

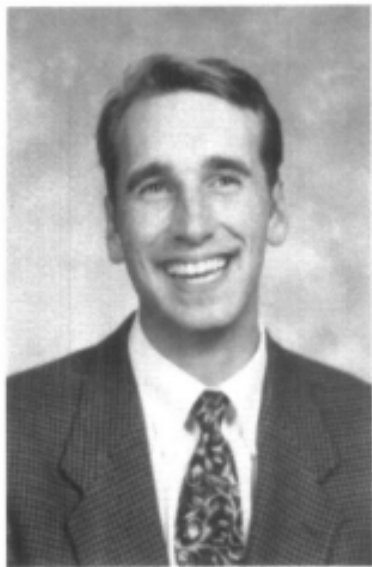
Shaped by Our Relationships

Working together to serve Calgary Christian School

by Bill Lindemulder

My relationship with Calgary Christian School began in 1995 when I began teaching at CCS, and my family's relationship with Christian schools goes back even farther. My parents were part of the Dutch immigration wave to Alberta in the 1940s and 50s. When these immigrants settled into a new area, among their first priorities were to establish a church and to ensure their children had a Christian education. These new Canadians were accustomed to government funded Christian Schools in The Netherlands, and not finding schools that met their needs, they decided to start their own private Christian schools: Lacombe in 1945, Edmonton in 1949, Lethbridge in 1962, Calgary in 1963, and Red Deer in 1968. These schools were built and governed by the parents and therefore established a direct relationship between the staff and stakeholders that is still evident today. In 1967, Alberta became the first province in Canada to provide private schools with government funding. This occurred directly due to the efforts of Christians who supported these private Christian schools. This relationship between the Alberta government and Christian schools allowed many more families to provide their children with a Christian education and made it economically feasible for more communities to start Christian schools.

By 1995, my whole life had been shaped by these schools, having graduated from Edmonton Christian School, King's University College (Edmonton), and Calvin College (Michigan). As a student, I didn't realize how important the relationships between the various stakeholders were, but over the past 26 years, my experiences as a teacher, coach, administrator, board member, and (currently) a parent have taught me that these relationships are crucial for any Christian school to succeed.



'95-96 CCS Yearbook

I loved being a teacher. It was one of the most rewarding and enjoyable careers I have ever had. One of the more challenging aspects of being a teacher is maintaining relationships. Our teachers entertain, comfort, and discipline students; they teach curriculum as well as life skills; they are coaches, mentors, and sometimes therapists; they change hats so many times in a day, it's no wonder some lose all their hair (if you see me you'll get that one)! In addition to relationships with students, teachers communicate and interact daily with parents, other teachers, and administrators. Inevitably there are going to be times when these relationships hit rough patches, and these times are when direct lines of communication between students, parents, teachers, and administrators are most important. As Christians we have Biblical guidance in how to deal with these conflicts, and when used, these relationships are most often strengthened. Teachers are the lifeblood of any school, and the fact that all our teachers are also followers of Christ is what makes CCS such an amazing place for our children.

Serving as a board member at CCS from 2016-2019 gave me further insight to an entirely different aspect of the inner workings of the school. In 2008, CCS entered into a partnership with Palliser School Division. Under this agreement, Palliser would fund and deliver education to the students of CCS, while the Society would continue to own, manage, and maintain the property and facilities of the school. The school Society would further be charged with student admissions and ensuring that Calgary Christian school maintained its Christian content throughout the curriculum. Our relationship with Palliser is often misunderstood. I experienced firsthand the collaboration between Society Staff, the Board, and Palliser representatives. We worked directly together to source funding for educational resources, facilities, and special needs; as a team we interviewed and hired teachers as well as administrators. It was also enlightening to discover that the Palliser School Division is very intentional about CCS being a Christian school. They understand and respect the very important role the society plays in the success of CCS. This relationship has allowed Calgary Christian School to flourish and also maintain its traditional Mission and Vision for Christian education.



For the past eight years, I have had the privilege of experiencing CCS as a parent. Seeing the care and dedication of our teachers has reminded me again and again why CCS is the only school my kids will ever attend. In addition to this, our relationships within our community is what really makes CCS so special. As someone who sometimes takes this for granted, I am reminded of this when I meet new families and they share how they have been welcomed into this community, and how much CCS has been a blessing to them. As parents it is important to be reminded that, even though we pay money for our children to attend CCS, we are not 'customers' purchasing a product. We are all stakeholders in the same common goals: teaching our children to understand the whole world from a Christian worldview, helping them develop their gifts to serve God and their communities, and working together to make the world a better place.

Throughout the years, and especially when I was a kid, I recall families who had to make huge sacrifices to not only afford the tuition for their children's education, but also donate to the school so that it could continue to provide quality education and expand to accommodate more students. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to those parents who came before us, so we can provide a Christian education for our children as well.

The past two years have been challenging for our school in a number of ways. I believe that our relationships have suffered by not being able to experience community with each other in a more meaningful way. And yet, alongside God's faithfulness, the hard work and dedication of the teachers, administrators, executive director, and society staff have enabled CCS to continue to flourish and grow. Very soon we will once again be able to meet with teachers and staff in person, walk the halls and classrooms with our children, and gather as a community to attend fundraisers and seasonal concerts. It's been 26 years since I was first welcomed into the CCS community, and I know there are going to be many more years ahead. I look forward to seeing what God has in store for our school as together, we learn, to shape God's world.

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