



Who We Are: Explaining the Mission Statement of Trinity School

The mission of Trinity School is to educate students in kindergarten to grade twelve within the framework of Christian faith and conviction—teaching the classical tools of learning; providing a rich yet unhurried curriculum; and communicating truth, goodness, and beauty.

At Trinity School we seek to create a community in which there is delight in learning and an atmosphere that encourages the sort of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic development that is fitting for those who bear the image of God. We want to challenge our students in a way that stimulates their natural curiosity, guiding their discovery toward personal, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

In the following pages we offer a more detailed explanation of some of the distinctives of our school:

- The Framework of Christian Faith
- The Classical Tools of Learning
- A Rich Curriculum
- An Unhurried Curriculum
- Communicating Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

Education is primarily the responsibility and privilege of parents, and Trinity School seeks to enter into a partnership with our parents toward the goal of an excellent education. Our aim is to support families by bringing our special resources to bear to help them attain their educational and spiritual goals. To this end, we encourage each family to be actively involved in the child's life as a Trinity student, and we look forward to working together to develop this community of learning called Trinity School.

The Framework of Christian Faith

Trinity School is a Christian school. Trinity aspires to be a place where children learn that God is at the heart of all that we are and do, that we do not belong to ourselves but to God, that the chief purpose of our lives is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. At Trinity, we aim to set our children out upon a journey of learning about God and the world he has made, with the hope that they will enter into a personal relationship with God through Christ, and follow the path of discipleship and vocation wherever God leads.

As a Christian school, Trinity seeks to be evangelical, orthodox, and ecumenical. We are a nondenominational, board-governed school, with over 40 churches represented in the student body. Parents are not required to subscribe doctrinally to our statement of faith, although everyone in the Trinity School community is expected to support the school's Christian mission. We welcome into the Trinity School community those families from differing theological

traditions or from secular backgrounds who respect and support the school's mission and policies.

As an evangelical school, we recognize and accept the authority of the Scriptures and the doctrine that salvation is found in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. The evangelical tradition has always affirmed that a personal and transforming relationship with God through Jesus Christ is essential to the Christian life. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ, applied through the work of the Holy Spirit, has the power to save from both the guilt and power of sin and to remake a person, enabling him or her to live the blessed life forever in God's holy presence. Upon this foundation alone is real and lasting character and virtue built, and by such faith will our school's leaders model true discipleship for the students.

When we claim that Trinity is an orthodox school, we affirm that there are ideas and doctrines that are correct, right, and true. Orthodoxy holds that the gospel has a specific factual and theological content (I Corinthians 15:1–11; Galatians 1:6–9; I Timothy 6:3), and that the Scriptures, the inspired word of God, tell us all that we need to know about God and how we should relate to him. This clearly presents a challenge to the intellectual and moral relativism of our age.

Beginning with the first seven Councils of the Church, the Scriptures have been interpreted to affirm Trinitarian and Christological truths apart from which the redemption of humanity is impossible. Trinity's doctrinal statement below is a summary of these basic Christian tenets. All Board members, teachers, and staff must unreservedly affirm and support the following doctrinal commitments:

We believe in:

- The only true God, the almighty Creator of all things, existing eternally in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—full of love and glory.
- The unique divine inspiration, entire trustworthiness and authority of the Bible.
- The value and dignity of all people: created in God's image to live in love and holiness, but alienated from God and each other because of our sin and guilt, and justly subject to God's wrath.
- Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, who lived as a perfect example, who assumed the judgment due sinners by dying in our place, and who was bodily raised from the dead and ascended as Savior and Lord.
- Justification by God's grace to all who repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.
- The indwelling presence and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all believers a new life and new calling to obedient service.
- The unity of all believers in Jesus Christ, manifest in worshiping and witnessing churches making disciples throughout the world.
- The victorious reign and future personal return of Jesus Christ, who will judge all people with justice and mercy, giving over the unrepentant to eternal condemnation but receiving the redeemed into eternal life.

Trinity's Board, faculty, and staff are committed to the Triune God, and to the basic tenets of Christianity as expressed by the orthodox and evangelical traditions. We share a common vision to create at our school a Christian community characterized by a living and culturally engaging faith. Teachers, staff, and Board members must demonstrate a vibrant faith consisting of true knowledge of God and of personal trust in the Lord Jesus. They must be able to give a clear

testimony of their faith in Christ and must be exemplary Christian role models in every area of their lives.

Rooted in these evangelical and orthodox traditions, Trinity aspires also to be an ecumenical school, one that furthers the cooperation and unity of the church as the Body of Christ. While acknowledging the existence of denominational differences in theology and practice, we emphasize those truths that Christians have believed in common for centuries, across boundaries of time, place, race, and culture. We are excited to be involved in an endeavor that has the potential to bring together Christians of many different traditions and racial and ethnic groups to grow together in our knowledge of God and his world, and to train our children in his ways and give them the tools to think from a thoroughly Christian perspective about every subject and issue in a way that transcends denominationalism.

The Classical Tools of Learning

Education in the West, from the Greeks through medieval times and into the modern era, has given pride of place to the study of the seven liberal arts: grammar, dialectic (logic), rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. In the classical model of education, the first three of these made up the *Trivium*, the elementary level of study in which students acquired the tools of learning—including a sound knowledge of language and the ability to speak and write logically and persuasively. The remaining four liberal arts constituted the *Quadrivium*, an advanced level in which students applied their skills to the study of the mathematical and physical sciences.

We at Trinity have been influenced by Dorothy Sayers' essay, "The Lost Tools of Learning," which is both an inspiring tribute to the value of the liberal arts and also a creative proposal for reviving the classical approach to education. This model of learning is quite different from one that focuses on merely learning content. Instead, students learn how to learn for themselves as they apply the tools of learning to the various subjects of the curriculum. Sayers links the three stages of the Trivium to what we know about the development of children. At each stage of the child's development, learning will take on a character of its own:

Pre-Grammar/Grammar (Grades K–2 / 3–6). At this stage, elementary school students are eager and adept learners. We capitalize on this desire by giving them many opportunities to memorize, to categorize, and to experience and absorb the rich world of books and things. Thus, teaching methods at Trinity School focus on the "grammar" or fundamental facts and rules of each subject, so that they learn to "play the games" of the different subjects.

Logic (Grades 7–8). At this stage, middle-grade students are naturally curious and argumentative. Their capacity for abstract thinking is beginning to develop, and subjects like algebra and formal logic exercise their mental faculties. In other subjects at this stage, students are encouraged to learn how to ask questions, to discuss ideas, to analyze, to reason well in their various subjects, to debate questions, and to discover how to find answers for themselves. This is the stage in which students begin to think about thinking.

Rhetoric (Grades 9–10). At this stage, high school students begin to develop their own sense of identity. Thus, teaching methods focus on instructing them how to express what they know and what they are learning with grace and clarity through essay writing, speech, and debate. A special emphasis is placed on understanding the interdisciplinary connections of their subjects: Rhetoric involves not only the mastery of clear and eloquent speech, but also the unifying of all subjects into a whole understanding.

In grades 11 and 12, the *Quadrivium*, students apply the tools of learning acquired in the Trivium to individual subjects and further refine their powers of written and verbal self-expression. Trinity School currently offers grades K–8 (the pre-grammar/grammar and logic stages) and we look forward to offering grades 9–12 (the rhetoric stage and the *Quadrivium*) in the near future.

These stages correspond to the natural development of children as they progress from concrete to abstract thinking. Each stage therefore varies in terms of its learning style, appropriate subject matter and assignments, balance of oral and written work, degree of student independence, and methods of assessment. Yet the Trivium is a unity. The stages are connected: the later stages depend upon the earlier ones, putting the tools of learning acquired earlier to new and expanded uses and thus equipping students to master the other subjects they will encounter in college, in graduate school, and in their vocations.

A Rich Curriculum

Trinity’s emphasis on a rich curriculum derives from the notion that children are created in the image of God. As such, they have the capacity to experience and reflect on God’s world, and the capacity to know truth, do good, and appreciate beauty. Charlotte Mason, an English educator in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, observed that all children are born eager to learn, with wide intellectual interests. Even the youngest children are curious about their world. They are inquisitive and absorb information easily, and they interact with that information, with the “living ideas” that nourish their active brains.

Children’s minds are not empty vessels needing to be filled full of facts and information. Rather, children are active learners with an appetite for learning. They are living persons that thrive on age-appropriate ideas from all of life. The role of the teacher is to ignite the fire of knowledge by leading the students through a rich curriculum of books and things.

Mason believed that children can tell good materials from poor ones, and accordingly, she advocated a curriculum that allows children to interact with the best materials available and ones suited to their developmental stage. This includes “living books” (well-written, worthwhile books, the classics of all eras), classics of art and music, and ample first-hand interaction with the actual materials of nature and science.

Mason also taught that the most meaningful education occurs when a person forms relationships with an idea, a story, a painting, a piece of music, or an object of nature. These relationships may be cognitive or aesthetic, intellectual or emotional, but they involve more than the mere memorization of facts. Rather, students become familiar with their object of study, identifying its interesting details, connecting it to its time in history, relating it to other works. In their study of it, the students make it their own, and like people we have come to know, it is not easily forgotten. At Trinity we seek to enable and foster this kind of learning.

Trinity School aims to offer a rich curriculum for all students. Our focus is on living ideas: ideas that stimulate thought, inquiry, and inference, and lead students to acquire not merely information but *knowledge*. This focus is sometimes realized in a broad curriculum, sometimes in a deep one. By active engagement with living ideas, captured in the great conversations and traditions of Western and non-Western cultures, our students gain knowledge about the past and learn to relate to the world around them.

An Unhurried Curriculum

Our culture seems too often hurried and greedy, wanting as much as possible as soon as possible. Many in our world are discontented with a quiet life of minding their own business (I Thessalonians 4:11). Our world pressures children and families into an accelerated pace of life and learning, and often ignores the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 4:6: “Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.”

At Trinity, learning to live an unhurried life is seen as an essential part of a godly education. This takes daily decisions by faculty and parents to resist cultural and personal temptations to intellectual greed and envy that prompt us to want to teach everything, learn everything, accelerate formal learning, or copy another school or family. A child’s education is broader than just that which occurs at school. There are in fact three spheres of education:

Formal education in school. This covers the things every child should learn, but at Trinity is oriented especially toward the love of learning, tools for learning, ways of organizing learning, and ways of communicating.

Formal education outside of school. Church and Sunday School activities fall within this sphere, as do lessons and activities that address the interests and talents particular to the child, such as dance, music, Scouting, and sports. Trinity assists with formal out-of-school education by offering a variety of after-school clubs and courses, and the school’s schedule and pace is designed to leave time for lessons outside of school. Beginning at the middle grades, Trinity also provides an interscholastic athletics program that serves a large percentage of our students.

Informal education. This occurs both inside and outside of school and includes time with family and playmates and time alone for reading, investigation, and contemplation. At Trinity we value the informal times when life’s lessons are often best learned: after school, at breaks and recess, on field trips, at those serendipitous times when the schedule is disrupted. Play is, in a special sense, the unique “work” of children, for by it their imaginations are awakened and nurtured. We believe that allowing children and young adults the time and opportunity to play is a vital part of an excellent education. Trinity’s shorter school day and year, and our emphasis on little homework before the teen years, aim to protect this time.

Attempting to balance the demands of school and of family, Trinity allows time for children to grow in academics, in the arts, in sports and recreation, and in the other opportunities their families choose.

We believe that a truly rich and intellectual education need not be rushed. Trinity is a place where children are free to be children, to learn as children, to play and read in ways that fit their natural bent at each age. Trinity’s developmentally sensitive curriculum respects children as maturing, but not yet fully mature, bearers of God’s image. Without accelerating them, we want to challenge them with the information and problems that will grow their imaginations and their abilities naturally, and so help nurture in them a lifelong love of learning.

Communicating Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

Truth, goodness, and beauty are the great transcendentals of the classical tradition. The intellectual, moral, and aesthetic experiences are avenues by which human beings have moved outside the self and have come to know spiritual realities. At Trinity, these great transcendentals are interpreted through a specifically Christian vision: We believe their source and medium is

the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In pursuing these transcendentals, we urge one another on to a fuller vision of God in Christ.

- Trinity School welcomes all *truth* as God’s truth. This perspective promotes unfettered inquiry in which all subjects may be studied and all questions asked. At the same time, Trinity seeks to understand and adopt God’s interpretation of every aspect of life, integrating all subjects in a unified perspective that is thoroughly Christian and consistent with the Scriptures.
- Trinity seeks to provide an education in *goodness*, one that develops the conscience and teaches virtuous habits. Most importantly, we hope to plant and tend the seed of faith in Jesus Christ, without which true goodness is impossible, and to help shape that faith into deep spirituality and Christian character. By encouraging such habits as fairness, humility, truthfulness, self-control, perseverance, courage, and compassion, Trinity prepares students for benevolent engagement with the culture at large. Such moral education is accomplished through precept and praise, through examples from history and literature, and through the living example of parents, teachers, and school leaders, by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our students.
- Trinity also nurtures an appreciation for reflections of God’s glory and *beauty* in nature, in the arts, in culture, and in human relationships. We believe that both aesthetic discernment and imaginative expression are important aspects of education. Trinity exposes students to sublime expressions of beauty, cultivates the imagination, and strives to develop in every student an ability to re-express God’s beauty in creative ways.

Trinity is blessed to have faculty members who on a daily basis strive to communicate and to model the truth, goodness, and beauty that flow from God and can be seen in his world.

Christianity is at the heart of who we are. The Christian education we offer is not superficially religious, a mere overlay of Bible courses, prayer, and chapel services upon an otherwise secular curriculum. Through prayer and through the study and memorization of Scripture, through the Christian witness of teachers and staff, inside and outside of the classroom, Trinity students can come to love God and to grow in their knowledge of Him. Believing that all truth is God’s truth, we teach students to use the classical tools of learning in their study of both secular and Christian thought in the arts, literature, and science. In so doing, we foster students’ growth both in knowledge and in discernment of what is true, beautiful and good, and encourage them to develop a lifelong love of learning. Through such means as community service, public speaking, debate, and exposure to non-Christian viewpoints, Trinity seeks to train students to participate in and transform the society in which they live.

For Further Reading

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Blamires, Harry. 1963. *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books.

Gaebelein, Frank E. 1968. *The Pattern of God’s Truth: Integration of Faith and Learning*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

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- Mason, Charlotte. 1925. *The Original Homeschooling Series*, vols. 1–6. Reprinted 1989. Union, ME: Charlotte Mason Research & Supply.
- Mason, Charlotte. “Concerning children as persons.” London, England: Parents’ National Educational Union.
- Sayers, Dorothy. 1947. “The lost tools of learning.” Originally published in *The Hibbert Journal*. London, England: Methuen & Co., Ltd.
- Veith, Gene Edward Jr., and Andrew Kern. 1997. *Classical Education: Towards the Revival of American Schooling*. Washington, DC: Capital Research Center.
- Wilson, Douglas. 1991. *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Additional documents available in the Trinity Office

- The Philosophy of Charlotte Mason at Trinity School
- Trinity School policy documents on the following subjects:
 - Computers and Technology
 - Foreign Language
 - Math Enrichment
 - Teaching of Creation and Origins