

Dear friends and families at Covenant Christian Academy,

My family and I are thrilled to join the Covenant Christian Academy family and we look forward to personally meeting each of you in the coming months. Coming in from the outside, it is easy to see the marks of grace and labors of love that have shaped this school, and I am honored and blessed to lead CCA into its next chapter. Please pray with me that it will be a Christ-exalting and faithful read.



Aristotle described a good story as one in which events occur “unexpectedly but on account of each another.” That is to say, events are unpredictable beforehand, but afterward are recognized as just what had to happen. My wife and I believe this description fits our move to CCA. Serving as Headmaster of a classical Christian school was not a course I charted long ago, full of careful planning and foresight. Now that we are here, however, we can see how my background and experiences have prepared me for just such an opportunity.

I would like to use this letter to introduce myself and my family to you and to give an account of how it is that we have ended up at Covenant Christian Academy.

My first introduction to classical Christian education stretches back almost two decades. My parents helped to found a classical Christian school in West Dallas where my mother served as Headmistress for six years. My sister was a first-grade teacher there for a few years and I was a frequent volunteer. I can’t say I really understood classical education at that point, but I did catch a glimpse of the power a school culture has to impact an entire community.

My trajectory at this time, however, seemed to be toward the pastorate or the academy. This was itself a shift from my undergraduate major in Business Administration at Colorado State. In the following years I often questioned my decision to major in business. Surely a good liberal art would have been better preparation for my life in ministry. In the succeeding years, however, I have more and more appreciated my early training in business, recognizing how valuable it is in many ministry settings, including here at CCA. We need this ship to sail to a destination, not merely drift about in good ideas and dreams!

Between college and seminary I may have walked nearby some of your houses if you live near the Appalachian Trail. You probably wouldn’t have recognized me back then, however, as I wore the long scraggly beard of an AT thruhiker. The section through Pennsylvania was hard (rocks!), but the entire experience taught me a lot about perseverance and self-discipline. On the trail, as in life,



David hiking AT in 2000.

some days you succeed just by faithfully putting one foot in front of the other again and again.

Continuing my move toward ministry, I completed a Th.M. degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. I am thankful for the many godly professors who shaped and sharpened my thinking during those years. I enjoyed studying theology and learning the biblical languages, hopefully not becoming *too* much of a theology geek. Throughout those years I also volunteered at West Dallas Community school and continued to see the power of classical Christian education.

My wife, Joy, and I met in 2005, when we were both working at CAMP-of-the-WOODS, a Christian family resort in New York's Adirondack mountains. She was just there for the summer, fresh out of graduate school with a master's degree in Biblical Studies from Wheaton Graduate School and no clear idea of what to do next. I was also a recent graduate—from DTS—and had just become the director of COTW's discipleship and leadership program for college-aged students. It was soon apparent that Joy was entangled in more than summer employment. We were married the following summer and she then joined me on staff with the discipleship ministry.



Our time at LIFT shaped us both in significant ways. LIFT stands for Leaders in Further Training, and each semester we led about a dozen college-aged students through an entire curriculum of biblical and theological studies, leadership training, wilderness adventure, and service in the local community. Over the years we also led teams on short-term mission trips to serve missionaries in Alaska, assist in prison ministry and medical-relief in Nigeria, and visit a ministry to women in Thailand's Red Light district. My experiences directing LIFT helped me see God's power to change lives.



David and Joy in Jos, Nigeria.

We next decided it was time for me to pursue that Ph.D. that was always on my mind. We selected the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and spent the next several years pursuing a doctorate in theology (or Divinity as the Scots call it). My thesis, which I successfully defended this past September—thanks be to God!—was on theological responses to secularism and nihilism in the (post-)modern world, focusing primarily on the thought of Robert W. Jenson and Alexander Schmemmann. For those whom that last sentence piqued interest rather than sleepiness, we can talk more another time. But for the rest of you: Yes, I did golf. No, I am not very good. :-)





The greatest blessings we brought back from Scotland were from the hospital not the academy. Our daughter, Ellie, was born in 2009 and our son, Ian, in 2011. Ellie is very excited to be starting Kindergarten this fall and if you meet her you will no doubt hear her little voice narrating all kinds of delightful observations. Ian will turn three in August and he loves to play with trains and to sneak up and crawl on unsuspecting folk. You have been warned.



This past year we moved to Binghamton, NY so that Joy could complete a one-year accelerated Bachelor's in nursing. Squeezing a full degree into one year leads to an interesting schedule. And by interesting I mean ridiculously full. I therefore stayed home with our children for this year, while also making the final corrections and edits on my Ph.D. thesis. It was a wonderful year and we are grateful for how God sustained and led us during this time. I am especially grateful that I was able to spend this time with Ellie and Ian. Joy is eager to graduate from nursing school in a few weeks and looks forward to resuming more cherished time with Ellie and Ian. She is also really looking forward to joining the CCA family for this next chapter in our lives.

When Ellie turned four last summer we decided to join a local *Classical Conversations* co-op. Watching the grammar-level students feast on the curriculum rekindled my interest in classical Christian education, begun all those years before in West Dallas. I began enthusiastically reading about classical methodology, visiting classical schools and exploring the possibility of starting a classical Christian school in the Binghamton area.

It was around this time that I decided to reconnect with my longtime friend Nate Winters. Nate was actually the founding director of the LIFT discipleship program I mentioned above. Joy and I had both, at different times, been students in LIFT prior to eventually working there, and Nate and Kim both made a great impact on us. I knew that he was involved with a classical school in Harrisburg, but I didn't know anything about it. Nor did I know about the Headmaster search, until a few days before our long-scheduled meeting. Over a three hour lunch at the Cracker Barrel in Wilkes-Barre, Nate told me all about CCA and the opportunities here. I expressed my interest in the position and he encouraged me to send a letter to the search committee.

Things have moved quickly from there and Joy and I are still marveling at how our call to CCA came together this spring. It has been a very encouraging and confirming time. We are genuinely delighted about this heretofore unexpected turn in our lives. We believe that God is at work at CCA, shaping boys and girls into young men and young women who yearn for truth and beauty in a time of distraction, who discern wisdom in an age of superficialities, and who love Jesus Christ above all else. Thank you for your warm welcome to CCA. Please pray with us as we embark on this vital task of educating children for God's glory.

In Christ,

David Sonju