

Cross and Crown Lutheran Church first opened its doors to preschoolers in 1972 under the name of “*Little Friends Preschool*”. With a well-established emphasis on early childhood development, Little Friends Preschool was expanded in 1984 to include kindergarten. In 1986, the name was changed to “*Cross and Crown Lutheran School*” to accommodate the growth of an elementary school when first grade was added. Subsequent grades were added each year until the middle school was completed in 1997. For the next 11 years, CCLS operated as a preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

In June of 2008, demographic and economic conditions that had been building over the years required that we scale back to a preschool-1<sup>st</sup> grade. The downsizing was devastating to staff and families alike. We went from a staff of 34 to 7. An enrollment of 168 was now barely 40. Understandably, some of those who took it the hardest were the ones who remained. It was like a death in the family. Where once there was a bustling of sound and activity, there now was emptiness and silence. Four of the seven remaining staff members had been teaching at CCLS over a decade, and two of them over two decades. Loyalty and devotion ran deep, as did grief and sadness.

We spent that summer selling off our middle school, inventorying the 11 empty classrooms, and scrambling to pull together for the coming 2008-2009 school year. Our long-range plan was to rebuild through the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, so in the fall of 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade was added back. In addition, a new Toddler program was developed to meet the needs of our families with very young children. In the fall of 2010, we expanded to include 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, as we worked toward rebuilding, it became apparent we needed to halt the energy being used to add a 4<sup>th</sup> grade and take a deep look at ourselves. We needed to go back to our roots and firm up our foundation before any further marketing of our grade expansion.

An extremely important piece in the development of our new direction was equipping the staff and teachers to embrace the mission by having them contribute to the process. As stated previously, sadness and grief permeated our campus for months following the downsizing that first year. Including the staff in the foundational rebuilding would aid in the healing of the school climate.

As we struggled to rebuild, we had overlooked the obvious. Not only were our website, brochures and logo outdated, our Mission, Vision, and Philosophy Statements no longer expressed our current views, nor

represented who we now were. In fact, no Vision Statement existed, and the current Philosophy Statement only pertained to the preschool. Our parent and employee handbooks needed to be redone, and our Staff Community Covenant reworked. However, the most grievous misrepresentation of all was the mention of Christ, fifth in a listing of ten “bullets” on our brochure. Clearly, Christ was not the center of our school.

Upon returning home last July from my week with the Van Luenen Fellowship, I was energized with a new enthusiasm to move ahead toward rebuilding our school’s foundation. Our first step was to put Christ at the focal point of everything we did. All existing brochures and handbooks, until we could formally rewrite them, were reordered putting “Christ” and “spiritual” first whenever a listing was given. Our theme for the coming year was set as *“Cross and Crown, a community of grace”*. We then formed a group which would revamp our website. Chapter 9 of Marketing Christian Schools by Dan Krause and Bob Rogalski became invaluable. This new “Website Committee” consisted of three school board members, two teachers, and one parent, who was a website designer. Immediately we devised a *“Website Content Review Process”* whereby the copy for the website was delegated to the various members of the committee, which in turn fell into the hands of our devoted staff and teachers. It was at this time the foundational blocks, our Mission, Vision, and Philosophy Statements were written or rewritten.

### ***Mission Statement***

*At Cross and Crown Lutheran School we offer challenging scholastic programs. We provide a nurturing environment where children can experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through trusting relationships, prayer, worship, and God’s Word. We are a ministry of Cross and Crown Lutheran Church, whose mission is to invite, grow, and serve our community.*

### ***Vision Statement***

*At Cross and Crown, we strive to nurture our students to become living examples of God’s love and grace. This educational experience will prepare them to challenge the world and change it for Christ our Lord.*

### ***Philosophy***

*Cross and Crown Lutheran School utilizes a curriculum strong in academics and integrated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our goal is to bring the Word of God into the lives of our students. We focus on the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social areas of growth, developing the skills and knowledge necessary to become capable, caring Christian citizens.*

Along with the development of the website was the “branding” of our school. In the summer of 2010, throughout the school, sixteen different CCLS logos were counted on as many objects. They ranged from 20 years of T-shirts and stationery to coffee mugs and stickers. A single logo and new tag line, *Developing Responsible Christian Citizens*, were created to re-brand Cross and Crown Lutheran School. We then designed new banners and had stationery and business cards printed as well.

The development of a new website also demanded we create other documents never used before in our marketing plan. These included a *Welcoming Letter* from the administrator, a *Minor Photo Release Form*, a *Visitor Contact Form*, *Your Child’s Day* for all grade levels, and *Staff and Board Member Biographies*.

While writing the copy for the website, the importance of a school-wide brochure with our current information was examined. The website was to provide initial information to prospective families, but a brochure of informational depth was needed. This led to exploring the suggestion by Bob Rogalski, to create curriculum overviews, which in turn would provide the specific program or grade level information requested by serious prospective families. Samples of overviews in chapter 3 of Marketing Christian Schools were our models. Teachers compiled curriculum information for their program or grade level. This information in turn was added to School-wide information, creating one, cohesive unit. No longer were we a divided entity of preschool and elementary school. We were united under Christ, and our mission, vision, and philosophy were the same. These overviews were ready to be placed, along with our admission papers, inside the newly created school brochure.

Designed by our school parent, the school brochure is very unique. In actuality, it is a tri-fold 9” X 12” folder, with a pocket to store 8 ½ X 11” papers, namely our admission papers, curriculum overviews, and Preschool and Elementary tri-fold brochures. Under Bob Rogalski’s advice, we spared no expense. Our business card tucks neatly into a pre-cut slot. We now have an attractive, inclusive informational packet, difficult for a prospective family to misplace.

The learning curve for this project has been exponential. Personally, I have been taken to places technologically I never would have thought possible for a teacher who still looks for the ditto machine in the staff room. I am grateful for the cohesiveness this project has developed among our staff. Around the campus, there is now a common sense of purpose, direction, and unity not felt for many years. I am also grateful for the support of our school board and pastoral leadership, without which, this project would not have been able to encompass such an extremely broad scope. Our parent website committee member has been phenomenal in her expertise and professional guidance, as has Bob Rogalski, my consultant, who was always a phone call, (and a chapter), away. Most importantly though, relying on Christ, making Him the center of everything we do, and searching for His will in our redevelopment process has been essential to the rebuilding of Cross and Crown Lutheran School.

Throughout this process of restructuring and rebuilding, we have felt God's hand guiding our efforts. This past year our preschool reached capacity, our elementary program steadily grew, and the school staff and finances became stronger than ever. We believe it is God's will that Cross and Crown Lutheran School continues to serve families in this community who desire a solid Christian education for their children. Our long-term goal continues to be adding a grade level per year until CCLS once again offers a full elementary program, and we are moving forward on a firm foundation in faith toward that vision.

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