

The History of Hickory Christian Academy

A Timeline of God's Faithfulness

Hickory Christian Academy was established on the basis of three scriptural principles: prayer, God's Word, and faith. These three principles have been woven together as three strands of a cord throughout the history of the school. Time and again, these three principles come to the forefront as HCA grows and prospers under God's guidance. As we look back, we clearly see God's provision for the school, and it is because of His provision that we can confidently look forward and know that He will provide for the school in the future. *"The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; thou dost support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me."* Psalm 16:5-6 (NAS).

In November 1994, God gave the vision for starting a Christian school in Hickory to a small women's prayer group. After a time of prayer and fasting to seek God's purpose for our group, the vision of a Christian school was conceived. It was a vision completely from the Lord, confirmed by His Word through prayer, the first two strands of the cord. God gave us a picture from the book of Daniel of young people being set apart and trained in excellence. We had no experience in establishing a school and had to depend on God through fervent prayer regarding the next step.

God led us to a future school board member who had read a book by Douglas Wilson, called Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning. Now the school had some semblance of a plan – follow the classical, Christian model outlined in Wilson's book. God even provided a classical, Christian school nearby in Greensboro for consultation. The next step was to pray, research, and wait for God to open doors, which He did in His perfect timing.

In July 1995, the school still had no teachers, no facility, no money, no curriculum, no name, and only four students, all children of board members. What the school's organizers did have was faith, the third strand in the cord. This faith was affirmed through God's Word, which He supplied constantly. Under God's leading and after much prayer, the decision was made to begin classes. In September 1995, Hickory Christian Academy opened its doors with three teachers and 19 students in the "Educational Wing" of Highland Baptist Church.

The second year for HCA began with another miracle. Three days before school was to start, one teaching position remained unfilled. The board and teachers had gathered at a member's house to pray. As we were on our knees praying, the phone rang with a teacher inquiring as to possible employment, referred to the school by a parent. God supplied every need that year just like the first.

Year three brought 85 students to HCA and a wonderful need for more classroom space. The board prayed and God led them to agree to purchase a modular building, acting on faith without sufficient funds to pay for the building. The very next day, God led a parent in the school to supply the down payment and finance the balance, interest free. God had proven His faithfulness once again. The threads of prayer, God's Word and faith continued to weave the history of HCA.

The fourth year brought HCA 125 students, a full-time headmaster, a second successful silent auction and an anonymous \$100,000 donor to meet our financial needs. By year five, HCA had grown to 166 students, a staff of 24 godly individuals and a new depth of dependence on God for the future. In year six, HCA entered the logic stage of the trivium by adding seventh

grade. HCA had a student body of 185 that year and drew from over thirty churches and 107 families.

Year seven began with 198 students, but it proved to be a year of testing. Our headmaster of the past 3 years did not return and, due to space constraints, we decided to try a dual-campus situation, dividing our students between Highland Baptist and First Baptist Church in Hickory. This proved to be logistically difficult for our interim administrator to supervise while he was learning the system. During the school year, several families and faculty members left the school, and it seemed that we were in a crisis situation. But God was still watching over our school and providing the things we needed to continue our ministry. Little did we know at the time that He was pruning us for the future.

Year eight brought several new teachers and a renewed commitment to Classical Christian education. We added a second administrator and consolidated back to one campus at Highland Baptist Church. We had “high school” kids for the first time as we entered the Rhetoric stage in 9th grade. The enrollment had dropped to 177, but those who remained were faithful to see the school succeed. The school was provided a beautiful 31 acre plot of land to purchase for future construction.

Year nine found our area in the midst of a major economic recession, making tuition payments difficult. Yet, we were the only private school to increase in enrollment, beginning the year with 180 students. We also began a capital campaign to raise funds to build our own facility. Maintaining the standard of excellence was difficult with limited funds. Adding grades without adding overall enrollment takes a financial toll. For the first time, the school accumulated some financial debt. Our prayer focus moved toward enrollment. Adding students was the only way to meet budget without sacrificing quality. God saw fit to give us several avenues of public relations to get our name more prevalent in the community, including a state championship in 1A boys’ soccer.

Our tenth year saw an affirmative answer to our prayers. We began the school year with 220 full-time students and 3 part-time students, drawing from over 140 families in the Catawba Valley area. For the first time in several years, we finished within budget. We entered a partnership with the Hickory Community Chapel to build on their land, and share the facility for their Sunday School needs. As the year progressed, God supplied every need, including the bank loan to begin construction. On April 16, 2005, HCA celebrated ten years of God’s blessings. We held an event at Sandy Ridge Baptist Church, highlighting the history of the school, and including a special presentation to the founding parents of HCA. Two weeks later, on April 28, we broke ground at the Hickory Community Chapel site, and construction began on our new facility.

Year eleven saw another increase in enrollment, to 247. This proved to be another year of testing for the school, as the construction process took much more time and money than originally anticipated. The school was too large to be housed completely by Highland Baptist, so we were forced to search for alternate locations. New Hope Baptist Church stepped up and saved the day. They took all our half-day students (approximately 55) for the year, free of charge. What a blessing! 1st – 12th grade continued to meet at Highland, but we committed to leaving their facility once the school year ended since they were ready to begin some renovations. The big news from the 2005-2006 school year was the graduation of our first group of seniors. Charis Craig, Kyle Keller, Elijah Lackey, Andy Peeler, Zack Sigmon, and Kelly Smith became the original graduates of Hickory Christian Academy. All six were accepted to the college of their choice, including Elijah’s acceptance to West Point, following the

recommendation from congressman Patrick McHenry. The ceremony was very emotional, and provided the unity we needed during the tough times of being in limbo during the building process.

Year twelve began with the disappointing news that the new building was still not complete. With our agreement to leave Highland, we were left without a home. However, God was still faithful, and opened the door for our half-day kids to remain at New Hope. In addition, First Baptist Church in Hickory welcomed us into their facility until our construction was complete. While we were literally working out of boxes, and with bare-bones supplies, we made the best of it, and started the school year off successfully. Finally, on November 15, 2006, we began the move! All of our high school students, and many of our parents participated in the move, finishing it in 5 days. Even though the facility was not completely finished when we moved in, the blessing of having our own building was incredible. For the first time in eight years, we had every student under one roof. For the first time ever, we held athletic events in our own gym, instead of begging local churches for their facilities. Now with 278 students in a “real” school building, HCA began to take on the look of a legitimate school. The year ended with our first Knighting ceremony of the 15 graduates in the class of 2007.

The thirteenth year of the school began in our very own school building. This was the first time that we did not have to rent moving trucks and storage buildings to house our things during the summer, so setup for the school year was greatly simplified. There was also a sense of legitimacy for the faculty and staff as we prepared for a year of school in this beautiful new space which God had provided us. The year was not without its bumps, but was a very successful year overall. The year began with 322 students, which filled up the building immediately. Our soccer and volleyball teams each won their third consecutive state titles, the high school was beginning to fill up, and HCA was transitioning from an infant school to an adolescent school. The highlight of the year was our U-Knighted We Stand Capital Campaign in which God provided \$2 Million toward our building debt through the pledges of private donors. This news certainly allowed us to enter the summer with great anticipation of the future.

It is not possible to share every story or provision because HCA has been built on miracle after miracle, each one a testimony to God’s greatness. As we look back at our rich heritage, we see what God has done not what man has done. He is the center of HCA and must remain so if this school is to exist. God has continually and abundantly poured out His blessings on the school. In the first ten years, the school experienced a 1200% increase in enrollment. This magnitude of growth reveals the need for a classical, Christian school in the Hickory area that is independent of any church or denominational affiliation. It also reflects God’s desire to see HCA grow and prosper. We sought God’s leading while expanding HCA to a preschool through 12th grade institution of classical, Christian education bringing glory to His name and serving Christian families in the Catawba Valley. *“We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God.” Ps. 78:4-7 (NAS)*