

Maplewood Today

A PUBLICATION KEEPING YOU INFORMED ABOUT MAPLEWOOD ACADEMY SUMMER 2025



**CLASS OF
2025**

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PARAGUAY**

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From the Principal

Dear Maplewood Academy Alumni and Friends,

As another school year draws to a close, I am filled with gratitude for the enduring support and prayers that you, our cherished alumni and constituents, continue to extend to Maplewood Academy. Your commitment to our mission is what allows us to nurture young minds and hearts for Christ, preparing them not only for success in this world but for the world to come.

Honoring Faithful Service: Bill Mitchell and Christine Haefner

This year, we bid a fond farewell to two remarkable members of our Maplewood family. Mr. Bill Mitchell, who is retiring after many years of dedicated service, has truly worn a multitude of hats at Maplewood Academy. Whether serving as head boys' dean, athletic director, soccer and basketball coach, or student recruiter, Bill's unwavering commitment and servant leadership have left an indelible mark on generations of students. We owe Bill a debt of gratitude for his selfless contributions and the Christlike example he has set for our community.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to Mrs. Christine Haefner, who will be moving on next year. Christine has been a tireless advocate for our students and an invaluable faculty member and volunteer. Her determination, project management



skills, and willingness to do whatever was needed have helped Maplewood Academy remain true to its mission: assisting students in developing a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Christine's legacy will be felt for years to come. Please join me in celebrating Bill and Christine's years of service and in praying for God's continued blessings on their journeys ahead.

Campus Updates: Cafeteria Renovation and Capital Campaign

I am pleased to share an important update from the Maplewood Academy Board. After careful consideration, the Board has decided to focus on renovating our existing cafeteria building rather than constructing a new one. All donations to our capital campaign will now be directed toward this renovation and other high-priority projects that will ensure our facilities continue to serve students well into the future.

In partnership with the Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, we are also developing a long-term financial plan for the school. We ask for your prayers as we seek God's guidance and wisdom in navigating the challenges facing Christian education today. Please watch for future updates as we move forward together.

A Call to Support Adventist Education

Now, more than ever, we need the united support of our alumni, constituents, and church family. Maplewood Academy's mission to provide Christ-centered education depends on your prayers, your

advocacy, and your generosity. Together, we can ensure that future generations have the opportunity to grow academically, spiritually, and in service to others.

Thank you for being an integral part of the Maplewood Academy story. May God continue to bless you and your families as we look forward to another year of growth and grace.

With gratitude and hope,
Jeremy Everhart
Principal, Maplewood Academy



I came here unsure, a bit lost and alone
 New to the halls that I'll soon call home
 But then Christian Valdez Nolasco gave a welcoming grin
 With Kaeden Miller, his best friend at the time beside him
 I felt safe within

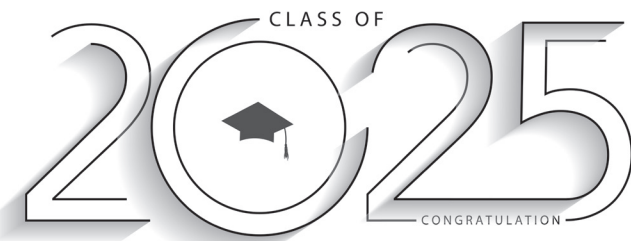
The faces around me, both teachers and peers
 Would shape who I'd be through laughter and tears
 Each person I met had a role in my story
 Helping me grow in both trial and 'glory'
 At first I was just a student with his shoes barely tied
 But now I leave with my head held high
 Maplewood welcomed me heart soul and all
 And they caught every stumble so I won't fall

I found that the weekends were more than just fun
 They drew me to Jesus, they strengthened my soul
 They helped me find God they made my heart whole
 They brought me to faith and to friendship that would stay
 They opened my heart in a meaningful way
 Through worship and laughter through music and prayer
 I found not just people but God Himself there

Our teachers wore titles but so much more too
 They taught and they guided like family would do
 Like mother like father with patience so wide
 They stood there beside us with hearts open wide

I've been to more schools than I care to recall
 But one stands the highest of them all
 Jeremy Everhart you lead with such grace
 With kindness and wisdom you light Maplewood up

Of course there were moments that weren't full of cheer
 Like being on social which made silence all so clear
 No talking allowed it hurt at first
 But it taught me the value of space and the heart



Through silence I learnt through distance I grew
 Even discipline had something loving and true
 It helped me reflect to become something more
 A person who's stronger than ever before

So now that I have left I can honestly say
 This school is a treasure and I'll miss every day
 To say goodbye hurt but I know it's not the end
 I'll carry you all in my hearts, each teacher
 and friend

Goodbye isn't final it's just not the end
 I'll see you again dear teachers and friends
 Always together never apart
 Maybe physically but never by heart



In March of this year, I had the incredible opportunity to serve on an international mission trip to Paraguay with other staff, students, and church members. We partnered with a local Adventist school called Colegio Adventista del Paraguay (CADEP), located in Distrito Yguazú, Departamento Alto Paraná. It was a truly unforgettable experience—one filled with service, spiritual growth, and powerful moments of connection.

When I first heard the mission trip for the 2024–2025 school year would be in Paraguay, I was beyond excited. I had always dreamed of going on an international mission trip, and now, the door was finally open. But this experience was unique—not only was it my first mission trip, but I was also going as a staff member. That added a whole new layer to the journey. I wasn't just there to serve; I was also there to lead and support both fellow staff and students. It was a beautiful challenge that constantly brought me to my knees in prayer, asking God for guidance, and He never failed to provide it.

One of the most memorable moments came even before we began our service work. After nearly two full days of travel, we learned during our bus ride to CADEP that all four churches where we were planning evangelistic meetings expected our students to lead their Sabbath service,

from start to finish. Exhausted but committed, I jumped into organizing four separate church services. With barely five hours of sleep, we woke up, ate breakfast, and headed to church. And let me tell you—despite the fatigue and time difference, God gave us strength.

Throughout our time at CADEP, I watched God work through our students in amazing ways. They jumped into every task—organizing an outdoor storage area, helping renovate a chicken coop, weeding, cleaning—and they did it with joy. What inspired me most was seeing them step outside their comfort zones. They overcame language barriers to build relationships. Several who had never preached before delivered their very first sermons. These were powerful, faith-growing moments—for them and for all of us watching.

To everyone who supported our mission through prayers, donations, or encouragement, thank you. Your support made this journey possible, and we hope you can see the fruits of your generosity in the stories we've brought home.

Please continue to keep us in prayer as we step forward in faith, embracing the mission opportunities God has in store. May we continue to be the hands and feet of Jesus, wherever He calls.

From the practices to the production and all the lessons we learned in between, we want to give you a look inside it all. I'm Iosif, an upcoming Senior at Maplewood Academy, and in this writing I'm joined by Josh, a Freshman during his portrayal of Jesus. This is our experience with Godspell, a musical, whose script is taken from the Book of Matthew and tells the story of Jesus and his followers, that we put on at Maplewood Academy.

Josh: When I heard that there was going to be a drama production at Maplewood, I didn't know what to expect from Godspell, because I have never seen or heard about this show in my entire life. When I got word that it was a musical, two long-standing members of drama class of the last 3 years, Nevaya and Christian, encouraged me to join. I soon decided that I was going to audition and hope for the best on what Dean Jesse, our drama teacher and a

GODSPELL

DISCOVERING SPIRITUAL LIGHT THROUGH DRAMA PERFORMANCE



dean over in the girls' dorm, would decide for my character. I procrastinated on my prep and, in just thirty minutes before the audition, I memorized the song "All For The Best" and a monologue about the stoning of the adulterous woman. A few days later I was chosen for the part of Jesus. I was scared and terrified, yet still glad that she chose me and trusted me with such an important role.

I was discouraged and nervous, because, unlike most people in the cast, I had not acted at all previously (besides being a cameraman that didn't talk and an old man that had a crush on a lady in a wheelchair in a small elementary play). I had no experience on a professional drama production or any acting skills at all!

Having the part of being Jesus set an overwhelming weight on my shoulders, but I kept praying for God to calm my nerves. When I practiced, I made sure to keep the heart of how Jesus would be: His face, the way he talked, and everything else. It felt like I was lying to myself as I spoke the Word of God. I am not like Jesus; I would have joined the Pharisees in what they thought of doing to the adulterous woman. I had trouble reading the Bible. I remember when I was a little kid, I was on fire for God and everything about the Bible. My candle lit like a fiery bonfire, but, as I grew older, that candle was turning into just tiny sparks of flame.

But when Godspell showed up, I felt like in my heart that this would benefit me and help with my spiritual walk with God. As I was new to acting, I felt like I was making a fool out of myself. Is this what Jesus would have done? I was not acting as Jesus outside of practice. But throughout my time in Godspell, God has given me signs and other miraculous messages. Coincidentally, Mr. Bacon started having a morning devotion with us in the book of Matthew,

which just so happened to be the same timeline of when rehearsals for Godspell started to when we took our final bow for Godspell. It was as if God was showing Himself to me and trying to get me to lean on Him and see and hear Him. "Oh the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!" I have never felt more heard in my life saying those words. They summed up my whole entire relationship with Him and how I felt for so long.

In my heart I did not have a good reason why I joined, other than being there because they needed someone that could sing. However, as I kept practicing and working, God revealed a deeper reason for why I needed to be in Godspell. I learned new things about God and my walk with Him because of Godspell. I will forever cherish the moments and the friendships I made along the way because of this production and seeing the cast members changed and have this new Light in them. It was as if we were all baptized with the Holy Spirit. During the performances, I saw all of the cast members

as true disciples, and I could relate to how Jesus would have felt having been so close with his group of friends for his three years of ministry. When I heard them cry for my name it made my heart sink. Is this how Jesus felt? I felt God speak to me and also through me as I said the lines of his life, his ministry, and on through his death. I was not me when I performed. As I was acting as Jesus, Jesus was acting through me. And my spirit was renewed.

Iosif: When I first decided to join Godspell I wasn't sure what to expect. I was a Junior and it was going to be my second time joining the drama production with Dean Jesse at Maplewood. I had never been much of an actor and it definitely isn't one of my gifts but I was still able to find joy in it. What also drew me



to joining was the way working on a play allows you to bond with a special group of people. Everyone from the four grade levels is allowed to try out and help backstage, and I remembered that from my freshman year when I joined Drama for Grace Cove. It allowed me to connect with a lot of seniors that I didn't have the chance to talk with before. It really is a community. So as I thought about this, I realized it'd be pretty nice to do it at least one more time. Then when I learned more about the musical, I was further encouraged. Excited, even! It was a story about Jesus! And the musical, Godspell, allows for a lot of freedom for those acting. We got to draw

through a group of high schoolers simply acting out the Gospel. There was an incredible impact even for me. I could picture what it was like for the disciples to lose Jesus's physical presence, what they would feel as they beheld one of their closest friends on a cross. Then, all of a sudden, the Bible stories I grew up with had new life to them. They were real. God continued to surprise me when, after our first performance, there were people who actually cried as they watched us act out the crucifixion. To see God's Spirit speak to people through us was so, so beautiful, and an experience that I'll cherish always.



inspiration for our own costumes and, even when acting, you have a lot of liberty in what you say or do. The unexpected funny ideas that come out during practices can actually become part of the play. Now as I look back on everything, I am extremely grateful to have joined. Not only because of the great time that I got to have with my friends but also because of the way that God spoke to me through this musical.

One of my friends said it best. She was part of the backstage crew, which allowed her to be there for our practices and really watch what was happening. After a certain practice she told me how nice it was to be able to see the story of Jesus come to life. And she wasn't the only one. Max, the husband of Dean Jesse (our director), said that having the Bible come to life this way helped his walk with God tremendously. I started to realize the impact that could be made

Josh: Playing as Jesus was a roller coaster in and of itself. I did not expect anything to come out of the play other than just exhausting practices and fun bonding time with the cast and crew. But what God did for me, for the cast, how He reached us through the script and re-lit our fires through this experience, I think Godspell will always stick with me.



All In God's Hands

In life, we all go through changes, big, small, good, not so good changes. It could be getting older, your first job, going to college far from home, moving out, having your first kid, the list goes on. Whatever it is, we all go through big events, and will continue to do so. As I think about life changes, I think about my first day moving into Maplewood Academy. I was so nervous and scared. It was my first time away from home and family. That thought of being in a place filled with people I didn't know, being far from home and family, it brought anxiety over me. I was overwhelmed with worry about what could happen. I knew one person, but she was a grade above me, so we wouldn't always be together; we had no classes together. I thought I would have no one to lean on. I prayed every night before the school year started. I prayed for a good roommate, for me to get along with everyone and enjoy my time at Maplewood. The Lord knew and prepared. He gave me a wonderful roommate, who is like a sister to me. He also gave me other wonderful close friends and blessed my time at Maplewood. God prepared my prayers better than I had prayed for.

**FOR I KNOW THE PLANS THAT I HAVE FOR YOU,
DECLARES THE LORD, PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND
NOT TO HARM, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE AND A HOPE.**

(Jeremiah 29:11)

When we go through all these big events and changes in our lives, it tends to cloud our minds. We worry for the future and forget that everything is in God's hands. He's got us. All we need to do is stop, take a deep breath, and remember that it's all in His hands. He's got the best plans for us. Remember that God is in control, so give him the wheel.



As we get older, we often reflect on the moments in our lives that truly shaped us into the people we are today. For many of us, our time spent at Maplewood Academy is remembered as a pivotal point in our life, when we learned hard life lessons, built character and maturity, and found friends who turned into family. Stories of our time spent at Maplewood show how impactful all the little moments truly were.

Our story begins at an early age, when Greg (class of 2014) and I (Lydia, class of 2015) developed memories way before we were students. Yearly camp meetings and alumni weekends with relatives helped shape some of those memories. But the most impactful for our story was the yearly Elementary Music Festival hosted at Maplewood in the spring. A brief weekend spent with 5th-8th graders across the



state encouraged students, including us, to get excited about attending Maplewood when we got older. Both Greg and I were raised in rural areas, and these weekends showed us how fun it was to spend time with SDA people our own age. It was during one of the festival weekends that Greg and I met. One night, I told my mom in the basement of the girls' dorm that "one day I would marry Greg Learned." My mom quickly told me to be quiet because Greg's mom was staying in the room next to hers and she didn't want his mom to hear me, at the age of 12, boldly proclaiming I was going to marry her son.

The time came for us to start our own journey at Maplewood and, from the moment that we stepped on campus, we both became very involved. Greg sang in Choraliers as every choir teacher's favorite bass, participated in gymnastics, and was usually found mowing the lawn or helping remove snow with Merlyn on those cold mornings. I enjoyed accompanying the Choraliers, fell in love with gymnastics, and was typically seen practicing piano or on my aerial silks in the gym my senior year.

Together, we shared a passion for Jesus and ministry. This led us to years of leadership in Campus Ministries. Greg led the entire Campus Ministries' team his senior year, and I led Sabbath School and In-reach programs. During Greg's senior year, we paired up to be prayer partners, so we would text each other every day to remind each other to pray and spend time in devotions.

Now Greg and I never saw each other as more than friends during our time at Maplewood, and, once Greg left for Southern after graduating, I didn't hear from him again until we completed college.

College brought continued opportunities for us. For me, I used my Campus Ministries experience from Maplewood and supervised all of the spiritual programming at Union College for 3 years. For Greg, his experience working for Merlyn helped him become an amazing mechanic and fostered a love for "tinkering." We were known on our respective

college campuses as the ones who worked hard, were very mature for our age, and had a spiritual foundation that was deeply rooted – a testament to our time spent at Maplewood.

During my third year of dental school at Loma Linda University, I received an Instagram message from Greg that said "Lydia, how the heck have you been?" and the rest is...well, history. We spent hours bonding over our time at Maplewood, sharing many stories and finding commonality about how much Maplewood impacted our lives. Even during our wedding in October of 2024, Maplewood was talked about during our parents' speeches and was celebrated with attendance of former classmates, who have become family.

We have since become heavily involved in our local SDA church, using the same talents that were fostered at Maplewood. Our passion is to teach and mentor young adults to fall in love with Jesus like we did during our time at Maplewood. We love to go back to campus often and spend time reminiscing on how things haven't changed, even as we have gotten older.

Maplewood Academy has a rich history of stories: stories such as eating pizza and drinking chocolate milk on Friday nights in the cafeteria, stories of countless hours spent riding in the yellow school bus, and stories of many dorm antics. But they also include deeper stories of lifelong friendships, about students giving their hearts to Jesus, and of lives impacted by a staff member who adopted a student into their family. Behind each of these stories is a life changed and a life story shaped.

As we look forward to gathering this fall again for alumni weekend, I encourage each of you to come back home and share your Maplewood story! You may just inspire the next generation of Maplewood alumni and be a part of shaping their story.



MAPLEWOOD
ACADEMY

700 MAIN STREET NORTH
HUTCHINSON, MN 55350

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



ALUMNI WEEKEND SEPTEMBER 25–28, 2025

ALUMNI 2025 HONOR YEARS

1950, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990,
1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020

