

From the desk of
Pastor Jeff Beckley
Memorial Baptist Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My church is in a community where many children struggle with their education. I've seen families try to make a change, but difficult circumstances have kept them from reaching their goals. Due to the cycle of poor education and academic failure, nearly one in every four people in our community aged 25 and older do not have a high school degree.

On top of that, many students on the Hilltop are either educationally behind, have little parental support, or both. As a result, if they try to enter a Christian school setting, they are literally grades behind. Even if they succeed in a Christian school, the closest school has been a two-hour bus ride from our community.

A number of years ago, God put a call to start a Christian school on the Westside in the heart of Ben Douglass, a local pastor. As my friendship with Ben grew, he presented the idea to me and our church leadership. If I'm honest, when I was presented with the opportunity to step into this vision, I laughed. My reaction was like Abraham and Sarah when they heard the news of having a baby as centenarians. Yet, as God allowed the dream of a Christian school on the Westside to become more of a reality, our church was asked to put our name in as a possible ministry site for the Christian school.

After thinking this was impossible, our church was chosen as the host location and Westside Christian School (WCS) opened in the fall of 2022 for kindergarten through second grade!

It was later discovered that Memorial Baptist Church had a mission school on its campus from 1909 to 1913. Now, 100 years later, the church doors have opened to a school once again. We know this is God's house, not ours. This is God's church. We cannot hold onto our building too tightly in an attempt to protect it from a few scratches on the wall or fear that the utility bill will go up. These rooms were vacant all week long, and now we have the opportunity to help these very real needs in our community and share the Gospel with kids from all over the neighborhood.

In the first year of WCS, we welcomed 32 students in grades K-2. We have seen challenges, but each challenge has been met with answered prayer after answered prayer. I have watched true miracles happen right before my eyes. Students who could not read are reading now. Children who struggled with their behavior are now singing praises to the Lord in chapel! Financial shortfalls have been prayed over, and the Lord has provided all that we've needed to keep the doors open and support our staff.

Yet, even after all of those gifts, God was not done. In the fall of 2023, Westside Christian School's enrollment nearly doubled to 63 students, and we had a wait list for several grades. The school has expanded to third grade, giving us four classrooms full of students growing in their academic and spiritual lives. Our halls are filled with laughter, the classrooms are full, the teachers are thriving, and children from our community are learning about God's love for them.

It has not always been roses and rainbows. There have been challenges and tough days. However, the incredible academic and spiritual growth of the students has made all the effort worth it. We believe we have found a way to partner with a community in need and offer each child a way to walk toward success in life. It is amazing to be part of God's work of creating generational change in the families on the west side of Columbus.

Will you join us in asking God to bless the relationships we're building with students and their families? We continue to pray that many will see and hear of the love of Jesus Christ and join God's family and our church family—or one of the other churches that are partnering with us in this community project. We pray and hope to be part of the solution for our community not only educationally, but also spiritually. Will you pray that God grants us the wisdom and resources to effectively provide spiritual solutions for our community?

If you or your church feel led to give toward this project, provide resources, or if you are interested in the possibility of hosting a school in your community, feel free to contact me or our church. You can also learn more about WCS online at wc.school. Above all, please consider praying for this incredible opportunity to reach our community with the Good News to provide these children a faith-filled future.

In Christ,

Jeff Beckley
Lead Pastor
Memorial Baptist Church
