

Dear Grace Community:

Uncertainty. The most certain dynamic in this ongoing crisis is that uncertainty is here to stay for months if not longer as this pandemic continues. In a recent blog, psychotherapist and human relationships expert Esther Perel notes, "We're dealing with Prolonged Uncertainty --the sense that, not only do we feel uncertain, we don't know when our feeling of uncertainty will end." Add to that feelings of ambiguous loss, anticipatory grief, and large doses of stress, and we are swimming in waters that feel so very deep and uncharted day to day.

Esther's blog ends with a note on who is faring the best at this time. She points to those people who can find brightness in the negative aspects of life. Survivors of great loss and unimaginable grief often surprise us with their resilience and their ability to pierce straight through to the good in any given situation. I heard recently that the most googled phrase in current times is not *How long will Covid last?* Or *What are Covid symptoms?* It is: *How can I help?* Indeed, humanity is continually searching for hope and for a way to survive, go on, and be of service to others. And that is what is most certain right now -- that we will find our way through this and that each and every day has some new ray of light, however small, that we can cling to.

What is also certain to me is that Grace does indeed go on. The connections we have built as a community of parents, students, and faculty are alive and well each and every weekday on Zoom, and through emails, and in the images of our continued engagements with our children's learning. Participation in this past weekend's PTO auction is yet another indication of the wider Grace family's love for our school.

For sure, things are not how we want them to be. We aren't used to dealing with the fatigue and overwhelm that can come through as we do call after call. We don't want our students to feel isolated from their friends or to have to grapple with all of the loss. But we can rely on a committed group of faculty AND parents who are working together to mitigate all of it with love, attention, and so much care. And as the next month unfolds, we will remain committed to that project and we will continue to try to grow and get better with each new lesson and interaction. We are learning new skills, all of us, and it is my belief and hope that these skills will serve us in ways we cannot even see right now.

But what about after that? What will summer be like? And how about September? Another possible uncertainty. We are asking that many of you pay tuition for the 2020-2021 school year beginning next month without a clear idea of what that will look like. What I can say - with certainty - is that we are turning great attention to various scenarios for the fall that keep our program running in a way that is strong and in line with our mission and our goals institutionally. Our scenarios include multiple options: we may be back in full swing; we may introduce a rolling schedule that has fewer students on campus on any given day; or we may be in a distance learning mode for the first few months of school or sometime after school begins if the virus re-emerges. What's certain is that we will deliver an academic experience that is impactful and in line with our mission.

And even more, we will continue to nurture the connections and relationships that make Grace the community that it is. As we look to another school year, we can all count on the bonds of the Grace community as one of the pillars that grounds our families and provides our children with teachers and experiences that extend their growth, their strong sense of self, and their belief in something greater than themselves. We know your children in ways that will guide us as they continue to grow and learn into a new school year. We are inviting you to embrace the uncertainty with us at this moment while having faith that what we have built and continue to build is a gift and a treasure.

I remain more committed than ever much due to the passion and resilience I see in all of you at this moment. I dream of the days when we are back in physical proximity, singing songs joyfully, and learning in person. But I also embrace these days where we strive for and find connection in this new normal. They have taught me a great deal about our own undeniable resilience and our commitment to the mission of Grace.

I promise to keep you updated on our ongoing planning for late spring and the opening of the academic year 2020-2021. We will also continue to bring our best focus and training to our current distance learning model. I hope you will join me at my weekly conversations on Thursdays at noon. This week I will be joined by school counselor, Renee Stewart and Learning Specialist, Melissa Lafionatis. Please call me anytime if you have a question or a concern.

Sending you my best now and always,

Jen Danish