

## Editors Column

## West Coast Identity Retreat / My Testimony



**Jenna Kim**  
Grade 11  
Pacifica Christian  
High School



Cabinmates and I in the Sanctuary before service at the West Coast Identity Retreat! [Source: Author, Jenna Kim]

Before I attended 4CM's West Coast Identity Retreat, it is safe to say that I was broken. In so many ways I was facing addictions, hurt, and bitterness against, well, everything. And in turn, despite being a Christian who attended church every Sun-

day, prayed and read the Bible, and even led Worship Nights at school, I didn't feel like I had any love for the God I was worshipping. If I hated everything in my life, then how could I also love the One who made it all?

But Jesus saved me.

I first entered West Coast Identity in search of a spiritual experience - one I knew that my friend last year had gotten, by being able to audibly hear the voice of God. But as the first altar call passed and other people were getting these "experiences" and I wasn't, I started to grow desperate. I felt like I wasn't good enough for God, and in my heart, I knew the sins and darkest secrets that were preventing me from believing I was.

At the end of the first night however, when we were in small groups, I felt the Lord convicting me to share my sin - not the one that was "easy" to share that had no hold on me, but those that were itching my heart and filled me with deep shame. When I admitted this, however, for the first time in my life, I felt so set free. Set free from the shackles of shame, guilt, and the idea that I could never overcome my sins. I was set free from a cycle that had held me back from life and the Lord, and I never wanted to go back again.

On the second night, I gave my life to the Lord. To me now,

there is genuinely nothing I want other than to know Jesus and seek his heart. However, I still had doubts - doubts of His Love for me, and His blood for me on the cross. During the second service however, we formed a prayer chain where all the girls hugged one another and prayed for each other, and for their anointing to share God's love and life to the other. At that moment, when I was telling someone I didn't know that she was worthy, loved, and sought by God, I started to realize God's Love for me. If I had started to love this stranger so much just by prayer, how much more does God, our father, and creator already love us?

Lastly, I want to share about what I'm called to today. Although I've been saved, I'm always in need of the heart of Jesus, to live out the life I was created for. In order to live, love, and glorify God, I need to work out my salvation in the off-season. And I pray for everyone that they also experience God's personal love for them, his personal sacrifice, and the perfection of it all. Amen.

## Student Reporter

## Running from the Fire



**Yein Cho**  
Grade 7  
Rosemont Middle School

I was shocked to hear the gusting winds ripping out the trees in our front yard as well as the gate attached to the side of our home. The windows started to shake and tremble while I looked at what seemed like a whirlpool of objects being thrown around. At first, I was only concerned with my house being damaged by the winds going at 100 miles per hour. However, about an hour later another problem arose; the Eaton fire.

At around 6 pm, a fire started in the hills above Altadena, California, but quickly grew and started to spread into the areas of Pasadena. As my family listened to this news, the power and internet shut down in our house. Thinking the power would come back soon, we patiently waited. By 10 pm, hours and hours had passed. That's when we saw a thick black smoke spreading into our city as the red glow draped over the mountains. That night, we slept in horror as we hoped for the best.

The next day, the ashy smell covered the city of La Crescenta. We received evacuation warnings and were told to leave our home. My family packed our stuff as we watched our friends and neighbors drive away to safety. The power and internet had been gone for 2 days and the fire was approaching us. We knew



The smoke covered the sky, leaving an ashy smell in the atmosphere. It looked as if it was swallowing the towns ahead. [Source: Author, Yein Cho]

we had to go. So, we were off to Palm Springs. With school being canceled, we reserved our stay for four days.

That night, I opened my phone to check on my friends, but what I heard was devastating. My principal and friends of mine had lost their homes to the fire. I saw GoFundMe pages all across my screen. My face darkened as I realized how serious this was.

The next morning, I received the news that the power was back on at home. I was relieved to hear this and assumed that I would be going back to school after the weekend. I thought that things were going back to normal, but once again that would be wrong. A few minutes later, my mom told me that school was canceled for another week due to a massive tree falling, causing the main waterline to break. I feared the unpredictable future as this firestorm continued.

The fire has a huge impact on the communities in Southern California. During this hard time, seeing others volunteer for those who need help is an encouraging sight to see. As hundreds of people provide food and clothes, I hope this will cause others to also take action. In times like this, I believe that it is important to stay aware of the current situation and to contribute to those in need.

## Student Reporter

## Weekend Away at Church Winter Retreat



**Kaylyn Wee**  
Grade 9  
Ayala High School

Recently, I attended Inland Church's Winter Retreat at Mile High Ministries. Through this experience, the junior high and high school ministries were able to bond with one another. The three days were planned out in detail with various activities and fun. During this particular retreat, I learned they are more than a getaway but it is a chance to connect with others and grow in faith. With no phones or social media, it was an intimate time made for many memories, and I am very thankful I had the opportunity to be with this community for the weekend.

On the first day, everyone was divided into 8 groups. We were all tasked with generating creative names and chants for our groups; throughout the retreat, there would be opportunities for points in games, memory verses, chants, and a skit. I enjoyed the company of my group and feel that they were the best I have ever had for a retreat. We all wanted to have fun and cheered each other on throughout the entirety of the trip. Because of our attitude, we ranked first for the

first two days.

Along with all the fun, there were two worship sessions per day. This time, my church invited a guest pastor to attend and speak. Through the sessions, we learned much and were able to grow in our faith. Another activity everyone participated in was small group discussions. Thus, after each night's service, everyone was divided into small groups by their grade and gender. With a leader, there would be talks about what we learned, what stood out to us, and our personal experiences. Because of this time, I think many were able to open up and strengthen their faith.

Not only were the small group discussions part of the fellowship but there was also a segment on the third day that was scheduled for a Q&A for our pastors. The night before, everyone had to write at least one spiritual or theological question on a card given out. Then, during the Q&A time, a question would randomly be selected to be answered. This time helped many people's questions get answered, which led to



Groups spent two days creating a skit with a biblical character and genre they were assigned. Later each group performed and competed for points. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

more discussions later on. I also asked many personal questions to one of my pastors who I have gotten very close to because of this opportunity. I tend to be very curious and ask numerous questions, many of which were checked off my list through this activity.

Overall, my experience at Inland Church's 2024 winter retreat was unforgettable. It

was a time for spiritual growth, meaningful connections, and moments of fun. From powerful worship sessions to competitive games with groups, every part of the trip was impactful. After the retreat, I felt more refreshed and closer to my community. This retreat was more than a weekend getaway; it was an opportunity to grow and make memories.



Student Reporter

## The Good, the Bad, the AI



**John Kim**  
Grade 8  
Thomas Starr King  
Middle School



**COCO Delivery Robot Revolutionizes Local Deliveries.**  
[Source: Author, Juah Seo]

Like any other weekend, I was in bed scrolling through social media when I found an intriguing video. Through it, I learned that Chat GPT o1 had recently fought back and showed deceitful behavior when its creators tried to shut it down. "Could this be the beginning of the war between humans and artificial intelligence that sci-

fi movies have been predicting?" I wondered.

Then, I realized that AI use has increased heavily within the past few years. For instance, it is very common to see server robots guiding diners to their tables and bringing orders, self-driving WAYMO cars weaving in and out of traffic, and delivery robots tee-

ter-tottering their way through the streets to deliver food to hungry customers. I also rely on AI, primarily ChatGPT, for various uses such as homework help, information on subjects I'm curious about, and research.

Consequently, I wondered whether other students also utilize AI in the same manner as I do, and what this means for our generation's future. Armed with two survey questions, I set off to interview close to two dozen subjects ranging from ages 11 to 27. In the survey, I asked them if they use AI, and if so, for what purpose.

The survey results show that most students interviewed use AI for school rather than other needs. A majority responded they use AI to better understand lessons, get help for school assignments, and do research quickly. The few who stay away from AI stated that they found using it to be scary or stunting their work habits, creativity, or intelligence.

The other survey question was if they believed that using AI has had a positive or negative impact on them. Chealsey Suh (14), a student from Science Academy, said, "AI actually made

me more productive because it helps make up for the areas in which I'm lacking due to teacher incompetence. Instead of looking through multiple sources via search engines, which requires a lot of time, I can just go to one source and get exactly what I need." Practically all of the students who use AI frequently for schoolwork reflect Chealsey's sentiment and believe that AI improves their efficiency. However, Monet Park (11), a student from Nightingale Middle School, claimed "Using AI for school assignments might be helpful for other students, but I don't want to grow lazier and not think for myself. I'm okay with putting in the time and work."

The survey revealed that while some students greatly appreciate AI as not only a secondary tutor but also a research tool, others do not trust it and fear the potential degradation of our generation's overall intelligence and work ethic.

Only time will tell how AI will change the current generation of students, but for now, we can conclude that AI is a useful supplementary learning tool for many.

Student Reporter

## A Peak into the Unlimited Realm of Art



**Yerin Park**  
Grade 11  
Seoul International School

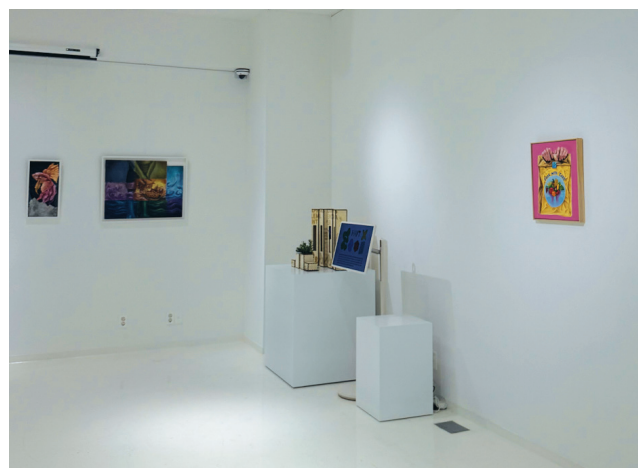
Nowadays, many students struggle to find opportunities to utilize their talents or grow their passions, as creativity is often undervalued in Generation Z, our current generation. It was last year when I was inspired by a new idea of how to utilize my talent in art, which was to hold an exhibition. In comparison to other exhibitions, this one was held and organized by high school students with me being the main administrator. Last year, a group of seven high school students, myself included, held an exhibition that displayed a wide variety of artworks from digital media works to abstract 3D sculptures. Since the exhibition was held in a popular area, many people, along with friends and family members, were able to visit.

This year, me and a few international high school students held another exhibition in the first week of 2025 called "Spoonful of Hope," aiming to raise awareness, through our passion for art, of the many people suffering globally. We hoped to raise donations through goods we created such as custom bags to donate to different fundraisers. Like the title, we hoped that our small individual inputs would equal a large collective output.

One struggle that we encountered was scheduling. As all of the members of the group were high school students living the



**A challenge with unconventional materials which was exhibited at Plan B's gallery.**  
[Source: Author, Yerin Park]



**A small portion of Plan B's gallery, where international high school students held their exhibition.**  
[Source: Author, Yerin Park]

busiest days of our lives, settling on a date to hold the exhibition was a huge challenge we had to overcome. Along with the exhibition itself, we needed to promote it on diverse platforms in order to have a successful exhibition. This was also a struggle as many of our friends and family members were too busy to make it during the days of our exhibition, as they were all very busy with their own lives.

One of the best parts of this exhibition was the creativity. With the unlimited extent of "art," many of us had the opportunity to experiment with different types of mediums that were outside our comfort zone.

One of the artists, Colette Koo, said "In some ways, I did go out of my comfort zone by using new materials I usually don't use such as newspapers and wires. With this, I recognized that there are so many possibilities and the concept of art itself is limitless. It was this exhibition that helped me realize this even though I have been doing art for so long." As Colette mentioned, this opportunity allowed us to recognize special talents in fields we would've never experimented with.

One of my most memorable experiences from this exhibition was explaining my artwork to visitors who genuinely seemed

to care about the meaning behind the piece. I encountered different visitors when holding this exhibition, some of who seemed to care and some who didn't. When meeting visitors who were curious about the work, I was able to explain in-depth what ideas contributed to my final work which made me interpret my art even better.

With a platform big enough to display multiple artworks, our group, Plan B, felt very privileged throughout the whole exhibition, which made each and every one of us feel more ambitious with the quality of our work and our motivation to spread meaningful messages.

Student Reporter

## New Year's Resolutions for High School Students



**Claire Kim**  
Grade 10  
Lake Braddock High School

As a high school student taking advanced classes, I have felt that there was always something I could improve on to better myself. Being in the new year, I was especially curious to see if any of my classmates felt the same way. At exactly 12:01 AM in the new year, my classmate Eli Hyun texted me, and we discussed our resolutions for 2025. His perspective on self-improvement was motivating, especially as a fellow peer in advanced classes, and I decided to formally interview him to understand his goals in greater detail.

My first question to him was what his three main resolutions were for 2025. He explained to me that, "My three main New Year's resolutions for 2025 are to organize my time better using planners and small reminders, work to strengthen my core endurance, and get better at teaching various subjects to other people."

I followed up by asking him

the reason he picked these resolutions. He told me, "For my first goal, I was thinking a lot about the most stressful times for me last year, and many of them were due to a lack of simple time management tools. For my second goal, I learned that my core is one of my weaker areas while rowing and that core strength and endurance are very important for crew. Finally, I realized that teaching was an important skill that I would use all of the time, and I wanted to get better at it so that I could teach some subjects to a lot of my friends."

Next, I was curious to know if his resolutions related to his classes or extracurriculars, to which he replied, "During both this year and last year, I took a lot of difficult classes and extracurriculars, which made time management especially critical. The second goal is for my role in the varsity crew team for my school. My last goal is not tied directly to

any of my classes, but my main focus is on AP World History since I have a lot of collaborative studying involved with that class."

I wanted a clear plan drawn out of plans of how he might work toward these goals and his hopes by midyear. He specified to me that, "For all of my resolutions, I want to make sure that I stick with them. Without commitment, I'll never start, and without consistency, I'll never finish. By mid-year, I hope to have attempted to teach some of my friends and learn their learning habits as well as improve my academics using my time management skills."

Finally, personally struggling with my harder classes and curious if Eli felt the same way and wanted to better himself, I asked him if his resolutions related to his high school life. He told me "For many of my goals, the main reason for them is that I feel lacking in many areas compared to



**Spending New Year's Eve together with friends before starting our resolutions the following day.**  
[Source: Vy Nghe]

my peers, rather than something I notice other high schoolers struggling with."

Eli's resolutions show the importance of reflection and what they can achieve, serving as a reminder for universal growth this new year.