
SUMUS LEONES

October 2021

Back to Life as We Know It?

By Ella Hankins, sophomore

With additional reporting by Elizabeth Campbell, junior

On Thursday, August 26, 2021 the school building was full for the first time since March 13th, 2020. Previously, only a selection of students and staff had been allowed inside the building, and now, everyone was back.

For weeks the administration had been slowly revealing information: the Covid testing policy, schedules, the mask mandate, and advisory lists. Questions and anticipation filled every “back to school” Zoom session. How was Washington Latin going to accommodate a full staff and hundreds of students, many of whom are not vaccinated, safely? The answer is relatively simple: implement the existing citywide Covid safety policies, then find weak points and tackle them as well. The execution, however, is very difficult. Every little detail needed to be thought of.

Ms. Fleming, the Director of Operations, acknowledged all the challenges stating, “It’s joyous to have students back on campus full time and be able to offer our instructional program to our full community again. Bringing everyone back has meant rethinking a lot of operational details, such as classroom set-up, the use of common spaces and hallways, lunch, arrival, and dismissal procedures, and many other ways we use our space and interact with each other, but it's well worth it to be able to offer in-person teaching again.”

In this issue:

Back to Life as We Know It?

Continued: Page 2

Back in Business: Page 5

Rude Re-Awakenings: Page 8

Editorial: Locker Delays-Too

Much on Our Backs: Page 10

Editorial: Latin Have a Vaccine

Mandate: Page 12

Texas Abortion Ban: Page 14

Religion at a Distance: Page 17

Comics: Page 20

In addition to the safety challenges, educational ones have arose.

Upper school math teacher Mr. Richardson commented that, “Students’ learning experiences for the last year-and-a-half are all over the place. The experience was different, what they learned was different, what they retained was different...in every one of my classes everybody's in a very different place.”

Mr. Richardson went on to explain the problems that arose from this situation. “Figuring out where everybody is in terms of their understanding of the math they have studied over the last year and a half. And then, figuring out, okay, how do I start to incorporate that understanding into the lessons I prepare? That’s the second piece of it that’s really difficult. And the third piece is since people are in very many different places, to have a class that is interesting for everybody. It's difficult to figure out how to do that.”

Students agreed with these sentiments.

Junior Audrey Kim said, “We're doing a lot of review right now just because last year we didn't learn as much as we would've during a normal school year. So...we are taking extra time this year to go over it.”

Sophomore Esther Espinosa Dilone added “it was much harder to remember things [from last year] because once I closed my computer, I did not open it. And I didn't really study for tests because they were mostly open note...I was not really as focused on remembering things, knowing that I could use my notes...it was just harder to retain knowledge off of a computer.”

Another issue that has arisen since the school opened its doors for the 2021-22 school year was hygiene.

Many students complained that the school provided supplies, most notably the hand sanitizer, “smelled,” and as a result were less likely to use them when necessary.

Ms. Fleming responded by saying, “Frequent hand hygiene -- especially around meals and when using the restroom -- is very important, but to be effective against COVID hand sanitizer has to have a high proportion of alcohol, which does have a distinctive smell. In addition to the pump hand sanitizers we have hand wipes all over the school, which are equally effective at sanitizing and which folks can certainly use if they prefer that.”

And, as some may have happily noticed, a few new brand-named hand sanitizers with more appealing scents have started circulating the school.

But, according to sophomore Janiyah Basil, it is not just the students who need to be cleaner, but the transportation too.

“I take the school buses that they provide here and the Covid protocols are not the best. I never really see sanitization happening, which kind of makes me feel unsafe. I’m vaccinated, so they don't make me feel too worried, but at the same time I wish the protocols were better.”

Ms. Fleming explained the bus protocols already in place by saying, “A few of the practices we put in place include the seats being wiped down with sanitizing cleaner/wipes before and after every ride and the drivers having hand sanitizer for kids to use when they come in and off the bus. All students also signed a bus agreement saying they would remain masked and seated while on the bus, and windows are open as much as possible to increase outdoor air circulation.”

So, of all those issues which one needs to be tackled next?

When asked, Janiyah and Ester’s first thoughts were different, but their second ones were very much the same.

“Definitely the buses... Also, the way that we have to move up and down the stairwells, I don't really like how a lot of them are down stairwells, when people typically go up them. It is really really confusing and also very hard when it comes to not bumping into people and also trying to get from place A to B safely,” said Janiyah.

Esther added, “They should do more social distancing in classrooms. And also the stairs, they should make it to so that [one of the two three-floor staircases that can be located on the first and second wings of the school] goes up... people don't follow the rules because they're the easiest staircases to access [and] they're both going down.”

Audrey disagreed, stating the next hurdle to overcome is “more transparency between the school administration and students when a student gets Covid. Only parents have been getting emails.”

The emails Audrey referred to are the last step of many completed each time a student tests positive for Covid.

As Ms. Fleming explained, “When we have an individual test positive for COVID, we contact DC Health and engage both their contact tracers and people on our staff who are trained to do that work. We identify anyone who meets the DC Health definition of a "close contact" and speak with that individual and their family about next steps.”

As for what is actually the next improvement, Ms. Fleming says, “We're continuing to seek approval to host a vaccination and immunization clinic on-site, which would make it easy for families whose children are not vaccinated or who have not gotten their other required immunizations to do so.”



Sixth graders in the school's garden

Back In Business

By Lydia Park, freshman, Ibbly Lee and Oluwamayowa Akinsanya, eighth grade

With many aspects of the 2021-2022 school year changing with the return of full in person learning, one of the most affected components are extracurricular activities and sports. Latin has taken multiple precautions that have changed the way students and staff participate in extracurricular activities.

There have been many difficulties with having sports practices that follow the Covid guidelines. Freshman, Max Aaron, commented, "Wearing masks is very difficult when we're running so we aren't as safe as we could be, but being outside and distanced seems to be safe enough...I was confident that Latin would make a safe sports plan, we are all either vaccinated or getting tested so I am not too worried about Covid during sports, at least when we're outside."

While some students might have been uncertain about joining a sports team because of the risk of catching Covid, Julia Nixon, a sophomore, stated, "I wasn't hesitant to join a sports team this year not only because I got my Covid shots a couple months ago, but because I knew the coaches would be strict with the rules. For example, a week ago before we were able to train on the field, one of the teachers checked our temperature before we could enter the field with the other students."

Coaches also had some thoughts on the Covid guidelines, and how to best help students be safe, and get enough air with masks. Mr. Green, one of the middle school cross country coaches stated, "Running it's a low-impact sport...the mask wearing is needed but not as needed as it is for other sports...when we finish a run I let them kind of spread and pull their masks down...I want them to be safe but I also think having a mask on while running in upper 80's heat and humidity is that in and of itself has its own safety issues. I want to make sure the kids are getting enough oxygen as well as avoiding spreading any potential germs."

Along with the challenges from organizing sports to stay within Covid guidelines, many clubs have also faced similar challenges of having Covid safe spaces especially when most clubs take place during lunch.

Upper school math teacher, Ms. Raskin, who also manages high school clubs, has commented on the recent changes due to Covid, "Clubs must follow all Covid safety-related guidelines, because of this, several students have organized outdoor-focused, [and] sports-related clubs. Ensuring that students stay socially distanced or remain masked unless actively eating or drinking is

challenging. Additionally, there is only so much space inside and outside of the building. Therefore, finding club locations that provide space for social distancing has been tricky.” Even so, she shares some words of hope, “Join a club! You’ll have fun spending time on an activity you love - or will grow to love - and will meet new people!”

Freshman Amal Buba, also had some remarks on the challenges of this new adjustment, mentioning, “Some clubs inside have tight spaces, however when it’s hot outside it’s not really appealing to go outside. [While] more spread out spaces would be nice, I really like how clubs this year are during lunch time, this gives you time for other after school activities.”

In addition to outdoor clubs, freshman Madeline Sickel shared that, “In ASL club we sit outside on the field and stay socially distanced.” She also compared it to last year's clubs and how, “In Certamen club we had to have our competitions with the other schools completely virtual because it was before vaccines had been approved for children under 16.”

“We are back in-person! This means no more asynchronous Wednesdays which is when most clubs in the MS met. Students are balancing athletics, academics, tutorial, and friendships!” Ms. Crespo, the 7th grade science teacher, who also handles middle school club says. “Understandably so, after a long day, many are eager to go home or hang out outside of the school building; while we encourage that believe it or not, involvement in school is just as important. Highly recommend signing up and committing to at least 1 club which’ll meet on average 45 minutes - 1 hour once a week. That’s it - just once a week! These are great opportunities to meet and hang with peers and staff that are also interested in the same things you are. And if you don't see a club that interests you, guess what? You can leave your legacy at Latin by creating one!”



The middle school cross country team at Kenilworth park.

Rude Re-Awakenings?

By Raigan Watson and Nadia Durham, freshmen

While many students being back in the building and being able to interact with their friends and faculty, there are certain aspects of quarantine and distance learning that everyone misses. Students say new challenges include attending advisory at 8:45 instead of 8:10, dressing down everyday, and of course eating whenever they want.

Freshman Lily Williams says there is a lot about the coziness of home she misses. She stayed virtual for all of last year, so the return to the building had some challenges.

"I miss being in my house, laying in my bed doing my work, eating whenever, not having to worry about disinfecting everything and wearing a mask, waking up ten minutes before school, not having to go outside for lunch," says Lily. "I also enjoyed being able to eat a full rotisserie chicken, rice, and broccoli meal during lunch, but now I gotta eat a sandwich and chips."

Freshman, Maggie Southworth shared similar feelings of enjoying last year's late schedule.

"Probably one thing that I miss most about quarantine, is being able to sleep in. I can get so much more sleep. I would sleep in till like 10 minutes before class started and just find an old sweatshirt, put it on and be like I am dressed you can see nothing. also the less homework, it was nice to go more in- depth in other stuff and allowed me to better review notes."

And Maggie and Lily aren't the only ones who are missing sleeping in; freshman Brooke Oliver and Cydney Roberts understand the feeling.

Brooke said, "Being in the house, not having to wake up early for school, gives me time to relax and prepare for the day." And Cydney agreed saying "starting class at 8:45, and breaks in between classes gave me more time to rest"

8th grader Janiah George, misses being in the comfort of her own home without any distractions and the rush to get to school and finishing her work on time.

"I miss being able to do things on my own time, and not worrying about or rushing to get work done," says Janiah. "Being at home in my own space without any distractions from my friends. I miss not having to commute to school every morning"

8th grade Latin teacher, Ms. Sisk is also currently missing the openness of last year's schedule. " I enjoyed the flexibility in the schedule, and being able to teach from different places"

Everyone misses aspects of online learning, the flexibility, doing things at home that you wouldn't be able to do at school, and not being rushed to finish classwork. But being back at school does come with its perks, seeing friends, not being in the house all time, and extracurriculars.



Mr. Staten's sixth grade civics classes' Sed Festival (top) and the Jazz Band concert (bottom).

Editorial: Locker Delays-Too Much on Our Backs

By Annika Jobanputra, junior

Back to school season has arrived, this year no longer on Zoom but in person causing it to be filled with much uncertainty

Why was there a delay with getting lockers? Half a month is how long students had to wait for lockers this year, forcing them to carry around all their materials for weeks. So why did the school not prepare for the students to come back, and what organization issues that could have been addressed over the summer were not dealt with?

With students returning to school in person, many things had to be changed. Mask mandates, social distancing, and bringing supplies to class, and, after spending the entirety of last year online, all the documents had also been digital. While some classes have transitioned to mainly computer-based, others have opted for paper. So, students have to carry around binders and notebooks and a computer in their backpacks.

Students felt like they were “breaking their back” from carrying around so much, and while some teachers were understanding of the situation, others still expected students to be prepared for their class.

The reason behind this situation was because the shipping of the locks had been delayed and previously used locks were discarded. But why did the school not ask students for locker combinations and salvage as many locks as possible with the anticipation that students would one day return to the school building?

Kayla Schifferle, a junior, said, “I have mixed feelings on the locker situation. On one hand I understand the situation with having to cut off all the locks because of Covid, but what I don't understand is why new locks were not ordered right away?”

She added that this has been a consistent problem over the years with lockers consistently being given days or weeks after the first day of school. She suggested that the school “order locks on the last day of school so we don't have to go through the annual waiting game...give each student a locker number and locker combination on the first day of school along with their class schedules.”

Cooper Davenport, also a junior, said “the school messed up [the lockers] and I don't want to carry my bag around anymore.”

With the sports season starting up again, junior Michela Irving added, “I am very frustrated because I am expected to have all of my stuff for class and equipment for my sports.” She added, [the school] could “tell us to buy our own locks or be more lenient about not having supplies.”

Michela added, with frustration, “teachers act...like it's no big deal after two weeks.”

Freshman Roya Nock has also experienced the delay of lockers at Latin, she said that “lockers are very useful when you have a lot of things to carry around so not having a locker is a struggle” she says that Latins organization system more specifically regarding lockers “needs to be more organized about the lockers and more.”

And once the lockers were finally distributed, some taller students were placed with bottom lockers.

As junior Omare Omatete said, “One of the tallest people in the eleventh grade has a bottom locker due to the delay of lockers...by the time they came in, all the top lockers had been claimed by those who had brought in their personal locks.”

Editorial: Should Latin Have a Vaccine Mandate?

By Aimee Crozat, junior

As of September 9, 2021, Los Angeles became the first U.S. school district to mandate vaccinations for all children ages 12 and up. According to the Associated Press, “The board of the Los Angeles Unified School District voted Thursday to require students age 12 and up to be fully vaccinated”. With other cities likely to be following in its footsteps, questions have been raised about whether or not DC should be one of them. Being a charter school means that Washington Latin has the ability to mandate the vaccine. However, is that the right move for us?

Ms. McBride, a high school Latin teacher and assistant coach of the girls’ varsity soccer team, believes that the vaccine mandate could be helpful, but has reservations. “It’s not as much about the kids as it is their parents. In a school environment I think that there should be definite encouragement for the parents to get their kids vaccinated [but] I’m hesitant about a mandate because I think that when you force anyone to do something, it actually creates a lot of resistance.”

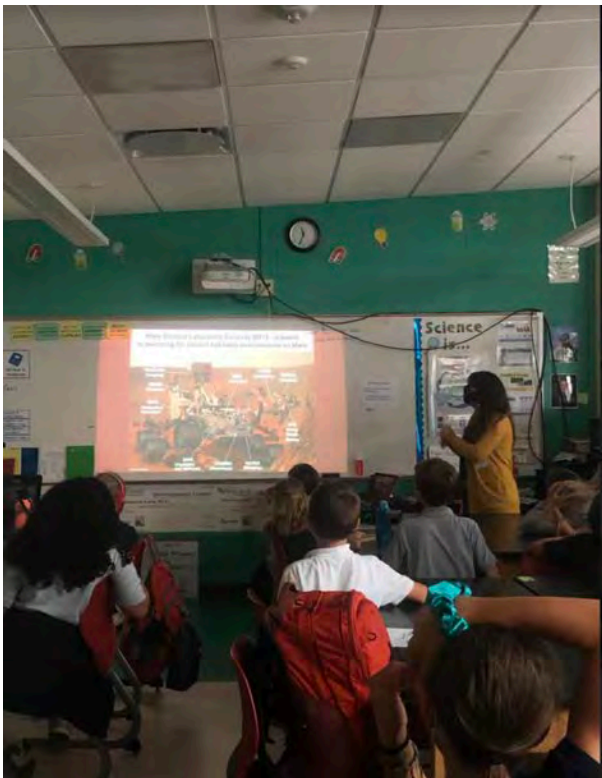
When asked her opinions on whether or not kids who play sports should get vaccinations, she expressed more willingness for that than school-wide mandates, but then pointed out that “say, what if you were a 17 year old and your parents wanted you to wait to get vaccinated so then you’re stuck in this in-between where you can’t play a sport you love.” While kids can technically bypass their parents’ permission to get the vaccine, that’s often not realistic for families.

Mr. Torrence, high school science and health teacher and coach of the boys’ wrestling team, also has conflicting views. He thinks that we should have a mandate for teachers and not for students, though he is not definitively on that stance. “With masks, we can protect our personal health. By having the vaccine, we can protect our personal health. Mandating how others maintain their personal health is a touchy topic for me.” Torrence added, “For extracurriculars, I’m more supportive of it because extracurriculars are optional. For example, the wrestling season is currently not happening because of COVID. But if it were, people who compete would have to be vaccinated, and I completely agree with and support that.”

On the one hand, Latin is currently going above and beyond what the CDC is requiring, both with masking rules, social distancing, and testing of unvaccinated students and faculty. Short of a mandate, there are many policies currently in place to protect Latin students from getting sick.

On the other hand, as senior Sanjana Bhojwani says she thinks the school should set down clear vaccination expectations, “there’s already been cases at Latin and I think that those were preventable...in order to contain the spread there needs to be a mandate.”

Just like they do around the city and the country, opinions about mandating the vaccine vary at Washington Latin. Having one would absolutely ensure the safety of everyone at Latin and protect all immunocompromised friends and family members. But, as Ms. McBride said, “It’s important to cater to the dignity of the people we’re talking to, and not assume that they’re stupid if they have some reservations about their child getting it because it’s not so black and white.” Whether or not Latin enacts a mandate should be a decision that comes from the thoughts and opinions of the community, and it should be an open-door discussion.



Dr. Marie Henderson talking with the STEM Club about her work as a planetary scientist and the Curiosity Rover.

Texas Abortion Ban

By Sadie Greenhalgh, Ry Shapiro, seventh grade, and Ruby Churches, eighth grade.
With additional reporting by Ella Hankins, sophomore.

In mid-May the state of Texas passed a law which stated that women who are pregnant cannot get an abortion, the act of intentionally terminating a pregnancy, in the state after six weeks of pregnancy.

On September 1, 2021 the Supreme Court ruled not to intervene, allowing the law to go forward. Justices Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett voted not to intervene with this law. Leaving Justices Sotomayor, Roberts, Kagan, and Breyer voting in favor of interference. According to The Guardian, Justice Sotomayor called the law “flagrantly unconstitutional.”

In 1973, the Supreme Court decided the case, Roe v. Wade, which legalized abortion. In the cases that followed, the Supreme Court made clear that a state can't ban abortion before “viability,” which is usually around 24 weeks into pregnancy. The Texas law - Senate Bill 8 - bans abortion after 6 weeks into pregnancy.

At Washington Latin, students and teachers have strong opinions on this issue.

“The unfortunate problem with the pro-life movement,” Mr. Staten, the sixth grade civics teacher answered, “is that we do not have the social infrastructure to support women having children, and a lot of pro-lifers don't acknowledge that we make it nearly impossible to raise children. If conservatives really wanted to ban abortion, they would need to support things like health care reform, universal pre-K, Head Start programs, and paid family/medical leave.”

Mr. Byrd, the eighth grade American History teacher when asked how Texas's laws will affect the other states, says he thinks Texas's law will have a chilling effect on the other states that might look to pass similar laws. “The backlash Texas is getting will show the other states not to follow in their footsteps.”

Eighth grade student Jonah Cohen explained, “I feel it's morally incorrect due to it being nearly impossible to detect a pregnancy before six weeks...this could lead to having illegal abortions rise which would have more significantly dangerous conditions and a higher mortality rate.”

A seventh grader, who wished to not be named, agreed with Jonah, stating, “I feel there should not be a law [about abortion] because some women who get pregnant don't want to have a child, and some might not be able to give birth, and it could include some serious complications. I also

think that protesting [against] abortion shouldn't happen because you don't know why people want abortions, and it's not affecting the protesters as it is affecting the people needing the abortion."

Other students found the issue complicated, with many struggling to figure out how they felt about the controversy.

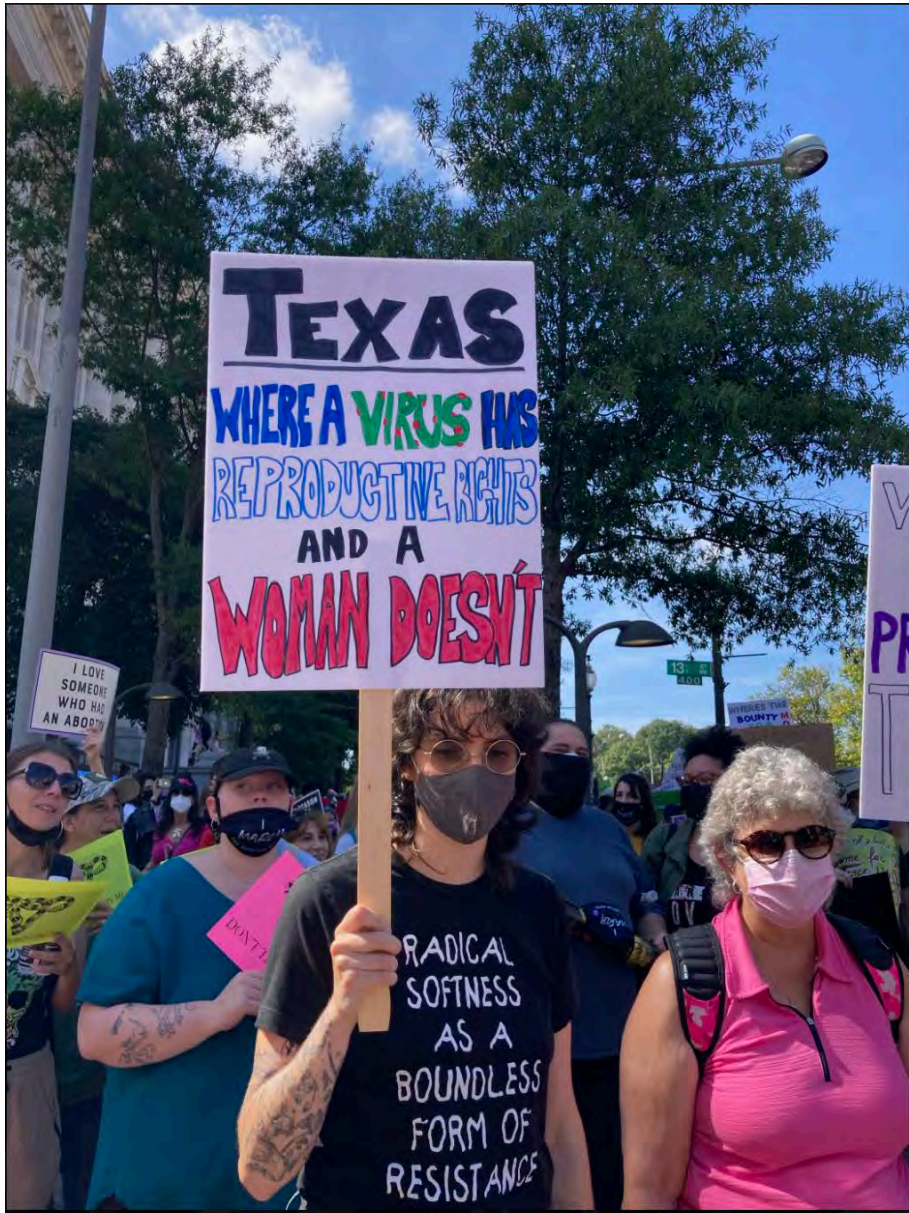
"I'm in the middle because it's sort of like murdering the child," a sixth grader expressed. "I do feel like it's unfair due to the fact that the baby doesn't get to grow up, because newborns have so many opportunities in life. On the other side, I see how abortion is good, because what if the child is unhealthy, and there are high risks? It's what you think is best for the baby and you."

"I'm in the middle," 8th grader Carys Gill commented. "I'm not 100% pro-choice, because you should not be able to get an abortion all the time, and because too many abortions is bad for you. Plus, you should be responsible about having babies. But I'm not 100% pro-life because in some cases you should be able to have an abortion, like if it's an emergency. For example, if you're going to lose the baby."

High schoolers have reflected on how the abortion law is affecting their college choices.

"In my college search process, I have not been trying to look for colleges in states with strict abortion laws and other laws I don't agree with," Senior Kayla Park explained. "I want to feel respected and safe on and off the campus, and that is largely affected by the state governments."

"The other day I was at a virtual presentation with a few universities," Senior Vivian Pittard recalled. "As the admissions officer from Rice University went through her presentation, I became quite intrigued. When it hit me that Rice was in Texas, I felt all the excitement disappear. I was now faced with a dilemma: do I let fear get the best of me and abandon my recently sparked interest in Rice or do I continue to research the University only to eventually have to make a decision whether I am willing to give up my bodily autonomy for an education at my preferred school? All of this made me reflect upon the culture of misogyny and fear abortion bans reinforce and how, even here in D.C., we can feel the effects of the ban."



Women's March in front of Supreme Court on October 2nd, 2021.

Religion at a Distance

By Paulina Inghima, junior

On Friday March 13, 2020, the DC government banned public gatherings of fifty or more people, which quickly turned to ten or more as a response to the growing Covid-19 pandemic. These laws rendered many Washington Latin students and teachers unable to attend religious services, and different congregations adapted in different ways. Many felt that they lost an integral part of their community by no longer going to in person services, even if they went online.

Mr. Clausen, head of academics and a practicing Catholic, said that at the start of the pandemic “All religious services were shut... for the first few months [my family] watched mass online,” before switching to in person services with masks and sign up policies.

Mr. Clausen went on to say that the move to in person services was a tough call, and he didn't take it lightly. “I think the opening up of masses is similar to the opening up of school, there's tension between desire for safety and the recognition that the virtual thing is not really church and not really school.”

Omare Omatete, a junior who identifies as Eastern Orthodox Christian, went to Zoom masses during the pandemic, but recently switched to in person church services with masks on. He said that “When I went back to church, I kind of forgot some people, [and realized] that I kind of missed [in person services], the building itself has power I think.”

One upper school student, who is Muslim, said, “I have not gone in person and I have not been to a mosque since Covid started because mosques are very packed and when praying you stay close to people.”

Mosques are the place of worship for Muslim people, and members of the Mosque generally kneel and pray next to each other, making socially distancing difficult.

However, the student has continued to practice his faith with his family by waking up early and praying together “in the house five times a day instead of separately.”

Claire Emmanuel, a junior, who is Jewish, said that she also took a break from services during the pandemic. “It was very discouraging for me to go to services online because it's not as much of a sense of community because I can't see people, and it's hard to stay focused.”

The three most popular religions in the US are widely considered to be Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Christianity has many different branches, including Catholicism, Evangelicalism, Baptist, and many more.

There are many things that people miss about going to services in person, particularly the sense of community religion can bring.

Ms. Hamd, an Evangelical Christian, said that most of all she missed the music of church, as well as “the feeling of community and to pray with a group of people...Our church has an amazing band, and singing all together in person feels for me like being in God's presence.”

The upper school student added that he “missed the feeling of being with my community...they offered free food after prayer and I really liked that.”

Claire said that “I miss being able to see people that I don't normally see [from my community], people of all different ages.”

The United States has long been known for being a melting pot of beliefs and religious freedom. In 2019, the annual average of American adults regularly attending religious gatherings was around 34% (Pew Research Center).

However, according to the Pew Research Center, since the coronavirus pandemic began only 3% of Americans have attended religious gatherings in person, and 28% remotely. This creates a 3 percent decrease in the amount of people attending services at all, in person or virtually, in 2021. The 3% decrease in attendance is the sharpest decrease the US has ever seen in such a short period, and many see the coronavirus pandemic as the cause.

Claire said that she believes that “once people are allowed to go [in person] everyone will be going back there again and it will be back to normal.”

Omare agreed, adding that the pandemic has helped people gain an appreciation for religious communities that they may not have had before.

“I think people are gonna try to stay with the feeling of going to church, because people couldn't go for a while, so you start to not take it for granted.”

While the pandemic restricted people's access to their spiritual communities, students and teachers found ways to stay connected and celebrate their religions in quarantine.

Omare had words of encouragement for anyone feeling disappointed and unmotivated about practicing religion in the pandemic: “You shouldn’t dwell on it too much, because it’s gonna get better, it’s gonna change, and even if the [place of worship] does change, just stick with it!”

Comics

By Ruby-Rae Mccants, freshman



