

Let Your Light Shine:

A 2020 Vision for Beacon Christian School

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Introduction

In July 2015, I began the Van Lunen Fellows Program, an executive management program designed for Christian School leaders. The program consists of a week at Calvin College in Michigan in the summer, a week in Arizona in January, and a final week back at Calvin the following summer. The program provides top level executive training and has been very helpful to me personally and, I hope, for the school which I presently serve, Beacon Christian School.

As part of the program, we are asked to complete a project for our school. My project comes from a vision of what I believe Beacon Christian can and should be. Beacon Christian School is surrounded by a supportive and dedicated support community. But the school is not far removed from a serious financial crisis that put the sustainability of the school at risk. The school has stabilized and faith in the school has been re-established, but there is still much work to do.

During the fall of 2015, Henry Contant, VanLunen Faculty, conducted a board governance retreat at Beacon. In many ways, that retreat was pivotal in helping determine the next steps for our school. That retreat crystallized for me and the board that we needed to do two things before embarking on any further path. The first is that we needed to re-evaluate and refine our governance structure. The second was that we needed to have a clear and dynamic strategic plan.

We have also been discussing at a board and committee level the need for going through a capital/debt reduction campaign to eliminate some long term debt. In consultation with the Christian School Foundation (Henry Koorneef, Michael Van Pelt) a new perspective of the school's present financial situation was understood. Henry Contant's words of "make sure your house is in order before you engage a community in a campaign" also echoed through our heads. The board and administration then focused its attention towards strategic planning, in conjunction with Ray Hendriks of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. This report summarizes this work.

Characteristics of Beacon Christian School in 2020

- An educational institution that is renowned for being:
 - Distinctively Christian in all aspects
 - Modern and research based
 - Inclusive
 - Beautiful, well maintained and modern facilities and grounds.
 - High standards of professionalism amongst staff and faculty.
 - A place that is bustling with activity, seven days per week, twelve months of the year.
 - Debt free.
 - A school that has moved from “Maintenance” to “Mission”.
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Mission

The mission of Beacon Christian School is to equip students to impact communities by serving Christ

Vision of Learning

Distinctively Christian

First and foremost, Beacon is a school that acknowledges that Jesus Christ is Lord of all things. Jesus is Lord in our weekly chapels and daily devotions. Jesus is Lord of the restorative justice principles that guide all the relationships at school. Jesus is Lord of the ten through-lines that suggest what it means to be a follower of Christ in every area of life.

A school for the 21st century

Beacon trains its students to be lights in **today's** world, equipping our children not only with the "3 R's" of Reading, 'Riting, & 'Rithmetic, but also the **Four C's** of Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity. With research-based educational practices and the finest academic resources at our fingertips, we offer the best possible experience for all students attending Beacon.

Inclusive

We are actively pursuing how Beacon can become a more inclusive school. We recognize the diversity that exists amongst God's children. We desire Beacon to be a school for all, realizing that each child that comes through our doors is a unique creation of the one true God—made in His image—regardless of ability, ethnic background, or socio-economic status.

BEACON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**MISSION FOR LIFE:**

Our Program is woven together by ten threads called Through-lines. These concepts guide the development of students as God is revealed to them in all things. Through-lines provide answers to the question, “How shall we now live?”

At Beacon Christian, we strive to be:

- Community Builders
 - God Worshippers
 - Idol Discerners
 - Servant Workers
 - Order Discoverers
 - Beauty Creators
 - Creation Enjoyers
 - Justice Seekers
 - Earth Keepers
 - Image Reflectors
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Steps to Achieve a 2020 Vision for Beacon Christian School

Phase 1 - Recent Past (2011-2015) - Redefine, stabilize, and re-establish

- redefined Beacon's Vision for Learning (see above)
- began use of Throughlines and the Teaching for Transformation (TfT) model
- began weekly chapels led by staff and outside speakers
- introduced school uniform policy
- hired Facility Manager and Advancement Director
- maintained annual giving and events
- stabilized tuition rates and increased opportunities for assistance
- committed to annual operational surpluses
- reduced debt and eliminated reliance on a line of credit for operations (see appendix A)

Phase 2 - Create and Adopt Strategic Plan (The Present)

- Identify Key Strategic Areas
 - Create plan in consultation with board, staff, committees and other stakeholders
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Phase 3 - Implementation and Outcomes (The Future)

1. School Program

- Review/Adopt Student Support Services guiding document (fall 2016)
- Create and implement a five-year curriculum review cycle (winter 2016)
- Complete School-wide Technology Plan (Summer 2017)
- Review/diversify use of specialist teachers in art, music, PE, etc. (Fall 2017, 2018, 2019)
- Create and launch Beacon Summer Camps (Summer 2017)

2. Governance

- Adopt a new organizational chart built on clear structure and lines of accountability (Spring 2016)
 - Review and revise board committee mandates based on newly adopted chart (Fall 2016)
 - Review board recruitment process (Winter 2016)
 - Establish Board self-evaluation (Spring 2016)
 - Develop and implement board education and orientation materials (Spring 2017)
 - Establish review cycle for Senior Administrator and all paid staff (Fall 2016)
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3. Finance

- Develop Financial stewardship education seminars within the Christian community (Fall 2016)
- strengthen partnership with the Christian School Foundation (CSF) and Christian Stewardship Services (CSS) (ongoing)
- Conduct a review of the budget process with a report of recommendations for the future (Fall 2016)
- Create a three-year budget, including capital expenditures (Spring 2017)

4. Fundraising/Development

- Review present Beacon fundraising initiatives (Winter 2017) and their effectiveness in regards to:
 - care for donors spiritual well being
 - thanking, receipting, and diversifying donor base
 - general effectiveness
 - limit number of asks to donors and families in a given year
 - Conduct estate planning seminars in conjunction with CSF and CSS (Spring 2017)
 - Create and offer Christian education opportunities (workshops, seminars, etc.) for adults ...recognize that the best development tool is well cared for and educated families (Fall 2017)
 - Develop a volunteer recognition and incentive program (Summer 2017)
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BEACON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**5. Recruitment**

- Develop/refine Beacon ambassador program to aggressively recruit new families from a variety of churches (Fall 2016)
- Identify educational initiatives that are the most effective promotion tools (Spring 2017)
- Create annual reports tracking reasons that families enrol (alumni, advertising, word-of-mouth referral, etc.) (Spring 2017)

6. Communications

- Provide a mechanism for feedback of all stake-holders (Fall 2016)
- conduct inventory of all current communications (internal and external) (Winter 2017)
- develop a comprehensive and distinctive communication plan (Summer 2017)

7. Facilities

- Complete building assessment for future costs (June 2016)
 - Increase accessibility (Elevator, Doors) (June 2017)
 - Complete renovation of gym and kitchen areas (August 2019)
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Appendix A

Financial Stability

In under five years, Beacon Christian School has reduced its debt load by \$2 million. This has been done with excellent annual fundraising and conservative budgeting, resulting in substantial operational surpluses. Donors have also quietly stepped forward with significant capital donations. All of this has translated into stable tuition rates for new and existing families and increased opportunities to offer assistance in the form of bursaries to those who need it.

Description	As of August 31, 2011	As of May 31, 2016
Line of Credit	\$402,265	\$0
Bank Loan	\$142,370	\$0
Member Loans (operating)	\$366,500	\$232,500
Member Loans (capital)	\$468,000	\$309,000
Mortgages (CRC Extension Fund)	\$3,500,000	\$2,571,000
Capital Lease	\$227,065	\$0
Total	\$5,106,200	\$3,112,500

Appendix B

Enrolment History

Beacon Christian School (formerly known as Calvin Memorial Christian School) has been in existence as a Christian elementary school for over 55 years in St. Catharines. There are some years of the school's existence where data was not readily available, As this chart suggests, there have been significant enrolment challenges in the last decade. We have also seen positive enrolment growths in the last three years after a long, steady decline.

Year	Enrolment
1967-68	335
1974-75	440
1979-80	470
1980-81	473
1981-82	434
1982-83	424
1983-84	392
1984-85	371
1985-86	371
1986-87	373
1987-88	375
1988-89	371
1989-90	335
1990-91	346
1991-92	335
1992-93	263

Year	Enrolment
1993-94	255
1994-95	255
2003-04	279
2004-05	264
2005-06	252
2006-07	247
2007-08	264
2008-09	252
2009-10	238
2010-11	210
2011-12	174
2012-13	161
2013-14	162
2014-2015	174
2015-2016	183
2016-2017	190*
2017-2018	
2018-2019	