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THE NEWSLETTER OF NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

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MINORIS

## THE NEW SCHOOL TURNS 30

For many years after my arrival at New Covenant - that was 1998 - I would meet people who had never heard of the school. That was to be expected; we were only seven years old at the time, and I would always have to explain that we were the “new” school. Lynchburg hadn’t seen a new school in decades, so getting the word out was a struggle.

Back then our student body was around 125 students, we occupied rented facilities that were not very visible to passers-by, and, of course, no one knew what classical, Christian education was.

Things are different now. Founded in 1991, the school opens this month celebrating 30 years of service to families across Central Virginia. I share this fact routinely with families who come on campus for tours, but I remind them that we are still the “new” school.

The new school, however, has grown up a bit. In spite of the difficulty that the pandemic has

*John Heaton, Headmaster*

brought us, New Covenant has received a record number of applications throughout the year, and will open with about 445-50 students this month. Our teachers have returned this week, diligently preparing their classrooms, while undergoing extensive training in our reopening plan. Don’t worry - they’ve got this.

We have two very important goals before us. **First, our highest priority is to maintain in-person education.** This means that we will open in a more constrictive posture, being very careful to monitor our mitigation protocols. As the situation develops, we will take appropriate steps to respond accordingly.

**Second, it is essential that we maintain predictability and support for our students and families.** These are bedrock values of New Covenant’s faculty-student culture, and they will contribute to a sense of normalcy in our daily schedule.

## WHAT’S NEW?

Look familiar? The photo above is The King of Kings Free Will Baptist Church on highway 460 near 811. It was the original home of New Covenant Schools 30 years ago this month when the school opened its doors to 16 students and three teachers. At the time, the church belonged to Providence Reformed Episcopal Church, pastored by the Rev’d Terry Brown, who made the space available. It was very nearly a one-room school house and served the school for only a year before it moved to the Church of God on Breezewood Drive near Heritage Baptist Church.

## Have You Seen This Church?

THINK.

LEARN.

LOVE.

LIVE.

# ET CETERA

In keeping with normal schedules and events, here are several that I would like to place before you.

## THE SERVICE OF CONVOCATION

It has long been our custom to open the school year with Convocation, to which the entire community is invited. We especially celebrate our rising senior class, and together we pray for our school and for the blessing of God on our endeavors. I can think of few things more important to our community life than this service.

Convocation will be held at **St. Thomas More Catholic Church on Sunday, August 16, at 6:00 pm**. The church is spacious and completely able to accommodate a reasonable attendance with distancing in place. It will not hold our entire parent community which now numbers more than one thousand. Thus, we have already pre-registered our seniors and their families, but you will shortly receive an invitation to sign up to attend with your family. Seating is first-come, first-seated, but by registering you will be guaranteed a place. I will bring a short address as we mark our thirtieth school term.

## MEET YOUR TEACHER

You and your children can meet your teacher and bring personal school supplies to the classroom on the following schedule:

- PreK and Grammar School will be held on **Monday, August 17, from 3:30-6:30 pm**. Appointments will be made through Sign-up genius.
- Middle School will be held on **Tuesday, August 18th from 3:30-6:30 pm**. Appointments will be made through Sign-up Genius.
- School of Rhetoric will hold student registration during the school day on **Monday, August 17** as planned for the 2020-2021 school year.

Students unable to attend Meet Your Teacher will be assisted on the first day of school. On the first day of school, one parent may walk each Pre-K-4th grade student to the classroom if needed. Parents and students will be required to wear a face covering when entering the building. Our faculty is looking forward to returning to school and being together again. I know that you and your children are, too. We look forward to seeing you next week.

## ABOUT THOSE CHANGES TO THE PLAN

Many of you have responded with comments and questions about the FAQ and updates to our Reopening Plan. The most commented upon was the change in face coverings. Here is a fuller explanation:

### FOR STUDENTS IN PRE-K THROUGH 4

These students are asked to wear face coverings to and from school. They will wear the face coverings until they arrive in their classrooms, at which point they may remove them. These students will wear face coverings only at such times as they are instructed, but not routinely in the classroom.

### FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 5-12

These students will be required to wear face coverings in the building. This means that coverings are worn in the classrooms. This does not mean, however, that students will not have breaks, or that they must wear them for hours without removing them.

## OUR RATIONALE

Guidance from the CDC urges schools to index their plans to their local region, not to statewide or national data reports. When we wrote our plan in July, our region was enjoying low transmission rates, and our hospitals had a low census of COVID admissions. That has changed. Currently, the VDH has designated the Central Virginia region with “Substantially High Transmission” status. The VDH makes this designation **based on ten criteria, only two of which are available to us**. Moreover, we are advised that the hospital census is higher than normal - not overwhelmed - but at elevated levels of patients, which is taxing our local health care system.

Thus, in consultation with the local health department, we have constricted our posture on face coverings ***as we start the year***. Our purpose is to protect our highest goal: *to maintain in-person instruction through prudent mitigations until such time as those mitigations may prove unnecessary*.

We know from your feedback that we do not have unanimity of opinion on this particular matter. We do appreciate, however, that your feedback has been honest, polite, and forthright. Thank you for maintaining those attitudes as we continue to move forward.

As school begins parents are provided a self-screening questionnaire to be use when sending students to school. The screener is self-administered - it requires parent integrity, and serves as reminder to self-report circumstances that may affect your family’s health. This document is linked with today’s QN and posted on the MyNCS page at [www.newcovenantshools.org](http://www.newcovenantshools.org). In addition, parents are required to sign the school’s “Assumption of Risk” document, also linked, which is a disclosure regarding student health and safety while at school. This document may be returned at Meet Your Teacher.