



Sunday, March 22, 2020

Dear Covenant Friends,

We are one week into this new reality we call "*Remote Learning*" and everything still feels wrong. I have always recognized one of our greatest strengths and gifts as a community to be our warm and family like environment. When this is suddenly taken away, at least in person, there is a tremendous sense of loss. And when the end is not in sight, there exists a temptation to mourn. I have spent this week vacillating between a myriad of emotions, and they have not all been life giving. Here on this Sunday morning, I have had to take a deep look inside and make an important decision. I can spend these weeks mourning, self righteously convincing myself that I have a right to my sadness and disappointment, or I can turn to the one who brings beauty from ashes and ask for His joy to be my strength. I know the right answer. It is the only thing that can heal my broken heart and allow me to serve you well. I will choose joy. I will choose possibility, and I will choose to look forward to the surprises God has in store for us all.

Let me not forget to extend to you my gratitude for your amazing response this week. Our buckets were filled by your constant encouragement, humility, and grace. We are so very humbled to serve a community that cares as much about us as we do about you! Thank you for becoming overnight homeschoolers. Thank you for bearing with us as we figure out what will serve this partnership best. Thank you for praying for our school, our families, our faculty and our students. As always, you have risen and showed your true colors. Thank you for shining so brightly during this dim time. I am keenly aware of how our reaction to disappointment says a lot about our character. This is something I have been wrestling with myself. Thank you for teaching me about grace and gratitude!

Though the governor has closed all Massachusetts schools until April 6th, most of us are aware that there is a looming sense that this could be a much longer period. I have no privileged knowledge, but I am watching TV and reading the news. We are staying in close touch with state authorities and will keep you informed as we receive updates. We recognize that the timing has a tremendous impact on so many scheduled spring events and we are doing our best to anticipate how to respond and maintain the integrity of important rites of passage and meaningful annual events. There are more questions than answers at this time, and we are doing our very best to anticipate all of your concerns. The world seems to be changing daily and we are doing our best to keep up. We will communicate any and all changes as they are determined.

I was invigorated by an amazing online service this morning that seemed custom made for me. My guess is that I am not the only one that had this experience. And I know this is because we serve a God who has prepared us all for this moment. We serve a God who was not surprised by this turn of events and has already gone before us, and will walk with us in this unprecedented moment. Quite frankly, I would be good if I never heard the word "unprecedented" again for as long as I live. What a unique word, certainly not a part of our

everyday vocabulary, which makes perfectly good sense when our lives are moving along as expected. Everything seems to be unprecedented at the moment: a pandemic ravaging the world, social distancing, and the shut down of life as we know it. We're not used to having our world turned upside down so suddenly and it shakes the very core of our need to control. But just maybe, this is what we all needed, a reminder that we were never in control in the first place. I think of the many times in the Bible God used times of hardship to set things straight with his stubborn people. That's me, that's you, that's all of us, suddenly realizing that it isn't all about us. There is an opportunity for us in this moment and we can grab it or let it pass.

I'm going to grab it! This is a little intimidating because I don't know what "it" is, how does one grab what you don't see? We open ourselves up, promise to listen closer, observe more carefully and trust. In situations like this I recognize trust is not my greatest strength. I like assurance, evidence, and the "sure thing". Can Jesus provide that? Do I really believe that the resurrected Christ is my assurance, evidence and "sure thing"? Here is where faith comes in, and today I choose my faith over my fear, over my doubts, and over my insecurities. We are all in this together and now is the time for encouragement, acceptance, and grace.

This week found our faculty walking through the same wilderness you likely journeyed through. We've never done this before and there was a steep learning curve for many. Our deeply relational, face-to-face philosophy of learning was tested and stretched, and will continue to be for some time. We recognize the importance of providing you and your students will a valuable and thoughtful "remote learning" experience and we are working round the clock to envision and deliver an education that will effectively bridge the gap. We recognize that we cannot replicate the in class experience. We recognize that students of different ages will need a different approach. And we recognize that personal preferences will be a challenge that will be hard to overcome. Please keep providing feedback, please share your thought and ideas. However, extend grace and understand that one size will never fit all.

We as administrators have been inundated with information about best practices for remote and online learning. I could have filled my entire week with webinars and Zoom conferences telling me exactly how to deliver the very best product. The flow of information is "unprecedented" just like everything else. We are exploring several platforms for enhancing synchronous online learning, which will begin with our older students this week, and will eventually be integrated into the Grammar School experience. Please extend patience, as this is very new to many of our faculty and though you may enjoy a high level of tech savvy, many people do not. We promise not to be complacent. We will keep learning at an exponential pace and continue to provide you with our very best. In the meantime, you should never hesitate to reach out by email to any of our faculty or administration if you have questions or concerns.

On a recent Zoom faculty meeting, we discovered that the greatest challenge we are all currently facing is the volume of email. This should not deter you from reaching out, but just keep in mind that it may take some time to receive a response. I have been so incredibly impressed by our faculty! They are open, willing, creative, and committed to doing whatever is necessary to see us through this time. We do not need to let this detour weaken us, we can even find ourselves stronger, more determined, and better for it if we set our mind on what matters most.

The administrative team has identified three priorities as we move forward:

The spiritual and social/emotional well being of our students is our number one priority:

We are working hard to find developmentally appropriate ways to ensure that our students feel loved, valued, and connected during this time. Isolation can be devastating and lonely.

Please don't hesitate to let us know if you have concerns about your child's mental health or spiritual well-being. We will partner with you to creatively work towards health and wholeness.

Pursuing intellectual pursuits with our students is as important as ever. We recognize that this will look differently than in our classrooms, but the quality doesn't need to suffer. We will embrace creativity and think outside of the box while also embracing the routines, structures and systems that our students depend on.

Scholé: Restful learning must be a part of our daily experience: Scholé is the opposite of ceaseless busy work that provokes anxiety. Scholé is selective and careful, embracing that which is true, beautiful and good. We want to focus on contemplative deep, lasting learning. We will seek to provide the most important lessons, mindful that learning will be richest when it coincides peacefully with real life (and real life is a bit unusual at the moment). We recognize that this will be tricky! Students respond differently to home learning and many have already experienced stress and a sense of burden in these first days. We are committed to helping you discover the important balance between work and rest. Personalities and our own strengths and weakness play an important part in this equation, but we want to know when and if stress has snuffed out all possibility for scholé.

You may be receiving this with optimism or skepticism, or may even already feel burned out. However you are feeling, we are with you. We are here for you and we are in it together. Please don't hesitate to reach out for support if you need it.

I pray that God will touch you in a very meaningful way, either through his word, through the lyrics of worship music, through personal prayer, or through the love of others as we continue to walk through this wilderness. A warm and comfortable home, food on the table, and the company of loved ones are blessings many do not have. In the grand scheme of things, this is a wilderness of relative ease. God is good, he is in control, and we will rejoice together at the amazing work he will do! CCA will rise stronger as a testament to the power of our Almighty God.

Some of my favorites:

Peace Be Still performed by Lauren Daigle

[Peace Be Still](#)

Goodness of God by Bethel Music

[Goodness of God](#)

Let me leave you today with one of my favorite prayers to pray aloud.

Be at peace.

*Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life;
rather look to them with full hope as they arise.*

God, whose very own you are, will deliver you from out of them.

*He has kept you hitherto, and He will lead you safely through all things;
and when you cannot stand it, God will bury you in his arms.*

*Do not fear what may happen tomorrow;
the same everlasting Father who cares for you today*

will take care of you then and every day.

He will either shield you from suffering, or give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imagination.

~St. Francis de Sales 1567-1622

We head into another week tomorrow morning. We are ready and we are open to the amazing ways God will work among us this week.

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” ~ Ephesians 3:17-19

Blessings,

Andrea Bergstrom

Head of School