



Thursday, March 12, 2020

Good Afternoon Covenant Christian Academy School Community,

I am compelled to begin this communication with a word from scripture that is playing on repeat in my mind: *Timothy 1:7 says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* I am daily proclaiming the words of *Psalms 91*, grateful for a God who is in complete control. In the midst of this chaos, our God will be ever present and it is His wisdom, truth and protection that we seek. My heart is breaking for the many ways this virus is disrupting the lives of our students and families, yet I trust in the Lord, knowing He will walk through this with us.

This week, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts due to the increase in COVID-19 cases. Current recommendations are not in favor of unnecessary school closures, but this is a rapidly evolving situation. We are keenly aware of the school closings happening in Massachusetts and are evaluating the situation as we receive information. Our recommendation and plans could change at any time. We are closely monitoring our own school community and the progress of the pandemic in our area. We are receiving recommendations daily and adhering closely to all guidelines provided by the Peabody and Massachusetts Departments of Public Health as informed by the CDC and WHO. Due to the Governor's actions, and out of an abundance of caution, the Board of Directors and my administrative cabinet have made the following decisions.

We are **cancelling** all March off-campus field trips

We are **postponing** the following events over the next few weeks to a future date this year:

- Winter Athletics Banquet
- Les Miserables production
- Grade 4 Class Chapel (Scheduled for next week)

The following events will be **evaluated** in coming weeks as more information is available:

- Field Trips in April and May, including Great East and Academic Travel Week
- Spring Concerts
- SpringFest Art Show
- Class Chapels
- Prom
- Science Fair
- Cosmic Bowling
- Mother-Daughter Tea

We will work diligently to **prioritize** these very important events should rescheduling become necessary:

- Senior Thesis
- 8th Grade Threshold Speeches
- Baccalaureate
- Graduation

Taylor Dempsey, our Athletic Director, is in close contact with schools in our athletic leagues and NEPSAC. No determination has been made at this point about spring athletics. We will communicate more information when it becomes available.

Please trust that information regarding all of these changes will be forthcoming. We are doing our very best to make alternative plans that are in the best interest of everyone and we ask that you kindly refrain from inundating staff with specific questions at this time. Information will be communicated as it is ready.

In an effort to protect our faculty, students and community at large, we are asking all parents and guardians to exercise a greater measure of social distancing. Parents should not enter the school building unless absolutely necessary. Grammar School parents should drop off and pick up students expediently, avoiding all loitering and socializing at this time. **In addition, we are asking that families only utilize our Aftercare Program for child care necessities.** You will notice signs posted at all entries asking visitors to stay outside of the building if they are experiencing any flu like symptoms. We will happily escort your children to your car if you are unable to enter the build for these reasons. Many of you know that these measure go firmly against the philosophy of family and school connection we so deeply value, but we believe it is what is right and necessary at this time.

As conditions change, we will reevaluate and adjust, as necessary. We understand the amount of time and effort that our students, staff, and parents have invested in the above activities and the financial impact a cancellation or postponement may have. However, taking bold, proactive steps for the safety of our students, staff, and community members is the highest priority and these cancellations or postponements are in the best interest of everyone in our community.

We want to continue to emphasize that taking the necessary precautions will help limit your exposure to the COVID-19 virus. As with seasonal flu and strep infections, there are general precautions we can all take to remain as healthy as possible.

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Use Alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. You can also cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid sharing drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, dishes, towels or other items. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick whenever possible.

- Practice other good health habits: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

It is important to keep children home from school when they are ill. If your child has any of the following symptoms please keep them home from school: temperature greater than 100.0, coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, any rash not yet diagnosed by a physician, red or pink itchy eye, and/or drainage from eye, and any contagious illness such as strep throat or flu. We thank you for your transparency with reporting the symptoms of sick students and ask that you remain vigilant in doing so.

The Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is an evolving situation that we are following closely and will continue to update you as information is shared with us. Please rest assured that we are monitoring student health concerns. We are in close communication with the local Board of Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health/School Health Unit, as well as pediatric health care providers in the community. Our School Facilities Department is following our normal cleaning protocol for our educational spaces as we typically do during cold and flu season. We are following all recommended guidelines to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

We remain deeply committed to student and staff wellness and will continue to share new information with you, as necessary, about this evolving situation.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Andrea Bergstrom
Head of School
Covenant Christian Academy