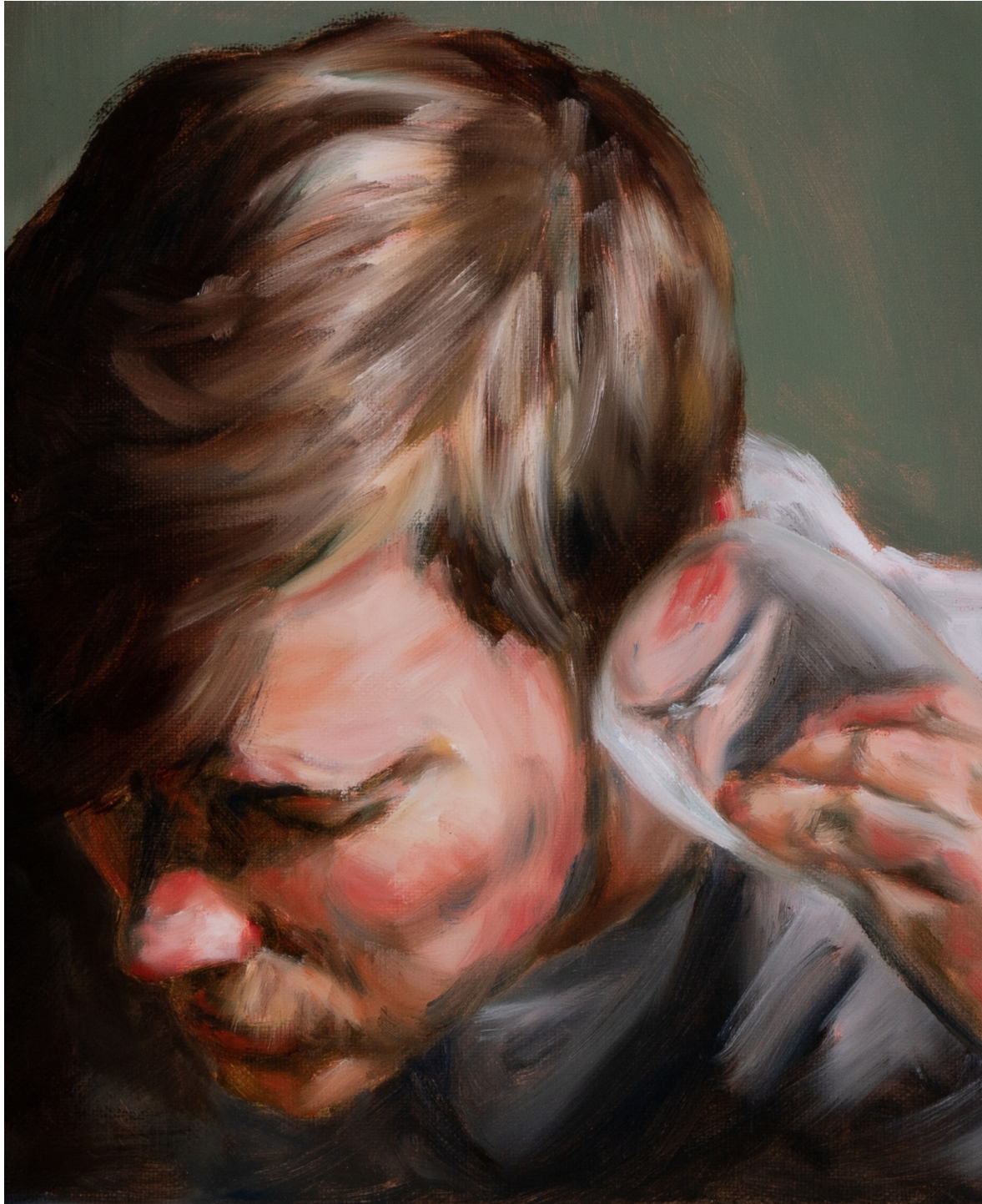
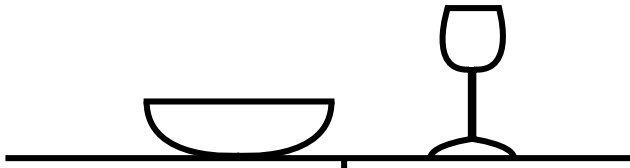


THE COMMON TABLE



ISSUE 2



THE COMMON TABLE

COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY STUDENT MAGAZINE

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Hampton Watts

The cups, oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

The views in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of Covenant Theological Seminary

Fall 2020

Welcome

I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer.

Psalm 6:6 – 9

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

To say that the year 2020 has been hard would be an understatement. The year 2020 has been cruel. As of September, over one million people have died of COVID-19, over 200,000 of them in the US. This is not even to speak of the COVID-19 related deaths such as fatalities due to domestic violence during strict lockdown measures. The United States in particular has been confronted not only with the COVID-19 pandemic but with a harrowing reminder of the ever-present evil of racial injustice.

In light of our times, the leadership team of The Common Table has found it mournfully appropriate to make the theme of this issue 'Sacred Sorrow,' based off of Psalm 6:6-9. We are not given the reason for David's mourning in this psalm, but we are presented with all its intensity. David isn't just struck by grief due to the brutality of life, but even the grief has struck his body. Much like David, not only is that we are experiencing sorrow due to tragedy and loss in 2020, but we find that the sorrow itself has made us weary. And yet, while it may seem, at first, that God is nowhere to be found, David's sorrow is not for nought. In his grief and mourning, he has turned to prayer, and in his prayer, God has heard his cry – and in so doing, making his sorrow sacred.

Scripture is riddled with accounts of the mystery of suffering however we often find that sorrow is

a means by which we draw near to God. I'm sure many of us have found that to be true this year. It is the hope of the leadership team that this issue will play a small part in what God is doing in our lives this year to draw us closer to Him in the midst of our grief and sorrow. In this issue you'll find articles that address the tragedies of this year directly, from the coronavirus to racial injustice. You'll read profiles of students navigating life and ministry amid this turbulent time, and read poems seeking to plumb the depths of our complex emotional experiences. We have also included contributions that do not address the tragedies of this year as a way of continuing to promote the excellent and insightful work that students of Covenant seminary produce.

It is our prayer that through this issue you'll find hope and encouragement from other students in the seminary community. We pray that the words, meditations, and lives of our peers would be a means by which the Spirit strengthens us amidst the grief and sorrow of this year, for the sake of the world – and in doing so, making our sorrow sacred.

We invite you to write to the editor-in-chief of The Common Table, at 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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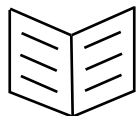
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The Study Table

Black Thoughts from a Black Mind

Lost Life Produces Momentary Value

DJ Davis

The year 2020 has reminded us of the value of the black body and voice. And if you are anything like me, a black person, you are exhausted with sharing your thoughts on current events and attempting to conjure up an answer on what you believe are some good actionable steps that could be taken in order to stop the spilling of blood that seems to pour from black bodies as if it were an open bar celebration. You are exhausted by always having to work around the thought that your opinion doesn't really matter, since for centuries the opinions of prominent black leaders have been disregarded. However, since you are one the few black faces on the campus, you have become someone that is sought out for conversation. Yet I cannot help but feel that my opinion didn't matter until the video of Ahmaud Arbery's execution surfaced. It didn't matter until George Floyd's last words were his last words. It didn't matter until Breonna Taylor possibly spent her last moments realizing she was not going to grow old.

See, what you must understand is that the videos of black people having their lives taken, which continue to surface are visual representations acting as confirmation for those who deny the black person's reality. This is an opportunity for many of you to be exposed to a truth that we have been aware of as black people, which is the fact that much of the majority culture has refused to affirm the dignity and humanity of the black body—whether life is still present within it or not. The white evangelical church continues to claim it

is pro-life, however, this seems to *only* apply to life in the womb. Yet, from birth to death, silence falls upon the lips of many. We mattered when our parents were considering an abortion, but when we were granted a chance at life, many of us found ourselves joining our parents in a harsh reality, in which we are deprived of access to God's resources and subjected to a life of hardship. This is the moment our existence seems to become of no concern to the ones who faithfully stand outside of clinics daily to protest their practices, but no one is standing outside of the state's capital or this country's capital daily protesting the practices of this system. Well, at least until our reality is brought to the front cover of your newspaper or plastered on your tv screen.

It seems as if the very people who are anti-pro-choice are also the ones making a choice about when to care about my life or the lives of black people, which implies that our lives and our plight in this world is somewhat of an inconvenience to you. That is, until our death. At that point it becomes convenient, because now you are granted the opportunities to stand up and confess your faith to the world and to claim that you believe that all lives matter. Yet, it's too late for Ahmaud, George, Breonna, Tamir, Trayvon, Eric, Sandra, Mike, and so many more; too many to name. They will never get to experience life where their well-being mattered to the church, even as the church, daily, was pleading on their behalf. To be honest, I, or even my kids, might not experience

“It’s too late for Ahmaud,
George, Breonna, Tamir,
Trayvon, Eric, Sandra, Mike,
and so many more; too
many to name.”

a world where people care about if they are free from oppression. However, we as the church are called to cease from evil, seek justice, and correct oppression (Isaiah 1:16-17).

Yet, it pains me to read and study the Word of God because it becomes more apparent that people are not just being naïve, but rather have become comfortable in ignoring the commands of God when it pertains to justice and loving their neighbor. I think of when Paul writes, “count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). I even think of the greatest example in Jesus Christ, who spent His ministry in the presence of the ones that society looked down upon, ostracized, stigmatized, and even stereotyped. Still this is where Jesus was found. He not only cared for the destination of their souls, but also cared about their plight in this world. Those who were disregarded and thrown away to be victimized by a system that produced injustice, Jesus made it His responsibility to be the one who liberated and affirmed their dignity and humanity.

So, when you ask someone like me what I think and what are some steps the church should take— also know that in the same breath you have both affirmed that you now recognize my presence and at the same time devalued my existence. What I now think matters, but you asking for my perspective was brought about by the existence of the black body, voice, and life, in this world. —✝—



The Apotheosis of all Timeshares

Daniel Dávalos

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

Matthew 16:24-26 (ESV)

If Jesus were trying to get you to buy his timeshare, I'm afraid he'd do a pretty terrible job of it. Sure, he would promise beachfront property, with year-round access and an open bar, but he would also promise death. He would say something along the lines of, "Don't be deceived: This timeshare is the apotheosis of all timeshares! It is the Platonic ideal of timeshares! But you *will* die."

He hands you a brochure and leaves it at that. For a while you forget about the timeshare, until one day you find the brochure jammed into the bottom of your laptop bag. It's Sunday and you're a little

intrigued. Life has never been better, and it might just be the best time to look into a timeshare. So you take out that old brochure, you unfurl its yellowing foldout, and your face drops. The timeshare looks like a shack made of driftwood. You can't quite explain it, but it looks like it smells rickety. And on closer inspection, half the nails have fallen out. Talk about a fixer-upper. You suddenly remember Jesus' sales pitch: "You will die."

Not for me.

But then it's Friday, and you just lost your life's savings investing in a company that went all the way under, and your children hate you because you haven't been home much lately, and your husband is distant, and your best friend has stage IV cancer. Maybe what you need is a vacation with the family. You take out the brochure, expecting to see that old driftwood shack—but it's changed. A perfectly symmetrical colonnade of palm trees leads to a picturesque courtyard with a cherubic fountain beckoning you to this monument of wide

windows and cozy reading nooks. You suddenly remember Jesus' sales pitch: "You will die."

You've been living a living death lately, and maybe it's time for a change.

So you call Jesus, and you tell him you're interested in the timeshare. You expect him to be excited, but he sighs for a moment, and he says, "Are you sure? Do you know what you're getting yourself into?"

Of course you do! You've Googled the locale, and you've figured out how to apply for a boating license, and you figure you can afford a week out of the year, and—and then Jesus says, "Yes. But you will die. Are you willing to die?"

I've been reading through Herman Bavinck's *Magnalia Dei* recently. Life has been a whirlwind, but those still moments when I get to share a cup of coffee with a dead Dutchman have been so nourishing. Then I close the book, and I wearily look at the day ahead. *What will it be today?*

Early morning conversations aren't enough, no matter how godly and pious your conversation partner. In the end, your coffee cup is empty, and all you have to show for it is a jolt of energy and a distorted reflection of yourself looking down into the hollowness. What does יתלתק תלתק תלתק תלתק הלתק לתק matter if it's all I have?

It would be wonderful if carrying your cross were as simple as learning theology. Theology is easy to come by—pick up some books and read them. Read Augustine, read Calvin, read Kierkegaard, read Bavinck. You're all set.

But carrying your cross is altogether easier than that, and at the same time, it is an impossible thing. Carrying your cross requires living, breathing, experiencing the world with all its beauty and ugliness. It requires being hated, lied about, spat on, betrayed, having your heart broken by those you thought you could trust. It requires seeing your wife walk toward you down the aisle, allowing yourself to feel that prick of ecstasy and exhilaration, finally being able to sigh because you know you're home. It requires having your face smashed to bits. It requires reveling in the

quiet gift of friendship. It requires waking, walking, wondering if your singleness will ever feel less heavy. It requires throwing all sorts of things: furniture, parties, temper tantrums, caution to the wind. It requires that you come face to face with the moist, hot breath of the fallen and the glorious, and through it all, it requires that you hold on to Christ with all your might and strength and vigor.

Theology is nothing. Carrying your cross requires that you die, day after day, because you know you're being made new, and you know the million little deaths you'll suffer through on your way to glory will one day paint a constellation of a dizzying grace you might never get to understand.

How many gardens will you plant? How many canvases will you mount? How many foundations will you lay? Carrying your cross is small; it is nothing, and it is everything. You're not promised much, but you're promised everything, and that has to be enough.

This article was originally published at thefallenandtheglorious.blogspot.com, where Daniel writes occasionally. He can be found on Twitter as well, @DanielDavalos. —¹

In the Valley of CoronaVirus

Israel Kolade

What, for many of us, was just an update of an unfortunate reality for a distant city across the world has quickly become a nightmare for our own cities and towns. What began as pure shock has quickly devolved into fear, anxiety, and anger. There's fear over the virus itself and the damage it has caused and will cause. There's anxiety over what this means for our jobs, financial security, children, parents, and livelihood. There's anger towards government officials who did not take this matter seriously enough, quickly enough, and anger towards ourselves for letting this disrupt our mental health as much as it already has. Suffice it to say, the coronavirus and the cultural moment of fear, anxiety, and anger that it has ushered in is far more than we had assumed and far more disruptive than we had expected.

How should Christians respond to the novel coronavirus and the cultural moment of fear, anxiety, and anger? There are three movements that have characterised the Church in times like this, and they are; (1) Enter into the Darkness, (2) Lean unto the Shepherd, and (3) Move toward the Afflicted.

Enter into the Darkness

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13 ESV)

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18, the Apostle Paul instructs the Church in regard to what they are to believe about Christians who have died. It is interesting to note that the first thing that Paul acknowledges is that Christians will grieve over the dead. He doesn't deny the reality of grief, but rather he qualifies it. The Christian reflex isn't to run away from the darkness of grief but instead to enter it - and to enter it as those who have hope. The same movement has been a mark of the Church throughout its history in response to the darkness of national tragedies and moments of fear, anxiety, and anger. Jesus Christ himself entered the darkness of grief as he wept over the death of his friend Lazarus - and He did so knowing that in a few moments He would bring Lazarus back to life.

This means that it is okay to daily check your

news app for the latest news regarding the virus and to constantly be alert to recommendations by the national government, local government, and all health officials. That is to say, it is okay to enter into the national darkness that the coronavirus has brought. In entering the darkness, there is permission to feel the pain that it contains - the fear, the anxiety, and the anger. After all, to enter the darkness is to acknowledge that we live in a broken world, and to mourn the devastation that is a regular part of this broken world.

What makes this a unique movement for the Church is not just that we enter the darkness, but that we enter the darkness as those who have hope. There is a strange providence to the timing of the coronavirus in the season of Easter. The story of Easter is the ground of the hope that Paul is talking about in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. The story of Easter is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This resurrection is the beginning of a grand renewal project that ends with the renewal of the world - what the bible calls the New Heavens and the New Earth. This is not just hope for the immediate future, in the midst of the novel coronavirus, but is an ultimate hope that redefines time itself. In the end, all wrongs will be made right, all diseases will be banished in the face of complete healing, and all things will be made new. This is the animating force of the Christian hope that drives the Church to enter the darkness - to enter the darkness as those who have hope.

Lean unto the Shepherd

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me (Psalm 23:4 ESV)

Psalm 23 is a well-known psalm, if not the most well-known psalm, and it is well-known for a reason. It pushes against the idea that we can lead ourselves in the right path, it pushes against the idea that we can lead ourselves into abundant life, and it pushes against the idea that we can bring rest to our disturbed souls, that we can give ourselves peace in the midst of chaos. The psalm tells us that there are forces far bigger than us: sin, death, and evil—but it doesn't leave us there.



Photo by Jake Gee

It points us to the one far bigger than even them: the Good Shepherd. This is why the psalm is read, preached, and sung at funerals, at sick beds, in the midst of tragedy, pain, betrayal, defeat, and despair. Because in those moments, like this one, we are forced to admit that we are never in control of our lives; we are but small creatures in a world plagued with monsters. And yet, the psalm says, there is a shepherd who is bigger than all of them; there is a shepherd who conquers all of them. This shepherd will lead you in the right path, into life, and will bring rest to your disturbed soul. He will give you peace in the midst of chaos. Why? Because He is with you.

One of my professors at Covenant Seminary, Dr. Michael Williams, famously says in his Doctrine of God class that the greatest preposition in the bible is 'with.' Better yet, he goes on to say, we can summarize all of God's promises to His people and His intentions for the world using that one preposition. God is WITH us in the valley of coronavirus and has promised not to leave us.

Why should we entrust ourselves to this Shepherd by leaning unto Him? Because He has entered the ultimate valley of sin and death itself, and in entering the valley took the pain and judgment that it brought so that we, who walk through the brutal valleys of life (from dysfunctional families to coronavirus) can always trust that He will never leave us and indeed is able to conquer all evil.

As I have been processing what it looks like to live Christianly in this moment, I listened to a sermon

by Bryan Dunagan, Senior Pastor of Highlands Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas TX, who, in response to the coronavirus, reminded his congregation that God hasn't stopped being God even in this moment and that the Church can move out with a non-anxious presence because God is still in control and can be trusted. He goes on to say: *'You will sleep best, knowing that God does not sleep at all.'*

Even as we experience feelings of fear, anxiety, and anger, we lean unto the Shepherd and entrust ourselves unto Him. We do this knowing that He is still in control, is still trustworthy, and is still more concerned for our welfare than we could ever be for ourselves. We lean unto the Shepherd who is with us and will never leave us.

Move toward the Afflicted

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor. 1:3-4 ESV)

The basic movement of the human heart in light of the brokenness of the world is toward the self. However, the movement of the Church from the book of Acts through two thousand years of Christian history has been, and continues to be, toward the other. And in times of epidemics, crisis, and fear; toward the afflicted. The foundation of this movement is the initiating movement of God. In 2

Corinthians 1:3-4, Paul explains that the ability and desire to comfort others stems out of the experience of God's comfort in our afflictions. In short, because God has comforted us in all afflictions we must comfort others in any affliction. While some will go through this pandemic unscathed, for many the coronavirus will bring many different types of afflictions. Irrespective of the type of affliction, the call is the same: to move toward the afflicted with the comfort of God.

This was the testimony of the Early Church. In his account of the plague of Alexandria, Dionysius writes:

Most of our brother-Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of the danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbours and cheerfully accepting their pains.

This sort of commitment to the other is indeed remarkable to read about. However, in light of modern medicine and a deeper knowledge of how diseases spread, what does a movement toward the afflicted look like? A burden to care for the hurting (physically, economically, and spiritually), or social distancing? Both.

The witness of the Christian Church has always been to creatively apply the ethics of the Kingdom of God to the unique context and situation of the present problem. This has looked different in each century, and it'll certainly look different in this moment. However, even as the actions may look different, the movement will be the same.

To stay at home in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus is an act of love just as much as is an attentive care to the physical ailments of those who have the disease. Both, in different ways, are movements towards the afflicted. In light of the global nature of this pandemic, with various types

of impacts at the local level, the challenge for the church will be to creatively move towards the afflicted in ways that seek their healing and bear witness to the loving attentiveness of God.

In considering these three movements of entering the darkness, leaning unto the Shepherd, and moving toward the afflicted, I'm praying that the Church, as it has faithfully done in the past, will

continue to bear witness to the movement of God toward the broken hearted and afflicted. I pray that the same will be said of the Church in 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, that was said of the early Church, as documented by Rodney Stark, in his book *The Rise of Christianity*:

Christianity served as a revitalization movement that arose in response to the

miser, chaos, fear, and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world. . . . Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachment. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fire, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services. . . . For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities more tolerable.

To cities, towns, and villages filled with overburdened health care services, people in social isolation, and anxious panic in the atmosphere, may Christianity offer a new culture capable of making life more tolerable in the midst of coronavirus.

Originally posted at

<https://israelkolade.com/blog/2020/3/18/in-the-valley-of-coronavirus> ↗

“We are forced to admit
that we are never in
control of our lives; we are
but small creatures in a
world plagued with
monsters.”



Photo by Candace Blackwelder



Photo by Bailey Preib

July 4 Bailey Preib

As I hold a metal stick on fire, watching its nostalgic spark, I feel a deep ambivalence in my gut. The same gut that is filled with hamburgers, hot dogs, watermelon, and beer - our typical Independence meal. This year, my mother bought a pack of sparklers, hoping to bring a little extra joy to our COVID filled summer. I'm not sure the last time I have held a sparkler, but like all once magical childhood experiences, something feels off.

It's not just that a group of four adults are standing a bit too still while holding flaming sticks -a clear affirmation of adulthood- that is causing my unease. I have felt troubled all day.

My white privilege, surrounded by my parents white suburban neighborhood, suddenly feels palpable. This is the longest time I have spent at home after leaving for college seven years ago. I have lived in a range of diverse cities ever since, from Savannah, to San Jose, and now St. Louis. Being back here affirms the dishonesty of my surroundings. I am white, which is actually to say I am of Irish and German descent. My first and last name seem to be the only remaining protest against my southern United States heritage claiming me as its own. But I am a foreigner in this land, as perhaps we all are, especially those belonging to the kingdom to come.

While I am grateful to my ancestors who fought for my freedom, I must hold that gift alongside shame. Like most things in life, it is not binary. The oppressed often become oppressors given the chance, blurring the lines of victim and attacker. Such was true of Israel. Such is true today. It seems impossible for me to understand how someone could fight and die for his own rights while actively imposing the same injustice to his neighbor. It is a grievous evil worthy of no excuse or explanation.

Yet it is my heritage, and the heritage of this nation. It was not just one instance where we perpetrated violence against others for our advantage, nor twice. The deep wounds of Native American and African-American people are still tearing anew atop this scar skinned land.

Though I do not actively use or endorse violence toward those different from myself, I am not innocent. I benefit from a system which promotes my success not merely because of my hard work, but also because of the color of my skin. I don't think twice about going five miles over the speed limit. I don't know what it is like to instinctively hide from the people who should be protecting me. I don't worry that my life or a loved one's might be taken away without hesitation or consequence. Nor have I tried to change that system. I am so sorry. But there is more to it than that.

I am centuries removed from the civil war, yet I shudder to think about being born in that time. In fact, I am terrified. Yet I must earnestly think of such things. Which side would I have been on? My mind screams that I would be on the right side of history. Modern day Germans probably think the same. But my heart knows my wickedness and the great influence of one's culture and society, especially on a child. Though they do not don a blue "X" with stars, I see the lingering effects in my extended family. I could see it in my naïve younger self, were I willing to look. The state in which I was born and raised did not fight alongside Lincoln. I must look at and wrestle with these facts. I thank God I was not born then and know what side I fight on today.

It is not enough to recognize our ugly foundation or even to apologize. Although, as far as I am aware, this country has not even done that in any personal or relational way. What then, are we

to do? Simply mentioning the word reparations will divide a room. There is so much disagreement on what reparations would look like or if we should even entertain the idea. Reparations can range from verbal acknowledgement to monetary wealth, or community rebuilding, to name a few. I certainly am not qualified, nor have the right to decide such things. But I do know that the wound of America will not heal by being ignored. In fact, it might only grow bolder. Ecclesiastes 8:11 comes to mind: "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil." To say we have been slow is an understatement.

The ghost of our nation's past will only continue to haunt and infiltrate our present and future if remained unseen. Even if we played no role in creating other's pain, which is a difficult stance to defend, we are still called to be bearers of restoration. I hear many brothers and sisters who refuse to accept this responsibility, asking as Cain did, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Word of God gives a clear answer: Yes. And who is my brother? Your brother and sister are those who share the human race, reflect the image of God, and live in the house next to you.

I wonder what the house at the end of my street, my parents' only black neighbors, are thinking about right now. I wonder if the bangs of fireworks sound more like shots of guns to them as they do to me on this July night. I wonder if my ambivalence pales in comparison to their experience on this day. I wonder if this spark of fire in my hand foreshadows a brighter future igniting lasting change, or if it will be remembered as a beautiful but quick flash against the illumination of the pandemic. The only way to know is to knock on their door. —

The Art Table

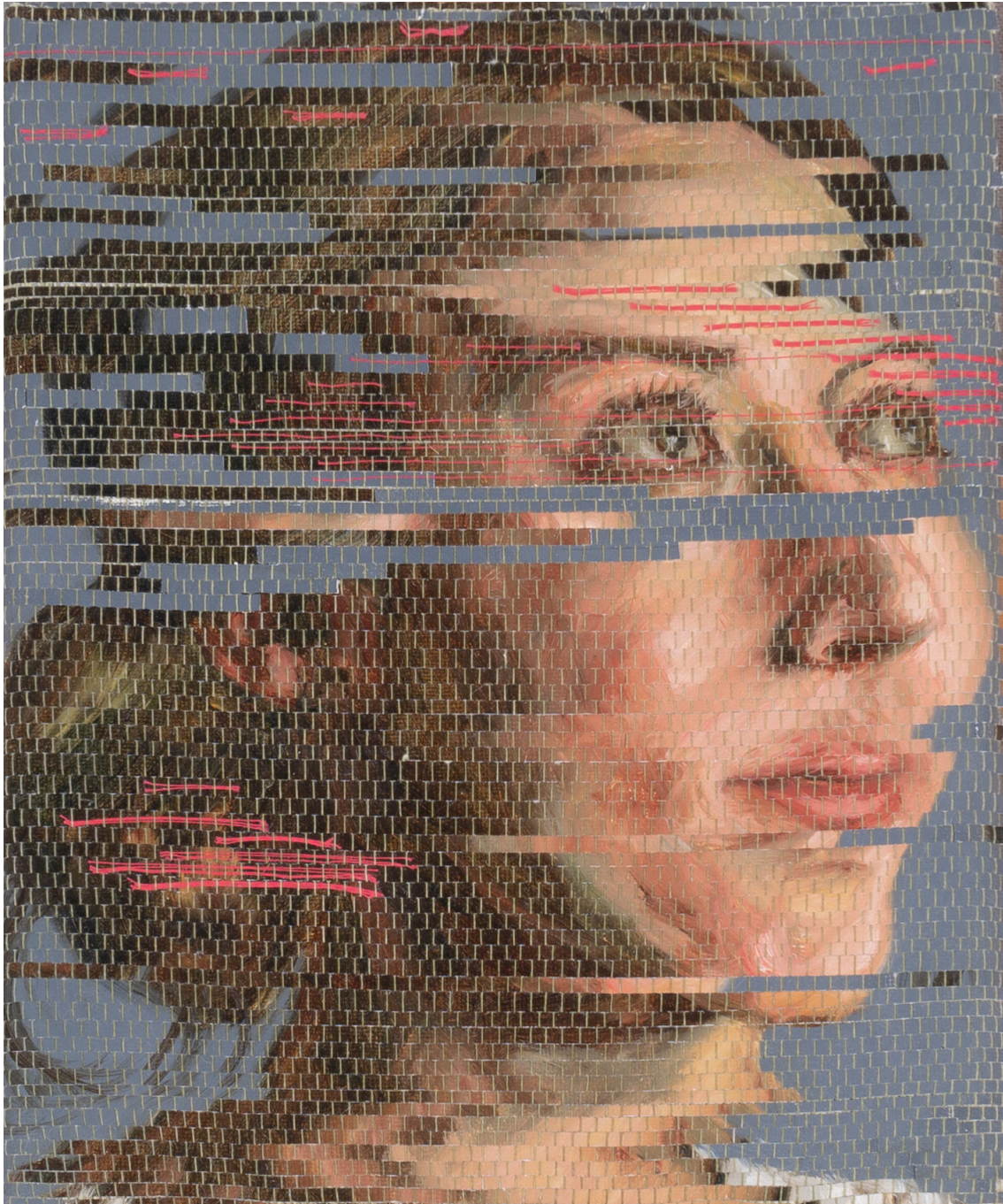
Monday Mourning

James McAllister

Monday morning rusting every shining Sunday ambition.
Monday mourning the absence of the Sunday friend.
What was growing, green and spritzed with life,
Today is pale, translucent, dry, and haunted,
Like the shell of the cicada,
Still clinging to the chainlink fence.
This day two feels so much like day first and day last.
This beginning ought to thrill and inspire and ignite and unveil,
Like the first glimpse of towering, chisel-grey mountains,
Or the brushed-steel-blue wall of sea,
Beheld at the crest of a taxing and worthwhile hill.
This beginning is a challenge to accept,
For it is new,
And it is old.
It is the visitation of a friend,
Whose disposition tempts me to assume the worst,
Or at best the same,
And to mock the patient whisper of hope.
I am in flight,
Through and away from this ambivalent day.
The descent is as relieving as it is disheartening,
With Monday evening out as best as it can to make its safest landing,
Into Monday evening and on into the changing of the day.

Play, my dear Owen Brown

Play, my dear.
Stay, don't go.
Not yet, I want you near.
Please, my dear.
Don't leave, not now, not yet.
Come back, my love!
Dreadful,
Dreadful



Static
Courtney Watts
Mixed media, woven oil painting
10" x 8"

Ahmaud Arbery

Mary Schieferstein

I'll never forget
Walking into the room,
News on the TV.

He was sitting there listening,
Dark fingers dancing expertly
On the keys of his DS.

He spoke without looking up—
“He shot them.
Just because they were black.”

I studied my little brother's face—
His beautiful, brown face—
Knowing I couldn't know how he felt.

I have never been a target
Or a suspect
Because of the color of my skin.

And I probably never will be.

An extrovert in quarantine,
Most days he puts on his shoes,
Goes for a run around our white
neighborhood.

Somewhere there's a mother
Whose son went for a run
And never came back,

A father who lost his boy,
A young man who lost his friend,
A birthday that will never be celebrat-
ed.

My heart aches.

I have no right to speak

As though I know what this feels like,
To claim some kind of wisdom in
these matters

When that isn't my experience,
When I have, however unintentionally,
Been part of the problem.

But I am obligated to speak
Against injustice,
Against people acting in place of the
law,

Against racism and profiling,
The affront to human value and dig-
nity,
The murder of a man made in the
image of God.

I must speak, for these things ought
not to be so.

So, that much I will say.
For the rest, I will listen
To those who know what it feels like,

Those who live on the other side of
these realities,
Who see them much more clearly
than I—
Those weary to the bone.

I will listen to them.
I will mourn with them.
I will learn from them,

In the hope that I may learn to be part
of the solution.



Photos by Jake Gee taken at a BLM march in St. Louis



The Irony of Outrage, and Sufjan Steven's "America"

Jeb Ralston

Sufjan Stevens, that enigmatic and soft-spoken tortured soul of a musician, released his new single this summer, "America," with the not-so-subtle timing of being one day before the Fourth of July. Sufjan, who is no stranger to political commentary through the lens of his own Christian perception, is not one to remain ambiguous on everything. Ask Sufjan fans, and most of us, anticipating this single, would have predicted a scathing takedown of American culture.

Sufjan is a disarming lyricist, though, and often catches me off-guard, as he did with this track. In a time when everyone has something to say about the state of our country or political adversaries and virtue-signaling abounds, criticism which involves self-criticism will almost always be more readily received.

I have respected Sufjan for this reason. He is willing to see the depths of his own infidelities and deviances in his songwriting before he is willing to call out the sins of another individual or a nation. He is typically above potshots, sucker punches, and virtue-signaling. Whether it is the secrets beneath his own floorboard or the humanizing of an American villain, Sufjan knows that the Pharisaical posture of thanking God that we are not like some is entirely antithetical to the Christian faith.

Sufjan Stevens called this new single "a protest song against the sickness of American culture in particular," but for Sufjan, this is a song equally (if not more) about the sickness within himself. He is not removed from the sickness, and neither are we. We are all products and producers of the culture in which we find ourselves. And it would

not be Sufjan without his iconic ambivalence:

“I have loved you, I have grieved
I’m ashamed to admit I no longer believe
I have loved you, I received
I have traded my life
For a picture of the scenery
Don’t do to me what you did to America”

In my estimate, it is a petitionary song to God in which Sufjan views the moral, social, and spiritual degradation of America as one that has occurred and is occurring in his own life. The oft-repeated line, “Don’t do to me what you did to America,” is a haunting and God-fearing request, and the frequent self-comparison to “a Judas in heat” strikes at the heart of the song. Allusions to the flood of Genesis 6 are frequent, but where Noah was called a “blameless man among the people” as he “walked faithfully with God” (Gen 6:9), Sufjan sees himself as one who simultaneously has “choked on the waters” and “abated the flood.” He is a type of both Noah and Judas. He is one who denounces the evil of the land but must also denounce himself in the process. He is one who has “worshiped” and “believed” but in the same turn has “broke your bread for a splendor of machinery.” He is pious and a traitor. And he is indeed ambivalent with his outrage: he is outraged over the condition of America and he is outraged with himself.

Like a land flooded in judgment, who are we to think we did not contribute to the flood? And who are we to think we will escape it? The problem to Sufjan is not the abstraction of sin but the reality of it. Sin is always more ‘real’ when we see it in ourselves. And the effects of sin can very well be a judgment in themselves. God can bring judgment as easily through a flood or a plague as he can by leaving us to our own devices. And I believe that is what Sufjan is grasping at here. The “sickness” of American culture is more pervasive than any one thing. The wrath consistent across the political divide, the deep-seated and vicious racial injustice, the xenophobia, and no doubt the greed and syncretism of American culture—as perhaps best expressed in one of his most bizarre songs, “Christmas Unicorn,”—are surely in Sufjan’s mind here as symptoms of such sickness.

The song strikes at the tension of Sufjan

possessing a holy anger over injustice while maintaining that he himself is deserving of judgment—an irony I know in myself all too well.

I am fraught with imposter syndrome. It has plagued me most of my life. I wear masks of competence and virtue but know full well that those masks are not the real me. I am a seminary student who hopes to be ordained, but I am also a profoundly immature and insecure man. I find myself in alignment with Sufjan’s own frustrations here because I know that there really is an imposter. And my frustrations with American culture are very often the same frustrations I have with myself: I am a greedy and self-protective man. The imposter is not imaginary.

Of course, the imposter is not the sum of me, but he is there, like Brennan Manning said:

“When I get honest, I admit I am a bundle of paradoxes. I believe and I doubt, I hope and get discouraged, I love and I hate, I feel bad about feeling good, I feel guilty about not feeling guilty. I am trusting and suspicious. I am honest and I still play games.”

I am not the man I want to be. I am a man who would not withstand the flood. I am one who is grieved over the sin in our world and in the deepest cracks of my own soul. I love Jesus, but my love proves itself so little. I am both “broken” and “beat” but also “fortune” and “free.” I am both sinner and saint, faithful and frustrated. And the only assurance I have in this life is that Jesus died for the likes of me.

While this is quite clearly a song of judgment and does not end on a happy note, the Christian life is no stranger to such paradox. And perhaps this very ambivalence may allow us to be keenly in tune with the sickness of our culture and be those most equipped to address the sickness without having to result to scapegoating or willful ignorance. When one is grounded in the assurance of the gospel, criticism can take a humble but potent new form because it can call sin what it really is without needing to resort to annihilation.

We have a Great Physician who came for the sick and sinners. And when we know ourselves to be numbered among them, our best criticisms will always have a tinge of irony and a taste of a cure.

originally published at mbird.com →



Photo by Bailey Preib

Time

James McAllister

Listen to *Time* by James McAllister here: <https://sptfy.com/5cfo>

Time
It's time I love
I am always hemorrhaging time
There's not enough time
This side
Of the New

Pain
I am in pain
Even when my body's ok
I feel pain everyday

Pain in my heart
Pain in my past
Pain in my hopes
Pain in my laugh

Dust
I will be dust
We all are dust
Our lives are specks of dust
And temporary

Tears
There will be tears

Throughout the years
Tears of sorrow now
But joyous in the end

I can't pretend
That I will mend
Before the New sets in
Before the New sets in
And draws the curtain closed

Step out of the dark
And into my arms
Step out of the dark
And into my arms, again
Step out of the dark
And into my arms
Step out of the dark
And into my arms

I can't pretend
That I will mend
Before the New sets in
Before the New sets in
And draws the curtain closed

Magnolia

Mary Schieferstein

I glimpse them through glass,
The velvety smooth, pinkish-white petals
My hands have fingered so many times.

My grandma had a magnolia tree.
I would wend through its branches, climb to the
top,
Pretend I could rule the world.

It's gone now, and so is she.
Death crept in while we were sleeping,
And now she rests beneath the dirt.

Buried, like those
All around the world
Whose breath Death stole away.

Gone.

They are gone, and I am leaving,
Heading back to where my heart is,
A home I'll no longer recognize.

A world changed by death and fear of death,
A million hopes chopped down,
A curse no ruler can reverse.

Gone,
So much is gone.

In grief my desperate eyes flit back
To the trees by the side of the road,
Budding, blooming, vibrant.

Brilliant specks of hope
Proving life still grows
Where once all was gone.



Photo by Jamie Ewald



Rending II
Hampton Watts

Oil on canvas
96" x 64"

These Hands

David Augustine

I see life stolen.
But yet I wait.
As I untouched,
Pursue my fate.
Barbary.

The end of lives
Seems not to die,
Seized by hands
That are enshrined.
Barbary.

I cannot wait
For life is precious.
I see it stolen,
Yet here I sit.
Barbary.

Yet here I sit
Barbary!
Yet here I sit
Barbary!

LORD forgive me,
For my voice speaks not
Against this buttress that holds
me.

For to speak is to lose
And to stand is to fall.

So here I sit
Barbary!
So here I sit
Barbary!

LORD forgive me
For a heart that does not break
for death,
For hands that do not strain for
justice,
And so keeping the power
And holding it tight.

Then I look, I look and see.
Are these the hands,
That are enshrined?
I see their guilt that is in mine
I try to flee, but they're part of
me

These hands
These hands
And look at me
And more and more I see

Not just my hands
But everywhere, I bear the sign
And wear the guilt.
And it feels so good.

Barbary, LORD, barbary!
Help me to fight
My selfish security
That keeps my hands en-
shrined.

These sentences scare,
Because to help is to lose.
But your justice must reign,
And those you love need judg-
ment.

For these hands bear guiltless
guilt,
Hidden for all to see,
Purity impure.
White.

He brought Sandwiches to war

David Augustine

He brought sandwiches to war. Henry Wilson was a Senator for Massachusetts from 1855 to 1873. He was a talented and smart man who was also a strong abolitionist and did far more to combat slavery than most of his peers. Although he was certainly not perfect (under a law he drafted, African American soldiers were paid approximately half of what their white counterparts made), he cared about institutional injustice and fought against it during his life. I say these things to frame what I am about to say: Henry Wilson was also a naïve fool.

Wilson and many others in the North believed that the first battle of the Civil War (the First Battle of Bull Run) would be symbolic of the war to come. He and others believed that the Union soldiers would easily defeat the Rebel troops, beginning a cascade of victories for the Union which would, in turn, bring a swift end to the war in about six months. In fact, Wilson and others were so confident that the Union would win the First Battle of Bull Run that they decided to travel and watch the battle so that they could see this wonderful victory. Wilson, like a parent at a soccer game bringing orange slices, even brought sandwiches to give to the Union Soldiers afterwards. However, things did not go as planned. The Rebel troops quickly caused the Union soldiers to chaotically retreat, resulting in them crashing through the observers' picnic, even allegedly destroying Wilson's carriage by accident. Those who believed that the Union would win the battle that day were resoundingly wrong. However, they were correct that the battle would, at least partially, serve as a symbol for the war. The Rebels were more strong, more entrenched, and more tenacious than the Union ever expected. Henry Wilson, with his basket of sandwiches, was a naïve fool, and so am I. What is a fool? In the book of Proverbs, the fool is a different character than the wicked one or unrighteous one. While the wicked or unrighteous knowingly flaunt and rebel against the good way, the fool simply does not understand. Take Proverbs 18:2, for example, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." However, this lack of understanding is not simple ignorance, for Proverbs calls the wise to

learn more. Lack of understanding is not foolishness. However, foolishness is resistance to gaining new understanding. Although this behavior feels less egregious, Proverbs consistently describes the consequences of the fool's actions in similar terms to the wicked or the unrighteous. For example, Proverbs 10:14 says, "The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near." Whether your actions are motivated by lack of knowledge or malice, they can have the same effect on those around you.

Henry Wilson was a fool for not recognizing the strength and determination of the Confederacy or the enormous power of racism that created a bulwark for its beliefs. Wilson had not learned the power of racism in his own life because he was never a subject of slavery or racist social structures; however, he could have listened to those who had those experiences. More obviously, he could have looked to the near-death beating a Southern Senator gave to another Senator for speaking against slavery. There were any number of signs Wilson could have seen, and he was a fool for not heeding them.

I am also a fool. I am a fool for believing that, over time, racism will naturally leave and that our society only requires minor change. I have believed that there are no powers working against us as we strive for a world that looks more like the world to come. I have believed these things despite continuous voices around me saying otherwise—voices of those who know more than me—but in my pride I have refused to listen I have been bringing sandwiches to war. I have waited politely for this stubborn and vile sin to leave of its own accord. I have picnicked while precious lives have been lost and the battle thrown into confusion. However, I now see more clearly racism's power in preserving the status quo. I see that our Enemy takes delight in sowing discord to prevent justice from reigning. I see that our society needs more than a new coat of paint to fix our ills. There is much work to be done, which I believe our Father wants us to do as we hold repentance in our hands. But first we must recognize the magnitude of our foe and the depth of its entrenchments. To my fellow fools, we must stop bringing sandwiches to war. —

Modern Lament

Bailey Preib

Oh God, my God,
My tears overflow from your bottle,
An outlier on your records.
I have no taste for unconsecrated
communion.

The bread is too soggy,
The wine too salty.
Am I bound to limp with Jacob's
wound

All my life?
Destined to decline into depression
Until I die?

My dust is watered thoroughly.
Face me that I may flower.
I will look to you.

For the sea looked and fled,
Jordan turned back.

My God, you became man
That I might not forget.

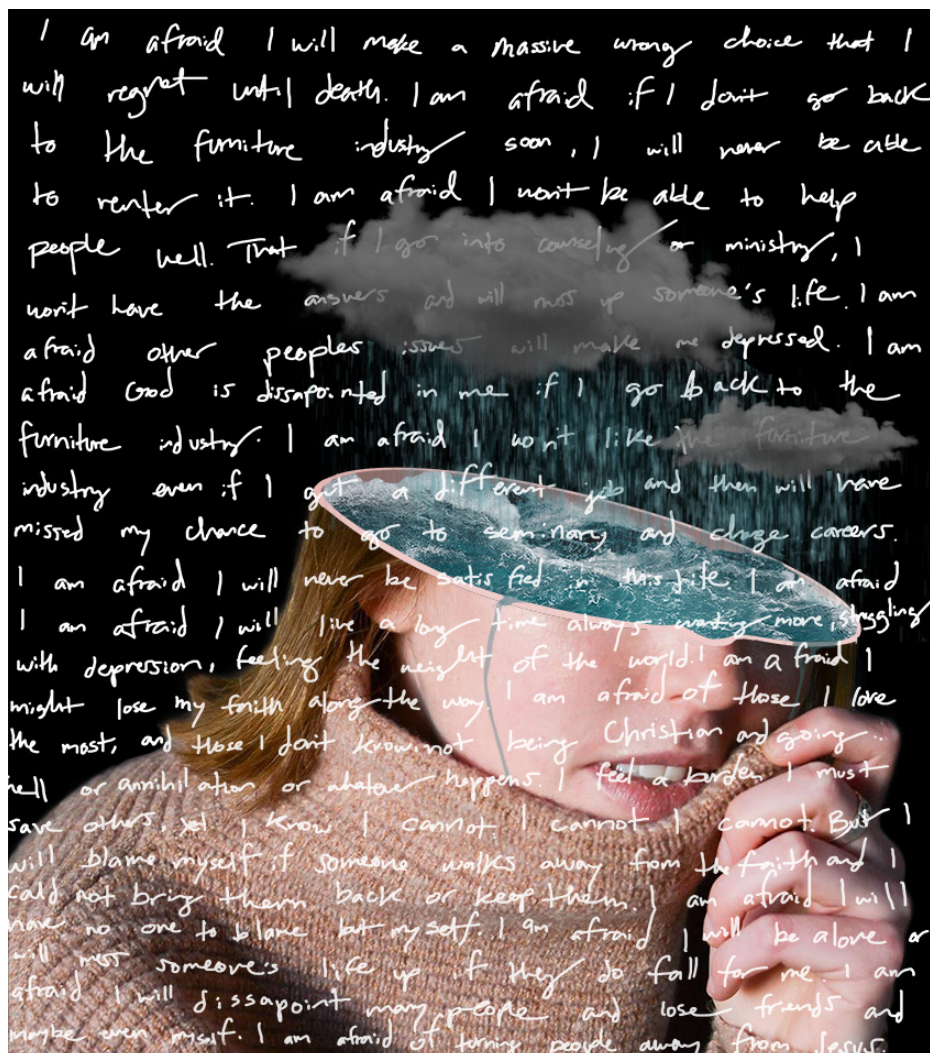


Image by Bailey Preib



イエス言ひ給ふ『我は復活なり、生命なり、我を信ずる者は死ぬとも
生きん。

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever
believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” John 11:25

Dying in Chicgo

Jake Gee

for my late Mother, (宮城優美子) Yumiko Gee

Sometimes
It's hard to put into words
The things we touch and see
And the places where we find
Ourselves
Like a stale hospital room
In West Chicago
On New Year's Day
Half-filled with light
From the baking winter Sun
Casting shadows in the corner
And fiery reflections all about
Through hurried, plastic face masks
Like when a watch brightly bounces
Sharp jittery light
Into your eyes
And makes you wince
But now the light falls onto the lap
Of my Mother
Wrapped in glowing, orange hue
Feeble and frail
Draped in tubes and gown
With electronic choruses
Echoing out of sync
While frantic sneakers squeak past her room
Upon shiny hallway floors
The background noise
Of a soundtrack
Long on repeat
But a latent revelation descends
And clouds the room
With grim clarity
As I hold the hand
Of this woman
Who gave me life

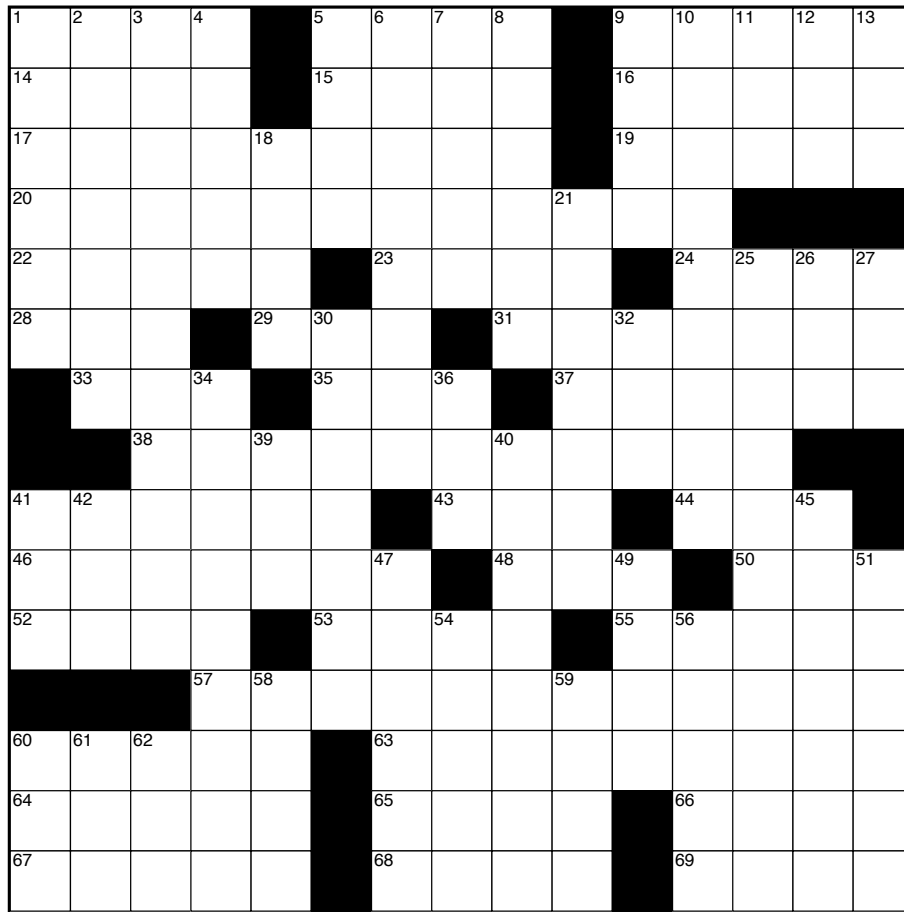
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In the wake of nightmares
She would sing me to sleep
In a language I did not know
With an accent I could not speak
But in my heart
I understood
What was said
By her
To me
Like osmosis
Or telepathy
Or foreigner friends nodding in agreement
For the lack of words
And sacred keys
Or secret, intricate handshakes
Between little human hands
Even as the door
Closed up the midnight light
Upon my childish brow
The security of Love
When the world seemed so wild
And uninvolved
And fair
But now the door is mine
To shut
And the songs are mine
To sing
And the comfort mine
To give
As the January sun fades
Behind drab concrete façades
And the light continues to dance
Upon my Mother's troubled breast
As she struggles to breathe
And hope
And find relief
Sometimes
It's hard to explain
Wouldn't you agree?
The things we touch and see

Crossword

Travis Hutchinson

See pg.46 for answers



ACROSS

- 1 Nadal nickname
- 5 "Thanks _____"
- 9 Popular RPG
- 14 "Dear _____ Hansen" musical
- 15 Face protuberance
- 16 "Rats!"
- 17 Inherits
- 19 Like Moody's for bonds
- 20 Psalm 49 verse, part 1
- 22 Caveman diet
- 23 Control
- 24 Teensy
- 28 Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, England
- 29 "Mind the gap!", e.g. (Abbr.)
- 31 1819 Scott novel
- 33 Globe-shaped fig.
- 35 German article
- 37 Emcee duties
- 38 Psalm 49 verse, part 2
- 41 Ab _____ (from the start)
- 43 Moo _____ pork
- 44 "Gross!"
- 46 Queen of Pop
- 48 Opp. of WNW
- 50 Ball of chewed gum
- 52 Hebrew

- measurement
- 53 Part of NAACP (Abbr.)
- 55 Frighten
- 57 Psalm 49 verse, part 3
- 60 All opposed
- 63 Wannabe rock star instrument
- 64 Common stats tool
- 65 Fourth century Germanic invader
- 66 Number of cat lives
- 67 _____ apso dog
- 68 How one might set the AC in summer
- 69 New years in 42-down

DOWN

- 1 Cookbook entry
- 2 Oaths
- 3 What the Malfoy's suffer from
- 4 Anoint, giving extreme unction
- 5 Spanish liqueur
- 6 Elevated train
- 7 Strong fiber
- 8 Tenth century Bishop of Rome
- 9 Frat house alternative
- 10 _____ life
- 11 Washington baseballer
- 12 Beats by Dr. _____
- 13 No CPR order

- 18 Pig feed
- 21 Jealous
- 25 Rare Jeopardy! occurrence
- 26 Also
- 27 "Count me in"
- 30 Like some Kias
- 32 Unwelcome picnic guest
- 34 Lottery win, for one
- 36 Super _____ gaming system
- 39 Racket
- 40 Yankee territory
- 41 "The way I see it..." in a text
- 42 See 69-across
- 45 Search allowance
- 47 Popular type of cheese bagel
- 49 Jacobs' hairy brother
- 51 Like some tractors
- 54 Toyota sedan
- 56 Director Eastwood
- 58 Serena Williams' org.
- 59 E to J filler
- 60 World's busiest airport (Abbr.)
- 61 Math degree
- 62 May be black or green

The Community Table

Campus Ministry in the Midst of a Global Pandemic

Tim Price, MDiv '20

RUF Campus Minister at Washington University at St. Louis, MO

Beginning ministry through RUF at WashU in St. Louis in the middle of a global pandemic is exciting. I bet that is not what you thought I was going to say. The truth is that it is not what I thought I would be able to say. This is certainly not the script I would have written for myself as I step into full-time ministry. Regardless, there is a lot of doom and gloom going around and it is important for us to remember who God is and that we are not alone. I have been known to be the big-picture, unhealthy optimist in the room who sometimes misses the small details. Lately though, I am more and more convinced that you just can't do the details well if you don't have the big picture in mind. The good news is that God is both in the big picture and the knitty gritty details. Doing ministry in the midst of a global pandemic will actually force us to continually go back to the big picture while assessing every aspect of the details in what we are doing.

While I am excited about what this semester may bring, I also want to recognize that it is extremely important to learn how to lament the things we've lost. At RUF this semester we will not be able to hold a large group meeting on campus, we will not be able to do retreats (my personal favorite), our numbers will likely grow smaller for many reasons, and as the semester draws nearer we will discover more and more things we cannot do like we would in a normal school year. The truth is, this is going to be quite difficult and abundantly strange. However, I continue to be reassured that throughout history God has always done amazing things in the worst situations through the most foolish people. It makes me think about one of my favorite Henri Nouwen quotes, "I used to complain about all the interruptions to my work until I realized that these interruptions were my work." This is helpful as we go further into a season where the entire world is continually "interrupted."

With that said, there are a few reasons I feel excited about this fall semester. For one, Covenant Seminary has equipped me with many of the necessary tools for enduring difficult seasons of ministry, and I am excited to use those tools! Secondly, I am inspired by a question that Dr. Henry Cloud proposed to RUF staff during a training seminar: "What if this was your best semester for discipleship you've ever had?" And finally, I continue to be reminded of one of RUF's most humbling and profound presuppositions - God is at work.

I mentioned that Covenant has equipped me with tools for enduring difficult seasons of ministry. I feel that the Seminary not only equipped me with tools for enduring, but also for seeing life's difficult circumstances as opportunities for growth. I am thinking in particular about a concept developed by Carol Dweck that we learned about in Tasha Chapman's Educational Foundations class called a "growth mindset." When we begin to have a growth mindset, what looks like failure is often a space for growth. We are aiming to make this a semester of tremendous growth for both staff and students at WashU RUF. We have a great ministry team of committed undergraduate students and together we will work to try many things, fail a lot, have healthy feedback systems to continue to try and fail, and find what works in this strange time. We hope this helps prepare our staff and students for future difficulties in every realm of life. With this in mind, next semester may require a lot of mentoring for the committed students and helping them reach students with Christ in places we will simply not be able to reach. In one sense, this is the essence of the RUF ministry - Reaching students with Christ and equipping them to serve.

As I think about Dr. Cloud's question, "What if this is the best semester for discipleship yet?" I can actually begin to see how that may be a real possibility for some campus ministries in this



strange time. If we can learn to adapt and accept failure as a part of life, then we may have a terrific semester, even if much of it looks like failure. God is kind to us in our failures, and keeps his promises to us even when we fail. We know this is true when we keep our minds fixed on the Cross. Not only that, but God also does great work through our failures and fumbling in ministry. If anything, this is an opportunity for all of us in ministry to reassess what we define as success in ministry. And so, it is of utmost importance that we are vigilant about our presupposition that God is at work. I hope and pray that all of us are reminded of the

truth that God is at work every morning when we get out of bed. God is at work in our failures and foolishness. He is at work in the best of times, in the worst of times, and especially in global pandemics. He is working and will continue to spread his kingdom on earth through ministries like RUF even if they are limited and require an abundance of flexibility and agility. I was pretty certain even as an undergraduate student that I wanted to work for RUF. This calling has been 8+ years in the making, and while the 2020-2021 school year will look nothing like I could have expected, I count myself blessed and deeply humbled to work for RUF at WashU. —

Living Our Wild Calling by Fighting Racial Injustice

Savannah Price, MATS '22

2020 has brought to light the racial injustices that people of color are suffering. George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Brianna Taylor are names that have been spoken time and time again as a cry for change. As Christians, we have the opportunity to love one another well by promoting black voices and joining our brothers and sisters in their cries for change. In my book, *The Wild Calling*, I talk about living our lives for the glory of God and how we are not called to play it safe when it comes to living with Kingdom-focus. The gospel is not a tale of safety. Rather, it's a tale of reckless and wild love that God displayed to His people throughout time. Jesus was not sent here to make us safe; He came to make us holy. When we play the gospel safe, we strip our lives of the value that God has placed on it through His wild calling by shrinking ourselves down to the place where we are comfortable. Our callings are not supposed to be comfortable, but rather they are wild. This has led me to sit in some spaces where my calling is to listen and I felt that the best way to do that when it came to racial injustice was by inviting someone with expertise to speak about this issue.

I'm going to be honest here in full light of living my wild calling. As a white female, I see some sexism play out in my life. I get talked down to by the mechanic, belittled when people ask me what I do for a living, or when I apply for a job, I find that my salary is lower than my male counterpart's income. But I will not even begin to act like I understand the brutal and blatant racism that my fellow POC friends experience on a daily basis. This treatment is cruel, inhumane, and does not reflect the heart of God. We write off the pain that our black brothers and sisters experience as "anger" and shy away from a listening ear at the excuse of "we should just love everyone." The Father's heart is grieved by this behavior and we should be too, but sadly churches are more consumed with keeping white attendance goes "comfortable" than actually changing how we talk about racism. Racism is evil, and we should not for a second think that as believers it should go unmentioned. Since we are preparing the next generation at this

Seminary, I believe that by finding good resources and using them, as we step into leadership roles, we can help the church become more comfortable with and active about racial justice.

I had the absolute joy of interviewing Faith Brooks, the Director of Programs for Be the Bridge, a group that seeks to "empower people and culture towards racial healing, equity and reconciliation." (Taken from their website www.bethebridge.com)

Faith is a social worker and is passionate about not just discussing racial injustice but creating solutions for every aspect of life. I got to ask her some pointed questions on racism in the church and how we can be a part of the solution as a seminary training the next generation of church leaders. **Savannah Price:** How are you seeing the church add to the problem of racial injustice in today's world?

Faith Brooks: I think the church adds to the problem by choosing to ignore the problem.

SP: Do you think the church is doing a good job addressing racism?

FB: Sort of, sometimes in enthusiasm we can say things prematurely without doing internal heart work and addressing racism around us. How do we view people in our church? Have we asked the POC in our church how they feel in our spaces? Are we actually committing to dismantle the systems we have created that are hurting the POC around us? If we're just giving statements instead of making change, we will repeat this pattern.

SP: If so (or if not) how could they do more/a better job?

FB: We need the broader church to get involved. There are some churches doing it well, but not all of them.

SP: What would you like to see church leadership do differently when it comes to the topic of racial injustice?

FB: The book *Color of Compromise* book by Jemar Tisby is a great starting point, as well as “Be the Bridge Church” resources/discussion guides found on our website. Our “Be the Bridge 101” foundations group is a good starting point for pastors or leaders unfamiliar with how to start these conversations.

SP: How can we teach students/kids in student ministry about racial injustice and give them the proper tools to combat it in their everyday lives?

FB: For students, they are way easier to talk to about these things, open, social justice is almost innate to them. They are very outward focused, because if you’re learning about it in school, you are already hearing this. Start with a foundation of definitions and terms. Understanding is their key to change, because they will be the ones to follow up and make changes. Let them know their voice is valuable. The discussion guide for students through “Be the Bridge” is a great starting point.

SP: How might you go about developing, teaching, or communicating a biblically shaped appreciation of POC in the church, or among a reader’s friends and family/workplace?

FB: First, acknowledge that we see color. POC have a culture and heritage to appreciate. Don’t vilify POC, instead see what they have to bring to the world. Beauty and equitable systems instead of capitalism will create change.

SP: How can we appreciate and celebrate each other in a society?

FB: You cannot destroy hate, but you can course correct through repentance and reparations. Humility in the hearts of people wanting to change will help real change take place. Through Compassion and kindness and less vilification, you will

tell a full and better story.

SP: How can the average reader get involved? Do you have ways to donate money, time, or social media influence?

FB: I’ve written an intentions guide: Show up and Speak up- prompts and tips for conversations. www.bethebridge.com shop + online webinar trainings are a great starting point. Some great podcasts are *Truth’s Table* and the *Melanated Faith* Podcast (which I co-hosts).

SP: It was great interviewing Faith, and I’m even more grateful for the work she is doing. My final takeaway is this: the churches that are still talking about racial injustice and actually taking steps to restore brokenness are the churches we need to be listening to. I don’t have any self-soothing notions to put at the end of this, but I do think that God has placed each and every one of us in 2020 for such a time as this. Living our wild calling and being all that God made us to be can start with making better choices to actively combat racism. We can create radical change by using our platforms to promote POC, our time to make a difference in communities where racial injustice is present, and our money to fund programs that truly make an impact in the lives of our black brothers and sisters. It starts with heart work, and our wild calling starts with saying yes to that heart work God calls us to.

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Counseling During COVID

Haddon Kellahan, MA, LP, MAC '2018

Counselor at Generations Counseling

Bailey Preib: Hi Haddon! Thanks for doing this interview with me. You were one of my RUF interns and now I'm grateful to have you in my life again. How have you been holding up in the midst of this pandemic? Most of us did not imagine COVID would still be impacting our lives months later. Do you feel like you have gotten into a good rhythm now?

Haddon Kellahan: Pandemic life is odd, for sure. Even several months in, I find that the rhythms my wife and I have tried to set can get a little offbeat. During the spring, we found that our home had suddenly become our offices, and that the separation from work that we both appreciated and needed was no longer naturally there. So that reality became our new norm and we tried to roll with the punches by going on a plethora of daily walks, only dedicating certain rooms of the house to work, and hanging virtually with friends. After some time, this started to feel like a new normal. Then a bump – what felt like a very good bump, I might add – came as restrictions began lifting throughout the state. Both of us started to travel

out of the house more for work, we engaged in more socially distanced activities, and we began spending time with friends in our backyard. Before we knew it, the new normal (version 2.0) was upon us. I like this newer version because it feels like the “OG” way of life... but I'd be lying if I said I'm not expecting more change in the future. At this point, the pandemic is sobering me to the reality that the beat of life will always change.

BP: How has switching to online counseling sessions impacted you? Do you think the technological barrier has been a hindrance to connecting with your clients?

HK: Before the pandemic, I was seeing only a handful of clients online. It didn't feel too out of the ordinary, and I certainly didn't feel it get in the way of providing good therapy. Had I felt that it was getting in the way, that would've been a clear indicator that I shouldn't be offering telehealth as a service. In some ways, I found it refreshing to

change things up in the course of my day; to shift over to the computer and connect with someone from afar was something I learned to appreciate and enjoy. I had plenty of energy for it. But of course, the pandemic brought on a lot of change very quickly, and when our practice made the wise decision to close the office doors and exclusively boot up the computer, boy did that take some getting used to.... All of a sudden, I found myself staring at the computer for upwards of 10 hours a day some days; laughing, crying, being confused, feeling angry...all of these things still happened between my clients and I, but I came to find that for me there was a very integral part of connection that I couldn't help feel was missing. The magic of being with another human in the room could not be digitally replicated. Don't get me wrong – there were some incredibly organic, powerful, and real-change moments that happened during my time of counseling exclusively online – and I praise God for doing that despite what was happening inside me. I was struggling more and more, pining for the day when I could see a foot bounce up and down with anxiety, or notice a couple sitting as far apart on the couch as possible, or hear the soft words of someone speaking from their most vulnerable place without having to interject, "I'm sorry – what was that?". That's the magic I am talking about; that's the magic that was missing.

So, was it a barrier? Some days it really felt like it for me. On the good days, I found myself trying to view it instead as a challenge and a reminder that even my best counselor spidey-senses are no match for what the Holy Spirit is doing on the other side of the computer.

BP: Are all your sessions still online?

HK: Nope. As restrictions started lifting, our practice has taken lots of precautions to ensure the safety of clients as they transition back to in-person. Heck, I even rearranged my office for the occasion!

BP: What it is like having clients in person again?

HK: How is it? One word: magical.

BP: After social distancing is no longer needed, do you see yourself continuing counseling online?

HK: Oh, for sure! I do and will continue counseling online. For some clients, it is their only option. And like I said, I believe so many great things can happen online.

For fear of sounding too negative about telehealth, I want to balance things out by saying that one major pro of this type of therapy is that you are literally entering into the client's space in a way that you could never do in the office.

For instance, I work with a lot of couples, and usually have them paint a picture of the scene where their disconnection happens; but when we meet via telehealth, I can literally be in the very "room where it happened". This is a key therapeutic opportunity for me to try to set in motion a healing experience for them right within an intimate and triggering place. Now that's pretty cool!

BP: Have you noticed an increase or decrease in patients looking for counselors since COVID-19 started?

HK: It probably depends on who you ask. For many counselors, at the onset of the pandemic, the client load decreased due to layoffs, furloughs, and the uncertainty of job security. I heard from many of my colleagues who were in this boat. It makes a lot of sense to me that many existing or prospective clients would hold off on therapy. You have to prioritize and safeguard what is absolutely essential for survival.

For some, however, therapy exists in the "essential for survival" category. I do think that since the pandemic's lingering, an increased desire for counseling has occurred. People need help processing what this has done to them and their families. Also, life doesn't stop; issues that were already present in people's lives are notably further exacerbated by the pandemic.

BP: What is the environment for counselors right now? Is there something your counseling

colleagues seem to feel collectively, like a certain attitude? Or a common topic/issue most counselors seem to be experiencing?

HK: I would say that in my network of fellow therapists, there are frequent messages of encouragement and empathy – go figure, right? But seriously. It has been deeply moving to see the psychotherapy community come together and remind one another that we are all human, we are all overwhelmed, and we need what we have always needed: connection. I belong to several online groups and list-serves, and on these platforms therapists have bravely been naming their moments of discouragement and fatigue in hopes of hearing the coveted “me too; you’re not alone”. For many of us, there’s such a need to be inundated with reminders of our own humanity, our own limitations, and our own need for the care that we passionately labor to provide for our clients. Burn-out is real, and it is especially high for those of us who forget that we can’t do it all. We need one another. We need the Great Healer.

BP: Obviously COVID had a major impact on everyone, but I would also like to hear how you see the Black lives matter movement impacting your experience as a therapist.

HK: As people enter the therapy room, they come from so many different backgrounds. It is my hope that when this topic emerges, that as therapists we might be able to meet our clients in their places of confusion, anger, grief, ambivalence, etc. without judgment or fear, but instead with bold love. That’s not easy, it has never been easy, and on this side of heaven, it will never be easy. Bold love looks like challenge, and bold love also looks like compassion. Both are vital. Evil must be called evil. Racism must not be ignored. With challenge and compassion, shame and stagnancy do not have the final word. I have greatly failed at this in my personal life and in my profession, and it grieves me to say that. The BLM movement rightly implores me to lean into healing by listening, learning, and using the tools of courage and love.

BP: Have you noticed anything that is particularly helpful for your clients or even yourself as we all try to navigate this current moment?

HK: Connection matters so much. When it comes to a Connection matters so much. When it comes to a time riddled with uncertainty and anxiety at every turn, we need regulation. Our greatest tool for that is connection. When we truly connect, we experience safety and understanding. I realize that for some, that’s easier than others. It takes a lot of work – but the work is worth it.

BP: The burn out rate for counseling is fairly high and I can only imagine our current situation is adding to that pressure and difficulty. How are you taking care of yourself right now?

HK: Oh boy. I’m blessed to have a few really life-giving relationships in my life...and I feel the Lord’s mercy in providing safe people with whom I can lean on when I feel really spent. I try to get good and consistent sleep, I exercise (swim laps several times a week), watch some [ok...a lot of] fun shows, and practice making new cocktails for me and my wife. Some days I’m better at doing these things than other days...It’s a process. Still learning. And when I’m bad at caring for myself, the least I can do is try to show myself some grace.

BP: Do you have any advice for current counseling students or those about to graduate?

HK: I know that it’s really easy to get wrapped up in the uncertainty of everything going on right now, but I encourage students and soon-to-be graduates to stick to the plan. We are going to learn to live with COVID. There is nothing new under the sun. You have all worked so hard to get to where you are, and you’re presumably studying something that you love. Don’t give up. When it gets hard, lean on one another, talk to your supervisor/therapist, show compassion and care to that part of you that is afraid! Oh...and take naps. →



Introducing the Asian-American Student Fellowship

Jason Huang, MDiv '22 and Hannah Moon, MDiv + MAC '24

When I (Jason) was a child, I remember liking Jackie Chan movies. The action scenes were great, and even though the bad guys sometimes looked scary, I always knew that the good guy, Jackie, was going to win in the end. It was good entertainment. Despite this, I never voiced my affinity for Jackie Chan movies to my peers, my parents, or even myself. Rather than appreciating a man who shared my ethnicity was on a television screen, I was often embarrassed that such a man was on a screen. Why? As I reflect back, I think it's because of how I perceived the American culture around me. As a Chinese-American boy, I saw only two paths: be seen as an immigrant (aka an outsider) or assimilate (aka fit in) and not be seen at all. There was no room to be both Chinese AND American. I had no language or way to articulate these feelings until I entered the Church in my late teens, and as I met more and more Asian-American

icans, I realized that my experience was not all that uncommon. In a recent online interview, Dr. Jane Hong, an Asian-American and historian of U.S. immigration, refers to Asian-Americans as being the "perpetual foreigner".

This "perpetual foreigner" experience has led to a history of assimilation for Asians in America. Back in February (of 2020), Hannah and I attended an Asian-American ministry leaders conference along with Dr. Robert Kim and several of our classmates. Although only one day long, it was an eye-opening experience for mainly one reason; we felt known. Topics such as assimilation, and others relevant to us, were openly discussed. We talked about what it meant to be an Asian-American Christian, and the challenges that we faced within the Church. Additionally, the leaders of the conference were also similar to us. They were

both Asian AND American. This might seem silly, but seriously, Hannah and I have never seen so many ministry leaders gathered in one room who shared our backgrounds. We've been to large churches and conferences where maybe one minister out of many was Asian-American, but this was different. This was surreal. These older Asian-Americans gave us real life models of what we could be in the future. Overall, this conference affirmed our identities and gave us tracks to run on as future Asian-American ministry leaders. In the weeks that followed, this beneficial experience became the catalyst to discussions of forming an Asian-American student fellowship at Covenant.

So, here we are. This Fall, Hannah and I will be starting the Asian-American Student Fellowship (AASF) at Covenant Seminary. We believe that the Asian-American story is valuable to Covenant Seminary because this is a school that deeply cares and acutely understands that our stories uniquely shape the manner in which we do ministry. Therefore, as a student organization, we hope to develop a space that primarily serves the Asian-American community at Covenant. This space is for working out our Asian-American heritage, our memories and experiences, our doubts and concerns, and our hopes and visions for our future. In doing so, this will help the Asian-American student gain a better understanding of who God desires them to be and how they benefit today's Church. Moreover, we look towards serving the broader Covenant student body. AASF's secondary mission seeks to cultivate a safe en-

vironment in which people from varying ethnic backgrounds with different cultural understandings can come to; listen, share, and grow with us, towards greater compassion and deeper respect for one another. We hope to foster a spirit of celebration in our diversity and solidarity beyond our ethnicity, firmly believing that God was purposeful in his design and therefore thoughtful about how each of us uniquely contribute to the building of his kingdom and Christ's body; the Church (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12).

So, what will this look like practically at Covenant Seminary? With this vision, there are many things that our group would be interested in doing. We would love to meet monthly, bring awareness to Asian-American history through discussion, fellowship over Asian style food, recruit Asian-Americans interested in ministry to Covenant, and more. However, we also realize that this coming Fall will be a unique one. At the very least, the circumstances surrounding Covid-19 challenges us to be very creative, and at the time of this writing, we are still working that out. Nonetheless, we are praying that the Holy Spirit will give us wisdom in figuring out what we could do to accomplish our vision at Covenant Seminary. We love the Covenant community and all that it desires to be. For now, we ask that you consider reaching out to us about how you could possibly participate in and/or help with AASF.

In Him,

AASF Leaders, Jason Huang and Hannah Moon →

Student Profile: JoCetta Dennis

MAC '21

Mary Schieferstein: Tell me a bit about your background and what got you interested in pursuing a degree in counseling.

JoCetta Dennis: I'm from the Nashville area, and I became a Christian in college. I did an internship for a college ministry and I loved hanging out with my students. I found that when I dove into their stories they were full of trauma and really hard things. I was very surprised. And I found that with all of the things that my students went through, it was very apparent in their lives. I really wished that I had some sort of training, so that's how I ended up at Covenant.

MS: What about your history has impacted how you view and understand counseling?

JD: I grew up in a Black, single-parent, multi-generational household. It was just my mom, and then my grandmother lived with us. We didn't have a lot of money. I would say that I think my mother or grandmother or any of the other people that lived in our house—all of them could have benefitted from one session of counseling. Just one could have made a difference. The psycho-educational part and the desire to go deep into story work would have benefitted me as a kid. There's a lot of trauma in my family, in my own story, in my parents, in my grandmother. I strongly stand by that. Counseling could have changed a lot of things. Even if it didn't last forever, just taking steps towards emotional and relational repair makes a difference.

MS: Are there ways that predominantly Black communities are affected differently by mental health issues or trauma?

JD: Trauma is trauma. I would say that among many dominant-culture white families there's still trauma. If you listen to the story of someone's life, there will be disruptions and unwitnessed and

unresolved pain. It might not be explicit, but it's there. Everybody, whether it's acute or severe, has some sort of trauma. In that way, there's not a difference.

There is a difference, however, in that Black and Brown people experience racism. Because of this, racism alters the way we interact with ourselves and the world around us. When addressing trauma concerning Black and Brown people, you have to address and affirm the role racism plays, whether it is implicit or explicit. You also have to talk about and address the stigma of mental health. It's kind of easy to say, "Some cultures just aren't about mental health," but the data shows it's not that simple, especially in this country. And we're in a time that not just Black people or Brown people are discovering therapy, everyone is: we're in a pandemic? Everyone is starting to see that they're not alone, and we all can affirm the effects of the pandemic. There are options we can try to help with maintain daily life. Therapy is one of them. Even if it's just for a season. But for Black people specifically, we are in a time and a place in history where we're able to stop. I think a lot of Black people are starting to come to the conclusion that, yeah, you have anxiety, and that makes sense, because you're a Black male and you can't leave the house at certain hours. Or you're a middle-aged Black mom and you have depression. Probably because you almost died giving birth, doing something your body is supposed to do. Or you have trouble relating to people. Probably because you grew up in poverty your whole life and those are the kind of people you got used to, and as soon as you went to college all of that changed. Practicing cultural competency is a part of being an effective counselor. The ethnic/racial/cultural component of our stories need to be honored and validated.

Historically, if you saw a therapist, you actually were seen as crazy. They were given medication, or even shock therapy—that still blows my mind that shock therapy was okay. Who would want to admit to having a problem? And if you're discriminated against in the medical field in general,



there's no way! It's a safety problem. So people find other ways to cope and medicate. Not all of them were good ways, but some of them were. I think a lot of our culture was birthed out of, "We're going to try to make this work." And I'm thankful for that part of it.

I don't think Black people disproportionately suffer from mental health. I am unsure of the specific stats, but stats are about who is reading them and the reason for using them. Statistics do not exist without bias. Never is that information used to humanize people. It's used to put them in categories or make assumptions. For example, the things I listed: single-parent household, lower class, multi-generational house, one car, no degrees. You form a certain vision of what my life was like. And if I had you repeat back to me how you thought I lived, you'd be wrong. I had a lot of love in my household. And I would not trade a multi-generational house for anything. So people can use information to dehumanize others. And I can't control that, but what I can do is reframe the way I talk about it.

MS: I appreciate you making those distinctions because, to me, statistics feel helpful, but they might not be helpful for everybody.

JD: The question is more so, when you hear a phrase, about something being disproportionate to Black and Brown people, or People of Color from anywhere in the world, why does that matter? And who does that matter to? The information doesn't stay on the page, it is applied.

Since I was five years old, I've known about mass incarceration and diabetes and other issue burdening the Black community, but that matters to me because it affects people I know and love. When I see statistics, it shows me that it's not only just happening to me, it's happening to a lot of people that look like me, too. So the indicator of whether it's humanizing or not is the concern for the one using the stats. Stats are about motive. All the things that "disproportionately" happen to Black people or poor people are put out there, and it triggers some of us to do something different. However a lot of people didn't

do anything. It almost made it worse in some instances.

MS: Is there a better way for us to be thinking about how we can humanize people? How can we take in information and use it in a more helpful way?

JD: Here's what I will say: I think the thing that gets me is the training that people need to do therapy cross-culturally. The number of mental health workers that don't know how to do this is really alarming. And I think that's sad in a field where I'm basically getting a degree in nuance. The story of a person really matters.

There are ways to humanize people with the information we take in about them. For example, knowing that we're not getting a personal story—are we seeking that part of it? A statistic is just that unless it's paired with a body. That body has a brain, that brain has a soul; that brain, body, spirit was knitted together. So it's what we do after. Allowing that information to humanize people, I don't think that happens unless there's some changes that follow once you've learned it—some minds being changed, some opinions being changed, some ballot box choices being changed, where we live being changed, the kind of conversations we carry on with our family being changed, some jokes we laugh at need to change. Little stuff. It's so small. But that makes all the difference.

MS: We talked about a couple barriers for people seeking mental health care, particularly for Black and Brown people—are there any other ones that you would like to discuss? Or could you expand on the issues with cross-cultural counseling?

JD: A lack of representation in any field affects the minority communities and the dominant culture. I think when we're being socialized as a child, we're all trained to see white people as authority. So it's not strange to me to go to a white person for therapy. This is our society and culture in America. Representation matters. It gives black/brown, other POCs, and people that are considered different from the norm, a chance to connect with those like them and to begin a change in

the narrative of the discrimination in authoritative structures. When you see a Black judge or you have a Black principal; that matters. And it matters to white people, too, to see Black as authority, because it's just not wired in our brains like that. So I trust people's experience of this. If there are points and times where they did not feel safe in a session, then they did not feel safe in that session. We must rely on the therapist to have a desire to explore this and not do further harm. It is a lot of pressure to want to do repair the right way, but reparations and reconciliation is a part of healing.

Another one is timing. When some People of Color encounter therapy, it's almost never by choice. The places where therapy happens are the hospital and in jail. Or Child Protective Services. I would love to change that. I think there's a lot of healing that can happen in educational spaces. Introducing voluntary therapy or safe therapy spaces for kids in schools, being creative and making it accessible. If you have a school in a community made up of Black and Brown people, stricken with poverty and violence and overall low access to resources, having therapists may be helpful. You can extend this to poor white rural areas as well.

MS: You were talking about how there are cultural aspects to help deal with trauma and some of those are actually really healthy. Could you share examples?

JD: If you learn anything about African American history, everything goes back to slavery. It doesn't matter what it is. This is how culture is formed. So I would say music, or any art form. I would say having strong women. This is changing because we want to have representation, and if you see one person they're not a monolith of that culture. The women in my life were strong to me, but they probably wouldn't describe themselves as strong. They would probably say, "I had to be strong." But I think that it's okay from my vantage point to say that I was raised by strong Black women. And I would not trade that for the world.

My grandmother was probably the most compassionate person that I've known. I've had family members who were incarcerated that have gotten out and she opened her house to those people.

You see those people as your family and you see what you have to do to take care of them—and we didn't have money, we only had one car—and all the ways that we literally bent over backwards to rehabilitate our family members. They just offered everything they had. And it wasn't much. We couldn't afford to be judgmental and non-forgiving and not open because we were often the ones in need. And I find that being a common narrative, that in the midst of trauma, in the midst of all the statistics and the reasons why I shouldn't be educated, I should be pregnant, probably shot and in jail—the reasons why I'm not is not because of some statistics, it's because of those people and God's provision. And their trauma and what they went through allowed them to live their lives a certain way that I was able to benefit from. Is my family perfect? No. Is there trauma? Yes. All of this goes into building a legacy and raising children. So I think—aside from the art, clothes, music—when it comes down to actual family structure, I benefitted heavily from that. Not everybody has that story. Some people have families that present things to them that they can't use, that even harm them. So I want to be mindful of that. But I've really benefitted from my family. I learned how to love myself. Many of the reasons that I struggled as a kid were due to societal false narratives. And my family did the best they could to repair and unlearn those things.

MS: Can you expand on that more?

JD: I was not raised to hate my Blackness. Honestly, I didn't really know I was Black until I went to school. That was something I had to learn. I think that's true for a lot of us. I was never taught to hate myself or to see myself as unworthy or less than. That stuff came a lot later.

My skin is brown all the time. Until someone says it looks like poop, I don't have a problem with it. I don't question my world until then. I was a chubby kid at one point in life and how do I know that's bad? Probably the way I was treated. It shows up so subtly, and unless someone does the work of undoing that, which my teacher and principal never did—none of these people were looking for that, to redirect or repair it. If you're not looking

for it, you'll miss it. You don't know if something's a problem until someone has a problem with it. They can act like they don't have a problem with it, but it comes out in words, in conversation, in behavior, in systems, in laws—all the way down to the playground, all the way up to the Supreme Court. It comes out.

MS: What has it felt like for you living in this current climate, between COVID and all of these deaths on the news, the protests and the riots?

JD: I'm pretty desensitized to it. But it seems like my anger is sad these days. It shows up at random times, I just get upset and need [to] call somebody. It breaks my heart. I wish I could just get rid of it all and make sure not another person dies that way. I don't have words. I don't know if I'm supposed to. It's just—when you see something like that or hear about something like that, you're not supposed to be okay with it. It shouldn't happen. But it's interesting. I anticipated something. When COVID hit, I was like, "Yeah, this is going to be bad. This is going to be really bad. People are losing jobs, they are stuck at home, they have a common enemy." This is a recipe for riots. Protests are a part of our 1st amendment rights and many societal changes came from people organizing. But COVID makes things seem more urgent and more scary. We are not promised a life without suffering. I did not know that there would be so much collective suffering this year.

I've always been okay with lament and grieving things. I never tell myself, "Jo, you shouldn't feel sad about that, you should get over it." Never. I don't tell myself that because I wouldn't tell that to someone else. And I think, for me—and this is what I think a lot of white folks missed before—is it's not just because they're Black that we feel collective pain and grief. I think it's because there's an ecclesiological element to seeing a person's life and seeing them as a brother or sister. Every time I think about Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Botham Jean, George Floyd, and all the names that have suffered preventable deaths, they weren't just random people. I don't know them, but that doesn't matter. The Church is supposed to be

global. That meaning someone in Australia needs to be weeping for these image bearers, just like other suffering that occurs globally. Because that's what the Church does.

I'm not encouraged by a lot of my Christian peers because they have problems hoping. They see the system as something that won't change. They'll say everything in the book except, "What are we going to do about this? What can I do?" They reiterate eschatological truths about what is to come (necessary) but can't fathom the system changing in the present. They just won't partake in the hope of it. Because, in doing so, you actually have to believe it can happen.

I don't like how Breonna Taylor hits a lot of us, especially Black women, very closely. That could have been—that really could have been me. You can't even protect yourself. Senseless. So, I don't like it, but I think where people get stuck is they don't have a plan. What's your plan so another Breonna Taylor never happens? The plan may not be "What am I going to do about this specific issue?" but a lack of hope is not something that I will tolerate. I expect that from non-believers, but I do not entertain that from believers. If you don't actually think that healing or change can happen, that salvation is offered—what do you think of the cross? Where are you with that? Let's talk about that. I would be happy to have a conversation about Jesus' plan to restore. He did not offer temporary fixes when he addressed the needs of people. He offered himself. This is Romans 12:1-2. I have nothing more to give than my life, my mind, my body and spirit. It is not a simple or easy thing to do. But we do not do this alone or without the Holy spirit.

MS: What closing thoughts do you have? When someone's reading through these things, how can they move forward from what they've read?

JD: I would say don't despair. We serve a loving and gracious God. Don't pity me, don't pity people like me, because those people are made in the image of God. Don't worry about doing it wrong. I'm doing it wrong. We're doing it wrong. Don't be afraid to admit you are wrong. I'm telling you, if you lead with that, people will return the grace to

you. Some will beat you up, but they're showing what's happened to them in the past. You don't need to experience all the ins and outs of racial trauma to do something, or to stop doing something. Racism is birthed from fallenness and sin. Even though God has the power doesn't mean we are powerless. Jesus allows us to do things and to live in ways that we didn't know were possible. If we're going to work to humanize others, we've got to see ourselves as such—something that's beautiful and broken. I would say don't go out there and try to get yourself a Black friend or Latinx friend, gay friend—that's not what this is about. But whoever you meet, try to see them for who they are, even if they don't know exactly what that is. We don't have to know the details to know that someone is imaging the Lord. Whoever you meet, whoever you encounter, treat them with respect.

I would say some of you white people reading this are missing out. There are People of Color that are around you that know the Lord, and I guarantee you that they probably see Jesus a lot differently than you. If you look in your church and you don't see people there that are clearly different—when they invite you home to their space you have to leave some preconceived notions at the door because you can't commune with them otherwise—that needs to happen. I just challenge people to see with your whole mind, body, and spirit. If you commit to that, the things that you have found yourself doing, spending time doing, the things you liked doing, they will change. And it's not because you're getting older, it's because you're undoing some things that shouldn't have been built.

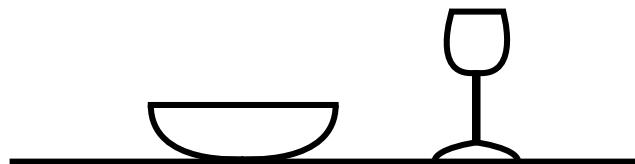
Hope with the knowledge that you got. Hope with the experience that you've had. Because people don't benefit from half-hope. If you're going to pray, pray. Pray for real. Pray specifically and by name. It'll help. I have been taught by those with more wisdom than me. I don't have it all on my own. And neither will you.

MS: Thank you for teaching me.

JD: You're welcome. —✝

answers from crossword puzzle on pg. 30

1	R	2	A	3	F	4	A		5	A	6	M	7	I	8	L		9	D	10	A	11	N	12	D	13	D
14	E	V	A	N					15	N	O	S	E					16	O	D	A	R	N				
17	C	O	M	E	18	S	I	N	T	O								19	R	A	T	E	R				
20	I	W	I	L	L	S	O	L	V	21	E	M	Y														
22	P	A	L	E	O					23	R	E	I	N				24	I	T	T	Y					
28	E	L	Y			29	P	S	A			31	I	V	A	N	H	O	E								
		33	S	P	34	H				35	E	I	N			37	I	N	T	R	O	S					
				38	R	I	D	D	L	E	T	O	T	H	E												
41	I	42	N	I	T	I	O			43	S	H	U			44	E	E	45	W							
46	M	A	D	O	N	N	A			47	A			48	E	S	E			50	W	A	D				
52	O	M	E	R						53	A	S	S	N			55	S	C	A	R	E					
					57	M	U	S	I	C	O	F	A	L	Y	R	E										
60	A	61	N	T	I	S				63	A	I	R	G	U	I	T	A	R								
64	T	T	E	S	T					65	G	O	T	H				66	N	I	N	E					
67	L	H	A	S	A					68	O	N	H	I				69	T	E	T	S					



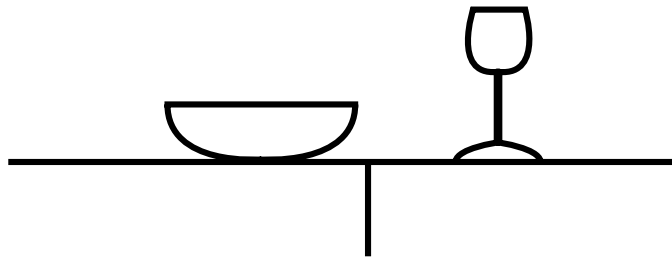
THE COMMON TABLE

The vision of The Common Table 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, The Common Table 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.

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



I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my pleas; the Lord accepts my prayer.

Psalm 6:6-9