



**LCS**

2023-2024

# ANNUAL REPORT





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DEFENDERS  
DEFENDERS OF  
THE FAITH

ALTHOUGH ONE MAY BE  
OVERPOWERED, TWO  
CAN DEFEND  
THEMSELVES. A CORD  
OF THREE STRANDS IS  
NOT QUICKLY  
BROKEN.™

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## **OUR MISSION**

The mission of Lakeland Christian School is to educate students in the light of God's Word to equip them for a lifetime of learning, leadership, service and worship.

## **OUR VISION**

To be a Christian school of influence, characterized by academic excellence and caring community.

## **OUR CORE VALUES**

Wisdom through Learning  
Spiritual Cultivation  
Christ-Centered Community

## FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

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The 2023-2024 school year was a season of celebration marked by the completion of the Forging a Firm Foundation campaign and the grand opening of the \$19.6 million Mike and Mary Sligh High School. Highlights included the launch of the Upper School's Student Life division, the most successful Financial Aid Gala to date, and the renovation and December launch of the Visual Arts Suite which features a new ceramics program. The RISE Institute also experienced major facility and program updates. Through it all, we witnessed the Lord's abundant faithfulness and provision.

In addition to these enhancements, we made significant investments in faculty and staff compensation and campus maintenance. Caring for our talented workforce as well as our beautiful facilities will remain priorities in the school's budgeting process.

The Annual Voyages and Victories Gala and Financial Aid designated gifts totaled \$639,775. This exceeded our totals for previous years. This effort is an expression of our commitment to keep Christian schooling accessible to as many families as possible.

The Viking Fund and Capital Campaign gifts totaled just over \$3,439,222 to support campus security and student-generated program initiatives.

In summary, the 2023-2024 school year witnessed 1,621 gifts totaling approximately \$4.3 million. This is amazing generosity inspired by faithfulness to the Lord and to the school He called into existence in 1954. We are grateful.

As we occupied the new high school building in August of 2023, we took the opportunity to focus on community in the Upper School. Under the leadership of Heather Rhoden (Director of Student Life), Tim Totten (Director of Spiritual Cultivation and Leadership), and Jon Harvey (Middle School Principal), we transformed the Senior Retreat and the Senior Trip, developed robust grade-level leadership and faculty engagement, and launched the "Middle School Houses" to organize grades six through eight into four smaller communities, much like neighborhoods engaged in friendly competition.

It is a sign of the long term faithful and effective financial stewardship and the confidence of our families reflected in a 94% rate of re-enrollment in 2023-2024 that we were able to do so much to such great missional impact on the heels of such a significant building campaign and season of change in leadership.

As Dr. Sligh stated in his final Annual Report letter, "the Annual Report reflects our desire for financial transparency as we endeavor to exercise faithful biblical stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. We recognize that all the funds available to us come from tuition, fees, and donations. We want to provide the information necessary to promote fiscal confidence among all our stakeholders and ministry partners." While the leadership has changed, this commitment remains steadfast.

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This commitment is evident in the annual audit ordered by the LCS Board of Directors as part of its fiduciary responsibility. A copy of this audit is available to our families and employees in the LCS Business Office. The Board Finance Committee, as a reflection of its faithful stewardship, oversees the annual budget process to ensure that all revenue generated through tuition, fees, and donations is applied to support the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan initiatives and critical areas of need as they arise.

To each member of our community who continues to support our efforts to fulfill our mission “to educate students in the light of God’s Word to equip them for a lifetime of learning, leadership, service and worship,” we say, thank you.” We are grateful for your faithful partnership on behalf of the 1136 students who make up The Viking Nation. We hope you are as encouraged as we are when we consider this past year as well as the future in front of us. It is a wonderful time to be a member of this vibrant community.

If you have any questions regarding the data presented or any aspect of the school’s financial operation, please feel free to contact us and we will follow up with you.

In His Grace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryant M. Black". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

**Bryant Black**  
Head of School

## LCS AT A GLANCE



### THE SCHOOL

- Polk County's oldest and largest K-12 private school - established in 1954
- Non-denominational
- Biblical worldview
- Extensive co-curricular program
- School families represent more than 200 different local churches
- Accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS), and Cognia
- Member of the following associations: Florida Association of Academic Non-Public Schools (FAANS), Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), Florida Bandmasters Association (FBA), Florida Vocal Association (FVA), Florida School Music Association (FSMA)

### ARTS

- Award-winning band and choir programs
- Musical production each year
- Private piano & voice lessons available
- Courses in Songwriting, Music Production, Ceramics, Video Production and more

### FACULTY

- Teachers maintain professional certifications in their chosen fields
- Overall student-to-faculty ration is 14:1
- 6 teachers hold doctorate degrees
- 46 teachers hold master's degrees
- 38 teachers have taught at LCS for 10 years or more

### ACADEMICS

- Engaging and challenging curriculum
- 95% of the 2024 graduates pursued college
- Test scores exceed local, state and national averages
- 38 Honors courses, 18 Advanced Placement courses and 15 Dual Enrollment courses offered

### ATHLETICS

- 39 teams in 20 sports, grades 6-12
- 28 State titles, 26 State runners-up
- More than 75% of students in grades 6-12 participate in athletics
- Outstanding on-campus stadium, athletic center and gymnasium





## ENROLLMENT DATA



Lakeland Christian School was blessed with another year of strong enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year as families continue to desire a Christian education for their children. As new families join the LCS community, more young people are being educated in the light of God's word.

### 2023-2024 TOTAL: 1136

- Elementary: 493
- Middle School: 274
- High School: 369

### 2022-2023 TOTAL: 1121

- Elementary: 486
- Middle School: 255
- High School: 380

### 2021-2022 TOTAL: 1124

- Elementary: 490
- Middle School: 272
- High School: 362

### 2020-2021 TOTAL: 1066

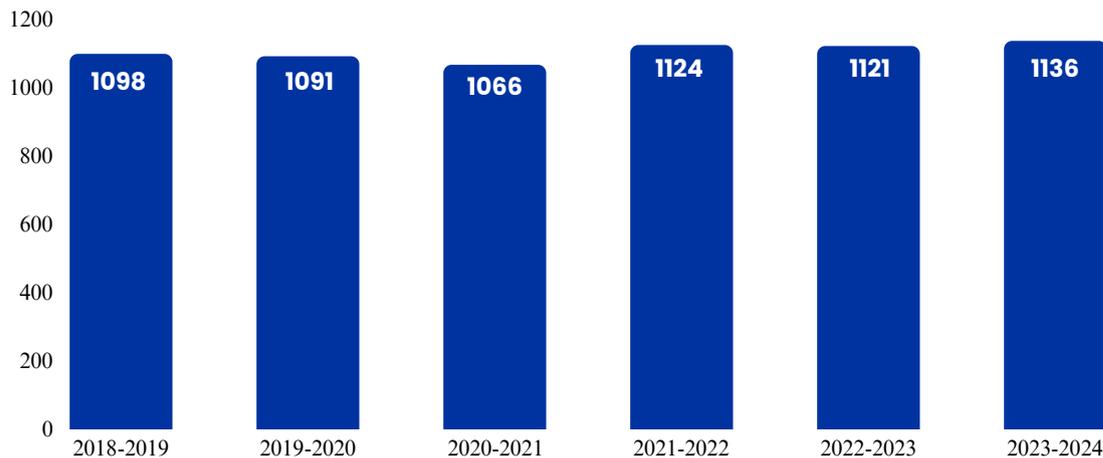
- Elementary: 447
- Middle School: 264
- High School: 355

### 2019-2020 TOTAL: 1091

- Elementary: 443
- Middle School: 272
- High School: 376

### 2018-2019 TOTAL: 1098

- Elementary: 445
- Middle School: 275
- High School: 378



# CLASS OF 2024



The Class of 2024 was the 52nd graduating class of Lakeland Christian School. Comprised of 97 seniors, this group of students was part of State championship athletic teams, award-winning Fine Arts programs, the Mock Trial team and the Robotics team. They were leaders in the classroom, in their youth groups and in the community.

Approximately 95% of the graduates from the Class of 2024 have pursued post-secondary education in schools across America including the University of Florida, Florida State University, Auburn University, University of Tennessee, Liberty University, Palm Beach Atlantic University, the United States Military Academy at West Point and more. In the Class of 2024, 80% of students matriculated to four-year universities and 13% to two-year colleges.



**\$6,523,100**  
EARNED IN  
SCHOLARSHIPS



**11,434**  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE HOURS  
EARNED BY THE  
CLASS



**95 PERCENT**  
PURSUED POST-  
SECONDARY  
EDUCATION



**41 PERCENT**  
QUALIFIED FOR  
FLORIDA BRIGHT  
FUTURES  
SCHOLARSHIP



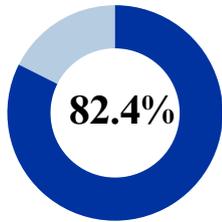
MIKE & MARY BLYTH  
HIGH SCHOOL  
BUILDING



## FINANCIAL DATA



### TOTAL OPERATING INCOME: \$18,358,161



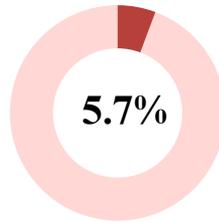
**TUITION  
& FEES**

\$15,131,852



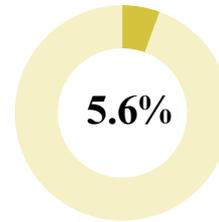
**CO-CURRICULAR  
ACTIVITIES**

\$1,107,693



**ANCILLARY  
INCOME**

\$1,045,677



**OPERATING  
CONTRIBUTIONS**

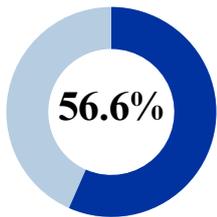
\$1,024,565



**OTHER  
INCOME**

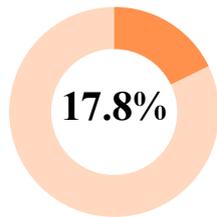
\$48,374

### TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES: \$19,346,381\*



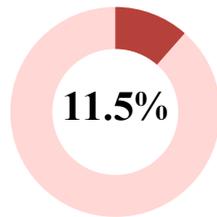
**SALARIES &  
BENEFITS**

\$10,955,431



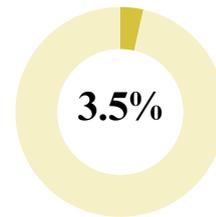
**SCHOOL  
INSTRUCTION**

\$3,442,380



**CO-CURRICULAR  
ACTIVITIES**

\$2,231,391



**ANCILLARY  
EXPENSES**

\$673,904



**GENERAL  
OPERATIONS**

\$2,043,275

*The numbers presented represent the operations of the school. Non-operating activity (investment returns, campaign activity, permanently restricted donations, etc.) is not reflected above. A complete copy of the auditors' report and corresponding financials are available for review in the school office.*

*\*An increase in depreciation expense is included within the expense categories reported above, which reflects the addition of the new Mike and Mary Sligh High School Building.*

# GENEROUS GIVING



Operating a thriving Christian school like LCS is expensive. Our needs will always exceed revenue from tuition and fees. That means LCS counts on the giving of a community of ministry partners — those who provide faithful support to the school year after year. The following information reflects heartfelt generosity to keep LCS on the forefront of educational distinction:

## GIVEN / PLEDGED BY CONSTITUENCY

- Employees: 981 gifts | \$93,129
- School Parents: 304 gifts | \$238,222
- Grandparents: 54 gifts | \$321,058
- Alumni: 12 gifts | \$1,330
- Alumni Parents: 34 gifts | \$124,200
- Other: 233 gifts | \$3,463,043

## GIVEN / PLEDGED BY FUND

- Financial Aid: 320 gifts | \$639,775
- Viking Fund: 829 gifts | \$216,810
- Capital Campaign: 296 gifts | \$3,222,412  
*(Forging a Firm Foundation)*
- RISE: 18 gifts | \$20,224
- General Endowment: 4 gifts | \$51,569
- Other: 154 gifts | \$102,192



2023-2024  
TOTAL NUMBER OF GIFTS

1,621



2023-2024  
TOTAL GIVING

\$4,252,982







### THE VIKING FUND

The Viking Fund is Lakeland Christian School's annual giving initiative. Each year, we are blessed by the generosity of a multi-generational community of supporters. This includes current parents, alumni and their families, grandparents, community friends, and both past and present faculty, staff, and administrators. Their faithful contributions play a vital role in ensuring that our students receive a dynamic and enriching educational experience. We are deeply grateful for their continued support.

**DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR, TOTAL GIVING TO THE VIKING FUND WAS \$216,810.**

### VOYAGES & VICTORIES GALA

The Voyages & Victories Gala is Lakeland Christian School's signature fundraising event, dedicated to supporting the LCS Financial Aid Fund. The theme for the 9th annual gala, "He Is the Vine," reflected the school's commitment to nurturing students in faith and learning. Held at the beautiful Bonnet Springs Park, the evening featured powerful testimonies, a delightful dinner, live musical entertainment, and an exciting auction. Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and attendees, proceeds from the event provided vital tuition assistance to families with demonstrated financial need—ensuring that more children and young people can experience all that LCS has to offer.

**THE 2023 VOYAGES & VICTORIES GALA RAISED \$555,595 FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL AID.**

### FORGING A FIRM FOUNDATION CAMPAIGN

The Forging a Firm Foundation campaign was a remarkable achievement, made possible through the generous support of our community. This \$19.1 million project came to fruition in the fall of 2023 with the opening of the Mike and Mary Sligh High School building. This state-of-the-art facility has transformed the Upper School experience, providing students with cutting-edge science labs, dedicated collaboration and community spaces, a Student Life suite, flexible learning rooms, a new Upper School office, Guidance offices, and more. We are deeply grateful to all who invested in this project, which has provided our students an exceptional environment in which to learn, grow, and thrive.

**DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR, CAPITAL GIFTS TOTALED \$3,222,412.**



MIKE & MARY SLIGH  
HIGH SCHOOL  
BUILDING



# DEDICATION OF THE MIKE AND MARY SLIGH HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

Lakeland Christian School dedicated the Mike & Mary Sligh High School Building at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, August 11. The three-story, 42,000-square-foot building houses 26 classrooms, the Upper School offices, the Guidance Department, teacher's workspace and a Student Life suite, as well as two flex space classrooms.

Funded through the Forging a Firm Foundation capital campaign, the \$19.1 million facility was named for longtime Head of School Dr. Mike Sligh, who retired in June 2023 after a 51-year career at the school, and his wife, Mary, who taught at LCS for many years.

Designed by Jon Kirk with Straughn-Trout Architects, the facility was built by Rodda Construction.

On the third floor of the building, the Mike Musick Sr. Science Wing features state-of-the-art science labs and a memorial wall to honor the longtime science teacher and coach who passed away in 2021.



## HOW TO GIVE

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Good financial planning honors God. It may also help you to avoid unnecessary taxes and allow you to make a larger gift.

### **CASH GIFTS AND PLEDGES**

Cash gifts and pledges may be made as a single gift or a pledge. Online giving is available at [www.lcsonline.org/support/](http://www.lcsonline.org/support/)

### **GIFTS IN KIND**

Gifts in kind possibilities are limitless. LCS uses and needs many goods and services.

### **APPRECIATED ASSETS**

Appreciated assets (appreciated stock or real estate you have owned for more than one year) will generate a tax deduction based upon fair market value.

### **TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY**

Tangible personal property giving will enjoy certain tax advantages.

### **MATCHING GIFTS**

Matching gifts for current or retired employees are offered by many corporations.

### **PLANNED GIFTS**

Planned gifts allow you to maximize your giving and/or minimize the impact of your estate.

*For more information, contact Jonathan Tencza, Chief Advancement Officer at 863-688-2771 or [jtencza@lcsonline.org](mailto:jtencza@lcsonline.org).*





LAKELAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.

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