

Newsletter November 2025

We are very pleased to welcome our students and staff back to school following the recent strike and lockout. We recognize that the past month has been challenging for our students and families, and we sincerely thank you for your patience, understanding, and support during this difficult time.

Teachers took job action in hopes of creating better learning conditions for students. It is important to acknowledge, however, that many of the concerns that led to the job action remain unresolved. We continue to pray for meaningful dialogue and progress, trusting that all parties will work toward solutions that uphold the dignity and well-being of our students, staff, and school communities.

We have received several questions from families regarding academic progress and extracurricular activities. At this time, the Government of Alberta has not indicated that time lost during job action will be made up. With this in mind, timetables and the school calendar will remain unchanged. As always, our dedicated staff will do all they can to ensure that students are able to access the curriculum effectively, so that learning continues without interruption.

Extracurricular activities and field trips are made possible through the generosity and commitment of our teaching staff who volunteer their time to coach, supervise, and lead student experiences beyond the classroom. This includes activities such as sports teams, clubs, concerts and many other events. Our teachers care deeply about their students and continue to give of their personal time in order to provide students with these important opportunities for growth and connection.

As we return to our regular routines, our focus remains firmly on our students—their learning, safety, and well-being. We are grateful for the unwavering dedication of our teachers and support staff, and for the trust our families place in us each day. In the spirit of our Catholic faith, we are reminded of our call to serve one another with compassion, patience, and hope.

Thank you to our families for continuing to walk with us in faith and partnership.







This month, we take time to reflect on how fortunate we are to live in a country where democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are cherished and protected. We enjoy these freedoms thanks to the courage of Canadians who have answered the call to serve and defend the values we hold dear. We will never forget the men and women who, despite great personal risk, made incredible sacrifices to safeguard justice and freedom. Their dedication and bravery deserve our deepest gratitude and respect.

On November 7, Good Shepherd Catholic School will pause to honor and remember the brave soldiers whose sacrifices have ensured the freedoms we enjoy today. We will also extend our appreciation to veterans, current Canadian Forces members, their families, and those who have gone before them, ensuring their legacy is never forgotten.

As we move through November, we also turn our hearts to the spiritual celebrations of All Saints' Day on November 1 and All Souls' Day on November 2. All Saints' Day is a time to honor all saints—those known and unknown—who have lived holy and faithful lives, serving as inspiring examples of virtue and faith. All Souls' Day invites us to remember and pray for all who have passed away, especially our loved ones, asking God to welcome them into eternal life. These observances remind us of the enduring connection between our faith, our community, and the saints who guide us, encouraging us to live lives of kindness, courage, and faithfulness.

As a school community, these important days invite us to reflect on sacrifice, service, and the power of faith—both in the lives of those who have protected our freedoms and in the lives of those who have gone before us in faith.



Jennifer Dimas Principal



Beth Pecson Assistant Principal



Sonia Schultz Assistant Principal

Our School Charism:

~ Inspired by our Good Shepherd, Jesus, to Love, Learn and Lead~

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:1-18

Key Verse 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

"I am the good shepherd" (11-18). Why is Jesus the good shepherd? Look at verse 11. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus is the good shepherd because he is different from a hired hand. When the hired hand sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. The hired hand is a false shepherd. A false shepherd takes the job of caring for the sheep not as a "calling," but as a means of gaining profit or fame. When the time comes to sacrifice for the sake of the sheep, false shepherds run away like 100-meter track runners. We should not be false shepherds, but good shepherds. When the boy David kept his father's sheep, he fought with lions and bears, risking his own life in order to protect his sheep (1Sa 17:34-36). David also fought against the enemy general Goliath as a shepherd of Israel in order to save his people from the Philistine army (1Sa 17:45-47). So David was known as a good shepherd of his people Israel. In verses 14-18 we can see why Jesus is the good shepherd.

All Hallow's Eve | A Christian Tradition

Halloween, an autumn celebration, reminder God's name is hallowed

Canadian Catholic News (www.cathnews.net/)

ANTIGONISH, Canada (CCN/Atlantic Catholic) – Autumn is a uniquely poetic time of year, when nature becomes melancholic and sweet. It's also the time for celebrating Halloween, of childhood memories of hayrides and bonfires, pumpkins and Jack-O-Lanterns, leaf-covered streets and, yes, tombstones, skeletons, haunted houses, ghosts and monster movies.

Many have a soft spot for Halloween's spooky side, as an essential ingredient of the holiday and as delicious as apple cider and doughnuts. But there is an aura of disapproval to that side of Halloween among many Catholics. Is there nothing of value to the spookiness of Halloween?

It should be noted that Halloween is a Catholic holiday. Pope Gregory IV in 835 made it the universal practice in the Roman Catholic Church to celebrate All Saints' Day on Nov. 1. All Souls' Day follows the next day as the commemoration of all of the faithful who have departed.

"All Hallows' Even" as the evening before All Hallows' Day — All Saints' Day – eventually became shortened to Halloween. Hallow, as in "hallowed be thy name" in the Lord's Prayer, is an older form of the word "holy."

It was the Protestant Reformation that rejected the universal practice of devotion to the dead (Martin Luther dropped any references to praying for the dead from his Bible). This Catholic holiday was attacked, much like the church as a whole, for being pagan and evil.

But Nov. 1st was the day of the Celtic Summer's End feast of Samhain, the day when the dead returned to the earth. We have retained some of these pagan elements to Halloween, as is true of Christmas and Easter.

Why would a pope put the Catholic celebration of the dead on top of the pagans' celebrations of the dead? Because the Catholic feasts are in continuity and fulfil the meaning of the pagan ones. This is why C.S. Lewis said that Christianity was the fulfilment of paganism.

So we don't reject the use of trees at Christmas time because they were pagan, we continue to use them, because as symbols of life they now point to Christ. That is another great thing about Catholic feasts. The arrangement of the liturgical calendar was made with a spiritual sensitivity to the cosmos that linked our celebrations with the language of creation.

When the trees put on their most beautiful funeral dress, nature herself is inviting us to meditate on the last things. We celebrate the coming of the true light of the world and hope of man when nature's light is at its weakest, and we celebrate the resurrection together with her rebirth in the spring.

So what about the indulgence in the spooky and scary? Skeletons are spooky, but they are also very Catholic. In fact, one couldn't find a better haunted house for a Halloween pilgrimage than the various "chapel of bones" that can be found across Europe.

In Portugal, there is a Franciscan chapel, the walls and pillars of which are made from more than 5,000 human skulls and bones. The threshold of the chapel bears the inscription "We bones here are waiting for yours." Another chapel is made of 40,000 bones arranged into decorations and furnishings, including a huge bone chandelier — even the macabre has a place in the church!

And what are we to make of Gothic cathedrals and the gargoyles that adorn its pillars and corners? If you read to your children the prophets' visions of the cherubim and seraphim who dwell closest to God, with lion heads and Eagle's talons, covered in wings and eyeballs, would the child not hesitate to call it a monster?

And if those creatures bathed in God's light are terrible to behold, what of God himself? Isn't it interesting that we used to refer to the third person of the Trinity with the combination of the words "holy" and "ghost"? Or that whenever the Bible describes men's encounters with God through an angel, the reaction is to fall down as though dead in fear? Could it be that horror is just another aspect of holy?

Like the sense of vertigo that is inseparable from the feeling of awe as a person reaches the top of a great height and looks out or how heat and cold seem to be opposites but become indistinguishable from each other in the extreme, so might majesty and dread, spooky and wonderful be inseparable in the Lord God.

Halloween is not just a time to think about mortality, or pray for the dead. It is a time to learn again what it means that the Lord's name is hallowed. Halloween is the feast of the holy, and we learn why the angels surrounding God's throne cover their eyes with their wings, and what it means to pray with them: "Holy, holy, holy — Lord God of hosts."

And to learn the fear of the Lord before, in the dead of winter, we celebrate his coming to us with a human face.

All Saints Day ~ November 1

November 1 is All Saints Day, the day commemorating every saint, known and unknown, as per the Catholic tradition.

Although many of the known saints have their own feast day during the year, on November 1 the Catholic Church remembers them all through the Solemnity of All Saints. For the saints that we do not have as much information about, or for those whose feats are still relatively unsung, the day offers an opportunity to commemorate their accomplishments and to pray to them, asking for their intercession.

All Saints Day was formally established in 609 AD by Pope Boniface IV. Pope Boniface the IV also created All Souls Day which is now held one day after the feast of all saints on November 2.

All Saints Day is the modern name attributed to the day, but it was once known in Old English as "All Hallow's Day" or "Hallowmas," making the previous day "All Hallows Eve" or Halloween as it is now more commonly known. "Hallows" is thought to have referred to the saints as they were the "hallowed ones"

All Souls Day ~ November 2

What is All Souls Day?

November 2 is the Commemoration of All of the Faithful Departed, or All Souls. On this day, we pray that all those who have died—our loved ones, and also those people around the world who we will never meet—through the mercy of God, will rest in peace.

All Souls' Day, in Roman Catholicism, a day for commemoration of all the faithful departed, those baptized Christians who are believed to be in purgatory because they died with the guilt of lesser sins on their souls. It is observed on November 2. Roman Catholic doctrine holds that the prayers of the faithful on earth will help cleanse these souls in order to fit them for the vision of God in heaven, and the day is dedicated to prayer and remembrance. Requiem masses are commonly held, and many people visit and sometimes decorate the graves of loved ones.

November 10 to 12 - Fall Break - No Classes

November 10 - 12 is our Fall Break. Therefore, there are no classes for students on November 10, 11 or 12.

The Anniversary of the Holodomor ~ November 23

The Fourth Saturday in November (November 23) is the official Holodomor Memorial Day as proclaimed by the Province of Alberta in November of 2008. Our site will commemorate this tragic event on Friday, November 21, through various whole school and classroom-based student engagements.

Why do we remember?

The Holodomor is one of the most devastating events of the 20th century. From 1932-1933 the government of the USSR, led by Joseph Stalin, carried out a genocide by starvation (*Holodomor*). At the height of the genocide, as many as 25,000 people were dying everyday with **one third of them being children**.

The Soviet government did their best to hide this atrocity from the world and because of this, many statistics are hard to find; however, the total death toll of the *Holodomor* totals between 6 and 10 million people.

Holodomor remains as the greatest mass murder of civilians undertaken during peace time. Despite this infamy, Holodomor is still a little known and little understood event.

Holodomor is a Ukrainian word with two parts: Holod, which means hunger, and moryty, which means a slow, cruel death. Adding to this tragedy is that outside of Ukraine, little was known about Holodomor, and even inside Ukraine, to speak of this event was forbidden.

The plan behind Holodomor was calculated and deliberate: for collectivization to be successful in Ukraine, the breadbasket of Europe, independent farmers had to be eliminated. Beginning in 1932, all food was removed by Soviet police and soldiers from targeted areas of Ukraine, and Ukraine's borders were sealed, denying people the opportunity to search for food. At the height of the genocide, 25,000 people per day were dying from starvation. Once the campaign of engineered famine was completed, Ukraine's religious, artistic, intellectual and political leaders were arrested, deported or executed. The russification of Ukraine followed.

For decades the Soviet government tried to conceal the atrocities it committed from the rest of the world. In Ukraine under the Soviets, any mention of the Holodomor was considered a crime against the state and subject to imprisonment, exile or execution. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the once highly classified documents of the Soviet government and communist party were opened up to researchers. Holodomor has been documented in detail by

many historians and eyewitness accounts have been gathered, revealing the magnitude and the deliberate intentions of the genocide. Some of the eyewitness accounts have been gathered from survivors currently living in Edmonton.

That Holodomor was genocide is supported by incontrovertible facts established through examination of archival documents, eyewitness accounts and demographic analysis:

- Farmers' seed grain was taken from them and then all food was removed from Ukraine's villages.
- Villages that did not cooperate were blacklisted, that is, these villages were surrounded by secret police, all food was removed, and anyone who tried to flee was executed.
- Ukraine was the only Soviet republic where borders were sealed, denying starving people the opportunity to search for food.
- The Famine Genocide targeted Ukraine as well as the Kuban region in Russia, which was predominantly settled by ethnic Ukrainians.
- Ukraine experienced a sizeable loss in population while the rest of the Soviet Union showed population growth in the 1930's. Demographic studies have shown a disproportionate loss of life in Ukraine during the 1930s compared to other parts of the Soviet Union.

Following the mass-famine was a very deliberate campaign of "russification". The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, predominant in eastern Ukraine where Holodomor was most widespread, was destroyed, priests were exiled or executed and overnight, Ukrainian Orthodox churches were reduced to rubble. Ukrainian intellectuals and artists were exiled or executed and the Ukrainian language and culture were suppressed.

Edmonton Catholic Schools joins the governments of Canada, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec in establishing a Holodomor Memorial Day as a way of paying tribute to the millions who died. Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba also include Holodomor as a mandatory topic to be taught in their curriculum.

School Council

Parents are always welcome to join us for our School Council meetings. Our next meeting will be held on **Wednesday**, **November 26 at 6:30 pm**. Minutes from previous meetings can be found on our school website: www.goodshepherd.ecsd.net.

Walk-a-thon Update

Our Walk-a-thon, originally scheduled for October 14, had to be postponed due to the recent teacher strike and lockout. With cooler weather now upon us, we're excited to announce that it's transforming into a Move-a-thon — a fun, active indoor event in our school gymnasium!

Students will get the chance to get moving, cheer each other on, and support our school community in this reimagined version of this great fall fundraiser.

The good news? Everyone now has extra time to collect pledges! Families are encouraged to continue supporting this important event that helps fund school initiatives and activities for our students.

More details will be shared soon by email once everything is finalized. Thank you for your flexibility, enthusiasm, and continued support — we can't wait to get moving together!

Remembrance Day Ceremony ~ November 7

November 11 is a day on which the poppy is proudly worn over our hearts. On this day, as Canadians, we honor our duty to remember and pay tribute to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in service of our country.

Our Remembrance Day Ceremony will be held on Friday, November 7 at 9:30 a.m. Poppies will be distributed to students that morning and families are invited to join us. Donations to the poppy fund are gratefully accepted, and all proceeds go to support our veterans.

Students who are members of Cadets, Girl Guides, Scouts, or similar organizations are welcome to wear their uniforms on this day as a way to show pride and respect.

Student-Led Conferences

Planning for our Student-Led Conferences is still underway. We are finalizing details and scheduling to ensure the experience is meaningful for students and families. Information about the event, including dates and times, will be shared with families by email once plans are confirmed. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through the details.

Health and Allergy Advisory

other lung conditions is appreciated. THANK YOU!

Food allergies have become more and more prevalent in our society. For some children and adults, the allergy to a food is so severe that it does not take ingesting it to trigger the reaction. Simply being around the food or making contact unintentionally can trigger a life-threatening reaction. This is the case for several children and staff at Good Shepherd School. Please ensure that no nut products are sent in school lunches. Please read the ingredients of all snacks, such as granola bars, as many contain traces of peanuts, tree nuts or other nuts. For the safety of these individuals, we ask for your cooperation in not sending to school snacks or lunches containing nuts or peanuts. We also ask that you refrain from having your children use highly-perfumed products. Your respect for students and staff with asthma, allergies and

"Edmonton Catholic School Division Annual Dream Builders Challenge" in Support of the Edmonton Catholic Schools Foundation and its Dreams for Kids Campaign

As a school, we will have a series of events that the students/families can participate in to raise money for the ECSD Annual Dream Builders Challenge in support of the ECS Foundation and its Dreams for Kids campaign. Dreams for Kids supports lunch and snack programs, support for students with mental health needs, resources for families in emergency crisis, financial subsidies for students to participate in school activities, opportunities for students to participate in social justice activities, and funds disadvantaged children who would benefit from early childhood education. The events that will occur at Good Shepherd are:

Movie Day - The students can bring in a \$5 donation towards a healthy snack. All students will watch a movie on **Friday**, **November 28**, **2025**.

Bend-the-Rules Day - Students can bring in a donation to bend rules that have been determined by their classroom teacher on **Thursday**, **January 29**, **2026**.

We thank you in advance for participating in the Annual Dream Builders Challenge and understanding the value of this campaign has for many students in the Edmonton Catholic School Division.

Good Shepherd Christmas Concert News

We wanted to share an important update regarding our Christmas concerts this year. Due to the recent interruption in programming, there is unfortunately not enough time for our students to adequately prepare and rehearse performances for a December concert. While we are disappointed that we won't be able to present a Christmas concert this year, we are excited to announce that we will instead be holding a Spring concert for all grades at the end of April.

This will give our students ample time to develop and showcase their musical skills and talents, and we are looking forward to celebrating their hard work and creativity in the spring.

We thank you for your understanding and continued support as we adapt our plans to ensure the best possible experience for our students. We can't wait to see you in April!

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line

Health Canada has announced the launch of the *First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:* 1-855-242-3310 (Toll free)

Callers can access the Help Line 24/7 effective immediately.

The Hope for Wellness Help Line is to provide immediate *culturally competent* telephone-based *crisis intervention counselling* to *First Nations and Inuit young people and adults* experiencing distress. Help Line calls will be answered by experienced crisis intervention counsellors, and service will be available in English and French. Callers may also ask about the availability of service in Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut.



Regular Bedtime is Important

One topic that we hear mentioned frequently by parents is bedtime. At school we see what happens when students do not get enough sleep. Students have a hard time keeping up when they are tired. Children need a regular bedtime and a regular bedtime routine. The bedtime should be based on the child's need for sleep and sleeping patterns.

It is good to have a planned routine for getting ready for bed and getting into bed. This may include bathing, brushing teeth, drinking a glass of water, saying good night, reading, or listening to music. Soothing, quiet activities may make the transition to sleeping easier. If your child has a difficult time falling asleep or has nightmares, your involvement in the "soothing" activities may need to be more extensive. Reading with your child may provide additional assurance to your child at bedtime. For younger children, a favorite toy or a night-light may be comforting too. Bedtime is a special time to be with a child.

A good night's sleep helps everyone have a better day! We hope these ideas are helpful to you and your children.



Picture Retakes ~ December 2

Picture retakes will be taking place early in the morning on Tuesday, December 2. Please let the homeroom teacher know if you would like your child to have retakes done.

BusPlanner Delays App

Parents can access the BusPlanner Delays App which will provide them with updates on the status of a particular yellow bus route. The App just needs to be downloaded onto your smartphone. It's very easy!



Severe Weather Conditions and Yellow Bus Service

Given the possible extremes of Edmonton weather and the potential for unexpected mechanical difficulties, it is impossible to guarantee buses will run on time or at all. A route can take 50% longer in adverse weather conditions. Parents are advised that if a bus does not arrive within twenty minutes of its scheduled time, they are to assume the bus is not coming. Parents must ensure that their child knows to return home or to a pre-selected location. Parents must then make alternate arrangements to get their child to school. Parents should also ensure that:

- children are supervised at the bus stop
- children have a place to go in the event the bus does not arrive
- children have alternate arrangements for getting to school should the bus not arrive
- children are suitably clothed to withstand weather extremes.

Transportation Services normal operational procedures for delayed transportation also apply in severe weather conditions.

The carrier is responsible for notifying the school and the Transportation Services office when a route is running late.

Good Shepherd Reading Superstars Program



As part of our ongoing commitment to building strong literacy skills, we are excited to share details about our school-wide Good Shepherd Reading Superstars Program. This reading incentive program is designed to complement your child's home reading and make it a special, enjoyable time for you and your child to share together.

Here's how the Good Shepherd Reading Superstars Program works:

□ Every student will receive an incentive sheet made up of strips, each containing eight boxes with specific reading goals.
\square Each night your child reads and meets their goal, a parent/guardian initials one box on the sheet.
□ Once a full row of eight boxes is complete, simply cut along the line and have your child return it to school.
\square Your child will then place the strip into their homeroom's Reading Superstars jar located in the atrium.

At the end of each month, one name will be drawn from every homeroom jar. The winning students will be invited to enjoy lunch with administration. Kindergarten winners will receive a special opportunity to "shop" for a book of their choice to add to their home library.

We are confident this program will inspire and motivate your child to read daily at home while building a lifelong love of reading.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact your child's homeroom teacher.

Happy Reading!

Good Shepherd House News

We will be starting our school house activities in November. Our houses are based on the 7 Grandfather Teachings -Humility (Wolf), Courage (Bear), Honesty (Raven), Wisdom (Beaver), Truth (Turtle), Respect (Buffalo) and Love (Eagle). It is a great way for the children to learn more about the Grandfather Teachings as each month we will focus on one of the teachings. Children can earn rocks as



rewards for house challenges/behavior/activities, and earned rocks are placed in house jars situated in all classrooms. Biweekly, the rocks are collected and placed in large jars on the stage. It's a great visual and incentive for the children as they watch the rock totals for each house accumulating. At the end of the month the rocks are counted, and rock totals are announced.

All children will remain in the same houses they were in last year (they stay in the same house until they leave our school site). The children were given bookmarks during library orientation identifying their house.

For November we will follow the trait of Bear House (Courage). Children can earn rocks for showing acts of courage. The character traits for each house have been posted in common areas of the school. Homeroom teachers will also be focusing on the trait of being courageous (making connections through literature and learning engagements) during the month of November.

Thank you for supporting the development of the 7 Sacred Grandfather teachings at home.



Alberta Project Promoting active Living & healthy Eating

This month, students are learning the benefits of being mindful through a campaign called Unwind Your Mind. Here is a summary of the learnings.

What is mindfulness?

It's about maintaining awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment.

Being mindful helps us pay attention and practice being present in the moment, instead of thinking about the past or the future.2

Mindfulness teaches you to be in control of your mind, instead of the other way around.1

How do you practice mindfulness?

Meditation, relaxation, deep breathing, reading, and stretching are all ways to train your mind and body to relax while you take time for yourself.1

Try a breathing exercise.

- 1. Take a slow breath in through your nose all the way down to your lower belly for about 4 seconds.
- 2. Hold that breath for 1-2 seconds.
- 3. Exhale your breath slowly through your mouth for about 4 seconds.
- 4. Wait 2-3 seconds before taking another breath. Repeat.

Try doing this about 6-8 times per minute for about 5 minutes, twice a day. Slowing down and taking long, deep breaths can help you get perspective, come up with creative solutions to problems and decrease your anxiety.

A Bite of Health

As an APPLE school, we strive to build a healthy school community focusing on improving students' mental health, physical activity, and eating habits for life.

Say What?

This month, students are learning the importance of using respectful language when discussing health through a monthly campaign called *Say What?* Here is a summary of the learnings.

Why use inclusive language?

Everyone's mental, physical, and nutritional health needs are different, and we need to be respectful with how we talk to them about their health. Using rude or hurtful words can impact how others feel about their health and themselves, but we can combat that by using positive language. Using positive language about health can create a safe environment for students to practice their health habits.



Why inclusive language matters.

1 in 3 Canadian youth are bullied. Bullying can lead to depression, anxiousness, irritability and other serious consequences. But practising inclusive language when it comes to health helps mitigate the use of harmful phrases and comments which may harm children.

How you can practice this at home	Examples
Comment on someone's process (how they played), rather than the outcome (whether they won or lost).	"Your catching skills are really improving, that's great!"
Use positive language when you are talking about your own body. This sets a positive example for your children.	"Not very many people have red hair like I do. That's one thing that makes me feel special."
Describe foods by the texture, colour, flavour or nutrients rather than using labels like "healthy" and "unhealthy" or "good" and "bad."	"Wow, all the vegetables in this pasta make it so colourful, it's like a rainbow!" "Apples have lots of fibre which help digest our food."
Share strategies you use when you feel down. This will help your child develop healthy strategies themselves.	"I like to talk to my friends when I am sad. They always listen to me."

References: ¹Bullying. (2021, February 18). British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase/bullying







