



New Covenant  
Lutheran School

August 11, 2020

Dear New Covenant Families,

I want to start out by thanking those of you who have been so supportive throughout these last few months. New Covenant is a family and we appreciate the love that we have all shared for one another for many years. I too have been feeling much stress throughout this time frame, with planning for our school and with navigating the homeschooling situation for my own 4 children. I know that you have heightened concerns right now as the 20/21 school year is just getting started at many schools, and today was our original start date. We have some news and information to share today and I hope it helps provide hope and understanding to you all.

### **Start Date**

As I stated in my previous letter, dated 07/24/2020, we have been diligently watching the daily tracking of 2 measurements over the course of 28 days. Those measurements are percentage of positive tests and total cases. Both have been progressively falling and we are now confident that we can inform you of our projected start date. ***We are targeting September 1, 2020 as our start date this year for all classes, apart from the Minnows (Mommy-and-me) class which will have a later start date (more info in upcoming weeks).*** We are all excited to get back into class and plan to send lots more information regarding back to school events in the weeks to come.

Please understand that the criteria we have been watching was carefully selected as criteria that we feel signifies a potential safe return for our New Covenant family. We know this has been a tedious process. There are many individuals health at risk and it is critical that we remain true to who we are and what our mission is, which is to share the love of Jesus with one another and bring Him into the lives of your children. For us to do that, we need to listen to Him and we, as a whole community, need to remain healthy and committed to continuously caring for one another throughout this process. We want to thank those of you who have remained confident in our school and who have provided us with grace and understanding during this time.

### **Reopening Plan**

I have heard multiple concerns about the reopening plan that was sent out last week. This plan was developed over the course of quite a few weeks. It was written and re-written and read and proof-read. It was discussed as a team and in small groups. It was reviewed by multiple levels of the board of ministry. The plan was developed as a protectant to assist us with 2 things. First, we want to do all we can to protect our family at New Covenant from the transmission of COVID-19. Second, we want to make sure that we do all that we can to prevent any infections from spreading across campus, so we can eliminate the need to shut down multiple classrooms if a case does present itself.

When considering each detail of this plan, the focus remained on health and well-being. Every life is important and impacting. We need to consider the fact that there are many tiny lives in our hands, some of whom are too young to know if they can or will be affected by the virus. Personally, I have had the virus cross the line of my family. My nephew contracted it and he is 9 years old. So, I know it can infect children and your children mean the world to me. We would be devastated if we did not do all that we can to protect them.

There are many rules and regulations in the plan that seem extreme, I am sure. We do hope and pray that we will soon be able to relax many of these protocols so that we may return to more normalcy. I would like to address some concerns in this format, so that the answers can get to you all faster.

**Drop off and Pick up** – Right now we are planning on starting with a gate drop off and pick up. If our team can devise another solution that honors the above two areas of importance, then we will work to change things

after we begin the school year. However, we do intend to start with the gate to gate drop off and pick up. We are certain that many of you are concerned about it because your children are so little, and it is hard to leave them, none the less at the gate. We promise to address many different scenarios and we are hopeful that we will be able to come up with other options that allow comfort and ease for all as we proceed.

**Loving and comforting your children** – We are a school that is based on love and comfort. You have no idea how it pains each one of us to think about not hugging every parent and child when the school year starts. If you know me specifically, then you know that my heart bursts with love and affection for every soul that walks onto our campus. We will never sacrifice the love we have for your children. We will not avoid comforting your babies. We will always love and hold them when they need us. They are tiny and they love our school because we love them unconditionally. We will trust in the Lord to protect us all as we continue to love and comfort each child throughout their days. Some of the wording in our reopening plan seems to have some parents feeling like we will not be loving and comforting your babies. I stand firm on the fact that this is simply not true. Please trust us and know that we have not changed who we are and why you chose our school to begin with.

**Disposable Lunches** – It has come to my attention that some parents are concerned about the fact that they will not be able to bring lunch boxes and/or ice packs at the beginning of the school year. I apologize for this. I know it is not the most desirable solution. However, we are certainly not in the most desirable situation and hope that you will find this a minor short-term inconvenience. I would recommend during this time, that you provide disposable ice packs for your child. These can be made by using doubled up Ziploc bags. Thank you for your understanding.

**Seating arrangements** – Seating the children in a front to back pattern on the rug seems to be a concern as well. We apologize. This is our best attempt to control the face-to-face contact in any way possible. As you know, our students are all under 6 years old. We have stated that we will not be able to even attempt to physically distance them, nor do we have the space to do so. However, we do feel as though we can do small things that will help prevent the exchange of droplets. Therefore, we will start the year hoping to seat them in a fun pattern on the rug, versus a circle. It may or may not entirely work. We will do our best. They are little and they move around quite a bit. It is not our goal to prevent them from their naturally instinctive free movement. This is an important part of their early childhood educational experience. Although, we will do what we can, where we can.

I am sure that there are many other bits and pieces of the reopening plan that have caused question or concern. I ask that you please lay in faith, continuous prayer, and remembrance of why you chose New Covenant for your family. It is important that it is understood the amount of time, effort and research that has gone into these decisions. There have been consults with numerous administrative professionals at a multitude of schools. There have been countless hours of trainings, webinars, news conferences, articles read and dissected and reading of reopening plans and forms from several states across the country. While we have felt the tug in many directions through this process, we have maintained our commitment to stay true to who we are and what we believe in. We love you and we are dedicated to continuing to provide a loving, educational environment for your children, that is filled with familiarity and faith-based values. Thank you again for your support. We look forward to seeing you in a few weeks.

In His love,

*Dana Engstrom*

Dana Engstrom  
School Director