learning for the 2020-21 school year! This is an accomplishment not only within our community but also statewide, as many Michigan school districts opted for fully virtual or hybrid learning environments. And while our high school followed the state mandated closure for several weeks last fall, K-8 had only one (voluntary) week of virtual learning following the Thanksgiving holiday. Our preschoolers had a later start to the school year, but have enjoyed uninterrupted in-person learning.

Virtual learning is nothing new to homeschooling families, but the public and private school systems are built on a model of in-person learning and group interaction with access to learning tools, curriculum, technology and supplies that aren't available in a typical home. Since March, 2020, Michigan school districts and working parents have scrambled to adapt to an alien academic environment with unique challenges. Teachers are trying to teach students from home while their own young school-aged children attend virtual school a few feet away. Parents experience similar scenarios while working from home and essential workers have to figure out childcare or leave older kids unattended during the school day. Public school students have had to adjust to limited social interaction, new on-line learning tools and reduced opportunities with specials and encore subjects (art, band, gym, etc.).

Thankfully, even with in-person learning, the number of positive COVID cases among KCS students, teachers and staff has been relatively low. Almost all teachers and staff received both doses of the Moderna vaccine early this year which will help prevent more new cases.

While overwhelmingly grateful for the privilege of face-to-face learning, teachers and students continue to face challenges with the mandates for physical distancing and mask wearing. 1st grade teacher Melissa Baas notes, "When we are physically present together, students can learn, not only from the teacher but also from each other." Still, she admits that it is difficult to teach phonics rules with masks and distancing means she no longer has room in her classroom for a small group meeting table. She wishes her students could see her smile and she looks forward to when chapels and friendship groups can resume. "We have come a long way since last March. I hope we continue on this road to recovery."

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# Seeking Justice in a Broken World

The year 2020 was full of alarming occurrences of social injustice, disparity and brokenness. From the death of George Floyd to the social isolation and deaths of nursing home residents, we saw a desperate need for racial healing, physical healing and compassion in our country. These events provided vivid, harsh, real-time examples of social injustice in our culture. They also closely aligned with this school year's theme of **Justice Seeking, which focuses on developing a Biblical understanding of our broken world and working to renew our world for Christ by following His example.**

From January 18 through February 26, all KCS students studied, discussed and participated in classroom activities that explored this theme of Justice Seeking. These activities helped students learn more about Biblical justice, historical figures who have acted as Justice Seekers, and their own role in pursuing justice both globally and within our community. Chapels and daily devotions all focused on this theme of Justice Seeking.

KCS students participated in a weekly, Justice Seeking, non-profit challenge. Each week families donated specific items for a local non-profit as a way to "act justly and love mercy" in our Kalamazoo community. The local non-profits included

Alternatives of Kalamazoo (diapers/wipes), Bethany Christian Services (books), Tree of Life Christian School (school supplies), Loaves and Fishes (food) and Sparrow and Nest (bed linens).

Teachers and staff were humbled by the flood of donations from our KCS families and they were convicted and challenged by the discussions that took place in chapels and classrooms. These conversations provided opportunities to increase their awareness of injustices in the world, past and present, and how they can be instruments of God's justice and mercy to those in need.

High school curriculum and discussions focused on the Quartet of the Vulnerable: the orphan, widow, poor and stranger. Chapels and devotions also looked at historical figures (Martin Luther King, Jr., Sojourner Truth, Mother Teresa, etc.), Justice Seeking organizations (Widows Harvest Ministries and Habitat for Humanity) and related topics including abortion, adoption, widow care and racial reconciliation.

As undeserving yet grateful recipients of God's compassion and grace, how willing and eager we should be to offer compassion and grace to those who face injustice in our world!

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."  
Micah 6:8

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another." Zechariah 7:9 (NIV)



The Bible clearly teaches that we are to be justice-seekers in our culture. *Isaiah 1:17* says “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” Kalamazoo Christian High School students looked at each individual within the Quartet of the Vulnerable (widow, orphan, poor and stranger) during their 5-week focus on this year’s faithline Justice Seeking. This article focuses on the orphan by taking a more in-depth look at the beautiful imagery and impact of adoption.

KCS parents Michael and Lorraine adopted Sara Bussey (‘22) through Bethany Christian Services in 2005 when Sara was 11 months old. The long months of paperwork and waiting were almost over as they boarded a plane to China with several other adoptive parents. That journey of anxiety, anticipation and celebration forged lifelong friendships, as almost all of these families have stayed in touch for over fifteen years.

Michael and Lorraine brought Sara home in late November, 2005 into the welcoming arms of family and friends. Everyone had so much to be thankful for that Thanksgiving! While loved ones have always been very grateful and accepting of Sara’s adoption, Sara shared that not everyone she encounters understands, appreciates or accepts adoption. She fields a spectrum of comments and questions, mostly from strangers. Some are curious (“Are your parents Chinese?”), others seem rude (“Your skin doesn’t look dark enough to be Chinese”) and still others hateful (“Go back where you came from”).

Sara once turned in an incomplete family tree assignment at a previous school before enrolling at KCS. She had to explain to her teacher why the assignment was confusing. Teachers often don’t consider that adoptive children have two family trees: one biological and one adoptive. Both are important parts of who they are, but oftentimes the biological family tree is largely unknown.

This school year, Sara bravely pursued two opportunities to advocate for and educate people about adoption. Late one night last October, she felt a sudden inspiration to conduct a toy drive fundraiser for Bethany Christian Services through her church and also prepare a chapel presentation on adoption for her school. Before she knew what she was doing, she had sent emails to her church youth pastor and Principal Walhout detailing her plans to support Adoption Month in November.

When asked what one misconception about adoption she would want to correct, Sara hesitated only a second before responding confidently, “I wish people wouldn’t assume that because someone is adopted that they weren’t wanted.” Sara sometimes responds to these comments with a light-hearted but sarcastic reply: “I was chosen by my parents. Your parents are just stuck with you!”

# Adopting a Justice Seeking Heart



**Sara Bussey, high school junior**

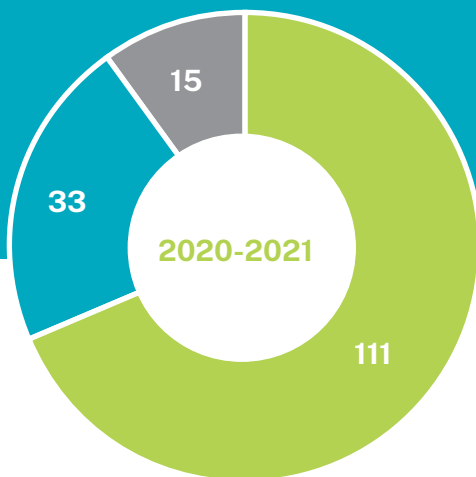
We have all been chosen by our loving Heavenly Father who has adopted us into His own family. *Ephesians 1:5* says “God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.”

Scriptures remind us that God wants us to have compassion and pursue justice for the orphan, widow and others who are vulnerable. As sinners who were once orphans and far off, but now are sons and daughters of the King, we should freely and gratefully extend our Father’s love and acceptance to orphans in our world.



**Michael, Lorraine and Sara Bussey**

**Photos courtesy of the Bussey Family**



**111** Elementary School (K-4)  
**33** Middle School  
**15** High School  
**159** Total New 2020-2021

# Welcome

## New Students

Kalamazoo Christian Schools' commitment to pursue in-person learning this school year attracted many area public school families who were looking for in-person learning for their children. Many area schools opted to continue with virtual learning even when state-mandated restrictions were lifted. This significantly impacted our overall enrollment which increased 119% from the 2019-21 school year to 2020-21 school year.

Kalamazoo Christian Schools welcomes all 159 new students who are currently enrolled!

Recruitment and Retention Specialist Jaime Ekkens has been busy this year with tours and following up with new families. Jaime and the enrollment team at the Kalamazoo Christian School Association spearheaded a new student ambassador program to help new families connect within our community. Parent ambassadors were linked with new families providing a warm welcome, familiar face and a friendly resource for questions.

Feedback from new families has been very positive, inspiring and encouraging. Here are some comments and stories from new parents on their families' experiences at KCS this year:

**119%**  
 from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021

**153**  
 students returning 2021-2022

**97%**  
 overall retention from  
 2020-2021 to 2021-2022  
 (so far)



*We are so grateful that God led us to this amazing school. We know He has nothing but the best in store for Ava over the next 5 years. Thank you so much for helping us navigate through things. We know for certain that we made the best decision for Ava's education and future.*

Beth Wilson, parent of a 8th grader

*The biggest eye opener for us so far is realizing what we've been missing out on by not joining sooner. Better late than never however, and we look forward to being part of the KCSA system for the rest of our kiddos school years. Thanks again for helping us navigate a challenging time with a very blessed outcome.*

Andy Fate, parent of a K and 4th grader

*I re-enrolled Kennedy for next year and plan to have her graduate from K Christian as well as our son William (he's only 1, so a few years off until we start him). That is how we looked at it too - an investment for our child. I am so happy that we moved her. Maybe if it weren't for COVID I wouldn't have; I'm not sure, but I do know how thankful I am that a sleepless night of scrolling through Facebook is what brought us here - well, God really did that. I tell everyone how impressed we are with the school and it's worth every penny and more!*

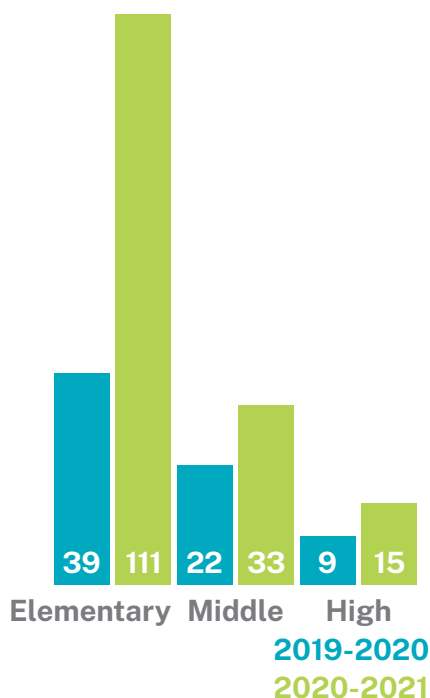
Natalie Lovely, parent of a 5th grader

*My kids are loving school. On Friday, my daughter asked if we could cancel weekends so that she could have school everyday. We made the right choice for our kids and our family.*

Zoe Powis, parent of a K and 2nd grader

The retention numbers support these inspiring stories. As of the writing of this article, 153 of this year's 159 new students have re-enrolled for the 2021-22 school year. The overall retention rate from 2020-21 to 2021-22 is 97%! In addition, we also have 54 new students enrolled to date for next school year.

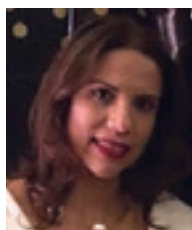
We welcome these current and future students and their families into the Kalamazoo Christian School community and hope they will stay for the remainder of their school careers and become permanent members of the KCS family!



# Welcome

## New Teachers & Staff

Kalamazoo Christian Schools welcomed four new teachers and staff for the 2020-21 school year and we welcome three more for the 2021-2022 school year. Please welcome all of our new teachers and staff to the Comet Community when you get a chance!



**Johanna Martinez** is a 3's Preschool Spanish Immersion Aide and will be a Spanish Immersion teacher next school year. Johanna received her bachelor's degree from Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre Y Maestra and previously taught

at Woodbury High School as a Spanish Immersion teacher. Johanna and her husband Manuel have three children: Manuel, Esteban and Gabriela. When she's not teaching, Johanna enjoys traveling, cycling and spending time with her family.



Middle School teacher **Abigail Vanderkamp** teaches Language Arts in grades 5-8. Abigail and her husband Joel ('16) moved to Michigan last summer after they married and graduated from Grand Canyon University. Abigail and her six siblings are all

natives of Arizona. She previously worked in special education for a year before coming to KCES. She loves baking, hiking and spending time in the sun. Abigail's mother-in-law, Amy Vanderkamp, teaches 1st grade.



Elementary School teacher **Laura Willbur** teaches 3rd grade Spanish Immersion. Laura received bachelors' degrees in Spanish and French from Wheeling Jesuit University and her master's in Spanish from Penn State University. Laura

previously taught Spanish for PreK through 8th grade at Country Day School. Laura is married to Dale and they enjoy spending time with Dale's two adult children, Shannon and Kevin, three grandchildren and one more on the way! Laura loves all things outdoors: animals, walking, hiking, ATV trail-riding and sitting by a fire.



High School teacher **Tara Macias** teaches History and Bible. Tara received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from WMU and a second master's degree from the University of Minnesota. Tara previously taught in Minnesota at Bloomington Public Schools.

Tara is married to Rev. Dr. Jose Macias. They have three children: Vania Macias (Hope College, 2019), Elise (5th) and Antonio (3rd). They also have a 4-year old grandson, Santiago Israel. When she's not teaching, Tara enjoys reading, gardening and discovering new places and people.



**Corey Scheffers** (KCS alum 2008) will join the High School teaching staff teaching Chemistry and Physics. Corey received his bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State University and is currently working on his master's degree

in Supervision and Administration from Anderson University. Corey comes to us from Holland Christian Schools where he was the remote learning coordinator. Corey is married to Alyssa.



**Saara Spitzer** will join us as a High School Math teacher. Saara recently graduated from Calvin College with a bachelor's degree in Math and Worship. Her teaching internships were at Grandville Middle School and Grand Rapids Christian

High School where she taught Algebra II and AP Calculus. Last summer Saara served as co-director of Granite Springs Music Camp in Lincoln, California.



**Brad Heethuis** will begin as High School Athletic Director in July, 2021. Brad received his bachelor's degree from Calvin College and masters' degrees from MSU and Waynesburg University. Brad previously worked as head coach of the men's soccer team and assistant coach for the women's soccer team at Waynesburg University in Pennsylvania. Brad and his wife Laura have two daughters, Hayden and Harper.



# Middle School ABC's: Art, Band and Choir

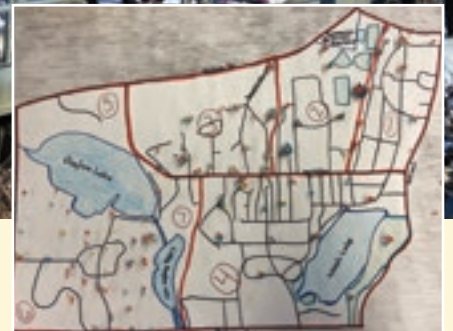
In-person learning has been a huge blessing this year, but it is not without its challenges. While some encore subjects, like art, are not as hugely affected by mask-wearing and physical distancing protocols, other encore subjects, like band and choir, are particularly difficult to navigate. But thankfully, students have been able to participate in all encore subjects. Here are a few highlights of middle school Art, Band and Choir.

**Art.** 8th grade art students studied the artist Chuck Close and his huge portraits created with direct finger application of pigment to canvas. By doing similar techniques, students discovered that the amount of pigment and the amount of finger pressure gives different tones and values. After taking photos of themselves and tracing their face images onto large paper, students pulled out the India Ink and got messy! Despite going home with black finger-tips, Middle School Art Teacher Anne Brouwer noted "This art process taught us a lot about darks and lights, details and learning to look at ourselves. It also reminded us that we are all created in God's Image."

**Band.** For 5th grade band students who are learning their new instruments, Band Teacher Matt Everett has been impressed with their resilience, hard work, and accomplishments. "The 5th graders have not been able to hold classes based on like instruments, but rather based on homeroom teachers which prevents more direct learning for our beginners." High school band students rehearsed entirely outdoors last fall thanks to the wonderful weather. Once it turned colder, students added bell covers to their instruments and rehearsals moved indoors. 5th through 12th grades have been rehearsing and preparing most of the year for a recorded band concert as well as a high school choir concert (scheduled on May 10th and 11th).

**Choir.** 5th-8th grades performed a virtual Fall Choir Concert in November at Comstock Auditorium which was recorded and posted on the school website. On March 23, 6th-8th grades performed and recorded two songs at Comstock Auditorium for a "virtual" District Choral Festival. Each grade recorded two songs from a required list and submitted them for comments and ratings by judges from Michigan School Vocal Music Association.

The Middle School 8th grade play "Stocking Stuffers", a compilation of several Christmas scenes, was recorded in early January. The 8th grade musical "Dear Edwina" is scheduled for free, live performances on Wednesday, May 19 at 12:30 and 7:00 pm at Comstock Auditorium.







## STEM, Exploratory and Interim Week

The week before Spring Break might easily become a time of distraction and lack of attention, but our students at the 12th Street campus were very engaged, enjoying the much anticipated STEM and Exploratory's week.



Elementary students participated in a wide variety of hands-on activities throughout STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) week including building a nest, building an aircraft, using Lego Robotics and much more. 4th grade teacher Linda Maring shared, "The students LOVE STEM week! Every morning my class wanted to know what they would be doing that day. At the end of the day, they would tell me all about what they did and how much fun it was." 3rd grade teacher Ben Wainwright commented "I was very pleased with their positive attitudes and collaboration with other classmates!"

STEM week usually combines students from different classes and grades on different days and every teacher has a different activity. This year, students had to stay in their own classroom and the teachers from that grade level rotated rooms, so the student still enjoyed a variety of activities.

On the other side of the building, middle school students stretched their minds after a morning of MAP testing by participating in exploratories each afternoon. Each student chose two classes from a long list of options: gardening, cooking, science, origami, ping pong, roller skating, bowling, taekwondo, upcycling, drumline, Word in the world, sign language and more. 5th grade teacher Kim Meyer noted "Everyone learned new skills, like how to work with tools to make a birdhouse or cook a healthy meal."



Unfortunately, due to the pandemic restrictions, Tree of Life students were not able to join in the exploratory classes this year, but the middle school students and staff look forward to including them next year.

Over at the high school, students participated in Interim which has a similar feel to Exploratory week at the middle school. High schoolers picked from a wide variety of activity options such as bread baking, a trip to Gilmore Car Museum, serving at Second Impressions and many more.

From Kindergarten through 12th grade, students headed into Spring Break perhaps still with a sigh of relief or shout of celebration, but also with a satisfied sense of completing a week full of fun and learning!

## High School Science Survey Local Deer Population

We've all seen them grazing in a field, wandering into a neighborhood or lying along the side of the road. Deer are a common sight and one of the many beautiful creatures we enjoy in our region. Unfortunately, overpopulation and habitat loss create problems such as car accidents and damage/loss to agriculture and landscaping. These problems are common in the Winchell neighborhood and Asylum Lake Preserve (owned by WMU).

High School teacher Steve Dyk and the 29 students in his Environment Science class conducted a deer survey of the Winchell/Asylum Lake area. The class divided into six groups and divided the area into six zones. Each group studied its assigned zone, counting and interpreting the sets of tracks to estimate the number of deer in that zone.

The class found 167 deer tracks across all six zones which they interpreted as 108 deer. Students analyzed and interpreted this data and offered some potential solutions to the Winchell neighborhood (barriers/fences, deterrents, ban intentional feeding) and WMU/Asylum Lake Preserve (open a 2-3 week hunting season). Mr. Dyk hopes they can present their findings to both Winchell and WMU after COVID restrictions have lifted.

Mr. Dyk commented on this valuable opportunity for students to study and immerse themselves in God's creation. "This project has been so amazing, allowing us to use hands-on science to positively affect our community while meeting two of our Faithlines- Creation Caring and Truth Pursuing. It also merges many aspects of both science (biology, environmental science, ecology) and other disciplines (statistics, geography, cartography, sociology), all while challenging students to be engaged, curious, and outspoken."



**Alexandra Augustus**  
KVCC  
Sue Augustus '87  
Joanne Stockwell\*\* '58



**Connor Bogard**  
Western Michigan University  
Jeremy Bogard '94  
Joyce Bogard\*\* '66



**Dylan Brown**  
Marines



**Anna Buckhout**  
Grand Valley State University  
Gary Buckhout '71



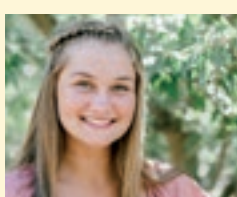
**Maggie Carless**  
Michigan State University



**Kelcey Cook**  
KVCC



**Seth Corwin**  
KVCC  
Kristi Corwin '88  
Andrea Vermeulen '63



**Nyla DeJong**  
Dordt University



**Katelyn DeGroot**  
Grand Rapids Community College  
Gregory DeGroot '91  
Jennifer DeGroot '94  
Dale DeGroot '67  
Connie DeGroot '71



**Elizabeth DeLaCruz**  
Grand Valley State University



**Carley Dirksen**  
California Baptist University



**Mitchell Drallette**  
Undecided



**Katie Dunlap**  
KVCC  
Kimberly Dunlap '93  
Charles Block\*\* '54  
Lois Block\*\* '54



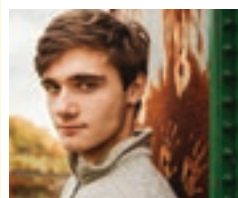
**Maxwell Duong**  
Undecided  
Thao Duong '94



**Avery Ekkens**  
Calvin University



**Rachel Feddema**  
Calvin University  
Jeffrey Feddema '87



**Adam Gabele**  
Cleary University



**Hannah Gabele**  
University of Tampa



**Kylin Geresy**  
Hope College



**Zoe Hazelhoff**  
Calvin University  
Matt Hazelhoff '92  
Rebecca Hazelhoff '92  
Carol Hazelhoff '70  
Norman Gruizenga '60  
Evelyn Gernaat\*\* '48



**Joshua Hill**  
Western Michigan University



**Kyle Hoogenboom**  
KVCC  
Kyle Hoogenboom '21  
Brian Hoogenboom '85  
Sheryl Hoogenboom '85  
Paul Hoogenboom '58  
Janet Hoogenboom '62  
Judy Long '61



**Molly Huffstetler**  
Calvin University



**Nolan Jones**  
KVCC



**Nathan Koetje**  
Michigan Technological University



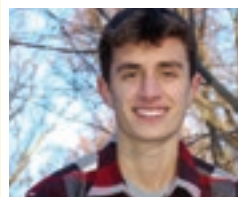
**Kyle Koning**  
Calvin University  
Douglas Koning '88  
Tami Koning '90  
William Koning '59  
Lois Koning '62  
Thomas Triemstra '66  
Anna Triemstra '66  
Roger Linders '43  
Effie Linders '17



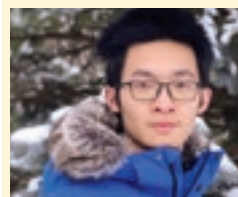
**Faith Krichke**  
KVCC



**Rachel Leep**  
Hope College  
Wayne Leep '84  
Wesley Leep '59



**Nathan Lehman**  
Hope College



**Tingfeng Luo**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign





Spencer Meachum  
Northwood  
University



Kyle Miedema  
Calvin University



Kyle Nash  
Hope College



Jady North-Kequom  
KVCC  
Lindsey Weaver '98



Mara Odean  
Florida State  
University



Samuel Offringa  
Lake Superior  
State University



Carter Perrin  
Pipe Fitting  
Darla Perrin '89



Ty Pettit  
Central Christian  
College of Kansas  
Susan Pettit '90  
Betty Westra\*\* '60  
Wallace Pettit\*\* '60



Kayla Raymond  
Cosmetology  
Janice Gibson '67



Taylor Roberts  
Western Michigan  
University  
Pamela Roberts '88  
Stephen Roberts '88  
Donna Hartman-Brooks '61



April Russell  
KVCC  
Sheri Russell '95  
Chad Russell '95  
Richard Koning '64  
Mary Lou Koning '64  
Barbara Russell '70  
Robert Durian\*\* '43  
Jeannette Durian\*\* '41



Sahil Sandhu  
KVCC



Jared Scheffers  
Working at Visser  
Construction  
Jeffrey Scheffers '92  
Kelli Scheffers '92  
David Scheffers\*\* '62  
Steven Visser '70  
Lynn Visser '71



Aaliyah Smith  
KVCC



Wyatt Steensma  
Alma College  
Timothy Steensma '95  
Melody Steensma '95



Christopher Terpstra  
KVCC  
Sara DeYoung '95  
Bert DeYoung '71  
Carol DeYoung '71  
Mardell Terpstra '65  
John Schaap '46



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Virginia Houseman\*\* '60  
Thomas Triemstra '66  
Ann Triemstra '66  
Roger Linders '43  
Effie Linders '17



Corrine  
VanderDussen  
Baylor University



David VanderKamp  
Calvin University  
Amy VanderKamp '89  
Dean VanderMeulen '66  
Carolyn VanderMeulen '66



Lucas VanderKooi  
Dordt University  
Joel Vanderkooi '86



Taylor Vanderlaan  
Calvin University  
Katie VanderLaan '95  
Ken Sportel '64  
Terri Sportel '67



Aiden VanLoo  
Calvin University



Malia Verkaik  
Calvin University



Maxwell Visscher  
Undecided



Roscoe Wallace Jr.  
University of  
Alabama



Patrick Willis  
Western Michigan  
University  
Shaun Willis '94

**Not Pictured**  
Jack Szczesny  
Western Michigan  
University

# 2021 Seniors

# Sports Update

## Going the Distance

State-mandated restrictions for high school sports resulted in several weeks delay for both the fall and winter sports schedules. Athletic Director and cross country coach Jeff Offringa looks forward to the spring sports season. "We are excited to have spring sports this year since they were cancelled last year! Other than mask wearing, they should proceed as normal."



KCHS Seniors are signing up for college sports this fall. Here is a list as of the writing of this article:

**MAGGIE CARLESS**  
Crew at  
Michigan State  
University

**ZOE HAZELHOFF**  
Softball at  
Calvin University

**KYLE KONING**  
Baseball at  
Calvin University

**TY PETITT**  
Golf at  
Central Christian  
College in Kansas

**WYATT STEENSMA**  
Baseball at  
Alma College

**LUCAS VANDERKOOI**  
Soccer at  
Dordt College

Due to the delayed start to their seasons, the **BOYS AND GIRLS BASKETBALL** teams had to cram 16 games in 6 weeks including games over spring break. During a normal season, teams play 20 games over 13 weeks. The boys basketball team had a great season winning district finals. They concluded their season with a loss to Schoolcraft in the regional finals. The girls basketball team also had a good season losing in the district finals to Hackett.



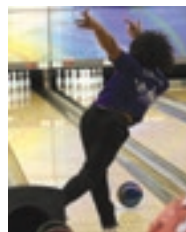
The **GIRLS VOLLEYBALL** team practiced outdoors when possible including a few weeks of practices on our sand court as no sports were allowed to practice indoors during the fall season. The girls had a 4-2 league record under new head coach Jess VanderLugt. They finished 3rd in their division in the conference.



**BOYS TENNIS** coach Joey DeKoekkoek noted that non-contact sports had it easier. The tennis team was able to participate mostly without masks.

The JV team made incredible progress this season winning more matches than they lost. The varsity team was 7-3-1 in the regular season and ended as the district runner-up with Jared Scheffers and Willem deJong as district doubles champs.

**BOYS BOWLING** placed 3rd in their division and 2nd in the conference tournament with a 5-4 record. **GIRLS BOWLING** placed 2nd in their division and 3rd in the conference with a 2-2-2 record. Coach Hank Poppen shared that it was an honor to coach all of these students. "They exemplified sportsmanlike behavior and were great examples representing KCHS."



**GIRLS GOLF** finished 3rd in the Kalamazoo Valley League and sophomore Kylie Gernaat qualified for the state tournament. Coach Mark Schied shared that even in the midst of an unusual season, the end result was as positive as ever. "Our athletes learned that part of sports and life is learning the ability to overcome obstacles. None of this was possible without the support of parents, teachers, athletic departments and the MHSAA for providing the framework for safely participating in sports."

Here are some more Fall and Winter Sports Season Highlights:



**UNITED FOOTBALL**, with new head coach Troy Ayotte, had a 4-1 league record and were 2nd in their division in the conference.



**BOYS SOCCER** had a 7-3 league record and won the district championship with coach Jay Allen.



**GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY** won the conference and also regionals. They placed 2nd at state finals!



**BOYS CROSS COUNTRY** was 2nd in the conference, regional champs, and placed 4th at state finals.



# The Arts Update

## Walking on Water with God and Shakespeare

by Aaron Potter

At the best of times, directing a play or musical is a stressful and overwhelming task, and this year has not been the best of times for anyone. Last year, we squeaked through performing our musical a week before COVID hit and everything closed. So, I knew this year would have additional challenges and require us to do things differently. A big musical with its moving parts and particle-projecting singing was not a good option, so I opted to do *Much Ado About Nothing*, my favorite Shakespearean play.

After a year of enough darkness and loss, I passed on Shakespeare's more well-known tragedies like *Hamlet* and *Romeo & Juliet*. *Much Ado About Nothing* is a fun, hilarious story of Benedick and Beatrice, two young people who fight so much you just know they will end up in love. We chose to set this original rom-com on a university campus to give it a fun, modern feel.

Practices were challenging; the first was over Zoom and we wore masks to every practice. But, things went really well until the week before the show, when nearly fifty students at the high school had to quarantine. That was really stressful and scary, realizing that after all of our hard work, the show might not go on. It's nearly impossible to do a play even when missing just a few kids, since we never have understudies in high school. The only thing we could do was wait to see what happened.



My pastor gave a very appropriate sermon that weekend about Peter walking on the water. Just like Peter, we have to fix our eyes and hearts on Christ when the storms of life rage around us. That sinking feeling of fear comes when we look at our circumstances and take our eyes off of Christ. Walking on water is a miracle and requires faith in a God of miracles who will not let your foot slip, even in the wildest of storms. I related to that story in a strong way amidst the stormy waves of quarantine and possible show cancellations. While it wasn't easy and I had moments of fear and doubt, I decided to trust that God would bring us through and fulfill his purposes. That is when the miracles started.

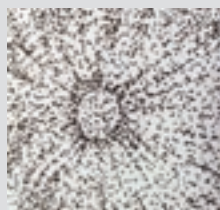
Out of the nearly fifty quarantined students, only two were members of our cast. Both of them tested negative in time to return to at least one practice before our first performance. In the midst of all this madness, all of our practices went very well and the kids did a great job, despite the challenging Shakespearean language.

As I write this, it is a few hours before our first performance and things could still change at any moment. But I believe that getting this far is nothing short of a miracle, and I trust God to help us walk in faith through any coming storm. Thanks be to our God who works wonders and blesses us so richly.



## KIA High School Area Art Show 2021

High school junior Alexa Hoogenboom entered a piece called 'Dark Side of the Moon' into a local art competition. The Congressional Art Competition - 6th Congressional District jurored the piece on April 30th. The moon was drawn with ink dots during last spring's shutdown. It took about 10 weeks. Her work will be exhibited until June 1, 2021 at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.



# Retirement Tributes

## Farewell Faithful Friends



### **Linda Maring - 40 Years**

"It has been an incredible 40 years at Kalamazoo Christian. I have taught so many amazing children (and even the children of former students), and have worked with a staff that is like family."

4th grade teacher Kim VanLoo shares, "Linda recognizes and reaches out when someone on staff is going through a hard time or needs support. I've always admired how she pushed students to be the best they could be. It has been a blessing to work with someone who cares as much as she does."

Linda and husband Ed plan to bike in Acadia National Park next fall and head somewhere warm next February. Linda and Ed ('75) have two children: Nathan ('12) and Renee ('15).



### **Roxanne Nieboer - 25 years**

"One of my biggest joys has been promoting good books to students and seeing their growth as readers. I will miss the students and their delight in books and library time." One of the highlights of Roxanne's career was packing many boxes of books from East, South and North Christian and moving them to the current 12th Street location.

Kindergarten teacher Kristina Schrik shares, "Roxanne has such a calm and caring presence with the students. The kids always love hearing what new stories she picks out each week!"

Roxanne and husband Al plan to spend more time with their grandchildren and other family members and to go somewhere sunny in the cold, gray months of winter. Roxanne also plans to explore new service opportunities during her retirement.



### **Becky Cramer - 16 Years**

"Some of my biggest chuckles have been listening to conversations between the kids. I also enjoyed seeing kids board my bus for the first time as kindergartners and for the last time as seniors."

Transportation Supervisor Lisa Bosch shares "Becky has been an outstanding bus driver, always willing to help out however she can. I will miss her greatly and I am thankful for her dedication to our school."

Becky looks forward to traveling and spending time on Lake Michigan. Becky and husband Dwain have two children, Jacob ('15) and Kaylee ('17).



### **Al Nieboer - 27 years**

"I consider myself blessed being able to contribute to the development of a solid science program and challenge students to view science from a Christian perspective."

Al's colleague at KCHS for 27 years, Jim Potter, notes "Al is one of the best teachers I have worked with in my career. What makes Al such a fantastic teacher is his capability to reach students on both the high and low ends of the academic spectrum."

Al and wife Roxanne plan to travel and spend more time with their grandkids. Al also looks forward to having time for more reading, volunteering and home and yard projects. Al and wife, Roxanne have three children: Jordan ('08), Rebecca ('98) and Nicole Tannor ('01).



### **Norma Kloosterman - 24 Years**

"This became more than a job, it became a family. I have learned a lot and God has blessed me along the way. I pray that I have been a blessing to my students and colleagues." Norma will miss hearing students sing her favorite chapel song "Trust in the Lord" and hear them call out "Mrs. K!"

Longtime gym volunteer Glen Wagner says "Norma is a great PE teacher. She prays with the students and encourages them to do their best, play fair and show respect for their teachers and fellow students. We will miss you, Mrs. K."

Norma and husband Tom ('79) have three children: Sara Mesbergen ('07), Jeffrey ('09) and Scott ('11).



### **Dr. Bill Taylor - 2 years**

"I've loved working with students who have a passion for learning and for Christ. Having worked in many districts, I can tell you that the staff here is top-notch." Dr. Taylor finished the last two years of his 32 year education career at KCHS teaching math and coaching track.

High School Math Teacher Heidi Boes shares, "I will really miss teaching next to Bill, even the times that he would bug me while I'm teaching 7th hour! He has been a great colleague and friend."

Bill plans to stay busy during retirement teaching a college class and working at a camp and golf course. Bill and wife Karen also plan to travel overseas and also in the US with their new camper. Bill and wife, Karen have adult twins, Brian and Sarah.



# Financial Update

## Making All Things New 2017-2020



## Finish Line 2021-2024



## Growing Strong 2025 and Beyond



## Crossing the Finish Line

Building on the success of the Making All Things New campaign, the Board, Administrative Team and Advancement Office enthusiastically launched a new capital campaign this spring called “Crossing the Finish Line.” This campaign aims to complete fundraising to build the gymnasium at the 12th street campus and also completely eradicate our long term debt.

Over the next three years, we will raise \$3.6 million to complete these two goals, paving the way for success and a strong foundation. Completing them now is critical for two reasons.

This fall, enrollment will climb for a second consecutive year. What a gift these new students and families are! But when it comes to teaching PE, our current gym is not set up for success. Throughout the day, two classes must share the gym with a curtain separating the space. The noise level is often deafening and the older classes have insufficient space to meet their PE physical objectives. Also, the gym is unavailable for classes during special events or chapels and the setup/cleanup time surrounding each event.

Our remaining debt is due for refinancing in 2024. The health of the operating budget as well as the feasibility of raising funds for the gym naturally lend to eliminating this old debt. We have the opportunity to model what we teach our students: biblical stewardship of their resources. With the debt gone, we can set our sights on capital projects beyond 2024 with new conviction and integrity.

The KCS leadership has listened carefully to the desires of our amazing community and has sought the Lord’s direction. God has a perfect future planned for Kalamazoo Christian Schools and will guide us toward the finish line. As we plan, we also pray that our ears may be attuned to the quiet voice of God’s Spirit. In 2 Corinthians chapter 8, Paul sends Titus back to Corinth to encourage the church to complete a project; Paul sends his own advice as well:

“10 It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. 11 Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. 12 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly.”

Please join us in this endeavor and help us cross the finish line.



Latest renderings of the Middle School Gym



# THE ALUMNI connection

## Alumni Babies



Amelia Marie  
7/5/2020  
Paul Madera &  
Michelle Webb '06



Theodore (Theo)  
6/23/2020  
David Boothe &  
Lauren Heyboer '07



Paige Oakley  
8/4/2020  
Jeff Marcusse &  
Kara VanElderen '08



Eleanor (Ellie) Blake  
10/24/2020  
Nate TenBrink '05 & Jessica



Gloria Estelle  
11/7/2020  
Jeff TenBrink '03 &  
Jojo (Josephine)



Carter Johnathan  
9/7/2020  
John Rachac & Amy  
VanderBent '02



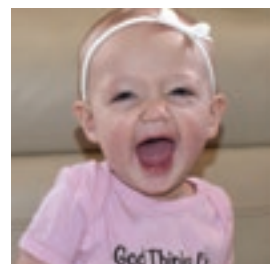
Theodore (Teddy) Chase  
9/6/2020  
Ryan DeNooyer '02 & Katie



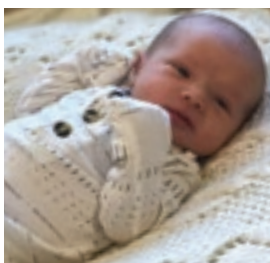
Andrew Dale  
5/9/2020  
Jeremy Bach &  
Elizabeth Smit '97



(William) Liam Scott  
10/13/2020  
Luke Berry & Michelle  
Westerman '09



Haven Morgan  
5/24/2020  
David VanderHorst '08 &  
Hanne



Millie Lou  
1/2/2021  
Kurt Westrate '04 & Samantha



Addalyn Ruth  
2/4/2021  
Kyle Penning '13 & Khrystal



Nicholas Scott  
3/2/2021  
James Woldhuis &  
Alex Hatfield '03



James Tucker (JT)  
4/10/2021  
Jake West & Brooke Petro '13



Bailey Reese  
2/9/2021  
Ben Kloosterman '10 & Jessica



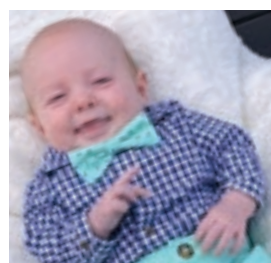
Brooks Oliver  
3/2/2021  
Eric Stelzer & Jessica  
Nagle '13



Kade Thomas  
3/16/2021  
Kyle Herm & Ashley  
Boender '09



Lily James  
3/25/2021  
Sam VanderBent '10 & Rachel



Miles  
1/2/2021  
Mark VanderBent '07 & Alyssa



Gavin Alexander  
1-21-2021  
Alexander Vigh & Elizabeth  
(Betsy) Stillman '03



## Alumni Weddings



Easton Joel  
4/17/2020  
Aaron Doorn & Erika  
DeKoekkoek '13



Grayson Henry  
4/17/2020  
Aaron Doorn & Erika  
DeKoekkoek '13



Shiloh Elizabeth  
4/17/2021  
Ty Monroe & Summer  
Bouma '01



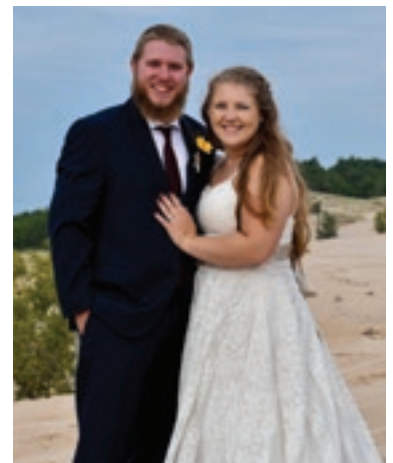
Wyatt John  
4/19/2021  
Luke Doorlag '97 & Justin



Haley (Sikkenga) '16  
& Caleb Eder  
married 11-7-2020



Nick DeVries  
Abby Visser '15  
married 6-27-2020



Tyler Pawlawski  
Kalie Burchett '17  
married 9-26-2020



Nate Niewoonder '13 &  
Paige (Sikkenga) '13  
married 7-9-2021



Jordan Nieboer '08  
Anna Poggensee  
married 7-3-2020



Sam Sarchet  
Abbey VanDongen '17  
engaged 5-7-2022

### NOT PICTURED

Foster James  
2/7/2021  
Jason Lohman & Katherine  
Blumenstein '10

## Calling Alumni

We know you love looking at these babies and happy wedding days as much as the Torch team enjoys gathering them.

We invite you to join us in creating more smiles. Please reach out to the association office for any alumni news that we can add to the alumni news.

Please contact us at: [alumni@kcsa.org](mailto:alumni@kcsa.org)

Babies  
Marriages  
In Memory Of  
Lifetime Achievements  
Mission Trips  
Alumni Reunions  
Change of Address

# THE ALUMNI *spotlight*



Photo courtesy of Nate Stripp

**Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!**  
**Isaiah 30:18 (NIV)**

## Nate Stripp Serves in NYC

When asked about his journey from KCS to a teaching job in Brooklyn, New York, Nate Stripp ('14) expressed a conviction to respond to the inequities he saw in how school systems were structured, where children living in poverty attended under-resourced schools. MS50 is a Title I middle-school with over 300 students. 89% of these students receive a free or reduced lunch, and Nate says 12% are homeless or housing unstable.

Nate sees himself as an educator for the whole child, helping students better understand themselves and develop an understanding and empathy for their world. He acknowledges that he could be doing easier work, but serving the students at MS50 is an opportunity to correct inequities and live out his faith. Nate believes that we love and serve Christ by loving and serving people. "I hope my students see me as someone who loves them unconditionally."

This opportunity to love and serve his students has broadened with the pandemic. Last year, twenty-three students at MS50 lost family members to COVID-19 and one student lost six family members. In the midst of this grief and stress, on-line education has been a challenge. After starting the school year in a hybrid setting, MS50 had to return to remote learning in November due to a rise in cases. Approximately one-third of families have no computer and those who do may only have one device that must be shared among family members. The school distributed 150 chromebooks. While on-line learning allows for some connection, Nate says the teachers and students long for face-to-face contact. "The longevity of this has been hard. We've been doing a huge push to continue to connect with families and match resources where they're needed." This included a big gift drive in December.

Reflecting on his time at KCS, Nate fondly remembers several teachers who were formative in his learning of how to be a Christian in the world: Tammi Eaton, Mike Lubbers, Matt Jewett and Jim Potter challenged him to look beyond himself and the comfort of his immediate community. He says the academics, tradition and caring community at KCS provided a solid framework where he found the ability to have a voice and an impact. He hopes that KCS can continue to provide that strong foundation while stretching and expanding its outreach into the community.

In response to recent, heightened racial tensions throughout our nation, Nate challenges KCS with a call to action. "These are moments...when students learn whether or not our claims that every human being is made in the image of God are actually believed or not. Publicly stand on the side of justice, not just in an email and on Facebook, but in every word and action you take. Not just today when it's acceptable but tomorrow when it is discouraged. The gospel demands justice. Our willingness to forsake justice at the expense of peace is our willingness to forsake the gospel."

If you'd like to reach out or reconnect with Nate, he can be reached at [nwstripp@gmail.com](mailto:nwstripp@gmail.com).



# THE ALUMNI *remembered*

## Remembering Ken Fletcher

Kalamazoo Christian Schools lost a beloved member of their family on September 25, 2020. Kenneth A. Fletcher was a KCS alum, parent, teacher, coach and athletic director. During his sophomore year, Ken ('61) met his future wife, Judy Oosterhouse ('60) and helped KCHS win the Class C State Basketball Championship. He was MVP of Calvin's basketball team in 1965.

After graduating from Calvin with a degree in Education and earning a Master's in Athletic Administration at U of M, Ken returned to his KCHS roots to begin teaching and coaching. During his 40-year career, Ken taught many subjects, coached several teams and served as Athletic Director for 30 years (he was named the region's Athletic Director of the Year by the MIAAA in 1989). Ken retired in 2006, taking with him innumerable memories and friendships.

One of these friends, former teacher Jerry Weesies, shares his reflections on his long friendship with Ken:

“ From the beginning of my relationship with Ken in 1980, I realized Ken was a large presence at KCS, not only in physical stature, but also in his commitment to work, faith, family and relationships. Ken's devotion to KCS was evident, especially in his role as Athletic Director. He was well known around the state, a testament to his work ethic and his outgoing personality. Coaches at KCS tended to stay for years under Ken's leadership and support. Ken also took on bus driving, another way to show his support for student-athletes and coaches. Even after retiring, Ken continued to drive bus until three years ago.

What most people observed about Ken was his ability to interact with others, no matter who they were, where they were from, or how long he knew them. Within minutes of meeting, Ken could have a complete stranger laughing or totally in awe of a story he shared. I enjoyed watching him interact with other local ADs at meetings, offering excellent insights or humorous comments.

Ken Fletcher was a very important part of my life over the years. My years with him left me with nothing but wonderful memories that I will carry forever.

”

On behalf of my children, Dan '85, Sara '89 and Mary '95, I would like to thank the KCS Family for all the thoughts and prayers, visits, cards, texts and generous donations given in Ken's memory! KCS meant the world to Ken and he was honored to be a part of them his entire life. He was proud to represent our schools in many ways.

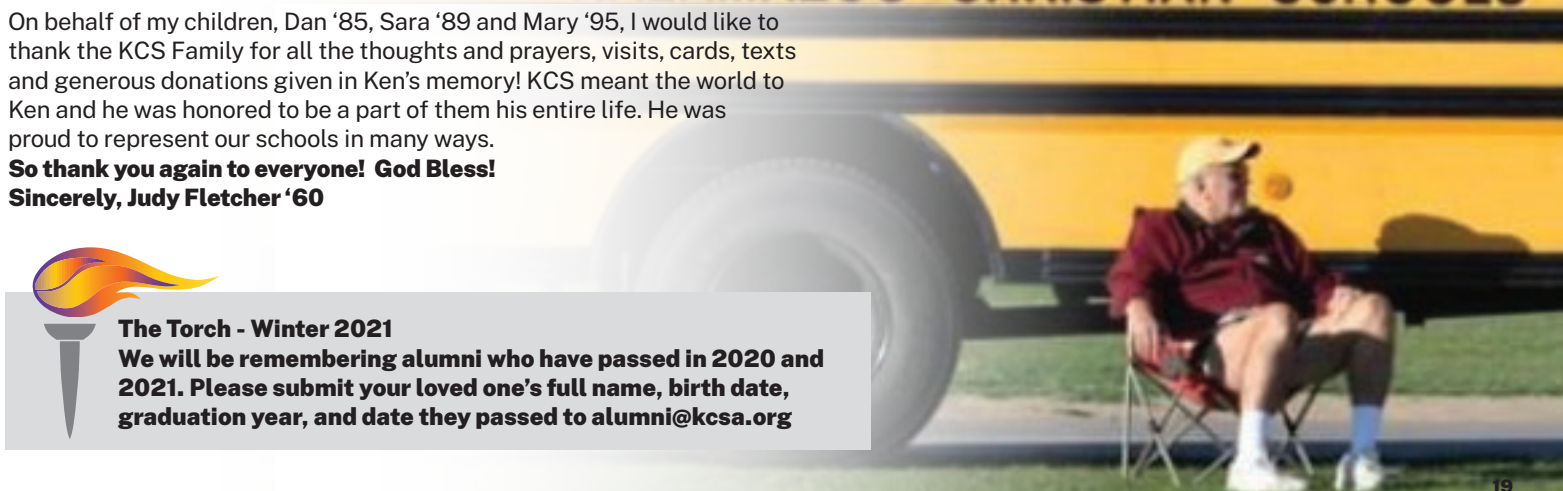
**So thank you again to everyone! God Bless!**

**Sincerely, Judy Fletcher '60**



Photos courtesy  
of Judy Fletcher

KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS



**The Torch - Winter 2021**

**We will be remembering alumni who have passed in 2020 and 2021. Please submit your loved one's full name, birth date, graduation year, and date they passed to [alumni@kcsa.org](mailto:alumni@kcsa.org)**



**KALAMAZOO  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

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## Upcoming Events at KCS

- May 19** Middle School Play
- May 28-Jun 3** Exams
- June 3** Last Day of School
- June 3** High School Graduation
- August 23** First Day of School 2021-2022

