



SCHOOL BELL

HIGHLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PUBLICATION



2025/26 Theme

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HCS MISSION STATEMENT

In order to honor God, we nurture and guide students to see the Father’s creation, to sense order in a world saved by Christ, and to serve God through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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HIGHLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 26
Thanksgiving Chapel

NOVEMBER 27-28
Thanksgiving Vacation

DECEMBER 11
Christmas Concert

DECEMBER 19
Christmas Chapel

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 2
Christmas Vacation

JANUARY 16
First Semester Gifts Chapel

MARCH 19
K-5 Spring Program

MARCH 27
Easter Chapel

MARCH 30-APRIL 43
Spring Break

HEAD OF SCHOOL WELCOME LETTER

written by Dr. Kyle Weener, Head of School



In my almost seven years of leading at Highland Christian, the most common question I am habitually asked is, "How is the year going?" Each time I hear the question, I struggle to find an answer that could come close to encompassing every good thing God is doing at our school, through our staff, and for our students and families. With over 700 students, 110 staff, and thousands of constituents, so many faces and stories flash through my mind. I think of students who are working hard through challenges and finding success, parents that are experiencing their child's faith blossom, and the smiles I see when giving the kindergartens a high push on the swings - because you know when you give the choice between low, medium, and high, nine out of ten students will pick 'the highest push ever.' At the same time, my heart is burdened for the dad who just lost his job, the student whose parents are going through a divorce, or a student who is wrestling with fitting in and discovering their talents. Each day certainly brings something new.

Many of these moments make me think about the future. What does God have in store for our school? How can we best lean into the calling He has placed on our lives? What will tomorrow bring? This summer, an acquaintance shared the following quote with me and it has had a significant impact on my view of HCS and the great God we serve.

Often we want to be able to see into the future. We say, "How will next year be for me? Where will I be five or ten years from now?" There are no answers to these questions. Mostly we have just enough light to see the next step: what we have to do in the coming hour or the following day. The art of living is to enjoy what we can see and not complain about what remains in the dark. When we are able to take the next step with the trust that we will have enough light for the step that follows, we can walk through life with joy and be surprised at how far we go. Let's rejoice in the little light we carry and not ask for the great beam that would take all shadows away." -Henri Nouwen

Thank you for faithfully joining us as we take the next step with the trust that we will have enough light for the step that follows. With a faithful community and God guiding each part of the journey, I am confident that Highland Christian will continue to successfully live into our vision to academically equip, Biblically ground, and spiritually nurture to impact the world for Christ.

GOVERNANCE UPDATE

written by Mrs. Holly Haitsma, Board President

In response to feedback received from our Society at the Annual Society Meeting regarding transparency of the Board, the HCS board has made some changes. In an effort to promote clarity and openness, the HCS website 'Boards of HCS' portion has been modified to provide a photo and biography of each board member as well as a description of each board appointed committee - including members of the committee. These changes were made to help associate names with faces, and understand who the board members are as well as what committees exist. Furthermore, in response to feedback received from the special meeting held in June, the board has decided to allow an opportunity for members of the Society to submit names for the board to consider as potential board nominees. The board has developed a Portrait of a Board Member to help guide community members as they consider nominees that are equipped and mission aligned. The Portrait of a Board Member has been reviewed by Christian Schools International (CSI) and their feedback and suggestions were included. Submitted nominees will be considered by the board and a slate will be presented to the Society in the spring. Thank you for your prayerful support of the HCS board as it seeks to support and advance the mission and vision of Highland Christian School

WISH LIST: FALL 2025

- Magnetic Tracing Boards
- National Geographic Informational Book Bundle
- Globe
- Erasable Writing Pads
- Periodic Table Poster
- Vocal Microphones
- Sphero Bolt + Coding Robots
- Rainbow Foam Dodgeballs



SCAN FOR
COMPLETE WISH LIST

25



26

SCRIPTURE FOLLOWER - 2025/26 THEME

written by Mrs. Vicki Huizenga, Director of Faith Formation

Each year, students arrive at Highland Christian School with hopes of finding their place within the community. The process of forming friendships and fostering connections reassures them of their belonging, both to the HCS family and the broader family of God.

Highland Christian is dedicated to guide students on this journey by academically equipping, Biblically grounding, and spiritually nurturing, all with the aim of making a positive impact in the world for Christ. We effectively evaluate our students' academic readiness through various assessments, but we encounter a challenge of how to measure their Biblical understanding and spiritual growth.

Last year, we identified some of the lifelong discipleship habits and practices that shape students and transform God's world. We envisioned how HCS students would continue to develop and grow in their relationship with God, His creation, and His people. We narrowed our list to a group of **NINE** essential roles that shape the learning in each classroom and subject area and ignite a desire in each HCS student to live into God's story. This framework, known as our **Portrait of a Graduate**, began with the role of **Creation Caretaker**, as outlined in Genesis 2:15: *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.* A **Creation Caretaker** embodies students who celebrate and care for God's creation.

This year, we are focusing on the role of **Scripture Follower**, as highlighted in II Timothy 3:16-17: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* Students need to **KNOW** God's story in Scripture and to recognize their place within that narrative. This knowledge provides their identity and shapes them on their journey. Students need to know how people like Abraham and Sarah, Moses, and David

played important parts in God's story even though they doubted and sinned. They need to see how the Psalms help them talk to God. More importantly, they need to **KNOW** how Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection gives them life. This understanding will lead them to recognize how the Gospels and the letters of the apostles can empower them to serve as the hands and feet of Jesus in their daily lives.

How are we nurturing our students in their role as a **Scripture Follower**? Nurturing students in this journey as **Scripture Followers** begins with intentional acts, such as Mrs. Kruithof praying over each desk and corner of her classroom in order to create a holy place for learning. The commitment continues when Kindergarten teachers hide God's Word in the hearts of their students, with the joyful recitation of Psalm 100 echoing through the hallways, often accompanied by expressive hand motions.

Nurturing is further exemplified by Mr. McClenahan and Mr. Shellhaas collaborating to teach Junior High students about the importance of *Standing Firm* (Ephesians 6) in the fight against evil. HCS students also encourage their peers to embrace their identity as **Scripture Followers** by celebrating the diverse cultures, nationalities, and gifts of the body of Christ and by recognizing the unity of belief and purpose in this body (I Corinthians 12). Before athletic events, student athletes embrace their role in the narrative of Scripture by praying that their abilities and attitudes serve to glorify God.

Through the roles articulated in a **Portrait of a Graduate**, Highland Christian students learn to **SEE**, **SENSE**, and **SERVE** God and practice living in God's Story.

Vicki



II Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

CAMP MANITOQUA

written by Mrs. Anna Haan, Jr. High Teacher

Our 6th graders recently enjoyed an exciting and memorable field trip to Camp Manitouqua. The day was filled with activities designed to challenge students, build confidence, and strengthen teamwork.

Students took part in team-building puzzles, reflected on the importance of trust and leadership, climbed the rock wall, and soared down a short zip line. Some bravely faced their fear of heights, while others discovered how much trust matters during group challenges. Every activity required communication, encouragement, and cooperation, showing students how much stronger they are when they work together.

One of the highlights was watching classmates cheer each other on. Whether it was crossing a balance beam or completing a puzzle, students saw that success often depends on supporting and motivating one another. These moments taught perseverance, leadership, and the value of encouragement.

By the end of the day, students returned with new memories, stronger friendships, and skills they can use in school and beyond. The experience at Camp Manitouqua reminded everyone that challenges bring growth and that great things happen when we work as a team.



Anna



HIGH SCHOOL PREP CLASSES

written by Ms. Kimberly Julian, Assistant Principal

Highland Christian School is fortunate to offer several Jr. High elective and core classes to prepare students for high school. Some classes students can take for high school credit include *Geometry*, *Algebra 1*, and *Computer Science*. Other classes students take are at an introductory level to make the high school credit easier, like *Spanish 1 & 2*, *Communications*, and *Current Events*. Additionally, there are classes that teach life skills, like *Music Ministry*, *Student Life*, *Home Economics* and *Study Skills*.

High school classes offered at HCS allow students an advantage to take a class again in high school or open up a space for them to take a different class. *Computer Science*, for example, is a new high school class requirement in Indiana. Those who are willing to put in extra work as an 8th grader and accept an additional load of homework are able to take this course at HCS. *Geometry* and *Algebra 1* can also be applied to students' high school transcripts, and they are able to take an accelerated path allowing them the opportunity to take courses like *Calculus* and *AP Stats* in high school. An alternative to an accelerated math track would be that a student could retake the classes as an honors class for a higher GPA. Students enrolled in these math classes have scored high on standardized testing and received a teacher recommendation.

Introductory level and life skill elective classes like *Spanish 1 & 2*, *Home Economics*, and others allow students the exposure to content that is challenging. A foundational knowledge in these courses allows them to find success in high school due to prior exposure and being able to practice the content over a longer period of time. High school brings a new level of class options and independence; we want to ensure that students are academically equipped for it.

Kimberly





SOCCER: A TEAM
COACH: JOSHUA BLOCKER
 Giuliana Arellano, Brody Boomsma, Seth Hadley, Ezra Hammersten, Xavier Hughes, Noah Jones, Katelyn Julian, Collin Kramer, Layla Okrasinski, Israel Reyes, Leo Smit, Jay Aardsma, Tyce Blocker, Ryker Evanson, Matthew Neibert, Brandon Pierce, Paxton Vander Pol



SOCCER: B TEAM
COACH: TONY SSERWADDA
 Josue Arguedas-Castro, Braelynn Boomsma, Noah Dykstra, Ryan Hutton, Finley Lang, Caleb Musch, Aiden Prim, Charlotte Tebben, Zaiden Vargas, Cooper Wognum, Chloe Zoeteman, Zion Campbell, Zeelan Constantino, Moises Garcia, Andrew Schutt



VOLLEYBALL: 7TH GRADE GIRLS
COACH: MADDIE SCHAAF
 Faith Blackledge, Ruby Bouquet, Christina Cruz, Gracyn DeGraff, Briar Dotson, Hayden Hiskes, Lily Licciardone, Norah Natelborg, Remie Paul, Shayley Summers, Enyu Wang, Amiya Wright



VOLLEYBALL: 8TH GRADE GIRLS
COACH: DARCY NICHOLS
 Naomi Ajayi, Erin DeYoung, Gabby Dobyne, Allie Dykstra, Mikayla Dykstra, Mylee Jones, Ellie Oostman, Hallie Sitter, Aubrey Staples, Lae'Lah Swain, Maddie Wieringa, Emma Zoeteman



CROSS COUNTRY TEAM
COACHES: ASHLEY KRUIHOF & CAMBRIE VAN ROEKEL
 BOYS: Adam Book, Aiden Brouwer, Jack Earnshaw, Connor Freel, Joshua Friend, Jason Guillen, Braylin Hamby, William Jellema; GIRLS: Jennifer Brice, Isabella Corral, Alyse Hopper, Camille Jellema, Sadie Jellema, Juliette Lee, Jayda Luttjebuer, Victoria McClenahan, Naomi Schutt, Vivian VanderWoude

FALL SPORTS RECAP

written by Mr. Luke Hillegonds, Athletic Director

The A soccer team had a great regular season. Coach Josh Blocker helped the team finish second in the league with a 4-1 league record and a record of 5-3 overall. The team represented Highland Christian well in all games and practices. They lost in the semi-finals of the league tournament to the eventual champions.



The B soccer team had a season filled with growth and learning. Coach Tony Sserwadda led this young group of 6th graders and helped them improve their soccer skills while competing well against bigger and older competition. They finished in third place in the league, with a record of 1-1-2. Their season finished with a close 3-2 semi-final loss in the league tournament. Well done, Huskies!

The 7th grade volleyball team had an incredible regular season! Coach Maddie Schaaf coached the team to a record of 4-2 in league play and 8-2 overall, earning a third place finish in the regular season. Highlights from the season included: defeating Crown Point Christian in three games in the regular season finale, beating the number one and two seeds in the tournament, and winning the tournament championship!

The 8th grade volleyball team saw a season in which they improved drastically throughout their time together. They finished 1-5 in league play with the highlight of the season coming in a dominating win at Lansing Christian. Coach Darcy Nichols helped the girls expand their skills and compete hard all season long. The girls lost their first round match of the league tournament, but they played with great effort and demonstrated positivity throughout the season.

The girls and boys cross country teams had a wonderful season of growth and improvement under the leadership of Coach Ashley Kruithof and Coach Cambrie Van Roekel. The girls team competed well and won multiple meets. Congratulations to Naomi Schutt (6th grade) for winning several meets, and shoutout to Vivian Vander Woude (8th grade) for finishing in the top five of multiple races! To finish the season, the girls' team claimed the league championship, where Naomi Schutt placed 1st, Camille Jellema placed 2nd, Vivian Vander Woude placed 3rd, and Alyse Hopper placed 5th! The boys team had several students return from the previous season. The boys battled hard and significantly improved their times from the year before. We are proud of all cross country runners!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Luke Hillegonds.



Naomi Schutt finished 1st, Camille Jellema 2nd, and Vivian VanderWoude 3rd!



Coaches Kruithof and VanRoekel hold the Cross Country League Championship Trophy.



A CLASS MILESTONE:

100% OF OUR 2024–2025 THIRD GRADERS PASSED THE IREAD3 TEST!

written by Ms. Andrea Harvey, Academic Principal

We are absolutely overjoyed to announce that **every single student in our third grade class of 2024–2025 passed the Indiana IREAD3 test**, achieving a remarkable **100% pass rate!** This milestone is an inspiring testament to the dedication of our students, the excellence of our teachers, and the strong support of our families as every third grader met expectations on this critical state reading test.

This accomplishment is even more remarkable when viewed in a larger context. According to the Indiana Department of Education, statewide only **87.3%** of Indiana third graders demonstrated reading proficiency on this year's IREAD3 test. The students at HCS didn't just beat the state average by a small number—they surpassed it by a full **12 percentage points!**

This perfect result reflects HCS's commitment to intentional instruction, focused literacy initiatives and a culture that celebrates learning. Teachers built strong foundations in literacy through engaging lessons, small-group instruction

LISTENING SESSIONS

Over the course of the year, school administration has implemented a new practice called 'Listening Sessions.' These sessions entail meeting with small groups of parents to learn about their experiences, elicit suggestions and ideas, open doors for communication, and build Christian community. Proverbs 27:17 stated, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." It is with great enthusiasm that we are able to dialogue with the Highland Christian constituency to listen, improve, and grow together as one body.

and encouragement that inspired students to do their best. Families partnered every step of the way by reinforcing the importance of reading and practicing at home. Together, this team effort created the conditions for success—and the results speak for themselves!



Another key factor in this success was our partnership with the Indiana Literacy Cadre, which strengthened instructional reading practices in grades K-3. Under the guidance of Mrs. Freel, our school's literacy coach, teachers gained new strategies, support, and resources that directly impacted student learning. Her leadership empowered our teachers to refine their practice, align instruction and create classrooms where reading success was visible.

Passing the IREAD test is a milestone for any Indiana student, but achieving a perfect 100% for an entire school is rare and deserves the highest recognition. It shows not only that our students are prepared for the academic challenges ahead, but also that they are building the confidence and skills they will carry for a lifetime.

Congratulations to our incredible third graders, teachers, and families for partnering together in this literacy journey! You've demonstrated that when a community comes together with purpose and passion, extraordinary results follow. We couldn't be prouder of this achievement – congratulations!

Andrea



SCAN TO WATCH
OUR CELEBRATION VIDEO!



SPECIAL PEOPLE AT HCS

written by Miss Jodi Lineburg, Development Director

Special people days are always a highlight at Highland Christian School! On these days, love is palpable. The value of relationship is undeniable. When children feel valued and secure, the sparkle in their eyes are bright. The smile on their face beams, and the energy of their excitement escapes every limb of their body as they gleefully greet their guest of honor!

On each occasion, Pastor Appreciation Chapel in September and Grandparents' Day in October, students' school-wide enjoyed sharing details about their classroom, classmates, and assignments with their special guests. In addition to being fun, these opportunities contribute positively to a student's sense of belonging and purpose while integrating faith, learning, and life experience in meaningful ways.

From the immediate and extended family relationships that root a child's being, to the Church leaders who influence and teach children the ways of the Lord, the beauty of God's covenant is constantly on display in a multi-generational, spiritual community like ours.

During the school day, we see education and discipleship flow, faith being infused, and evidence of our core values in action! Without you, we couldn't succeed in our mission. So, during this holiday season we offer our GREATEST THANKS

- o ... to the moms who pray over our students and community every Friday.
- o ... to the parents who cultivate community through their service with PTO.
- o ... to the members of our community who give generously to see our school thrive!
- o ... to our ETC Thrift Store family who works to see our Foundation strong!
- o ... to our supporting churches who give guidance as we navigate socio-cultural issues
- o ... and to the 375 families and 122 local churches we are doing life with each and every day!



Jodi





OUR FOUNDATION IS GROWING!

Written by Miss Jodi Lineburg, Development Director

Our community shows up! We hit the ground running with a maxed-out participant roster and filled all of our sponsorships for the **Annual HCS Foundation Golf Outing**. What great fun we had! The laughter factor was off the charts and we yielded over \$26K for the Foundation in one day. Thanks to all our sponsors, golfers, and volunteers who invested freely and generously in the Highland Christian School Foundation through this event.



Next up is ETC...A Thrift Store! Did you know that ETC stands for Educating the Children? These wonderful people go above and beyond to see our thrift store thrive. Last year alone, they contributed \$325,000 to the Foundation Fund! We are truly blessed to have such a great community and a robust endowment fund for Highland Christian School.

For 40 years, our Foundation Fund has been growing and has blessed the School budgetary support, directly reducing tuition for families. This year, the Foundation Board was pleased to present its highest gift ever in the amount of \$202,000! With these funds we will help 139 families and make another investment in the CHOICE Contingency Fund.

Highland Christian School's Foundation offers a trusted structure for donors who wish to make an impact beyond our immediate, time-bound needs. We are honored to have celebrated life-long legacies through tribute and estate gifts we received this summer. These precious saints, now home with the Lord and fully redeemed, have anchored our present and fueled our future in their generosity.



Through our continued membership with the Barnabas Foundation, Highland Christian School community members have access to estate planning professionals, free of charge. No commissions, no fees. Just like-minded Christian professionals whose goal is to help you reap the greatest impact from your generosity.

They can help you:

- Save taxes by giving stock, real estate, commodities or other non-cash assets.
- Simplify and streamline your giving by establishing a donor advised fund.
- Make a gift in your will to extend your charitable impact beyond your lifetime.
- Eliminate taxes by giving from your IRA.
- Give in ways that provide you or your loved ones income for life.



Not ready to meet in person? We've linked their smart giving resources on our website! If you're not sure where to start, no problem. We've got a life stage road map to help with that!

We are called to be generous and have been blessed by the generosity of many. Thanks for standing with us as we grow our Fund for the long-term good of Highland Christian School!

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!

Your generosity is powerful and right now you can be doubly effective! Highland Christian School is matching new Family Legacy Funds, dollar for dollar, up to \$5,000 per new fund started. This means that if you start a Family Legacy Fund with \$2,500, it instantly becomes \$5,000. If you start your fund with \$5,000, it will instantly become \$10,000!

START YOUR FAMILY LEGACY FUND TODAY!

Learn more online at [highlandchristian.org/Family Legacy Funds](http://highlandchristian.org/FamilyLegacyFunds) or by calling Jodi Lineburg at 219-838-0356 x165



HAMMOND RIVERSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL UPDATE

written by Dr. Kyle Weener, Head of School

"I'm sorry. Our classes are full. There is no room for your child in our Christian school." Across the region, hundreds of mission-matched students and families are turned away from Christian education. Despite continued expansion projects at CPCS, HCS, and ICHS, this challenge remains. While enrollment wait-lists are wonderful from an operational point of view, from a vision point of view, these limitations are challenging. From a parent's point of view, they're heart-breaking and hope-stealing. Hammond Riverside Christian School is part of our answer.

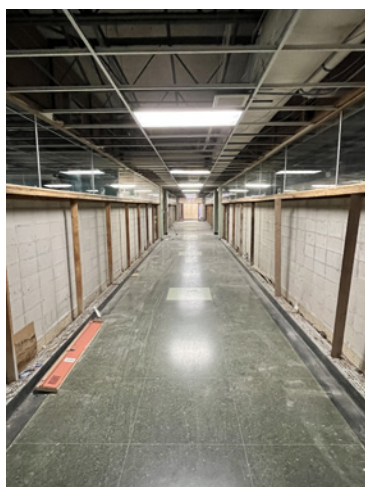
With a passion and sincere desire to fulfill the Great Commission, Illiana Christian High School, Crown Point Christian School, and Highland Christian School came together and formed a new separate entity named *For Generations to Come, Inc.* Earlier this fall, City Baptist School in Hammond, Indiana was purchased to help expand the accessibility of Christian education - specifically in North Lake County. **In its inaugural year next year, Hammond Riverside Christian School (HRCS) will serve up to 126 students in grades K-5 - with plans to expand grade levels and the number of homeroom classes per grade.** Based on the size of the building and the demand for high quality Christian education, the capacity for Hammond Riverside Christian School is slated to be 1,040 students (Pre-K to 12th grade).

Since acquiring the building, the following advancements have been accomplished:

- A robust accreditation process was completed with Christian Schools International (CSI).
- Between the first two work days, more than 250 volunteers came to support HRCS. Together, volunteers removed ceiling tiles from 36 rooms and school hallways, disposed of over 250 chalkboards, and 700 lockers, and enhanced the landscaping across the property.
- The City of Hammond distributed a press release announcing HRCS.
- A website is being commissioned and a graphic designer has been hired to develop school logos.
- Communication with local churches about the start of this new school is occurring.
- Dialogue with community foundations and private donors continues.
- Job descriptions are being developed - in efforts to hire staff for administrative, educational, maintenance, and office positions.

Meanwhile, the *For Generations to Come* board is developing a phasing plan, raising both public and private funds for facility upgrades, and beginning the hiring process for leadership and staff positions. Currently, bids have been finalized for roof and HVAC replacement work, totaling \$2.1 million. Once raised and completed, further facility improvements must occur to refurbish classrooms, upgrade restrooms, make parking improvements, remodel some common and office spaces, and improve school security. In addition to the roof and HVAC, these additional projects are estimated to cost an additional \$4 million.

Starting Hammond Riverside Christian School is inestimably important. This summer, Hammond's Chief of Staff, Scott Miller, spoke to a group of constituents about the light that Hammond Riverside Christian School will be for the community. As we spread the word about this new school, it is exciting to see the community come together to see this great work completed. Thank you for your continued prayers and support. With the opening of Hammond Riverside Christian School, countless lives will be impacted for Christ!



ALUMNI NEWS PART OF THE PACK!

Any new babies in your family?
We have some new HCS Baby Swag
we'd love to bless you with!

Share the good news
of your family's newest addition!
Email Jessica at
jhiskes@highlandchristian.org



HIGHLAND
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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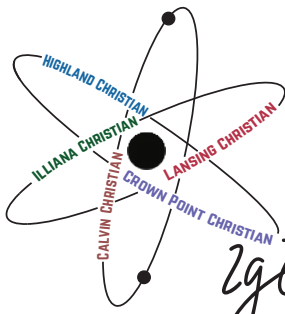
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Presenting JOHN O'LEARY

We are excited to announce that FUSION is hosting nationally acclaimed speaker and #1 bestselling author John O'Leary for a special in-person event on Friday, February 6th.

John's incredible journey—from being given just a 1% chance to survive a childhood fire to now inspiring millions around the world—is a powerful testimony of hope, faith, and living with purpose. His story is the focus of the upcoming film *Soul On Fire*. This family-friendly event is open to the entire community.

Come be inspired, find your community, and discover what it means to truly live!



FUSION

Together we can



TICKETS
\$20 ADULT
\$15 STUDENTS



Friday, February 6th
7:00 - 8:30 PM



Faith Church Dyer
100 W. 81st Ave, Dyer, IN

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