

1.2 HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

HISTORY OF THE LANDMARK CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

I am Landmark Christian School. More than buildings of mortar, cement, and bricks, I am a way of life to almost 200 students and 53 staff members. I am a ministry of Landmark Baptist Church of Haines City, Florida.

Together, my students and I share our joys and tears, our happiness and heartbreak. We make lasting friendships, learn of Christ's never-ending love, and are taught by the finest teachers around!

I wasn't always here. Forty-five years ago, I was more than one man's dream. Then in 1972, my doors were opened for the first time to admit the new students, the first "Little Patriots." On that September day, neither of us knew quite what to expect; but we rolled up our sleeves, put a smile on our faces, and purposed to trust God in accomplishing His will in this ministry.

I am an institution and a friend to all my students; but most of all, I truly care what happens to each one of them. I watch with great pride as each graduating class leaves and welcome with love the new "Little Patriots" that enter my doors each fall because I know that I will be just as proud of them as I am of the ones in the past.

It is my honorable privilege to tell the history of Landmark Christian School...

Things actually began to happen in January 1971, when Rev. M.P. Carter became the Pastor of the First Missionary Baptist Church of Haines City, Florida. In the first Sunday service that Pastor Carter conducted, 37 souls were present. From this most humble beginning, Brother Carter began to build the solid foundation of First Missionary Baptist Church. From the pulpit and behind his desk or wherever he labored for the Lord, Pastor Carter spoke the words of a true Patriot in every respect. It became clear in the minds of all familiar with this ministry that the future held many improvements for this struggling work.

First Missionary Baptist Christian School was founded in September, 1972. The school began with 30 students in kindergarten through third grade. The facilities were modest at best. Curriculum was scarce but the purpose and philosophy that formed the foundation of this new school ministry burned in the hearts of each staff member and parent who trusted God to work a miracle that many said could never be accomplished. Pastor Carter established from the beginning that this Christian School was to be distinctively different. His vision was to provide an education while developing the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of each student. As the founder of the school, he believed that each student should receive a good Christian education that they might be a good testimony for the Lord.

Following God's leadership, Pastor Carter named Rev. Ruben Nance as the first Principal of the school. It quickly became evident that Brother Nance was the right man for the job. The Scriptures declare: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." It was with this admonition in mind that Mr. Nance started his administration. He believed that it was imperative that we raise a generation of young people that will continue Faith in God. Therefore, the basic aim, of the school was to instill the old-time principles upon which our nation became great and to point a generation to Jesus Christ who is the only hope of any individual or nation. In Haines City, Florida, the school became known as the school where men could preach, pray, and sing for the Glory of the Lord without Fear!

The school experienced rapid growth with the enrollment rising to 119 students for the 1973-1974 school year. To meet the academic needs for this increase, the school adopted the Accelerated Christian Education program for the curriculum. This change was necessary at the time but short-lived as the traditional approach to Christian education returned the following year.

School opened the 1974-1975 year with 153 students. Sports found an enthusiastic start as the school fielded its first sports team in flag football. The summer of 1975 was a pivotal year in the youth ministry of the church as Camp Glory was built upon 50 acres of land donated by a group of people who had a special place in their hearts for young people. The church camp brought a wonderful conclusion to the summer and prepared the students for the beginning of the 1975-1976 school year. By this time, classes were full through the 8th grade.

The 1975-1976 year brought continued change to the school. Rev. D. B. Fowler became the new Principal and the enrollment soared to 221 students. Bro. Fowler stated that his desire was to see that every student had the opportunity of academic excellence, a competitive sports program, and good moral character training with the Bible as the foundation and authority.

Brother Fowler's first year as the Principal produced new opportunities to the ministry. High School grades 9-12 were added utilizing the A.C.E. curriculum again. The school fielded its first baseball team and attained membership in the Florida Christian Conference. The Patriot Athletic Booster Club was founded to provide funding and support for the new sports program. The month of May brought the first graduating class of the school with 8 seniors.

Well before school concluded in the spring of 1976, the need for new construction was great. A 10 acre plot of land adjacent to the church became the prayer of each teacher and school parent. The gentleman who owned the property had no intentions of selling his thriving 10 acre orange grove. God moved upon his heart, and the resounding NO changed to a YES. Pastor Carter led the people to trust God for a miracle. The goal was set to raise \$100,000 on a single Sunday. This would put a down payment on the property and build a gymnasium and high school educational facility. The miracle became a reality as the \$100,000 was indeed raised on the first Sunday of June, 1976. Church staff, church members, and school parents put in an incredibly busy summer as the construction took place. As the 1976-1977 school year began, the high school students entered the new facility; and the enrollment grew to 250 students. The school now had teachers in place, and the traditional approach to Christian education became the mainstay of the school from that moment on, as the A Beka Curriculum became the backbone of the school curriculum. This year was very special, and one that will long be remembered because many people in Haines City saw God perform a miracle. The special offering was called "The Miracle Offering," but the greatest miracle of all was in seeing many people won to Christ through the outreach of the church and school ministries. The school also put its first tackle football team on the field.

The 1977-1978 school year included the addition of foreign language to the high school curriculum, as Spanish was offered as an elective. The interior of the gymnasium was finalized as a new wooden playing surface was installed and the school fielded its first basketball team. The High School "Harmony Makers" choral group received, for the first time an excellent rating in the F.A.C.C.S. Fine Arts Competition.

In the 1978-1979 school year, First Missionary Baptist Christian School was accredited by the Florida Association of Christian Schools for the first time. This was a great day in the history of the school.

1979-1980 saw the addition of the Drama Department and the first girl's sports team for the school as softball was the ladies' choice of sport. The summer of 1979 brought a major change as First Missionary Baptist Church became known as Landmark Baptist Church and the school became Landmark Christian School. Proverbs 22:28 "Remove not the ancient landmark which the fathers have set," became the inspiration for staff and students to remain true to the purpose and philosophy upon which the school was established. This school year saw the enrollment exceed 300 for the first time. Mrs. Rosemarie Daniel became the Elementary Supervisor and Curriculum Coordinator. The Senior class was greatly honored to have Dr. Al Janney as their commencement speaker.

The 1980-1981 school year saw continued growth in the school as the enrollment exceeded 400. New programs were implemented in the high school with the addition of a band program. The Prayer Warriors Club became the first official high school organization, and the basketball program added a boy's junior varsity team. The football team won their first F.C.C. state championship.

In 1981-1982 Mr. Pitts became the High School Supervisor. Mr. Tim Vanderveer was added to the teaching staff which was significant, since Mr. Vanderveer became the first Landmark graduate (1977) to return to the school as a teacher. This school year also brought the addition of the Special Education Department, the 4-H Club, and the American Christian Honor Society. The sports program added another football championship including a N.A.C.A. national championship, and the girl's basketball team was started.

As the 1983-1984 year began, Mr. H. C. O'Bryant became the elementary supervisor as Mrs. Daniel stepped back into the classroom as the 4th grade teacher. The high school football field received a new playing surface and the stadium was built with a press box, bleachers, scoreboard, and lighting. Gone were the days when the Patriots had to play their home games on a city-owned field while working around the schedule of the public high school. Landmark Christian School could now take pride in having one of the finest game facilities in the Florida Christian Conference in addition to the excellence displayed by our teams in competition. This year also saw the addition of girl's volleyball to the sports program. Landmark once again received accreditation from F.A.C.C.S.

By the 1984-1985 school year, Landmark had recovered from the effects of the devastating freezes that brought the citrus industry to its knees in the early 80's. The impact on the local economy also impacted the school as parents felt the brunt of difficult times. The enrollment that had dropped back to the 300 mark was again closer to 400. This school year brought the Chess Club, and the first match took place at Grace Christian School on December 10th. Parents and students were thrilled when the Chess team won every match of the competition. The school hosted the first Florida Christian Conference Chess Championship in March.

This year also brought about two other important events, Audra Crews was enrolled in kindergarten and became the beginning of second-generation students to be enrolled in Landmark. Audra's mother was a 1977 graduate of the school. We also saw three students, of our original kindergarten class of 1973, graduate from Landmark Christian High School: Eva Sons, Pam Maddux, and Christy Matthews.

The Academy of Art from Greenville, South Carolina, visited Landmark for one week; and with their guidance, the students brought to life the story of Joseph and his brothers in ancient Egypt.

The 1985-1986 school year saw the addition of several new organizations to the high school campus with the addition of the Language Club, the Debate Club, the Varsity Club, the hand bell Choir, and the P.A.W.S. Club (Prayer Aids Weak Students.) The first journalism class was formed, and the first school newspaper was published by the students. The conclusion of this school year brought the administration of Dr. Fowler to a close as he sought his well-earned retirement. Under his guidance over the previous 10 years, the school experienced wonderful improvements and unprecedented growth.

1986-1987 brought a new air of expectancy to the school as Mr. James Leslie became the new Principal. As a Christian educator, Mr. Leslie fully realized the challenge of teaching young people both academically and spiritually. He eagerly worked to make such a high standard of education possible. Over the summer, a new K-5 building, housing two classrooms, and a new K-3 building were constructed.

The church founded a new outreach ministry WLVF (Landmark's Voice of Faith.) This Christian radio station went out over the airways to educate, encourage, and spread the Gospel to Central Florida.

In 1988-1989, the church added a much needed fellowship hall which also included a fully functional commercial size kitchen and cafeteria. Landmark also received its third F.A.C.C.S. accreditation.

Due to the gradual decline of enrollment during the years between 1990 and 1993, when enrollment dropped to approximately 200 students, the Pastor and the Deacon Board realized that something would have to be done. After much prayer and deliberation, they decided the school must return to the basics that had brought great success in the earlier years.

For the school year of 1993-1994, the decision was made to hire an elementary administrator and a high school administrator. This change was made in order that the overall needs of the entire school could be met more specifically. In 1993, Mr. Pitts was promoted to High School Administrator. He has been involved in every aspect of the ministry at Landmark Baptist Church and the school since 1975 as a teacher and supervisor.

He has dedicated over 20 years of his life to the Ministry of Landmark Christian School. Bro. Pitts is well-known for his patience and understanding with the young people as well as the staff of Landmark Christian School which has made him a superlative in the field of Christian education. Also in 1993, Mrs. Rosemarie Daniel returned to the Landmark Staff after 10 years absence. She assumed the responsibilities of Elementary Administrator. Even though Mrs. Daniel left the school faculty for a brief while, she continued as an active member and pianist at Landmark Baptist Church for over 20 years. Each of her three sons and three daughters-in-law are graduates of Landmark Christian High School and upon her return to the staff, her oldest grandchild began his first day of kindergarten as another second generation "Little Patriot."

Mrs. Daniel believes in quality Christian education and strives to see that Landmark Christian Elementary School is the place where boys and girls will excel academically, but most importantly will come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

During the new Administration with Mrs. Daniel and Mr. Pitts, many accomplishments have occurred. We have seen an increase in enrollment, with many students returning that had withdrawn during previous years, also additions of new staff, major renovations to all buildings, re-opening of the nursery school, a new 1st grade building with two rooms and a new spirit of excitement among students, staff and the community. The 1998-99 fall term set a record attendance with over 500 students enrolled in Nursery through 12th grade.

The summer of 1999 brought about an additional change as Mr. Pitts moved to a position at the Landmark Baptist College. Mr. Wallace Hill moved from many years of successful classroom teaching to the position of Administrator of the Junior and Senior High School. The future has never looked brighter for Landmark Christian School.

In the summer of 2001, the Lord had more changes in store for Landmark Christian school. Mrs. Daniel left our ministry to move back to Ohio and take a position as principal of Milford Christian Academy. With this change, Mr. Hill assumed the responsibility of Administrator of the elementary school as well as the high school.

The 2002-2003 school year was a year of changes in personnel. We had to say good-bye to our Elementary school office manager, Mrs. Nancy Lucas as she made a change in her career path. We were blessed to be able to move Mrs. Rosanna Wyland into that position after working in the high school office and teaching fourth grade. Other staff additions were Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Hopson to the high school teaching staff along with Mrs. Eugenia Segreda, our Spanish teacher. Mrs. Sonja Burdon, Miss Doreen Forcadela and Mrs. Elines Avilez were added to the Elementary Staff. In January of 2003, Mr. Mark Elliott was hired as the new Athletic Director and Assistant Principal. After 20 years as the Athletic Director, Dr. Jack Nixon decided to hang up his cleats.

In the summer of 2003, the high school office was renovated to include a teacher work office and a new sick room. Mrs. Jerilyn Kane was hired as a high school office secretary and her husband Tom was hired as the Elementary and High School librarian. Another staff addition was Mr. John Major to the high school teaching staff. As we face this new year, we look forward to what the Lord will do at Landmark Christian School.

In August of 2003, enrollment at LCS rose slightly to 346 students in grades N-3 through 12th. As our re-evaluation for FACCS accreditation approached, the staff was extremely busy preparing for the 3-day evaluation. LCS has been accredited by FACCS since 1978. Thanks to the gigantic team effort from each staff member, as well as volunteers, LCS was granted accreditation status for another five years.

Brother Richie Lemon, an LCS graduate, passed away in the spring of 2004. Brother Lemon was the Youth Leader of Landmark Baptist Church and directed the 7th - 12th grade Chapel. He was highly respected by our students and staff. He left behind two small children, Justus and Lydia, and his wife April. He has been and will continue to be greatly missed by all who knew him.

The highlight of the sport's year was the championship victory by the Patriot Baseball team for the first time in nine years.

Mrs. Avaline Green was hired in October of 2003 as an elementary supervisor and Jennifer Tomlinson was hired as our new telephone receptionist. As the 2003/2004 school year closed, we said goodbye to some of our staff. In the elementary, Mrs. Debra Lucas resigned to work with her husband, Mrs. Sonja Burdon gave birth to a new child, Mr. Bill Brinkworth resigned to pursue other interests, Mrs. Kristie Sumner took a year off from teaching K-5 to give birth to a daughter, and after 12 years teaching 1st and 2nd grades, Mrs. Shelly Ogden retired to spend more time at home with her family. Mrs. Elines Avilez had to resign from teaching because of health concerns. In the high school we all said goodbye to Mr. and Mrs. Hopson. Mr. Hopson is actively candidating for the pastorate of an Independent Baptist Church. Mr. and Mrs. Kane left our ministry before school was out to return as missionaries to India.

As with each year, the Lord sent new people our way. For the 2004-2005 year we welcomed in the elementary – Mrs. Carol Cotoia (N-3), Miss Yolanda Maxwell (K-5), Miss Dina Cher-Aime (K-4), Miss Nishoni Burkhart (1st), Miss Becky Hill (4th), Miss Lissette Cruz (6th), and Mrs. Maria Ledwidge (office). In the high school, Mrs. Kathy Messersmith will be joining our team as a Math and computer teacher in the Jr. High area. Mrs. Kristie Sumner will be working in the high school office before and after the birth of her daughter.

Brother Joe Pesola, Landmark Baptist Church's new youth leader, will be leading the high school chapel. We are praying and expecting to see great spiritual victories in the lives of our students, staff, and parents.

The 2004-2005 school year began with little suspect that the Haines City area would be hit by three major hurricanes within the months of August and September. We actually started school four times in a month and missed a total of 10 school days. Praise the Lord! He supplied all our needs to repair the extensive damage caused by storms.

We experienced a successful sports' year with several of the teams making it into the playoffs with the football and baseball team making a championship game appearance.

We had to say goodbye to some of our staff as they are moving to serve the Lord elsewhere. Miss Becky Hill was married on June 4th and moved to Plant City to teach at Faith Baptist. Mrs. Nashoni Harvey has moved to Michigan with her husband to serve in another ministry. Miss Dina Cher-Aime went back to the Bahamas and Miss Yolanda Maxwell has returned to college to work towards a doctorate. James Schaefer has also returned to college to finish his Master's Degree. Mrs. Eugenia Segreda has returned to Costa Rica. All of these have been a great blessing to LCS.

While we are sad to see good people leave, we also have the blessings of seeing new people join our team. Mr. and Mrs. Scott Hester have been hired. Brother Scott Hester will assume the duties of Athletic Director, and his wife will be the N-3 teacher. Miss Jennifer Bennett will be teaching the 4th grade and will marry Jason Church at the beginning of the year. Mrs. Sonja Burdon is rejoining our school team as the 2nd grade teacher. Mrs. Donna Benton will be working in the high school office. In the junior high, Mrs. Donna Major and Mrs. Debbie Wiebe will be teaching English and Science respectively. Mrs. Major will also be heading up our cheerleaders. We thank God for His servants.

In July of 2006, Mr. Scott Hester was added to the high school staff as the Dean of Students, Athletic Director, and Assistant to the Principal. Mrs. Shelly Ogden will be assuming the duties of the high school librarian, and Mrs. April Lemon will be the new high school receptionist. Mr. Lauren Wiebe will be the high school math teacher and also being a retired Air Force diesel mechanic, will be the church bus mechanic. Miss. Kelly Gottardt will be the new 4th grade teacher and Mrs. Joy Case will be the new 3rd grade teacher. We also welcome Mrs. Beth Ervin, as the new elementary office receptionist. Mrs. Ervin will also be the Volleyball Coach. We have had to say good-bye to Mrs. Rebekah Ricks after several years of faithful service. She will be helping us with our fine arts drama department on a limited basis.

We rejoice with the great year we had in 2005-2006. The Fine Arts department got off to a great start with their performances in the Winter and Spring Concerts and the Christmas play. We had the largest number of students competing in the FACCS Jr. Fine Arts Competition and had the largest number in our history go on to compete at the State Competition with almost everyone placing in the top three places per event. The 2006-2007 school year will bring many challenges and blessings.

The “Summer of Change” is what the 2007-2008 school year will be remembered for. Construction and Re-Organization would also describe the beginning of this year. The plans for constructing a much needed new gymnasium has begun with the moving of our current locker room and beginning the new foundation process. Staff re-organization was developed to balance the budget as well as meet the teaching needs for the coming year. We had to say good-bye to Shelly Ogden, Sheila Howard, Cherie Parsons, Joy Case, Elizabeth Ervin, Mark Elliott, and Mark Burdon. Several new staff will be joining the Landmark team this year: Danielle DeVane, James and Lucy Washburn, Renee Williams and Tammie Trevino. Miss Samantha O'Neill will be taking the reins of Head Varsity Volleyball Coach.

As the 2007-2008 school year came to a close we had to say good-bye to James and Lucy Washburn as they returned to their home church to help in the ministry there and to Miss. O'Neill who married and moved to Alaska with her husband to serve the Lord in his home church. Miss Glenda Curtiss will be the new 5th grade teacher this year.

The 2008-2009 school year continued to be a year of reorganization. Pastor Steven Carter returned from his three year pastorate in Georgia to become Co-Pastor of Landmark Baptist Church. Dr. Jay Lewis was also added to the church staff as a new position of Ministry Administrator was created. He works closely with the Pastor's office as the administrator of the four main ministry departments: Landmark Christian School, Landmark Baptist College, Gospel 90.3 Radio, and Landmark's Freedom Baptist Curriculum. The school year closed with some major reorganization. We had to say goodbye to Dr. Hester and the Washburns.

The 2009-2010 school year brought some major changes. After ten years as principal of Landmark Christian School, Mr. Wallace Hill moved to a position at Landmark Baptist College. Mrs. Paula Carter became the principal of the elementary school, and Dr. John Major became the new principal of the high school. Mrs. Donna Major became high school supervisor. Mr. Shane Rocker returned to our team to become the new athletic director and high school history and math teacher. Coach Mark Burdon also returned to the staff as head football coach and JV basketball coach. Joe Major, a Landmark graduate was hired as the elementary P.E. Teacher, junior high Bible teacher, and weight training coach. Mrs. Avaline Greene was moved from the third grade to the junior high school. Miss Amy Mason was hired to teach K4. Mrs. Amy Lewis joined the team as elementary office manager.

We experienced a very successful sport's year with both the football and baseball teams winning state championships. Several of the other teams made it into the playoffs. We also saw the erection of the new gymnasium in the fall of the year. The interior still is awaiting completion.

We had to say goodbye to some of our staff as the year ended as they move on to serve the Lord elsewhere or in other ministries of the church. Miss Amy Mason will be getting married and will be moving. Mr. Joe Major will move to the New Orleans area to plant a new church there. Both Miss Lissette Cruz and Myra Cruz have decided to pursue other interests.

While we are sad to see good people leave, we also have the blessings of seeing new people join our team. For the 2010-2011 school year, Mrs. Rebekah Ricks returned to become a teacher in the high school and Mr. Scott DeVane has been added as the new music instructor for both the elementary and high school.

Over the past six years, Landmark has seen its shares of ups and downs. We have had a complete change in administration. After four principal changes, we now have as our high school principal Mr. Matt Pautz and our elementary principal Mr. Jeremy Tudino. Anita Baker is now the office manager. Adeline Carranza is our elementary secretary and enrollment specialist. Mrs. Jessica Holley is our high school secretary. Mrs. Karen Stanek has been added as the bookkeeper. Mrs. Rachael Pautz, Miss Crystal Gilbert, Miss Hannah Arnold, Mr. Lauren Wiebe, and Miss Tammie Trevino being our steadfast teachers over this time period. However, we are excited to have added Mrs. Jodi Ossewaarde, Miss Joy Kokubun, Mr. Colin Morton, Miss Lauren McGalliard, Mrs Allison Spadano and Mrs. Amanda Tudino to our excellent teaching staff.

Over the past few years we have begun resurrecting our athletic department. Bringing back ladies softball and basketball. Our volleyball and boys basketball programs have continually been competitive. During the 2015-2016 school year we brought back our football team.

Our fine arts department put on a Christmas Program and Spring Program directed by Mrs. Amanda Tudino. The Choir was directed by Miss Hannah Arnold. We competed in the FCAA Fine Arts Competition in April, bringing home 12 ribbons.

As we look toward the 2016-2017 school year we are very excited to see enrollment again rising. We are excited to have two kindergarten classes. We will be bringing back our elementary music programs being taught by Hector Rodriguez. We are adding Mrs. Leah Morton and Miss Amber Ossewaarde to our teaching staff this year.