

TERRA FIRMA

A STUDENT MAGAZINE | WINTER 2025



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PROVIDENCE

CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Terra Firma, solid ground, represents a metaphor for the vision and mission of Providence. We seek to teach and train young men and women to reach their highest potential in truth and character, to cultivate minds “well-made” not simply “well-filled,” from this solid foundation. Rooted in Scripture, students prepare to go forth in service to God and man.

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HEADMASTER ADDRESS

Living for Christ, dying to self

Ryan Evans, Headmaster



“When Christ calls a man, he bids him to die.” Those words from Dietrich Bonhoeffer summarize what is perhaps the biggest challenge of the Christian life. In his classic work, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer encourages fellow believers to pursue obedience and righteousness even amid trials. And trials he knew: Bonhoeffer was involved in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, was jailed, and executed just days before the allies liberated Europe.

His profound writing is best summarized by his thesis drawn from the Sermon on the Mount and Christ’s command to Christians in Matthew 16:24-25. “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’”

While the challenge to die to self is a lifelong struggle for all, the fruit is borne out in the wonderful benefits of service to others, sacrifice for the kingdom, and joyful gratitude that accompanies true Christian fellowship. Who hasn’t experienced exuberant joy that comes from bearing one another’s burdens through a tangible, benevolent act toward another? Yet the struggle is still against our own flesh, our own proclivities, our innate desire for pursuing what we want when we want it.

The Apostle Paul tells us that to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). The command to take up our cross daily is rarely accomplished through grand initiatives or heroic feats. Rather, they are accomplished through small steps that lead to growth and sanctification: daily Bible reading; deferring to another the choicest cut of meat at the dinner table; taking the garbage out; refraining from saying a harsh word that may be deserved; consistently arriving on time to work. Nobody celebrates such feats; in fact, often these things are not noticed by others. But such small decisions grow us into Christ’s disciples, and He uses them to sanctify us.

Christianity cannot be reduced to a system of rules, nor can our Christian growth be measured in a line graph. As any parent knows, our children mature with a few steps forward and often another one back. The line of a child’s sanctification is rarely linear. It’s the long game, and we celebrate baby steps. It helps us to remember that God works to chasten and grow us as parents as we shepherd our own children too – as we raise and train our children, God is training us to be more faithful, more dependent, more reliant on His grace.

Obedience to the call of Christ results in freedom and gratitude. Bonhoeffer writes, “To leave everything behind at the call of Christ is to be content with him alone, and to follow only him. By his willingly renouncing self-defense, the Christian affirms his absolute adherence to Jesus, and his freedom from the tyranny of his own ego.” May God grant us grace to daily die to self and to live in the glorious riches and liberating joy that result in following Christ.

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Introducing three new teachers to the Providence community

Natalee Bodea



Claire Payne
Secondary



Pamela Harwood
Secondary



Grace DeKerlegand
Grammar

Claire Payne attended The Master's University in Santa Clarita, California, studying Biblical counseling. As a teacher of Bible, history, and science, Miss Payne shares how her need of the Lord helped her get through her first year teaching. She hopes to instill humility in her students throughout the year, along with enthusiasm for learning. One word of encouragement she has for us is found in Philippians 1:6, "being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Fun and ready to work, Providence welcomes Pamela Harwood as a teacher of rhetoric and English. With a bachelor's degree from Liberty University and a masters from Regent University, Harwood brings broad theater experience to the table. She shares that the Lord has taught her the importance of prayer since starting her new career. Her hope for her students throughout the year is that they will learn to love knowledge and have a thirst for it as they mature into young adults. One Bible verse she shares with everyone is Philippians 3:13-14, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."

Grace DeKerlegand is one of the new grammar teachers at Providence this year. Born in Texas, Miss DeKerlegand went to Stephen F. Austin University with nursing in mind, but came back with a diploma in education. As a fifth grade teacher, she notices how a Christian community affects one's life greatly, making it vital to Christian living. Miss DeKerlegand's goal in the classroom for the rest of the year is to instill gratitude in her students, making them constantly aware of the blessings that surround them. As a heartwarming piece of advice, she points to Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God."



RISING ABOVE

Varsity volleyball's season of growth and determination

Paul Kloss

Varsity girls volleyball had a tremendous season this year, progressing to the state tournament for the first time since 2019. Volleyball is one of the most popular sports at Providence, even without a facility to practice in. Sports are a large component of life at Providence.

Athletics not only refines our body so we can better do God's work, but athletic challenges refine our minds. Team sports build camaraderie, friendship, and love among the athletes who participate. They also help us to work past our own personal barriers. Coach Elliott states, "We had some pretty big mental hurdles to overcome and a lot of trust to build from the ground up. Also, we had to figure out where to play individuals in a rotation that utilized their strengths and shored up their weaknesses so that the team as a whole was stronger than the individual parts."

As the season progressed, all these challenges were overcome by the girls' constant hard work and diligence. Coach Elliott remarked, "I saw players let go of self-seeking goals and put the good of the team over personal glory. They trusted the coaching staff and gave their all, working hard at whatever position they were asked to play. They improved communication, disciplined play, and developed indomitable spirits, facing taller and more experienced teams with courage and determination."



Odessa Kaufman, a team captain on the Highlanders' volleyball team, was asked to compare her team from the beginning of the season to the final match they played. She said, "At the beginning of the year, our team was skilled but not focused. We had the same heart and love for the game that we began with in August, but by November, we had become a strong, fiery, and skilled team. Over the season, we made mistakes, got back up, and adjusted accordingly. We bounced back again and again, earning our spot in the state tournament."



The girls played hard throughout the season and ended up in a playoff tournament. In the final match, they were exhausted but played with everything they had left. Despite a hard-fought battle, they lost the final match. Odessa continued, "Tournament play was certainly daunting, but it was more exciting than anything. While excitement often rattles athletes and makes them play nervously, our team was inspired to take our first game and run with the torch we were offered. Everyone was so thankful to have made it this far, and our mentality was to make God, our coaches, and ourselves proud—win or lose."



Even though they left the court without a trophy, they won a spiritual blessing ten times more important. They left as more virtuous and godly sisters in Christ. "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

PLAYING WITH PURPOSE

How athletics reveal - and build - character

Gabrielle Owens

Imagine playing a soccer game and after an unfortunate loss, your coach brings you and your team together to sing a hymn. This heartwarming story comes from a real middle school boys soccer game this year at Providence. The boys had just suffered a significant loss against a rival school and their coach, Tyler Hatcher, called them in to sing the Doxology.

In such situations, it's far more common to see players stalking off the field, venting frustration about the loss, or blaming teammates and referees. Even in professional sports, grown adults often throw tantrums over calls. These moments can reveal the harbored anger in our hearts or the fruit of the Spirit. The intense pressure of competitive sports tends to expose our true character.

Mr. Pedersen, a former collegiate volleyball player and coach, wisely notes, "A game is won or lost in your mind long before it's won or lost on the court." The heightened emotional state that competitive sports induce means that every reaction is often magnified. What might be a minor irritation in practice can become a monumental barrier in competition. Along with the pressure to win, athletes perform in front of fans—some cheering, some waiting for them to fail.

"Blocking out the noise and calming your mind when you're literally in a physically stressed state is extremely difficult," says Mr. Pedersen. Taking control of reckless emotions is crucial for players to succeed and reach their full potential. It's nearly impossible to perform at your best when drowning in negative emotions like anger and anxiety.

Instead of succumbing to a negative mindset, players must transform it into a growth mindset. Rising above the burden of negative emotions takes them one step closer to being what Mr. Nathan Morris calls, "the best teammate you can be."

One way to overcome anger is to remember that you represent others, not just yourself. Losing control reflects poorly not only on your character but also on your coaches, teammates, and most importantly, God. Having control means putting your best foot forward after mistakes and putting in full effort to beat the opposing team.

Anxiety is another common struggle that hinders athletes' abilities. The fear of letting people down, making mistakes that cost the game, or worrying about judgment is something many athletes face. As Christians, we can remember that God is in control of the things we can't control.

"The best players are the ones that love the game," says Mr. Pedersen. They always strive to be the best they can be, try to bring out the best in others, and elevate the team's mood. Such a mindset reveals the character of the athlete, showing how their faith in God works through them.

In moments of intense pressure, our true character is revealed. We either rise to the occasion or fall into the temptation of giving up hope or ceasing to give full effort. Playing for God and using our emotions as motivation instead of letting them deflate us allows us to grow both as athletes and as Christians.

AGREEING TO DISAGREE

How Providence cultivates Christian living despite differing ideas

Blake Tibbetts

It is third period on a Thursday in October. The senior class is sitting down for apologetics class in our new Harkness room in the East Building. Harkness is a student-led, collaborative, discussion designed to encourage critical thinking and promote deeper understanding of a particular topic. A student begins, asking a question that sparks a highly contended debate: Should Christians baptize babies? He argues that babies cannot confess faith, therefore they should not receive the sacrament of baptism. The teacher asks him to back up, suggesting that he first define baptism. A second student quotes Galatians 3:27 which supports that baptism places us in Christ, so baptized babies become covenant children before they confess faith. Yet another student mentions Acts 9, which supports that baptism follows regeneration. Still another student answers back with Acts 16, when Lydia and her household were baptized, inferring that

baptism is a corporate act rather than an individual one based on confessing faith. Another student brings up Acts 8, an example of baptism following a confession of faith. The teacher adds to the discussion with the Lutheran position that baptism saves using 1 Peter 3:21. With that, the class and the discussion come to an end.

Ask any parent of a Providence student how Providence stands out from other schools, and they will most commonly give you one of two answers. The first answer you might receive is academic excellence. The average SAT score for all schools across America in the spring of 2024 was 948. The school's average was 1224. Providence prepares its students for success by inspiring them to zealously pursue their academic goals. The second answer you might receive is that Providence infuses a Christ-centered influence into every class. St. Augustine wrote





in his book, *Confessions*, “All truth and understanding is a result of a divine light which is God Himself.” At Providence, we believe that without God, truth cannot exist. Our teachers make it their mission to find the truth of God in everything they teach our students.

Combined, these two factors alone mold children into Christians capable of critical thought and nuanced opinions grounded in scripture. Mr. Evans, our headmaster, says, “Our primary goal is to teach students to love what is lovely, to think and act biblically, and to pursue academic excellence in joyful submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.” Providence gives students the opportunity to go above and beyond the status quo of America’s public school system.

Although all Christians are one in the “One, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,” (catholic meaning ‘universal’) there are some doctrines that we disagree on, such as the time of life at which we baptize, how our churches ought to be governed, or the interpretations of the end times. Providence serves as a safe environment for healthy discussion regarding these topics. After all, the best way to develop Christian thought is to engage in a respectful debate with someone who disagrees with you.

For example, seniors in apologetics class are encouraged to think of fun rabbit trail questions throughout the week, and Mr. Hatcher, the apologetics teacher, leads a healthy debate on those topics on Thursdays. On one Thursday, we met around our new Harkness table and discussed the pedobaptism vs. credobaptism controversy. The senior class comprises an equal number of voices arguing on both sides. We immediately went to the scriptures to inform our interpretations, just like the Bereans in Acts 17:11. With the help of Mr. Hatcher, we found a total of ten passages that help define what baptism means, however we could not end the debate in agreement.

How can Christians with differing interpretations and doctrines coexist peacefully? Men of ages past have waged bloody war against others in defense of their views on such issues, so how can Providence students keep the unity of faith?

The first answer lies in a single word that is quite misunderstood today: tolerance. The modern definition of tolerance boils down to an acceptance of the false relativity of truth. In modernism, if Billy were to tolerate Sally, Billy would concede that although a

statement may be true for him, it is not necessarily true for Sally. Providence affirms that all truth is God's truth, therefore truth is knowable, absolute, and objective. Truth is true, no matter what the Sallys of the world say.

The proper definition of tolerance is a respect that one pays to another despite a disagreement. To bring our friends Billy and Sally back, proper tolerance is Billy saying to Sally that, although he disagrees with her, they can still coexist as brother and sister in Christ. We know that some of us are right, and some of us are wrong about baptism. As long as both sides base their view on scripture, we can hold to our convictions and live together in love.

The second answer comes with benefits to our faith: sharpening. Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." A senior student makes the claim that Christianity is a warring religion. Across the ages, millions of Christians have died fighting for their faith against those who are bent on snuffing out the flames of the gospel. However, the church's war lies more deeply within the spiritual realm. In preparation for spiritual war, one must understand why he believes what he believes. Debating other Christians is like sparring. In the end, both parties have a better understanding of their weapons. When we engage in doctrinal sparring, everyone involved must dig deep into the corollaries of their interpretations and the supporting evidence. Having someone to bounce ideas off serves as an intelligent motivator toward proper apologetics and exegesis.

The most important principle is that we hold true to the Word of God. In Acts 17:11, St. Luke praised the Bereans over the Thessalonians because they tested the claims of the Apostles against the scripture to tell if they were true. Christians are called to be biblically-minded in every claim or interpretation. The church is the body of Christ. Each part of a body serves a different purpose. In the same way, different denominations serve different purposes in the building up of the church.

God's plan for us is perfect, and trusting in His plan enabled us to leave the Harkness room at the end of that eventful Thursday discussion with our relationships intact. Perhaps they were even improved because our understanding of each other was expanded, and our current understanding sharpened.



LIFELONG LEARNERS

A journey through Providence's
classical education

Elias Poole



On the first day of school, a group of intimidated, if not downright scared, first grade students walk into the Providence building. Here they will begin their Providence education and, Lord willing, continue through to high school graduation. Students that attend from first grade through twelfth grade are affectionately known as 'lifers.'

Providence is a classical school, meaning that it divides its education into three parts: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Each part corresponds to a stage in the development of the kids. The Grammar stage gives students a strong framework of knowledge that will be built on. Logic is where students begin to make connections with the material they learn and are guided towards seeing the world in a Christian light. This work lays the foundation for the Rhetoric stage, where students learn to think critically about the material they interact with and form their own opinions, ultimately learning to defend their positions logically and respectfully.

Providence integrates the truths of the Christian faith into each phase of the Classical method. Lifer Alex Bravo-Jump said that a major theme throughout his Providence education was, "To love God and do everything thinking of Him and to imitate Christ."

From pre-k to 6th grade, students are in the Grammar stage of their education. Here, memorization is a key component of their educational development along with building foundational skills such as penmanship and how to construct a well-written paragraph. Students memorize a wide range of things from poetry to the 50 states to books of the Bible. Grammar students progress through the history of the world from creation to 2000 A.D.

The capstone of this memorization is the recitation of the 29 New Testament Sound Off (NTSO). Each NTSO is about a book in the New Testament with the first two being a summary of the entire Bible and the second, a summary of the New Testament.

This flows nicely into the Logic stage. As a lifer myself, the transition from Grammar to Logic is one of the most satisfying parts of my education. All the things you memorized up to this point are used to make connections. In

this phase, you begin to see how every discipline fits together into one cohesive whole. In seventh and eighth grade, students take logic classes that teach them to analyze and create their own arguments. Here students begin to make cohesive arguments and write longer papers. They also ‘restart’ to the beginning of civilization in world history and dive deeper into the events that took place including the philosophical developments that developed during different phases of human history. In Bible, students learn the core doctrines of the Christian faith in seventh grade, and take an Old Testament overview class in eighth grade.

In high school, students enter the Rhetoric stage and begin to learn how to incorporate the elements of rhetoric that Aristotle defined: logos, pathos, and ethos. These are logic, emotion, and authority, respectively. Students must learn how to integrate each of these elements into their papers to become polished writers. This all culminates in the final thesis which seniors write each year. These theses are approximately 15-page long papers that they present at the end of the school year. Seniors also take an apologetics class where they learn the reasons behind what they believe and how to defend their positions.

The penultimate high school experience occurs during the summer after their junior year. Rising seniors go on Grand Tour. This is a two-week trip that visits several historic cities throughout Europe. Excitement for this trip begins even in the lowest grades and builds throughout the Providence career. It is a unique opportunity to physically experience the places that most have only read about in books and explore the world where western civilization began.

As students move through each phase of their education, Providence strives to build up excellent Christians who are strong in the faith. Those same students that entered the hallways as nervous young kids, gain the skills they need to meet the challenges that await them when they walk those halls for the last time.





GUIDED BY VIRTUE

Five habits shaping grammar students

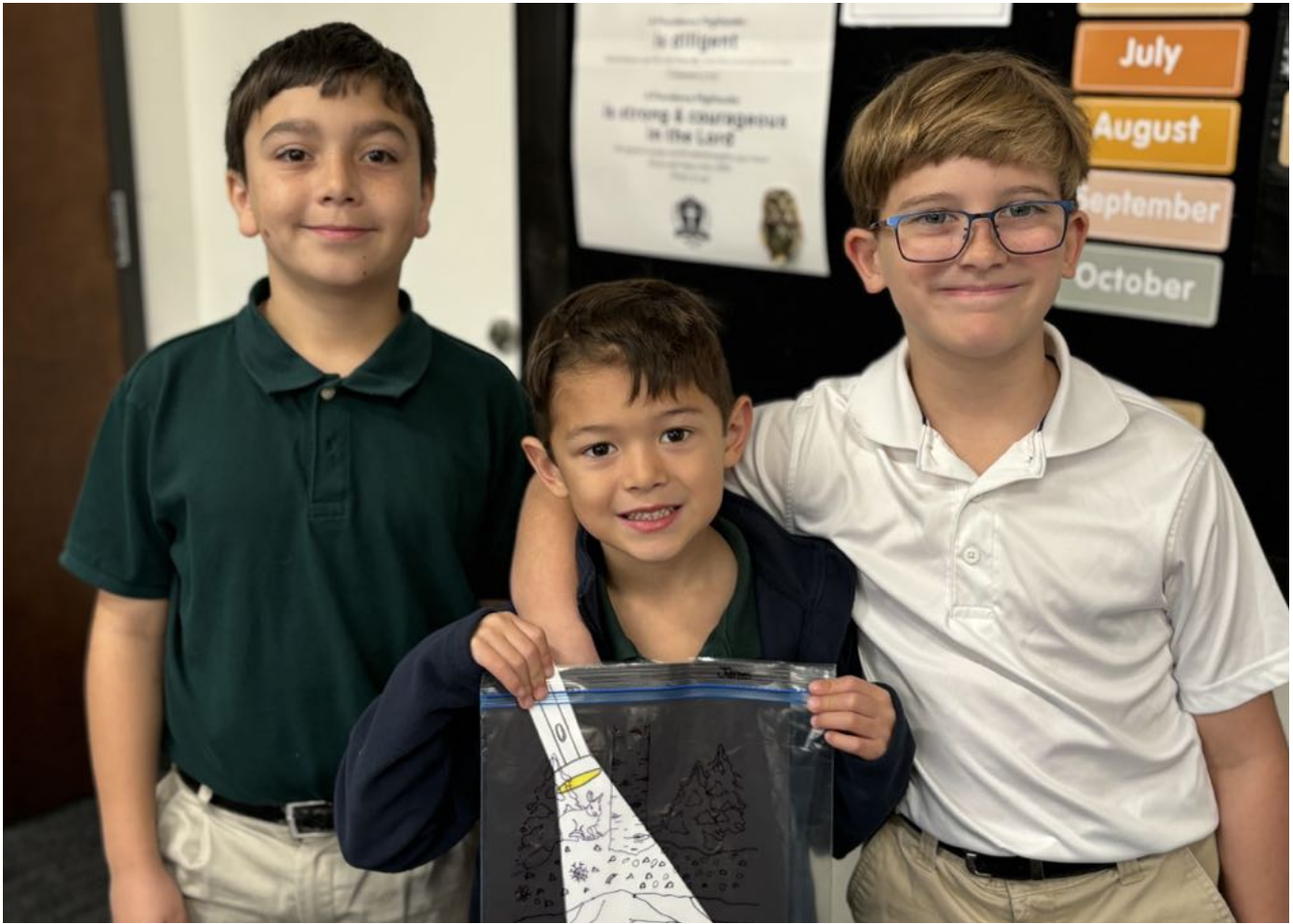
Viviana Buchler

Grammar habits form a central foundation for young students at Providence. Humility, Attention, Diligence, Attitude, and Excellence are the Five Habits on which the Grammar school is built. These habits are woven into the fabric of day-to-day life at school and go hand in hand with the core virtues embedded in Providence culture. They show how young brothers and sisters in Christ can model characteristics that honor God both inside and outside the classroom.

Students from pre-k to sixth grade practice these virtues to glorify God in their daily interactions with teachers and peers. Grammar habits do not aim for perfection but act as a compass guiding students

in their pursuit of excellence. Applying these habits offers many benefits. For instance, the habits teach students to receive guidance from teachers and peers, fostering humility and an attitude that honors God.

Practicing grammar habits allows students to honor those around them and, more importantly, honor God. When students model these habits in class, they exemplify Christian conduct, uplifting and encouraging each other academically and relationally. By practicing consistency in a God-honoring lifestyle, students represent Christian living and honor God with their works, words, and actions.



COUNTING BLESSINGS

Nurturing thankful hearts in young students

Christian Underwood

This year, the Grammar school continued the much-loved tradition of the Gratitude Journal. This cherished exercise is reserved for students in grades kindergarten through sixth. The Gratitude Journal is an exciting opportunity for young grammar students to express their thankfulness at the beginning of the school year, designed to help them remember the goodness of God.

The activity, which is optional for those who wish to participate, spans thirty days. Students who choose to take part receive a journal in which they write one thing each day for which they are thankful to God. At the end of the thirty-day period, students who complete the assignment are handsomely rewarded with a small bag of candy or a colossal lollipop.

The purpose of this endeavor is to cultivate grateful disciples of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to fuel the desire to serve the Lord with a thankful heart. This project allows young scholars to see firsthand how many blessings the Lord bestows upon His children, regardless of size or significance. By appreciating and expressing gratitude for both small and great things, students demonstrate the important virtue of humility.

In addition to fostering gratitude, the Gratitude Journal helps students develop a positive mindset and strengthen their faith. By reflecting on their blessings daily, they learn to focus on the goodness around them and build

a habit of thankfulness that can last a lifetime. This practice not only enriches their spiritual lives but also enhances their emotional well-being and relationships with others.

Parents and teachers have noted the positive impact of the Gratitude Journal on students' attitudes and behaviors. Many students become more mindful and considerate, showing greater empathy and kindness towards their peers. The journal also serves as a valuable tool for parents to engage in meaningful conversations with their children about the importance of gratitude and faith.

Overall, the Gratitude Journal is more than just an exercise—it's a transformative experience that helps young students at Providence grow in their faith, character, and appreciation for the world around them. Through this beloved tradition, students learn to live with a heart full of gratitude, honoring God in all that they do.





HOTSHOT

Cole Lyshol's unique path to firefighting

Von Sandeno

Providence students are equipped with a unique skill set that makes them capable of succeeding in practically any career they choose. Our school's mission is "to partner with Christian parents in educating their children, in the classical tradition, to think and act biblically and to pursue academic excellence in joyful submission to the Lord Jesus Christ." Cole Lyshol began attending Providence in seventh grade and graduated in 2021. He chose a particularly unique path that is far removed from the traditional classroom environment of Providence. Cole has found himself working as a wildland firefighter, wielding a chainsaw and pushing through the soot and smoke of fierce wildfires. Unsure about his future career, Cole began volunteering at Lake Roesiger Fire Department after graduating. He recounts, "I was sent to a training event for wildland firefighting and heard about 'hotshots,' elite wildland firefighters who work long hours and use hand tools and chainsaws to put out wildfires...I knew I needed to apply."

One may ask how a Providence education applies to intense and dangerous labor in the woods. Cole explains, "In my line of work, most people, at some point, will have to address a large group of firefighters and brief them on their mission." Cole remembers his senior thesis and the experience it gave him and says, "After graduating Providence, I am prepared to address a large group of peers and speak confidently." He also particularly values a lesson taught by Mr. Hatcher in twelfth grade apologetics: "Repentance precedes joy. If I am ever lacking joy, I have the tools and knowledge to gain it back." Cole's education has prepared him to think and act biblically with a solid academic foundation.

A Providence education profoundly applies to all aspects and avenues of Christian living, including wildland firefighting. Cole demonstrates this, saying, "Every other aspect of a capable firefighter can be attributed to work ethic, leadership skills, and good moral character, all of which are engrained in Providence students."

TRAGEDY AND TRIUMPH

Providence's bold production of *The Tragedy of Macbeth*

Jacob Alford



Macbeth is considered Shakespeare's bloodiest play. The supernatural saturates the pages with witches, ghosts, spells, and incantations that has led to the belief that the play itself is cursed. To this day the name "Macbeth" isn't uttered in the theatre and is referred to instead as 'the Scottish Play.'

Providence performed this Shakespearean tragedy for the annual high school play under the direction of Chad Lewis. Mr. Lewis is new to the Providence community and brings with him an extensive theatrical resume including work on Broadway.

Although it is a dark play, Mr. Lewis notes that it doesn't glorify evil, but instead "bring(s) to light the reality and doom of one who does not obey God's commands." The play shows what can happen when you fall down the path of sin. "Sadly, Macbeth does not receive the grace and mercy of being alive in Christ."

Macbeth's greed and desire for power is sparked when he's confronted by three witches who prophesy that he will

be king of Scotland. His greed is later fueled by his wife's unbridled ambition, leading him down a never-ending spiral of murder and tyranny that he cannot escape.

Blake Tibbetts masterfully portrayed the titular character. Blake describes the character as a being "motivated by the prophecies of the witches, which cause him to kill the king in the second act." Tibbetts notes that Macbeth's, "[Desire] to maintain his newfound power motivates him to more killings." At the end of his reign of terror he is brought to justice by the worthy Macduff, played by Micah Wilson.

The tragedy of Macbeth is that he never receives the saving grace of God. Mr. Lewis points out that in one scene, a doctor says of Lady Macbeth that only 'the grace of Grace' can heal her. "It's important for students to see what happens on the other side of grace." says Mr. Lewis.

In addition to challenging subject matter, the play also introduced new elements to the Great Hall performance. Stage combat with choreographed sword fights is called

for and a whole new set of lighting was implemented. Several fight-scenes were choreographed that moved through the audience as well as on the stage itself. Specialized lighting instruments were used to heighten the themes and create unique looks for specific moments throughout the play.

As for the 'curse?' Lighting technician, Mr. Pedersen, became very sick and wasn't able to run any of the actual performances! Providentially, he had already hung, focused, and programmed the cues which allowed Mr. Lewis to fill the gap. In the end, the show was a rousing success.





EPIC RETREAT

Slip-n-slide, watermelons, and Olympic glory!

Every year, students journey to the picturesque Lakeside Bible Camp on Whidbey Island for the secondary retreat. Seniors created a "Providence Olympic Games," a series of games played on a slip-n-slide and featuring watermelons for a smashing good time! Through fun-filled activities and meaningful gatherings, the retreat fostered community, faith, and camaraderie, truly making it an unforgettable experience. This tradition continues to strengthen bonds and create cherished memories year after year.





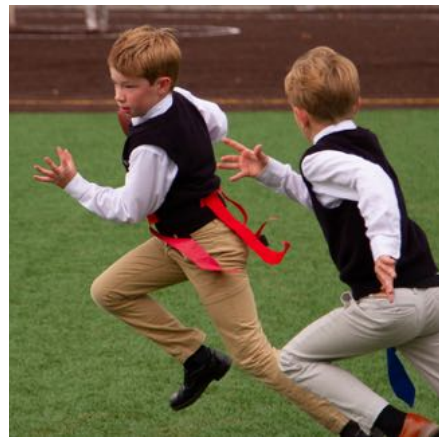
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Varsity men's soccer team placed fourth in the 1B/2B state championships



Providence secondary students at retreat