But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

II Tim. 3:14-15

St. Paul said Timothy had known the Scriptures from a very young age. How? Well, we know from the Bible that Timothy learned the faith from his mother and grandmother. And we also know that more advanced Scripture learning would have taken place in synagogues and congregations. That was one of the main reasons the Christians gathered—to hear the public reading of Scripture and preaching based on it.

The how of the matter can be different in different circumstances. Parents must teach their children the faith. That is a big part of their God-given duties. But whether they home-school, use a parochial school, or attempt to augment a public school education depends on their particular opportunities and gifts. The main thing is that it get done. St. Paul’s has always considered parochial schooling to be an excellent option; that’s why we’re dedicated to offering it.

This year, not just the parents but the schools themselves have had to grapple with a new “how” question. Remote or in-person learning? Various schools in our area have chosen differently on that question. One option some of them had, one that St. Paul’s did not have, was to offer both and let the parents choose. Schools with multiple teachers at each grade level could retool to have some teach in person and others teach online. We only have one teacher per grade, and the requirements of online vs. in-person learning prevent one person from doing both simultaneously, at least with the prep time, training and equipment available to us. So we had to pick one or the other, knowing that whatever option we chose, there would likely be parents who would opt to remove their children from St. Paul’s in order to pursue the other option.

We chose to offer in-person learning with strict protocols in place in keeping with all health guidelines and mandates. A huge amount of work has gone into making that decision possible, and we think it is the right decision for St. Paul’s and for the vast majority of our students. But neither choice was going to be able to serve everyone. Exercising their responsibilities as parents, several families have chosen to withdraw from St. Paul’s to pursue a manner of learning they hope will work better in their circumstances. We certainly hope they find what they are looking for and the children receive a high quality, Christian education. And we certainly will leave the door open for a potential return in case another option doesn’t work out.

The upshot of this crazy year’s forced choices is that our school enrollment looks likely to be significantly down from what we had predicted (and budgeted on) before we knew about all the disruption. The numbers and trend line merely as statistics might look pretty alarming, but in context we know and understand the situation. We also know that school enrollments often decline suddenly but generally increase gradually. So this pandemic could be reverberating in our school environment long after the virus is contained. We have a lot of work ahead of us. But it is as worth doing as always, and nobody said it would be easy. Certainly St. Paul never told Timothy it would easy.

This is a chance to remind ourselves of the importance of what we teach. We have to practice what we preach. We have to live our lessons. The sacred writings, the Scriptures, assure us that the mission of preaching and teaching Christ to the next generation will be with us as long as there is a next generation. So we need not fret, worry, second-guess, or wallow in self-pity. We simply dedicate ourselves to making Christ known however He enables us.

In Christ,
Pastor Speckhard