



Why are students attracted to The Geneva School?

by Robert Ingram

Transfer students have accounted for a significant increase in our student population in the Dialectic and Rhetoric over the past two years. During the 2003-04 school year, 12 students came to us from other private, public, or home school environments. This past fall another 27 students transferred into Geneva. Of the current 86 students in grades 7-12, 39 of them (45%) made a conscious decision to enroll at Geneva. These are very encouraging trends and statistics, especially when they are combined with the internal growth that is taking place at Geneva, which also contributes to the growth of the Upper School. As our K4 through 6th grade classes continue to double and triple, these students will, as soon as next fall, begin to add strength, stability and numbers to our Dialectic and Rhetoric. For example, our two 6th grade classes will next year become two 7th grades, and the doubling effect will be felt for the first time in the Upper School.

Why are these transfer students attracted to Geneva? That was a question I posed in a research paper last month that was written for my Master's program in Education at Geneva College, PA. The results of the student surveys and interviews are so encouraging, and I thought it important for the entire Geneva family to know what is fueling the growth of our student population.

Unquestionably, a combination of factors had converged to create a climate that was ripe for the aggressive promotional campaigns of the last couple of years. New board leadership had been put into place, giving Geneva a higher visibility in the community and signaling the type of people and resources that were benefiting it. A strengthened and revitalized administrative team emerged, and many strong additions to the teaching faculty consolidated these other gains. At the same time, the school was moving into a new facility in a new location, and enthusiasm for our beautifully-equipped school drew considerable attention.

While not diminishing the positive effect of any of the above considerations, it is significant to note that those were not the sole factors in accounting for the resulting student growth in grades 7-12. Research indicates that many students and families

were not specifically aware of recent board, administrative and faculty changes. The new building and grounds certainly attracted attention and students, but again, survey results indicate that students had additional reasons for transferring in. What were those additional reasons? *Student culture* and *academics* were two reasons consistently given by transfer students. The heart and soul of the school was a most significant element in the decision to enroll. In many instances students transferred in from larger, older, and more prestigious institutions in favor of the community of students they discovered at Geneva. What students and families experienced when they walked through the front door of the school became one of Geneva's main selling features.

Not surprisingly, students in grades 7-12 have a significant influence upon the final decision where they attend school. Of the 39 transfer students, 32 indicated they had a major role in the decision, and 7 of them indicated they had sole discretion. Clearly this is an indication that students attend Geneva by choice, and thus they are consciously lending their approval to the student culture and academics.

It is impossible to reduce a 25-page research paper into an article (but it is possible to read it in its entirety online at Geneva's website so as to appreciate the full scope of the survey questions and responses). However, some of the more salient points to ponder include the following. Thirty-two of thirty-nine indicated Geneva required more work than they had been accustomed to, but one wrote,

"it is better homework;" another wrote, "but now I learn more." Twenty-eight said it was harder to get the same grades they had previously, but again comments indicated, "at my old school we didn't think" and "I just know I learn more here." Some of the most gratifying answers in the entire survey were responses to the question "Compare your educational aspirations now that you have been at Geneva to your previously-held hopes, dreams and goals." Here is a sampling of the many encouraging responses given: "I'm now excited about learning, whereas before I was not," "I am now applying to harder colleges" and "I want to become an engineer more than ever."

An academic culture of aspiration was further reflected in asking the students if they expect to make at least a "B" average in college. Thirty-six of thirty-seven said yes, with numerous students adding, "Why not an 'A' average?"

The Heart and Soul of the School was a most significant element in the decision to enroll

"What has pleased you most about the school?" elicited an array of answers, and nearly all of the 57 responses (numerous students listed multiple answers) were positively linked to the faculty, academics, the atmosphere or their new friends.

Geneva students seem to have a culture of being cultured. All 39 responded that they had read at least one book for pleasure in the past year; 28 play musical instruments, 26 have attended a recital or concert (not as part of a school program) in the past year; 17 have on their own visited an art gallery or museum in the past year. Those who have volunteered in the community in the past year number 32 of 39; those who have done peer tutoring numbered 27. How gratifying it is to know the discretionary choices being made by our students!

While these numbers and percentages seem high in their own respect, they are even more impressive when compared nationally to other students in private schools across the country. The concluding portion of my research was to make that comparison, and I was not disappointed. The survey results are very heartening, and will serve to reinforce our commitment to our mission, vision, and values in the years ahead. As these same Geneva students continue to experience the distinctiveness of our culture and educational approach, I am optimistic in believing that they will continue to aspire to the goal of graduating as "virtuous scholars."

I am convinced that students transfer into Geneva because of the educational culture, and in turn help to create a richer expression of the same. In future years may their name be Legion.



The Geneva Parents Association Invites You to an Evening with Sinclair Ferguson

As parents at Geneva, we often struggle to explain to others what it is that makes Geneva unique. TGS is just, well, different from other places that we could send our children to learn and grow. But what is the source and foundation of its uniqueness? One of the important distinctives of the School that is often difficult for us as parents to explain is the system of theology promoted and taught to Geneva's students. A good shorthand term for one's view of God is theology and TGS by confession believes and promotes a theological perspective that is often referred to as "reformational."

Using shorthand terms like "reformational" and "theology" can be confusing, frightening and even offensive. The Geneva Parents Association (GPA) is sponsoring a unique opportunity for parents to gain insight into what is really meant by this often-misunderstood term, "Reformational Theology," from one of the most eloquent teachers of our time. On Thursday, January 27, at 7:00 PM, Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson will be a guest at Geneva to shed light on this all-important subject.

Dr. Ferguson is known around the world for his unique and winsome ability to convey otherwise-difficult truths of the Christian faith in a manner that the man on the street can comprehend. He is professor of Systematic Theology at the Dallas campus of Westminster Theological Seminary,

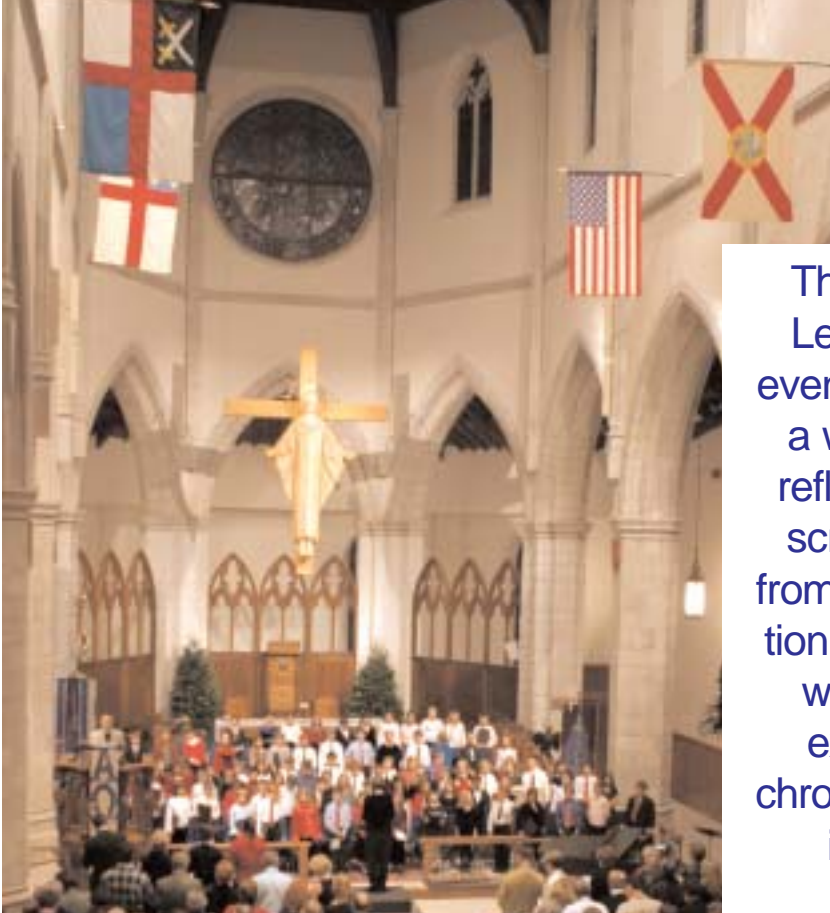
with years of pastoral experience in his homeland of Scotland. He is also the author of numerous books which have become Christian classics over the years.

At the invitation of the GPA, Dr. Ferguson has graciously agreed to join us on the eve of January 27 to share his insights with us and to answer our questions. This will truly be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to engage one of the greatest Christian minds of our age on this vital and essential matter of how we should think about God, his work in the world in the past, present and future, and our place in his great plan.

This meeting will be held in the fellowship hall of the First Presbyterian Church of Maitland (at the junction of 17-92 and Horatio). Since Dr. Ferguson's presentation may also draw interest from outside the School community, the event will be ticketed to ensure that we prepare for the right number of guests, and that Geneva parents have the first opportunity to attend.

Although required for this event, tickets will be free to Geneva families. Those outside the immediate school community can obtain tickets for a nominal fee of \$3 per family. Tickets are available from the School office.

Mark your calendars now for this unique opportunity and join us on Thursday, January 27, at 7:00 PM, for an evening to remember.



The Geneva School's Festival of Lessons and Carols, held on the evening of December 16, 2004, was a wonderful service of worship: a reflection of the Christmas story in scripture and song. The readings from scripture told the story of salvation from creation to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, a worship expression reflecting Geneva's chronological approach to the teaching of both history and Bible.





Friday,
December 10

**Service of Lessons
and Carols for
Geneva's Youngest
Students in Grades
K4 - 2**



Alumni News

Geneva Graduate Nathan Patton Receives High Praise



The following is an excerpt from a letter written about one of Geneva's graduates, Nathan Patton, by one of his college professors. Nathan was a member of Geneva's first graduating class (2001) and he is currently a senior at Furman University. We share it with you because we are often asked how our graduates fare once they get to college. Nathan is an example of a student who has attained the highest goals we have for our graduates.

"It is with great pleasure that I write the strongest letter of recommendation possible for Mr. Nathan Patton. In 22 years of teaching at the collegiate level at both Harvard University and Furman University, I have never taught anyone with as much leadership potential, demonstrated maturity and responsibility, and accumulated achievement working in the face of adversity. Nathan is intelligent, personable, sensitive, and is well-liked by his peers. He is a natural leader with effective organizational skills as well as tactful and sensitive in his ability to consider the opinions of others. He can build consensus while remaining focused upon successfully executing his personal goals and the goals of the organizations in which he participates. All this, I understand, is extraordinarily high praise and I am prepared to explain below the basis of my admiration for this fine young gentleman. I have seen Nathan interact sensitively and successfully with a wide array of individuals from my own young children to senior citizens. I

have also witnessed him make friends almost immediately with a broad diversity of people in this country as well as others.

His exposure to diversity and his rich cultural background grant him the ability to function effectively in a variety of contexts. His discipline is made evident mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually as a practitioner of the martial arts. His dedication and time management skills are reflected by his extraordinary academic achievement. Nathan maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average in high school and he is currently on a path to graduate magna cum laude from Furman University this spring (2005).

In addition to all the aforementioned accomplishments, one must recognize yet another extraordinary dimension of Nathan's character. On his own, Nathan has worked three jobs to support himself as well as pay the high tuition of a private university.

In addition to teaching at Furman University, I also serve as Principal of Shaner & Associates consulting. I serve large multinational corporations in the areas of business development and organizational development. My clients are Fortune 100 companies such as Pepsico, Gillette, and Mitsubishi. My recommendation to any of these clients would be to hire Nathan and place him in their "high potential," "fast track," management development program. In short, Nathan will succeed in all of his endeavors and will make a valuable contribution to any business or organization that is fortunate enough to secure his services. I recommend Nathan with the highest praise and believe that he will make a superb contribution to your organization."



Geneva's U10 Girls Win Fall Soccer Tournament

On Saturday, November 14, Geneva's U10 Girls' soccer team won their final game of the season, beating the College Park Angels to win the ACYS U10 Girls Fall Tournament. This team was one of nine from Geneva who competed in the ACYS (Association of Christian Youth Sports) soccer league this fall. Coached by parent volunteers and Latin teacher, Philip Levy, athletes in K4 through 5th grade honed their soccer skills, enjoyed the camaraderie of their teammates and were cheered on by their biggest fans - their parents - as they played hard every Saturday.



With the Middle School and Varsity basketball season already in full swing, we look forward to 150 Grammar School students in K through 6th grade playing ball after Christmas. Having the children participate in sports from an early age not only builds their skills and confidence, but it also builds Geneva's athletic program from the bottom up.



To watch our older students in action on the basketball court check out the game schedule on the TGS web site.



Clockwise from left: U11 Boys' Team, John Michael Eatmon, Renee Dickinson, Moira Cloke, U9 Boys' Team

January 2005

January 3: Back to School

January 10 - 14: Re-registration for current TGS families.

January 12: Half day for grades 7 - 12: dismissed at noon.

January 13: Semester exams for grades 7 - 12 (Math and English). Grades 7 - 12 dismissed at noon.

January 14: Semester exams for grades 7 - 12 (History and Science). ALL GRADES DISMISSED AT NOON.

January 17: Open registration begins.

January 18: THE GENEVA SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE. Invite your friends to one of the two Open Houses being held on this day at 9:30 AM and 7:00 PM.

January 27: GPA meeting with special guest speaker, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson. 7:00 PM at the First Presbyterian Church of Maitland.

Moms in Touch

A group of dedicated moms meets every Tuesday at 8:15 AM for approximately one hour to pray for The Geneva School students, parents, teachers, staff and Board. Come as you are to the Grammar School library after you drop off your children.

The Geneva School Annual Auction

Saturday, February 12

:08 "8 Seconds" Club
100 West Livingstone Street,
Orlando

Donations are still needed - any help in this area will be very much appreciated.

The Geneva School

2025 State Road 436

Winter Park, FL 32792

www.genevaschool.org