



Church of the Redeemer
PARISH DAY SCHOOL

Dear Folks,

Last fall we formed a visioning committee to dream about expanding the Parish Day School into the elementary grades, guided by a commitment to only grow if it benefitted the School, the parish, and the community around us. We invited educators and parents, vestry and a former PDS board chair to join us, and we asked local school leaders to challenge our assumptions. The process clarified who we uniquely are, what we value, and why now might be the right time to grow. And because the pandemic compelled us to add a first-grade option this program year, as we write to you, 16 first graders are thriving in a repurposed room at the bottom of the parish hall stairs.

In June, we met with Nancy Grasmick, former Superintendent of the Maryland State Department of Education, to think out loud with us about two ways we might grow: upward in grade level and more deeply into our relationship with Govans School. Her response was immediate and strong. "By expanding to the third grade, Redeemer will complete early childhood education, a precious gift to the current landscape of schools. And by creating an on-going partnership with Govans, you offer a rare public-private partnership that can knock down walls that divide us." Go for it, she said, and you've got a fan in your corner. On Tuesday, the Vestry voted their commitment and full support of the School's case for growth!

Here's what we are excited about. The Parish Day School is a small, inclusive Episcopal School which welcomes diverse families from different religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds. We provide a nurturing environment grounded in early childhood learning—experiential, student-driven, open-ended, multi-sensory... active, playful, noisy, messy... and full of joy. Through listening and reflection, our students are helped to solve problems, make decisions, and communicate effectively with other children and adults. Music is part of our daily life, which presents exciting possibilities to partner with the Choir School of Baltimore. Our eight-acre campus and curriculum stretch minds and bodies, invite exploration and wonder, and model how to learn from our mistakes. We are committed to providing an affordable option for early grades, with small classes and low teacher-student ratios, and we offer need-based financial aid. Our teachers and students are faithful, welcoming, courageous, and kind.

The work ahead is to continue listening to every stakeholder, especially as we design curriculum and develop ways that Redeemer and Govans can help each other. It also includes fostering a culture of stewardship within the School community to support an annual fund, capital costs, and an endowment. In the next program year, additional students will mean having classrooms in learning cottages, and we will also need to discover space in our buildings for special programs. Continued growth will call for more permanent structures, we imagine, and School alumni and the parish community will be invited to take part in that development.

Students are fundamentally shaped in the earliest years, we believe, and so as we add elementary grades and a child-centered partnership with Govans School, we offer a program that will not only change individual lives, but our city along with it. That's the vision which nourishes us. If someone asks you about the Redeemer Parish Day School's plans for growth, tell them this: *We are educating children to be curious, confident learners, discovering each person's unique worth and beauty, building an inclusive and equitable community, strengthening the School, the parish, and Baltimore.* Will you grow with us?

Faithfully,

David Ware, Rector

Mary Knott, Parish Day School Director