

C O V E N A N T C O L L E G E

VIEW

The Fuel of Doubt

Expression Engine | An Exceptional Moment | Tearing down the Tower

SPRING 2015
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Contents

Departments

- 4 Covenant News
- 12 In Focus
- 14 Campus Collage
- 27 Faculty View
- 28 Alumni News
- 35 President's Postscript

Features

16 Expression Engine

Covenant alumni are addressing needs of the human soul through music and the local church.

20 An Exceptional Moment: Christian Education in Indonesia

The country with the largest Muslim population in the world is home to alumni who are passionate about Christian education.

22 The Fuel of Doubt

Listen to a conversation on doubt and the Christian life between professors Bill Davis and Jeff Dryden and resident director Evan Marbury.





C O V E N A N T C O L L E G E

VIEW

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View's purpose is to:

- Encourage alumni, parents, and friends to keep Christ preeminent in all areas of their lives
- Give alumni, parents, and friends—our most important ambassadors—stories and information about the College, its students, alumni, faculty, and staff
- Provide alumni with an ongoing connection to the Covenant community
- Give God's people news about Covenant that will encourage them to praise, thank, and petition our Heavenly Father.

COVENANT
COLLEGE

IN ALL THINGS CHRIST PREEMINENT



While Lookout Mountain was covered in snow this February, alumnus Matt McLelland '92 flew overhead and captured Covenant's campus from the sky.

CovenantNews



Prof. Hans Madueme Selected for Templeton-Funded Science and Religion Project

Dr. Hans Madueme, assistant professor of theological studies, was one of twenty-five scholars chosen to participate in the Bridging the Two Cultures of Science and the Humanities project, offered by

Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford, the UK Centre of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The project is funded by the Templeton Religion Trust.

The Bridging the Two Cultures project focuses on providing opportunities for Christian academics to delve into the relationship between science and religion by hearing from leading scholars in both fields and working on their own research to contribute to the science and religion conversation.

Madueme will participate in two month-long summer sessions at Oxford University beginning in the summer of 2015, as well as continue his research and writing on sin.



Covenant Hosts Regional Entrepreneurship Competition

This March, Covenant hosted the South regional competition of Elevate, a national, faith-based business plan competition. The vision of the competition is to elevate and mobilize a generation of entrepreneurs to use their God-given gifts.

Elevate consists of three regional competitions, followed by a national competition in Silicon Valley. The winner of each regional competition is awarded \$20,000, and the chance to win an additional \$50,000 at the national competition. A team from nearby Lee University won the South regional competition with their business, Remedy Flies. A team from Morehouse College with the business Million Dollar Scholar was awarded the runner-up spot.

“Having hosted a business plan competition for Covenant College students these past four years, it was only natural for the College to serve as host for a regional competition as well,” says Dr. Brad Voyles, vice president for student development.

Men’s Cross Country & Soccer Teams Win USA South Titles

The Covenant men’s cross country team took home the USA South championship for the second year in a row last fall—the first time since the ’94 and ’95 seasons that the Scots have earned back-to-back conference championships.



Men’s soccer claimed their first conference title since joining the NCAA Division III in a 2-0 win over Maryville College this past fall, earning them a spot in tournament play. The Scots fell to Whitworth University at the NCAA tournament, ending the season with a final record of 15-5-2.



Kim Collins ’99 Appointed Director of Alumni Engagement

In January 2015, Covenant welcomed Kim Collins ’99 back to the mountain as the director of alumni engagement. After graduating from Covenant with a degree in English, Collins went on to teach middle school for several years. She later joined the World Journalism Institute (WJI) where she served for nine years in various capacities, most recently as deputy director in New York City. During her time as deputy director, she worked to actively engage alumni of WJI.



Before coming to Covenant, Collins served as the capital campaign manager for the Bowery Mission in New York City, ministering to the homeless and hurting in NYC.

“Covenant is proud of our alumni and thankful for them, and we are excited about what God is doing in and through them,” says Collins.



onCourse Biography Project

Faculty:

Dr. Jay Green, professor of history

Class:

Introduction to History

Assignment:

Students are charged with reconstructing the life story of a person from the Chattanooga area who has been deceased for at least forty years. Students in the class take a trip to Forest Hills Cemetery, just five miles from Covenant College. From headstones in the cemetery, they pick three residents as possible subjects for their biography projects. The students then conduct preliminary research on all three names, finally landing on one person as the subject for their biography.

The reconstruction of a person’s biography proves more difficult than most students initially expect. They work to acquire five primary sources on which to base their biography, and seek to reconstruct the life of the resident: What was his or her social, cultural, economic, religious, and political context? What neighborhood did they live in? What were their race and social class? What occupation did they hold? The answers to these questions are often uncovered in newspaper obituaries, city directories, census reports, and government archives.

After gathering information from available sources, students sketch a 1,200-word biography of their subject, reconstructing as much of the man’s or woman’s life and context as they can.

Says Dr. Green:

“The assignment is intended to introduce students to the idea that history can only be done if we can access traces from the past we call primary sources. Without that stuff, we don’t have warrant to say anything about the past. Through the project, I also have the students think about what they will leave behind. If they were gone tomorrow, what would someone be able to say about their lives? This is the essence of the historian’s trade: making sense of people’s lives based on what is left behind.”

"In my new role, I am eager to build relationships and to find new ways we can serve, encourage, and collaborate with our alumni both in their particular callings and for our alma mater."



Andrew Peterson Named Nick Barker Writer in Residence

Musician and author Andrew Peterson is serving as Covenant's 2015 writer in residence. In addition to releasing more than ten albums since 1996, Peterson is an award-winning author. He recently authored the final novel in a four-book fantasy series, *The Wingfeather Saga*. Peterson also runs the Rabbit Room, a creative community named after the room where C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and other Inklings met to share and discuss their work.

"I am, obviously, thrilled that our students have the chance to learn from Andrew Peterson," says Prof. Sarah Huffines, associate professor of English. "Those in the class have been commenting on how much they have enjoyed the class time and have been encouraged by Andrew's focus on some of the big-picture issues in writing fiction and creating worlds."

Peterson's appointment as writer in residence includes two visits to campus during the spring semester to teach a hands-on, fiction creative writing course. During his visit in January 2015, Peterson had the opportunity to share his music with the Covenant community in chapel.



WIC Lecture Series

Dr. Daniel Dreisbach, professor in the School of Public Affairs at American University, presented this year's Women in the Church (WIC) Lecture Series. Dreisbach has been a member of the American faculty since 1991, where his research interests include constitutional law and the intersection of politics, law, and religion in American public life. He is also the father of a Covenant student.

"Dr. Dreisbach's earlier work on Thomas Jefferson and the wall of separation metaphor is probably the definitive statement on the subject," says Dr. Cale Horne, associate professor of political studies. "It's a great honor for Covenant to be able to host Dr. Dreisbach, who is quite honestly one of the most important constitutional scholars alive."

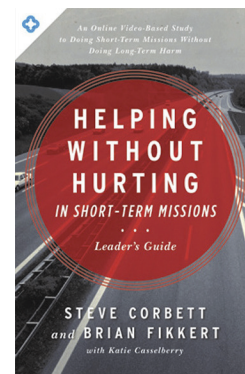
Dreisbach's WIC lectures explored the role of the Bible in the political discourse of the American founding. You can listen to his lectures at covenant.edu/WIC15.

Profs. Corbett & Fikkert Co-Author *Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions*

The authors of the now classic *When Helping Hurts*, professors Steve Corbett and Dr. Brian Fikkert, have released new resources for groups interested in short-term missions, titled *Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions*. Covenant alumna Katie Casselberry '10 also contributed to the resources, which include

a leader's guide and participant's guide.

Using the power of story along with empirical research, the new books allow teams and leaders to follow online video lessons and facilitate fruitful discussions.



Theatre: *Edith Stein*

The theatre department at Covenant presented Arthur Giron's *Edith Stein* under the direction of Prof. Camille Hallstrom. The play is based on the life of the twentieth-century Jewish intellectual, and recently canonized, Edith Stein. The story follows her decision to become a Carmelite nun all the way to her death in Auschwitz.

"I have wanted to do this play since my grad school days, thirty years ago," says Hallstrom. "The story as written is masterful—a gut-wrenching, persistently compassionate exploration of the collision of worlds and worldviews as well as the flesh-and-blood people who represent them, be they Nazi, Jew, a broken sufferer struggling not to give up faith, or a cloistered nun offering her suffering to God in the hope of delivering her brutalized people."

Watch clips from *Edith Stein* at covenant.edu/edithstein.

Top 10 in 2014

ScotsCasts covenant.edu/soundcloud

Chapel Messages covenant.edu/soundcloud

Videos covenant.edu/youtube

News covenant.edu/news

1

Scholarship
Weekend 2014
by Sarah Ocando '07

The Good News
of Self-Denial
by Matthew Trexler '11

Merry Christmas
from Covenant

Dean's List,
Spring 2014

2

Center for Student Success
by Janet Hulse &
Sarah Ocando '07

A New Song
by James Ward '72

Move-In Day 2014

Dean's List,
Fall 2014

3

Learning & Loving as a
Whole Person
by Andrew Bankson '14 &
Andrew Christenberry '14

On Privilege
by Dr. Derek Halvorson '93

Kilter 2014

U.S. News Ranks
Covenant #6 in South

4

Pursuing Nursing
at Covenant
by Jeanna Belz '17

An Expression of Worship
by Jonathan Adam '10

Castle in the Clouds

Top 10 Lists
for 2013

5

Campus Preview Weekend
by Sarah Swygard '13

The Paralyzed Man at the Pool
by Bishop Henri Luke Orombi

Mountain Affair

Craig M. Lyon,
1924-2014

6

Chapel: A Call to Worship
by Rev. Grant Lowe

Senior Testimonies
by Garrison Dale '14 &
Ivy Ritchie '14

'80s Skate Night

Washington Monthly Ranks
Covenant #13 in Nation among
Baccalaureate Colleges

7

Mark 10:45 Program
by Julie Moore '01

Why Do You Weep?
by John Bates '88

Convocation 2014

New Faculty Appointments
in Music, Psychology,
and Spanish

8

Our Move-In Day
Was 50 Years Ago
by Helen Piatt '70 &
Janis Putman '68

The Burning Bush
(Exodus 3:1-10)
by Rev. Grant Lowe

Jazz on the Overlook

2014 Covenant College
Commencement

9

Covenant's Move to
Lookout Mountain
by Frank & Dottie Brock

I Believe in Institutions
by Dr. Jay Green

Senior Integration Project

Scots Trot 5k

10

Three Semesters
at Covenant
by Jordan Yeo '14

The Next Evangelicalism
by Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah

Mistletoe Mingle

Covenant Assisting New
International Teachers
College in Indonesia

27

Record number of wins by the 2014 volleyball team

119

Student-athletes who earned Dean's List honors in fall 2014

49

Percentage of students from the PCA

40,000

Plays on SoundCloud per year

20

Students who majored in art in 2004

54

Students majoring in art in 2015

2,250

Apples served in the Great Hall each week

17

Percentage of students studying the natural sciences

22

Countries represented by current students

6

Current students from Indonesia



Global Gospel Advancement Week

Covenant welcomed Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah as the primary guest speaker for Global Gospel Advancement Week. Rah is an associate professor of church growth and evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, IL, and the author of *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Alumnus Jonathan Adam '10 also spoke during the week. Adam is the founder of Project:Restore, an organization that seeks to empower and resource the local people of Thailand to help other local people.

In addition to the lectures delivered by Rah and Adam, students had the opportunity to attend a missions fair, featuring representatives from Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Rafiki Foundation, Mission to the World, and Hope Now/ Kompas Park Ukraine.

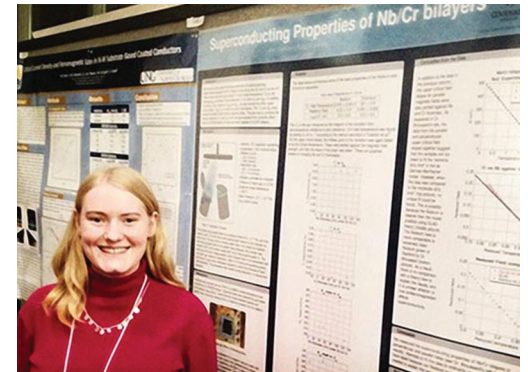
Listen to the Global Gospel Advancement Week lectures at covenant.edu/GGAW14.

Prof. Broussard & Student Collaborate on Physics Research

In the fall of 2014, Dr. Phill Broussard, professor of physics, and physics major Amy Davis '17 presented their collaborative physics research at the 81st annual meeting of the Southeastern Section of the American Physical Society.

Broussard and Davis presented findings from the research they conducted in the

summer of 2014. Their work continued Broussard's long-term research project by studying superconductivity through thin-film experimentation. Since graduate school, Broussard has worked in the area of electricity dealing with superconductivity, and he often engages current physics undergraduate students in his research.



At the conference, Broussard presented a talk entitled "Parallel Critical Fields & Inductive Critical Currents in Nb/Cr Bilayers," and Davis presented a poster on "Superconducting Properties of Nb/Cr Bilayers."

Listen to Davis and Broussard discuss their research at covenant.edu/physicsresearch.

Philosophy Club Launches Online Undergraduate Journal

Last fall, Covenant's student-run philosophy club released the first issue of an online, undergraduate philosophy journal titled *Mountaintop Thoughts*. The journal aims to promote rigorous academic dialogue among undergraduate students. The first issue contained two papers: "Forgiveness & Retribution: Politic Matters" and "What Is Warrant?: In Defense of a Causal Account."

Mountaintop Thoughts is overseen by a board of advisors comprised of alumni and faculty members. The board includes Covenant Profs. Bill Davis '82 and John Wingard, Dr. Hans Halvorson '95, Dr. Atria Larson '03, Dr. Paul Moser '78, and Dr. Matthew Novenson '01.



Construction Begins on New Fine Arts Facility

For years, Covenant College art students have painted, thrown clay, sculpted, and sketched in an old equestrian stable affectionately known as the Art Barn. An original structure from Carter Hall's days as the Lookout Mountain Hotel, the stable operated as the primary art facility on Covenant's campus since the reestablishment of the art major in 2003.

The Art Barn closed in the summer of 2014, following investigations by facilities management and a structural engineer. As the cost of a detailed structural analysis and potential remediation would likely be higher than the actual monetary value of the building, the College decided to pursue construction of a new facility. Classes and studio spaces were temporarily relocated to Jackson Hall and the basement of Carter Hall. In light of the continued growth of the art program and the need for a new facility, the College is pleased to announce plans to construct a new fine arts building.

In January 2015, the dismantling of the Art Barn began and construction of a new fine arts facility is beginning in the same location. The lower-campus site offers the chance to construct a building that diverges from the College's typical, stucco structures into a new architectural style. The building is scheduled to open before the fall semester begins in August 2015.

Covenant's new fine arts building will provide the square footage necessary to accommodate more student studio space as well as offices and studio space for art faculty. As the number of students majoring in art has increased steadily over the past decade, it has been clear for several years that the 3,200 square feet of space in the Art Barn was inadequate. The new facility is programmed for 7,500 square feet. In addition, the building will feature improved natural lighting, ventilation in studios, designated work space for senior art students, and a commons. The interior of the building is designed to incorporate windows from the Art Barn, maintaining a link between the history and future of Covenant's art program.

"We are excited about the potential intersections between student, faculty, and visitor in a variety of ways," says Prof. Jeff Morton, chair of the art department. "Roughly 1,000 square feet of the commons area will be used for the display of 'in-progress' and finished student work. Additionally, a unique feature to the new building that will house sculpture and ceramics, painting and drawing, is a faculty work space connected to these two studio areas. The faculty office is ostensibly a studio. Here we communicate an important example to our students that the faculty

"In this studio space, students will be able to watch works develop and participate alongside faculty members in the art department."

member is a working artist. In this studio space, students will be able to watch works develop and participate alongside faculty members in the art department."

Construction of the new fine arts facility will cost approximately \$2,200,000. In addition to raising funds for construction, the College is seeking to raise \$500,000 to endow the ongoing maintenance and care of the facility.

"We're grateful for the many foundations and friends of Covenant who quickly saw the need and have already pledged or contributed \$2,200,000 to cover the cost of construction," says Jeff Sandhoff, interim vice president for development. If you would like to join our efforts to support fine arts at Covenant by contributing to the building's endowment, you can give online at covenant.edu/give.

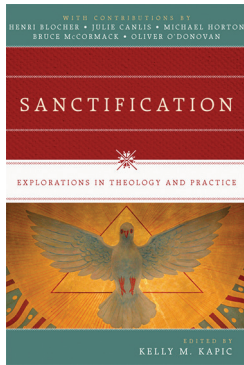
Prof. Kelly Kapic Edits Book on Sanctification

IVP Academic recently released *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, edited by Dr. Kelly Kapic, professor of theological studies. The book came out of a conference held in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh, where scholars, pastors, and laypeople were invited to present essays and papers exploring the topic of sanctification. Kapic was among the academics presenting papers and was selected to edit a volume of the essays into a book on sanctification.

"I enjoy editing because I'm a strong advocate of doing theology in community," says Kapic.

Amidst ongoing discussions on justification and sanctification happening in churches around the country, *Sanctification* provides a helpful look at the doctrine from the perspective of scholars and pastors.

Listen to Kapic discuss editing the book and his contributing chapter at covenant.edu/sanctification.



Marriage, Family, & Community Conference

Dr. Dan Doriani, professor of theology at Covenant Seminary, was the featured guest speaker for Covenant's annual Marriage, Family, and Community Conference. In addition to work in the academic field, Doriani served for ten years as a senior pastor. He is the author of numerous books, including *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*, and *The Life of a God-Made Man*. He is also a contributing blogger for The Gospel Coalition.

Listen to Doriani's lectures on marriage, love, and parenting at covenant.edu/MFCC15.

Academic Lecture Series

Covenant welcomed Bruce Herman, department chair and professor of art at Gordon College, as the featured speaker for the College's annual Academic Lecture Series. After joining the faculty at Gordon College in 1984, Herman became Gordon's first art department chair in 1988. He received the Junior Distinguished Faculty Award in 1992 and now serves as the Lothlórien Distinguished Chair in the

Fine Arts. His work has been exhibited around the country and internationally, as well as featured in numerous books, journals, and magazines.



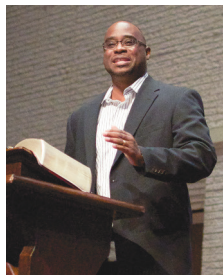
Herman delivered three academic lectures around the theme of "Ordinary Saints," and presented artwork on the same theme in the Kresge Memorial Library gallery. The art installation featured nine portraits of ordinary men and women. You can listen to Herman's lectures at covenant.edu/academiclectures15.

Dr. John Plating Appointed Director of Center for Calling & Career

Dr. John Plating joined Covenant College as director of the Center for Calling & Career in the spring of 2015. Plating came to Covenant after serving as the chief operating officer



SoundCloud
covenant.edu/soundcloud



"I'm so glad that sin does not negate our usefulness in God's kingdom."

Rev. Kevin Smith
Grace after Breakfast



"The greatest enemy to my hope is cynicism."

Karen Hodge
Living in Light of Eternity



"If you want to see the anxieties and hopes of a people, look at their popular stories."

Dr. Robert Erle Barham
On the Power of Stories



Adjunct professor Stephen Humphries directed the Covenant College percussion ensemble in works by J.S. Bach and Nils Rowher in a fall concert featuring the jazz, brass, and percussion ensembles.

and chief financial officer for the academic component at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, where he also served as an associate professor of history.

Plating was a senior pilot in the US Air Force, where he flew as an instructor as well as a C-130 transport pilot. While stationed in Germany, he directed the airlift of nuclear weapons throughout the European theater. He and his wife, Paula, have five children and are members of Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church. Two of their children attend Covenant College.

Speech & Debate Society Places First in Division

The Covenant College Speech & Debate Society concluded another successful season in March 2015, at the National Christian College Forensics Invitational (NCCFI) tournament in Lakewood, Colorado.

At the NCCFI tournament, Covenant's team won first place overall sweepstakes for division II colleges. Covenant teams advanced to quarterfinals in both novice and varsity parliamentary debate. Lauren MacDougall '18 won top novice debate

speaker, Mackenzie Harmon '17 earned second place varsity debate speaker, Morgan Barney '18 took home third place novice persuasive speaker, and Jonathan Turner '16 placed fifth in novice extemporaneous speaking.

"I joined the debate team without any prior experience, and since then have grown in my communication skills and my ability to evaluate ideas and arguments," says MacDougall. "Learning about a wide array of issues has expanded my perspective of the world and given me a greater appreciation for differing opinions."



"We are not seeing the de-Christianization of America. We are seeing the de-Europeanization of American Christianity."

Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah
The Next Evangelicalism



"We're taking our gifts and not just polishing them for the sake of shininess."

Dr. Scott Finch '96
Engaging the Community through Music



"We were able to overcome the language barriers and the cultural barriers to the glory of God."

Cynthia Lopez '15
A Semester in Japan

InFocus

Twice a year, classes are suspended for the day as students, faculty, and staff take time to gather as a community and pray. Day of Prayer begins with a sunrise service at the nearby Rock City overlook. The Covenant community gathers to pray together, sing, watch the sunrise, and enjoy some early-morning hot chocolate provided by Covenant's Psi Chi honor society.

"Day of Prayer is more than a day off from school," says Morgan Sharpe '15, president of the Psi Chi society. "I once heard the word pilgrimage used in reference to the sunrise service and I think that is fitting—it's a small pilgrimage Covenant students can choose to take to worship and pray together at Rock City. To me it is a powerful time, as we are so fully enveloped in creation and usher in the sun with worship."









CampusCollage

1-2 Bakertree Festival

The annual fall festival featured art, music, handcrafted goods, and homemade food.

3 Reformation Day Lectures

Dr. Carl Trueman delivered three lectures on the life of Martin Luther.

4-5 Celebrate Christmas at Covenant

Covenant's community celebrated the coming of Jesus Christ with a Christmas concert and madrigal dessert reception.

6-7 Mistletoe Mingle

Students commemorated the last day of fall classes with a Christmas-themed dance party.

8 Day of Stewardship

Alumnus Christian Man '09 challenged the Covenant community to question their acts of consumption.

9 Exam Cram

Faculty and staff dressed up as lumberjacks to serve snacks to students during finals week.

10-11 Culture Fest

Students celebrated diversity with a variety of performances, including K-pop and African dances.

12-13 Global Gospel Advancement Week

Students heard from Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah and Jonathan Adam '10 during GGAW.

14-16 Snow Days

A southern cold front brought snowmen and snowball fights to campus.

17-18 '80s Skate Night

The '80s resurfaced at Covenant in the form of big hair, bright shorts, and roller skates.

19 Ensembles Concert

The music department showcased the work of several Covenant ensembles.

20-21 Academic Lecture Series

Bruce Herman presented lectures in chapel and shared his artwork in Covenant's art gallery.

22 Theatre: *Edith Stein*

The theatre department shared the story of the life of Edith Stein on the Covenant stage.

23-24 Day of Prayer

Covenant observed its bi-annual day of prayer on a chilly day in February.

25-26 Spring Formal

Students got dressed up and welcomed spring in style.

See more at covenant.edu/facebook.

After studying music at Covenant, Michael Kendall '11, Libby O'Neil '08, and Evelyn Petcher '10 have used their training and talents to bring the gift of music to the East Lake community of Chattanooga. Inspired by Jose Abreu's El Sistema programs, Michael, Libby, and Evelyn founded the East Lake Expression Engine, where they share their passion for making music with the children of East Lake.



Expression Engine

by Grace Mullaney Humbles '13



“WHEN YOU TEACH A CHILD TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT, HE IS NO LONGER POOR.”

In 1975 Jose Antonio Abreu made this idea a reality when he started a youth orchestra in an abandoned garage in Venezuela, promising to turn a group of children with no musical background into one of the best orchestras in the world. Abreu succeeded, and today 500,000 children in Venezuela learn music through what became El Sistema programs, along with children in nearly 1,000 programs in 55 countries around the world.

More than 2,000 miles from Venezuela, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Michael Kendall '11 serves as the music director for New City Fellowship East Lake, a PCA church in the heart of the neighborhood of East Lake. In the fall of 2013, Michael's classmate Evelyn Petcher '10 happened to be in Chattanooga, and told him over coffee about the work she'd been doing in Baltimore with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's ORCHKids—one of the original El Sistema nuclei in the United States.

“I've always thought that music is such an important part of what it means to be human,” says Evelyn. “It enhances our experiences and relationships with each other and helps us understand the world better. I've learned so much from ORCHKids about what music can mean to a child's personal development. A child's ownership of their music affects their behavior, socialization, creativity, and ability to problem solve.”

Michael had always wanted to pursue something with music education and El Sistema, and after his conversation with Evelyn he started to think that this “something” could happen in his church's backyard.

“I called Evelyn and told her we should start an El Sistema-like program right here in Chattanooga,” says Michael. “She said she'd already been talking about a similar idea with our mutual friend Libby.”

Fellow music alumna Libby O'Neil '08, Evelyn, and Michael immediately began to plan. Their original idea was modest—they would strategize and fundraise for the next year and begin with a one-week summer camp in 2015, move on to a two-week camp in the summer of 2016, and hopefully by 2020 launch a year-round El Sistema-inspired program at East Lake. They started to call their project the East Lake Expression Engine.

“I always knew that I wanted to work with kids in the inner city, with music, as a tool for ministry, and also to give them a skill they may not have access to,” says Libby. “When Evelyn got her

ORCHKids job in Baltimore she called me and said, ‘I have your job.’ And that's when I was introduced to El Sistema.”

The three friends knew they wanted their El Sistema-inspired program in Chattanooga to focus on more than just physical poverty—the Expression Engine would allow them to bring both music and the gospel to children in East Lake.

In March 2014, the three entered into a formal relationship with East Lake's pre-existing tutoring program called ELECT (East Lake Every Child Taught), that runs out of the church during the summers and after school during the school year. On average, ELECT serves sixty local children during the summers and forty children in its after-school program throughout the rest of the year. By forming a formal relationship with ELECT at East Lake, the East Lake Expression Engine could get off the ground far more quickly than the three friends had ever thought possible.

“What El Sistema aspires to do is address the entire human being through music instruction,” says Michael. “The reality is that there are only so many problems that learning to play music can solve. It became apparent to me that the best way to use music as

a tool to address the needs of the human soul, and the pain and difficulty that come from growing up poor, is through a local church.”

Michael and Libby explain that because the East Lake Expression Engine is a part of their small, local church in the East Lake neigh-

borhood, parents, students, community members, and even potential investors were more ready to trust in the work that the program was hoping to accomplish.

In the summer of 2014, the Expression Engine pilot project launched, giving Michael, Libby, and Evelyn the chance to make the case for why the program should exist. The trio spent time raising money for instruments, planning curricula, writing music, and trying to wrap their minds around what they had gotten themselves into.

“There was no one telling us what to do,” says Michael. “It was like, ‘OK, there are no adults here. It's just us.’”

After just a few months of planning and fundraising, the East Lake Expression Engine joined ELECT for its summer camp in June. From 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. every day, students who had never picked up instruments before began to learn how to play in an ensemble.

“Abreu's idea is that students in ensembles learn music faster and better—from each other—in a different way than traditional, conservatory-style music education,” says Libby.

“The best way to use music as a tool to address the needs of the human soul, and the pain and difficulty that come from growing up poor, is through a local church.”



New City Fellowship was formed in 1968 as a Sunday school, and became a church in 1976 with a vision for racial reconciliation, cross-cultural worship, and the goal to minister to the people of Chattanooga.

In 2008, elders at New City Fellowship decided to plant a church in East Lake, a neighborhood of Chattanooga. East Lake is an incredibly diverse neighborhood with nearly equal numbers of white, African American, and Latino residents. With a population of around 10,000, only forty-two percent of East Lake residents graduated from high school. The church describes the neighborhood as a place full of personality and “kind, warm people.”

To learn more about the work of New City East Lake and the East Lake Expression Engine, you can visit newcityeastlake.com and facebook.com/EastLakeExpressionEngine.

For the first four weeks of the summer pilot program, students learned musical concepts—the basics of ear training, sight-reading, and notation. After learning some of the fundamental structures of music, the students from East Lake finally got to pick up instruments. With a chance to participate in choir, “bucket band,” and orchestra, the music camp took children with no musical background or training and gave them the tools to not only play music, but also to compose their own songs. At the end of June, the camp gave a concert in downtown Chattanooga at Miller Plaza, where, in front of more than two hundred people, the students presented a 45-minute performance, including a 20-minute collaborative composition that they had written alongside the instructors over a one-week period.

The collaborative composition was the result of Evelyn’s experience during her last semester at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University, where she earned her master of music degree.

“I took a spring break intensive course called Creative Connections,” says Evelyn. “We partnered with ORCHKids and some area schools and together we spent a week brainstorming, playing games, and writing music. It was this incredible experience that made me realize that people were already doing the kind of cross-disciplinary, innovative

musical work I had always aspired to do, and that it was a real way to bring communities together.”

During camp, Evelyn took what she had learned at Peabody and taught it first to the other instructors, getting them used to the idea of improvising, listening, and building on each other’s ideas. The instructors composed a chorus for the collaborative piece and

taught it to the students as a springboard for the rest of the composition that would center on love, joy, and peace. The students broke into small groups and composed music and lyrics together. Middle school girls wrote about forgiveness, fourth grade boys wrote about Lookout Valley on a beautiful day, and the second graders wrote about everything their families do for them out of love.

“They each brought something different to their lyrics and music. Most of our students had no trouble sharing their ideas even though they were not musically trained before the camp.”

“It was really neat to see how the different students thought about the concepts,” says Evelyn. “They each brought something different to their lyrics and music. Most of our students had no trouble sharing their ideas even though they were not musically trained before the camp.”

Libby tells the story of a student named Roger, who came into the summer program four weeks behind everyone else. He didn’t get the original music instruction the other students had received in the first

few weeks, but Roger picked up a trumpet and immediately fell in love. A child who, other than a recorder class in elementary school, had never picked up an instrument, now wants to play trumpet all the time.

“Beginning trumpet doesn’t always make the most awesome sound,” says Libby. “But Roger loved it from the very beginning.”

The summer concluded with a culmination concert at the end of July, featuring the three main ensembles along with performances from each instrument group: brass, woodwinds, strings, and percussion. There was no question in anyone’s mind—the East Lake Expression Engine pilot project was an upbeat, inspiring, and resounding success.

Originally, Libby, Evelyn, and Michael were planning to take a break after the summer to reflect and consider what they should do next with their fledgling program. The momentum and triumph of the summer changed all that. With many community members and fellow instructors advocating for the program, the three decided to begin their after-school program that fall, more than five years before their goal launch date of 2020.

“There is so much potential to love these kids in a community-focused way through this work,” says Evelyn. “My hope is that Expression Engine will allow for a more holistic exploration of character building and for the students to start asking deeper questions like: Why do we want to play music? Why do we want to be joyful? Why are we supposed to love each other?”

The three attribute part of the success of their efforts to their common history as Covenant music alumni.

“The fact that I already knew Michael and Evelyn and that we share a history academically and musically was huge,” says Libby. “I’m not sure this would have gone the way that it did without that foundation we have together. There’s a level of trust that is very necessary when taking on something like this.”

On September 3, 2014, the East Lake Expression Engine after-school program began in tandem with ELECT. Students in the East Lake community came to New City Fellowship East Lake for academic tutoring from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., and then went to the East Lake Expression Engine from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. The students continued to build on what they had learned throughout the summer and fell more in love with their growing musical abilities.

“I think the only way to explain the success of this program so far, in the summer and now in the school year, is that this is like an El Sistema program on steroids,” says Michael. “Kids are learning, they’re developing, changing, growing, and coming alive in ways that are startling, to be honest. This style of education, done in the context of a local church is 100 percent logical.”

Now, every Monday through Wednesday from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., students in Chattanooga’s East Lake neighborhood pick up trumpets and violins, drumsticks and flutes, and practice together as an ensemble within the walls of New City Fellowship East Lake. Every Monday through Wednesday, East Lake Expression Engine instructors live out the belief that music and the gospel can powerfully disrupt both physical and spiritual poverty in their neighborhood. 🙏



The music department at Covenant is passionate about the work Michael, Evelyn, and Libby are doing at Expression Engine. The department recently donated seventeen instruments to the East Lake Expression Engine, including violins, trumpets, trombones, and flutes.

“We’re trying to figure out what it looks like to come alongside the Expression Engine,” says Dr. Scott Finch, assistant professor of music. “We are sure that it includes sending our students and lending our time. It gives the Expression Engine students the opportunity to be inspired by Covenant students and gives Covenant students the chance to get off the mountain and into the community.”

The Covenant orchestra participated in a joint rehearsal with students from Expression Engine, allowing East Lake students to see what it’s like to rehearse and play music in college, and connecting Covenant students with some of their neighbors in Chattanooga.



An Exceptional Moment: Christian Education in Indonesia

by Grace Mullaney Humbles '13

Covenant alumni are bringing Christian education to the country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

IN THE COUNTRY WITH THE HIGHEST MUSLIM POPULATION IN THE WORLD sits Yayasan Pendidikan Pelita Harapan (YPPH), a charitable foundation seeking to proclaim the preeminence of Jesus Christ through Christian education initiatives in Indonesia. Founded and funded by international businessman James Riady and his family, the foundation provides Christian education to students from elementary through graduate school.

With a mission aimed at proclaiming Christ's preeminence, it's easy to see how the vision for global Christian education in Indonesia has captured the interest of Covenant College and the hearts and imaginations of many Covenant alumni.

In 2012, YPPH began working to establish an International Teachers College (ITC) at the already established Universitas Pelita Harapan (UPH), just thirty minutes outside of Jakarta, Indonesia. A Covenant task force was appointed to explore how a residential liberal arts college in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, could best partner with and support the work of Christian education in Indonesia.

Initially, the committee considered the idea of opening ITC as a branch campus of Covenant. After further deliberation, the Covenant College Indonesia Task Force determined that exchange programs, faculty assistance, and other informal partnerships would allow more flexible opportunities for collaboration. Covenant alumnus and faculty member Dr. Jim Drexler '79 moved to Indonesia, on loan from Covenant, to serve as the president of the new teachers college, bringing a Covenant perspective to their programs.

Alongside various institutional collaborations with ITC at UPH, several Covenant College alumni are pouring their lives into the work God is doing through the educational initiatives of YPPH in Indonesia—both at ITC and beyond.

**“The community of educators
and the work being accomplished
at the International Teachers College
represent a true kingdom enterprise.”**

Covenant Alumni at ITC

ITC opened its doors in August 2014, offering students from five countries an American-accredited joint degree from UPH and Corban University in the U.S. The college welcomed thirty-three students during its inaugural year, from Nepal, the Philippines, Cambodia, the United States, and Indonesia.

Jim and Sara Drexler '78 have been serving at ITC in Indonesia for a year and a half—doing a variety of administrative work necessary for the young college to function, including admissions, recruiting, fundraising, and establishing networks. All of this was done while Jim worked to hire faculty and build community among faculty, staff, and students. During the college's first semester, Jim also taught education classes at ITC.

“We are offering teacher training for people who want to be elementary and secondary Christian school teachers in various countries,” says Jim. “We do everything in English and students will graduate with

bachelor's degrees, from both UPH and Corban University, so that they gain the American accreditation and their international Christian teacher certification under the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI).”

In January 2015, Dr. Jeff Hall, vice president of academic affairs at Covenant, traveled to Indonesia to teach a condensed educational psychology course at ITC.

“The community of educators and the work being accomplished at the International Teachers College represent a true kingdom enterprise,” says Hall. “I was humbled by the opportunity to participate in and contribute to that work. Those who serve ITC love the students and have a vision for how a work of modest size can have significant influence in God's economy.”

“God is at work in my classroom. . . . I’m representing Christ to my students every day. I hope to be the type of teacher they will feel comfortable coming to talk to about God, or anything else, if the Spirit works in their hearts.”

Covenant professors will travel with Covenant students to ITC for May term classes this summer, and Covenant is exploring the possibility of exchange programs for both professors and students.

It is no accident that ITC has opened its doors at this point in history. Jim and Sara both see the timing of the new college’s arrival as a gift.

“It is a unique time in history for Asia,” says Jim. “First, because of the economic growth that’s taking place. As economies grow, middle classes grow, and the demand for education grows. Second, many countries are enjoying more political freedoms. Finally, the numerical growth within the church in Asia is unprecedented since the time of Christ. Many people, after coming to Christ, start thinking about Christian schooling for their children.”

The significance of a Christian education is not lost on Christians in Asia. Jim points out that there is an exceptional sense of enthusiasm for Christian education in Asia that isn’t easily found in the United States. At the same time, there is an increasing and desperate need for Christian teachers to serve in Christian schools to fill the growing demand for thoughtful, biblical, Christian education.

“A friend recently said that ninety percent of the world’s people live outside the United States, but ninety percent of the world’s educational resources are inside the United States,” says Sara. “When I heard that, I thought, ‘Let me have the privilege of being out and about and helpful.’ It’s such a great opportunity to be part of this.”

Students at ITC feel that same sense of privilege at the chance to earn a degree from a Christian institution. One of those students, Phalla, came to ITC from a poor village in Cambodia, where there is now one school with five classes that stop after fifth grade. When Cambodia was devastated by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, the vast majority of professionals, including educators and clergy, were killed. During a discussion in class about why ITC students wanted to be teachers, Phalla raised her hand and talked about the impact of so many people being slaughtered in her country. She said, “They’ve killed all the clever [educated] people, and God is calling me to be one of those replacement teachers in my country—to replace one of those who was executed.”

These are the kinds of students God has brought to ITC—students who hope to bring the love of Christ and a quality education back to their villages and communities.

“We have students from Nepal, another relatively poor country,” says Jim. “The Badi people are considered one of the lowest castes in the country. One of our students is Badi and as far as we know he is the first

Badi who has ever gone to college. He is studying to be an elementary school teacher and wants to go back to teach in his home community.”

Jim and Sara are not the only alumni serving at ITC. Adam Porcella ’07, former resident director at Covenant College, serves as the director of residence life at ITC. Adam notes that although the context, institution, country, and students are vastly different from what he experienced at Covenant, he is still serving the same kingdom, same gospel, and same God.

“God seems to find great pleasure in using the weak things of this world to accomplish His good works,” says Adam. “Right now it is difficult for me to see how God could possibly use such a fledgling institution in the crucible of its formation to build His kingdom, which makes me all the more confident that He has big plans for ITC. God’s imagination is infinitely greater than my own.”

Alumni at the School of Light & Hope

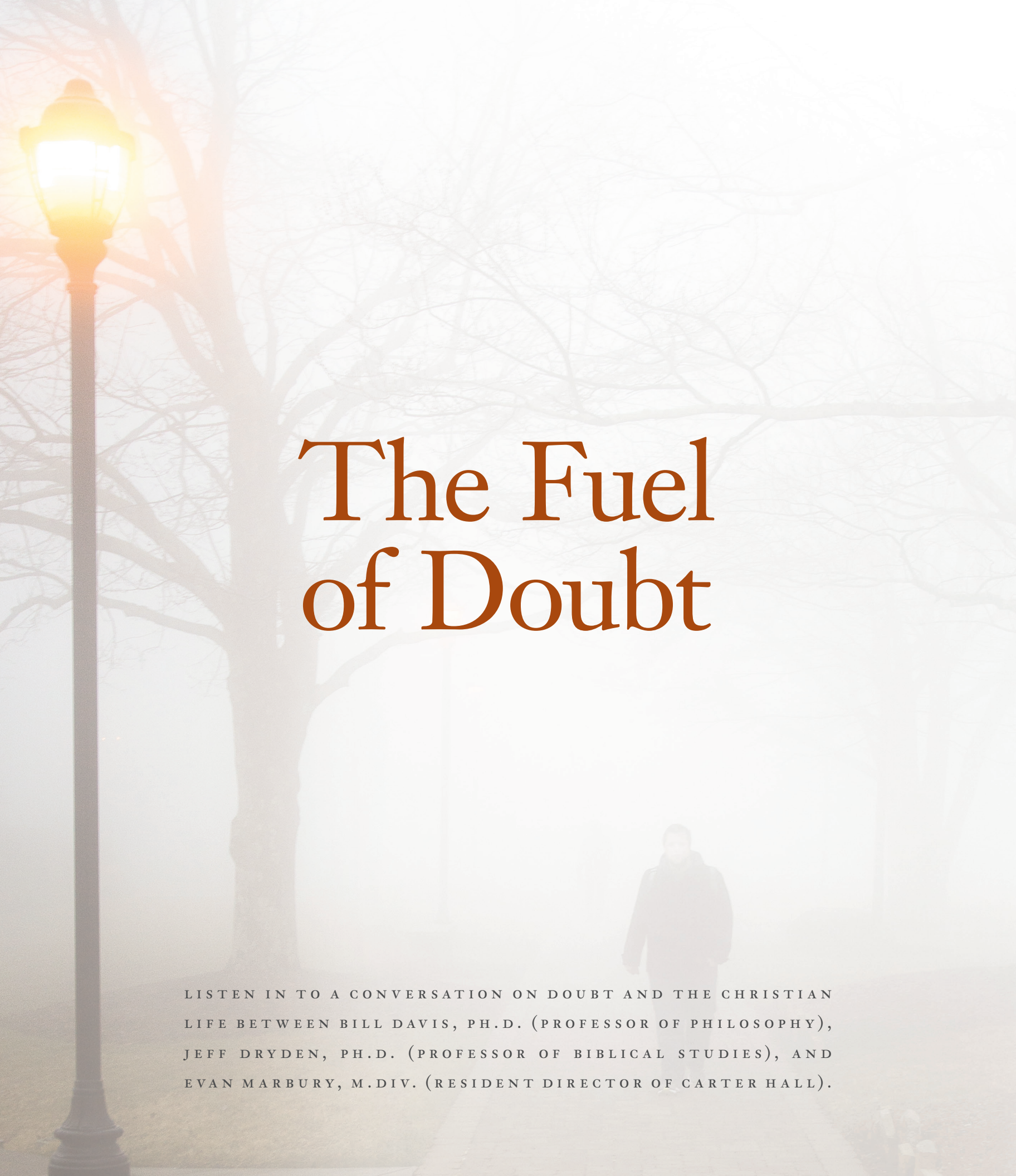
While Sara, Jim, and Adam work to further Christian education at ITC, five other Covenant alumni serve as teachers at Sekolah Pelita Harapan (School of Light & Hope). Emma English ’13, Katie Glass ’14, Da Som Jung ’12, Rebekah Schmidt ’10, and Melanie Terpstra ’14 all teach in various schools of SPH.

Melanie is the fifth grade teacher in a smaller school in SPH, about an hour from Jakarta. She teaches English and unit of inquiry to fifth graders, along with sixth grade English and afterschool photography for third through sixth graders.

“God is at work in my classroom, and in SPH,” says Melanie. “Many of my students are not Christian, which means I’m representing Christ to them every day. It is quite a responsibility and a privilege. I hope to be the type of teacher they will feel comfortable coming to talk to about God, or anything else, if the Spirit works in their hearts.”

Melanie notes that one of the most exciting parts of what is happening at her school is that the tuition money brought in is invested in giving lower income children the opportunity to receive an education and to learn about God.

In the midst of a country where eighty-seven percent of the population is Muslim, there is an exceptional opportunity for Christians to bring the light and hope of the gospel to young men and women through Christian education. As Indonesian brothers and sisters in Christ work to offer this kind of education in Asia, Covenant alumni are privileged to work alongside them, seeking and proclaiming Christ’s preeminence over all of creation—from Lookout Mountain to Indonesia. 🙏

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a foggy street. On the left, a tall black street lamp with a glowing yellow light stands prominently. The fog is thick, obscuring the details of the trees and the person walking in the distance. The overall mood is contemplative and mysterious.

The Fuel of Doubt

LISTEN IN TO A CONVERSATION ON DOUBT AND THE CHRISTIAN
LIFE BETWEEN BILL DAVIS, PH.D. (PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY),
JEFF DRYDEN, PH.D. (PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL STUDIES), AND
EVAN MARBURY, M.DIV. (RESIDENT DIRECTOR OF CARTER HALL).

Nature of Doubt

Dryden: I think there are two aspects to doubt. One is epistemic—doubt regarding knowledge. But there's also the doubt of trust that's a relational, kind of fiduciary doubt, and that is the one the Bible is most concerned about because it's doubt in terms of a lack of trust.

Marbury: I feel like doubt is part of the result of the Fall. But even when we were in perfect fellowship with the Lord, the serpent in Eden was asking, "Did God really say that?" I feel like that's the nature of doubt for everyone. One of the tools that the devil uses is just questioning what's been plainly said. I don't think that hearing the question itself is wrong, but you have to work through that.

Doubt as Part of the Human Experience

Dryden: One thing that's really helpful about the Bible is that it makes doubt normative for the Christian life—not that it calls us to doubt, but it normalizes it as part of the human experience. Read the Psalms—the writers of the Psalms are believers who are distraught and distrusting and angry and feel betrayed by God, and that's the hymnal of the Old Testament. So they're not singing all happy-pappy songs. What a worship service does—whether anybody wants it to or not—is teach you what the Christian life looks like. In the New Testament, we read about disciples who doubt. Luke explicitly talks about them doubting in the presence of the resurrected Jesus. They're standing before Him and they still doubt.

Davis: Yes, just before the Great Commission, in Matthew 28:16-19 it says, "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, . . . 'Go and make disciples of all nations. . . .'" He says this to people who are doubting, even as they're looking at Him in His glorified state.

Marbury: He's sending them into vocational ministry with their doubts.

Davis: Right. So if you think doubts somehow preclude you from the work of Christ's mission in the world, we have Jesus' own testimony, because He looked at people who doubted and said, "Go."

Doubt on a College Campus

Davis: Students will regularly slip into my office when they think no one is looking and say that they're struggling with doubts. The most important thing that I say to them is that I know exactly what they're talking about. Even at my ripe old age and years of experience, I have doubts too and there's nothing unusual about this. It's OK to ask God why, when you don't know. And it's OK even to say, like the end of Psalm 88, darkness is my only friend. It's even OK to reach the point when you can't imagine an explanation.

Marbury: A lot of times there's confusion or a lack of confidence in this time of life when these students are just beginning to think critically. And they also feel a sense of guilt because they're questioning: Is Scripture really valid? Is God only one? And they feel guilty just

for having the questions. I try to reassure them and say I think that it's very profound and important to think through those questions.

Dryden: Covenant students are kind of trapped between modern- and postmodernism. Their intellectual framework is modernist, but the framework that they actually live with is that postmodern kind of romanticism where emotions are the ultimate mark of truth.

A lot of the problems stem from the model of the Christian life they've been imprinted with that deals in categories of intellectual certainty and moral perfectionism. They think that those are the signs of what the Christian life looks like. They think, I won't have doubts and I wouldn't be sinning if I were a Christian. But then they have the doubting experience, which is natural because they're human beings and doubt is part of life, and then they have to live in that tension.

Davis: They probably have not had modeled for them people who are open about their doubts.

"It's OK to ask God why, when you don't know. And it's OK even to say, like the end of Psalm 88, darkness is my only friend."

Doubt & Faith

Dryden: In the New Testament, especially in the gospels, faith is always partial—it's always in motion, it's always under development. In the gospels, you have endless experiences of people who have different degrees of faith who come to Jesus and Jesus says the faith that they have is good and now it just needs to grow one more step. It's always in movement, and it's always partial. I think what that means is that some element of ambiguity and doubt is always involved in the Christian life.

Davis: Maybe in our public prayers there could be more expressions of unresolved anxiety. I've heard pastors pray, "We have no idea what you're doing, Lord." But that's also a trusting doubt—it's not a cynical or rebellious doubt. It's a trust that we know who God is and we know He loves us, but we have no idea what He's doing.

Dryden: Well, that's what the Bible calls faith, not what the Bible calls doubt. And this is what is modeled in the Psalter: the experiences of doubt and confusion and loneliness and betrayal and turning to God with all of those things. This is why all of those bits in the Psalter are expressions of faith, not expressions of doubt. The choice to turn away from God in the context of those doubts is the sinful choice.

Davis: That's why in Hebrews 11, we're told about the heroes of the faith—whose lives are chock full of doubt—that "all of these died having not received the thing promised to them." Then chapter 12 begins with, "Fix your eyes on Jesus."

Dryden: And that is the model of faith in Hebrews 11.

Doubt & Sin

Davis: There's a big difference between doubts that are just temptations, and doubts that are sins. And there's nothing sinful about being tempted. Jesus was tempted. I think the Bible describes a number of different states that are translated as doubt that are simply perplexity.

Dryden: I'm not comfortable calling doubt temptation. Temptation for me is a negative word, but doubt to me and most doubt I see is neutral, in the same way that I would consider most emotions as neutral experiences. It's a context that creates choices, but the doubt itself I don't see as a temptation.

I feel like there are as many species of doubt as there are potato chips—it's just a complex reality. But there really are places where doubt is sinful. I think there are times when doubt becomes a stance of life, a mode of operation when you hold everything at a distance, and that's the only kind of doubt where I start to say that is sinful doubt. There are some places where doubt is neutral and some places where it's a sign of growth.

Davis: Do you read Thomas' doubt at the end of the book of John as a sinful kind?

Dryden: No. I don't think you're meant to read it as sinful. I think in the literary context he's a model for the reader who doubts. In the gospels, part of how you know how you're supposed to relate to characters is by watching how Jesus relates to them. And Jesus doesn't scold Thomas, He just offers His wounds. Whereas you do have times in the gospels when Jesus pushes back very hard on people—think of the rich young ruler, the Pharisees, or even Peter. So the way that Jesus relates to Thomas is why I would say this isn't sinful.

Doubt as a Means of Growth

Dryden: The other side of it, for me, is that doubt and confusion are often the most important incubator for spiritual growth. At L'Abri I saw that the people who were driven there through confusion are the ones who grew. Sometimes I think real growth only happens in the midst of confusion.

Marbury: I think of Ephesians where it says to grow in maturity so that you're not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. I feel like a healthy level of doubt and questioning is helpful. On some level, doubt can be a gift—that you don't just take things and think they must be true but that you're willing to think critically. I think it can lead to a very healthy place.

Davis: I think I'd want to qualify that a little. I think doubt in a community, like at L'Abri, can produce growth. When I experience doubts here I talk about them with my friends and usually what I'm finding perplexing and distressing is not what they're finding distressing and so they talk through, not a five-step formula, but they're able to tell me why it isn't a crisis for them. I think the wrestling part is important—it's in the midst of the body that you wrestle and you have to be able to do that openly.

Doubt & the Church

Dryden: I think, if we're honest, our evangelical context privileges the folks who everything works for and who are happy in the Lord, and it disadvantages those who express doubt. That is what is modeled.

Davis: But James says some scary things. In James 1, he says, "When you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not

expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."

Dryden: But here's the issue, it's a text that is speaking in antithetical language: no doubt/receive blessing. So who does that apply to? Nobody. This is a place where we get tripped up by bringing our black and white, moral and intellectual certainty model to the text. The problem is, we're all out of luck if that is the truth. What James is

characterizing in that passage is the person who is double minded. That's not an antithetical category. This is one of the things the Bible does rhetorically all the time—it speaks in antithetical polarities that clarify the fact that we all live in the soup. What he's really talking about there is the double-minded person—the person who is characterized by hedging their bets with God. That person will get nothing. We immediately jump on "it says here 'no doubt,'" but that, by definition, excludes any and all readers. And, depending on how you understand the Garden of Gethsemane, might even exclude Jesus. It's very easy for us to take it that way, but I think that's an imposition of our way of looking at it.

Davis: There are students and there are pastors who claim that they have no doubts. Are they deluded? Are they lying?

Dryden: I would say both, frankly. They're deluded and lying—to themselves if not to everyone else. But the reason they are doing that is because that's the system they have been sold and that's the system they're told to promote.

"I think, if we're honest, our evangelical context privileges the folks who everything works for and who are happy in the Lord, and it disadvantages those who express doubt."



(L-R) Bill Davis, Jeff Dryden, Evan Marbury

“Whatever happens in that hour and a half on Sunday morning imprints a model of ‘This is what the Christian life looks like,’ and if there’s never doubt involved then that isn’t seen as part of the Christian life.”

Davis: I suspect that it would be very healthy if there were times, fairly regularly, when people had questions, in Sunday school for instance, where the answer was not finalized. It would probably be healthier if, from time to time, people heard, “I don’t know.” It’s easily the most important thing I say in class—saying I don’t know.

Marbury: And it’s good to consider if there’s a place programmatically maybe for a sermon series on doubt, or explanations of songs that have been birthed out of a sea of doubt. It can help to see that there are other places in church history where Christians have wrestled with these questions and doubts.

Dryden: I think part of the issue is exactly what we’re talking about. Doubts are uncomfortable, and in our church setting today the greatest sin is to be impolite. We have a church that is built on the doctrine of politeness, which isn’t a doctrine we inherited from Jesus. We’re very nice people, and one of the things we can guarantee is that no one will be disturbed by a church service.

One of the characteristics of doubt is that when you’re in the middle of it there isn’t any end in sight. You’re in the middle of the ocean and there is no land—that is not a pleasant experience. We are programmed to see the Bible as about closure and the Christian life as about closure. And again, that gets modeled implicitly in a way where confusion and ambiguity and doubts are seen as things that I need to purge from my life. And so it’s being conscious of what things we’re actually modeling, implicitly, which isn’t a question that we ask nearly often enough, but especially in a church environment. Whatever happens in that hour and a half on Sunday morning imprints a model of “This is what the Christian life looks like,” and if there’s never doubt involved then that isn’t seen as part of the Christian life.

When a Friend Doubts

Marbury: I would encourage those with friends who are struggling with doubts to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to take offense. I feel like I see too often that people are listening in order

to respond, and not listening in order to understand. They listen to someone’s doubt for a solid fifteen minutes and they have all the books and Scriptures lined up to blow it out of the water. Do you really know that person and their doubt that well, that soon? And sometimes they’re not really talking in order to get a response, they’re talking in order to be heard and be known, which is part of the heart of God.

Part of the reason students here might be quick to pounce on the doubt is because they are taking offense on behalf of God, and they’re not willing to linger at all, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death as part of reality. How do I just literally walk with a friend and not try to rescue them?

Davis: I think the two things I normally hear most clearly when I’m talking to someone who is doubting are the things that I know what to do with and the things that I find threatening because I don’t know what to do with them. I’m probably more likely to jump on those things I find threatening unless I remind myself: The most helpful thing you can do is say, “I find that threatening too. I know exactly what it’s like to have that kind of distress, precisely because I’m not sure what to do with it.”

It’s really hard though. It’s hard to admit because it’s socially risky. The person telling you about their doubts is taking a risk, and if you join and walk with them in wrestling with hard things that’s risky too.

Dryden: I think the experience that you’re talking about is key in most people’s responses to a friend’s doubts. We feel threatened by those doubts because they resonate with our own doubts that we’re not comfortable with and we wish weren’t there, and so I’ll fix you as a way to not have to deal with my own things.

I think that Paul’s language is mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice. It’s not “fix the mourner and make them rejoice.” Mourn with those who mourn. Doubt with those who doubt. It doesn’t mean that doubt in and of itself is a virtue,

“Too many people see doubt as a disease and not as fuel to gain more understanding.”

but it means that we should be with that person and normalize the experience of doubt. Most people just need to learn that doubt is normal and they're not a crazy person.

Davis: And saying, “Let’s pray,” which is also counterintuitive, because you think that prayer needs to be built on a solid foundation of no doubting. But the thing to do is to pray—pour your heart out to God about the thing you’re finding difficult. It’s a trusting doubt.

Marbury: And also, don’t be scared of doubt. I have a friend who is incredibly agnostic, but I’ll invite her to anything. I invited her to my graduation at seminary and she brought her partner with her. I just tell her I’m not afraid of her doubts. I know that God is real and He wants to reveal His truth to all people and I’ll invite her to as many things as possible where she’ll be exposed to truth and if she wants to talk afterward, we can go there. But I’m not scared. In the words of Charles Spurgeon, the Bible is a lion and can defend itself.

Dryden: Doubt is a very complex reality that just has to be met in a bunch of different ways. There’s not a single formula. You can’t be formulaic and I think sometimes people have to be unsettled.

Wrestling with Doubt

Marbury: God has enough self-esteem to handle your doubts, so really dig into them. Doubt as much as you can as hard as you can and be curious about your doubts, because God can handle it. He handled Jonah and his drama, He handled David and his drama, and He handled the disciples. He can handle any level of anger, doubt, sadness that you’re wrestling with, any doubting of His existence. Don’t hold back for anyone’s expense, because it’s only going to harm you. God is faithful and that’s not to say that you lament and it’s all over—you might be wrestling for weeks, months, or years, but God is still faithful.

Davis: Yes, “as hard as you can.” You want to take steps so that it’s with your whole self and with all the intensity that you’re feeling, and you don’t hold part of it back because you think God needs help. But it needs to be directed, in trust, towards God. Because there are ways to doubt as hard as you can so that you push God away, and we’re not told that those who are blaspheming God can expect that God will break through that. It’s going to be super intense and perfectly candid, but it needs to be an honest, pouring out your heart to God, not just to your neighbor or the un-listening universe.

When we look at what steps we would suggest people do in this situation, one is that they go where we’re told faith grows, which is

in the ordinary means of grace. So, rather than waiting until you’ve figured out all the answers to your questions before you throw yourself into worship or into the Word, no, go there. Read the Psalms. I find the Psalms especially helpful. There you find people, led by the Holy Spirit, expressing the full range of righteous emotions, including righteous anger.

“I find the Psalms especially helpful. There you find people, led by the Holy Spirit, expressing the full range of righteous emotions.”

Dryden: I would totally agree with that. It reminds me of Bonhoeffer who said it’s only the ones who believe who obey and only the ones who obey who believe, and there are lots of places where obedience is the path towards faith. And I think you’re right in talking about it in the context of community and the ordinary means of grace. The only caution that I have is that most folks in churches have been told that those normal means of grace are the tools to suppress doubts—that you use them as ways to not think about your doubts anymore. And that’s what lots of people hear when they hear, “These are the things you should do. . . .” It labels doubts as inherently bad and sinful and the means of grace are the means by which you control doubt—you fill your head with other things. We don’t have a lot of good models of actually leaving a place for my doubt and *still* participating in these practices—they’re seen as conflicting.

Marbury: I would agree. Too many people see doubt as a disease and not as fuel to gain more understanding.

Dryden: Doubt is normal—it’s a normal part of human experience. The Bible normalizes it. Herman Bavink says that mystery is the lifeblood of theology, but we tend to model a faith that has four square corners and answers every question. The biblical picture of Jesus in the gospels and even in the cry of dereliction on the cross is to teach us that Jesus isn’t waiting at the end of our doubts—He is the one who travels with us through our doubts, because He experienced all of the same realities and can identify with us. 🕊

Tearing down the Tower

WHEN I STARTED GRADUATE SCHOOL, MY MOTHER gave me a book of poetry by Rod Jellema. The first poem ended like this:

*He freed us, all of us
Adam's children, free to play
to pocket words like stones
found on the shores, to arrange them
in settings only dreamed,
as many settings
as there are stars in the sky.*

I'm a linguist. I love thinking about the diverse strategies people use to build words and phrases and sentences. When I first read these lines of poetry, I found them deeply comforting, and I think I finally understand why.

Like many children raised in church, I grew up with a traditional understanding of the Tower of Babel story (Gen. 11): God punished the proud tower builders by confusing their language. According to this view, linguistic diversity is a curse, so we should expect it to end when Christ's kingdom is consummated. But, frankly, I like the idea of a multilingual heaven.

I was pleased to discover recently that the curse interpretation of Genesis 11 is not the only one. In fact, some scholars have argued that God's mixing of language at Babel was actually a blessing. One such interpretation points out that the tower builders were defying God's command to fill the earth (the cultural mandate in Gen. 1:29 and 9:1). The builders wanted to avoid being "scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4), so they worked to stay together—to preserve their one culture and

"God-ordained unity does not look like cultural or linguistic sameness."



by Dr. Nola Stephens, assistant professor of linguistics

language. Then God mercifully thwarted this plan and set them back on the right path by mixing their language and scattering them (Gen. 11:9). The kind of unity they sought was not what God desired for them.

When I think about what language might look like in heaven, I imagine a community of speakers—not like those who came together to build the Tower of Babel—but like those who came together at Pentecost to hear one message proclaimed in the languages of "every nation under Heaven" (Acts 2:5-11). God-ordained unity does not look like cultural or linguistic sameness. According to Revelation 7:9, it looks like saints "from all tribes and peoples and languages"

standing together before the throne, one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). We're still waiting for the perfection of that unity, but in the meantime, I believe that God's actions at Babel have freed us, all of us / Adam's children ... / to pocket words like stones / ... to arrange them in settings only dreamed, / as many settings / as there are stars in the sky. 🙏

ALUMNI NEWS INTENTIONALLY EXCLUDED

On Words

I LIKE WORDS. In fact, it would probably be fair to say that I *love* words. I like big, long, Latinate words, like “obstreperous” and “mellifluous.” I like the punch and precision of short, Saxon words, like “good” and “bad,” or “strong” and “weak.” I believe that words matter, that language matters. In fact, I believe that words are crucial to, and critical for, our life together.

Many of you may not know that I fancy myself a farmer. I have learned something very interesting in my time as “farmer.” Soil matters. In fact, it matters a lot. I learned, the hard way, that the kind of soil you plant in has significant impact on the health of your shrubs or flowers. I learned how to prepare soil—how to till and condition and fertilize soil in order to create the richest and most hospitable setting possible for my shrubs.

Words are the soil of our community. Language is the material in which a community grows. This is a reality that’s reflected in the original—and now obsolete—meaning of the word “conversation.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “conversation” is (in its old meaning):

1. The action of living or having one’s being *in* a place or *among* persons. *Obs.*
2. The action of consorting or having dealings with others; living together; commerce, intercourse, society, intimacy. *Obs.*

Faculty members at Covenant are often heard saying that we are inviting students into a great conversation, or *the* great conversation—a conversation that’s been going on for thousands of years about the meaning of life and the nature of God and the nature of man and the nature of society. But students here are also part of a conversation in the archaic sense of the word that I just defined—a life together. That common life is rooted in words.

Words matter for their effectiveness in communicating truth and meaning, but they also matter because they are inherently powerful. We, as image bearers, have words. We have the use of language. In fact, one of the first ways in which Adam exercised his dominion was by naming the animals. No other of God’s creatures has this gift of words. The *imago Dei* has often been thought of in terms of rational capabilities, but certainly one of the essential characteristics of the *imago Dei* is language. God spoke. Where there was nothing, there was something. Not only did He use the power of speech, but His speech made reality. We are human beings created in the image of a God who created something out of nothing, with words.

I think it’s this power of words to make things real that led Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his little book *Life Together*, to write that: “Often we combat our evil thoughts most effectively if we absolutely refuse to allow them to be expressed in words.” Think about that—how often is it that sin has become a problem for us, a reality for us, because we’ve thought on it, and muttered about it, and expressed it in words?

We need to care for our words, to cultivate healthy and rich language, to practice the use of life-giving words and to practice not using life-killing words. Our words have the power to make things real—to tear down, or to build up. It is our responsibility to take care that our words enrich the soil in which our community grows—giving life to those around us. 🌱



J. Derek Halvorson '93
President

“Words are
the soil of our
community.”

[Listen to President Halvorson's chapel
address on words at covenant.edu/onwords.](https://www.covenant.edu/onwords)



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Chapel services provide the Covenant community with the opportunity to gather for corporate worship throughout the week. Through the chapel program, Covenant students hear from speakers from campus and around the world, including Dr. Rosaria Butterfield, Rev. Kevin DeYoung, Nancy Guthrie, Bishop Henry Luke Orombi, Andrew Peterson, and many more.

You can now watch Covenant chapel services every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 11:00 a.m. via live stream at covenant.edu/stream. If you miss the live stream, you can watch recordings at covenant.edu/youtube, or listen to audio of recorded chapel lectures at covenant.edu/soundcloud.