

# Alumni NEWSLETTER

## RIVENDELL SCHOOL

### Alumni Speak in Assembly

We love to see our alumni when they drop by for a visit, spend their spring break volunteering in the office or classroom, attend Lessons & Carols, or really anytime!

We were honored this spring to have alumnus Graeme Innes visit the school with his wife, Becqui, and children, Iona and Joshua. Graeme spoke in Friday Assembly about his journey from Rivendell School to the mission field. Graeme and his family are headed to Moldova, where they will serve one of the poorest post-Cold War countries. Graeme will be involved in preaching, discipleship, and evangelistic outreach.

This fall we had alumna class of 2004, Rachel Thompson, speak in Assembly. She shared with the students about the importance of friends to come along beside you and show God's Love to you, and about being that kind of a friend to others.



*Graeme Innes and family  
visit Rivendell*



*Rachel Thompson speaks in Assembly*

### Mark Your Calendar for Alumni Events

Take the time now to mark your calendar for several events in 2017-18. You can also view the Rivendell calendar any time on our home page at [www.rivendellschool.net](http://www.rivendellschool.net).

**DECEMBER 19, 2017**

Lessons & Carols

**DECEMBER 28, 2017**

Alumni Holiday Party

**FEBRUARY 7-10, 2018**

Shakespeare Festival  
4th Form Play

**JUNE 8, 2018**

Graduation

**JUNE 10, 2018**

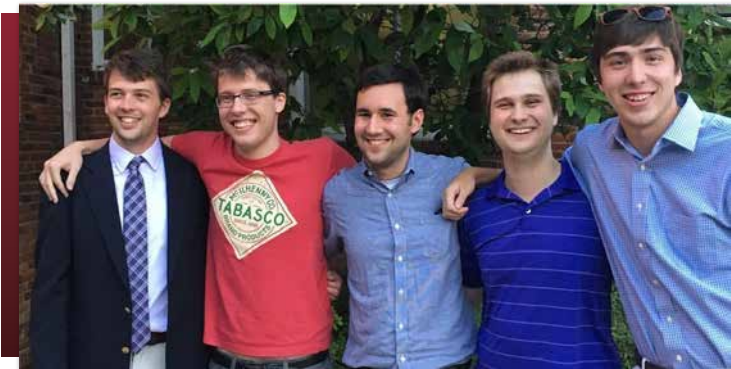
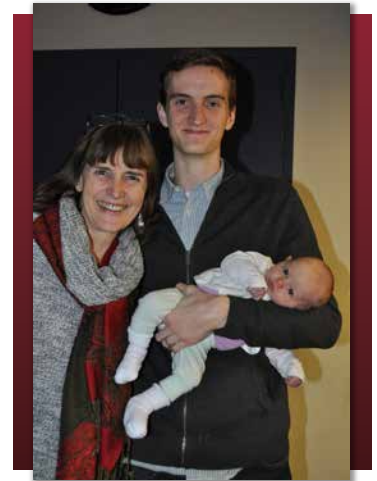
Alumni Renuion

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*Prayer continues to be the foundation of this community.*

# WELCOME

We are overjoyed that you are holding in your hands the inaugural edition of the Rivendell School Alumni Newsletter. This has been a long time coming, and much prayer has gone into it. From the stories I have heard of Rivendell's beginnings, it is clear that the foundation on which this school was built is prayer. Although other things have changed over the years (would the founders have ever imagined Chick-Fil-A lunches or entering parent hours on an app on your phone?!), prayer continues to be the foundation of this community. As I have been privileged to pray with the Intercessors, it has been a joy to witness how frequently the names and requests of alumni and their families are prayed over. You are always a part of the Rivendell family and your story, even as it is now unfolding, is an integral part of our story as a community. I am thrilled that the Rivendell School Community Relations Committee has made a commitment to caring more fully for our alumni through creating a volunteer alumni coordinator position. Although none of my children are yet graduates (my oldest, an 8th grader, is getting close!), I love that the heart of this community—because it reflects God's all-encompassing heart—is full of love for both our current students and those who we see less frequently but who are just as much a part of the family.



The message I hope that you will hear throughout this newsletter, our website, alumni events, and all of our other communication is that of welcome. You are welcome, always. The Rivendell home, that “last homely house,” is your home. I hope that you have many joyful memories of this home; however, as I reflect on the many homes in which I have spent my life, I know that painful memories are sometimes intertwined with the delightful ones. Tolkien's “perfect house,” where “[h]ealth and hope grew strong in them, and they were content with each good day as it came...,” has always been this community's aspiration, but

we are a community of fallen creatures and hurt is sadly the way of this world. When I gather my three children up from Rivendell at the end of the school day, they are often smarting from a wound of some kind—a skinned knee from recess, a sharp word from a friend, a day of drudgery when fun was anticipated.... And yet, I so often see how God is at work to redeem these as lessons are learned, relationships are restored, and grumbling is turned to laughter. And so I pray, and invite you to come, share your story with us—the good and the bad, pray together for redemption, and thank God together for His provision of this home for us.

Welcome,

*Katie Toro*

Katie Toro (current parent and alumni coordinator)





## “BEING KNOWN” at Rivendell School

Rivendell Parents attending the October 20, 2016 Town Meeting were introduced to our newly revised Rivendell School Distinctive, “Being Known.” You may recall our “Respect For Each Child” Distinctive that was a pillar of Rivendell School for over 20 years. The language for that Distinctive stated:

### Respect for Each Child

“A supportive environment of small classes that helps teachers identify and encourage each child’s unique abilities and allows each student to progress at his or her own pace.”

As Rivendell School evolved from a school with 80 children to a school with over 140 students, it became clear that maintaining the kind of individualized education—characterized by the phrase “progress at his or her own pace”—the Rivendell Founders envisioned was going to be difficult. The Rivendell Founders also could not have predicted that “his or her own pace” would feed into an “all about me and my child” culture that has exploded over the past 30 years. Cultural evolution also created a shift in the meaning of the word “respect.” This term that was once a virtuous call to honor others and to show deference to those in authority has become a watered-down “respect” in which “you’re not allowed to tell me anything because what I do is my own business.”

At the same time, over our many years Rivendell School’s value of deep, healthy relationships (rooted in the “Respect for Each Child” Distinctive) has only intensified. We are more committed and more intentional about being a school in which healthy relationships are honored, and children are known. Relational wholeness is now a core tenet to our educating, and it is based on both scientific evidence and anecdotal conviction that children who are known, loved, valued as important, and honestly affirmed for their strengths and weaknesses will be students who are ready to learn. Studies of the brain and of numerous educational environments point to the simple truth that a child’s brain is ready to be stretched and to absorb information only when that brain is not anxious, not stressed, not “unknown” or feeling insignificant. For these reasons we are thrilled to unveil our re-formed Distinctive, “Being Known.”

### Being Known

“A supportive, relational environment of small classes in which each child is known and is encouraged to exercise healthy habits of heart and mind.”





# BUILDING PROJECT

## On the Horizon...

At a recent Town Meeting, Byron List, David Andrukonis, and members of a Long-Term Strategic Planning Committee shared with the Rivendell School community plans to refresh the existing Rivendell School physical plant in a three-phase project. The three phases, as currently under discussion, will be 1) a new gym and play space, 2) classroom and office space, and 3) renovating the current academic wing. We are thrilled about the opportunity to make the building, originally designed as a church, function more effectively for the specific needs of our school. The improved facility will include more-spacious and better-designed classrooms, more elbow-room in the office, and a play space that better accommodates our children on rainy days, in addition to infrastructure improvements such as HVAC and plumbing upgrades. At the meeting, Byron shared his hope for how the renewed facility will be used in the future:

By God's grace, and for as long as God wills it, Rivendell School's physical plant will serve as a light on a hill, and a living altar of remembrance, bearing witness to each new generation that our God is with us, that God is lavishly generous, loving and faithful, and that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Perhaps you wonder how you can play a part in contributing to this good work of God? Soon we will be taking steps to ask all of our Rivendell community—including current and past Rivendell School parents, Rivendell alumni, and friends of Rivendell School—to consider partnering with us prayerfully and financially in this project. Feel free to start participating immediately by partnering with us in prayer. Please pray that God will cause Arlington County's government representatives to look favorably on our project, to work with us, and to keep our upfront permitting and engineering costs down. This is an amazing gift our school community is receiving, and it will bless our children and Rivendell children for generations to come.

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## Building Project Q&A:

### **When will the Building Project begin and what does the timeline for the project look like?**

Our architects are currently in conversation with Arlington County to pull permits and initiate the preliminary elements of a building project. Over the next few months we expect the architects will draw up blueprints, and then those will have to be approved by the county. This process alone can take several months to complete, and unexpected hiccups can often occur along the way. When approval of the work is complete, we will be on our way toward breaking ground for Phase 1. Please pray that these preliminary hurdles will be overcome quickly so construction can begin. This three-phase project (gym and play space; classroom and office space; and renovating our current academic wing) has the potential to be completed over the next three years.

### **Where will the funding come from for the Building Project?**

Donors to Rivendell School have offered to cover much of the cost of construction. The "soft costs" of construction (desks, tables, classroom needs, etc.), as well as architects fees, environmental survey fees, engineer fees and costs for pre-construction preparation will need to be raised through the Rivendell School community, alumni families and students, and friends of Rivendell School.

### **Will Rivendell School's mission change because of the new building?**

Is the project intended to increase student population or to add a new high school? No. Rivendell School's mission to provide an excellent, Christ-centered education to children in grades K through 8 will not be altered. We will continue to have classes with 16 to 17 students in them, and while we will be able to spread out a bit more, we remain fundamentally committed to our Distinctive that each child will be known.



# LETTER FROM THE HEADMASTER

In the Spring our Fourth Form put on *Oliver Twist* for the third time. It got me thinking about all of the performances we've done at Rivendell School over the years. I recall, in our early days, we performed *The Hobbit*, and Mr. Larson played the part of Smaug the dragon. There was a year when the Fourth Form rewrote an Ellis Peters novel for the stage and Brother Cadfael solved a murder mystery here at Rivendell School. "Balen and Balyn," twin Knights of the Round Table, fought a battle to the death on Rivendell's stage, and I recall there was a lot of fake blood prepared for that performance.

Shakespeare's plays have been a Rivendell staple from the very beginning and when, back in 2004, Mr. Craft and I proposed that every other year we hold a Shakespeare Festival, we never could have imagined all the fun we'd have. Not only have our Fourth Form Shakespeare plays been outstanding (and sometimes quite a surprise...like our recent merging of *Romeo and Juliet* with *West Side Story*), but we have also gotten great mileage out of Mrs. Brasher's "Short Shakespeare," Mr. Ball and Mr. Dunlap's "One Minute Shakespeare," and a hilariously tragic version of *Hamlet* in First Form.

In more recent times we've offered a rotation of certain selected plays that fit with our Unit Studies. The Third Form has used *Mulan* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, while the Fourth Form has acted out *Les Misérables* and *Oliver*. Our Sixth Grade gave *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* a try for a year but has settled in on *Julius Caesar* ever since. Even Second Form does a regular, biennial performance of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

While the lines may be the same, each rendition of these familiar plays differs because the students, the scenery, and the portrayals change. Every year I hear the same post-performance declaration from parents, "This was the best one yet!" I hear the same phrase uttered following each graduation ceremony...and I've been doing them for nearly 15 years. The speeches, the slide show, the teachers' words of blessing are always "the best ones yet!"

The fact is, for each class, and for each parent in attendance, that event IS INDEED the best yet. This year we will take the best Bike Trip yet, the best New York trip yet, and our teachers and students and parents at the school will be the best ones yet! "The best yet" is all a matter of perspective.

And that leads to my invitation. Would you consider getting in touch with us to share with us your own perspective? Many of you have experienced travels around the world; you've graduated from high school and earned amazing degrees in college; you've gotten married and had kids; you have taken on fascinating and challenging careers; you have spoken, drawn, written, acted, built, learned, tasted, and experienced life more fully since leaving Rivendell's hallowed halls. We would love to hear about your experience, what you have learned, and who you have become.

Rivendell has changed a bit, too, and for the most part, I'd have to say it has been good change. (Though now and then I still miss the good old days.) We continue to grow and mature as people, and as a school. God is not finished doing His good work to perfect all of us and to continue to shape Rivendell School into a place that more fully reflects the character of Jesus. So, we still stand and greet parents when they enter the classroom, still say the Shema ("Hear, O Israel!") at Assembly, still sing the school song, and still provide half an hour for lunch and half an hour for recess each day. We continually look for ways to stay humble and faithful to the mission we have of Helping Children Explore God's World and Discover Their Place In It. As our school song says, "O Rivendell School you're the best"...ever.

Looking forward to hearing from you,



Byron List, *Headmaster*