

Exodus 18 *Jethro Visits Moses*

7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them.

9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

Dear Christian Friends,

I want to tell you what the LORD has done for DLHS this school year.

As we close in on yet another graduation, I cannot help but think that it was one year ago that our high school faced tremendous uncertainty about its future existence. We were literally in the hands of the Egyptians and Pharaoh. I remember many calm voices of reason speaking from the chaos saying, "Turn it over to God, He is greater than any debt." And so we did. And God worked through His people to give 1.1 million dollars in less than a month. And then he worked through LCEF to take over our debt. Then He really showed His power when the bond investors agreed to our offer. He saved our school. Miracles do happen. We're back.

Like Moses, I have told the story of what the LORD did for DLHS to everyone I know. The typical reaction is much like Jethro's – "Praise

God!" And so like Jethro, we as a faculty at DLHS dedicated our school year to the "greatness of God" – a reoccurring theme found in our staff devotions and our chapels. Our theme for the year was appropriately titled, ". . . with God all things are possible."

God has continued to work his good in our school. I had four main goals that were presented to the faculty one year ago. The first goal was for students and staff to be in the Word more. Mr. Craig Parrott was named the "spiritual director" for DLHS. He has guided the themes and tone of our chapel services and also acquired a beautiful new altar and podium. I believe the overall focus, quality, and tone of our chapels have improved greatly. Under Mr. Parrott's direction, our staff development and devotion times have focused on "sanctification" – the work that God (through the Holy Spirit) does in us. I know that I have grown personally in my faith through what God has done through Mr. Parrott.

My second goal was overall **improvement in communication from DLHS to students and parents.** I found this to be the most difficult goal to accomplish, but I believe improvement was made. We changed the look, content, and direction of our monthly newsletter (thank you Cathy Hellmers). Athletic updates and upcoming events were viewable weekly through K12planet.com (thank you Cheryl Cattau). Our website has undergone numerous changes so that weekly announcements are now viewable on the front-page (thank you Mr. Hellmers). A marker board kiosk was added to the lobby at the front of the school to give important reminders to students as they enter the building.

The third goal was to **change the written discipline system to properly administer law and Gospel.** A disciplinary step system with levels of consequences was put in place prior to the start of the school year. Various rules concerning absences, tardies, and being late for school were changed. I believe we are becoming a school where inappropriate actions receive appropriate consequences, and yet students can separate the consequence of the sin from how we feel about the sinner. Students whose behavior was deemed serious enough by our handbook to warrant expulsion were asked to leave. I anticipate some minor adjustments this summer to make our system even more effective in dealing with student discipline.

My fourth goal was to improve the “look” of our grounds. This is an ongoing improvement, but our fields, lawns, and parking lot look better than they ever have. Mr. Warren Kettner has always done a great job with grounds maintenance, but we hired one of our own students, junior Matt Ramos, to assist him with grounds and building maintenance. Matt has been a gift from God and has worked after school all year to keep things looking good. I am looking forward to this summer where some minor projects can improve our grounds even more.

Along the way, school safety was improved as well. The school emergency response plan was redone and response binders were added to each room in the building. Students underwent evacuation and lockdown drills. The outside lunch area was moved to the back north patio, away from Arizona Avenue. Students and parents learned to use the west entrance as the pickup/dropoff area. The main west entrance became the only open door to the building during the day. Security cameras were used on two occasions to recover stolen property. More cameras and expanded capabilities will be installed this summer, using money raised at the association auction.

Mr. Stelling took four of our students on a mission trip to New Orleans in January. They spent a week cleaning and rebuilding homes that were devastated by Katrina. Both Mr. Stelling and Ms. Noffze will be taking another group to New Orleans during the first full week of June. I hope that DLHS will be able offer two opportunities a year for students to go on mission trips.

In an effort to improve classroom instruction, **students are being given the opportunity to anonymously evaluate each of their teachers** using a comprehensive, 34-question survey that the faculty approved in March. I will use the results of those surveys to identify areas of improvement for teachers for the next school year. Teacher evaluation and observation, along with a comprehensive plan for instructional improvement will be a major focus for next school year. This will go hand-in-hand with updating the objectives, scope, and sequence of our current curriculum to add to the updated course outlines which will appear on our website soon.

Many curriculum changes were put into affect for the next school year. These changes are highlighted by the addition of a freshmen honors English class and a required Introduction to Art

course. Future students will be required to take Public Speaking. Mr. Renquest has done an excellent job getting us through the first year of online courses at DLHS. We will maintain our relationship with the Orange Lutheran Online / GradPlus programs to offer both high school and college courses to students. Through OLO, we are able to offer Contemporary Math, Music Appreciation, Writing Seminar, and Economics for next year. Next year’s GradPlus courses range from Persuasive Writing to Behavioral Science.

This school year brought the addition of Mrs. Linda Cusimano to DLHS to lead our Concert Choir and Light Brigade. The work that God has done through her has been amazing. The Light Brigade has played a huge role at our Lutheran High Sundays and has showcased DLHS better than anything I could ever say about our school. Mrs. Cusimano also took over as our HOPE mentor when Mr. Trujillo moved to New Mexico in January. **Mr. Paul Duensing’s band went on tour to Hawaii over Spring Break** and a good time was had by all as they performed three times, visited Pearl Harbor, and enjoyed the nice weather. I believe the excitement level about our music programs is extremely high.

The DLHS drama team pulled off an amazing fall musical, *The Music Man*, incorporating an enormous set and a cast of over 70 students, 25 of which were grade school kids. Mr. Paul Von Rentzell and Mr. Andy Hellmers did an excellent job with its production. Not to be outdone, Mr. Troy Stelling directed 28 of our students in a production of *The Man who Came to Dinner*, a hilarious comedy that showcased the talents of our finest actors.

The DLHS athletic teams once again held their own against the tough competition of the Metro League. Mr. Larrabee’s football team dropped down a classification and produced a winning record and a trip to the playoffs. Mrs. Oates’ volleyball team had a winning season as well. Boys’ soccer and girls’ softball improved their records from the previous school year. Mr. Bredow’s boys’ basketball team came away from the winter season with another winning record, and the baseball and track teams hope to end their seasons this spring with runs into the state tournament. The spring season also saw the reintroduction of girls’ soccer to DLHS. Mr. Hollenbeck’s tennis team continues to improve every year.

DLHS students once again served their community through the Community Lights program directed by Mr. Ron Brandhorst. On three days during the school year, our students worked at local churches, schools, and non-profit organizations, shining as “Lights” to our community.

Our prayers go with **Miss Keri Meyer, who is moving back home to Illinois due to her engagement** and upcoming wedding in October. Her expertise in math will be missed. They also go with Miss Bethany Ritchey, who is seeking a job at another school to teach English or History. We are thankful for her contributions to DLHS this year as well. A huge thank you needs to go out to Mrs. Jeanna Sturniolo, for filling in for Mrs. Gehrke when she was on maternity leave.

Mr. Joel Brase, a math teacher and football coach from Northeast Lutheran High School in Norfolk, Nebraska, has accepted the Call to be our math teacher and football coach next year. We are currently searching for a full-time Spanish teacher.

As our seniors put the finishing touches on their senior year, I am amazed at how quickly their four years here at DLHS have flown by. Many of our seniors are the last of their siblings to go through DLHS and are marking the end of an era for their families. Those families will be missed and the time and effort volunteered by all of the senior parents will be hard to replace.

As we get ready to say goodbye to the class of 2007, I have spent a large amount of time on the retention of all students from the classes of 08, 09, and 2010. How incredible it would be if every student returned to DLHS next year! I pray every day that Christian education continues to hold a place of true importance in everyone’s lives.

Being the principal at DLHS comes with the pleasure of becoming a part of the administrative team for the Colorado Lutheran High School Association. That team includes Mr. Randy Lowe, our CEO; Mrs. Julie Jacoby, the Marketing Director; Mrs. Barbara Kinney, the Admissions Director; and Rev. Juls Clausen, the principal at Lutheran High School – Parker. The five of us have met on a regular basis all year to discuss vision, direction, and how to make our high schools excellent. It has been a pleasure to work with people who are good at their jobs and clear about the one thing that makes our schools special – the presence of Jesus Christ.

The clear reality of our situation at DLHS is that we need to see increased enrollment every year to successfully make our business plan work. I believe this challenge is best met through three strategies:

1. All of us need to speak clearly and boldly to others about the importance of Christian education. Christian/Lutheran parents need to be continually educated about why their sons/daughters should be at DLHS. I dream of a community of Christian parents that view DLHS as the logical and obvious choice for high school education and the premier choice for Christian education in the Denver Metro area. I dream of a world where it would be considered strange for our Lutheran/Christian middle school students to go anywhere but DLHS.

2. DLHS needs to continue to be a school that truly does nurture academic excellence and encourage growth in Christ. Our product has to be so excellent that our location and tuition will matter little to people. We must continue to provide an education that exceeds the standards of our competitors. We must continue to provide a Christ-centered education that points all of our students to Jesus.

3. We need to trust fully that the Lord will continue to work His good in all of us. It is fun to tell others what God has done for us this school year. No matter what His plans are for the future of DLHS, no hurdle is too high for Him. God is good, and He will use DLHS as He sees fit to accomplish the work of His kingdom.

I appreciate the support that so many of you gave to me this year in my new position and to my wife and new family member. The DLHS family is truly a blessing.

I encourage all of you to be like Moses and tell others about all the good things that the Lord has done this year at DLHS.

See you at graduation,

Dan Gehrke
Principal, Denver Lutheran High School
Nurturing Academic Excellence, Encouraging Growth in Christ

