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A network diagram on a black background. It features numerous small, colorful circular nodes in shades of blue, yellow, red, pink, and white. These nodes are interconnected by a dense web of thin, bright orange lines, creating a complex, interconnected structure. The overall appearance is that of a data network or a social graph.

Recal

Leading in Precarious Times

ibrate!

How do you recalibrate your leadership after society has been upended? How do you lead in turbulent times? Here are four key areas of focus that will sustain your leadership through the tumult.

AS I WRITE THIS *Link* article (late March, 2020) the COVID-19 virus is beginning to spread uncontrollably across North America. It has ravaged China and Europe, and is expected to spread around the world. When this story first broke as a new virus spreading in Wuhan, China, few of us could have imagined the impact it would have on our lives. This

pandemic has turned the world as we know it upside down and has created immense amounts of stress, anxiety and despair.

Precarious times?

As a very young baby boomer I can attest to the fact that my generation, and all those that have followed, have lived a somewhat charmed life. My parents

experienced the great depression, World War II and Cold War. My grandparents experienced the ‘war to end all wars’. But me? As a young child I was aware of the threat of a nuclear holocaust, but by my formative years, treaties were being signed and the cold war was thawing. We’ve had some economic ups and downs, periods of high interest rates and incidents of terrorism—but on the whole life has been stable and positive.

Biblical Leaders

When you examine the stories of biblical leaders, it is amazing how many of them led during precarious times. Joseph led though a great famine; Moses led his people out of centuries of slavery; Samson, Gideon, Deborah and David all led through times of conflict and war. Daniel, Nehemiah and Ezra led during the time of exile, while Peter, Paul and Timothy all led under the threat of persecution. Precarious times are not uncommon in the biblical narrative and repeatedly God raises up leaders, “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).

Lovers in a Dangerous Time

In his 1984 hit single, “Lovers in a Dangerous Time,” Canadian folk singer legend Bruce Cockburn explores the interface of love and hope juxtaposed with anxiety and despair. Cockburn fans speculate that the ‘dangerous times’ refer to the threat of nuclear holocaust or the emerging HIV/AIDS crisis of the day. Although Cockburn enjoyed some success with this song, it was popularized by the Canadian band Barenaked Ladies in 1991.

The song explores the mysterious interplay of conflicting emotions when we live in uncertain times:

Don’t the hours grow shorter as the days go by

*You never get to stop and open your eyes
One day you’re waiting for the sky to fall
The next you’re dazzled by the beauty of it all*

Cockburn masterfully weaves profound theological truth into his lyrics, noting that in dangerous times the

*Spirits open to the
thrust of grace
Never a breath you can
afford to waste*

He doesn’t shy away from the complexity, pain, and struggle that comes with dangerous times:

*But nothing worth having
comes without
some kind of fight
Got to kick at the darkness
’til it bleeds daylight*

Recalibrate!

So how do we recalibrate our leadership after our society has been upended? How do we lead in precarious times? I’m suggesting four key areas of focus that will maintain our leadership during precarious times.

1. Remain mission focused. Your Christian school has a distinct mission that has been supported for many years and now you need to embody that mission in a new reality. Help your staff, students, and parents know that you’ll continue to focus on meeting your mission to produce graduates who meet the qualities you’ve articulated in your student graduate profile. Stay on message and keep your community on message. Remember that you are the spiritual leader of your school. Find new and creative ways to maintain this aspect of leadership. As you lean heavily on God yourself, offer your community calm, wise counsel that helps them see the bigger picture, engenders deep hope, and nurtures their faith.

**“As leaders your task is
to position your school
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sustainability;
living through times
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of that journey. Spend
some time with the Old
Testament prophets—
they were masters of
taking the long view!”**

2. Take the long view. In precarious times it can be tempting to demonstrate strong, decisive leadership by taking quick action. While critical decisions do need to be made, they should be made in the context of the long view. As leaders (both administrative and board) your task is to position your school for long-term mission sustainability; living through times of ambiguity and uncertainty are part of that journey. Spend time with the Old Testament prophets—they were masters of taking the long view!

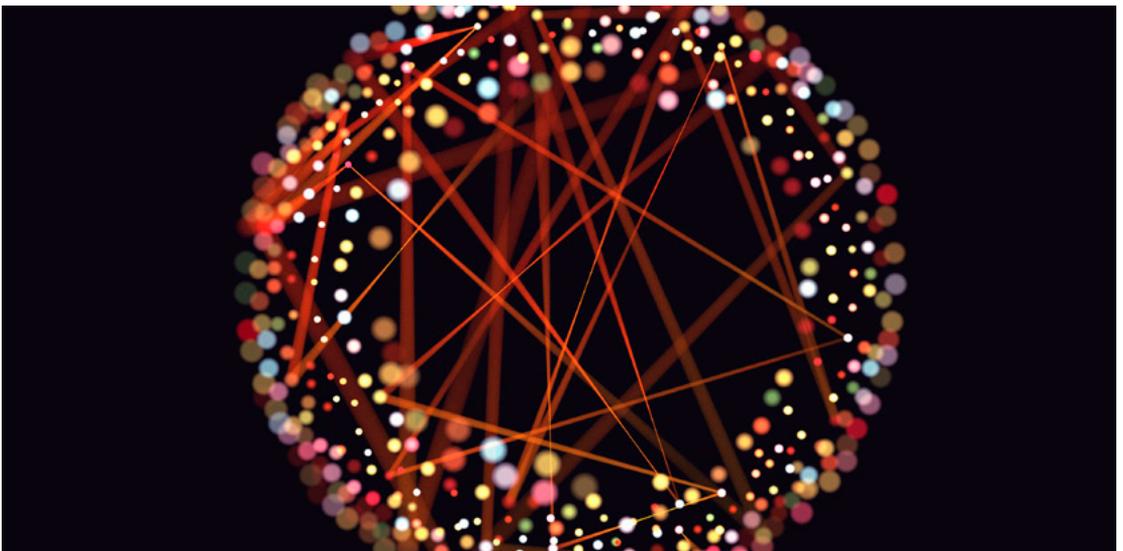
3. Heighten executive function and reimagine relational leadership. Precarious times call for strong executive function. Communication must be mission focused, consistent, and clear. Financial adjustments must be made and long-term financial planning must continue. Marketing plans and donor relations need to be adjusted but maintained. And governance needs to be supported in its primary task of focusing on long-term mission sustainability. While heightened executive function is critical, we need to reimagine what relational leadership involves in a time of social distancing. Our schools are community oriented and we need to lead creatively to maintain the strong connection of students, staff, parents, and board to our core

community. Together with your leadership team, get creative so that you can support physical distancing without creating social isolation.

4. Champion justice and mercy. An insidious consequence of precarious times is rampant individualism. People naturally ‘turtle’ to focus on care and protection of self and family. The hoarding and price gouging we’ve witnessed are ugly reminders of the natural outcome of insidious individualism. Leaders can be a prophetic voice to remind Christian communities of the call to justice and mercy (Micah 6:8, et al). Insightful leaders will recognize the openings to a “thrust of grace,” remembering the vulnerable and marginalized who are at increased risk during times of social upheaval.

Challenging times? Indeed. You were called to leadership for such a time as this. The road we are on is not what we expected, so recalibrate your leadership to lead well in precarious times. May God bless you as you “kick at the darkness till it bleeds daylight.” 🌸

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Tracey Yan

Nurturing Trust... in Real Life



Photo by Pawel Janiak on Unsplash

IT SEEMS IRONIC THAT the theme of our cancelled business and development conference in April was “Nurturing Trust.” What was supposed to be a refreshing retreat discussing what it means to trust God in the context of business and development—how we could engender trust in our communications, and how we should walk through tricky human resources issues with integrity—has instead become a real life learning experience.

The finances of many businesses, charitable organizations and individuals have been turned upside down as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. The same is true for independent schools. Not only is there immediate concern about tuition and donation revenues, but also pressing considerations about how to best provide financial security for as many staff as possible. Add to that privacy, cyber risk and occupational health and safety issues for staff

working from home, building security and insurance considerations, communication with banks about credit facilities, and the legal ramifications of trying to cancel contractual obligations, and it becomes clear why accountants are considered essential service workers. The constantly changing landscape of government assistance programs and the volume of documents, webinars, news releases, and other advice has often times been overwhelming and has left schools grappling with the question “What do we do when the numbers don’t add up?” As we progress through this crisis, a few answers have become clear.

Take a deep breath

Initial advice to schools to avoid rushing into action has proved propitious. Taking time to gather all the necessary information, to think, plan and ask questions before making decisions has served schools

well in a time of significant uncertainty. As government assistance and direction has continued to evolve, schools were able to stay the course and demonstrate a steady hand to staff, students, and parents.

Take time to do your research

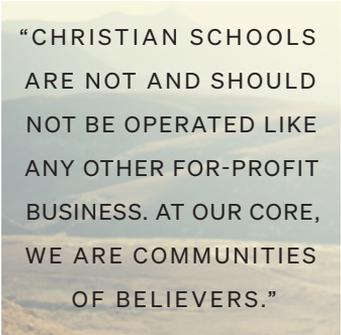
We are blessed to have access to plenty of good advice from experts, including lawyers, accountants, insurance brokers, and bankers. All levels of government have been communicating frequently with up-to-date information. While it has sometimes been hard to keep up with the latest pronouncements, we are fortunate to have access to a multitude of websites, documents, and webinars that help us gather the information we need to make informed decisions.

Collaborate

One of the blessings we have all experienced in recent weeks is the degree of collaboration among our Christian schools. The free sharing of ideas and information has been one of the silver linings in the middle of trying times. Larger schools with greater capacity have been able to help smaller schools, learning leaders and administrators are working closely with finance and development, and all types of independent schools across the province have been working together with FISA to share solutions and advocate for our schools. When this is all over, let's hold onto this spirit of collaboration.

Think long-term

When making decisions during times of crisis, it's important to avoid just looking for easy solutions. The quick answer to a question could provide some temporary relief but may cause more grief in the long term—the perfect example of this is a decision to lay off educational staff at a time when there is a shortage of teachers and educational assistants in the province. Sometimes we need to focus on the



“CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS ARE NOT AND SHOULD NOT BE OPERATED LIKE ANY OTHER FOR-PROFIT BUSINESS. AT OUR CORE, WE ARE COMMUNITIES OF BELIEVERS.”

next week or two, but we also need to think about where we need to be in one month or one year. Disaster recovery planning is ideally focused not on just the point where the organization re-opens its doors, but on one to two years beyond that. Be strategic in your thinking and be prepared for the long haul.

Care for each other

Christian schools are not and should not be operated like any other for-profit business. At our core, we are communities of believers. While financial and operational decisions need to be practical and demonstrate good stewardship, we always need to remember that God first calls us to love Him and to love each other. Extending grace and offering a sense of security to others who may be suffering from extreme anxiety, financial struggles, and illness is part of what differentiates us from the world.

Pray

We've all seen the endless memes and posts about trusting God and how we will learn from this crisis to value what's most important...all true, but often difficult to live out in real time. So when we know in our heads that God is in control but our hearts are filled with worry, the most important thing we can do is to call on Him in prayer—yes, for the healing and restoration of the world, but also for the peace we need in times of trouble.

“Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Matthew 6:31-33 🌸

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Crisis as Reality, Revelation, Regulation

We are in the midst of a crisis. Rod Wilson walks us through the three obstacles that block our path to righteousness, justice, and love of neighbour.

CRISES OF ANY SORT are an invitation to respond with righteousness, justice, and love of neighbour. But there are always three obstacles in the way:

- Reality—is this a crisis?
- Revelation—how are people responding?
- Regulation—what is my level of fear?

Reality

With over 1,800,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than 110,000 deaths, the medical community around the world copes with a situation that knows no bounds or borders. Financial markets are plummeting, and multiple countries are launching economic stimulus programs. When in recent history has the entire world been concerned

about health, mortality, and economic decline?

Children are ‘visiting’ their elderly parents through the windows of seniors’ facilities, and people with already compromised systems are fearful that they will pick up the virus and not get the help they require. Who in western culture has had to worry whether there would be enough ventilators in the local hospital?

Parents with young children are living an unknown existence, trying to stay home as requested by the government, but not being sure how to do their life, pay their bills, or function with social distance. Who in western culture has had to worry whether they should take their children to the playground?

Older people who are closing in on retirement are watching their pension get smaller by the day.



Whalers by Joseph Mallord William Turner, ca. 1845; Metropolitan Museum, New York

Employees who already live paycheque to paycheque, are not sure how they will put food on the table, and whether they will benefit directly from stimulus plans. Who in western culture has had to think so much about putting bread on the table and wondering where to buy the bread?

Children of various ages and dispositions have to grapple with a virus that seems frightening, even ominous, and it is hard to reassure them when no one knows for sure what is going to happen. Who in western culture has had to figure out communication by linking developmental psychology and explaining a pandemic?

Educational systems, schools, administrators,

teachers, and staff, while acknowledging the value of online learning and working from home, are now at a place where being in-person and in-the-school are not allowed. Who in western culture has ever imagined a scenario where this would be mandated rather than chosen?

We are in a crisis. As we navigate our various communities, it will be essential to live into this reality and not expend energy debating whether it is a crisis.

Better to pursue righteousness, justice, and love of neighbour in the crisis, than be absorbed with conceptual debates.

Revelation

Crises are seasons characterized by difficulty, challenge, even danger. They are disruptors of the equilibrium that previously marked our lives. Do you remember last March break? You were not thinking about multi-billion-dollar infusions from the government, how many hand sanitizers you owned, or cute songs you could sing while washing your hands. This March break has brought a crisis.

The great irony with crises is that they do not bring a new day. Who we were before the challenge will have a significant impact on who we are in it. Personality styles, spiritual commitments, and political convictions before a danger rise to the surface when trauma hits. Our go-to conflict resolution pattern in normal circumstances will be what comes to the table in the crisis.

We have all experienced this phenomenon in recent days. While many individuals and communities are stepping up with compassion and action, we are confronted with multiple stories and personal experiences that make us cringe and frustrated. However, in these situations, people are merely behaving in ways that characterized their life pre-COVID-19. Here are five stories I have heard recently.

Pastors refuse to cancel church services because the government should not be telling God's people they cannot meet together.

Democrats and the media create pandemonium around the virus, as a way to get Trump out of the White House.

Prosperity gospel evangelist proposes that people give \$91 to her ministry because Psalm 91 encourages us not to fear pestilence and plagues.

Church teaches that saltwater sprayed into your

mouth will cure the virus, but when they did it, 46 people were infected with the virus because they did not clean the bottle between sprays.

Woman who believes that there are too many people on the earth says this virus is God's way of shrinking the population.

Whatever we may think of these responses, they are revelations of the way people usually respond, so there is little point in fighting their perspective.

Better to pursue righteousness, justice, and love of neighbour in the crisis, than be absorbed with challenging the response of others.

Regulation

Crises provide an opportunity for all of us to self-regulate. Those who self-regulate well bring appropriate and helpful emotional reactions to external circumstances. In the face of a global pandemic, we need to ask ourselves how fear and worry are operating within us.

"Fear not" is an essential biblical injunction. Sometimes this is poorly understood by Christians who think that a fear of heights, cancer, snakes, or viruses, is synonymous with being unspiritual or showing a lack of faith. It becomes a superhero reaction where you are untouched by anything human, but live in a spiritual bubble that is immune to anything that comes your way. By this standard, the shepherds who reacted with fear to the angels at the announcement of Jesus' birth, and Jesus himself who reacted fearfully in the Garden of Gethsemane in anticipation of his crucifixion, would be found wanting.

My mother is in a seniors' facility in Toronto. I am fearful that her residence will be impacted by the virus, that she might contract it, and it could

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Reality Revelation Regulation

result in her death. I hold those appropriate emotional reactions in tension with the fact I trust in God to carry out His will for my mother, His loved child. If I become consumed by the fear and worry in an obsessive over-wrought way and do not live in trust, I am missing the reality of my relationship with my Creator. By the same token, if I slip into a dualism that believes belief in God eliminates all fear and worry, I am missing the reality that I am created and human.

Jesus captures this issue in the Sermon on the Mount when he references people who worry about what they should wear, and what they should eat or drink. Life, Jesus argues, is not about apparel, food, and beverages. If we become absorbed with these things, and they begin to define our life, we have missed the point of faith. Those who have faith and trust in God obviously think about their diet and their wardrobe, but those thoughts are not at the centre. Putting the pursuit of the kingdom

of God at the centre moves these legitimate issues to the edge.

If we either ignore the COVID-19 or let it define our lives, we have not used this moment to regulate emotionally under the watchful eye of a loving and caring Father.

Better to pursue righteousness, justice, and love of neighbour in the crisis, than be absorbed with fear. ❁

ROD WILSON

Rod Wilson served as President of Regent College from 2000–2015. Originally trained as a clinical psychologist, Dr. Wilson has been involved in the field of counselling and consulting for over 30 years. He is currently Teaching Pastor at Capilano Christian Community, as well as Senior Advisor with A Rocha Canada, and consultant with various organizations, including SCSBC.

Growth through a Time of Crisis

COVID-19 HAS HAD AN immediate impact on all of us. I can't recall a time in recent history when the world has been so united against a common challenge; and although it comes to isolate us, it also unites us. More than ever before we have a sense that we are in this together and we are deeply connected; we are vulnerable together, anxious together, sad together, scared together, and hopeful together.

According to UNESCO monitoring, as of March 24, 2020, 156 countries have implemented nationwide closures or remote learning options, impacting 82.5% of world's student population or 1,418,764,116 learners.¹ Teachers, students, families, administrators, departments, and whole communities are being forced to respond and adapt quickly. In our schools, we are having to adapt in ways like never before, and the unfamiliarity of this can bring anxiety for leaders and educators. Unfamiliar things have a way of unnerving us.

Dr. Hayley Watson, psychologist and creator of the Open Parachute Mental Health Curriculum, stated in an interview:

The flip side of every crisis is that it presents an opportunity. Everything is turned on its head,

so it is a time where all of us can reflect on how we are living our lives, what matters most to us, and what we would like to gain from going through this experience. We get a chance to find ourselves again. So, the best thing you can do for yourself and your family is to slow down, take a breath, get clear on your own values and find the options and opportunities that are available to you in this new reality.²

So, let us shift our focus to the positive opportunities and possibilities that may come out of crisis; something extraordinary can and often does come out of adversity:

1. Spiritual Growth

In times of crisis we look upwards to our heavenly Father rather than looking inwards for answers and direction; we become more dependent upon God. This is a time to grow in our faith and reconnect with the purpose that God has intended for each of us. There are many scriptures we can call to mind for encouragement, hope and inspiration. In Joshua 1:9, as Joshua faced a great enemy the scripture implored, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not



be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

2. Increased School-Family Connectedness

The sudden shift to families learning from home creates a need to grow closer to and understand our families like never before. We must understand their context, what resources they have at home and what their needs are. As we reach out and listen to families, we gain an insight into their home experience and grow closer to them. We gain a greater appreciation of our community and dependence upon one another.

3. Increased Family Involvement in Education

One of the key secrets of success in education is parental involvement. This is an unprecedented time when educators, parents and guardians are working together to support the education and well-being of children. It is an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and to equip parents to become more involved in teaching their children.

4. Increased Innovation in Education

The modernized BC curriculum has been ushered in and has brought significant changes, yet the COVID-19 virus has brought an abrupt and immediate need to change the way we do education altogether. This time of crisis can bring with it an opportunity for innovation and new ways of doing the business

of educating. We have the flexibility to transform learning and focus on involving the whole family, developing multi-age learning, individualized learning and the ability to tap into student interests allows for genuine authentic personalized learning

on a new level. Students may be gifted with the opportunity to take ownership of their learning and increase their agency, choice, and voice in the learning process. Experiential learning in the home and in nearby outdoor locations brings opportunities for real-world inquiry-based learning.

5. Increased Focus on Health and Well-being

Our schedules and plans have all been radically interrupted. We are forced to pause and refrain from our usual running about and busyness. It is a time to reflect and re-evaluate our priorities and what really matters in our lives. There is a growing awareness of our need to focus on wellness within our families—to rest, relax, play, gain new hobbies, connect, exercise, eat

well, sleep well, to hold close and love large.

Whether it's a natural disaster or a global trauma, the world has been through tough things before, and we've pulled through. We will get through this one too, growing stronger in the process. 🌸

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SCSBC Director of Educational Support Services

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1. Retrieved from UNESCO, March 25, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>
2. Watson, Hayley. Personal Interview. March 24, 2020.

News & Events



Please visit our website for up-to-date conference information related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

construct
cultivate
create

JEREMIAH 29:4-7



September 28-30, 2020

10th Leadership Conference

Register Now!

Featuring: Miroslav Volf

www.christianschoolscanada.com/conference-2020/

We look forward to welcoming you to Vancouver for the **10th Christian Schools Canada Leadership Conference** at the Marriott Pinnacle, Vancouver in September. Deeper Learning Conference to be held on September 28.

We are especially pleased to spend time with the theme of **Exclusion and Embrace**, featuring plenary speaker: **Miroslav Volf**, professor of Theology and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale University.

Our prayer is that this conference will inspire, challenge and strengthen you in your personal and communal leadership journey. We encourage you to use this unique opportunity also to build relationships and network with Christian school leaders from across Canada and from different countries around the globe.



*engaging society
for the common good*

**SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

Saturday, October 31, 2020

The Society of Christian Schools in BC invites you to the 21st annual SCSBC Leadership Conference for Christian school board and committee members and administrators on Saturday, October 31, 2020.

We hope you will be able to join us for this dynamic day of learning, networking and inspiration for Christian education leaders.

Our theme this year is *Construct, Cultivate, Create: Engaging Society for the Common Good*. We are very pleased to welcome special guest, Dr. Mark Husbands, President of Trinity Western University, as we explore what it means to engage society for the common good.

Recommended Resources

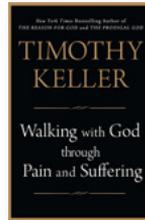


The Lost Words

Robert Macfarlane
& Jackie Morris

“Acorn,” “otter,” and “willow” are just a few of the entries you’ll find in this gorgeous, large-format children’s book, *The Lost Words*. Author Robert Macfarlane, along with artist Jackie Morris, successfully imbues a sense of wonder into words that describe our natural surroundings, but are no longer included in the Oxford Junior Dictionary.

With online teaching resources.



Walking with God through Pain and Suffering

Timothy Keller

If social distancing has opened up some space for reflection, check out this substantive but accessible book. Keller takes seriously life’s terrible realities yet continues to live with joy and conviction that the soul can grow through suffering. Using the Biblical metaphor of suffering as a furnace, Keller comes at the topic from multiple angles: philosophical, theological, devotional, and narrative.

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