



November 2020



Dear Friends of Unity,

I have been enjoying my time here as the new Development Director at Unity, although there is a lot of work to do! The teachers and staff members are an amazing, hard-working group of Christians, and the students are simply FANTABULOUS! They are so polite, study hard, work well with each other, care for and respect one another...it's wonderful to see them in action every day.

Each day we begin with our "Belong to Jesus Time" where Pastor Aaron Dickerson leads the students in a time of worship, Bible readings and a short devotional message. On Wednesdays we have Chapel, often with a guest speaker. One eighth grade student recently told me that she has heard her friends here go from saying "I don't believe in God" to saying "God is my Savior and Father, He's my everything" just because they attend Unity School. All these hours spent learning more about God and hearing His Word are impacting these students, not just for eternity, but in how they live out their daily lives. Many of our students come from unstable family situations, 90% come from low-income families and 80% come from unchurched homes. Our school is in East St. Louis, IL, which sadly has the following statistics:

**More than 2/3 of the city's children live in poverty and the average household income is \$20,000.*

**The public school system here is ranked as one of the worst in the state. The East St. Louis High School dropout rate is 10%, its graduation rate is only 69%, and only 49% go on to college.*

**East St Louis has had 453 murders since 2000, and in 2016 it was labeled with the title of "highest murder rate in the country" ...and it has held that title every year since then.*

This is the city where many of our students live and where our school shines its bright light! It truly is a mission field. I feel we are living out Proverbs 3:27: "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act." While we can't assist every impoverished child in America, we can, in this small town, help 140 students (and thus impact their families) with the love of Jesus on a daily basis. We want to continue to influence those that ARE within our power to reach, children in our circle of influence. And today we invite YOU to join us in this effort, as you are ABLE. One thing I just LOVE here is that every morning we say our "Daily Affirmation":

I belong to God and I am everything that He says I am. I am beautiful because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, in the image of God. I am intelligent because He fills me with wisdom and spiritual understanding. I have friends because I am friendly. I am accepted because I am a part of His family through Jesus' shed blood. I am capable because He gives me strength. Today, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I say, "Yes" to God and His ways.

Isn't that AWESOME?? 😊

When these students say this out loud every day, they begin to really believe the words are true, despite their circumstances. Some students walk to school each day past abandoned buildings, homes in disarray, or ones that have burned. If they don't have adults in their lives speaking positive messages of hope, they can often let what they see every day limit their belief that they can build a

better life for themselves. But here at Unity, we daily try to strengthen their beliefs... that God loves them, that He made them for a SPECIFIC purpose in this life, that they have talents this world can benefit from, that they CAN graduate from high school and attend college, that they can go after any career they set their mind on! But it takes dedicated teachers to daily teach them not only the core subjects but to strengthen their faith in God and build up their self-confidence. If you have not visited our website, please do so at www.Unityesl.org or visit our Facebook page at "Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School." We have videos and our newsletters posted on both media sites, which show our students and teachers in action!



So that is why I am writing to you today. Our teachers and staff are doing all they can to make the lives of these 143 students dramatically different than those around them. Without our school, many would have to attend the public schools and thus become part of those statistics you read about. With your help in the past, we have been able to keep this school open since 2003. We need your help, now more than ever, to continue this mission. Covid has made this year more difficult and requires the staff to spend more time and resources just to make it through the day following Covid protocol. But we believe 1 John 4:4 is true and that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." We are confident God will help us continue this mission.

Tuition costs about \$6,000/student for the year. Every family pays some tuition, based on their family income. About 20% of the tuition fee comes from the families, as we believe everyone needs to pay some portion of their child's fees. Another 30% comes from churches and foundations. That means the remaining 50% needs to come from our wonderful individual donors. So I invite you to join us this year for our Annual Fund. Won't you please consider a gift? Some people have been giving faithfully for a decade or more, and we **PRAISE GOD** for your continued faithfulness!

Another one of my favorite verses is Proverbs 11:25 "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." God will refresh us for our service to Him, so I always like to tell people, "GO BE A REFRESHER!!" And by donating to Unity, you are doing just that... you are refreshing our students by allowing them to attend here on scholarships, and you are refreshing our staff by keeping our bills paid so we can put our full efforts into teaching and administrating. By refreshing us, God will refresh you! 😊

If you would like to donate, checks can be made out to "Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School" and mailed back in the envelope enclosed. You can also give online by going to our website www.Unityesl.org. Click on the "Donate" button. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone or by email as shown below.

Thanks for being a "Refresher!"
In His Joy,

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