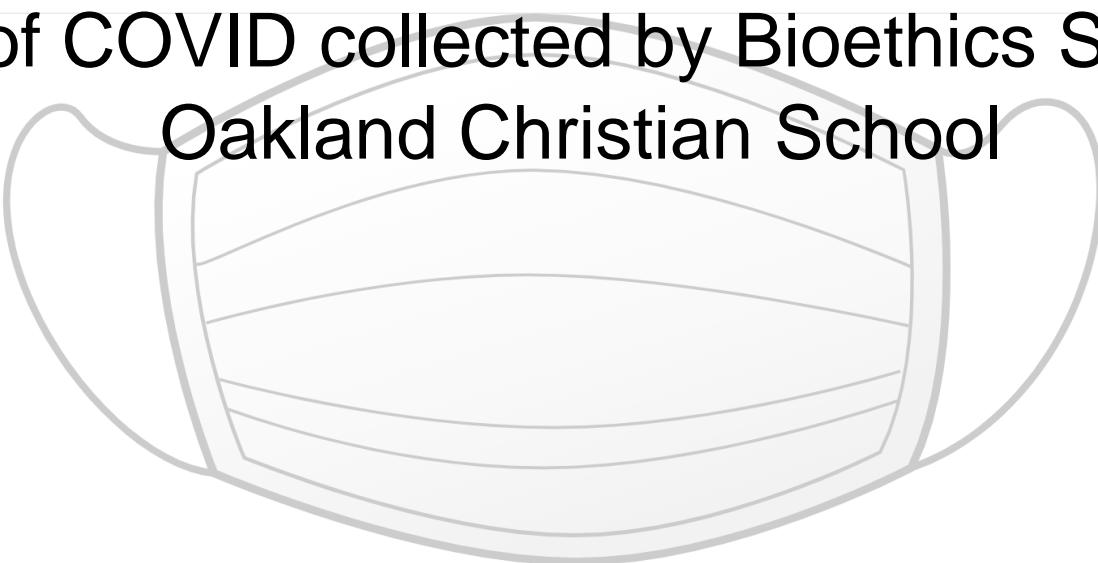
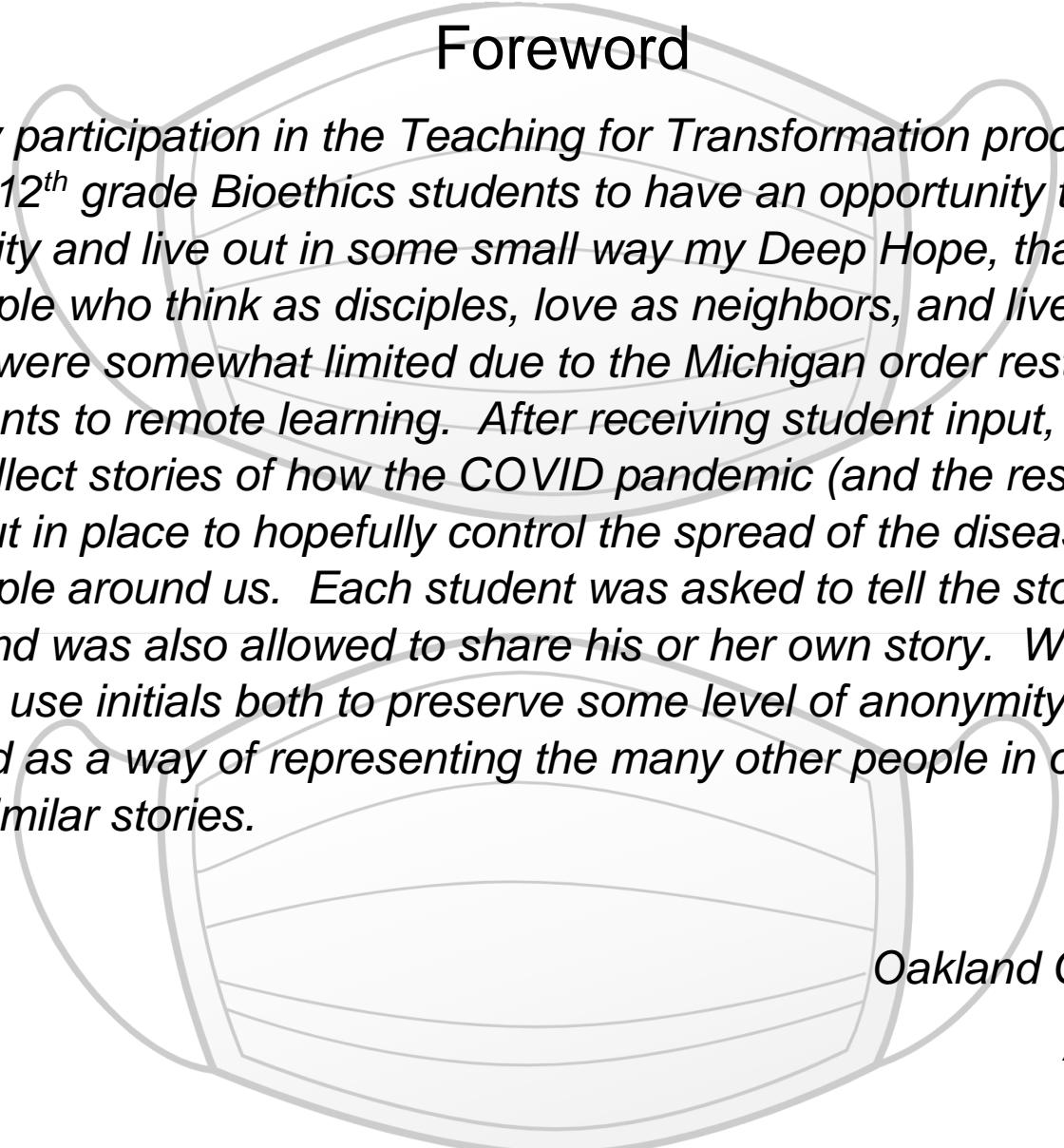


Voices from behind the Mask:



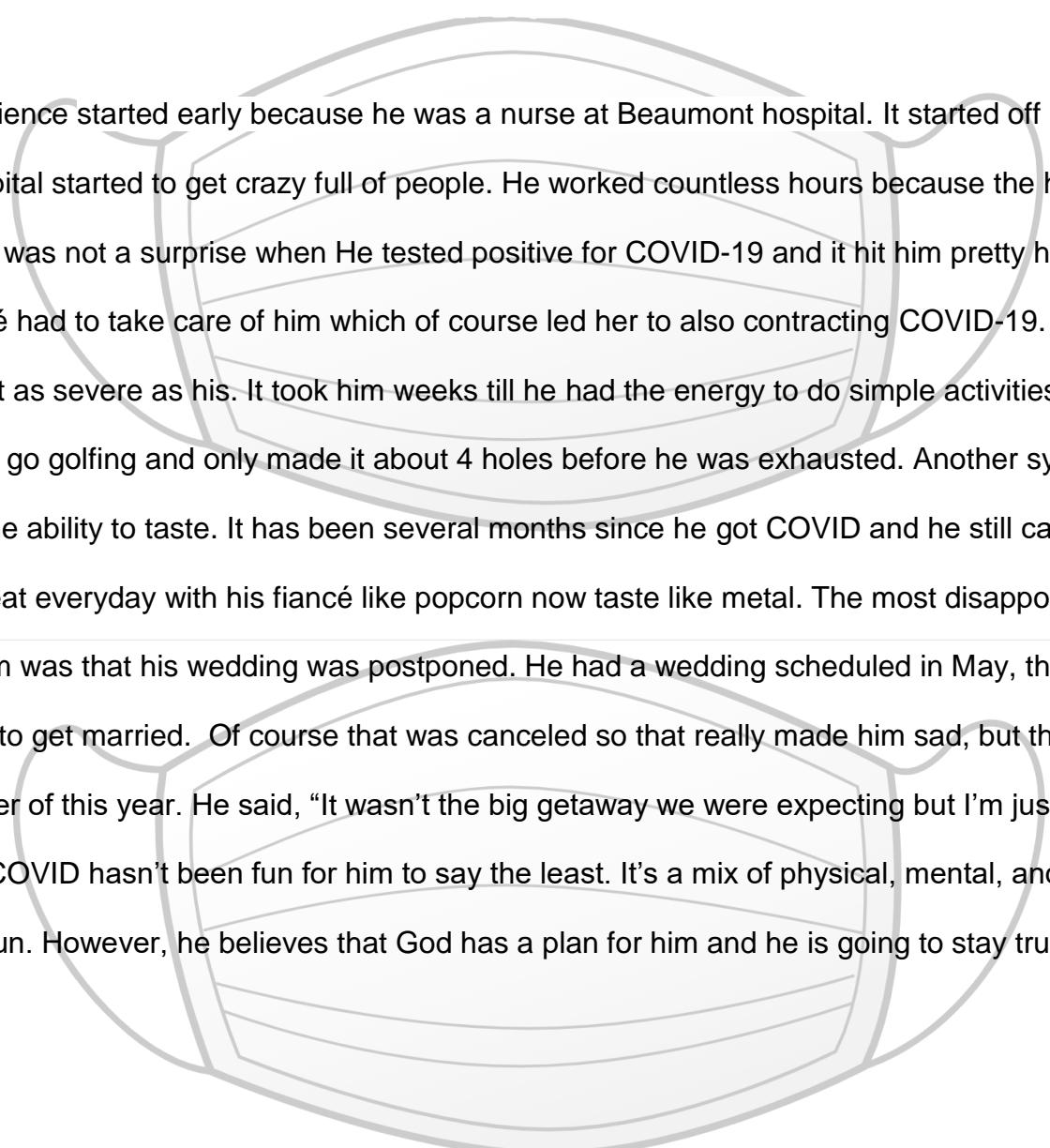
**Stories of COVID collected by Bioethics Students at
Oakland Christian School**

Foreword

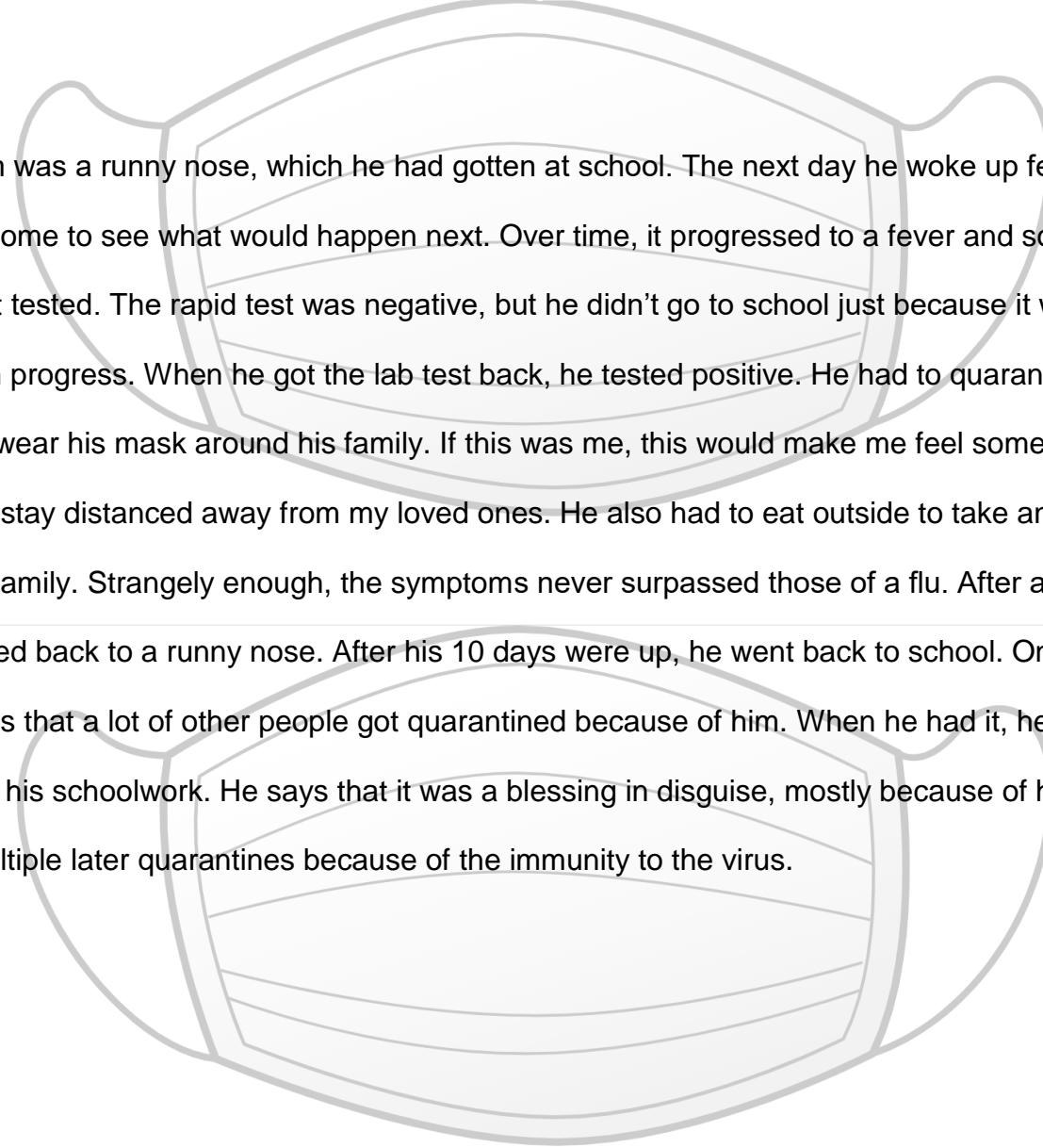


Motivated by participation in the Teaching for Transformation process, I wanted my 11th and 12th grade Bioethics students to have an opportunity to connect with the community and live out in some small way my Deep Hope, that “We will become people who think as disciples, love as neighbors, and live as stewards.” Our options were somewhat limited due to the Michigan order restricting high school students to remote learning. After receiving student input, I decided that we would collect stories of how the COVID pandemic (and the resulting social measures put in place to hopefully control the spread of the disease) had affected people around us. Each student was asked to tell the story of someone they knew and was also allowed to share his or her own story. We have attempted to use initials both to preserve some level of anonymity for the subjects, and as a way of representing the many other people in our community who share similar stories.

Bryan Crump
Oakland Christian School
Auburn Hills, MI



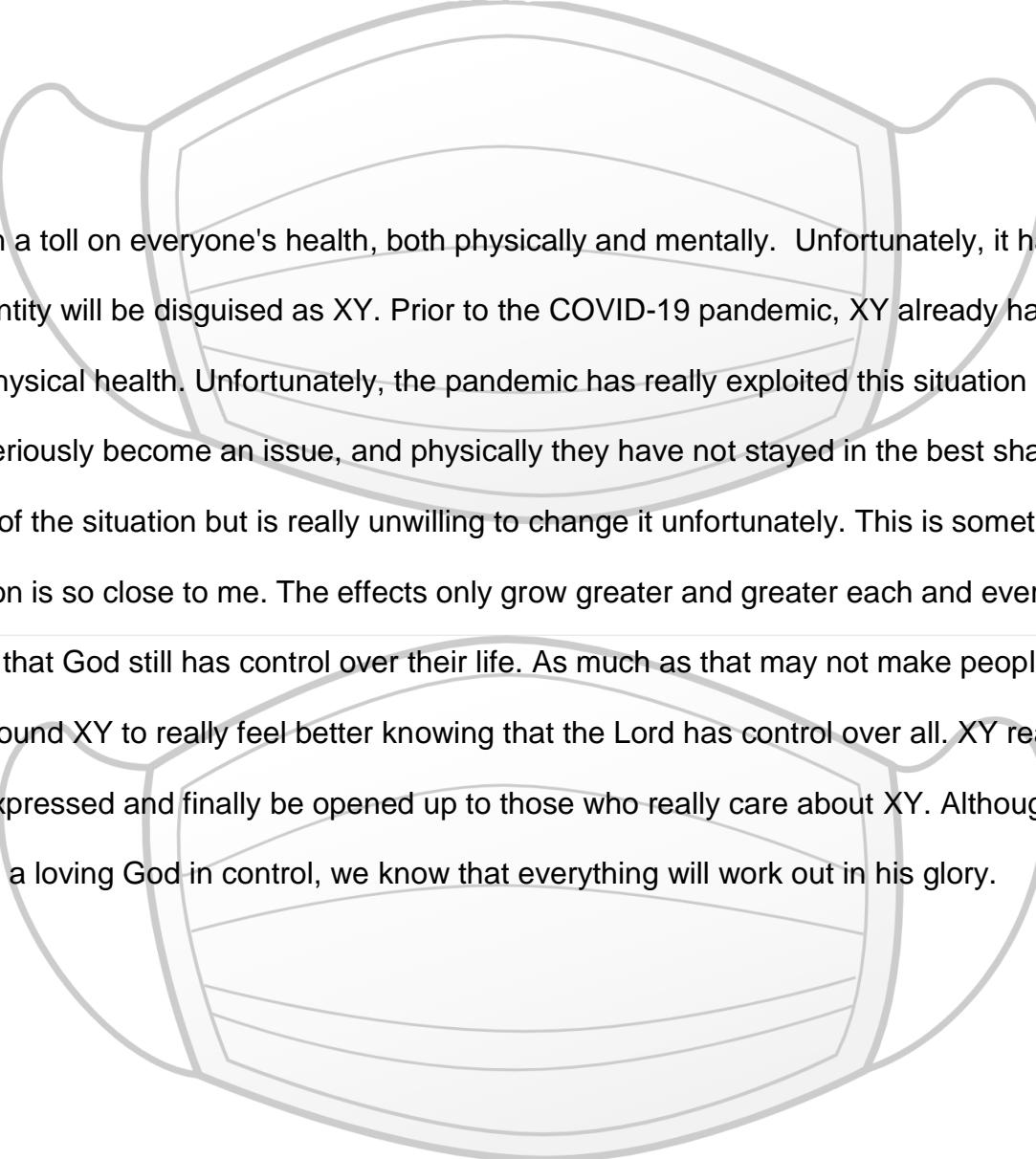
K.J's COVID experience started early because he was a nurse at Beaumont hospital. It started off pretty tame but early this spring the hospital started to get crazy full of people. He worked countless hours because the hospital needed the extra assistance. It was not a surprise when He tested positive for COVID-19 and it hit him pretty hard. He was extremely weak and his fiancé had to take care of him which of course led her to also contracting COVID-19. Thankfully her symptoms were not as severe as his. It took him weeks till he had the energy to do simple activities. He remembers in July that he tried to go golfing and only made it about 4 holes before he was exhausted. Another symptom that still haunts him to this day is the ability to taste. It has been several months since he got COVID and he still can't taste certain foods. Foods he used to eat everyday with his fiancé like popcorn now taste like metal. The most disappointing part about how COVID affected him was that his wedding was postponed. He had a wedding scheduled in May, they were going to go across the country to get married. Of course that was canceled so that really made him sad, but thankfully he did get to marry her in October of this year. He said, "It wasn't the big getaway we were expecting but I'm just glad we are finally married." Overall, COVID hasn't been fun for him to say the least. It's a mix of physical, mental, and financial challenges that haven't been fun. However, he believes that God has a plan for him and he is going to stay trusting in him.



A.A's first symptom was a runny nose, which he had gotten at school. The next day he woke up feeling worse, and to play it safe, he stayed home to see what would happen next. Over time, it progressed to a fever and some aches, and this is what made him get tested. The rapid test was negative, but he didn't go to school just because it was the weekend, and he had a lab test in progress. When he got the lab test back, he tested positive. He had to quarantine in his house, and sometimes had to wear his mask around his family. If this was me, this would make me feel somewhat secluded, as I would have had to stay distanced away from my loved ones. He also had to eat outside to take an extra precaution from spreading it to his family. Strangely enough, the symptoms never surpassed those of a flu. After a few days, A.A's symptoms regressed back to a runny nose. After his 10 days were up, he went back to school. One of the things A.A felt the worst about was that a lot of other people got quarantined because of him. When he had it, he lay around all day and tried to keep up on his schoolwork. He says that it was a blessing in disguise, mostly because of his being positive, he was kept out of multiple later quarantines because of the immunity to the virus.

C.R's family got COVID the week before Thanksgiving. They decided to do the "herd immunity" approach and all get it so that they could carry on. They also did that to build immunity. They felt very blessed and fortunate that their symptoms were not severe. They all had cold symptoms, tiredness, and the loss of taste. Her brother was asymptomatic and without a fever which was a miracle since he has Addison's disease. Having to quarantine was quite boring because they were all without energy. The pro though was being able to spend time with family (maybe too much time). They watched movies, learned new cooking recipes, cleaned the house and did Christmas decorating. For this family, COVID was a blessing in disguise.

SB said that once COVID hit and schools were closed and life was shut down they went into a deep depression. School was closed, and that was really only one of their main ways of seeing people and being able to interact. SB's Mom had to work at the hospital constantly, so SB along with their brother were usually by themselves a lot of times which did not help their cause. SB's counselor, who they would talk to about their depression, passed away (not because of COVID) but managing the situation they were in made life that much harder and more difficult for them. It has been hard for SB to really recover from this, they recently went through depression beforehand and was able to get out of it, and now, due to COVID, this has created a whole new mountain for them to overcome, and the circumstances around the situation have not made it any easier for them.



COVID-19 has taken a toll on everyone's health, both physically and mentally. Unfortunately, it has taken a major toll on someone whose identity will be disguised as XY. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, XY already had some issues with mental health and physical health. Unfortunately, the pandemic has really exploited this situation severely. This person's mental health has seriously become an issue, and physically they have not stayed in the best shape over the quarantine period. XY is aware of the situation but is really unwilling to change it unfortunately. This is something that really hurts to hear since this person is so close to me. The effects only grow greater and greater each and every day. Thankfully, this person understands that God still has control over their life. As much as that may not make people feel super secure, it allows the people around XY to really feel better knowing that the Lord has control over all. XY really appreciated that his thoughts could be expressed and finally be opened up to those who really care about XY. Although things may not be always positive, with a loving God in control, we know that everything will work out in his glory.

I chose to write my story about a family friend of my family. This friend (Mr. E senior) recently passed away due to COVID-19, and it was all very sudden. It happened about a month ago. Just a week or two before he passed away, I was at his house with my dad shooting guns before opening day. However, he ever came out because he was feeling sick, and because he was old and didn't want to risk coming into contact with me and my dad. Unfortunately a few weeks later, he was sent into the emergency room and news got out that his organs were failing. The saddest part of this tragedy is that Mr. E senior's son, daughter-in-law, and grandkids, never got to see him before he passed away. Two of the kids were unable to visit due to college, and his son was all the way in Thailand. It breaks my heart to think about how he was unable to see his family, and his family who was unable to see their dad/grandpa before he passed away.

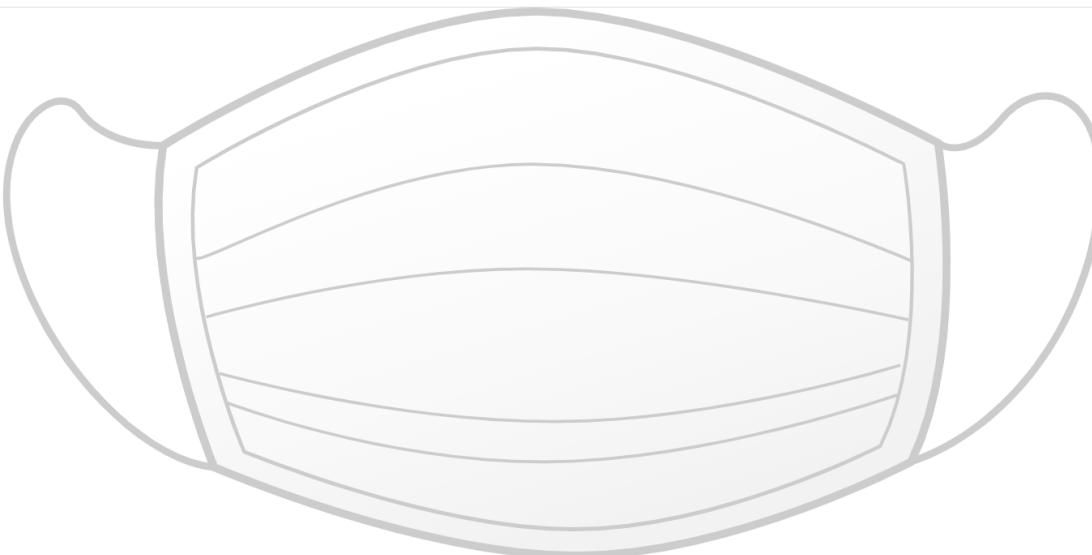
E.K. is a professor at a university, and happens to be immunocompromised. When COVID first hit, EK was worried about how it was going to affect their students, and what would happen to her classroom. After January EK decided to start teaching more online courses in their field and less physical courses. While they have managed to still teach effectively through COVID, they deeply miss their students, and the environment that their workplace created. They also miss interacting with people, as since they are immunocompromised, it is unsafe for them to be out in public.

When XZ thinks about her COVID experience XZ does not think about happy memories. Yes there were definitely happy moments for her and she was beyond blessed that she could continue school and have a loving family to support her. Physically she was doing well, able to exercise on a daily basis for longer and I was eating healthy. Mentally XZ was struggling in many ways. Everything was happening and ending so fast she did not think her body knew how to process everything. XZ started to slip into bad anxiety that she still has to battle with today. XZ was struggling to be happy inside even when my family was doing something fun at home. She knew she needed help but it was the hardest thing to admit. Her brain kept telling her that it will not help, people have it worse than you, and you are just being dramatic. She thought she needed to be suicidal to get help, she now knows that she was so wrong. Her parents were very supportive and willing to help and pay for what she needed which she is beyond grateful for today because it is not cheap. XZ cannot speak for everyone who has had to deal with mental battles of their own but for her it never truly goes away. She still has to go to counseling and has triggers for her anxiety that she has to be careful about. XZ says "I am definitely in a better place than I was a few months ago and getting closer to the mental state I was before COVID. In a way I am thankful for my COVID experience because it taught me that it is okay to ask for help and people are not meant to deal with battles on their own. I am thankful for this experience because it has made me stronger and showed me it is better than okay to ask for help."

OC has struggled with COVID in a lot of ways. She has not specifically lost someone to COVID, but she has lost a family member during COVID. The most impactful event for her during COVID was the loss of her aunt unexpectedly and not being able to go and visit her. She regrets not being able to see her in her dying days. She has also been impacted by COVID in other ways. The various shutdowns in Michigan have made her wish she was at school, because of her boredom. The prolonging of her volleyball season has made her so mad. The volleyball season made its way to finals, in which they had one more week to go. The governor decided it would be best to postpone the season with one week left. OC thinks that the season just needs to end so everyone can get on with their lives.

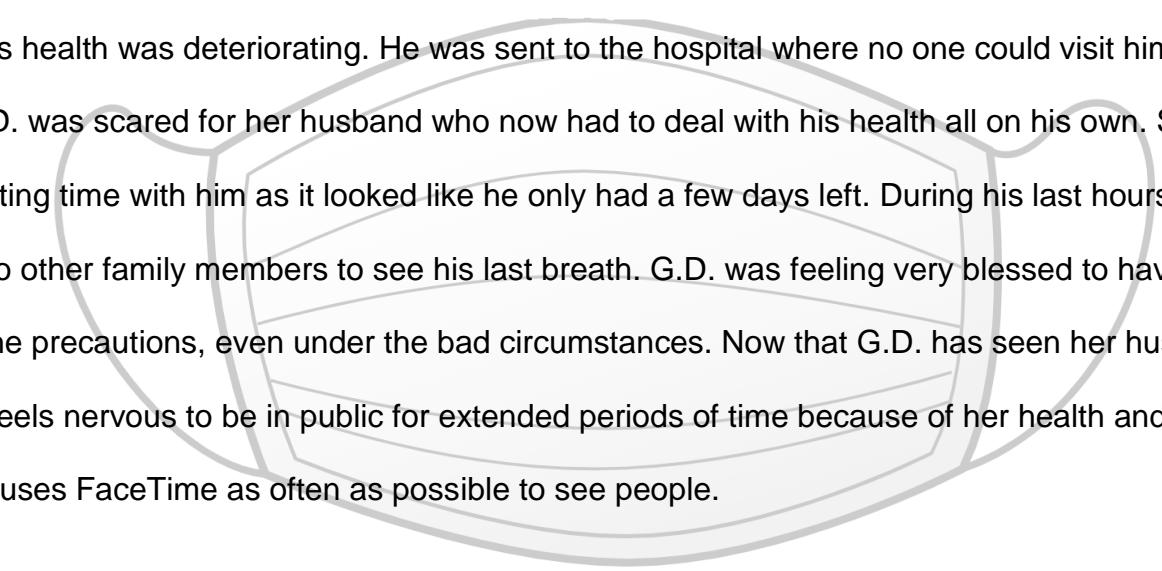
G.D.'s husband's health was deteriorating. He was sent to the hospital where no one could visit him due to the COVID precautions. G.D. was scared for her husband who now had to deal with his health all on his own. She was eventually able to have visiting time with him as it looked like he only had a few days left. During his last hours, the hospital made an exception for two other family members to see his last breath. G.D. was feeling very blessed to have been allowed to visit in the midst of the precautions, even under the bad circumstances. Now that G.D. has seen her husband die during the pandemic, she feels nervous to be in public for extended periods of time because of her health and age. She keeps her circle small, but uses FaceTime as often as possible to see people.

The COVID interview was with ZJ. She just became a mom earlier this year and was married the year before in the spring. ZJ is a friend of my family, and we enjoy seeing her and my Grandma does as well. So one day, my grandmother came over to my house and she also went to ZJ's house. When she was at our house we, as well as her, were unaware that she was carrying COVID. A little while later the interviewer's grandmother went over to ZJ's house also unaware that she had COVID and unknowingly gave it to ZJ and her husband. The interviewer's family then found out that the interviewer's father had COVID or at least had all the symptoms of it. The interviewer then found out that ZJ had COVID and her husband as well and to top it all off their power went out. Because their power went out they couldn't make food or be warm and keep in mind they have a 6 month old. They couldn't go to a hotel because they had COVID but luckily the ordeal was over in a few days when their power went back on.

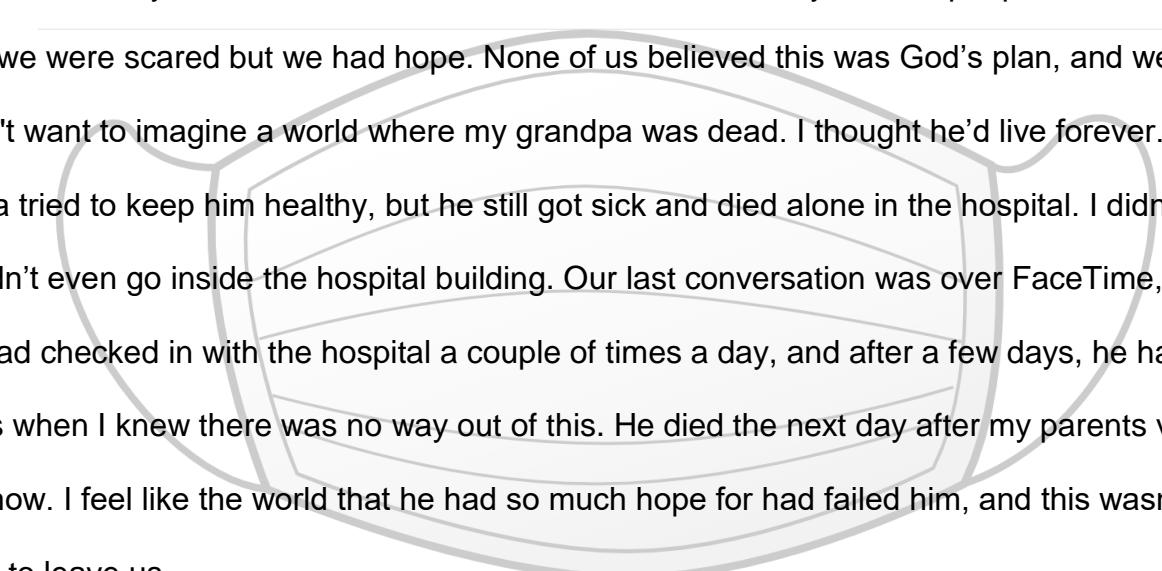


YY's COVID story has a lot of ups and downs. This summer they had many opportunities planned for their upcoming career and with their basketball team. They were supposed to go to UCLA and Northern Colorado State to meet with the coaches there and learn more about college coaching, which is her dream career. In the summer their Basketball team was also planning a mission trip to Guatemala. YY was very upset and somber when all of this was canceled due to all the COVID restrictions. However, some new opportunities arose over the summer that were small silver linings to a rough time. YY got to learn how to use new basketball equipment called the Shoot360 which helped improve their basketball game. The Shoot360 allowed YY to also meet some really great people at that facility. YY also got a promotion at their job and was able to work with their sister and cousin. These two things were actually really good opportunities during a tough time. YY's COVID season had some ups and downs and was still able to grow as a person in many ways during this time.

A.K. was as equally alarmed by COVID as the rest of us, but more for the fact of the quarantine solitude than the disease. So A.K. confined himself to his room only to escape his rambunctious family he was now forced into constant contact with. Eventually A.K.'s grandmother came over, but unfortunately she had COVID and gave it to everybody except him and his brothers. This led to even more solitude, which A.K. wasn't particularly against. A.K. now wasn't forced to socialize with his siblings anymore, and being the oldest, you are usually made to partake in their mundane activities.



G.D.'s husband's health was deteriorating. He was sent to the hospital where no one could visit him due to the COVID precautions. G.D. was scared for her husband who now had to deal with his health all on his own. She was eventually able to have visiting time with him as it looked like he only had a few days left. During his last hours, the hospital made an exception for two other family members to see his last breath. G.D. was feeling very blessed to have been allowed to visit in the midst of the precautions, even under the bad circumstances. Now that G.D. has seen her husband die during the pandemic, she feels nervous to be in public for extended periods of time because of her health and age. She keeps her circle small, but uses FaceTime as often as possible to see people.



My grandpa and I were very close, he was a wonderful man and one of my favorite people on earth. When we found out he had COVID, we were scared but we had hope. None of us believed this was God's plan, and we thought he'd get through it. I didn't want to imagine a world where my grandpa was dead. I thought he'd live forever. He stayed at home and my grandma tried to keep him healthy, but he still got sick and died alone in the hospital. I didn't even get to say goodbye, I couldn't even go inside the hospital building. Our last conversation was over FaceTime, and he couldn't even talk to me. My dad checked in with the hospital a couple of times a day, and after a few days, he had to go on the ventilator. That's when I knew there was no way out of this. He died the next day after my parents visited him and told him he could let go now. I feel like the world that he had so much hope for had failed him, and this wasn't the way God intended for him to leave us.

For TA, the most impactful event during COVID is the impact on his social life. It is extremely boring to be at home all the time and even when he does see people, it feels different. He hasn't lost someone to COVID and he says that he also knows that others have had it worse than him. Also, another problem is that his extended family fights about politics. COVID has become an excuse for his family to not talk. He didn't get to see his extended family during thanksgiving and hasn't seen them in a while. Not being able to see family members at this time weights heavenly on TA's heart because family means so much to him. It has also been a lot to lose sports seasons and school. Although TA feels that school is boring, the stay at home mandates have taught him to appreciate the social aspect of it.

YY's COVID story has a lot of ups and downs. This summer they had many opportunities planned for their upcoming career and with their basketball team. They were supposed to go to UCLA and Northern Colorado State to meet with the coaches there and learn more about college coaching, which is her dream career. In the summer their Basketball team was also planning a mission trip to Guatemala. YY was very upset and somber when all of this was canceled due to all the COVID restrictions. However, some new opportunities arose over the summer that were small silver linings to a rough time. YY got to learn how to use new basketball equipment called the Shoot360 which helped improve their basketball game. The Shoot360 allowed YY to also meet some really great people at that facility. YY also got a promotion at their job and was able to work with their sister and cousin. These two things were actually really good opportunities during a tough time. YY's COVID season had some ups and downs and was still able to grow as a person in many ways during this time.

Kyle is a 66 year old grandma of three. She lives alone, over 50 miles away from her son's family and less than a mile from her daughter's family. Kyle is closest with her daughter and middle granddaughter but still strives to see her son's family as often as she can. Kyle describes herself as an eccentric person. She spends the majority of her time working on her art. Over the years, she has become proficient in many different forms of art such as knitting, quilting, painting, screen printing and encaustic art. Aside from her art, Kyle pays attention to politics and has a heart for supporting local non-profit organizations. In her older age, Kyle has developed many health problems such as fibro-myalgia, cancer, asthma and other severe problems. Problems like these put Kyle at extreme risk for the COVID pandemic. When the Corona virus was announced in the U.S in February, she began her lengthy quarantine. When quarantine began, Kyle felt okay. She felt as though she was quite used to spending time by herself and did not see this alone time as anything too different. However, quarantine began to take a toll. She could no longer see her daughter and granddaughter, she could not attend her art classes and she could not receive the help from her family that she normally would. Kyle became extremely cautious, even wiping down door handles after someone touched them. It was around April when she realized that this would not be as easy as she thought. Not seeing her family very often started to take a toll on Kyle's mental health. She often felt alone or depressed. She started to become sick of her normal activities such as art. COVID began to also ignite arguments with some less-cautious family members. Kyle knew the only thing she could do was take care of herself and try her best to engage as normally as possible. Kyle had to miss out on a lot of important events. For the first time in 16 years, she was not able to hug her granddaughter on her birthday, she was unable to attend her other granddaughter's softball games and had to miss her eldest granddaughter's graduation and graduation party. It was very hard for Kyle to find the positives in life. The only thing that kept her going was the idea that eventually she would be able to be with her family again. Kyle is currently on month ten of her mostly self quarantine. As time has gone on, she has become less cautious when it comes to her family. In July, although wearing a mask, she was able to hug her granddaughter for the first time in five months. She still does not go out in public often but is now able to pick up her own groceries, attend dinner here and there and visit with her son's family. Certain things are still very hard for her, she was unable to attend thanksgiving. But, with the new vaccine on the horizon, Kyle feels as though the United States could finally be headed in the right direction when it comes to combating the Coronavirus. Overall, Kyle feels extremely grateful for the support and love she has received in such hard times and continues to put her best foot forward as often as she can.

Selected Student Reflections on the Project

"The COVID project was meaningful since it gave me a unique way to sympathize for the person I interviewed. I would almost call it therapeutic just because she was able to discuss what was on her mind and I was a listening ear for her. This fits with the deep hope because I was able to love as a neighbor as I reached out and was willing to listen. This connects with bioethics in general because bioethics is almost asking the question: "What would Jesus do?" We think about bioethical issues through a biblical lens in this course and Jesus sets the greatest example of what it looks like to live as a steward and love as a neighbor. Jesus helped the hurting, just as we did through this project."

"The COVID project was meaningful to me in many ways. I was able to talk to other people about their stories and listen. Sometimes the best thing for someone is to listen to their story and I could be that person for them. It also impacted me being able to write my story. I have only shared it a few times and never been able to write it down, it impacted me knowing that some people can read my story and relate knowing that they are not alone. It fits in with the deep hope sharing that us believers go through battles and we can help people with theirs. It also connects to bioethics in many ways. Because this virus is new, there are so many things out there about what to do and what not to do and what is best for the people as a whole that it is hotly debated."

"It was meaningful to me because it helped me to empathize with people I didn't know I needed to empathize with. It fits with the deep Hope because it helped me love as a neighbor. It connects because this whole quarantine is a question of our basic rights for freedom, and that has been restricted."

"Yes, the project was meaningful to me, because I had a deeper understanding of my friend's COVID experience. Talking with friends about their COVID experience shows a loving neighbor. Everyone has a different COVID experience, all difficult in different ways. We were taught in our first unit that we are all made in the image of God. Each person's experience with COVID is meaningful because of this fact. Also, just like we rely on Jesus to help us have informed opinions about certain issues, we need to rely on Jesus for our difficulties with COVID."

"The COVID project was meaningful to me because it allowed me to see how everyone around me was affected. Most of us have experienced some tragedy from COVID and it is helpful (but sad) to know that others around can relate and share their experiences as well. This issue connects to bioethics in that we need to decide the best way to allocate medical resources."