

Adages from Augsburg

Augsburg Academy

Volume I, Issue I

Special points of interest:

- Augsburg Academy was founded in 2005
- The Academy is named after the city of Augsburg, Germany, where Martin Luther faced the Imperial Diet (parliament) and declared “Here I stand” when asked to repudiate his writings.
- The Academy has grown from one class of 3 students to serving students from age 4 through 4th grade this year

A Year of Change and Opportunity

The 2007-2008 school year has been an interesting and exciting one for Augsburg. We opened the year with our largest enrollment yet, offering classes for Kindergarten-4 (pre-kindergarten), Kindergarten, first, second, and fourth grades.

We also welcomed several new faculty members to assist us with our growing school. Jill Lee joined us as our kindergarten teacher. Carli Rossow teaches our fourth grade as well as helping out with the K-4 reading and math and music for all grades. Dianne Blank, grandmother of two of our new students, comes in twice-weekly for art class.

In November 2007, the congregational council at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, our original sponsoring body, announced that Augsburg would not be sponsored by the school as of January 1, 2008. This required us to obtain a new sponsoring church, from which grew



Preparing for a class, Augsburg teachers use many available resources.

Augsburg Evangelical Church, an independent, non-denominational church in the Lutheran tradition. The change in sponsorship was completed in December 2007.

One of the effects of the change was the change in our school's rental agreement. The owners of the church building in which we met, a Seventh-Day Adventist

congregation, desired to raise our rent from \$1200 per month to almost \$8000 per month. This was impossible for us to accept, and we began efforts to find a new home.

Even with the economic slowdown and its affect on the real estate market, prospects were not good in finding a new home until board member Dave Murray received an email from Clai Carr, president of Top Shelf Development and operator of The Gardens Ice House, graciously offered us space for the Academy.

Over Presidents' Day Weekend, the staff packed everything which had not already been placed in storage and, with the hearty assistance of Jason's Moving (1708 Whitehead Road, Gwynn Oak, MD 21207), and some helpful parents, we were able to get everything moved and reconfigured while only losing one day of school.

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Losing My Marbles—Can You Help?

Pastor Art Hebbeler, STS
Head of Schools

On my desk at home (I am using the student hockey players' study hall at The Gardens as my “office” for school), I have a jar filled with 60 marbles. I expect to lose every one of them, but I do need your help.

You see, those 60 marbles represent the sixty applications that we have set as our goal for the 2008-

09 Academy year. We know that situations happen that every student who applies does not enroll, so in order to assure at least 30 students for the next year, we need sixty applications. Every time we get an application, I throw out one of the marbles from the jar. When I've lost all my marbles, we've met our goal for the year.

I need your help “losing my marbles.” If you know of a family with children age 4 through 7th grade,

tell them about Augsburg, and more importantly, **tell me**. Let the family know that you will give me contact information, and I will follow up with the family and provide a complete information package. You can call me (410-804-6020) or send me an email (pastor@augsburgacademy.net) with the information. In any case, it's important that we work together so that your friendly pastor and headmaster can “lose his marbles” as we grow!

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Year of Change, Opportunity (continued from page 1)



One of the many students at Augsburg, Brianna is one of our “founding” students from the 2005-06 school year

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Now that we are settled, the hard work of recruitment for 2008-09 begins, as well as our opportunity to work with Clai Carr and his team as well as the various county and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission officials to create a permanent place for the

school here on Old Gunpowder Road.

We have developed a vision document, which is changing even as this newsletter is prepared, to help steer us in our efforts. When the Academy was founded in 2005, we planned to have just three grades operating this year—Kindergarten, first, and second. However, we now

have five grades, and in the fall will have eight grades in place. Thanks to the support and assistance of a growing number of friends, the reality of Augsburg Academy being a full-service K-12 program is quickly becoming a reality. Our opportunity at hand is to continue our growth and get the first dedicated facilities in place as quickly as possible.

News Alert — Park and Planning Opposes Development Plan

As we were preparing this newsletter, we learned that our initial proposal to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and County Councilman Tom Dernoga has been opposed by the MNCPPC staff. That proposal was to build a stand-alone school facility with a gymnasium, and to permit MNCPPC use of the gymnasium when it was not being used by the Academy. Additionally, the proposed construction was designed to withstand Category 5 hurricanes, and include a Food Services building with its own power generation capability in case of a natural or man-made disaster affecting our community, all of which were to be available to the county in such an emergency. We are working on alternative strategies, and will keep you, our dear friends and supporters, informed.

“We are called by the Holy Spirit to be the best teachers we can be...and students are called to be the best students they can be...”

What Kind of School Are We?

Augsburg Academy is part of a tradition that dates back over 1,000 years. As a parochial, or church-sponsored, school, we are taking our place in that tradition of educating young men and women in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as preparing them to serve and lead the world in the years to come. By design, we are a Christian school. As such, Christian values and Biblical understanding are at the core of our very being. We have been called by the power of the Holy Spirit to be the best teachers and leaders God has made us to be, just as the children have been called by that same Holy Spirit to be the best students God has made them to be. We are certainly “on a mission from God.” At the same time, Augsburg’s religious education program does not replace, nor does it desire to compete with, the religious education our children receive at home or in their home congregations. Our reli-

gious education program is designed to teach children—especially through middle school—the basics of the Christian faith. That is, we want children to know the common Bible stories and organization of the Bible, traditional Christian texts (the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the 23rd Psalm), traditional and contemporary Christian hymns and songs, and, of course, prayers. Our religious education program is structured on these basics because children need to learn their faith in age-appropriate manners as well as family-specific needs. By providing a core from which to build, we assist parents, Sunday School teachers, and pastors in the religious education specific to each child’s situation. More importantly, children in these grades are still “concrete” learners, and aren’t ready for the “abstract” thinking necessary for a true understanding of theological

issues. This is a long explanation of our position on religious education, but we have learned over our first three years that the greatest “concern” of parents when evaluating Augsburg Academy has been the nature and focus of the religious education component. As we say in our introductory materials, the first priority of Augsburg Academy is to live out our calling to provide the best possible education for our students, then the best possible athletic programs and physical development for our students, and finally, the best possible moral, social, cultural, and spiritual development. “What kind of school is Augsburg?” Well, what kind of school are you seeking?



Augsburg faculty and students are led by the Holy Spirit in their vocations—God-given callings as children of God.

A Quick History of Augsburg Academy

Many of you reading this newsletter are just becoming familiar with Augsburg Academy. So, in an effort to help you understand the road we have followed to get where we are today, we offer this first installment in the History of Augsburg. —Editor

The Start of Augsburg Academy

In 2002, while gathered around a conference table with members of the Christian Education committee at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, the post-meeting conversation turned to the education of children. One of the women present was concerned about the options she would have to provide for a high-quality, safe, and morally-sound education for her children, especially once they reached high school. While there were many private and parochial schools serving the K-8 students, there was no option for high school within the Lutheran tradition, and the options which otherwise were present were very expensive, highly competitive, too far away, or a combination of all three.

“What’s to stop us from exploring starting a Lutheran high school?” Well, money seemed to be the biggest reason. We thought we would need at least \$10 million, and probably much more, to purchase enough land, build the building, pay the staff, and cover the bills until the school was large enough to pay its own way—if it ever did. At that time, there wasn’t

enough faith in the concept to move forward, but as with anything, the Holy Spirit has a way of working in mysterious and wonderful ways.

In 2004, Prince George’s County Public Schools began to consider school realignment actions in our region (The new Laurel-Beltsville elementary school was still just a dream at that time). One of the proposed changes was to convert Beltsville Elementary School to a middle school, and do so by moving the kindergarten classes out in August 2006 and the remaining grades the following school year. This created a great deal of concern in our community, and it became obvious to us that a need for a local kindergarten, and later elementary school, was emerging. A proposal was developed to open the Augsburg Academy at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in phases, starting with kindergarten and then adding one, or perhaps two, grades a year. We could accommodate up to 70 students at APLC, so the need to find a satellite location or to build a stand-alone facility elsewhere was always in the back of our minds.

With approval of the congregation, the Academy was set to open in August 2005. We initially began a search for a principal, but in the process came to believe that (a) we had a good team with the two pastors and (b) candidates who sought the position did not have the skills

necessary or the desire to build a new school from scratch. We then moved forward to find an administrative and teaching assistant and a classroom teacher for kindergarten. The associate pastor would serve as principal, and the senior pastor would provide oversight and serve as chaplain and religious education instructor. When the PGCPS finally decided to leave Beltsville Elementary as it was, the community push for alternatives were reduced, and we began Augsburg’s first year with 1/3 the projected student body.

The first quarter was eventful, to say the least. First, the teaching assistant discovered she was pregnant, and was having a difficult pregnancy and had to resign. Then, the kindergarten teacher resigned suddenly for personal reasons (we later learned that she, too, was pregnant), and the associate pastor asked to be relieved of his Academy duties so that he might return to a part-time status with the church. The senior pastor then stepped in to the day-to-day operation of the Academy, even taking a week as kindergarten teacher while searching for a replacement. The good news is that these changes did not negatively impact the students, and the results of standardized testing in the spring showed that all the students were at or above grade level in all areas of our program.

...To be continued in our next edition



The original Augsburg Academy logo. The Pembroke Welsh Corgi is “Lord Theodore, Archbishop of Catonsville” and is one of Pastor Hebbeler’s four Corgis. The caption on the logo will soon change to read “Laurel” instead of “Beltsville” to reflect our new home

“Augsburg Academy started as a way to fill a perceived community need. It grows as the need grows.”

Why Parents Choose Augsburg

Recently, a new family visited the Academy for a morning, and then came in to drop off applications and ask a few questions they had about the coming year. It was an opportunity for us to learn a bit more about why parents choose Augsburg.

For this particular family, one of the big reasons for choosing Augsburg was the fact that we had a plan in place to grow

through the high school years. With so few options for a quality private or parochial high school experience, being a part of Augsburg, even as a new program, was a distinct benefit.

For another family, the ability to work in a positive manner with the school to ensure their child would not be penalized for being a competitive figure skater was seen as a benefit of being an

Augsburg student. Additionally, there was the convenience of going to school where the student trained.

Above all, the reason for choosing Augsburg is the top-notch educational experience, coupled with our desire to bring out the God-given abilities of the students in a safe, Christian environment.



Parents are important partners in the Augsburg family. Here, Brian and Roselynn Falby, parents of two Augsburg students, chat with Debbie Hebbeler at an Academy Sunday coffee hour.



Augsburg Academy

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Theological Reflection on Education



The lamp, a traditional symbol of education, also reminds of us the parable of the 10 maidens, and especially of the wise maidens who kept their wicks trimmed awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom. Teaching our students about the works of God as told in the Holy Bible is part of our core curriculum.

One of the greatest responsibilities we have as Christian parents is the upbringing of our children, preparing them for leadership in the world. In a common baptismal rite of the Lutheran church, parents of infants and small children are asked, prior to the baptism itself, if they promise to bring the child up in a Christian home, teach the child the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and Apostles' Creed, bring the child to worship *regularly*, and as the child grows older, place in the child's hands the Holy Bible and see to the child's instruction in the Christian faith.

All too often, these promises

made by parents are quickly forgotten, until the child reaches confirmation age, and then there is the plea to the pastor to teach the child everything he or she should have learned in the previous twelve years. It is a tough experience for all concerned.

For Martin Luther, education was one of the most important things parents and leaders could provide for children. In fact, when the Roman Catholic church closed many of the schools in the territories of the Evangelical churches, it was Luther himself who wrote to the princes and nobility demanding the rulers provide for the education of boys and girls as a function

of the state if the church failed to provide that education.

Today, as we move further into the 21st century, we find the issue of education again at the forefront of public conversation. Unfortunately, it is more of a conversation of how the educational system can maintain its old ways, and not how it can provide for the education of our children and prepare them for leadership.

Many churches have not been involved in the education of our youth. We at Augsburg thank you for your partnership with us in serving those little ones whom Christ himself welcomed.