

LIONHEART

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF INTERMOUNTAIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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FALL 2023



Gabe Pethtel addresses the community on Welcome Back Night.

LETTER FROM GABE

By Gabe Pethtel, head of school

Intermountain Christian School was founded over forty years ago by a group of committed Christian parents who desired a Christ-centered education for their children in the heart of the Salt Lake Valley. Today, ICS has grown to host over 290 students in grades pre-kindergarten through twelve. **The mission remains to equip and inspire students to thrive in God’s world.** In a landscape of politics negatively impacting many school cultures with teaching designed at times to be contrary to the Bible and the loving authority of a parent’s household, ICS is exceptional. **Our vision is in partnership with families, educating and discipling students toward excellence, joyful curiosity, and biblical faithfulness - building**

the school of choice for Christians in the Salt Lake Valley.

Through meetings, surveys, and board and faculty consideration, **we began the 2023-2024 school year with a five year strategic plan for the further development of ICS.** This strategic plan renewed our transformative vision proposing giving-driven steps toward refreshing our facilities and updating our curriculum and programs. **Please take a careful look at our new strategic plan (www.intermountainchristian.org/ics-strategic-plan) to learn more about the detailed steps we will climb as a learning community.** As we climb together, we will seek to build Pillars of Purpose that will impact students now and build a legacy to be proud of for years to come.

We are so grateful for each parent, student, alumni, and staff member involved in the mission and vision of ICS. You are just as important now as the founding group of Christian parents who started Intermountain Christian School many years ago. **Would you prayerfully consider your part in helping us to take our next steps to build Pillars of Purpose in the lives of our students?** Your prayers, your presence, and your financial support are an important encouragement to ICS.

If you would like to connect with me to talk further, I would be happy to meet you over a cup of coffee soon. Please email me at gphtel@intermountainchristian.org.

In Christ,

Gabe Pethtel, M.Ed.
Head of School

ABOUT ICS’ LIONHEART

The *Lionheart* is a publication of Intermountain Christian School. The purpose of the *Lionheart* is to keep you up to date on everything that is happening in our school and to unify our greater school community.

Please contact The ICS Marketing and Admissions office if you would like to update your contact information or if you know of someone who would like to receive the *Lionheart*.

ICS Marketing and Admissions | 801-365-0349 | marketing@intermountainchristian.org



Mr. Wittstock permanently plastered his “rooted in love” sticker on his coffee cup.

ROOTED IN LOVE

By Andrew Hobbs, dean of elementary school

Many Christians have a favorite Bible verse or a “life verse.” Some Christians have a “season verse” that God uses to bring them comfort, encouragement, and motivation for a specific season of life. At ICS, we take part in this practice by choosing a key verse each school year to focus our community on a specific aspect of God and the Christian faith.

As Pamela Smith, dean of middle and high school, and I pondered what our key verse would be, God was busy working in the heart of another ICS staff member about what He wanted our community to focus on this year. Nicole Stoddard, operations manager, came to Mrs. Smith to suggest Ephesians 3:17b-19 as our key verse for the school year:

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Mrs. Stoddard has prayed these specific verses over our school for years. It is her desire, and the desire of many in our community that our students would not just have a head knowledge of who God is nor would they simply learn to live moral lives. Our deepest desire is that our students would know the love of Christ so fully that they would build their lives on that foundation, so when the cares of the world, the trials of life, and the snares of the Devil come, they will remain steadfastly rooted in His love. This love rescues us from our corrupted desires and prevalent sins to forgive us and offer relationship and eternal life with Him.

If you step through the doors of ICS, it will be evident that our desire is for our students to be “rooted in love.” You’ll see it in the posters and banners around the school, on T-shirts, in the elementary Bible stories and the middle and high school small groups, and in our weekly chapel services. This is how we sow the seed of the gospel into the hearts of our students and rely on God to bring growth. Please partner with us in praying this year that those seeds would fall on good soil in the heart of each student and that they would be “rooted in love.”

MAKING GOD'S STORY REAL

By Denise Buckley, professional development coordinator

Every day at Intermountain Christian School we challenge ourselves to be biblically relevant by intentionally instructing our students through the biblical lens. Whether it is learning the alphabet, exploring Utah's geography, or dissecting a piece of literature, our educators desire to bring a Christian worldview into every lesson they teach.

But how do we do so authentically? How do we model our faith and point students to God's truth in ways that capture their heart and mind? How do we make God's story real in our students' lives?

Several years ago we embarked on the Teaching for Transformation (TfT)* journey. This program brings together educational best practices and intentional biblical integration, giving our teachers the tools they need to authentically integrate God's story into their subject matter.

I get to see this in action every day at ICS! Enjoy a few examples from our first weeks of the school year:

MIDDLE SCHOOL: Our 7th graders take a class called College and Career Awareness. Ms. Reed has woven in the biblical worldview in creative ways, including asking students to investigate *What are God's jobs?* In addition to taking strengths surveys and exploring traditional career models, our students are taking TfT's Biblical Throughlines and applying them to potential job choices. Ms. Reed loves for students to investigate how *all* jobs can be used to glorify God.

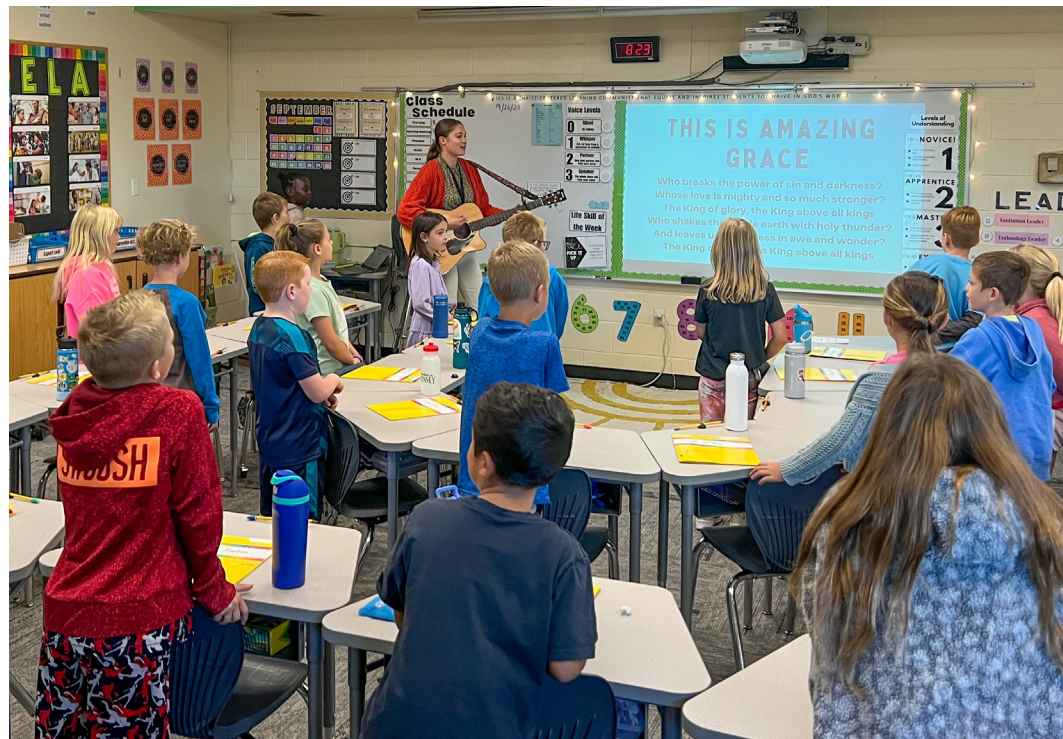
HIGH SCHOOL: In her Anatomy and Physiology class, Mrs. Florell began the year sharing Psalm 1:3. After talking with her students about the sweet spot of success in her classroom (being likable, respectful, and productive), she used the psalm as an illustration of what thriving as a student means: to thrive looks like a tree planted by streams of water--healthy and vibrant in contrast to parched and struggling. What a great example for our juniors and seniors!

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Mrs. Roach recently shared how she uses worship time in her second grade classroom (pictured below). Leading students in song on her guitar, she integrates into their schedule time to praise God, refocus, and settle their minds. Seeing them wholeheartedly praise God together is a gift to Him and to Mrs. Roach as well!

It is such an encouragement to see our teachers intentionally and authentically weave God's Word and truth into their lessons. I invite you to pop in and see our teachers and students living out His story.

*For more information about TfT, check out their website: www.teachingfortransformation.org

Pictured: Mrs. Roach leads her second grade class in worship at the beginning of the day.



High School Cross Country

Keaton Okino (12th)

GLORIFYING GOD THROUGH COMPETITION

By Randi Hillaker, athletic director

This year in athletics we are working on achieving our department's mission: "to create opportunities for student-athletes to glorify God through competitive excellence while honoring Christ and serving others". In a culture where winning is everything, the ICS athletics program aims to teach our students how to glorify God, honor Christ, and serve others. Our student-athletes have lived out our mission this year in many ways.

After a volleyball game in early September, a player from the opposing team suffered an injury while leaving our school. After confirming she had help, members of the ICS team didn't hesitate to begin praying for her. No teacher, coach or parent asked our athletes to pray. Rather, their hearts were evident in their immediate action to pray for an injured peer.

IN SERVING AND LOVING EACH OTHER WELL, ICS ATHLETES ARE HONORING GOD, GIVING HIM THE GLORY FOR THEIR WINS, AND LEARNING THROUGH THE LOSSES.

Our baseball team recently faced an opponent that was very inexperienced. The school had not had a baseball team in 15 years. When set to play ICS, they had never played baseball and had only practiced once. We quickly took the lead, but remained humble and encouraging toward the other team. A player was sent in to pitch that needed more pitching experience. ICS' pitchers took the time to provide practice and pointers to the new pitcher. Other Lions offered tips to their catcher as well. This team's coach was very grateful for our understanding and encouragement. He commented that he was sure they would not meet another opponent this season who would be more willing to help his team improve.

Within ICS' teams, there is a noticeable effort to build one another up and solidify relationships. They regularly serve each other on and off the field. In serving and loving each other well, ICS athletes are honoring God, giving Him the glory for their wins, and learning through the losses.

ARTISTIC ODYSSEY

By Jennifer Adema, director of admissions

Senior Kadance Eagle has been attending Intermountain Christian School since her freshman year of high school. She has been interested in art for most of her life, going back to elementary school. Kadance enjoys using various mediums, but her favorites are acrylic painting and digital art. While creating using these mediums, she finds that mistakes are easier to fix.

Kadance has taken every art class available to her since she started attending ICS. While in Mrs. Lee's art room, Kadance has been challenged to do projects she wouldn't consider on her own. The assignments have pushed her out of her comfort zone. She and a classmate worked together to create a cardboard animal head mount. She never would've taken on that challenge outside of Mrs. Lee's prompting. Once completed, she took pride in her cardboard sheep!

Kadance's favorite year of art was her junior year. All of the projects were her choice, and she was able to be creative and unrestrained. Her favorite project was the completion of her dragon sculpture, which used multiple mediums, including clay, fabric, and paint. The other project she was most proud of was a digital piece with a setting in Southern Utah and the inclusion of griffins. It was an effort to get the piece printed out and stretched onto canvas, but the final outcome was very satisfying!

Kadance has goals of working in animation and hopes to attend the University of Utah, majoring in general arts and minoring in film studies with an emphasis in animation. Kadance credits Mrs. Lee with encouraging her through ups and downs in her pursuit of art.

The art department at ICS exists to encourage students wherever they are in their capacity and skill to express their God-given creativity. Many students who have gone through Mrs. Lee's art program came out not only with more skill and understanding, but an appreciation of who God made them to be and how to give Him glory through art. The ICS community looks forward to seeing what's next for Kadance!

Pictured: Kadance's acrylic painting titled, "Icy Ridges" (above). Kadance's acrylic painting titled, "Borzoi" (below, left). Kadance and Mrs. Lee (bottom, right).



STEPPING INTO STEM

By Jennifer Adema, director of admissions

Dana Pethel is in her second year as the elementary STEM teacher at Intermountain Christian School and her sixth year with Quest for Space. Quest for Space is a company born out of San Jose, CA. A group of Christians in the tech industry came together to launch this STEM program specifically geared toward Christian schools. Quest for Space now partners with 150 schools worldwide, including Intermountain Christian School!

The produced curriculum is unique and adds great depth to our 5th grade STEM class. It is fully Christ-centered and references God's creation and how STEM fits into every part of God's world. Mrs. Pethel weaves biblical truths and stories in her lesson plans. During the year, the students complete a David and Goliath project. They work to build catapults to knock down a water bottle, which is representative of the giant that David took down with a slingshot and a rock.

While participating in STEM class, the 5th graders interact a lot with the space station and astronauts. The main lesson for the year is understanding the three types of heat: convection, conduction, and radiation. The students spend time building an experiment kit on how heat reacts on Earth in gravity. The same kit is available and used on the International Space Station.

The students create and run heat transfer experiments on earth and hypothesize what will happen in microgravity. Mrs. Pethel doesn't tell the students if they are right or wrong, but admits that the results are different on the space station than in the STEM classroom!

The 5th graders also have the opportunity to Zoom with retired Christian Astronaut Shane Kimbrough (pictured right). This is an invaluable meeting time for students interested in space exploration or other STEM careers.

There is also a more fun component in STEM in which students write code to animate a cartoon character. The space station then sends a video back to Mrs. Pethel's class, which shows the character actually moving in space. This is proof of microgravity that the students get to see in real time in the classroom (view an ICS student example at www.bit.ly/ics-stem).

Our elementary STEM program strives to captivate students from a younger age, to set a firm foundation for the middle and high school years and beyond, hopefully building confidence to pursue a career in STEM. Our elementary students go to the STEM lab every other week, and are also able to be a part of the STEM club which meets after school on Wednesdays. The whole experience is created to inspire students to aspirations they never thought available to them.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

By Jennifer Adema, director of admissions

Before Amber Furze was an ICS board member and ICS parent, she was an ICS student! Amber was part of ICS' beginnings and joined the student body in the year it was founded, entering 5th grade in 1982.

Amber credits her parents with seeing the need for Christ-centered education for their own children and other Christian families in the Salt Lake Valley. Amber's parents desired an education with Christian values, where the Bible was taught by Christian teachers. Because of a few visionary families, ICS came into existence, and Amber has been a part of it since the start.

Butch and Judy Cosgrove are Amber's parents and are a large part of the legacy of ICS. The Cosgroves served the school community by cooking for many auctions and fundraisers. Judy taught at ICS while Butch coached basketball for 20 years! Butch received a "Friend of the School" award for his years of faithful dedication to Intermountain Christian School.

After graduating from ICS with the class of 1990, Amber received an associate's degree from Salt Lake Community College. She then went on to Westminster College where she earned her bachelor's in nursing. Amber had wanted to be a nurse since she was a young girl.

Amber gave her life to Christ as a child. While attending ICS, Amber was encouraged to continue her walk with the Lord. She appreciated the Bible classes that she took while at ICS.

The Furzes have four boys currently at ICS in grades 6th, 8th, 10th and 11th. She homeschooled the boys for years. Three years ago, as the boys were getting into more difficult subjects to teach, she considered ICS. She started with the two older boys as they were entering 8th and 9th grades. The very next year, all four Furze boys were a part of the ICS student body.

The choice that the Furzes made to attend ICS was affirmed after their first parent teacher conference. The Furzes left feeling grateful for the love the teachers showed for their kids. They believe that the teachers at ICS truly know and love the students.

ICS is grateful when alumni see the value in their Christ-centered education and want to provide the same to their children!

Pictured: The Furze family (above, circle). Amber's senior portrait at ICS (above). Amber (#22) on the ICS Lady Lions basketball team in 1990 (right).



MORE ALUMNI NEWS!

We appreciate when our alumni love ICS so much that they come back to work here!

Pictured left to right: Brewster Christiansen (high school math teacher, class of 2001), Hailey Biel (P.E. and health teacher, class of 2018), Heather Hubbs (first grade teacher, class of 1996), Polina Burk (after care aide, class of 2022), and Ben Stoddard (elementary aide and Camp ICS director, class of 2017)

CHOOSING ICS FOR SENIOR YEAR

By Jennifer Adema, director of admissions

Morgan Brown (pictured right) will graduate from ICS with the class of 2024. Morgan's first day as an ICS student was also the first day of his senior year. He attended a charter school in the Salt Lake Valley from kindergarten through 11th grade. During his junior year, he became interested in making a switch, desiring a Christ-centered education. The reputation of the ICS community preceded itself, and Morgan wanted to be a part of it.

Morgan took no time adjusting as the "new kid" in the senior class; he was immediately warmly welcomed by the student body. Friendships were quickly solidified during the high school retreat at Big Canyon Ranch, and he has had no regrets in coming to ICS.

Once he began pursuing ICS, he discovered that he could have a very flexible schedule while completing the credits needed to graduate. Morgan's schedule allows him to be off campus each Monday and Wednesday. During these days, Morgan works one of his two jobs: Chick-fil-A or a local daycare. When he is not in school or working, he enjoys rock climbing and hanging out with friends.

After he graduates high school, Morgan hopes to pursue a career as an electrician or intern in ministry. As he progresses into adulthood, he desires to grow in his faith and gain boldness in sharing his faith with others. He is an active member of Risen Life Church in Holladay.

ICS welcomes students for the entirety of their school years, or just for a select year or two. Our staff is grateful for all the time students choose to spend in our classrooms, and we are overjoyed that Morgan chose to spend his senior year at ICS.



THE SPASOFF FAMILY

By Jennifer Adema, director of admissions

The Spasoff family has four children, two of whom are school-aged and attend ICS. Gabe is a freshman, while his little sister, Cameran, is in first grade - both are thriving at ICS.

Mallory Spasoff first found out about ICS through an internet search. Her family was relocating to Salt Lake City from Nashville, TN and desired a Christian education. Mallory had been praying for God's direction to guide what should be next for their children's schooling. Once she found ICS' website and social media pages, she liked what she saw and was eager to schedule a tour of the school. Soon after moving to Utah, a neighbor came over and began talking to Mallory about ICS and the great experience her daughter had in PreK here. Mallory says this was confirmation to continue pursuing a Christ-centered education at ICS.

Mallory scheduled a tour, and was convinced this was the academic path for her family after seeing the school in person. The Spasoffs appreciate the solid foundation and Christian discipleship their children experience while at ICS. The individualized education journey each student receives is invaluable to the engagement and learning that takes place in the classroom.

Gabe and Cameran have both cultivated friendships among the students at ICS. The Spasoffs say that the staff is so engaging and as parents they feel safe and confident in their decision to have their children attend.

To families considering ICS, Mallory encourages them to schedule a tour! She says it's a great way to see what you'll be getting if you decide to choose ICS.

Pictured: The Spasoff family

THE SPASOFFS APPRECIATE THE SOLID FOUNDATION AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP THEIR CHILDREN EXPERIENCE WHILE AT ICS. THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION JOURNEY EACH STUDENT RECEIVES IS INVALUABLE TO THE ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING THAT TAKES PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM.





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