

# SPIRITUAL Milk



*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.  
1 Peter 2:2*

ISSUE 1

# SPIRITUAL Milk

COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY STUDENT MAGAZINE

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# Spring 2020

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## Welcome

*So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

*1 Peter 2:1 – 3*

### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Welcome to the first issue of Spiritual Milk – the student magazine of Covenant Theological Seminary. The name is drawn from 1 Peter 2:2 where Peter calls Christians to long for pure spiritual milk that leads to their growth in faith. Peter argues that because we have experienced the goodness of God, we are to pursue a continual growth in Him. The leadership team found this to be a fitting name for Covenant Seminary's student magazine because it encapsulates what is at the heart of our vision for the magazine – to see students grow in faith even as they seek to be equipped to serve the Church in her growth.

As a student of Covenant Seminary, I am often asked by family and friends what makes Covenant unique. I always answer with a statement that seems so obvious but can be far too often missed in the life of a seminarian – spiritual formation. Anyone who has been at Covenant for any extended period of time will certainly know this to be true, and it is our hope that the same will be said of this magazine. God has brought us to this place at this time to prepare us for a life of service to His people, and His world. And yet, in that time of preparation, He has also called us to be con-

tinually formed in Christ and to continually grow in faith. This formation, and this growth, does not take place in isolation but in a rich, beautiful, and often flawed, experience of community. Side by side, before one another, in the presence of God, we encourage each other towards a deeper formation in Christ and growth in faith. At Covenant Seminary, we understand that God has given to us this particular community to stir each other towards Christ, towards faith, and towards growth.

It is our hope that this magazine, through the contributions of fellow students, stirs within you a longing for spiritual milk. That as you see how the Lord has been good in the lives of His people, you would see the goodness of God in your life, and because of His abounding goodness you would hold to His word, and be in the midst of His people, for your growth, for your equipping and service in ministry, and for the life of the world – all for God's mission.

We invite you to write to the editor-in-chief of Spiritual Milk, at [covstudentmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:covstudentmagazine@gmail.com), with your thoughts and reflections in response to the contributions contained in this issue.

Israel A. Kolade, MDiv '23



Editor-in-Chief

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from left to right: Mary Schieferstein, Israel Kolade, Hilary McSheehy, Brendan DeJong, Bailey Preib

## What is your favorite book of the Bible? What are two things on your bucket list for life?

Israel Kolade  
MDiv '23  
London, England

Psalms- specifically for psalm 23 and more broadly for the honesty and beautiful display of communion with God  
Become a cellist, and write a book.

Brendan DeJong  
MDiv '22  
Hamilton, Ontario

Job; I've always been interested in wisdom literature.  
Travel to Alaska and climb a mountain.

Mary Schieferstein  
MDiv '23  
Amherst, OH

Job; my pastor tends to recommend it to me in difficult seasons, and it always comforting. Job is a difficult book to understand—much like life—but is incredibly beautiful.  
Having some of my songs professionally recorded and releasing an album, and having kids.

Bailey Preib  
MDiv '23  
Huntersville, NC

Ecclesiastes; I love poetry and wisdom literature. It captures what my soul often feels and gives me freedom to feel such ways.  
Run a small farm or brewery and travel to Japan.

Hilary McSheehy  
MAM '21  
Charleston, SC

Job- I find it to be beautiful and relatable of who God is, how he meets us where we are, and His patience towards us.  
Walk the coast of Seattle down along California and visit a coffee shop from every state in the USA.

## Best Friends and Bottle Dumps

Jeb Ralston

It was right around my sophomore year of college when I started going with one of my best friends and spiritual mentors, Ande, on regular visits to a bottle-dump. If you know me, you probably know I'm not really one for this sort of thing. Digging through mud and fecal-like substances in the Florida heat with the sole hope of finding rare, old bottles feels drab and honestly rather sweaty to me. But as I look back on it now, these adventures are among some of my most beloved memories.

College was a particularly turbulent time of my life. Many days during those years I found myself angry for reasons I couldn't articulate, and other days I found myself uncontrollably sad and frozen in the fetal position for (what felt like) days. All the while, my Christian faith had slowly started to become something I realized I sincerely required—I needed it in a way I had never needed it before. It seemed like I was awakening from a stupor I had been in for many, many years, and it was overwhelming. Fear and faith seemed to have reawakened within me simultaneously.

I have never been very good at letting myself exist in the present. I'm always thinking about the natural outcome of things that are occurring in my life and where I will or won't be in the future. I often turn towards cynicism to help me understand and cope with reality. At the time, not only was I consumed with the realization that I had felt alone for so much of my life, but I was also consumed by the fear that I would be alone throughout the rest of it. Loneliness on a microscopic scale scares me just as much as loneliness on a cosmic scale. Being awakened to this existential kind of loneliness concerned me that perhaps the best sort of living was the kind where I slipped back into a life of compulsive distraction and superficiality. I found myself scraping at the question: "Is there really

life to find, and if so, is finding it really worth the effort of digging through all the crap in my life?"

I vividly recall certain days in college when I would be texting Ande about my frustrations and melancholy, and he would sometimes kindly and pastorally respond by inviting me bottle-hunting. It's comical thinking back on it because what I wanted was a logical and well-reasoned response to make me feel better, but instead what I often received was an invitation to put on my worst pair of jeans, a raggedy t-shirt, and head off to a bottle-dump. We'd put on our gloves, gather our shovels, and hike through long grass to find our spot, where we would then spend hours looking for valuable bottles. Sometimes we would spot something promising and pull it out, only to realize that an incredibly valuable bottle was shattered at its mid-line. Other times we would spend the whole time searching and not coming away with much of anything except for maybe some sand-spurs on our jeans and a few average-quality bottles.

Much like my own life at the time, I had begun to wonder if the search was worth it. Was there anything lasting and meaningful to be found? Would the search ultimately end with a broken bottle?

I will never forget the conversations we had during those times at the dump. We talked about so many different things—some serious, some trivial. Being at a bottle-dump allowed us to talk about anything and everything. Hiding behind pretense doesn't work well in a bottle graveyard. We told stories about our lives. We approached the scary questions we had about life. We talked about loneliness and friendship, sex and sadness, family and football, Jesus and glory. I didn't realize it then, but spending those times together helped open my heart to hope and my eyes to



Photo of actual shelf and bottles by Jeb Ralston

beauty. The immobilizing questions of life I was asking seemed to lose a bit of their bite in my trips to the dump.

It rarely happens that when you go looking for something unique and meaningful that you find in it a single moment or in a single object. I recall that we didn't usually come away with many rewarding finds from the dump, but that never really concerned us. I didn't find a one-line answer to the concerns I had for my life during that time, but in hindsight, those times contributed to the discovery of a deep sense of peace in Jesus and a recognition of the echoes of Eden this world still has, despite it often feeling like a dump.

Ande made it a habit of bringing bottles back with him. He would clean them and make them shine, even if they weren't particularly special. He and his wife eventually arrayed them in such a way to create a beautiful mosaic-like shelving. Out of nothing particularly special, they had made something wonderful, and I can't help but consider how Jesus does a similar thing in restoring and redeeming his people and arraying us in a beautiful way. He's certainly in the business of entering our grime, bloodying his hands of healing on our jagged edges, and bringing us—his friends—home. This whole process of bottle-hunting and its re-

sulting mosaic helped me understand something about the nature of friendship. Particularly, I learned that most of the growth of friendship occurs in the mundane. It grows as we spend time together, doing simple things together, facing disappointments together, eating together, and telling stories together. Most of the memorable moments of friendship only happen because of the myriad of other little moments we've shared. And while we may have some unique, valuable, and intimate moments with those we care most deeply about, it's often an ordinary but faithful routine with another that makes up the beautiful mosaic we share with them.

Looking back on it, it's interesting to see how God has used friendships like these to alleviate some of my deepest concerns about life. Through human hands and the kind words of friends, I've grown to believe the promises of God more and have begun to see more clearly how he provides for us in both divine and human ways. I didn't get an answer that immediately relieved my biggest doubts and fears at that time, but in Jesus, by his friendship with me and the friendship he granted to me in others, I discovered a beautiful and transcendent mosaic which birthed a hope I never expected to find while digging through a bottle-dump.



Photo by Hilary McSheehy

## The Importance of Study in the Life and Ministry of the Puerto Rican Pastor - An Extract

Rafael A. Nieves Rosario

How can Benedictine monasticism, Carolingian ecclesiastical reforms and Franciscan worldview inform ministry in a Puerto Rican context? To echo the words of David Escobar-Arcay, “Discipleship cannot be taught in isolation, detached or disentangled from the identity of a people.” This brings further challenges concerning the political, social and cultural identity of Puerto Rico. It has been stated, in rather humorous fashion, that a Puerto Rican is the person in a bar asking the question “What is a Puerto Rican?” Indeed, the complexities and intricacies of the nature of our identity as Puerto Ricans is difficult to navigate. Given that we belong to a country that has been colonized twice, the idea of simultaneously belonging to everywhere and nowhere frames Puerto Rican identity.

In 1493, when Christopher Columbus arrived with Spanish forces at Boriquén, there were already groups of indigenous people called taínos residing in the island. Different types of indigenous people had dispersed all across the Americas, and this shared history, coupled with Puerto Rico’s geographical location in the Caribbean, gives Puerto Ricans a shared identity with the rest of Latin America. In 1508, the Spanish crown es-

tablished a governor named Juan Ponce de León who brought Catholicism to the island and taught the taínos the Catholic faith over against their own religion. The Spaniards “civilized” the country, building towns, ports, and churches, gradually establishing Catholicism as the dominant religion on the island. Puerto Rico remained the property of the Spanish crown until the United States forces invaded it in the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898. The United States won, Cuba achieved its independence, and Puerto Rico became an American territory, as it remains to this day. The question of American intent in granting its citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1917 is still a matter of debate due to the wake of the First World War the following year. In any case, the struggle that Puerto Ricans face when thinking about their identity is evident. What we have is something close to a melting pot, a trait which manifests itself in diverse aspects of our culture, including our theology.

Jesús Rodríguez-Sánchez, in his study of *The Emerging Field of Pastoral Theology in Puerto Rico*, shows that in doing theology, the aim of Puerto Ricans is to achieve a synthesis between three traditions which intersect in their culture. Spain brought the European tradition, which was

characterized by its emphasis on classical (and systematic) theology. As part of the United States, we share the American focus on correlational theology, pastoral counseling, and psychology. As part of Latin America, we focus on social analysis and justice.

But how have these foci informed pastoral academic preparation and the pastor's perceived support of his congregants in the late twentieth and twenty-first century? The reality is that there is a stark separation between pastoral ministry and the theological academy in Puerto Rico. The general consensus of the church is that academic theologians and seminary professors have changed the truth of the gospel for their own intellectual proclivities. Because of this, the majority of evangelical pastors, seeking to guard themselves from losing the faith, do not choose to go to seminary to study. This apprehension is not entirely unwarranted, but can be explained by looking at some of the movements of missional endeavors in the early twentieth century, to which we now turn.

After Protestantism arrived with the Americans in 1898, the historic churches—namely, the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, etc., divided the island into regions in order to have an equal chance of mission. The majority of these missionaries were American. But what was the state of American seminaries at the turn of the century? A new technique of biblical studies was emerging—textual criticism—which called into question first order beliefs of the Christian faith—for example, the divinity of Jesus and the reliability of the Bible. The first reaction to textual criticism by the Americans was fundamentalism, which was a call to go back to the fundamentals. This fundamentalist movement stood in opposition to textual criticism, and theological studies were, as a whole, viewed as liberal and heterodox. Missionaries with fundamentalist tendencies then came to Puerto Rico and spread their philosophy. More importantly, alongside all this, the formation of the Pentecostal movement in the island was undergirded by fundamentalist sensitivities as well.

On the island, Pentecostalism held significant importance and influence. During this time, the people of Puerto Rico were, in their majority, suffering from poverty and lack of education. In that context, Pentecostalism was evidence that God was in their midst and had not abandoned them. And because Pentecostalism did not have a specific region, as did the other churches, when it diffused, it ended up taking over the whole island.

The proliferation of Pentecostalism was so overt and influential in the life of the culture that even within denominational churches today, they sing the same songs with the same fervor of a Pentecostal. Indeed, music and worship proved to be one of the most useful tools of disseminating theological beliefs and ecclesiastical postures. This

made Pentecostalism appear livelier than the traditional liturgy of the historic churches. Javier R. Alanís, referencing Edwin D. Aponte, says that the coritos (little choruses) “are concrete vehicles that express a hope, faith, and empowerment rooted in both the Bible and lived experiences

of the community.” Looking back to the shared communal experience of poverty and lack of education, the Puerto Rican people sing that in those days “no habían muchos libros, pero había poder de Dios” (there were not a lot of books, but there was [the] power of God).

Even though the ability of the Puerto Rican Christians to demonstrate endurance in the midst of suffering is admirable and praiseworthy, because of coritos like these, the idea that education and study were of secondary importance in ministry spread across the island. This brought about a church culture in which study was considered unnecessary and therefore often unsupported by the community.

What should be the role of study in the life and ministry of the pastor? This Research proposes an alternative view of study in contradistinction to the fundamentalist approach which has been handed down across generations in the Puerto Rican culture. Benedictine monasticism informs the life of study of the minister by understanding study primarily as a spiritual discipline. Therefore,

## “THE PASTOR’S STUDY IS FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH’S MISSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL LIFE.”

there is a correct character that belongs alongside the discipline of study. In their book *A Pastoral Rule for Today: Reviving an Ancient Practice*, John P. Burgess, Jerry Andrews and Joseph D. Small write the following:

Reading and writing are spiritual exercises. By itself, study can become self-indulgent and abstract. But when anchored by disciplines of prayer, worship, reception of the sacrament, and Christian service, study is sanctified. It attains a moral dimension that takes us beyond reason for reason's sake to knowing the living God personally.

Why should pastors make a habit of studying? Not only in Puerto Rico, but also in the United States, we live in an increasingly secular culture. As the product of Enlightenment's project, our society has pushed faith out of the public sphere and reduced it to mere subjective preference. Christianity is often seen as irrelevant, unwarranted, unsophisticated and unlearned. Burgess et. al. expand:

Pastors need to study because understanding and communicating the truths of the Christian faith requires sustained, disciplined attention to the Scriptures, church tradition and teaching, and the contemporary world in which pastors labor.

Today, there is a strong need for pastors who are well equipped and are not only able to give a reason for the hope within them, but also to entrust this hope to faithful leaders who are qualified to teach others. Burgess et. al. continue, "Study matters because intellectual work sustains pastoral ministry. Reading and reflection are not academic luxuries; rather, they are the church's lifeblood when they draw us into deeper fellowship with our Lord." It is here that Carolingian ecclesiastical

reforms highlight the importance of not only the clergy knowing and explaining the content of the faith, but also that the people are able to understand it. Only then will we be able to witness the Christian faith in a manner that brings honor to God.

How are pastors to study? This question can be answered twofold: in terms of practical steps and in terms of motive. Due to limited space, I will limit myself to a brief overview of each of them.

In terms of practicality, the discipline of study needs be practiced like any other spiritual discipline, that is, by separating a specific time and place free of any kind of distractions in order to establish a constant rhythm of study and make it into a habit. Study will take precedence not by willpower, but by integration within daily activities. More importantly, in terms of motive, pastors are to study with the aim of edifying the other. Studies can also lead to disconnection from reality. Pastors are doing something wrong if they find themselves dealing with feelings of frustration "because they have to deal with people." Thus, Franciscan worldview informs the approach of our motives: to stand with the marginalized, renounce power and social standing when it goes against the cause of the poor, and to battle against pride and vainglory.

We aim for a pastorate that is formed holistically: inwardly, outwardly, and corporately, in order to disciple people in a similar way. Pastors ought to view their study as transcending their own personal intellectual gain, informing their ministry, and interacting with their culture. Indeed, the pastor's study is for the sake of the church's missionary vocation and life. Escobar-Arcay argues, "The ministry of the church should be designed somehow so as to allow and encourage Christians to

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1. David A. Escobar-Arcay, "The Ethics of Spiritual Formation for a Christian Puerto Rican in a Postmodern Urban Context," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 20 (2011): 211.

2. Former taíno name of Puerto Rico. Its first name was Baneke meaning "land of many waters", then changed to Boriquén. Under the Spanish colonization it became San Juan Bautista with Puerto Rico being its capital, then both those names changed places.

3. Jesús Rodríguez-Sánchez, "The Emerging Field of Pastoral Theology in Puerto Rico," *The Ecumenical Review* 59, no. 2 (April-July 2007): 221-234.

4. Javier R. Alanís, "God," in *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006), 15.

5. John P. Burgess, Jerry Andrews, and Joseph D. Small, *A Pastoral Rule for Today: Reviving an Ancient Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 141.

6. Burgess et al., *A Pastoral Rule for Today*, 123.

7. Burgess et al., *A Pastoral Rule for Today*, 142.

8. Burgess et al., *A Pastoral Rule for Today*, 124.

9. Escobar-Arcay, "The Ethics of Spiritual Formation," 213.

analyze worldviews, disciple their minds, know human nature and have a wider understanding of the duties of our cultural and social centers.”

The tradition handed down to us through Benedictine monasticism, Carolingian ecclesiology and Franciscan worldview acts as a primer which can begin to aid the internal opposition to ministerial studies in Puerto Rico. In order to establish a relevant church, Puerto Rico requires theologically prepared pastors with a genuine love for God and his church who help foster a culture in which Christianity is recognized both for its intellectual viability as well as its ethical import, fighting for social justice and standing with the oppressed. Our faith unifies every expression.

## Battle Within a Black Seminarian

DJ Davis

Being black in seminary is not easy or simple; rather, it is challenging and daunting. It is one of the most isolating experiences of our lives. We are in the midst of a community, yet we find ourselves alone. We do not have that person or group of people who can simply empathize with our plight, but rather, we find ourselves having to speak with the hope that sympathy does not precede our words. We have to sit through lectures where diversity seems to have been forced within the boundaries of PowerPoint. We must endure required readings that continue to employ black culture to support their stances on issues such as sin and immorality. One author uses Dr. King's infidelity and even the 1955 bus boycott to support their stance on the cohabitation of great good and great evil in humanity. They only briefly refer, however, to Thomas Jefferson's ownership of slaves, while ignoring the fact that we (black people) remember him as a womanizer who used the tactic

of hypersexualizing black women to rid him of his guilt. We endure this reality every time we make a conscious decision to step foot on campus. Yet, our faith continues to restrain our anger but emboldens us to act. Act in a way that shows that we know our value to God and to his church even if our brothers and sisters do not, or if they refuse to acknowledge it.

Yes, we black students do make a conscious decision to attend this institution, but we do it with hope. We hope that we might encounter a counterculture which could debunk many of our beliefs about majority-culture spaces. We hope that we would be welcomed, since we are commanded to be one in the body of Christ. Many of you refer to us as brothers and sisters, but yet when you read books or listen to lectures, your complicity is enhanced because you do not react as we do to nuances found in some of the rhetoric to which we are exposed. So, we often struggle to embrace



Photo by Jake Gee

this institution as something resembling a family. Rather, it seems closer to an extension of the reality our people face daily outside this context.

Understand this is not to condemn our brothers and sisters from the majority culture, but rather this is an opportunity for you to experience the thoughts of your black brother. It would be easy to live in isolation within this community and bear the weight of anger towards my brothers and sisters - an anger attributed to the suppression of one's pain inflicted by the culture. As Dr. King demonstrated, we must not only hope and demand freedom for the oppressed but also hope that one's newfound freedom can free the oppressor. I love you all!!

P. S. When you do see us in our small huddles of color, please thank God and pray that our huddle grows.

# Core Christian Apologetic Principles

David Leonardo Vilches

Christian apologetics is like marketing—it is the art of communication in marketing. Both apologetics and marketing involve the ability to captivate the viewer with a message by targeting the imagination—inviting the viewer to taste and see the quality of the product, in order to evoke hunger, longing, and interest. Marketing done well ushers the viewer into a world of beauty, truth, and goodness by means of story, and guides its viewer toward a desired end. Christian apologetics also invites the viewer to inhabit a story, but the plot lacks the pseudo conflict and resolution typically found in marketing (e.g., a broom that always breaks resolved by a broom that never breaks). Yet, apologetics is more than marketing because it is done in a real context. The scope of marketing is more limited than apologetics. Not only are there many avenues for the apologist to take, but also within each path she must imitate Christ.

In examining the methodology required of an apologist, we ought to notice her movement. While communicating, she will move from herself, toward the other, and then toward the divine. The first move is grounded in joy, the next in friendship, and the third in love. In this article, I will therefore propose that an apologist must maintain joy, friendship, and divine love as core principles in her apologetic communication—all of which are grounded in the life and ministry of Jesus. The flow of the movement is patterned after C. S. Lewis's perspective of imagination and reason.

## Joy

I used to have a lively dog named Nena, who was always running and jumping. When I came home from school she would see me through the win-

dow and bolt toward the door. Upon my arrival, every moment counted. If I went to the restroom she would wait outside the door; when I lay on the couch, she would sit on the floor next to me. It was as though my presence did something for her. Her tail and eyes both bore witness of her joy. But one day she was hit by a car. The driver kept going and left her limping home. The vet said she had internal bleeding and that something had damaged her lungs. She was then unable to run and jump for long periods of time or she would have trouble breathing. A couple of years later, still clinging to my side more than any friend, I came home from school and saw her panting. My family could not afford to see the vet again, so I held her in my arms knowing these would be my last moments with her. She licked me with unending joy as she gasped for her last breaths. I was her joy.

Like Nena, the Christian apologist should maintain a posture of joy. Her apologetic approach comes from her delight in Jesus. She loves to dwell with him. She constantly longs for closeness to him; in his absence she waits for him by the door. She has tasted and seen the joy of being with Jesus and can bear witness of its goodness. Out of this joy comes her communication. This is similar to what C. S. Lewis calls “enjoyment” and Zack Eswine calls “sacred joy.” The apologist communicates from within. She is able to engage her imagination and that of her audience. She enters into their experience, as Jesus entered into hers. She also communicates with a gospel-oriented imagination because she finds true joy in the ‘witness’ of God. She recalls the narrative of Scripture and



Photo by Bailey Preib

sees the value that Jesus has placed on her and others. Therefore, with joy the apologist can share hope—engaging the imagination because she is a living testimony of the joy in knowing Jesus.

As a principle, joy invites beauty into our rhetoric. As communicators we must collect, organize, and present data with the goal of appealing to beauty. But how can we appeal to beauty if we cannot see or imagine it ourselves? We are like sculptors that fail to chip away excess material because we have never learned the skill of sculpting. What is left is a product of our imagination—and if our imagination is anemic or stagnant, then we create lifeless sculptures. We tend to spend little time crafting our rhetoric, learning to read well, or developing a healthy imagination. As a result, our apologetic communication is on par with a three second meme. Without learning imagination, our words are lifeless. How can we communicate beauty if we ourselves do not enjoy the beauty of the very thing we are talking about? Jesus utilized parables, metaphor, and hyperbole to target the

imagination. But it is not enough for an apologist merely to communicate beauty.

### **Friendship**

Along with joy, Nena knew friendship. I was a pensive student in high school, contemplating ‘deep’ matters about life. But Nena would lean her head on my side. My mind would then rewind its lofty thoughts and return to my room. This happened week after week. I longed for closeness to others but could only seem to keep her at my side. She would cheer me up when I was sad, inspire joy when I was happy, and even at my worst moments, when I beat her without reason, she would return to my side. She was like the preacher in Ecclesiastes who permits the voice of true human angst from friends. She embraced me as her friend.

Like Nena, the Christian apologist should maintain a posture of friendship. She moves from joy toward friendship. After targeting the imagination she can then engage reason. To engage reason,

however, she must move toward the other. In order to move toward the other, she must learn the art of listening. Beyond the imaginative process there are propositional statements that humans embrace, and it is the apologist's job to invite statements of fact, receive reasoned speech, and welcome crafted arguments. On the other hand, it is also her job to offer a response, to challenge her audience on their turf. But how can she engage their speech without embracing them? Reasoning well not only involves analyzing speech, but also includes noticing what lies behind speech. The apologist holds the proposition close, so that she understands its source—she is able to recognize the moment at which the imaginative process became a proposition. The apologist moves toward the other with the result that she hears their words as a friend. She understands the time, effort, and messiness in friendship and enters that relationship.

Friendship as a principle helps us in our rhetoric about truth. We move the other from acquaintance or enemy status into friendship status, so that genuine dialogue can occur. This is similar to Lewis's perspective on looking 'along' and 'at'. He suggests that we need both—experiential and intellectual looking. I am suggesting that we need to listen 'along' and 'at', but we especially need hearing aids in our listening 'along'. Friendship in our apologetic communication helps us develop this skill. As communicators we can console and challenge others, but only insofar as friendship orients our communication. Interpersonal dialogue requires time and space. Unlike marketing, our apologetic communication needs to offer a true resolution, but that can only be done if we hear the true conflict in the other's reasoning. Yet, another movement is still required. Reasoned speech cannot transform another's will on its own.

### **Divine Love**

Nena loved me, but at the same time, she did not satisfy my longing. In my quest for joy and friendship she offered a measure of relief, yet I

continued to long for something else. Loneliness, confusion, and grief continued to follow me, and she could not compete with them. Playing with her helped; walking her occupied my mind. But one day it hit me. My brother was yelling at me to take Nena out of my room. I yelled back through tears and frustration. Then I noticed something—I felt the love of my brother—he was trying to fill the gap of our dad's absence. He was like a small rescuer. At that moment I knew that Nena and my brother were one ounce of water in a well. They loved me, but could not satisfy my longing to be loved. I needed to worship something or someone else.

Jesus waited by the well. The woman had no idea that she would encounter Jesus. But he came. Alone, hurt, and longing, she experienced a supernatural intervention. Without Jesus' presence she was hopeless—awaiting another messiah, a pseudo savior. But Jesus arrived and redirected her longing and gaze toward him. She left the well transformed—sharing about the wondrous person whom she had met. G.K. Chesterton writes:

The crux and crisis is that man found it natural to wor-

ship; even natural to worship unnatural things. The posture of the idol might be stiff and strange; but the gesture of the worshipper was generous and beautiful. He not only felt freer when he bent; he actually felt taller when he bowed.

The woman at the well was worshipping something or someone prior to encountering Jesus. But something about hearing, seeing, and talking with Jesus redirected her life. The apologist must also guide conversation toward Jesus. She ought to speak and act with the intention of embodying Jesus' speech acts.

As the Christian apologist communicates, she also moves towards the divine. She recognizes that without Jesus there is no transformation. The love of Jesus transforms others where our imaginative process and reasoning are limited. The apologist bears witness of Jesus' love in order to

## **“HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE BEAUTY IF WE OURSELVES DO NOT ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF THE VERY THING WE ARE TALKING ABOUT?”**

target the other's will. Beyond her speech, she embodies the love of Jesus. She sits at the well with others because Jesus sat with her at the well. She testifies about his presence in our world. She retells her story and the stories she hears from others about Jesus' love. She prays for the Holy Spirit to enter her conversations with others because she knows that Jesus offers living water. Like Jesus, she can see that there is a longing in her audience and that they too worship something or someone else, but only in encountering Jesus can change occur. Lewis suggests that Christianity challenges all people to encounter something 'other'—something transformative. He calls apologetics a dangerous affair for our faith, saying:

That is why we apologists take our lives in our hands and can be saved only by falling back continually from the web of our own arguments, as from our intellectual counters, into the Reality—from Christian apologetics into Christ Himself.

Love as a principle orients our vision toward Jesus and our rhetoric toward the will. Our speech becomes dynamic. We live in light of what we say. Love as a principle helps us relinquish our pride, arrogance, and hate toward others; instead, we learn to walk and talk as Jesus walks and talks. We learn to love what he loves and hate what he hates. His love sustains us when we are persecuted, humiliated, and abandoned. His love also reminds us of his mercy and grace toward us, which subsequently guide us toward his goodness in our apologetic communication. Divine love has entered into our world; good has triumphed over evil. Ultimately, we are solely dependent on Jesus' love to transform lives. Imaginative process and reasoning are essential, but without the presence of Jesus we are only marketing Christianity. As apologists, we must maintain joy, friendship, and love.

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1. Jessica Eswine and Zack Eswine, *Apologetic Communication: Session 5 – The Language of the Apologist: Imaginative Speech*, 1.
  2. Jessica Eswine, *C.S. Lewis and Communicating Truth*, 8.
  3. Zack Eswine, *Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes*, 33.
  4. It is important to note here that I am not suggesting that joy is the absence of grief; rather, joy is the presence of Jesus in the midst of the brokenness in our world (cf. Ps. 23 and Heb. 12:1-2).
  5. John 3:5-8; 6:35,41; 8:12; 10:1-19; Matthew 13:1-58; 18:10-14, 21-35.
  6. Eswine, *Recovering Eden*, 12.
  7. C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 233-234.
  8. See John 4:1-26, 39-45.
  9. G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, (Middletown, DE: Rough Draft Printing, 2013), 70.
  10. C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 103.
  11. *Ibid.*, 103.



Photo by Jake Gee

## Characterization of Ezra's Leadership in Ezra-Nehemiah

Cary Smith (winner of the CTS Theological Fellowship 2020 Bantum Award)

### Introduction

Ezra-Nehemiah (EN) depicts the arduous efforts exerted by thousands of Israelites seeking to restore Jerusalem after the Exile. Ezra and Nehemiah figure prominently, each leading a wave of returnees from their captive lands to the devastated capital. While numerous American leadership studies have focused on Nehemiah, Ezra's leadership has received little attention. This may reflect a cultural underappreciation for the type of leadership traits Ezra exhibits. Nehemiah creates compelling vision for change, provides authoritative direction, and develops necessary structures (both literal and figurative). Ezra leads quite differently.

This article employs narrative criticism with an emphasis on characterization to argue that EN positively portrays Ezra's leadership as instructive, collaborative, approachable, and demonstrative. I conclude that Christian leaders should

value such qualities. I do not presume the narrator primarily intends Ezra to serve as a model for leadership, but I consider such emulation a valid application of the literary analysis.

### 1. Ezra's Instructive Leadership

A character's occupation reflects one form of descriptive characterization. Ezra's first appearance in EN includes an elaborate description of him as a priestly scribe. A genealogical list demonstrating Ezra's high priestly descent (Ezr 7:1-5) is followed by an ascription asserting his role as a scribe (רִפְסָ) skilled in the Torah (7:6). The common title רִפְסָ could describe various offices associated with recordkeeping but here reflects Ezra's competency and commission as a teacher of the Law. Ezra's introduction culminates with the comment, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (7:10). The expression "set his heart" reflects the narrator's description

of Ezra's internal intent, a deeper layer of characterization. The causal  $\text{כִּי}$  in 7:10 makes clear that "God's good hand rested on Ezra" (7:9) because the scribe had set his heart to study, observe, and teach the Torah. Such descriptions reflect the narrator's own assessment of Ezra, which rests at the top of the reliability scale in Hebrew narrative.

Ezra's instructive gifts align with his commission by Artaxerxes to teach the laws of his God in the Yehud province and appoint others to judge the people accordingly (7:25). Ezra is repeatedly portrayed as one whose teaching prompts covenant attentiveness and tangible repentance among the people. Such responses by others often play a role in a narrator's character portrayal. Most notably, Ezra's role in reading and explaining the scriptures during the Jerusalem assembly in Nehemiah 8 results in celebrating the Feast of Booths and likely prompts the subsequent mass confession described in the following chapter.

The lack of comment about Nehemiah as a student or teacher of scripture creates implicit contrast with Ezra and highlights this aspect of the scribe's leadership. Characterization in narrative texts frequently involves such contrasts. The two men have different roles, and their talents align with their tasks. This fact does not diminish Nehemiah's character or responsibilities but rather highlights the story's emphasis on Ezra's distinct gifts and calling as a leader whose teaching, by God's good hand, transforms the restoration community.

## 2. Ezra's Collaborative Leadership

Ezra is a collaborative leader in that he repeatedly seeks to include others in his endeavors. The first hint of this trait appears in Ezer 7:7 when the narrator somewhat awkwardly interrupts his introduction of Ezra to specify that "some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants" also went up to Jerusalem. The abrupt insertion reflects the narrator's close association of Ezra with the groups mentioned.

Ezra's collaborative leadership style is primarily demonstrated by his repeated assembling of various groups. The verb  $\text{צִבַּק}$  (HALOT "draw together"; BDB "gather") seems to function as a leitwort in EN. In multiple places,  $\text{צִבַּק}$  and synonym verbs

characterize Ezra as one who draws others together. The first two uses of the verb reflect Ezra's collaborative leadership: (1) As soon as Ezra offers a benedictory response to Artaxerxes' endorsement letter (7:27-28), the priest explains, "I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered ( $\text{צִבַּק}$ ) leading men from Israel to go up with me." In addition to the key verb, the concluding prepositional phrase  $\text{יָמַעִי}$  ("with me") highlights the collaborative purpose for which Ezra draws the leaders together – they will accompany him to Jerusalem and assist in fulfilling his commission. (2) The second occurrence of  $\text{צִבַּק}$  describes Ezra's gathering of the whole pilgrim company along the river to Ahava (8:15). As the people camp, Ezra surveys the people and the priests, presumably to ensure he has the appropriate personnel to complete his given tasks. Noticing that no Levites are present, Ezra sends recruiters out to gather dozens of them. Ezra's collaborative leadership style is also evident in 10:5, where he responds to Shecaniah's call to action by calling the leading priests and Levites to make a covenant to fulfill what had been spoken. Lastly, collaborative leadership appears in Nehemiah 8 where the narrator lists thirteen individuals who stand beside Ezra as he reads the Torah (Neh 8:4) and thirteen Levites who help the people understand what Ezra is reading (8:7).

While Nehemiah certainly had gifts of delegation, his leadership is typically described with a far greater proportion of individualistic and directive language (see Neh 2:5-8, 11-16; 5:6-13, 14-19; 7:1; 12:31; 13:4-31). In contrast to Nehemiah, Ezra's portrayal emphasizes his intentional assembling of various groups to work with him.

## 3. Ezra's Approachable Leadership

The narrative also depicts Ezra as approachable in the sense that other characters seem willing to engage him in distinct ways.

The title and responsibility of priest are the first hints of this attribute. The central role of the priest was mediation between God and the covenant community, representing God to the people and the people to God. In addition to interacting closely with priests as part of regular cultic practices, the people sought priests for guidance about any number of practical concerns related to Torah observance. Introduced as a priest in Ezer 7:1-

10, Ezra's character implicitly carries intimations of approachability.

Several personal interactions in Ezra 9-10 more clearly demonstrate Ezra's approachability: (1) The officials in 9:1 "approach" (שגג) Ezra and disclose that many of the people and leaders have intermarried with foreign women. The Torah forbids marriage to foreign women who did not worship Yahweh because of the spiritual danger it posed (Ex 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-14). Ezra plays a passive role in the mixed-marriage crisis. He does not discover the transgression and confront the people as Nehemiah does later (Neh 13:23-27), but the people rather approach their priest to confess the state of affairs (Ezr 9:1-2). (2) When Ezra publicly laments the transgression, many faithful people "gather" (niph'al of אסף) around him (Ezr 9:3-4). Such language reflects another nuance of the gathering theme discussed above. When Ezra does the gathering, his collaborative nature is in view. When the people do the gathering, the focus is Ezra's approachability. While Ezra prays, confesses, weeps, and casts himself down before the temple, many more gather (צבק) to him

(10:1). The narrator specifies that the assembly comprises men, women, and children. People of all types are drawn to their priest. (3) After the public grieving, Shecaniah approaches Ezra and calls him to action (10:2-4). Such initiative by Shecaniah suggests that he expects his priest to hear him out and respond favorably, despite Ezra's enduring expressions of anguish. The brief speech also includes the intimate proclamation "we are with you" (10:4). The people identify themselves even further with their trusted leader. (4) The public assembly that follows Shecaniah's proposal (10:9-15) provides further evidence of Ezra's approachable nature. The people make a bold suggestion to suspend the proceeding that requires them to stand at length in the open during heavy rains (10:12-14). The narrator had previously noted that the people trembled because the intermar-

riage crisis and the rains both weighed heavily on them (10:9). The assembly trusts Ezra to listen to their reasonable suggestions and respond compassionately to their discomfort. The priest's response confirms their expectation (10:6).

In contrast to Ezra, Nehemiah's portrayal includes multiple instances of decisive, authoritative, and even aggressive responses to internal and external opposition and to moral failure of the returning community. In the final chapter of the narrative, Nehemiah throws the personal furniture of his opponent Tobiah out of the temple's sacred chamber (Neh 13:8), warns merchants he will "lay hands on" them if they continue commerce on the Sabbath (13:21), and confronts Jews being led astray through intermarriage by cursing them, beating some of them, and pulling out their hair

(13:25). Such responses create a less-than-approachable impression of the Judean governor and therefore highlight Ezra's approachability all the more.

#### 4. Ezra's Demonstrative Leadership

By demonstrative, I mean that the narrator portrays Ezra as visibly passionate in ways that elicit positive responses

from other characters. He demonstrates external zeal that moves the people around him to follow suit, providing a model of character and conduct.

Demonstrative interpersonal dynamics appear most poignantly in the mixed-marriage narrative, which I will revisit from this angle: (1) Ezra responds to the astonishing announcement in Ezr 9:1-2 with extreme expressions of grief and anguish. His external reactions reflect his inner distress. Robert North suggests that Ezra's tearing of clothes and ripping of his own hair in 9:3 depict "highly emotional but also highly calculated behavior." Whether or not the priest intended to evoke a response in those around him, such a response certainly ensued as other faithful Israelites surround him and apparently join his lament. (2) This pattern of non-directive influence continues as Ezra offers the elaborate prayer in 9:6-15.

"EZRA WOULD LIKELY  
NOT HAVE THRIVED AS A  
BUILDER OF JERUSALEM'S  
WALLS, BUT HE EXCELLED  
AS A BUILDER OF ISRAEL'S  
PEOPLE."

The priest does not quickly engage the people or their crisis the way Nehemiah does. He rather engages God in front of the people. There is a fine line “between prayer addressed to God and sermon addressed to the people.” Boda describes the prayer as contagious because it attracts “a very great assembly” who follow Ezra’s example of bitter weeping in 10:1. (3) This response ends up “more potent than any flurry of activity, since it drew out of other people the initiatives that could best come from them.” One such initiative is their calling for Ezra’s intervention (10:2-4). Ironically, “Instead of whipping a reluctant people into action, Ezra has pricked their conscience to the point at which they now urge him to act.” Acts of repentance are driven by the people, but the people are driven by Ezra’s pious passions. He leads by demonstrative example.

While Nehemiah leads by example in many ways, the narrative does not emphasize the effect of his modeling with nearly as much specificity and pathos. Nehemiah’s influence is depicted primarily through his direction, not his demonstration. Such contrast highlights Ezra’s role as exemplary.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates the powerful potential of those whose leadership styles do not encompass Nehemiah-like dynamics such as execution of large-scale projects or authoritative and directive responses to egregious sin (as necessary as such dynamics are). Ezra would likely not have thrived as a builder of Jerusalem’s wall, but he excelled as a builder of Israel’s people. He was suited to the task given him. Ministry leaders with such natures can find dignity in their individual combinations of gifts. While every leader should strive to be well-rounded, those who flourish in teaching, team-building, relational ministry, example-setting, or any number of similar traits need not worry if they never develop into charismatic visionaries, executives, or prophetic confronters. As God did with Ezra, he will lead them to callings that match their gifts. In a similar way, churches and ministry organizations should strive to maintain a broad view of leadership that leaves room for various gifts and personality types and expects leadership to look differently in different contexts.

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1. I assume the literary unity of Ezra-Nehemiah. For an extensive discussion of this issue, see Mark J. Boda and Paul L. Redditt, eds., *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric and Reader* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008). While multiple hands influenced the composition of EN, I use the term “narrator” to describe the perspective reflected in the final canonical form.
  2. Gary E. Schnittjer, “The Bad Ending of Ezra-Nehemiah,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173 (March 2016): 34.
  3. Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 35–36.
  4. Zvi Ron, “Ezra, the First Rabbi,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (January 2016): 38.
  5. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 70 (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1989), 53.
  6. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 146–147.
  7. Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1993), 138.
  8. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 40–41.
  9. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 138.
  10. See Williamson regarding the difficulties with 7:7. H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, *Word Biblical Commentary* 16 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 88–90.
  11. Philip Jenson, “*הֵרָא*,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2:600.
  12. W. Dommershausen, “*הֵרָא*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 7:66–70.
  13. Mark J. Boda, “Ezra,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, December 11, 2005), 282.
  14. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 84.
  15. Robert North, “Ezra,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 726.
  16. Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, *Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), 49.
  17. Boda, “Ezra,” 282.
  18. Derek Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* 12 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 77.
  19. *Ibid.*, 78–79.



Graphic by Katie Kinney

## Imposter Syndrome: When You Feel Like You Don't Belong

Brendan DeJong, Scribe writing consultant

In February, The Scribe Conversation Series heard from Prof. Sabrina Hickel, Dr. Robert Kim, and Dr. Jay Sklar, who shared their wisdom concerning and experience with “imposter syndrome.” Imposter syndrome is the feeling of inadequacy or self-doubt when you feel like you don't belong. It is common in all contexts, not least in an academic one like here at Covenant. The following is an edited excerpt of the conversation; the full version of it and other resources can be found on the Library's YouTube channel and Workshops page.

**Katie Kinney**, : Can you share about a time in your career when you felt inadequate? Were there people who came alongside you?

**Robert Kim**: During my DMin, I reached a point partway through when I was filled with doubt about my project—I did not think it would be a contribution to the field. My degree advisor encouraged me, affirming that I had a unique voice.

**Sabrina Hickel**: I experience imposter syndrome in the counseling profession as well as being an internship supervisor. One thing that helped me was learning that other faculty members shared

that experience in their personal relationships.

**Jay Sklar**: During my first year teaching at Covenant, I came straight out of a PhD program as a Pentateuch scholar and had to teach Historical Books. I felt totally overwhelmed. Then, it was like the Holy Spirit drove a grace-filled dagger into my heart, saying “the Lord loves you just as much now in your feeling of incompetence as he did during your PhD study.”

**KK**: Can you elaborate on the link between humility and inadequacy?

**SH**: How do I define humility? I begin with asking: ‘Where is my identity? In Christ—being secure in that identity, and thus being free to forego celebrating myself, and celebrate others.

**KK**: Do you have any tips for dealing with procrastination?

**JS**: Ask yourself four questions:

1. Am I procrastinating because I don't have a strong work ethic?

2. Am I working in an area that is outside my strengths?
3. Am I afraid to do it imperfectly?
4. Do I see its purpose?

Pray, repent, and strategize in order to counteract this tendency.

**SH:** Sometimes, it's good to put work off with intentionality. Faithful sabbath rest means work hard for six days, and rest for one. To avoid either calling devalues the rest of the week.

**KK:** For many of us at seminary, it's the first time in school for a long time, or we didn't do a 'pre-seminary' degree. If writing feels difficult, that means you're growing, and you're exactly where you ought to be. To our panelists, I'd like to ask: what is the hallmark of a faithful student?

**SH:** I expect your best effort—that will be good enough. I love when students are honest with me and tell me where they're at.

**JS:** Here at Covenant, character formation is the most important. When students graduate,

faculty do not say, "He/She was a straight A student." They say, "this person really grew to be more like Christ."

Audience question: What would you say to someone who, being a minority, intentionally others themselves because they feel safer?

**RK:** One book I will recommend as a resource is *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race*, by Beverly Daniel Tatum. It is important to listen and understand the person to see why they're doing what they're doing.

The Scribe Writing Center is a peer-to-peer writing resource offered in the Library. Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to have anything actually written down in order to make an appointment! Walk on in, make an in-person or online appointment through the Library website, or find us at Community Writing Hours every Wednesday from 12-1:30 in the Community Center. Questions? Contact [Scribe@CovenantSeminary.edu](mailto:Scribe@CovenantSeminary.edu).

## Tied Yet Called

David Augustine

A time gone by  
Until my heart goes too  
A body rooted here and now  
Yet called to infinitude

I cannot be but to be  
And cannot no other self but me  
A self I was given but chose  
A past I was handed yet lived

My person I built while I slept  
Knowing not what my left hand did  
And instructed silently by the loud  
    voice of history  
While deaf to the sound of construction

I'm unchangeably attached to that then  
Forever fettered to this now  
Tied to these moments of past and  
    present  
However ever called to the always

An always that always was  
Connected to every single now  
There shaping all of our thens  
Calling us not to be but to be with

To be a new man who I am. Not. But  
    will be  
Drawn to something greater while tied  
    to something now  
So I wait with you patient  
While I move with you now

## The Windows

Trey Martin

They make visible, invisible truth:  
That ev'ry inch belongs to one unseen,  
The coming one, the man who's dead to death,  
Once was, is now, and will forever be.  
Look there; abounds the glowing life inside  
Something full-whole breaking in, the candles leap  
To light, suffuse, all blazing stars' best pride:  
Diffused through panels fragile, incomplete.  
These people are too untrue, that is true.  
Although they still...though steal and lie and cheat,  
A colored pane of light yet glances through,  
And all my all-explainings come too neat.  
Those windows wear full well their weight of light  
That make all wonder what may be so bright.

# Holding

Bailey Preib

The terrain is diverse  
With mountainous knuckles  
And prominent rivers

Small fissures  
And patches of tan and pink  
Run rampant across it

I hold the world in my hands  
Contrasting its roughness  
Against my suppleness

Fragility clings to me,  
A whispering clairvoyant  
With dark eyes like mine

Fear I can't quite comprehend,  
A young god  
Surrounded by immortality

Her hands falls through my fingers.  
Wet, with grace and dignity,  
Earth returning to itself



Photo by Jamie Ewald

# A Lovely Phantasm

Taylor Daniel

I knew you, and was new in the knowing  
My love! You brought joyful days—did you see?  
The many painful tears dispelled owing  
to you: simple, present, now laughing, free.  
I held you. And still therein find respite.  
Hair gold in sunlight, hands soft as gentle rain,  
wild whispers under a starry midnight  
loving me largely, unto shame's disdain.  
We began love by kiss, by ring, by aisle  
then maintained it in hope and mild madness.  
Now I have bloomed in the soil of your smile  
and I forget that slow, searching sadness.  
Onward with you. You only. Ever on.  
While flowers bloom in unknown places; dawn.



Photo by Ann Beverley Prideaux

# Near You Are

Nick Dahlquist

God of the heavens incarnate, perfect, immeasurable gain  
O that the Father of all would humble himself to my aid  
Incomprehensible splendor, power none else can employ  
Turning the hearts of your people to founts of untamable joy

*Holy Father, infinite you are – but never far  
Uncontainable, beyond the stars – but near you are*

Jesus the ultimate comfort, God with his people on earth  
Knowing our every temptation, perfect in life from his birth  
Soon we shall know him more fully, now it is only in part  
Still there is knowledge enough to capture the whole of my heart

*Holy Jesus, infinite you are – but never far  
Prince of heaven, only Son of God – yet near you are*

Far beyond need of provision, endlessly longing to bless  
Left from on high to restore us back to eternity's rest  
Knowing the depth of your fullness, O how much sweeter your ways  
That the Creator of heaven longs to me face to face

*Holy Spirit, infinite you are – but never far  
Lord of all, yet living in our hearts – so near you are*

# To Know and Be Known

## Mary Schieferstein

Five hundred miles  
From the bones of my fathers,  
The house on a ridge,  
The Lake Erie waters.  
Five hundred miles away  
From my land.

She calls me one night,  
An hour ahead,  
Her life keeps going,  
I'm stuck in the past.  
My heart just can't catch up  
To what it's left.

Out of place,  
Out of time,  
Out of anyone  
That I've ever relied on.  
I want  
Ground beneath my feet,  
To live fully where He's led me,  
But what I want most  
Is to know and be known.

Five hundred miles  
From the ones held so dear  
That we speak the same language  
And cry the same tears.  
Five hundred miles away  
From my friends.

Everyone's nice here,  
They're learning my name.  
They ask how I'm doing.  
I'll stick with ok.  
There's a depth of grief  
Strangers can't share.

Out of place,  
Out of time,  
Out of anyone  
That I've ever relied on.  
I want  
Ground beneath my feet,  
To live fully where He's led me,  
But what I want most  
Is to know and be known.

To not have to pretend,  
To not fear some offense,  
To walk into a  
Conversation  
With no hesitance.

To share what I can't say,  
Look someone in the eye,  
To let it all be  
Known that they would  
Know what lies  
Inside,  
Inside,  
Inside.

Out of place,  
Out of time,  
Out of anyone  
That I've ever relied on.  
I want  
Ground beneath my feet,  
To live fully where He's led me,  
But what I want most,  
What I want most,  
What I need most  
Is to know and be known.

Listen to *Near You Are* by Nick Dahlquist here:  
<https://soundcloud.com/covstumag/near-you-are-by-nick-dahlquist>

Listen to *To Know and Be Known* by Mary Schieferstein here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TC83MD\\_Mf1M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TC83MD_Mf1M)

# The Letter

Trey Martin

Black ink to pale page pressed, defining lines  
That curve to cage the wilds of meaning vast,  
Disclosing one who words himself confines,  
To which all may be called to interact.  
The strokes are made, page stained, indelible,  
Inflexible to shift, yet breathe and spark  
The heat of Life, the author actual,  
And sketch a stroke-shaped silhouette by marks.  
A letter made by letters finely craft  
Cuts deeper than the surface it indwells  
Into intent of author's pen then draft  
Communicating truth of self—to self.  
And matters not that gulfs of slander yawn,  
His character by characters is drawn.

# Death Stands Before Me

David Augustine

A curse, accursed  
I sit and see. nothing  
I stand and hear. silence  
Death

Today it wears no mask  
Not hiding in its guise of promised beauty  
Or masquerading in the veil of happiness  
But walking open for us to see

Its visage so frightening  
Though not because of gruesome horror  
But its vacuum of reflection  
For it is everything and nothing

And I wait to hear its voice  
So often a sweet song to entice  
Or a cacophony to drown out  
But now it sends out silence  
And it waits for me to scream

Yet I have no voice  
To say "come" or "go"  
So death remains in this moment  
And I am frozen in its nothingness stare

I feel my heartbeat quicken, wanting me to run  
But I must stay here for these breaths  
Please help me not to blink  
That I may see death as death and fear no more

# The Prison You Call Home

Jacob Virtue

The toughest prison to escape and the most contained estate, is not the penitentiary.  
It is not the secluded island or even the buried lock-box.  
It is untouchable, yet it will put you in a coma.  
It is invisible, yet it is seen every day.  
It is without scent, yet it will leave an unmistakable aroma.  
It is so heavy that the strongest man cannot move it, yet so small that even a child may carry it.

All at once, it will call you friend—then stab you in the back.  
All at once, it will give you knowledge—then make you a fool.  
All at once, it will give you security—then leave you abandoned.  
All at once, it will give you identity—then tell you to change.

You will love it for its power and hate it for its destruction.  
You will love it for its availability and hate it for its presence.  
You will love it for its pledge and hate it for its prestige.  
You will love it for its promises and hate it for its secrets.

It is written in Scripture and affects the soul.

Lucifer generated it and abandoned the plan.  
Nebuchadnezzar denied its existence and ate grass.  
David believed it was wisdom and killed a man.

And you, sitting there, would point your finger at others.  
When they fall, you pat yourself on the back.  
As you stand with the keys in your hand, you chuckle to yourself; closing the gate to the most  
disastrous contained estate—pride: the prison you call home.



Photo by Jake Gee



Photo by Pablo Rosales

## Karis Liberty-Hope Rosales Pablo Rosales

Have you turned back from your promise?  
Have you left us here to suffer?  
Have our tears you not acknowledged?  
You said death you would demolish?

We thought we'd get to see her cries;  
see her kick like she did inside  
We want to hold her. We want to touch her.  
We want to look at her and hug her.

Oh Karis, sweet Karis;  
Beautiful Karis, living Karis.

It's like a piece of us is gone.  
It's gone, her ears, her perfect nose.  
yet something says it won't be long.  
we'll see her perfect eyes unclose.

We thought about the sleepless nights  
and fought about upcoming fights.  
I'd give so much to see her move,  
to see her wake to songs we'd choose.

I know that one day we'll see Him.  
I know on that day we'll see her.  
And our tears will be no more,  
when we see what He has in store, for us.

Lord, please come now. Please come now.  
Please put all things new somehow  
and on that mountain we will see  
Our Karis from this death set free.

# An Open Wound

## Trey Martin

Leave the wound alone.  
Let it be.  
It may heal on its own  
But if not, see:  
Better is an open wound  
Than all your senses seared.

To follow Christ,  
Leave the gash alone.

Not to prize it, desire it,  
miserly and preciously hide it,  
but to *live* despite it,  
by enduring to despise it,  
and with open eyes it  
is a more pathetic thing.

Real, present.  
Unendurable? No.

Watch the forerunner's path:  
See how he feels it  
Accepts and meets it  
Knows the better rests  
Beyond the last hurt, (ill-strewn).  
The price for besting  
Is gulping, tasting  
His glory is  
End-facing,  
Pain-racing,  
Coming not untouchable,  
But much able  
To be touched.

And when you tell him  
What pain you're found in  
He knows.

Yet he beckons you on,  
Pressing along,  
Keeping on  
Your humanity

That cut, you bleed  
And live indeed  
So called to resemble  
that curious splendor  
Of the sorrowful smile  
Of the suffering Savior.

# Coward

## Bailey Preib

Courage I prayed for you  
With trembling hands  
And watery eyes.

I looked for you  
High and low  
With silent screams.

But you did not come,  
Did not fix the damn,  
Did not still the body.

Not for me. Not for her.  
And it was her I was asking for.  
Her that shook and wheezed.

So they took to other means  
That could ebb and flow.  
A forced serenity.

And so I wait.  
Nothing but a coward  
Praying for courage.

# 2019

## Taylor Daniel

Farewell to the horrid and hallowed year  
which catechized by fire. And ice. And tear.

# Laughter

Mary Schieferstein

Laughter is like a feeling,  
But not.  
It hints at happiness,  
Makes the corners of the mouth twitch  
Up as though smiling.

It makes something move in the chest,  
A diaphragm  
Beating in place of a heart—  
A sensation, a fluttering—  
Masking the hollowness.

It can act as a soothing balm,  
A drug,  
Distracting the mind,  
Pouring water into a leaky soul,  
Til bearing it is (temporarily) a little more bearable.

Do I make laughter sound depressing?  
It's not.  
It can shift the heavy weight of a smothering darkness  
Just enough, just enough,  
To make you believe you've breathed.

Just one breath.

One breath for a dead heart to pump through blood.  
It's enough.

It's enough.

No, laughter is not a feeling,  
But still,  
The feelings that left will most likely return  
To join that non-feeling in an incredible consonance  
Of breathing and beating and hope.

And *that* feeling?  
Is like  
Dancing in the summer rain;  
A good, long drink wetting a parched throat—  
It feels worth all the feelinglessness.

No, laughter is not a feeling.  
Joy is.

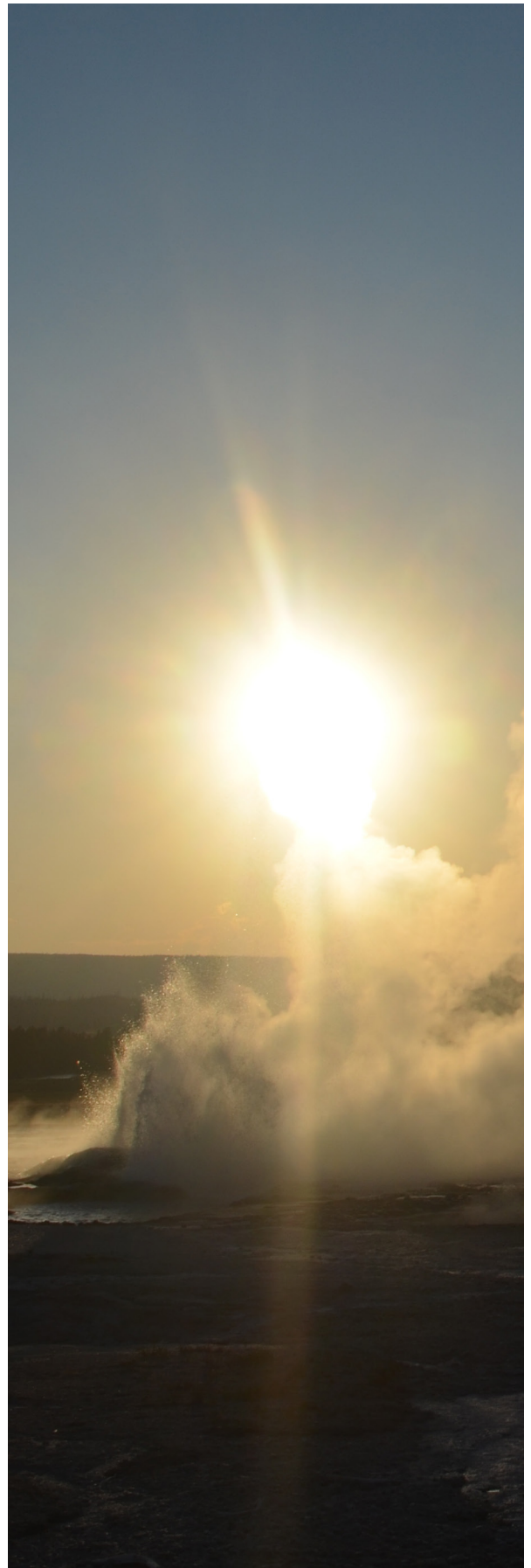


Photo by Bailey Preib

# Passion's Shape

Trey Martin

By the power of your resurrection, take  
What once was thought to have all power—gone.  
And in the sweeping space behind it, stake  
A place for you, a place of life begun.  
Make more than just a legal change in me,  
But make desires new and powers blaze—  
Able to move and mold my moving into shape  
Of what is meant to be loved, by loves awaked.  
I long not for perfect collections of the goods—  
Creation's bounty blesses (beyond sharing in the earth)—  
But rather for perfect allocation of those passions  
You bequeathed the image of your love in mankind's birth.  
Give me share in all your yearnings pure and bright  
And suddenly my heart will sing within the night.

## Rainy Saint Louis

Taylor Daniel

Silver strands of many mirrors fell fresh  
on a parched landscape too long in the sun  
the grain of a new sacrament to thresh  
in installments, first by gift of green shoots—

as if God, anticipating artists,  
preemptively patronized the canvas  
with a phoenix wonder: safety in storm,  
life from menace, a joy born of sadness.

It was delicate in the tracing act  
this outline, forged of a bright morning world  
wherein crisp borders held to more than fact  
with beauty also when it was unfurled—

and gray shone brighter than boisterous gold  
while silence made sound which words could not hold.

# Stranger Friends & Stranger Things

Jeb Ralston

“She’s our friend and she’s crazy.” – Dustin

There’s no doubt about it. There’s something really special about *Stranger Things*, especially considering its huge mainstream following despite the genre it’s in. Yet, there’s nothing all that strange about why so many have latched onto this show. There’s a lot that resonates, especially when it comes to the dorky friends at the core of it.

I think we can each find something to our liking in the show. Who doesn’t want to watch a group of nerdy, neighborhood kids go toe-to-toe with a malevolent, inter-dimensional beast? There may be really, really strange things happening in each episode, but the plot is really only there so we can see how these friends address it. Perhaps that’s why so many people of different generations are finding themselves hooked on this show. The show is all about friendship. You don’t have to like fantasy, horror, or sci-fi to love this whimsical and tight-knit group of friends. You may hate *Dungeons & Dragons* or an ’80’s atmosphere (though I’m still not convinced anyone can hate this), but you can’t deny how awesome Will, Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and El are together.

There’s something within this little community of friends that is fundamentally sincere. This

show glorifies the youthful and the weird, the whimsical and the ambitious. Like Mike’s and El’s dads, it mocks the jaded and the dead-beat. It’s a show that takes place in a world where cynicism and apathy are seen not as virtues but as vices. As a result, friendship actually matters.

“Friends don’t lie.”

It’s simple. It’s sincere. It’s the gang’s most cherished rule. Friends don’t lie because sincerity is a virtue. There’s something deeply noble about the kids in this show. They handle conflict remarkably well. They notice when rifts in their group are forming and they long to see them

## “THEIR FRIENDSHIP ISN’T A MEANS TO AN END: IT’S AN END IN ITSELF.”

mended. They fight amongst themselves, yes. But they also fight demo-dogs for each other. They are able to address reality headfirst and lean into it head first without buying into the sort of cynicism that says, “It doesn’t really matter what you do—We’re just kids—the Demogorgon will clearly beat us.” Hell, I don’t think the kids are idiots (let’s be real, they are pretty freakin’ smart), surely they know the danger they are heading into to save their friends. In a lot of moments, they know their chances of survival aren’t great,

but, to them, it’s worth it to keep fighting.

These kids prove that their friendship isn’t just some dispensable, self-serving idea. Their friendship isn’t a means to an end—it’s an end in itself. This show isn’t about how a group of friends can take down a monster; it’s about why fighting a nearly invincible monster is worth it for the sake of your friends.

I’m sure we can all admit this: we long for friends who fight for us, and we long for friends to fight for. We want strange friends who embrace the strange things that make us unique and who understand the strange situations we find ourselves in. Isn’t it a basic human fear that if we were to suddenly disappear no one would come looking for us? That no one would actually notice? We

long to have friends in our lives who know where we would be, friends willing to drop what they are doing to come find us. We ask ourselves if are we those sorts of friends. Perhaps we are not.

And there’s something deeply strange about that.

It’s no wonder stories like *Stranger Things*, *IT*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Star Wars*, and *Harry Potter*, are as good as they are. They express something many of us long for: to be in daily proximity



Photo by Jake Gee

with friends, knowing the oddities of each other's lives and journeys. The adventures these sorts of characters find themselves in may seem unusual to us, but there really shouldn't be anything unusual about these little friend groups. Rather, what should feel strange to us is that we typically find such friendships more regularly in stories than in reality. As the great Stephen King once said, "I think that real friendship always makes us

feel such sweet gratitude, because the world almost always seems like a very hard desert, and the flowers that grow there seem to grow against such high odds." As strange as flowers in the desert are, real friendship in a cynical world is an even more incredible gift. Yet, with as much youthful hope as I can muster, I long for the day when such friendships aren't considered a strange thing at all.



## Student Profile: Rafael A. Nieves-Rosario MDiv '22

**In his providence, how did God lead you to Covenant Seminary?**

Ever since I was 15 or so, I knew I wanted to study theology. Nevertheless, it seemed that there wasn't any real possibility of that happening. This is because there were no undergraduate programs in theology in Puerto Rico at that time, and I could not afford to complete a Master's degree after my Bachelor's.

Around 2017 I started looking for a church that was more in line with my reformed convictions. My dad, who was studying for his Master's in Pastoral Counseling in the Seminario Teológico de Puerto Rico, took a class with Jules Martínez, a

Latin American theologian who was, at the time, part of the pastoral staff in a PCA church. My dad suggested I visit that church to see if I would like it. I went and I did! More importantly, my wife, Monica, did too!

As I talked to the pastor at the church, Ronnie García, and told him about my desires to study, he pointed me to Covenant Seminary as an option. Back then, the idea of going to Covenant seemed unlikely since Monica was still studying for her PhD in clinical psychology in Puerto Rico. However, we looked into the possibility of Monica doing her practicum remotely, that is, in an APA-approved clinic in the St. Louis area where she could continue accruing hours to that end,

and under God's guidance and providence an opportunity arose and it was possible. Without hesitation or delay, we got married, moved to St. Louis, and started classes at Covenant!

**In what ways has God been working in your life through your time at Covenant so far?**

Coming from Puerto Rico, which is a territory of the United States, I was not expecting the 'cultural shock' to be so palpable. By that I mean there certainly are some dialogues that take pre-eminence in the United States that are not so much debated in Puerto Rico. For example, due to the overwhelming presence of other cultures in the US, cultural advocacy takes a more central role of discussion than in Puerto Rico. Therefore, it has been challenging for me to find representation within that dynamic.

Nevertheless, in Covenant, I have encountered a community that seeks to be intentional in relationship-building. Covenant's understanding of God spills over into the content of the lectures, the application to evangelism, the cohort groups, the approachability of professors – essentially, everywhere you look you can see a commitment to living life together. This vision of the Christian life experienced in community puts you in a place to practice confession, repentance, acceptance and love among brothers and sisters from other cultures and backgrounds.

**What's one piece of advice that you'd share with other seminary students?**

Without a doubt it would be to try and find the intersection between studying life and devotional life. It is so easy to stress one over the other. For me it actually helps to pray using the very same (theological) language I'm learning in class –

For example, thanking God that he is the God who is faithful to his covenants. In the same way that He made a covenant with Noah, Abraham, the people of Israel, David, and staked His reputation in fulfilling them, we have been made part of the new covenant in Jesus Christ and God will remain faithful to us and his promises.

On a more technical note, I've found that time management is crucial for seminarians. As such I'd advise students to practice and maintain a disciplined adherence to a predetermined schedule that respects both time for work and rest.

Also, read your Greek New Testament everyday (haha!).

**For students who will be joining the seminary in later semesters what would you recommend they visit first in St. Louis? And why?**

It's so hard to pick just one. There's so much to do. But being a jazz musician myself, I am biased to choose the jazz scene in St. Louis - which is such a good one actually. There are jam sessions and concerts everywhere. There's nothing like a nice dinner listening to a live jazz quartet in downtown. A couple of good places to check out are the Dark Room and the Ferring Jazz Bistro of Jazz St. Louis.



## Student Profile: Jessica Huber MAC '21

**In his providence, how did God lead you to Covenant Seminary?**

The story has its roots in bold words from others, dorm rooms, and a skateboarding injury. The summer before my senior year of college, I was part of a campus ministry called CRU, and I went on a summer missions' trip to Los Angeles for two months. On day three, I broke my foot trying to skateboard and so I spent the entire summer walking a couple of miles a day on a broken foot. When I got back to St. Louis, I had to get a surgery and be in a boot for six months. Around Thanksgiving, I had to find someone to drive me to my parent's home – and a random family friend offered to do so. It was during that car ride, while having a conversation about life after college that I was encouraged to pursue counseling. As I considered that possibility, I noticed how lots of girls would come to my room (as the resident manag-

er of their dorm) with various life crisis situations seeking guidance. I found so much joy and purpose in those conversations, especially in being able to sort through the overwhelming things of the lives of others and make them more manageable. As I looked at different graduate schools, I was drawn to Covenant specifically for the way that the MAC program integrates theology into its psychotherapy – and I'm so thankful for it.

**In what ways has God been working in your life through your time at Covenant so far?**

My practicum supervisor was recently sharing with me the ways in which he sees God as Jehovah Rapha (The God who Heals) and throughout my time at Covenant so far, I have really come to see that truth with a greater and deeper appreciation – not just for my life, but in the lives of others, too. Throughout my time in the MAC program, I am not only being equipped to help people in

their healing but I am also being healed through the process. I've slowly learned to see how things do not define me, how to think through my present relationships with others, how to be a good friend (and roommate), and what it looks like to grow more into who God has designed me to be and not someone who is restricted by the trauma that has happened to them.

**What's one piece of advice that you'd share with other seminary students?**

Be relentless in your pursuit of community, irrespective of whether you live on-campus or off-campus. It is important that you do not give up on community even though it can, and often does, present difficulties. Community is where we find encouragement and challenge as well as opportunities to learn from others who are rich in knowledge and story.

**For students who will be joining the seminary in later semesters what would you recommend they visit first in St. Louis? And why?**

Firstly, check out the St. Louis Spotlight in this issue of Spiritual Milk!

Now for a broader answer: if you're going to be in a city, find out what the heart of the city is – and figure out what that means for the city. For example, going to the places where you get a chance to experience the people and feel the vibrancy of St. Louis. I tend to find that the heart of a city is found best in the way it does art, and so I'd recommend the contemporary art museum and the sculpture park.



## Student Profile: Christina & Tommy Hannah

MATS '20 (Christina); MDiv '20 and ThM '21(Tommy)

**How did you meet each other and end up getting married?**

We were both in college, I (Christina) was in north Washington state, and Tommy was in Oregon. One summer, during college, we met at a Bible Camp one summer as camp leaders. It was a fun summer where we got to lead sessions, teach the gospel, and work together. What drew us to each other was the deep gospel conversations we had. We had this one conversation with another friend (Josh) and during the conversation Josh quickly felt like a third wheel – we were just talking theology, but somehow also flirting with each other. At the end of the summer we had fallen super in love and knew that we wanted to get married and so we bought a ring! We got married a year and a half after we met.

**In His providence, how did God lead you both to Covenant Seminary?**

In our first year of marriage we applied and had been accepted into, what we would later find out is, a fundamentalist dispensational bible translation society. We realised that we wouldn't actually be accepted fully into the organization because we, at that point, now subscribed to covenant theology and so we weren't in agreement with the foundational theological doctrines of the organization.

All this time we were working at a homeless shelter, and had two guys living on our apartment floor. We then applied with serge to a trip to Ireland to see if that would be a possibility, and just before heading to Ireland we found out that we were pregnant! During, and after, our time at Ireland we prayerfully considered, in community with our church elders (shout out to Christ Church Bellingham WA!), whether applying for the serge apprenticeship in Ireland was the right thing for

us in that season. Our elders encouraged us to go to seminary so as to be properly equipped for whatever God would have for us in the work of ministry. We felt this absolute peace, as a couple, in pursuing seminary in a way that we hadn't about anything else.

**Since arriving at Covenant, what are the lessons that you've learned that you didn't expect to encounter?**

Christina: Because Covenant has the awesome option of a spouse scholarship, I've been able to take classes, and through those classes I've realised that I love ministry, and theology, and learning about how I can serve God's people and his world. Additionally, we've really had to navigate how we are a couple with two small children as well as being full time students. The whole process has been seasoned with grace, in the midst of a loving community. We've really learned how to work together as a team by figuring out how we can support and make time for each other. This has helped me see our joint work in ministry instead of it being Tommy's ministry and I just bring the cookies. Now, I will bring the cookies to those events – and don't you dare try to stop me – but how we will serve together as a couple will be much more than that.

Tommy: The counselling aspect of the seminary has really helped me to understand and articulate the hang ups we've had in our story that have caused us to have unhealthy relationships within ourselves, with one another, and with the world around us. The formation that happens at Covenant is something I definitely did not expect. I came here with the expectation that I would learn theological principles, how to articulate the gospel more effectively, how to preach and so on. Those things have certainly happened but the funny thing is that to a certain extent they almost feel secondary to the formation that has occurred – from the way I relate to Christina in our marriage, and the way I relate to our children to the way I understand myself and move forward to engage with the world.

**How has it been to raise a family, on campus, while being full time students at seminary?**

Tommy: It's been overwhelming, however the community dynamics at Covenant has made it possible. For example, we know that when we haven't looked closely enough at our calendars and realize that there's a scheduling conflict and we need to get childcare, we're able to send out an email or a text and somebody always shows up to help. Living life together in community here has been a visible expression of the beauty of the



gospel which we've had the privilege to see and savor.

Christina: I'd add that it would have been much harder if it weren't for the way Tommy carries himself in the family. I see so many fathers who get sucked down the 'I have to do my homework' approach to their family. However, Tommy has really lived out the family motto of 'teamwork makes the dream work.' That has looked like setting things aside that we really want to be great at in order to be with our children in a way that is honoring to God. So there have been times when we've wanted to give eight hours to an assignment but have had to accept that we'd only be able to commit five hours to it because we need the more important things to be more important.

**What has been your favorite part of St. Louis since arriving?**

Coming from a place as beautiful as the Pacific Northwest where we spent all our time outside to a place like St. Louis where it's basically flat (and an area like Creve Coeur which is pretty suburban) made the first year and a half to two years really hard for us. However, God has really opened our eyes to see that his beauty is in every square inch and we've come to recognize that St. Louis in its own right is a beautiful place crafted by God.

We've seen that St. Louis is a place where you can flourish in many ways across a broad range of socio-economic stratum. There are lots of free sites and activities that really foster family bonding and cohesion. We love the public libraries, the zoo, the art museums, and all the children specific events they have.

**What is next for the Hannah's family?**

Seminary is not over just yet for the Hannahs. Tommy will be starting a ThM at Covenant so as to leave the door open for a PhD program and also to dive deeper into a few of the specific areas of theology that have stimulated a lot of interest and curiosity. We love Covenant Seminary and are excited to dive deeper into theology, and dive deeper into community.

# After School

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St. Louis is a wonderful city to adventure in — especially on a seminary student budget! Unlike many other major cities, St. Louis offers dozens of vibrant experiences for FREE. If you're new to St. Louis, or even if you've been here for years and years, it can be tricky to know where to look for enriching experiences. Here are my tips and tricks for exploring St. Louis!

*Note: I don't spend much time on sports. However, St. Louis is home to SO many professional teams. Use sites like Seat-Geek to get cheaper tickets!*

## Music

If you want to scream lyrics alongside thousands of other fans or experience music in smaller, more intimate settings, St. Louis has a plethora of options.

**Delmar Hall** — A smaller yet extremely popular concert venue. Prepare to arrive early to shows since almost all are GA!

**Blueberry Hill** — Dining, drinking, arcade games, and live music most nights. Did we say dart boards?

**Jazz Crawl** — Every Wednesday night.

**Sofar STL** — Beginning artists performing in intimate concerts.

**Twilight Tuesdays** — With tributes from NOLA brass bands to Tina Turner, May holds weekly performances outside of the MO History Museum in Forest Park



The Slam

## Art

Picasso, Monet, Van Gogh, Rembrandt. What more do you want?

**SLAM (St. Louis Art Museum)** Permanent Collection is free and First Fridays the special exhibits are too!  
**CAM (Contemporary Art Museum)** — just got the Warhol grant, bringing an exhibition titled “Stories of Resistance” in September. Get hyped.

**Art Hill Film Series** — pack your picnic blanket and snacks to watch a movie with hundreds of strangers-turned-friends.

## Breweries

It's been a long day and there is nowhere better to drink a cold one and hang out with friends and strangers alike.

**Civil Life** — The best Brown Ale in town. They also have stellar soup in the winter and tacos in the summer.

**2nd Shift** — Although they have a national reputation (and awards) for sours, this brewery doesn't take itself too seriously.

**Tapped** — Perfect for trying out new beers with dozens of self-pour taps. It is a chill atmosphere with a large food menu to top it all off.



Photo by Ann Beverley Pirdeaux

## Bars

In case you have gluten allergy

**360 St Louis** — Drink in style while taking in a beautiful view of St. Louis.

**Recess STL** — Recess + alcohol... what could go wrong?

**Narwhals Crafted** — Frozen alcoholic beverages. Summer come soon.

**Westport Social** — A bar and gaming lounge all in one.

## Coffee

This list is the longest because, well, let's be real, that is probably where you are right now. Coffee is the currency of students after all.

**Road Crew** — South of Tower Grove, this is the place where coffee meets bicycles. Go for a ride in the park afterwards.

**Coma** — Another local coffee shop great for studying and for meeting up with friends.

**Sump** — A high quality local coffee shop. Simple. Good. Go.

**Kaldi's** — A local chain that has won the hearts of many seminarians. You might even recognize a few working there.

**C Oliver Coffee & Flower Bar** — Sink into rich green velvet seats as you embrace a cup of warm goodness and breath in vibrant florals. Oh, and this will up your Instagram game.

**Maypop Coffee & Garden Shop** — Where plant moms and dads go to get caffeinated

**Lola Jean's Giveback Coffee** — the lemon wallpaper isn't where it ends. Lola Jean's is there to serve its community and make you feel like family

**Special mention: Teatopia** — a favorite spot for me and my roommates.



The Shack

## Breakfast

The most important meal of the day. So they say.

**The Shack** — Voted St. Louis' top breakfast joint for 2019 with a great gluten free menu

**First Watch** — A great breakfast and brunch restaurant that serves fresh ingredient food

**Rooster** — Serves breakfast, brunch, and lunch with a commitment to locally sourced ingredients

## Dinner

Because we know you're eating lunch in between class in the community center.

**Salt and Smoke** — BBQ and Mac 'N Cheese

**Mission Taco** — Tacos a la carte. \$2 tacos after 10pm every night.

**Louie (\$\$\$)** — Where to go for your graduation meal.

**The Taco and Ice Cream Joint** — A great spot combining two of your favorite foods

**Black Market Eats** — sushi burritos and nachos



Clementine's

## Dessert

Treat yo self.

**The Dapper Doughnut** — Teennie tiny doughnuts

**La patisserie chouquette** — Every October, the owner transforms the shop into a Harry Potter dessert masterpiece

**Clementine's** — Unique (and boozy) ice cream flavors.

**The Baked Bear** — The most insane ice cream sandwiches you have ever experienced.

# Vision Statement

The vision of Spiritual Milk is to see student voices amplified, student skills developed, and student life improved, for the purposes of promoting the common good of the Covenant Theological Seminary. In order to see this vision realized, Spiritual Milk will work to promote critical reflection and dialogue on faith, theology, culture, and life through the semi-annual publishing of an online and print magazine – all for God's mission.

# Contributors

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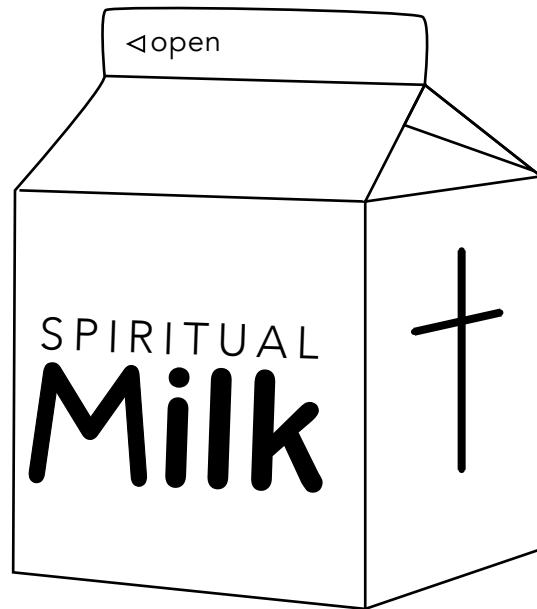
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*Thank you to each and every one of you who helped make this magazine possible!*



*So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

*1 Peter 2:1 – 3*