

Full-Scale Invasion Looms Large as Russia Targets Ukraine

What happened? The biggest war since 1945 appears to be brewing in eastern Europe. U.S. intelligence reports show that Russia is planning to invade Ukraine with a force of up to 175,000 troops as soon as the spring. Currently, 90,000 reservists are stationed on the Ukrainian border in what Vladimir Putin says is a routine training exercise. However, Ukrainian officials told the Washington Post that they are “rehearsing an invasion.”

The move comes as Putin has put increasing pressure on Ukraine to disassociate from its Western allies, who he believes are acting against Russia’s interests. Most recently, Putin demanded that the U.S. prohibit Ukraine from joining NATO (a military alliance), fearing that the alliance will bolster Ukraine’s army. This is in addition to a general warning to stay out of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Why does it matter? A war between the two countries would be a foreign policy fiasco for the U.S. government, which helps train and arm Ukraine’s army, and remains committed to the country’s independence, per the New York Times. During a virtual meeting with president Biden Tuesday, Putin said the U.S. is using Ukraine as a proxy to undermine Russia, even though he claims his intention is to reconcile Ukraine to Russia after creating a rift between the two countries with his annexation of Crimea in 2014. Ukrainian officials highly doubt the validity of this claim, which they view as cover for a power grab.

What happens next? In Tuesday’s meeting, Biden reaffirmed the U.S.’s “ironclad commitment” to Ukrainian sovereignty and vowed to place economic sanctions on Russia should they invade Ukraine. Moreover, in a press conference last Friday, Press Secretary Jen Psaki rejected Putin’s demands, saying “NATO member nations decide who is a member of NATO, not Russia.” While U.S officials stress that the exact reasons for the rumored invasion are unclear, they are preparing for “all contingencies.”



The owners of Major League Baseball have instituted a lockout of the players. A lockout is when the owners halt all player activity with their teams. The lockout was put in place because the collective bargaining agreement, or CBA, between the owners and the players’ association ended, and no new agreement was made.

The collective bargaining agreement contains many of the rules that allow the league to function. The owners want to put pressure on the players’ association to conform to their desires for the agreement.

Politics

By Ben LeBlanc

Supreme Court Takes up Monumental Abortion Case

What happened? This month, the Supreme Court took up the latest challenge to Roe v. Wade, the landmark decision the high court handed down in 1973 that established a constitutional right to abortion. The law in question comes from Mississippi, and bans abortion 15 weeks from conception, about two weeks earlier than the 24 week benchmark used nationwide (24-28 weeks is around the age a baby can survive outside of the womb).

The law, first proposed in 2018, was struck down by the lower courts when the last abortion clinic in Mississippi sued, prompting the state to appeal to the Supreme Court. Justices heard oral arguments for and against the law on December 1st. Five of the six conservative justices seemed ready to consider overturning Roe, while the three liberal justices clung to precedent. Only Chief Justice Neil Gorsuch suggested keeping the law instead of fully abolishing or keeping abortion, so compromise seems highly unlikely.

Why does it matter? Because six out of nine justices lean right and are either skeptical or fully opposed to abortion, it is very likely Roe could be completely overturned—a precedent-shattering move on par with the high court’s 1954 decision to overturn Plessy v. Ferguson, which legalized racial segregation with its “separate but equal” clause. Should abortion be overturned, whether or not it would be upheld or criminalized would be up to individual states, around half of which plan to ban abortion if a favorable verdict is reached, per USA Today. The final verdict is expected to come in June.

The arguments have varied over the years, but the original justification for abortion was that the decision fell to the woman, not the government, because of personal privacy rights established in the 14th Amendment. During the arguments, liberal justices emphasized this and how scrapping long-established precedent would politicize the court. The conservative majority countered that the Court has been wrong before and that the Constitution is silent on abortion. More broadly, conservatives have argued that unborn babies have the same constitutional right to “life liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as Americans, believing that life begins at conception.

What are they saying? “When you have those two interests at stake and both are important, as you acknowledge... why should this court be the [decision maker] rather than congress, the state legislators, state supreme courts, people being able to resolve this?” —Justice Brett Kavanaugh on the divisiveness of abortion

“It’s not the right answer because the court correctly recognized that this is a fundamental right of women, and the nature of fundamental rights is that it’s not left up to state legislatures to decide whether to honor them or not.” —U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar on the fundamentality of Roe

Sports

By Brad Hill

The players want the mid to low-end players to get paid more. They also want to eliminate tanking, or intentionally losing to get a better position in the draft. The owners don’t agree with the players on these key issues.

The two sides seem to be very far

apart in the negotiations, so while there are hopes that no games will have to be cancelled, that outcome is a possibility. The start of the season is an important deadline for both owners and players, as both sides need to play to make money. There is currently very little movement to be expected in negotiations until February.



THE TALON

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PVCA Raises Over \$50K on Giving Tuesday



By Ben LeBlanc

Tying a firm knot at the end of the thanksgiving season, on Giving Tuesday Pioneer Valley Christian Academy raised \$52,155 for the school’s annual fund. The funds were raised during a Facebook Live event that ran from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., in which faculty, students, parents and alumni shared their reasons for giving to PVCA in live and pre-recorded interviews, as well

as promotional videos.

This year’s goal was to raise \$50,000 in celebration of PVCA’s 50th anniversary, an amount that was exceeded thanks to the generous contributions of PVCA community members, which totaled \$27,155, and a \$25,000 pledge made by the board of directors.

Those who still wish to donate can do so in a variety of ways, including through PayPal, Venmo, or by mailing a check to 965 Plumtree Rd, Springfield, MA. They can also give via payroll deductions, matching gifts or gifts in kind, all of which can be found under the giving tab of the PVCA website. All the money will go toward the 20% of expenses not covered by tuition such as school supplies (\$100 per student) and water, heating and electricity (\$377 per day)

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Seniors Host Second Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

By Alexa Walker

On December 3, 2021, at around 1:15 pm, the senior class hosted the second annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. The event began with a large assortment of soups supplied by teachers, parents, and staff of the PVCA community. Along with the soup, the seniors provided hot chocolate, as well as candy canes for stirring and cookies made by the Spanish IV class.

“I had Mrs. Sprague’s broccoli cheddar, so you can’t go wrong. Many people participated in making different soups which was really nice because there were many varieties,” Olivia Rivera (‘24) said.

Once everyone had eaten, class games began. Each class selected one peer to dress up as a snowman using toilet paper. Once wrapped, the student had to run to Mrs. Witherow on the other side of the courtyard, sing jingle bells twice, and run back, before the rest of the class raced to rip off the toilet paper and put it in a bag. The senior class had the fastest time.

“I honestly thought that with the other competitors’ range of motion that I was going to lag behind, but I guess the whole get-up actually kept the paper on me and I didn’t have to backtrack at all. I guess you can run in a dress if you have to!” Ian Feragne (‘22), the winning snowman, said.

After the toilet paper was cleaned up, the classes were tasked with turning one of their students into a Christmas tree. The

PVCA Turkey Egg Hunt 2021



Emma Carlson (‘22), Alexa Walker (‘22), and Jillian Roberts (‘22) enjoy spending time with each other while on the hunt for eggs.



Marcos Aikman (‘22), Kyle Witherow (‘24), Lydia Sperry (‘24), and Alison Witherow (‘22) teamed together to find the most eggs.



The Junior class didn’t know where to look for eggs and were very cold.

Occurring on the week after Thanksgiving, Giving Tuesday is an international day of giving that encourages generosity of all kinds, from checking on a friend to volunteering at a local charity, per givingtuesday.org. The organization works year round with fundraising platforms in 75 countries, providing tips and resources for rallying around local causes. In 2020 alone, participating charities raised around \$2.5 billion.

People seemed more than willing to participate. By 11 A.M. more than \$17,000 had been raised and the Facebook feed filled with positive comments, including from former faculty and alumni. The live interviews were streamed from the multipurpose room, where PVCA community members shared why an education at PVCA was worth supporting. Among the reasons: strong core values, quality academics and a tight-knit community.

Nancy and Marshall Jordan sent their children to PVCA out of concern over “the philosophy of the public school system”, which was increasingly secular. More and more they found they had to help their children “unlearn” things they had learned in public school that ran contrary to their Christian faith.

At PVCA, however, the Jordans, both of whom were board members, knew exactly what their children were being taught. “One of the things that impressed us both [about PVCA] is that the school is in a partnership with families in education,” said Mr. Jordan.

Mrs. Jordan added that the tuition is not only worth it for the education, but also for the development of Christian ethics.

“Our kids were well-equipped for college, but facts don’t make sense or add up if you don’t have a coherent worldview... That’s an education. That’s what makes a person,” she said. “Isn’t it one of the best things we can do to raise children in the truth, to equip them so that they can view the world rightly... so that they grow into women and men of virtue?”

Besides character building, a frequent topic of discussion was whether PVCA could compete academically with

secular schools.

Alumnus Samuel Adams (‘11) left no doubt as to the answer. Once in college, he easily tested out of the required humanities courses, and found that his writing and math skills surpassed that of many of his peers. After college, Mr. Adams got a job in the defense sector working as a software engineer for Raytheon, where he now leads team projects and teaches tactical radar.

He said of his Christian witness, “when [my colleagues] realize an engineer they look up to believes [in Christianity] it gives them pause and they ask questions.”

As the Headmaster’s granddaughter, Alexa Walker (‘21) has had a front row seat to the rapid expansion of

“ We’re the only school like this in the area; we’ve never wavered in the truth of God’s word. And we love and support your kids. ”

Mrs. Weferling on the draws of PVCA

the school. For her, the decades-long dream to expand the academy was realized when, in 2016, PVCA made a \$4 million expansion to the school building, which included a new elementary wing, a two-court gymnasium, athletic offices and locker rooms.

“There were some years when [the faculty] were like ‘I don’t know if we’ll have a school to go back to...,’” she said. “but in the end there were always more kids than you could ever imagine. We’ve needed to make additions because... [the school] has just grown exponentially”

She also noted the close relationships that form at PVCA, a k-12 school of around 350 students.

“I’ve been with the people in my class so long that it’s like we’ve become a family,” she said. “And while families fight and they do all these crazy things... it’s like fighting with your brothers and sisters.”

Similarly, alumnus Joseph “Jojo” Mozdzanowski (‘16) said the k-12 track allows students to become better friends than they would in public school.

“I think most of the fun I had from PVCA was really understanding everyone so well. So everyone was so funny and so interesting in their own different way,” he said. “And you would have never been able to appreciate that if you weren’t in class with that person for such a long period of time, or even if you weren’t in class with them since second grade.”

Not only that, but the small class sizes of PVCA allows for more meaningful, personalized learning.

“When you have small classes, kids will learn more, it’s just a fact,” said Spanish teacher Mrs. Mozdzanowski, Jojo’s mom. “We can do more with them, we can help them. And it goes beyond academics, it goes even to counseling... If I had 40 kids in a class I don’t know how easy it would be, but because it has remained small... we really can be there for the kids”

The event also shed light on some of the new and exciting developments at PVCA.

One notable venture is the Chick-Fil-A Leadership Academy. According to its official website, students gather every month to “learn leadership principles and begin working toward their capstone Impact Project—an opportunity to put their classroom learning into practice by creating positive change in their communities.” Participants are expected to complete their first service project before Christmas break.

Additionally, the new Peer Tutoring Center has allowed students to receive help in areas of difficulty.

There are many reasons for giving to PVCA. Mrs. Weferling, who has taught elementary school students since the school’s founding, summarized them all: “We’re the only school like this in the area; we’ve never wavered in the truth of God’s word. And we love and support your kids.”

Features

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Living Without Taste

By Emma Kerns

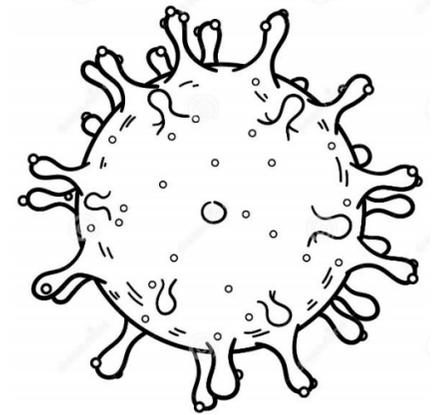
What happens when a headline virus that puts the world on pause trespasses into your own home? Stage one—“It’s probably just a cold.” Yet after a quick self-diagnosis through Google, and then a standard test, the realization hits that you have contracted the coronavirus.

When my parents were confirmed positive, I was doubtful the rest of my family would contract it. Three days later I found myself bedridden, severely dizzy, nauseous, feverish and with a headache that felt like a deep burn on the sides of my head. For four days, I hibernated in my room, living off of crackers, grape juice and *Dance Moms*.

Around the second day I was bed-

ridden. I tested my senses with a lemon, and then apple cider vinegar, to confirm I had lost my sense of taste and smell. 90-95% of those who have lost their sense of taste or smell due to COVID regain them in weeks. I automatically assumed that I would regain my senses in the shortest amount of time possible. Nine months later, I am still oblivious to the smell of dinner cooking, perfume, and other scents.

I have honestly forgotten what it is like to smell and taste. With the lack of taste, comes the lack of desire to eat, and then the loss of weight. Over the months, I have developed a very muted way to taste foods. Recently, I have been able to



distinguish salty, sweet or sour, but the flavor of a food is nonexistent. I occasionally get a very distorted whiff of a smell, but each time my perception of the smell is drastically different from those who have their full sense of smell.

I have developed food sensitivities, so it is hard to find foods that are complementary to an absence of flavor, and will not cause my body to have a reaction. It is discouraging that so little is known about the effects of and the solutions to the coronavirus. But, I am hopeful for the products of further research.

FIFTY WORD STORIES

I have never expected a normal family, not to say PVCA is normal. It’s my second home. The staff and the other students have become a safe place for tears, laughter and joy—a place to share raw emotions with no judgement or need to fit in; a specific place for growth.

—Morgan Temple-Orr (‘22)



In the year of 1972, some faithful Christians united and established this school. Years went by, students came and went, buildings formed and built. Yet, something has never changed: Honor, Integrity, Gratitude, Responsibility and Perseverance. For 50 years, these school principles have been taught. May PVCA continue teaching the truth.

—Bruce Chen (‘22)



Oh how has it been fifty years already? The memories that have been made around PVCA. Oh how fun it was when we stole cardboard and used it as a slide. The times we would put clothes pins on each other. Shoving ourselves into closets to hide from the search parties.

—John Russel (‘22)

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“ It was so much fun and I loved that we were able to come together as a high school to make some memories and share some laughs. ”

Sagelyn Russel (‘24) On the ceremony

most creative and recognizable Christmas tree would win.

With six minutes on the timer, the classes hurried to find decorations and come up with a theme. The freshman used real pine for their tree; the sophomores

used balloons and a fern; the juniors used a sombrero and streamers; and the seniors used a Christmas tree costume, garland, and Azarel Navarro (‘21) as a live angel. In the end, high school science teacher Mrs. Kasulinous called a tie between the freshmen and seniors. When asked about how the event went, many students seemed pleased.

“I love [the tree lighting]. The seniors and Mrs. Moz did a great job and I’m looking forward to seeing how it goes next year,” Olivia Rivera (‘24) said.

Others were excited about the entire high school having the opportunity to come together. “It was so much fun and I loved that we were able to come together as a high school to make some memories and share some laughs,” Sagelyn Russel (‘24) said.

Similarly, Molly Connor (‘23) said, “I thought the tree lighting ceremony was a great way to connect all the high school classes together!”



Alexa Walker (‘22), Mr. Mozdzanowski, Alison Witherow (‘22), Emma Carlson (‘22), and Tatiana Alvarado (‘22) making cookies for the ceremony.