



OCSTA News

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



- FINISHING WELL

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. II Timothy 4: 5-8

This is the time of year when many of you likely feel that you are on a train that is moving very fast towards that final destination: the end of the school year. Not only do you experience the last tests, exams, papers, sports, assemblies, activities, and field trips, but for a number of you, this is the season for saying goodbye to your school communities. For some of you, this is a final goodbye as you retire or as you go to other schools or careers.

I have had and will continue to have the pleasure of speaking at many retirement celebrations this spring. When I hear the stories of appreciation, hard work, and vision, I am encouraged by the men and women who have taught and led for so many years in our Christian schools. It is good to celebrate those who have dedicated their lives to the furthering of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in education. One of the secrets that many of these people have learned is "how to finish well," and I wonder if we all need to reflect on that great gift.

Many questions come to mind at the end of a career or time of service with a school community. You may recognize that, particularly after a few years, memories of the students you have taught begin to fade. Your legacy (or at least what you thought was your legacy) is picked up by others and moves to a new place. This is both a joy and a sorrow. Saying goodbye to the class, the staff, or the community into which you have poured yourself is another stage of letting go. And the questions surface: *Is it really time for me to move on? Have I finished well? What will the Lord surprise me with next? What should I be busy with now?* These questions take time to work through, and that time, for many, is a process tinged with some sense of grief.

What I have discovered is that finishing well takes great courage, great risk, and great friends/colleagues. It takes great courage to continue to put forth your best at the end of a career because doubts about whether it still matters often take root. It takes great risk to open up your files, your work, yourself to the next person who will undoubtedly do things differently than you did. And it takes great friends/family/colleagues not only to support you as you transition but to love you even when you are no longer the principal or the teacher or whatever other title that you have used to define yourself. These friends, family, and colleagues are also needed for one very important piece of the journey. They are needed for honesty, crucial conversations, and advice in advance as you are making those decisions to finish. I believe we all need at least a few trusted people in our lives who will dare to ask the tough question of when to leave a career.

Finishing well means pulling your weight until the last day, continuing to learn and grow and contribute. Finishing well means ensuring that you continue to be focused on others rather than on yourself. Finishing well is an attitude of service and support even when that is a sacrificial and painful state to be in.

So whether you are a new educator just finishing your first year (yeah!), a young educator finally feeling like you are grounded in your teaching, a mid-season educator who is wondering if this is all there is, or a well-seasoned educator who is looking at the future and wondering when your time ought to be up, be assured that everyone has their ups and downs. Everyone wonders whether they really have measured up this school year, and everyone looks forward to and needs a break in routine for reflection and refreshment.

May God grant you the strength to finish well this season! May God bless and keep you in the many decisions that you need to make before the end of this school year. For all those who are retiring or thinking about it, may God grant you grace and peace and excitement as you move into a new phase of your life!

OCSTA wishes God's encouragement to all the retirees!!! (see page 2)

May our Lord Jesus Christ be honoured by each of us wherever we serve!

Shalom, Diane

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HOSPITALITY AND MEMBERSHIP - WE NEED YOU!!!

As organizations continue to grow and learn in the 21st century, the board of OCSTA has made it their mandate to take stock of its organization, membership, and services. The board (through the Promotion and Membership Committee) has engaged a consulting firm, Compass Creative, to plan for the future. It has been noted that communications have changed dramatically in the last number of years, as well as the way that services are planned and coordinated. Websites, e-newsletters, online communities, PDFs, email are the wave of the future and the design and delivery of such things needs an artistic, engaging flavour. But the first step toward developing our organization is to hear from the membership. In the next few weeks, a **short online survey for OCSTA members** will be available for the membership to help your professional organization continue to grow and learn. Your staff OCSTA reps will be getting this information to raise the profile of the survey, but each member will also receive an email to encourage feedback.

When the board started on this path of asking ourselves “Who are we?”, we recognized that there are many educators who may be interested in being part of a larger community of Christian educators who are asking the big questions of what it means to be a Christian AND an educator. Redeemer University College and Tyndale University College have both requested an official “student” membership for their fourth or fifth year education students. We have become aware that encouraging young, new educators to be a part of our community is important. Additionally, our organization is being asked whether Christian educators from other systems (besides the OACS community) might be a part of our professional learning community. Educators have requested information on how to join our email lists, join our *Educators Helping Educators* online communities, and receive our “OCSTA NEWS” and the *Christian Educators Journal*. As a result, we are looking at expanding the forms of membership to include:

Student Membership—Redeemer and Tyndale

Christian Educators in other systems—Basic Membership

Christian Educators in other Christian systems—Associate Membership

Christian Educators in OACS Schools—Full Membership

One other interesting aside: The internet is an amazing gift for connection. In the last few weeks, OCSTA has been in contact with Fred Buyinza, leader of an association of 755 Christian educators in Rwanda. We have exchanged emails and he comments,

Teachers play a big role in shaping the future, we do it through holding conferences annually, group discussions on how to promote Unity, Uniqueness, Services and Stewardship in all subjects, we have National committees where each province is represented, Provincial committees and we are moving towards forming District committees, we believe in networking with other Christian teachers to share the experiences.

We look forward to continued dialogue with Fred and his educators. God breathes His Holy Spirit through our world and we praise God for the opportunities to partner and encourage other Christian educators halfway around the world!!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING OCSTA MEMBERS WHO ARE RETIRING IN JUNE:

Audrey Reitsma (Brantford Christian School)
 Joanne Brelsford (Stratford & District Christian School)
 Karen Gerritsma (Beacon Christian Elementary School, St. Catharines)
 Ann Evans (Orillia Christian School)
 Sonya Horzelenberg (Hamilton District Christian High School, Ancaster)
 Dick Van Dyk (Hamilton District Christian High School, Ancaster)
 Mary Guldemon (Calvin Christian School, Hamilton)
 Margaret Bierma (Timothy Christian School, Owen Sound)
 Mary Ann Visser (John Knox Christian School, Oakville)
 John Lunshof (John Knox Christian School, Oakville)
 Garry Schubert (Heritage Christian School, Lindsay)
 Steve Bylsma (Trenton Christian School)
 Henrietta Hielema (Woodland Christian High School, Breslau)
 Jane Vander Wilp (John Knox Christian School, Brampton)
 Wendy Vyfvinkel (John Knox Christian School, Brampton)

Each retiree served his/her school community faithfully and we wish them all an abundance of God's blessings as they wrap up this phase of their lives and begin a new one. We pray that they find a great deal of fulfillment, satisfaction, and shalom.

SHARING STORIES OF REMARKABLE EDUCATORS - YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT, GOD?

(submitted by Jim Hosmar, grade 6 teacher at Calvin Christian School, Hamilton)

The Promotion and Membership Committee has commissioned this series of articles celebrating those educators, leaders, and mentors in our lives who have encouraged and led us in the art and craft of education. This series is part of an overall theme for the OCSTA NEWS wherein we are hoping to be a "community of gratitude" looking at the past, celebrating the present, and anticipating the future. If you would like to share stories of remarkable educators who have influenced your life, please contact the OCSTA office.

Teaching was the last profession I had in mind growing up. My mother was my grade 2 teacher. I thought it was awful, and I think my mother would agree that I didn't make it a walk in the park for her, either. Based upon this memory only, I tossed around several other professional options: fire fighter, police officer, grocery store clerk, airline pilot, long distance truck driver (each of which were offered to me at one time or another as a career choice), and a sanitation engineer. Yet, in spite of all of these options, I became an educator.

Why? I had already tried, and failed, as an educator once! Before attending Redeemer College, I had attended Durham College and received my diploma in Early Childhood Education. I thought this was going to be a great career choice. Working with little kids, telling stories, playing, going on field trips, etc. But I failed at this job because I didn't understand what being an educator was.

It wasn't until several years into my "second round" that I began to really enjoy teaching and its fruits. Through experiences, I drew on memories, and it was, in part, these memories that allowed me to connect the dots in becoming the educator I am today. Each memory drew more on the person involved than on the actual event of the memory. Allow me to tell you about some people involved in my memories and how they impacted me.

The first people were two of my high school teachers, one a veteran, the other a rookie. The veteran, Mr. Mark Ward, was my high school history teacher. If memory serves me well, his classes were nothing out of the ordinary—they were predominantly lecture-style courses. But I remember being intrigued with his knowledge, his ability to relate the information. Mr. Ward worked hard at making sure we "got it" and wouldn't give up until that goal was achieved.

Mr. George Petrusma was the rookie. He was not only my grade 10-12 PE teacher, but he was also "a friend." I remember not so much the PE classes (although I am sure they were great, George), but more the times I/we had with him outside of class. There were all the Chicken Picking events, the ICC (Intramural Chicken Club), the laughs, times of encouragement, and the hallway conversations. Whenever he went past, he always had a moment for us.

Fast forward ten years to my time at Redeemer College. It was my second year, first term, and I was changing my major for the third time. This time, history. I had taken a history course in first year and found I was able to learn history well. There were several history professors, but I had two consistently: Professor Harry Van Dyk, and Professor Jim Payton. Both of these professors had their own teaching style, but they also showed passion for the discipline which was evident in their teaching.

And finally, my mother. Although I stated at the outset that I did not enjoy having my mother as a teacher, she did influence my career. She showed a dedication to the profession that you can't see from the student side of the teacher's desk: marking, phone calls, paperwork, meetings, reports, etc. My mother did all of these things, yet she also had time for family. She was never too busy to attend an outing, play a family game, or anything else. She was always there for us!

So, what have I taken from these people that have influenced my desire to remain an educator? First, from Mr. Ward, I learned that teaching is a profession that requires dedication. I try to do for my students what is necessary for them to "get it." That is the job, in part. Second, I learned from Mr. Petrusma that to be an effective teacher, I need to know my students. I need to show interest, not just in school life, but life outside of school as well. Third, I learned that in order to be a good educator, I need to daily express a passion for what I do. Anybody who has had a history course with either Professor Van Dyk or Professor Payton knows that they have a passion for their discipline. Their lessons, at least for me, were brought to life through their passion. Finally, I learned from my mother's example that, although teaching is a demanding career, I need to create a healthy balance between work and family time. I must, in order to stay motivated as an educator, stop being an educator for periods of time to be a dad and do "dad things" with my family.

I want to formally thank Mr Ward, Mr Petrusma, Professors Van Dyk and Payton, and Mom for teaching me about what it means to be an educator. But the story does not end here. There is one more group that I am in need of thanking: students. This group of people have shaped me into being who I am today, teaching me that this calling is a relationship and that without this relationship, I cannot be an educator.

Am I always successful? I would like to think that I am, but reality shows that I am not. Have I made a difference to someone? I would like to think that I have, but only time will tell, as it has for the educators I have mentioned. I think I will go and spend some time now playing with my kids before I plan tomorrow's activities.

(Jim Hosmar never wanted to be a teacher, but God put amazing people in his life to gently nudge him in that direction. The last 14 years of teaching, in three different schools, all at grade 6, have allowed him to keep meeting people that have affirmed that nudge by God.)

THANK YOU!!!

One of the core values of the OCSTA organization is **Leadership Development**.

Every year, OCSTA says goodbye and thank you to various people who have taken leadership in our organization. This year, three OCSTA board members are retiring.

Justin Cook (Hamilton District Christian High School): Justin provided visionary leadership and was also an important contributor on the OCSTA Professional Development committee.

Stephen Janssen (Knox Christian School—Bowmanville): Stephen is a details person who really helped the board and Credentials Committee with big-picture thinking.

Peter Minnesma (London District Christian High): Peter was OCSTA's treasurer and liaison to the Finance Committee. He has been instrumental in ensuring that we are in good financial shape.

The OCSTA organization provides an excellent training ground for those potential leaders in the future. Being able to see the big picture of Christian education as well as being able to take leadership is an important development for our members. Thanks to Justin, Stephen, and Peter and their supportive educational communities for the time, effort, and vision that was shared!

BOOKS TO READ FOR THE 2010 SUMMER

Fabric of Faithfulness by Steven Garber; remember that he will be the keynote speaker at our 2010 OCSTA Educators Convention: *Woven Together in God's Faithfulness*.

See the reviews in your latest CEJ (*Christian Educators Journal*) on:

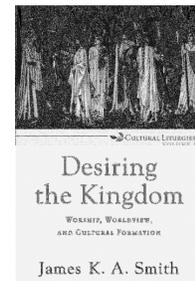
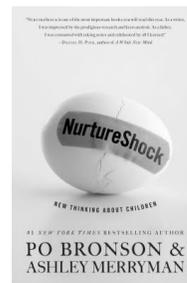
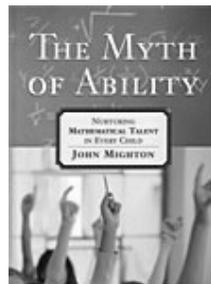
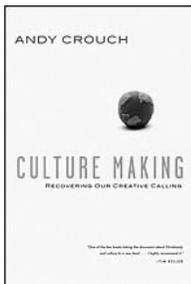
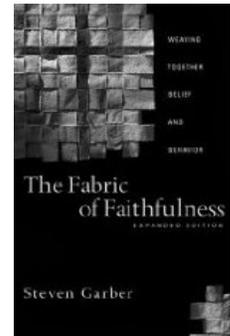
Culture Making by Andy Crouch (2011 OCSTA Convention keynote speaker)

The Myth of Ability by John Mighton (coming to the 2010 OCSTA Summer Institute)

Nurture Shock by Po Bronson and Asheley Merryman

Desiring the Kingdom by James K.A. Smith

And many more....



BUILDING COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR MEMBERSHIP

Pray With Us

Please remember in your prayers Albert and **Betty Hovingh** (Community Christian School, Drayton). Betty's mother, Margaret Slotman, passed away peacefully on March 27, 2010, and Albert's mother passed away suddenly on April 10, 2010. Knowing their mothers are with their Lord gives them comfort.

Celebrate With Us

Congratulations to Justin and **Lauren Farina** (Sarnia Christian School) on the birth of Noah Samuel James Farina. Born March 18th, 2010. 7 lbs. 12 oz., 21.5" long.

Calendar of Events

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| April 30 | Bluewater PD Day | June 1 | CEJ Board Meeting—Conference Call |
| May 6/7 | Worldwide Christian Schools, International Opportunities Roundtable | June 2 | Mary Guldemond Retirement—Hamilton |
| May 7 | OCSAA Membership Meeting | June 10 | Sonya Horzelenberg/Dick VanDyk Retirements—Hamilton |
| May 13 | OCSTA Promotion and Membership Committee | June 10 | Audrey Reitsma Retirement—Brantford |
| May 14 | Karen Gerritsma Retirement—St. Catharines | June 11 | Wendy Vyfvinkel/Jane Vanderwilp Retirements—Brampton |
| May 15 | Orillia Christian School 30 th Anniversary | June 16 | Joan Brelsford Retirement—Stratford |
| May 17/18 | CSI Pension and Insurance Board | June 17 | John Lunshof/Mary Ann Visser Retirements—Oakville |
| May 20 | Henrietta Hielema Retirement—Breslau | June 18/19 | Cardus Board, Hamilton |
| May 26 | M.Ed. Committee—RUC | June 24 | Margaret Bierma Retirement—Owen Sound |
| May 28/29 | Christian Schools Canada Board Meeting | June 26 | Gary Schubert Retirement—Lindsay |
| May 28 | Ann Evans Retirement—Orillia | July 5-9 | OCSTA Summer Institute, RUC |
| May 29 | John Knox Christian School 50 th Anniversary—Woodstock | July 19-23 | Leadership Course, Calvin College at RUC |
| | | August 26 | OCSTA Board Meeting |

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