

Greetings CCS Families,

My name is Arn Boonstra and I am the principal at Calvin Christian School. Last Thursday, the administrative team, in consultation with the Board of Director, made the decision to close the school for two weeks following the March Break because of the COVID - 19 health crisis. Within a very short period of time, things have continued to escalate since that decision was made.

We are, first of all, glad that we made the decision to close the school to do our part to slow the spread of the virus. Ultimately, we hope to continue working in tandem with our broader community to keep people safe. However, we are also now reflecting on what's next. I am reminded of a passage that I used to have posted on the bulletin board of my grade 8 classroom. 1 Peter 5:7 very simply says of God, "Cast all your anxieties on Him because he cares for you." What a beautiful, but simple message in times of stress. Practically speaking, I believe these words mean spending time in prayer with God to discern how he will provide that care. I also think the passage reminds us to look out for others, as difficult as that might be in these times of social distancing. If ever there was a time in which social media can be a blessing to others, perhaps now is that time.

So, what will the next few weeks bring, and specifically, how will decisions being made impact your children?

With the blessing of the Board of Directors, the CCS staff will be planning learning opportunities for your children while they remain at home. Although these times are challenging, we are also determined to view them as unique opportunities to carry out our mission--Equipping to Shine. Instead of doing that work at school, we will endeavour to carry out our mission from home via an online learning community. Let me briefly explain what learning at home might look like:

1. Our first step is to prepare teachers with a workable plan. That preparation will take place over the course of next week (March 23-27). During this week, teachers will collaborate and begin planning learning activities, activities that also have a uniquely Christian perspective.
2. On Monday, March 30, we hope to begin providing learning opportunities for your children to access while at home. Those opportunities may include the use of online resources, project work, and/ or other learning activities.

3. Throughout those weeks, we hope to establish communication links for you to use to connect with your child's teacher in addition to other school personnel. We anticipate communication via email and our website for our primary grades, and Google Classroom for our grade 4-8 classes.

We understand that these plans may not be easily workable for all families. To carry out the online learning plan, access to a reliable computer and the Internet are essential. If technology needs are too challenging for your family, you should let the office (info@ccshamilton.ca) know and we will do our best to make alternate arrangements.

Some of the tools of traditional learning--lectures, textbooks, white boards, etc-- will be less helpful in an online learning community, but this is also where opportunities lie. We will be encouraging our teachers to look for unique ways to provide meaningful and relevant learning activities. Because most of the material will be digital, there is no need to come to school to pick up your child's books. This decision is also in line with the ministry of health's mandate in regards to staying home.

In addition to how our plans might impact your children, let me also give you a brief school update:

1. As mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Health, all public, separate, and private schools must not only suspend classes, but also close their school buildings for a minimum of 2 weeks. As a result, CCS will suspend all rental arrangements and close our doors to anyone coming to the school until further notice. With dynamics constantly changing, we will continue to take our cues from the Ontario ministries of health and education.
2. The Edvance Association of Christian Schools has been very helpful in providing support for CCS as well as all other member schools. The plans we are creating are not being done in isolation; rather, we are collaborating with educators across the province to explore how to best navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.
3. The CCS Board of Directors continues to plan for the future. As we make those plans we will be discussing employment issues, human resources, and financial matters. The CCS board recognizes that all of those issues, and others, will need to be addressed and monitored. Please pray for wisdom for the board.

These are unprecedented times, with much uncertainty and a great deal of stress. I know that you and your children have many questions, not just about what school might look like, but also how the COVID-19 crisis might play out. We certainly do not have all the answers, nor do we know what the future holds. However, I am confident in the fact

that our staff cares about your children and will do whatever they can to support their learning experiences while at home and perhaps bring a little normalcy to your life.

Please convey to your children that their principal, their teachers and the rest of the CCS staff are praying for them. Know that you too are being prayed for as you help your children navigate these challenging times. May we rely on the grace of God and his wisdom to provide us with understanding and direction.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my message. We will do our best to keep you informed and up to date with further decisions.