

2ND CENTURY FUND UPDATE:

Our fiscal year ends on June 30 and we welcome gifts to the 2nd Century Fund to help us finish strong! Gifts to the annual fund:

- Provide student financial aid
- Make possible programs such as Touring Choir and E-term
- Help us nurture students' faith formation

Make your gift online at easternmennonite.org/support or by mailing checks made to Eastern Mennonite School, 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.



Building(s) and Bricks!

LOWER BUILDING UPDATE

Progress on the renovation of the former MennoMedia building to provide a permanent home for our K-5 program is on track to be move-in ready sometime next fall!

- Drywall installed for classrooms, learning kitchen, art and music
- Windows enlarged to maximize natural light
- Entrance and offices built with rooftop garden and tool shed
- Exterior stair towers engineered and installed
- Exterior brick salvaged to re-use



UPPER BUILDING UPDATE

The roof on our middle and high school building has served us well since 1987, but it's time to stop the leaks! A summer 2019 replacement project will include partnership with Secure Futures for solar panels to save energy and help students and the community learn about solar energy. **Contact Paul Leaman, head of school, if you're interested in supporting this project. 540-236-6012 or leamanp@easternmennonite.org**

BUY A BRICK AND BUILD A BRIDGE!

We have raised more than \$30,000 toward our \$50,000 goal to build a bridge between our two buildings. Thank you parents, class of '19 and other supporters! The bridge will provide safe pick up and drop off space for elementary students and a covered outdoor learning space. Engraved bricks honor students, alumni, teachers, past and present administrators, and recognize businesses. May 31 deadline extended for Today readers! Order online at easternmennonite.org/support/build-a-bridge



Jessica Peachey of Blue Ridge Engraving

New Website

EMS launched a new website in March. Users will find content about each school division, athletic schedules and scores, thematic content (faith formation, the arts, experiential learning), events postings, a parent portal for enrolled families, and content especially for alumni and donors.

Check the news blog for frequent stories and updates at easternmennonite.org/about/news

For more on the website, designed by Clay Showalter '98 and Lindsey Kolb, go to easternmennonite.org/2019/04/ems-launches-new-website

Content written by Andrea Wenger unless otherwise noted.

Photographers for this issue: Trisha Blosser (p. 2), Andrew Gascho (pp. 1, 2, and 4), and Andrea Wenger (pp. 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Today creative team:
Andrea Schrock '82 Wenger, writer and editor;
Trisha Maust '95 Blosser, editorial assistant;
Lindsey Kolb, designer;
Elwood Yoder, editorial consultant;
Paul Leaman, head of school.

Send feedback to today@easternmennonite.org

Find past issues at easternmennonite.org/about/today-publication



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TODAY

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Spring 2019

Celebrate!

Forty-one seniors graduated from EMHS on Sunday, June 2. Maria Archer '81, K-8 principal, brought the message.

See a weekend wrap up at easternmennonite.org/about/news

Discovery 2019

Every other year a group of 20+ students, teachers and chaperones travel across the country to learn about land and water issues.

Follow this year's trip June 4-29 on Facebook at [EMSdiscovery2019](https://www.facebook.com/EMSdiscovery2019) and on our website at easternmennonite.org/discovery

Homecoming Weekend

Oct. 18-20, 2019

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- Reunions for classes ending in 4 and 9
- Activities for all ages and all grad years

easternmennonite.org/homecoming



During the annual elementary school Passion Walk, students listen and reflect on the Easter story.

The Holy Spirit: A Year of Reflection

Guest speakers, students, faculty and staff shared on the theme of "Holy Spirit" throughout the year in chapel and the weekly elementary Gathering.

In an end-of-year wrap up chapel, Justin King (high school principal) and Maria Archer (K-8 principal) shared times when they experienced the Holy Spirit this year. "When our 7th graders visited our local Jewish Synagogue during Explore Week," reflected Archer, "their quiet respect felt holy to me," she said.

"I felt the Holy Spirit at work in my first year in this role when I knew my colleagues and even

students were praying for me," shared King.

Chapel participants jotted comments on sticky notes about how they have felt the Holy Spirit this year and placed them on crosses as they left. Some samples...

- ... everyone who has made me feel like I belong here.
- ... in the beautiful innocence of the elementary students.
- ... long and meaningful conversation with friends and family about faith and life.
- ... the seniors who have been mentors to me.

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Save the Date!

Homecoming: Oct. 18-20, 2019

Registration opens August 1.

worship touring choir music
reunions for classes with 4 & 9
Fan Appreciation Meal building tours
Saturday breakfast for all
volleyball reminiscing soccer

MISSION:

Eastern Mennonite School joins home and church in calling students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.

VISION:

Eastern Mennonite School aspires to reflect Christ's light as a learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God's call.

FOLLOW US:



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

FAITH COMMUNITY

THE ARTS



Faith Formation: A K-12 Experience

Whether it's required Bible classes, Spanish language discussion, service to others, or how we interact as athletes, faith formation happens throughout the day – kindergarten through grade 12 – at EMS.

All three divisions use the Encounter curriculum, developed by Mennonite Schools Council, which focuses on holistic faith formation through encounters with God, each other and creation.

K-5 students focus on how we create Shalom: student to student, teacher to student, student to teacher, classroom to school. They learn about peace with each other, with God, and with creation, learning stories of Jesus.

Grade 6 students develop a basic understanding of the Bible and discover the tools available to help study the Bible.

Grade 7: **How small is a mustard seed?** Students explore Jesus' parables and use technology learned in Digital Literacy 7 to create projects.

Grade 8: **Live the Story.** Students learn about global and local church practices. Throughout the year, they examine how their personal story connects with God's story.

Grade 9: **Creation and Promise** covers caring for God's creation; listening to God's voice; working for God's shalom; and living God's way through Old and New Testament and present-day stories.

Grade 10: **Sermon on the Mount.** Students study Matthew 5 to 7, memorizing small sections each week. Sue Swartz taught the class for 19 years before retiring in 2018 and notes that memorization was a tradition long before she picked up the course.

"As followers of Jesus, these verses are key to our understanding of how he lived and treated others. They span all times and seem to always be fresh and

applicable to the present," Swartz reflects. "In the Bible curriculum, pieces of this scripture are visited and revisited."

Grade 12: **Kingdom Living** is required for all seniors and focuses on how the Kingdom of God impacts our lives in the areas of peace and justice, stewardship, salvation, and mission. The class culminates with each senior sharing a 20-minute reflection on their academic and faith journey with friends, faculty, parents and the community.

High school **elective Bible courses** include:

- Christian Family Living
- Christian Ministry
- Global Anabaptism
- Global Christianity
- Philosophy, Theology and Apologetics

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

E-term (high school) and **Explore Week** (middle school): In urban and rural settings; on bicycles, chopping wood, creating with hands, singing sacred music and more, with a small group of peers guided by faculty and staff.

Community Service Day: More than 250 middle and high school students in 20 organizations. "Go and be the Body!" challenged Abby Stapleton '20 in opening reflections.

National Honor Society: Raised money to prepare 140 hygiene kits for Mennonite Central Committee distribution to displaced families around the world.

Touring Choir: More than 20 programs this spring in area churches and on their tour. Students often reflect on music making, particularly choral singing across grades, as important faith development.

See more stories and photos at easternmennonite.org/about/news

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- ... in Touring Choir. The people and passion for music but also sharing God's love.
- ... on my team when we have devotions, celebrating a win, or crying after a tough loss.
- ... in prayer chapels. At first they made me uncomfortable but they became really meaningful and intentional for me.
- ... in teachers and their willingness to help students with things other than schoolwork, even taking time to pray with them daily.

Shannon Roth, government teacher, leads Chapel Planning Committee. Students provide planning input, offer tech support, and help to lead music.

"I feel the Holy Spirit in the positive atmosphere that this community brings consistently."

ELEMENTARY

The elementary weekly Gathering time also often focused on the Holy Spirit. Guests included:

Moriah Hurst, Park View Mennonite Church youth pastor, talked about fire as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. It is calming and can give warmth, but is also very powerful.

Joyce Lind, former first grade teacher at EMES, had several students wear a blindfold and try to hear the voice of their friends. Sometimes we have to listen closely to hear the Holy Spirit.

Fred and Judy Miller shared Mennonite Disaster Service experiences helping communities rebuild after natural disasters. They also challenged students to find ways to help other people, noting this is God's Holy Spirit at work.

Mary Golden-Hughes, former EMS Advancement Director, shared how the Holy Spirit has led her to work in La Gonave, Haiti and at a local food pantry.

Dr. Nabeel Babar, father of three EMS students, told about his family's return to Pakistan when he was about 11, an experience that instilled in him a desire to serve others, especially those less fortunate in his community. He shared about the importance of listening to each other; even when our ideas and faith practices differ, we can learn and grow from hearing the stories of others.



Faculty and staff surrounded Dave in prayer after he shared his plans to depart at the end of the year.

Dave Bechler: An Athletic Era Ends

The end of the school year brought the end of a 23-year era of Dave Bechler as Athletic Director for EMS.

"More than two decades at the helm of middle and high school athletics is highly unusual," noted Paul Leaman. "We have been blessed by Dave's long-term commitment to our school and students."

That blessing has extended beyond the school's walls to the local area, regional and state levels where recognition came from the Blue Ridge Conference, Virginia Independent Conference and Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) this spring.

At the state level, Dave served on the VISAA Executive Committee for 14 years (2004-2019), the state boys soccer committee for 13 years (2005-2019) and the state boys basketball committee for 10 years (2009-2019). He was also voted VISAA Athletic Director of the Year in 2013.

Dave served as president from 2005 to 2019 for the VIC and BRC where he was:

- #1 in all-time career wins (boys basketball)
- 22 years as head varsity basketball coach
- 341-291 career record
- Nine-time VIC Coach of the Year

RECOGNITION BY COLLEAGUES

Earlier this spring at a K-12 faculty and staff spring recognition celebration, long-time colleagues Kendal Bauman and Jennifer Young shared reflections about Dave's impending departure.

Full of laughs, it was also a time to shed some tears. Anyone who has worked with, or played for, Dave knows he has a soft heart.

"I've been crying all week," Dave confessed, leading up to the faculty recognition. "This stuff is hard, but it's all good."

Find an article and view a video of the presentation at easternmennonite.org/about/news

"And ... the most important of all the things Dave has done," noted Bauman. "He has mentored approximately 45 middle school, 42 JV and 73 varsity coaches; that does not include assistant coaches. He has touched so many athletes through our coaching staff with the philosophy of competing at a high level, but maintaining excellent sportsmanship."



Dave Bechler

FACILITY CHANGES AND PROGRAM UPGRADES UNDER DAVE'S LEADERSHIP

Outdoor Facilities:

- Creating new athletic fields (softball, baseball, soccer)
- Dugouts (softball, baseball)
- Scoreboards (all fields)
- Soccer kick walls
- Ballards to protect fields
- Resurfacing the tennis courts
- Field maintenance equipment
- Outdoor concession stand
- Bleachers
- Athletic field maintenance including irrigation

Indoor Facilities:

- Batting cage
- Basketball Shooting machine
- Weight room (2016)
- Gym renovations including replacing the rubber floor with hardwood, new lights, bleachers, and paving the gym parking lot
- Support for foyer renovation
- Floor system for side volleyball courts

Sports Added:

- Softball, girls soccer, JV tennis, golf, swim club
- Middle school sports (soccer, track, volleyball, basketball, cross country)

Other Items:

- Hiring an athletic trainer
- JMU Concessions to help pay for athletic uniforms
- Transportation upgraded for athletic teams to mini buses and larger buses
- Continued support of the Athletic Booster Club
- Instrumental in getting the girls sports programs into the Blue Ridge Conference (2001), where they could compete for conference and state titles
- Moved the cross country invitational from Eastern Mennonite University to Peak View in 2002 (oldest and one of the largest races in VA)
- Started the Menno (2004) & Flames (2016) Classic soccer tournaments
- Flames Tip-Off basketball tournament (1999)
- EMHS Volleyball Jamboree (2008)



Neighbor Groups

Students grades 6 to 12 meet weekly for 20 minutes in small Neighbor Groups to share a snack and discuss school-wide issues, personal concerns, and current events.

Often, leaders use a circle process to facilitate conversation. Participants pass a "talking piece." Only the person with the talking piece may talk; others listen. Participants can "pass" when the piece comes to them if they aren't comfortable sharing. Everyone has a chance to be heard.

By using the circle process in Neighbor Groups, the format is familiar and comfortable when it is used as part of restorative discipline processes or if a group needs to work through a conflict.