



PATHWAYS NEWSLETTER

Honoring God through creative learning & strong academics in a caring, fun-filled school.



Picture of the Month

Third graders were filled with joy as they created a “hamster maze” for Mrs. Heenan’s hamster.



A message from our Principal

Mrs. Cleveland’s Spotlight:

Nurturing Spiritual Growth During the Christmas Season

The Christmas season gives us a beautiful opportunity to slow down and help children learn more about who God is. In the midst of excitement, activities, and anticipation, young hearts are especially open to wonder and the joy of Jesus’ coming. Here are a few simple ways families can nurture spiritual growth at home during this meaningful time of year.

1. Create Simple Moments of Reflection

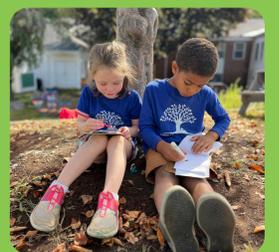
Children don’t need long devotionals to encounter God. Even a short Scripture reading at bedtime, singing a favorite Christmas hymn, or asking a simple question like, “Where did you see God’s goodness today?” can help them pause and notice His presence in daily life. Christmas hymns and Bible verses tell us about Jesus through the many names He is given. This past week in chapel, Mrs. Jimenez (mom to Noah T. and Children’s Ministry Director at The Journey Church) brought in a huge wrapped gift to represent the greatest gift—Jesus. She labeled the gift with the names from Isaiah 9:6: **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**, and explained what each one tells us about who Jesus is. It was a simple but meaningful way for kids to learn more about His character.

Upcoming Events

- * **Christmas Program**
December 18th, 1:30pm
This program will feature all our students.
- * **Christmas Break**
No school Dec. 22nd–Jan. 2nd
- * **First day back to school**
January 5, 2026
- * **Development Day - NO SCHOOL**
Jan. 9, 2026
- * **MLK Jr. Day - NO SCHOOL**
Jan. 19, 2026
- * **Term 2 ends**
Jan. 23, 2026
- * **February Break**
Feb. 16–20, 2026
- * **Spiritual Emphasis Week**
Feb. 23–27, 2026

“SHOW ME YOUR WAYS, LORD, TEACH ME YOUR PATHS. GUIDE ME IN YOUR TRUTH AND TEACH ME, FOR YOU ARE GOD MY SAVIOR, AND MY HOPE IS IN YOU ALL DAY LONG.

PSALM 25:4-5



“Mrs. Cleveland’s Spotlight” continued...

2. Use Storytelling to Point to Jesus

Kids connect deeply with stories. Whether you are reading the Biblical account of Jesus’ birth together, sharing favorite Christmas picture books and short stories, or talking about your own childhood memories of Christmas, stories can help children understand that this season is rooted in God’s love and faithfulness across generations.

3. Practice “Slowing Down” as a Family

Christmas can easily become hurried, even for young children. Setting aside a few evenings to stay home—lighting a candle, reading Scripture, praying together, or listening to worship music—sends a powerful message: we make space for God. Those quiet, unhurried moments often become the ones children remember most.

4. Serve Others in Simple, Meaningful Ways

Acts of service shape a child’s understanding of Christ’s heart. Whether it’s choosing a gift for someone in need, delivering cookies to a neighbor, or writing a thank-you note to someone who blesses your family, service helps children see that love is active and outward-facing.

5. Practice Authentic Giving

Creating or choosing a gift for someone teaches children the art of thoughtfulness. They are blessed not only by receiving gifts, but by giving something that will bring joy. Learning to consider what others would like or need is a skill that blesses people all year long.

6. Celebrate Traditions That Point to Christ

Advent calendars, lighting candles, attending special church services, or sharing special bedtime stories and songs can help children understand the meaning behind Christmas. Traditions don’t have to be elaborate to be meaningful—simple practices, done consistently, take root deeply.

7. Give Children Space to Ask Questions

Children often receive spiritual truths with a natural openness, but this season can also spark wonderful questions as they grow in their understanding of faith. Encouraging their curiosity—“Why was Jesus born in a manger?” “How did the shepherds know?” “What does ‘peace on earth’ mean?”—invites rich conversations that deepen their understanding of God.

As a school, it is a joy to walk alongside you in nurturing the spiritual development of your child. Our prayer this Christmas season is that every family experiences the peace, hope, and wonder that come from knowing Jesus—Immanuel, God with us.

Joyfully,
Mrs. Nikki Cleveland, Principal



**HONORING GOD THROUGH CREATIVE LEARNING &
STRONG ACADEMICS IN A CARING, FUN-FILLED SCHOOL**

From the School Committee

School Committee Says....

The School Committee is excited and blessed to share our first ever Pathways article to discuss some of the things the committee has been working towards to improve HCA for our students, families, and staff! Before we delve into some of the projects we are working on, it's important to review the role of the School Committee and who makes up the team!

The School Committee is composed of a team of Holden Chapel members, parents, and HCA administrators who meet at least monthly to provide direct support through financial planning, project management and to assist the School Administrator as needed with the overall well-being of the school. You'll often see members of the School Committee actively volunteering in different ways at HCA such as the "Feed the Need" Dinner and Packing Event, Substitute Teaching and planning fun school events such as Field Day! We always enjoy the opportunity to team with parents and students to find ways we can make improvements throughout the school!

The committee has planned and coordinated on many of the improvements you may have already seen such as the Team B Hallway tiling, security advancements, and bathroom upgrades! We are also looking to the future as we find ways to fund improvements to the playground, coordinate refurbishments in the Science hallway such as painting and tiling, and conducting a full renovation of the front office to make the space more inviting, while ensuring we exceed security standards to improve upon the safety of all personnel.

Additionally, while the school prepares for the 2026 Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) reaccreditation, the school committee has been actively involved in funding a much needed update to the HCA website which you may have already seen, as well as receiving training through ACSI to better serve the school while ensuring our Mission and Vision Statements are in line with God's Plan for meeting the needs of our students and faculty through education and spiritual growth. We are always looking for areas where we can make improvements and are thankful for those parents with special skills who have volunteered time and resources to often assist us in making HCA successful. We recognize that one of the most important areas in a school's success is family involvement and we are so very thankful for all you provide to our students and staff to make every day a wonderful learning experience!

Service-based fundraiser

Feed the Need Update!

Thank you to every family who registered, raised money, and prayed for a successful Feed The Need campaign. To date, we have raised \$53,529! This helps us close the gap between the cost to educate every student and tuition. Please continue to pray with us that God will not just close the gap to help us meet our budget, but also provide abundantly so HCA can thrive for generations.

REFERRAL PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT:

Our amazing School Committee has brought back the HCA Family Referral Program for the 26-27 school year! Word of mouth is one of our most effective tools for growing enrollment, so we hope current families will help us for the upcoming school year.

Here are the details:

If a new family names a current family on their application, once the new family has been accepted and pays 3 months of tuition, & the referring family is up-to-date on tuition payments, they will receive \$250 per new student!

Get Involved!

Interested in starting a new elective? Would you like to get some Family Service Hours in by volunteering or working on a project? Check out our [website](#) for Volunteer Opportunities or email the HCA office!

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Thank you to our amazing Feed the Need Corporate Sponsors!!!!!!

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Thank you to our amazing Feed the Need Corporate Sponsors!!!!!!

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Gifts in Kind



- Animal Adventures
- Chick-Fil-A, Worcester

Thank you!

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From the classroom

What's Happening in Preschool with Ms. Michelle

November blessed us with all things we are thankful for. We spent time learning about what it means to be thankful, and enjoyed telling each other about what makes us happy. We loved playing in our dramatic play center and preparing a Thanksgiving Dinner for our friends. We also were busy working on all of our turkey crafts. The best part of it all was getting to enjoy the beauty God created around us during our time playing in Nature Explore. Fall is a wonderful time to be creative with nature. We have welcomed December with energy and excitement! The kids are looking forward to learning more about what Christmas is all about, the birth of Jesus and traditions. Our Memory Verse is "For with God nothing will be impossible" Luke 1:37. We talked about Angel Gabriel visiting Mary and what message he had for her. You can also find gingerbread men all over our class this week!! We will be learning about our 5 senses, following the star(like the wisemen), and decorating our class Christmas tree. The kids have also been practicing our song for the Christmas concert and can't wait to perform for you later this month.

We have our class apple stand that has now turned into a Fall Farm Stand. You can find all your fall necessities from pumpkins, gourds, flowers, cider, pumpkin pies, donuts and pumpkin lattes. Prices vary depending on who's working, and please use exact change. We're still learning!

We've been enjoying Nature Explore so much with this beautiful weather. December is always a busy time of the year. For the rest of the month we will be preparing for our Christmas concert, exploring kindness by picking out a gift for a friend and experiencing the joy of giving, and celebrating with a birthday party for Jesus! Parents please keep an eye out for separate emails and print outs with all the details for our Christmas party and gift exchange. God Bless, Merry Christmas

IMPORTANT DATES:

Christmas Concert
December 18th @ 1:30pm

Class Christmas Parties & Gift Exchange
Monday December 15th
Friday December 19th
(email to come with details)

PJ Day in Preschool
December 12th and 16th



From the classroom

Kindergarten News

With love from Mrs. Coombs

Dear Kindergarten Families,

We have now finished Term 1 and what a wonderful start to the school year it has been! Over the past few months, I've watched the children grow more comfortable and confident in their Kindergarten routines. From morning arrivals to classroom jobs and transitions between activities, the students are becoming increasingly independent and responsible. Their enthusiasm, kindness, and curiosity brighten our classroom each day.

With the end of Term 1, we concluded our study of China and enjoyed a fun-filled celebration day! Students practiced writing Chinese characters, created mini abacuses, sampled a variety of traditional foods, and played classic games. Their excitement and pride made it a wonderful way to wrap up the unit. We also spent time exploring the deciduous forest. Students learned about the plants and animals that live there and how the forest changes throughout the seasons. We compared different types of leaves, explored animal habitats, and discussed how forest animals prepare for winter. The children loved becoming little nature experts!

Term 2 has begun the start of our year-long unit on the Attributes of God. Over the next few weeks we will pause and turn our focus on the Christmas story. We are exploring Mary and Joseph's journey, the announcement of the Good News, the shepherds in the field, and traveling along with the wise men. This is always a meaningful and joyful part of our learning, and we look forward to sharing these stories together. I am also excited to share that we will celebrate **Jesus' birthday on December 19th**. More information about this special day will be coming soon.

Also this Term, we have begun our study of Israel, exploring its holidays, and learning about the history and traditions behind each celebration. As Israel features desert landscape it transitions nicely into our study of this arid environment. We will explore the plants and animals that live there, learn about special animal adaptations, and discover what life is like during the day and night in the desert.

We will also continue to focus on numbers 0–10. Students will keep practicing counting, recognizing, and writing numbers in many different ways—using hands-on manipulatives, drawings, games, and ten frames. Once these foundational skills are solid, we will begin decomposing numbers (taking them apart) and composing numbers (putting them together). We will also continue to compare numbers and start exploring simple addition and subtraction through playful and engaging activities.

Kindergarten is continuing to work hard on our handwriting and letters. We are nearing the end of the alphabet with only a few more letters to learn. Once we finish, we will be moving on to Unit 2 of FUNdations where they will learn to blend and segment sounds in words with three sounds. They will do this through the sound-tapping procedure. We will also work on our capital letters as well as start our letter of the week study. This is such an exciting time of year and I look forward to enjoying the holiday season with my students!



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From the classroom

First Grade News: Mrs. Plourde's Perspective

Hello families,

I can't believe that we're already into Term 2! We finished our study of China and deciduous forests. We are now beginning to study Israel by looking at its customs, seeing where Jesus walked by creating a map, and taking a closer look at the food related to some of the Jewish holidays. We're also studying desert biomes where we'll be taking a closer look at camels. We're also moving into new material in Math and FUNdations. Students are learning about some mental math strategies, doubles-plus-one and doubles-minus-one.

We're also working on a word bank of keywords or phrases that the students find the most helpful to solve Math word problems. In FUNdations, we've learned about new glued sounds, commas, quotation marks, and the suffix "s". We're also working on writing longer sentences. We've gone from five or six word sentences to eight word sentences! I'm so proud of all their hard work.

In Bible, I'm so excited to be talking about the meaning of Advent and going through the Nativity story in depth. Recently I've been working with the students on ruminating on scripture, by listening to a story from the Bible and then being silent for one full minute. In that minute I'm encouraging students to be praying and reflecting about the Scripture they've just heard.

We have a short time before Christmas vacation, but we're looking forward to Christmas Shoppe (today!) with our Timothy Groups and the Christmas program on December 18th at 1:30pm. I'm also hoping to have a class Christmas party the last week of school before break; stay tuned for details!

Mrs. Plourde



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From the classroom

Second Grade News: Miss Theodoss' Tales

Hello Parents,

I hope you all had an enjoyable Thanksgiving break! I can not believe that we are already 4 weeks into Term 2. The time goes so fast. At the end of Term 1, we wrapped up our study of China and the Deciduous Forest biome, and are moving to Israel and the desert for Term 2. Your kids have also finished Unit 4 of FUNdations where they were introduced to suffixes, and have started Unit 5 where they will begin learning how to decode multisyllabic words. This will really expand the words and books that they are able to read!

In Math, your students have solidified how to add double digit numbers without regrouping, and will be learning the lifelong skill of regrouping in Chapter 4 which we started this week. Over the next few weeks in Bible class, we will be going over the Nativity Story and the meaning of the Advent candles before Christmas break.

Since it is the Christmas season, 2nd grade has many fun events in their future! First, we have the Christmas shop during school today! This event really kicks off the holiday spirit for HCA. Next, we have the HCA Christmas Concert on 12/18 @ 1:30pm. Parents, please join us in the Sanctuary! Finally, 2nd grade will have their class Christmas party on 12/19. More information about that fun event will be coming soon.

Blessings,
Miss Theodoss



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From the classroom

Third Grade News: from the Desk of Ms. Rennie

Third grade continues to focus on learning and mastering our multiplication tables. Thank you for any support you can give your child by practicing them whenever you can. The students are learning so many new skills in FUNdations and Shurley Grammar. This year of 'reading to learn' is well underway!! We have also been learning about famous missionaries . Our focus in Science is now on deserts, as we begin our study of Israel and the culture of Afghanistan in Bible and History class. Our Middle School Math teacher, Mrs. Jorritsma's, daughter Meghan Mann, is planning to come share the beauty of this culture. She has worked previously with Afghan refugees through WARM in Worcester.

Lunches with Ms. Rennie have begun. It's an annual tradition for each student, one at a time, to have a homemade Italian meal with me. We meet in alphabetical order every Monday. Our "Me Stew" pot will go home on the Friday before for your child's luncheon, to fill up with all things about them: pictures, toys, games, stuffed animals, etc. They also decorate a poster all about them.

It's been so fun celebrating Advent with our 1st grade reading buddies. All praises to God as we anticipate His coming!! Keep an eye out for our Christmas party details, planned for Friday, December 19th.

I pray that you feel the presence of God during this blessed and sacred season.

Blessings,
Ms. Rennie



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From the classroom

Fourth & Fifth Grade News: A few notes from Mrs. Velarde

As we move through the season of Advent, we are taking time to reflect on the anticipation and hope in the events surrounding Christ's birth. Our Bible, Social Studies, and Science curriculum all tie together beautifully this term, as we center our learning on the country of Israel. We will look at daily life in Israel around the time Jesus was born, and we will focus on the climate, plants, animals, and challenges of daily life in the desert.

In Language Arts, we have completed NaNoWriMo. Looking ahead, we will transition to persuasive writing - with a fun Christmas twist! Students will write from the perspective of a person, animal, or object in the Christmas story. I look forward to seeing their creativity shine in a different way through this next project.

In Math, 4th grade is digging deeper into division, factors and fractions. 5th grade is working on dividing by 2-digit numbers and will soon be dividing with decimals.

This season will fly by, so I want to encourage everyone to take a breath and find time to be in the moment with Jesus - even as the details come flying fast and furious!

Speaking of details, there are two things I want to bring to your attention. The first is to be on the lookout for information regarding our Christmas party, and the second is information regarding our first field trip! It is a busy and exciting season of growth and change and I am grateful for your partnership.



From the classroom

Mr. Shea's Shenanigans: Middle School Language Arts 6th Grade Homeroom

Hello Middle School Families!!

Happy holidays! And Merry Christmas! We are moving into the Middle East in our study of world cultures. We will be focusing on the Gospels and Israel as we lead up to the Christmas break and Jesus's birthday. We will be looking at different types of literature found in the Bible: narrative, poetry, and discourse. We will be looking at the books of Ruth, Job, and Romans as examples of each of these literary types. Students will also be completing a book report on a Gospel of their choice.

After the Christmas break Grade 6 will be doing a quick dive into Syria and its culture. We will be looking at some of the key differences between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as part of this study without diving into the deep conflicts of the area. In Language Arts, we will be doing a jigsaw of the Middle Eastern work "Arabian Nights". Students will work on a special type of comic book called a four coma (an asian style comic) that will have them combining some interesting cultural elements from their previous studies from Term 1.

Please keep a lookout for emails regarding our Middle School Christmas party (details in Mr. Curtis' Corner) and a homeroom gift exchange in a few weeks. We will deliver details as soon as we have decided upon them in class.

That's it for now! Thanks for your partnership!

In Christ,

Jeremiah Shea
Middle School Language Arts
Grade 6 Home Room

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be on His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6



From the classroom

Mr. Curtis' Corner: Middle School Bible & History 7th Grade Homeroom

Can you believe we are already in the midst of the holiday season? We are only a couple of weeks away from Christmas. The excitement is certainly building in the Middle School, but there is much learning to be done before the celebrations begin! Middle School will be joining together in celebration of Jesus' birth on Friday, December 19th. This year, we would like to try and tie our celebration in with our study of cultures, so we are asking students/families to consider contributing a food item, tradition, or game that is a part of their family's culture. This will be a fitting way to ring in the Christmas season with our school community. Please stay tuned for a follow-up email and sign up for the Christmas party.

Currently, in World Geography, we have been studying the Middle East: its peoples, cultures, climates, as well as its rich and complex history. For such a small region of the world, it has been the centerpiece to a lot of human history. This past week, we have been taking a closer look at Israel and their technological developments in agriculture that have allowed it to create thriving farms in the Negev desert. We look forward to uncovering more fascinating discoveries as we continue our study of the Middle East and its unique cultures and peoples.

As we start of Term 2, our Bible class is taking a focus on the four gospels of Jesus. Yes, their similarities and differences, but also on how to better understand and apply them as a Middle School student. Each student in Middle School has selected a particular gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and is in the midst of reading through it in order to interact with God's Word and go a bit deeper. As they read through it, they are tasked with writing down the questions, comments, and observations that appear to them. Afterwards, they will write a reflection and summary. It is my hope that the Holy Spirit will assist them in seeing God's word and the stories of Jesus' life anew. I look forward to learning alongside the students as we all endeavor into the gospels during this Christmas season.

Merry Christmas and Maranatha,

-Mr. Curtis

P.S. Please enjoy a few photos from our annual Turkey Bowl, which happened the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. it was a great team building activity for grades 4-8.



WATCH OUT FOR AN EMAIL COMING SOON WITH SIGN UPS FOR THE CLASS CHRISTMAS PARTY!



From the classroom

Mrs. Jorritsma's Jam: Middle School Math

Our Middle School Pre-Algebra students have been hard at work this month!

Grade 7 students have been exploring linear expressions, learning how to identify, model, and simplify expressions using real-world examples. **Grade 6** students have been diving into ratios and rates, discovering how to compare quantities and solve everyday problems using proportional reasoning.

On Monday, November 24th, we celebrated Fibonacci Day! Leonardo Fibonacci was a mathematician who discovered a beautiful, God-designed number sequence often seen in creation. The sequence begins with 0 and 1, and each new number is the sum of the previous two ($0 + 1 = 1$, $1 + 1 = 2$, $1 + 2 = 3$, and so on). We explored where this pattern appears in nature—such as the spirals of a sunflower, pinecone, and seashell—and learned how the sequence connects to the golden ratio, approximately 1.618. As the numbers increase, the ratio between them gets closer and closer to this remarkable value, pointing to God's intentional design in the world around us.

Progress reports will be sent out before Christmas break.

As always, please remember to check your child's Google Classroom for important information regarding homework, missing assignments, lesson slides, rubrics, and notes from class. This is the best way to stay up to date on your child's progress and see what we're learning each day.

Blessings,

Cindy Jorritsma

Middle School Math Teacher



From the classroom

Mrs. Gordon's Musings: Middle School Health, Science, and Outdoor Ed

7th Grade Science & Health: Our studies integrate beautifully this term as we explore the human digestive system alongside nutrition. We frame this by considering the God-given place for food as both a source of fuel and fun in our lives. We focus on developing a healthy relationship with our food as well as an appreciation for it.

Students began their Exposure Experiments this week where they will expose themselves to a healthy food they dislike in as many forms as possible over the next 30 days to explore how much control they have over their preferences. For example, if they choose spinach, they will eat it raw, steamed, added to a smoothie, cooked in soups and sauces, and so on. In the past this has been a rich experience for students who invest effort. I so appreciate friends and family jumping in to support them in this worthwhile endeavor!

6th Grade Science: We continue our tour of the world's biomes with a closer look at deserts, beginning with the water cycle to better understand the distribution and movement of Earth's waters. Students will study plant and animal adaptations as well as begin considering some of the cultural implications of biomes on humans. This integrates nicely with their study of the Middle East in other classes this term, and I look forward to those lightbulb moments!

Outdoor Education: We recently enjoyed the culmination of our fire unit by building a fire together and roasting lunch over it. The kids participated so well in this activity, and I was proud of them! We also got to share some outdoor time with the annual Turkey Bowl the day before Thanksgiving break. It was a joy to referee that game and soak in all the fun and fresh air together!



"I wish you all a wonderful Advent season! I pray you make time for rest and play as you continue the good work set before you daily.

—Mrs. Gordon

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