



OUR MISSION

*Covenant Academy exists to serve Christ and His Kingdom,
by sharing the gospel and partnering with parents to train students
by way of Scripture and the classical liberal arts.*

Dear Covenant Family,

One year ago, we were having our first conversations about school closures. Last year's spring break ended up being a week of preparation for launching online classrooms, a herculean effort on the part of our teachers to keep students connected for a few weeks lead to virtual instruction for the rest of the year. **Lesson One: Virtual instruction is not effective.** Students need to be in a classroom experiencing life together for a true learning experience. **Lesson Two: The Freeze of '21 awakened our appreciation for electricity and running water.** It also showcased the tenacity of the Covenant family to partner in repairing the damages of busted pipes in our classrooms and office. By God's grace, it was also a helpful time of quarantine during a brief spike in COVID cases in several grades.

I'm grateful that we've been able to provide real classroom instruction for our students with relatively few interruptions. I'm hopeful that we are turning a corner in this year-long marathon. But we haven't crossed the finish line yet. Regarding lifting the state mask mandate, Governor Abbott stated, "Texans don't need an order from Austin, Texas to tell them the right thing to do, they know the right thing to do." **Lesson Three: Fear not and be not reckless.** Every decision that we've made as a school has been based on data. We made the decision to open based on the data that students need real classrooms. We made the decision to mask based on the data that at risk students, teachers, parents, and grandparents need protection from COVID. In January, we saw a spike in the data of COVID cases that led to us to return to Protocol 1.0. **Now, based on the data, we can return to Protocol 2.0—mask breaks when outside or when seated and silent inside. If the data changes, we will make decisions in response to that data. If it is prudent, we will evaluate further changes.**

True confession: As a hearing-impaired educator I can't begin to tell you how much I dislike teaching with masks. I can't hear my students and I can't read their lips. It's exceedingly difficult to teach effectively. And I see the challenges for them as well. It's not ideal, not how students were designed to learn. While I've become adept at reading the micro expressions of their eyes, I prefer reading their whole face and I prefer that they can see that I'm smiling to convey my love for them. As the person who will answer to God for the safety of my students, teachers, and their parents and grandparents, I would rather lose the benefit of seeing their full face than be responsible for losing any single person in our community. Many of our teachers are at high-risk. I will do everything in my power to protect them. Do masks make a difference? Consider this, the incidence of the flu on our campus is almost non-existent this year. It usually interrupts learning for months. The protocol we're following really does help. Let's continue just a little while longer, by God's grace.

As we head towards Spring Break 2021, let's continue to lean into the practices that have helped us get this far. Traveling is a great gift, but it has led to spikes in cases on our campus with every break. Please plan on protecting your Covenant community by planning a test and a two-day window if you travel or gather.

I'm so proud of our Covenant family. We've endured a long hard year and I look forward to the day when we can talk about this as history. Right now, I'm looking forward to Spring Break. This time, I'd like to rest and enjoy the time off.

Grace and peace,

Leslie Collins, Head of School