



FIRM FOUNDATION

A FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN TO SECURE A
FLOURISHING FUTURE

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-11

2025

MARINERS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL COMMUNITY,

As we embark on a new chapter in the life of Mariners Christian School, it is with great excitement and gratitude that we present the next phase of our strategic plan: *Firm Foundation: A Strategic Plan to Secure a Flourishing Future*. This multi-year plan represents our unwavering commitment to mission and values, ensuring MCS remains committed to academic excellence and Christian faith.

Rooted in the words of 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ,” this plan reflects our desire to build upon the solid foundation of Christ and the exemplary academics that define our school. Guided by His wisdom, we are dedicated to continuing the work of laying bricks of excellence, faith, and stewardship to ensure a flourishing future for generations to come.

Designed as a dynamic, rolling plan, the current strategic plan is a focused iteration of the original launched in Fall 2022, evolving to address the changing needs and priorities of our school community. This next phase builds on the original intent with clearly defined, impactful goals that prioritize the most critical needs and interests of our school and community. With a sharpened focus to maximize impact, the current plan identifies key priorities for the next five years to ensure meaningful benefits for every student, enhanced support for every program, and the continued growth and development of our beloved faculty.

As we celebrate the achievements since the plan’s inception, we eagerly embrace the exciting opportunities the refined initiatives will provide. The next chapter of our strategic journey has been shaped through careful prayer, planning, and collaboration, incorporating valuable insights from all stakeholders, including two in-depth feasibility studies conducted over the past two years. We are deeply grateful to all who have invested their time, expertise, and prayers to help refine our vision and guide the next steps for MCS.

Firm Foundation will **Fortify the Cornerstones of Excellence and Secure Our Decidedly Christian Legacy**. By staying true to our mission and continually seeking God’s guidance, we are confident the outlined objectives will position MCS for lasting impact.

As we step forward together, let us remain committed to building on the firm foundation of Christ, trusting in His provision and direction as we pursue excellence in all we do. Thank you for your partnership and faithfulness as we work to build a flourishing school and future.

In Him,

Heather Harrison, *Head of School*



Who We Are

Mariners Christian School, established in 1987, is Orange County's only covenant TK-8th grade school and has remained steadfast in its mission: "building a firm foundation through Christ-centered education." Twice recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School and dually accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the Council on Educational Standards and Accountability (CESA), MCS is dedicated to excellence in spiritual formation and academics, rooted firmly in biblical truth. As a decidedly Christian school, we believe in partnering with Christian parents to "train up a child in the way they should go," trusting the promise of Proverbs 22:6, "when they are old, they will not depart from it." For over three decades, MCS has faithfully served thousands of families with an unwavering commitment to equipping students with a faith-driven, exemplary education that empowers them to stand firm, lead with integrity, and influence the world for Christ. From the desires of our founders to today, the mission of Mariners Christian School has never been more vital, as we remain uncompromising in our dedication to Christian values and the pursuit of excellence.

Guiding Mission, Values, Vision, and Goals

Mariners Christian School stands firmly on the unshakable foundation of Jesus Christ, with a mission that is secure, values that anchor us, and a covenant commitment that defines us. Guided by our vision and annual goals, these core pillars shape every aspect of our school, ensuring that every decision strengthens our dedication to providing an exemplary Christ-centered education.

MISSION

Building a firm foundation through Christ-centered education.

CORE VALUES

- We cultivate a deep **Love for Christ**, guiding students to grow in their faith and develop a biblical worldview.
- Through **Exemplary Academics**, we challenge and inspire students to achieve their fullest potential, preparing them for success in a rapidly changing world.
- Our **Whole-Child Focus** ensures that each student is nurtured emotionally, socially, and spiritually, recognizing that education extends beyond academics.
- Embracing a **Culture of Innovation**, we pioneer new approaches and foster creativity to enhance learning and engagement.
- The **Connected Community** reflects a shared partnership between families, faculty, and staff, united in the pursuit of providing a thriving, Christ-centered environment.

COVENANT COMMITMENT

Mariners Christian School partners with committed Christian families, ensuring alignment to mission, biblical values, and the Statement of Faith as the foundation for faith and learning. Through the admissions process, families must demonstrate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a commitment to nurturing faith within their home. This shared foundation is essential to the MCS experience, fostering spiritual growth and a dedication to honoring God in every aspect of life and learning.

VISION

Strategic initiatives provide a clear roadmap for the future, aligning our mission, core values, and beliefs with key areas for growth and improvement. This framework serves as a guiding force for decision-making, ensuring every step strengthens MCS's commitment to excellence and Christ-centered education while driving meaningful actions that shape students' spiritual, academic, and personal growth for the future.

ANNUAL SCHOOL WIDE OPERATIONAL GOALS

Annual operational goals are identified for continuous improvement to strengthen every facet of the day-to-day operations of the school. Goals address key priorities across academics, operations, safety, facilities, finance, admissions, technology, and advancement. By guiding daily efforts of leadership and staff, annual operational goals ensure every aspect of our school remains excellent, well-stewarded, and mission-driven.

ANNUAL DIVISIONAL GOALS

Annual divisional goals are targeted objectives within the elementary and middle school programs, centered on the continual fulfillment of our mission and core values. These goals guide professional development, enhance instructional practices, and support learning, while prioritizing spiritual formation, a Christ-honoring environment, and ensuring an exceptional and well-rounded educational experience for all students.



LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Heather Harrison
Head of School

Jennifer Vaughan
Director of Advancement

Angela Drevlow
Elementary Principal

Sue Celek
Elementary Vice Principal

Jennifer Herrera
Middle School Principal

Jordan Brown
Middle School Vice Principal

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Kaley Brandon
Joel Klatt
Joey Patierno

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kaley Brandon, *Board Chair*
Chase Emery, *Treasurer*
Punita Jeyakaran, *Secretary*
Ben Roberson
Jacob Clemons
Milagro Maggette
Joel Klatt
Joey Patierno
Michelle Vail

Celebrating Success

Since the launch of the strategic plan in Fall 2022, Mariners Christian School has made significant strides in pursuing excellence and strengthening our foundation for the future. Guided by a clear vision, we have accomplished key goals that reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and lasting impact. These achievements are a testament to the dedication and collaborative efforts of our administration, faculty, board, parents, and students. We are proud of what has been accomplished thus far and deeply grateful for the many contributions that have made these successes a reality. These accomplishments have also provided valuable insights, informing our continued initiatives and helping shape the ongoing work of this five-year strategic plan as we move forward with confidence and purpose.

Key Accomplishments to Date:

- Secured 6-year WASC accreditation exceeding standards and receiving “Highly Effective” rating.
- Received secondary accreditation through Christian accrediting organization, CESA; awarded the maximum 5-year accreditation.
- Completed two comprehensive feasibility studies through outside consultants to inform Strategic Plan and subsequent capital campaign.
- Completed Strategic Plan refresh and reprioritization based on feasibility studies and community feedback.
- Continual engagement with Christian consulting firm, Generis, to analyze and improve current development and fundraising practices and fully developed a Capital Campaign Plan to support Strategic Plan.
- Expanded student support program through additional staffing to provide intervention in reading and math in both elementary and middle school.
- Created partnership with outside speech and language therapists, integrating services into the student support program to provide on-campus therapy for identified students.
- Launched a partnership with Vanguard University's Graduate Psychology program to provide counseling support for students in need of social and emotional support.
- Full launch of the first middle school academy– Academy of the Arts
- Further prioritized our commitment to spiritual formation by adding a campus pastor for the first time in school history.
- Explored potential expansion opportunities in the Oceanside/adjacent area determining expansion is not in the best interest of the school at this time.
- Branded and launched the Lion Fund to better support the efforts for the Annual Fund.



Our 5-Year Vision

The strategic vision of Mariners Christian School is bold and focused, grounded in an unwavering commitment to the pursuit of academic excellence and Christian faith. Building on the solid foundation of Christ and rooted in our mission and core values, the strategic vision reflects our commitment to the cornerstones of excellence, faith, and stewardship. Strategic initiatives accomplish this vision through professional development, curriculum, academic program expansion, and innovative opportunities.

The strategic vision for MCS is designed to fortify and sustain a thriving, Christ-centered community both now and in the future. The two strategic initiatives will expand and strengthen programs, protect our missional status as a covenant school for decidedly Christian families, and broaden enrichment offerings that ensure every student experiences the most transformative, Christ-centered education. Through financial stewardship and mission-driven excellence, we are securing the strongest foundation for Mariners Christian School to flourish for generations to come.

Firm Foundation: A Strategic Plan to Secure a Flourishing Future

FORTIFYING THE CORNERSTONES OF EXCELLENCE

- **Goal I:** Establish the Institute for Educational Excellence
- **Goal II:** Expand Mariners Academy Program

SECURING OUR DECIDEDLY CHRISTIAN LEGACY

- **Goal III:** Campaign for a Flourishing Future
- **Goal IV:** Expand the Legacy Endowment

Fortifying the Cornerstones of Excellence

The *Fortifying the Cornerstones of Excellence* initiative at Mariners Christian School is a bold strategy designed to ensure every student thrives academically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally while elevating the education at MCS to the most exemplary standards. Rooted in an uncompromising biblical worldview, this initiative seeks to enhance education by addressing individual needs, nurturing unique, God-given gifts, and inspiring the passions of every student.

At the heart of this initiative are two transformative goals: the establishment of the Institute for Educational Excellence and the expansion of the Mariners Academy Program. Together, these efforts will enhance academics and strengthen the cornerstones of excellence and faith fostering a holistic, tailored approach for every MCS student.

The Institute will serve as a center for innovation and growth, empowering faculty through specialized professional development, curriculum innovation, and expanded student support services. This investment in faculty development will enhance instructional quality, recruit and retain outstanding Christian educators, and ensure students receive biblically grounded, exceptional instruction. The expansion of the Mariners Academy Program will provide middle school students with unique pathways to explore their passions and talents in greater depth, offering specialized enrichment opportunities in areas such as the arts, technology, engineering, and design.

The *Fortifying the Cornerstones of Excellence* initiative will strengthen our foundation for long-term success, empowering every student to reach their full potential and ensuring MCS provides the most transformative, Christ-centered education.



Goal 1: Establish the Institute for Educational Excellence

Mariners Christian School will establish an Institute for Educational Excellence, dedicated exclusively to serving the MCS community. The Institute will be a center for innovation and growth, providing the resources and support necessary to elevate education for every MCS teacher and student. By offering specialized professional development, curriculum development, and expanded student services tailored specifically to our school, the Institute will advance MCS's mission and ensure exemplary academics while strengthening the educational experience for all who are part of our community.

Objectives

Professional Development for Faculty: Provide ongoing professional development and instructional coaching for MCS faculty and leadership to ensure exceptional instruction to exceed established learning objectives.

Curriculum Design: Develop curriculum tailored to our program, learning objectives, and subject areas, all integrated through a biblical worldview.

Expansion of Academic Support: Ensure every child reaches their full potential by providing expanded instructional support and fostering a dynamic learning environment where every student thrives.

- *Enhanced Classroom Instruction* – Strengthen instructional support through additional positions in key elementary grade levels to facilitate small group learning and provide more support in the classroom.
- *Expanded Student Support Services* – Provide targeted assistance for students with learning challenges by expanding services to better support progress aligned to identified needs.
- *Broadened Enrichment Opportunities* – Further challenge and engage exceptionally gifted students with greater depth and academic rigor, including advanced courses.
- *Well-Rounded Educational Experience* – Creating a dynamic learning environment where every student can thrive.

Goal II: Expanding Mariners Academy Program

The Mariners Academy Program is a specialized enrichment initiative for middle school students with specific passions and skills in identified areas. The program provides a structured pathway across the three middle school years, allowing students to explore and deepen their interests with increased depth and rigor. This initiative will expand the program beyond the arts to include focused offerings in technology, engineering, and design, fostering greater development and growth in these areas.

Objective

Expansion of Innovation: Expand the middle school academy program by launching a second academy, the **Academy of Innovation**, to enhance educational offerings.

Securing Our Decidedly Christian Legacy

The path forward requires achieving and sustaining the strategic goals outlined in *Fortifying the Cornerstones of Excellence*. Securing Our Decidedly Christian Legacy will strengthen MCS by funding essential resources, addition of personnel, and long-term financial sustainability.

By securing financial sustainability, we will maintain affordability for current families, invest in the right staffing and infrastructure, and strengthen program excellence. A successful financial strategy will allow MCS to continue improving, growing, and remaining steadfast in our Christ-centered mission, ensuring a flourishing future for our students, faculty, and school community.



Goal III: Campaign for a Flourishing Future

A strong financial foundation is essential to sustaining excellence and ensuring every strategic initiative is fully realized. *Securing Our Decidedly Christian Legacy* requires the successful completion of the Firm Foundation Campaign to eliminate the school's mortgage debt. This financial freedom will strengthen MCS's position as a covenant school, making it more resilient to economic downturns and enrollment fluctuations. Eliminating debt will also redirect critical resources from debt service to enhancing academic programs, improving financial health, and expanding long-term sustainability. More than just debt elimination, this campaign removes financial constraints, enables strategic growth, and secures a flourishing future. It is a pivotal step in fortifying MCS, ensuring long-term success, and strengthening our legacy as a thriving, Christ-centered school for generations to come.

Objectives

- **Eliminate Mortgage Debt:** As one of the key components of the Firm Foundation Campaign, fundraise \$6 million to eliminate mortgage debt.
- **Long Term Strategic Growth and Excellence:** As one key component of the Firm Foundation Campaign, fundraise \$3 million to immediately fund strategic goals I and II providing the necessary means to achieve identified objectives.
- **Fund Staffing and Infrastructure:** Successfully complete the Firm Foundation Campaign ensuring identified staffing and infrastructure needs are met immediately and sustained for the future
- **Sustain Long-Term Financial Freedom:** Redirect resources saved from debt service to strengthen academic programs, enrich faculty and staff support, and maintain overall mission alignment.

Goal IV: Expanding the Legacy Endowment

The final component of the Firm Foundation Campaign will focus on raising funds to expand the MCS Legacy Endowment. The existing endowment, established in 1999, is limited to providing only short-term, emergency aid, and does not offer long-term support or ensure sustained access to MCS. Expanding the Legacy Endowment will move beyond the provision of temporary support, creating a more sustainable and consistent financial foundation that enhances affordability and ensures long-term access to an exemplary Christian education for decidedly Christian families

Objectives

- **Firm Foundation Campaign Endowment:** As a key component of the Firm Foundation Campaign, fundraise \$3 million to expand the existing Legacy Endowment.
- **Endowment Sustainability:** Develop long-term investment strategies for consistent growth to provide sustained financial support for families.



JOIN US IN ADVANCING THE MCS VISION

To learn more, contact:

Heather Harrison, *Head of School*

hharrison@marinerscs.org

Jennifer Vaughan, *Director of Advancement*

jennifer.vaughan@marinerscs.org

Additionally, we invite you to explore the Firm Foundation Campaign, a transformative effort to provide the essential resources needed to secure MCS's future.

Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and partnership as we work together to build on our firm foundation for generations to come.