

EXCELSIOR NEWSLETTER

Excelsior Classical Covenantal Community

May 2010

www.excelsiorclassical.org

Our Graduating Seniors

We are pleased to feature our three graduating seniors for this year. We pray that God will richly bless them as they pursue their future endeavors.

Recommended summer reading lists:

3rd-6th graders:

Little House on the Prairie, Laura

Ingalls Wilder.

Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain.

7th-8th graders:

Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain.

Little Women, L.M. Alcott.

Little Men, L.M. Alcott.

Beric the Briton, G.A. Henty.

9th-12th graders

Lower level:

Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens.

Upper level:

Les Miserables, Victor Hugo.

or

War and Peace, Leo Tolstov.

End of Year Program

The end of the year program will be at West Jackson Street Baptist Church on Friday, May 14 at 3:15. The party will follow at Ballard Park. Please RSVP to Kathy Strevel regarding the party, and let Misty know your plans for the program.

All families are asked to participate in our final clean-up immediately after classes on May 14. Each teacher should help clean the room that they use during the day. This shouldn't take too long if we all pitch in together. Feel free to bring your own cleaning supplies!

Thank You Notes

We would like each child (if possible) to write a personal note to West Jackson church thanking them for use of their church for Excelsior.

Parents are also encouraged to write a note as well. Please bring these to Excelsior by Friday, May 7 so that we can present them to the church.



Eleanor Green

From the Greens:

Eleanor was the perfect infant. So perfect we wished we had named her Pleasant. So perfect I quit panicking over having four children. So perfect we could have lost her.

She ate at my convenience, she took very long naps, and when she was awake, she was all smiles and contentedness. When she was hungry, her cry said, "I think it's time for a little something, but no rush. Just whenever you get a minute." At 5 months old and "failing to thrive," she had dropped off the bottom of every chart the pediatrician could find.

Thanks be to God, he let us keep Eleanor, and she has filled our lives and our home with her own unique humor, gifts, and beauty. Impetuous and headstrong, yes. But also creative, resilient, fair, and quick to forgive. We have seen grace and growth under the stress of interpersonal crisis, and we have seen the Lord deepen her heart's commitment and draw her closer to Him. We feel intensely blessed that he gave her into our care.

The biblical injunction to bring up one's children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord seems to take on new dimension and fresh perspective with every stage of family life. When we start out as parents, the proposition seems simple: love them, keep their bodies healthy and clean, protect them physically and spiritually, and teach them God's word and its principles. (In other words, catechize the stew out of them.) As time goes on, and they grow---relentlessly---it begins to dawn on us that it may not be quite that simple---that though God's word is black and white, the application is sometimes grey, complicated by the fact that each child is unique and



wired differently, which can make each benchmark with each child seem like new territory.

It occurred to me in a blinding flash one day this week that this is Eleanor's first huge Crossroad. Not that she hasn't felt the need for God's help and guidance before now (after all, she is a sinner, she has Friends and relationships, she lives with flawed parents and little brothers, and she has been a student in Excelsior), but she has always basically known what her immediate future would hold---in a word, school. She has existed in the comfort of clearly defined parameters

and expectations. She has heard certain scriptural principles from birth. But now, in a bigger way, she is at one of those momentous points on her journey that takes the principles and promises from where they have resided in her head, (relatively undisturbed), and shoves them down deep into her heart. Because now she really needs the guidance in a way she hasn't felt before. We will still be around for the foreseeable future, Lord willing, to help steer and give direction, but our role now begins to shift as she moves into adulthood. Gradually, there is less of us in the picture and more of a very direct reliance on her heavenly Father.

It's that tricky benchmark time again. New territory. Our consolation is faith in the Almighty God who is immutable.

It's too easy to exist in the lull of doing what we do because, um....it's what we do. But when I stop---really stop to think about it---my gratitude for Excelsior is profound. Even with the occasional pitfalls or drawbacks one might acknowledge in a homeschool cooperative, I have come to believe it truly can be the best of both worlds. And to belong to one with folks who share common goals, labor to uphold Christian

integrity and honor Christ in all things---that is a very special blessing, indeed.

Our heartfelt thanks to the parents and teachers of Excelsior for another year of self-sacrifice, patience, genuine interest, and partnering with us in faithful watchcare over our children. Your willingness to share your knowledge and expertise, and your faithfulness to serve, have helped to grow their minds and their souls.

From Eleanor:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to the head of the class, we were all going direct to...(in an ominous whisper)... the headmaster. In short, my years in Excelsior have been a very full and stimulating stage of my life, not only educationally, but spiritually and in my steps toward adulthood.

Ever since we were little, Mama and Papa have taught us to love learning and to realize that education does not happen exclusively in a classroom. So many opportunities that presented themselves were used as teachable moments that might enrich our experience: driving home from Memphis was a chance to discourse on the range of colors and hues found simply in the layers of the horizon, a song on the radio could provide an endless discussion about the philosophy and worldview that birthed its lyrics, and even loading the dishwasher could easily be turned into a logistics lesson.

They believe in this method because they too are always absorbing new things, expanding their depth of knowledge, and trying to reshape and improve

themselves. It is a paradigm that they have passed on to us, trying to help us become well-informed, well-rounded, useful people. Their decision for our family to join Excelsior was, therefore, a natural and logical marriage with likeminded people who desire to “seek... first the kingdom of God.”

Our education never ends, and because I have been taught to engage the world around me, I suspect that even when I’m an old, spinsterly cat lady sitting in my rocking chair on my front porch, I’ll still be able to glean some new bit of knowledge from the events of my time and continue to grow and mature from that understanding.

Next year will be a gap year for me—a time to work, study piano, and finish some courses. My future is obviously uncertain—only God knows what Plan A is—but Plan B is that I will then attend the University of Memphis and study...something...I’m not sure yet, actually. As I said, my future is uncertain. Like many graduates before me, though, I’m trusting God’s promise, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall

direct thy paths.” Please pray that I will have the wisdom to acknowledge Him in all aspects of my life, and that He will help me make decisions that are glorifying to Him, and that are according to His will.

I’d like to thank each of my teachers for helping to prepare me for this next phase of my life: for taking time out of their lives to teach and cultivate me, and for being patient and understanding, while still holding me to a standard that I would probably not have held on my own initiative. God’s hand in our participation in Excelsior is very evident to me and my family, and I thank Him for guiding us to such a blessed opportunity.



Katie Strevel

From Kathy Strevel:

As I considered responding to this email. so many thoughts and memories filled my mind... perhaps not the typical ones of, "Should we send our daughter to this co-op...is this what is best for her and our family...do I need to commit to such since we live so far away...?" No, my immediate memory was of being offered the option of Excelsior for Katie's schooling at a time when education was way down the list of 'what is important' right now. We had just learned in December of 2005 that Katie's daddy had terminal cancer and our lives were turned upside down and pulled from many directions at once and the only thing that kept us from despair was the Anchor of Jesus Christ, our Hope. We had begun attending Christ Community Church in New Albany five months earlier and were just getting to know the people, many of whom were a part of Excelsior. I didn't even understand exactly what this group was about, much less did I understand the 'requirements'--the tremendous commitment from parents and the necessary cooperation from the students--when it was suggested that I might want to send Katie, who was 13 and doing 7-8th grade work, just so I would not have to even 'think about her schooling' at this critical time in our lives--so Katie would have some kind of regular schedule for study to help keep her mind off the constant press of doctors and hospitals and treatments and tears and pain. I was told that "nothing will be required of you...we will take care of transportation from New Albany and even her books will be furnished...you need not give it any thought...we



simply want to help--to serve." Mike thought it a wise move and so I readily agreed and Katie agreed because she was an obedient daughter who didn't want to be the source of extra concern for us. I do remember many comments assuring me that it would not matter if Katie could not 'keep up' with the work load--that I should expect this and to not worry about it. I did not. God gave me His grace in such measure that I completely turned over to the kind families of Excelsior our daughter's schooling.

I know those first months were difficult for Katie in many ways, but, she did 'keep up' and the load that was born by those who desired "to help" was, indeed, something I was unable to bear. So many special considerations were given to us that I cannot recount. During these years I have neglected much that could/should have been done about Katie's studies. The task of grieving requires more than one can imagine.

Learning to lean on our Saviour and find in Him our reason for living has been happily thrust upon us by our own heavenly Father and has usurped the normal importance of foreign language and higher math.

Katie graduates from Excelsior with a sound foundation in many areas, with a broader scope than she would have had without her daddy's teaching skills and his amazing understanding of life and history and science and how it all fits together. I am truly thankful for these past four years and remain indebted to my All-Wise, loving and kind heavenly Father for His Provision of Excelsior in our lives. Katie plans to continue her study of violin and will take some additional

courses next year as she finishes the requirements for college and gives her mother one more year of her blessed company before the seemingly necessary parting. Mothering her has been a choice blessing; sharing her with Excelsior has been my pleasure, and, I trust yours as well.

From Katie:

Somehow, for the past several years I have thought that I'd have it mostly figured out by my senior year. ("It" being the immediate future, decisions like where to attend college, when to attend college, what to study, etc.) However, coming into the final weeks of high school here at Excelsior, I find that instead of having my life fit into neat compartments of my own choosing, and instead of being confident about where I'm headed and what I'll be doing while I'm headed there, the only thing I'm really sure of is that my present and my future are in far better hands than mine - my heavenly Father's. I also find that I have little or no control over things I've thought were mine to take care of. And surprisingly, this brings me far more peace than thinking I had it all under control ever did.

It sounds cliché, doesn't it, it say "God is in control; I'm trusting Him with my whole life"? Sadly, I often find myself saying that and turning right around and trying to live on my own strength. But thankfully I am brought to see again and again the bleak reality of my own insufficiency contrasted with the beautiful reality of Christ's sufficiency. This insufficiency



on my part and full sufficiency on His applies to all areas of life - salvation, sanctification, and even graduation and the wide horizon beyond. I hope I am daily learning to trust Christ more fully and abide in Him more completely, and that these lessons will remain with me long after I have forgotten why Napoleon had such an evil hegemony, why the Dark Ages actually were a time of light and growth for Christianity, and how Dr. Grant defines culture.

I want to thank Mama for teaching me so much more than just how to read and write and do math. She combined learning with pleasure, having me write essays on violets, doing math with me outside, and teaching me science with flowers. She has showed me how to make a house a home, causing me to realize beyond a shadow of a doubt that I want to be a stay-at-home mother, even though I won't be able to do it half as wonderfully as she does. Most of all, she helps me see that what I put in my heart is so much more important than what I put in my brain.

I'm so grateful to Daddy for instilling in me a love for classical music, for introducing me to the fascinating subject of history, helping me see it as much more than "dates and dead people" long before I caught the first glimpse of Dr. Grant and his bowtie, and for showing me how to run the Christian race with endurance all the way to the end.

Joining Excelsior at a time when I needed out-of-the-ordinary structure was such a blessing, and I thank all the teachers and parents who did so much to make my first year, (and all the years since,) as easy and pleasant as possible. I have had experiences at Excelsior I never would have been able to have otherwise, and as I look at all the high school classes required for college admissions, I realize just how much I owe to Excelsior and the people who make it possible.

I want to especially thank Mrs. Mary Jo Tate for helping me put my love for books into coherent words, and Mrs. Danette Becker for forcing me to not write sentences as long as William Faulkner's. I appreciate you both very much.

Hugh Morris



We are very grateful for the instruction Hugh has received at Excelsior. Being a part of Excelsior has given him many opportunities to work on areas that were not necessarily his strengths but were essential to his having a well-rounded education. He has been given the tools he needs for life-long learning.

Next year Hugh plans to take advantage of a “gap” year by working part-time and taking a couple of classes at the local community college before moving fulltime into his college studies.

We would like to extend a sincere “thank you” to all the teachers who have shared their time and energy to contribute to Hugh’s education.

Sincerely,
Phillip and Sandy Morris

Preparing for May...

May Headmasters

May 7th - Tom Thompson

May 14th - OPEN

Lunch:

May 7th -

Little Caesar’s

May 14th - **Pepper’s**