

August 3, 2019

To the Ascension community of teachers, parents and students,

For everything there is a season and a time to every matter under heaven. Eleven years after answering a call to leave Pennsylvania and move west to become Head of School at Ascension Academy, these words from Ecclesiastes have hit home in a profound way for my wife and I. We have both come to the realization that it is time for us to bring this chapter of our lives to a close. After much soul-searching we have decided that we will be retiring at the end of the 2019-20 academic year.

Succession in leadership at a school is both natural and necessary. Our Board of Regents will soon appoint a committee from among our stakeholders that will begin a search to hire the best person or persons to lead our school in the coming years. I am eager to assist in this effort as we work together to make this transition smooth, positive and purposeful. Our gathering today is a most important step in that process.

Leaving Ascension next June will not be easy for Patti and me. We have both tried to give our very best to this school, celebrating its many successes and agonizing over its many challenges. Seeing it grow, prosper, and emerge as an exemplar of what a world-class college preparatory academy can be in the Panhandle has been immensely gratifying. Our work, like the work of so many at our school, has been a labor of love. We will shed many tears in moving on, but they will mostly be tears of joy and gratitude.

Our school enters its third decade with a well-earned reputation as the region's strongest college preparatory program, and our 225 graduates confirm what Ascension has done for them and helped make of them. Yet at the same time we face financial challenges that threaten our ability to sustain a program of this caliber. This reality, coupled with my age, my longevity in this position, and the normal family plans and preoccupations of grandparents have all combined to make this a decision we believe is right for us and for the school.

In closing I want to thank the Board of Regents, past and present, for this career-fulfilling opportunity and for the friendship, understanding, support and confidence you have given me these many years. And I want to especially thank each member of the faculty who stayed on in 2008 when this Easterner showed up to share in this educational ministry with you, and to those teachers who accepted my invitation to join us in this experiment in school *as it should be*. We haven't always fulfilled our own high expectations, but, like our students, we have discovered the life-changing power of aiming high and, in that effort, accomplishing much.

I believe Ascension's best days may lie ahead of us, a hope buoyed by the strength of commitment I sense from so many on our Board, in our faculty, among our families, and within our alumni body. Ascension is a unique and precious jewel of learning in this corner of Texas. And our future vitality and sustainability is an essential part of the emerging trajectory of growth and prosperity for our Panhandle home that we love and care about so much.

With the greatest respect and appreciation,

Bill Summerhill

To everyone in the Ascension Academy community,

Dr. William Summerhill has recently informed the Board of Regents that the 2019-2020 school year will be his last year at Ascension Academy. Bill and Patti plan on retiring next June and move to Colorado to be closer to their family.

We are grateful for what the Summerhills have meant to Ascension since coming to Amarillo in 2008. Our school has enjoyed a dramatic growth in enrollment during Bill's tenure, and we annually graduate some of the area's most qualified college ready students. On his watch our pre-AP, AP and Dual-credit curriculum has developed students with SAT, ACT and AP performances significantly above local, state and national measures of excellence. Latin was introduced in 2009 as part of Bill's commitment to strengthening student appreciation for and knowledge of language, literature and history.

Ascension students successfully compete in regional and national competitions such as science bowl, Math counts, TAMES and TAPPS academic tournaments, and have won several State championships along the way. An avid supporter of the arts, Bill has fostered excellence in instrumental and choral music, theater and studio art, and was recognized as a TMEA Distinguished Administrator in 2017. Ascension's athletic programs have prospered during his tenure, with cross country, track, golf and fencing added to the school's other sports, with 8 TAPPS state championship banners won since 2013.

Our Board has already begun the process of securing our next Head of School. We have engaged The Education Group, a well-respected consulting firm with deep Texas roots, to lead us in our national search. The Board has formed a Search Committee that will be working closely with TEG throughout the seven-month selection process. Over the next few months, consultants will visit Amarillo, meet with various individuals and groups, and survey the community to understand our school, its values, needs and priorities. We will work with them closely to develop our school and position profile to help identify candidates with the credentials and experience needed to lead our school in the coming decade.

During the search process we will keep the community informed of our progress, and once finalists are chosen, members of the Ascension community will have an opportunity to meet them when they visit our campus. When completed the Search Committee will recommend their top candidates to the Board of Regents who will, as the school's governing body, select our next Head of School.

This 20th year of our history promises to be a most important one in paving the way for Ascension's future. We appreciate your understanding of this important process and your continued support of our school and of Bill and Patti as they bring their careers to a productive and meaningful conclusion at our school.

Sincerely,

Patrick A. Swindell, Chairman of the Board of Regents