

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

VIEW

Faith, Hope & Love
*A Pastoral & Theological
Meditation on Suffering*

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VIEW

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View's purpose is to:

- Encourage alumni, parents, and friends to keep Christ preminent 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



Students, faculty, staff, and community members celebrated Christmas at Covenant with a concert and madrigal dessert reception.

CovenantNews

Theatre: *Moreau*

The theatre department presented Sean Gaffney's *Moreau* on the Covenant College stage during the spring semester of 2016.

Professor Camille Hallstrom directed *Moreau*, which is based on H.G. Wells' novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. A sci-fi thriller, the play followed shipwrecked Edward Prendick as he discovered the horrors hidden on a mad scientist's island.

"I first came across this remarkable play when Globalstage put Taproot Theatre's original production on video," says Hallstrom. "A science horror story, the play sticks close to the novel in the first half, but takes some creative license later, making for hugely engaging drama, but also great discussion points for themes like, 'What does it actually mean to be human?'"

Prof. Lok Kim Winner of International Conductor Competition

Covenant professor and orchestra conductor Lok Kim was one of three winners of the 2016 International Conductors Workshop and Competition, sponsored by the Gwinnett Symphony Chamber Orchestra and Georgia Southern University. The event hosted conductors from China, Finland, Hong Kong, Mexico, Taiwan, the United States, and many other countries.

During the four-day workshop, conductors had the opportunity to participate in seven rehearsals, refine their orchestral conducting technique, and work with fellow conductors from around the world. The workshop and competition concluded with a free concert, which included pieces from Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, and more.

Michael Gerson Keynote Speaker in Conversation on Predatory Lending

Covenant College and the Center for Public Justice co-hosted a conversation regarding the growing epidemic of predatory payday lending in November of 2015 on the Covenant College campus.

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson delivered the keynote address, presenting a biblical perspective on payday loans and how Christians can respond to this growing issue of injustice. Gerson is the author of *Heroic Conservatism* and co-author of *City of Man: Religion and Politics in a New Era*. Gerson's address was followed by a panel discussion, which was moderated by Center for Public Justice CEO Stephanie Summers.

Watch Gerson's lecture and the following panel discussion at covenant.edu/gerson.

Profs. Corbett & Fikkert Author *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence*

Professors Steve Corbett '81 and Brian Fikkert, along with alumna Katie Casselberry '10, authored an additional companion resource to *When Helping Hurts*. Moody Publishers released *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence* on October 6, 2015. The book helps answer the question, "When a low-income person asks your church for help, what do you do next?"

"Virtually every church in North America has the opportunity to work with people requesting money in order to pay their electric bill, to fill their gas tank, or to buy food," says Fikkert, professor of economics and community development and founder of the Chalmers Center. "This book helps churches to apply the principles found in *When Helping Hurts* in such situations, showing them how to move beyond mere handouts into longer-term, more empowering approaches."



Covenant Receives Vibrant Communities Grant

The Georgia Arts Council recently awarded Covenant College a Vibrant Communities Grant. The council's mission is to "cultivate the growth of vibrant, thriving Georgia communities through the arts." The Vibrant Communities Grant was created to fund arts endeavors that meaningfully engage communities and K-12 students.

The grant will contribute to the work of the John Hamm Performing Arts Series, which was inaugurated in 2015. The series brings world-class musicians to Covenant's campus for concerts, master classes, and one-on-one music lessons and coaching. During the spring semester of 2016, with help from the Vibrant Communities Grant, the College invited students from local elementary, middle, and high schools to campus to participate in the musical education provided by these world-class musicians.

"We are so excited for this external affirmation of the good work of our music department," says Dr. Jeff Hall, vice president for academic affairs. "Covenant College remains committed to engaging the arts and the community in ways that celebrate and declare the lordship of Christ in all things."

Learn more about the John Hamm Performing Arts Series at covenant.edu/JHPAS.

Dr. William Struthers Presents WIC Lecture Series

Dr. William Struthers, professor of psychology at Wheaton College, presented the 2016 Women in the Church Lecture Series at Covenant College on February 11-13. Struthers' lecture series was entitled, "Sexuality and the Brain: Christian Faithfulness in the New Millennium."



onCourse Visualizing Emancipation

Faculty:

Dr. Alicia Jackson, associate professor of history

Class:

The American Civil War Era

Assignment:

Dr. Alicia Jackson's American Civil War Era class focuses on the social, economic, and political aspects of the antebellum period through the reconstruction era. The entire class participated in research that contributed to the national Visualizing Emancipation project. Visualizing Emancipation is a research venture aimed at producing a digital, visual history of the process of emancipation during and after the Civil War. The visual guide is a map that documents the end of slavery throughout the United States.

Dr. Jackson's class was tasked with researching the years of 1861-1865 in Rome, Georgia, and Savannah, Georgia. Students analyzed the number of runaway slaves in each city by looking through city newspapers for runaway slave ads, jailed slave ads, and any other mentions of runaway slaves. Once they found evidence of a runaway slave, they documented the description of the person and any information they had found in a spreadsheet that contributed to the larger-scale Visualizing Emancipation research project.

For Example:

One student's research focused on issues of the *Savannah Republican* newspaper from 1861. In that year, there were more than 300 runaway and jailed slave ads in the newspaper. As the war progressed, there were more runaway slave ads and fewer jailed slave ads. The class hypothesized that as General Sherman moved through Georgia, it became easier for slaves to run away and fewer slaves were captured and jailed.

Says Dr. Jackson:

"I first heard about the Visualizing Emancipation project while attending the Southern Historical Association meeting in Atlanta two years ago. I contacted Dr. Scott Nesbit, the project leader, at The University of Georgia, and he encouraged us to participate. My class was excited to have the opportunity to participate in a national project that sharpened their skills as researchers and contributed to the overall study of history in the American South. One of the highlights of the experience was having Dr. Nesbit Skype with the class, evaluate their presentations, and give feedback to individual students."

Listen to students discuss their experience with the Visualizing Emancipation project at covenant.edu/VisualizingEmancipation.

4

NCAA tournaments
Covenant athletic programs
have played in since 2014

191

Prospective students
who participated in
Scholarship Weekend

175

Alumni who live
outside of the United States

4

Lecture series in spring 2016

95

Chapel lectures available
on YouTube

16

Pieces of crenelated battlements
placed on the Carter Hall tower

5

Theatre productions in the
2015-2016 school year

45

Students majoring in
computer science

475

Students on the fall
2015 dean's list



After earning a BA in psychology from Illinois Wesleyan University, Struthers went on to earn an MA and a PhD in biopsychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research interests center on the neural mechanisms that underlie behavioral arousal and the processing of novel environments. He is a contributor to and author of several books, including *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*. He has served as a professor at Wheaton College since 1999.

You can listen to Struthers' lectures at covenant.edu/WICLectures16.

Volleyball Team Sets Program Records

The Covenant volleyball team continued to break program records in 2015. Under the instruction of USA South coach of the year Joanna Ehman and the play of All-American Chelsea VanDyk '16, the Scots won the South division of the USA South, and went on to win the USA South tournament, claiming a spot in the NCAA Division III tournament for the first time.

The team finished 19-13 overall and 13-3 in the USA South—winning 13 straight USA South matches. The streak earned the Scots the number one seed in the USA South's South division and earned them the right to host the USA South conference tournament. The conference tournament title was the program's first since 1979 and the first time on record that the Scots volleyball program has won a conference regular season and tournament title in the same year.



Dr. Alicia Jackson Receives Louisville Project Grant for Researchers

Dr. Alicia Jackson, associate professor of history, was awarded a 2016 Louisville Project Grant for Researchers from The Louisville Institute. The institute provides grants to both scholar/pastors and scholar/educators and is interested in advancing American religious and theological scholarship.

Jackson's research project will focus on Isaac Anderson, a black minister and politician who lived during Reconstruction. Anderson was a founding pastor of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church while also serving as a senator in Georgia. Anderson's story provides a window into the experience of many African-American ministers in the time period.

"It's a really fascinating story," says Jackson. "I'm interested in the complexity of this African-American man who is a minister and who is also involved in politics. This was a period where there was significant respect for people who were ministers. I hope the project will help provide a greater understanding of the complexity of the issues facing African Americans during Reconstruction and today."

The Louisville Project Grant will allow Jackson to visit and research various places Anderson lived or traveled. She will visit locations in Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas, combing through archives and learning more about Anderson's life.

Top 10 in 2015

ScotsCasts

covenant.edu/soundcloud

Chapel Messages

covenant.edu/soundcloud

Videos

covenant.edu/youtube

News

covenant.edu/news

1

Scholarship Weekend
at Covenant
by Scott Schindler '10

I Believe in Puddleglum
by Prof. Camille Hallstrom

Chapel: Propaganda

Prof. George "Tad" Mindeman
(1954-2015)

2

A Semester in Japan
by Cynthia Lopez '15

Senior Testimonies
by Hattie Corbett '15
& Roy Anderson '15

Move-In Day

Dean's List,
Spring 2015

3

Engaging the Community
through Music
by Dr. Scott Finch '96

Faith, Hope, and Love:
Reflections on Suffering
by Dr. Kelly Kopic

'80s Skate Night

Carter Hall
Renovation Begins

4

Advising Pre-Med Students
by Dr. Tim Morris '83

On Choosing
by Dr. J. Derek Halvorson '93

Day of Prayer

Picnic &
Andrew Peterson Concert

5

Celebrating Women
in Computing
by Anna Hankal '16

Senior Testimonies
by Matt Lattner '15
& Alicia Zanoni '15

Kuier Kilter

Construction of New
Fine Arts Facility Begins

6

Developing a Framework
of the World
by Joey Beyer '15 & Bryce Stout '15

Living in Light of Eternity
(2 Cor. 4:16)
by Karen Hodge

Merry Christmas from
Covenant College

U.S. News Ranks
Covenant #9 in South

7

Shaped through Brokenness
by Liz Simakoff '15

He Is Able (Eph. 3:14-21)
by Dr. Herb Ward

Spring Formal

Washington Monthly Ranks
Covenant among Top Ten
Baccalaureate Colleges

8

Studying Jane Austen
at Oxford
by Eliza Cary '16

How Did I Get Here
by Jerilyn Sanders

What I'm Learning

Scots Trot 5k

9

Studying Abroad in Spain
by Ellie Groenendyk '16

Father's Love, Son's Worth,
Wrath's Weight, Grace's Substitute
by Dr. Ligon Duncan

Chapel:
I Believe in Puddleglum
by Prof. Camille Hallstrom

Top 10 Lists
for 2014

10

Praising God for His Provision
to the Chemistry Department
by Dr. Dan Zuidema

Colossians 1:9-14:
Knowing God's Will
by Rev. Grant Lowe

Castle in the Clouds

New Faculty
Appointments

Jackson is in the process of writing a book about Anderson that will both appeal to academics and be accessible for the lay reader.

Profs. Fikkert & Mask Recognized in *Christianity Today* Book Awards

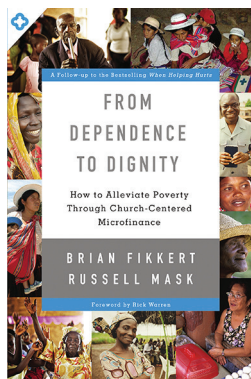
Drs. Brian Fikkert and Russell

Mask's book *From*

Dignity: How to

Alleviate Poverty Through Church-Centered Microfinance won an award of merit in the missions/global church category of *Christianity Today*'s 2016 book awards.

Christianity Today's annual book awards highlight works from the previous year in twelve categories. Publishers are encouraged to nominate books for the awards, and the final selection process is handled by a committee of scholars, pastors, and other readers.



Covenant Acquires New Organ

The Covenant College music department recently acquired a digital Allen organ. Replacing an older analog organ, this new instrument provides students with the opportunity to practice and perform on an organ that more closely mirrors the sound of the pipe organ.



"The most exciting part about having a new organ in the chapel is the quality of sound it can produce," says organ major Elsie Matsuda '17. "The Allen organ has really gone above and beyond my expectations for an electric organ, and it emulates an authentic pipe organ sound really well. So far I have had a thrilling experience blasting baroque pieces throughout the auditorium, and the fact that the organ has three manuals is really helpful on some of my pieces. I'm thankful I get to practice on such a glorious instrument for my last two years here."

Watch organ major Elsie Matsuda '17 play "All for Jesus" on Covenant's new organ at covenant.edu/organ.

Covenant Hosts First Imago Dei Conference

The College hosted the first Imago Dei Conference in the spring semester of 2016. The conference takes the place of the annual Marriage, Family, and Community Conference.



"It is our hope that the Imago Dei Conference will provide space for thoughtful dialogue and interaction with biblical personhood," says Chaplain Grant Lowe. "This dialogue will include topics like marriage, family, and community, but it opens the door for a broader discussion of identity and what it means to be created in the image of God."

Rev. James Forsyth, pastor of McLean Presbyterian Church, presented the inaugural Imago Dei lectures at Covenant. His lectures centered on personal identity and its relationship to the Imago Dei.

You can listen to Rev. Forsyth's lectures at covenant.edu/ImagoDei16.

Dr. Dan Zuidema & Chemistry Student Co-Author Journal Article

Chemistry professor Dan Zuidema and chemistry major Lindsey Herndon '17 recently co-authored an article in the *Journal of Chemical Education*, titled "Using *The Poisoner's Handbook* in Conjunction with Teaching a First-Term General/Organic/Biochemistry Course."

SoundCloud
covenant.edu/soundcloud



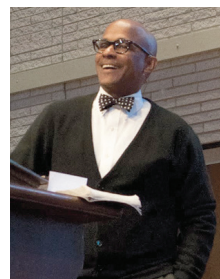
"There is no suffering that is irredeemable."

Rev. Grant Lowe
Suffering Is Not Futile



"Sin breeds in solitude. But the beauty and significance of friendship is that it can draw you out toward the light."

Hannah Bloomquist
Friendship: A Calling In, Out, and To



"We know that freedom will not ring because of a flag, but it will ring because of a cross."

Rev. James White
Lessons from Difficult Moments that Can Define Our Destiny

The article chronicled a semester-long project aimed at increasing student interest and engagement in Zuidema's Introduction to Chemistry course.

During the semester, students were tasked with reading *The Poisoner's Handbook* in addition to usual chemistry textbooks. *The Poisoner's Handbook* chronicles poisonings from the early twentieth century and highlights the use of forensic chemistry in both the creation and detection of poisons. Zuidema and Herndon hoped that *The Poisoner's Handbook* would increase student interest in the class material by demonstrating practical applications of the chemical reactions they studied.

"It was a really cool collaboration," says Herndon. "It showed me a lot about how education and chemistry intertwine."

Listen to Herndon discuss the opportunity to collaborate with Zuidema at covenant.edu/herndon.

Men's Basketball Team Wins USA South Title

The Covenant men's basketball team took home the USA South tournament championship in a 101-92 overtime victory over LaGrange College. The conference championship earned the Scots an automatic berth into the NCAA Division III tournament. This is the first year since 1987 that the Covenant men's basketball program has qualified for a national tournament, and the conference title is the first on record since 1964.



"It was an incredible weekend in North Carolina," says head coach Kyle Taylor. "We talked all year about being relentless and we showed that winning in overtime."



Academic Lecture Series

Dr. George Yancey, sociology professor at the University of North Texas, delivered the 2016 Academic Lecture Series at Covenant. After earning a BS in economics from West Texas State University, Yancey went on to earn a PhD in sociology from the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include anti-Christian attitudes in the United States, multiracial churches, and academic bias. Dr. Yancey is the author

of several books, including *Beyond Racial Gridlock* and *Neither Jew Nor Gentile: Exploring Issues of Racial Diversity on Protestant College Campuses*.

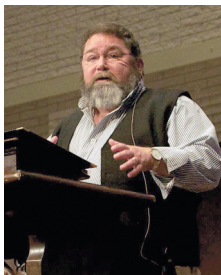
Yancey delivered three academic lectures, which are available to stream and download at covenant.edu/AcademicLectures16.

\$5 Million Matching Gift Pledged for Carter Hall

Generous donors have pledged to match \$5 million in gifts to Carter Hall. In 2015, the College began a two-year project to restore Carter Hall, returning the exterior to its original design and preserving the building for future generations of Covenant students. Much of the funding for this \$19.4 million project has already been raised, and the College is grateful for this \$5 million matching gift, which serves as an encouragement and challenge to others to give generously to the project.

As the work on phase two of this four-phase project nears completion, the progress on Carter Hall is beginning to excite students, staff, faculty, and visitors to the College. The north porch has been reclaimed, crenelated battlements top the Carter Hall tower, the north exterior has been restored, and beautiful double windows have brought added light and weather protection to north residence halls and administrative offices.

You can stay up to date on the Carter Hall progress and give to the restoration at covenant.edu/carter.



"Abstinence is not as much about purity as it is about faithfulness and obedience."

Prof. Kevin Eames
Positive Sexuality



"Perfectionism, at its core, is about trying to earn approval and acceptance."

Ashley Baldwin '12
Experiencing Abundant Life



"Because grace is true, Christians should be the least offended and the least offensive people in the whole world."

Rev. Scott Sauls
Jesus outside the Lines

LUCAS ART WORKSHOP

Covenant College's new visual art facility was officially named and dedicated at a ceremony in March of 2016. The Lucas Art Workshop is named in honor of David and Linda Lucas, whose leadership and generosity provided a place where artists may work, imagine, and enjoy the beauty of God's creation. David serves Covenant as a member of the College's board of trustees and as a board member for the Covenant College Foundation.

"The fine arts are critical components of a rich education in the liberal arts and sciences," said President Derek Halvorson '93. "We are thankful for the gracious generosity of David and Linda Lucas, which has provided a place where young men and women can grow in their understanding of God's creation and His calling on their lives, while honing their skills in the visual arts. We are thrilled with the new Lucas Art Workshop, and are grateful for the Lucases' faithful partnership and abundant generosity."

Listen to David Lucas share his story in a chapel talk titled "The Art of Living" at covenant.edu/ArtofLiving. Take a guided tour of the Lucas Art Workshop with art professor Jeff Morton at covenant.edu/LucasTour.



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CampusCollage

1-2 Day of Prayer

Students, faculty, and staff took the day off from regular classes to enjoy time of reflection, worship, and prayer.

3-4 Carter Christmas

Students in Carter Hall decked their residence halls for Christmas.

5-6 Mistletoe Mingle

Students celebrated the final day of fall classes with a dance on the Southern Belle riverboat.

7-8 Celebrate Christmas at Covenant

The surrounding Lookout Mountain and Chattanooga communities celebrated Christmas at Covenant with a concert and Madrigal dessert reception.

9-10 Exam Cram

Students, faculty, and staff donned their favorite *Star Wars* gear for an evening study break.

11-12 Café Literati

Students shared their talents with one another.

13-14 Culture Fest

Students, faculty, and staff celebrated the diversity of the Covenant community.

15-17 Snow Days

The Covenant campus looked fresh and clean under a blanket of snow.

18-20 '80s Skate Night

Big hair and crazy clothes run wild at this annual skating event.

21 WIC Lecture Series

Dr. William Struthers presented lectures on sexuality and the brain.

22-23 John Hamm Performing Arts Series

The Dismembered Tennesseans and the Marinus Ensemble performed concerts during the spring semester.

24-25 Theatre: *Moreau*

The theatre department presented this sci-fi thriller based on an H.G. Wells novel.

26-27 Class on the Overlook

Prof. Huffines took advantage of some warm weather and held class outside on the Covenant overlook.

See more at [covenant.edu/facebook](https://www.covenant.edu/facebook).

Faith, Hope & Love

A Pastoral & Theological Meditation on Suffering

by Dr. Kelly M. Kopic

ON JUNE 9, 2008, MY WIFE, THE MOTHER OF MY TWO YOUNG CHILDREN, WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER. I watched her courageously and gracefully go through this diagnosis and the surgeries and treatments that followed. Even as I watched her, I was unprepared for the weight of that watching, for the weight of walking beside a suffering one.

After having eventually been declared cancer free for a time, in May 2010 she developed severe polyneuropathy, a condition characterized by extreme fatigue and debilitating pain in all four limbs. It has not eased through the years, and remains a daily, even hourly presence in her and our lives. Most people who see her would not guess that this most active and able woman is often bedridden or severely restricted by her pain and limited mobility.

Through these years, we have wrestled in various ways with suffering, grief, and loss. We've had to ask hard questions about God, His will, ourselves, and relationships. We have wrestled with issues of identity and purpose. These have not been easy years, and there are no simple answers. But this journey has been our story—our existence lived with and before God.

I begin with this brief snapshot of our lives, not because I aim to give you an autobiography, but to admit that this subject of suffering is not hypothetical to us. Nor do I imagine that it is hypothetical to you. Consequently, these reflections do, in some way, reflect our own family's wrestling through the ravages and emotional toll of suffering.

Tempted to Think Ill of God

Christians, perhaps even more than those without faith in a personal and loving God, can feel not just alone but abandoned during times of difficulty. It is one thing for sufferers to cry out to the great unknown, echoing the unsettling words of Stephen Crane:

A man said to the universe:

"Sir, I exist!"

"However," replied the universe,

"The fact has not created in me

A sense of obligation."

Yet for the saint who confesses the personal God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Mary, such moments of despair can bring the fear of divine indifference, rejection, or judgment.

Dorthee Soelle, in her powerful but unnerving book *Suffering* shows deep frustration with the orthodox Christian tradition at just this point. With special hostility reserved for the likes of John Calvin, she observes that Christian theologians have often used suffering to promote a kind of “theological sadism” and “masochistic approach.” She describes a most unpleasant picture of common historic approaches: “Suffering is there to break our pride, demonstrate our powerlessness, exploit our dependency. Affliction has the intention of bringing us back to a God who only becomes great when He makes us small.”

While I am not interested here in debating the adequacy of Soelle’s many historical or even theological claims (many of which I strongly disagree with), I believe her volume raises honest questions. What do we really believe about this God?

One of the most powerful temptations Christians face as they go through suffering is, to borrow a phrase from John Owen, to have “hard thoughts” of God. By “hard thoughts,” this Puritan theologian does not have in mind our honest questions that naturally arise amid our struggles. It is fairly common to have honest questions as we stand before God in our physical pain: *Why? How come? What does this mean? When will it end?* Such questions are not only understandable, but healthy.

Despite widespread misperceptions, Christian spirituality is not stoicism. Heartfelt cries and existential questions operate at the core of healthy theology, and suppressing them is more hurtful than a confession of ignorance. While I can’t fully unpack this here, let me just say we need a fuller appreciation for longing and lament. What Owen has in mind is different, which is why these might be called “temptations” rather than merely honest struggles.

Whether first fostered from painful childhood experiences, heavy-handed preaching, or something else, we often imagine God in

deeply problematic ways. When experiences of physical suffering persist, it is all too common to find ourselves plagued by distorted perceptions of God, making Him appear tyrannical or even demonic. Such “hard thoughts” are temptations because they can lead us to ultimate despair and away from communion with the loving Lord. They are temptations because our suffering and struggle entice us to think ill of God, to imagine Him cruel and brutish. As Owen comments, we are “apt to have very hard thoughts of Him, —to think He is always angry, yea, implacable; that it is not for poor creatures to draw nigh to Him.” God’s concern about such hard thoughts arises not because He cannot answer our questions or becomes defensive. No, they concern God because they keep us far from Him.

With this in mind, I want to help us think about this problem as an extended meditation on Paul’s comment about faith, hope, and love in 1 Corinthians 13:13. These words and images are vital, not simply in telling the Christian story, but for anyone trying to live within that story.

Faith

I want us to spend some time with Martin Luther. Luther’s emphasis on faith is important for our discussion because it shaped his view of the Christian’s struggle with sickness.

With the loss of health, a person—whether in the sixteenth century or the third millennium—commonly loses a sense of peace and identity. Physical difficulties are often accompanied by spiritual trials, even though tracing out the exact relationship between the two is impossible. A person’s life becomes unavoidably narrow when severely limited by debilitating pain or weakness. Amid such difficult seasons of life, Luther understood that the fog of doubt often comes rolling in, obscuring the believer’s vision: accordingly, the taunts of hell often grow louder during those

periods. He recognized this because he lived it himself.

During his life, Luther experienced various levels of physical ailment. Sometimes it was so severe that he thought he was on the verge of death, frightening not only his wife and friends, but even himself. Given that he viewed physical pain as often woven together with spiritual challenge, he approached such moments not with indifference or stoicism, but more like a sailor fighting a vicious storm that would inevitably leave damage and pain through its thrashings. Amid such storms he believed “all hands on deck” were needed to survive the turbulence.

For example, in 1527 he wrote to Melancthon, explaining how for a full week he was terribly ill and “in death and hell.” Through these moments of weakness and pain he describes his vulnerability: “I almost lost Christ in the waves and blasts of despair and blasphemy against God, but God was moved by the prayers of saints and began to take pity on me and rescued my soul from the lowest hell.” Luther knew that in times of physical and emotional distress saints often struggle to believe and are afflicted with confused images of God and His work in the world. During such seasons, the Christian leans heavily upon the faith and prayers of other saints, for by them one is sustained, or even “rescued.”

Writing to Nicholas Hausmann on a different occasion, Luther describes how he stands in the midst of great suffering even as the plague seems to be ending in his area: at least three times the affliction had hit his household, with even his son Hans greatly malnourished and ill, appearing for a time to be on the verge of death. Here the sickness was not his own, but that of those he loved, and so again he admits that in this context, while it is “Christ’s will,” he has still been struggling with “restlessness and faintheartedness.” Consequently he implores Hausmann for prayers that “my faith fail not.”

Luther never doubted the significance of faith, but he also never forgot how fragile it could become in instances of duress. What was really at stake in such moments of weakness was not merely his physical condition, but his belief in God's goodness and provision.

While Luther's life was fraught with various battles, including struggles against the Pope and other power structures, he always seemed to have a sense that the underlying battle was one of faith, or as David C. Steinmtz concluded, "the central problem for Luther remains the problem of God. The mercy and compassion of God are always set against the background of God's hiddenness." This tension often grew during times of physical weakness, when uncertainties and temptations fostered uncomfortable questions: *Is God really loving? Could He welcome a sinner like Luther into His holy presence? Would Luther's heart worship this God or merely fear Him?*

Luther lived, as Heiko Oberman memorably said, between God and the devil, and so he serves as a useful model of the Christian struggle. When he suffered from serious sickness, the threefold taunt of sin, death, and the devil was always nearby.

The ache of disease often awakens an awareness of one's sin, thus increasing even the believer's susceptibility to imagine divine judgment. At stake during these times of illness is the saint's ability to trust in God's gracious reign and rule. What is needed is light, the light of faith.

Illness was unquestionably tangled up with spiritual trial in Luther's mind. His afflictions were often accompanied by "spiritual depression." Once, Justus Joan wrote as a firsthand witness of a time when Luther was suddenly overcome with grave physical pains, after having gone through a "grave spiritual trial" earlier in the morning. That evening Luther's body

gave out, starting with ringing in his ear but then quickly spreading so that his entire flesh seized up until he appeared frighteningly faint. Luther's response was not only to beg Justus to splash him quickly with cool water, but he also began fervently to pray. His prayers in this instance, as we have them recorded by Justus, are a mixture of his reciting the Lord's Prayer and various psalms. Luther was mainly just physically weak, and so his friends brought physical relief, but they also reminded him of his hope.

Luther desperately requests their prayers: "I have saved others, myself I cannot save." Such moments require the prayers of other saints, rather than self-referential prayer. And what Luther wants to be "saved" from is not merely death, but more importantly, saved from blasphemy, doubt, and distrust of his loving God.

Luther's letters serve as powerful examples of someone who recognizes not only the centrality of faith, but also the dependence we have on others through their prayers and presence to provide a hedge around us during our weakness.

"God freely employs the faith of others, expressing itself through prayer, as a means to sustain and uphold the fragile faith of the suffering Christian."

Turning to everyone in the room one by one, Luther requested, "Pray for me, please." But Luther did not die, and when the physical pains subsided and he was more stable the next day, he reported that he had just been to "school," and that "his spiritual trial of yesterday was twice as great as this bodily illness which came on in the evening."

While it may be debated whether or how spiritual trials might provoke physical vulnerability or how bodily weakness may open one up to spiritual challenges, it does seem that these two often go together for psychosomatic beings.

Writing to Gerard Wilskap at Herford in 1528, Luther noted that while he had suffered illness from his youth, he was now facing things at their most severe. His note describes his precarious situation. "[S]o far Christ has triumphed, but He holds me by a very slender thread," and so

God freely employs the faith of others, expressing itself through prayer, as a means to sustain and uphold the fragile faith of the suffering Christian. During times of challenge, including illness which can breed vulnerability, the wounded believer often depends on other saints to sustain her through seasons of suffering. While Luther and others from the Reformation are often accused of brash individualism in their conceptions of faith, these examples of Luther's sickness remind us that he never imagined faith as a purely individual activity. Yes, the individual was called to believe, but that faith can in fact only be lived within an organic connection to the locally constituted church.

One of the regular ways the body of Christ maintains its health is just as when parts of the human body are attacked with disease or weakness: the other parts often carry some extra weight. If a person's ankle is broken

“Fellow pilgrims not only rescue us in our struggling faith, but also strengthen us by embodying gospel promises.”

he instinctively places more weight on the strong leg. This is not because he despises the weak leg, but because it can only return to full health if its burden is born by the other limb. Similarly, Christians bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:1-5).

Such a relational setting allows, even requires, a more holistic response to suffering—not only by attending to the legitimate physical, social, and psychological concerns of the wounded saint, but also by offering the distressed pilgrim the faith, prayers, and acts of mercy of the surrounding body of Christ (2 Cor. 1:4-7). When we are distressed and find it easy to doubt God's grace and provision, we find shelter and sustenance under their canopy of faith.

Together as the body of Christ the worries about divine apathy, judgment, or abandonment can honestly be faced and answered. Alone, the flame of faith diminishes, but in true community the fire of faith illumines the night.

Hope

Christian faith does not simply involve affirming God's existence, but also the far more difficult call to trust in God's holy kindness and tender provision. John Calvin described faith as “a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Maintaining a “firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence” can sound easy when things are going well, but prolonged physical suffering easily induces despair and fatigue, both for

the sick and the caregivers. Hope, which nourishes faith, thus plays a pivotal role.

Seasons of physical distress challenge Christian hope, so the suffering saint leans hard upon other believers for spiritual sustenance. Fellow pilgrims not only rescue us in our struggling faith, but also strengthen us by embodying gospel promises.

Notice that Calvin's definition of faith doesn't ground confidence in the Lord's benevolence by making empirical observations about the way the world works (which in fact is full of injustice and pain). Instead, his certainty is “founded upon” the realities of the Son and Spirit. And the promises of Christ and the power of His Spirit are normally linked to the people of God.

Earlier, we noted that the saints speak to God for us when we struggle to believe and speak alone. Here, we note that saints are called to speak to us for God when we seem unable to hear Him on our own. Their prayers sustain our faith; their proclamation reignites our hope.

Hope is not achieved through the power of positive thinking, but in the promises of the Word and sacraments. Of course, one can read the Scriptures while alone, and it is the individual who must swallow the bread and wine, but the corporate life of the church strengthens the soul by reminding us that we are not alone but in a body. Here both particularity and community meet.

The Holy Spirit mysteriously draws us into communion with God in the proclamation of the Word, speaking into our fragile condition. For example, the

Psalms often display a movement from anxiety to hope. Beginning occasionally with questions or a sense of impossibility, the Psalms often urge the singer or reader to invoke the power of remembrance and anticipation. Remember who this God is, the Creator Lord who has been faithful through the ages. Remember the stories of His deliverance, His constant care, His steadfast love. Such remembrances rekindle hope by assuring the sufferer that Yahweh neither leaves nor forsakes.

The beauty of the Psalms is that they openly move between the glories of hope to the depths of despair: they neither belittle pain nor trivialize promises.

Significantly, the Psalms do not attempt to explain suffering or what mysterious purposes God may have for our pain. Instead, they display the character of Yahweh as trustworthy—brimming with compassion for His people.

Biblical hope grows out of a confidence in God's redemptive actions and trustworthy presence. But such hope can become hard to muster when we are physically or mentally vulnerable.

Because Jesus Christ is the hope of the gospel, God's people serve one another in their times of suffering by offering each other the good news of Christ crucified and risen. Only in Christ do the Psalms and the rest of the Scriptures take on their full power of hope. In our weakness we may find it impossible to proclaim this hope ourselves, but when it is offered to us in the liturgy or by fellow pilgrims, when we hear, “Christ is risen,” we are able to reply, even if weakly, “He is risen indeed!”

“Christians themselves give and receive love, but it is always ultimately a response to and an extension of God’s love.”

Love

To the sufferer, the body of Christ offers faith and graciously supplies needed gospel hope. Yet, by the remark in I Corinthians 13 that of these three—faith, hope, and love—the greatest of these is love, Paul shapes our understanding of them and how they affect each other.

Even great gifts can be upended and used for ill. Faith without love can turn abusive, belittling the struggling saint by substituting impersonal axioms for heartfelt prayers. Likewise, hope void of love can devolve into insensitive forms of activism and arrogance, replacing empathetic grace with cheap platitudes or an impersonal vision of what must be done.

So if faith and hope are to mean anything to us in our suffering, they must come to us in the context of love. Or, to put it another way, faith and hope are only properly applied with love: a love accomplished and given through the person and work of Christ. Nicholas Wolterstorff, grieving over the death of his son, illustrates some of these connections:

“Suffering is a mystery as deep as any in our existence. It is not of course a mystery whose reality some doubt. Suffering keeps its face hid from each while making itself known to all.... We are one in suffering. Some are wealthy, some bright; some athletic, some admired. But we all suffer. For we all prize and love; and in this present existence of ours, prizing and loving yield suffering. Love in our world is suffering love.... This, said Jesus, is the command of the Holy One: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ In

commanding us to love, God invites us to suffer.”

We experience divine love most concretely in our suffering as we receive and give it to others. In His economy, God expresses His love and extends His comfort normally through the agency of His people. This is not merely a sociological observation, but a theological reality.

One aspect of our secure union in Christ is our secure union with one another. The church, as the body of Christ, recognizes “no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

We, under the normal means of grace, receive and extend the love of Christ through our union with the saints. Such love is received by faith, bolstered by hope,

“When faith and hope are detached from love, they are drained of their power and efficacy.”

and protected through self-giving. When faith and hope are detached from love, they are drained of their power and efficacy. When they grow out of love, they are like food for the hungry and medicine for the sick. Thus we need faith, hope, and love, but without love we lose all three.

Luther helps us here, also. He appears to assume that the relationship between suffering and faith is best seen within the context of the community, even in its imperfect expressions of love: “When we feel pain, when we suffer, when we die, let us turn

to this, firmly believing and certain that it is not we alone, but Christ and the church who are in pain and suffering and dying with us.” Within the matrix of love, Luther holds together the church and the Savior through a robust view of union with Christ.

When having “hard thoughts” about God, Christians can better understand their lives within the matrix of faith, hope, and love. Others speak to God for us by their faith and prayers, when we cannot ourselves speak. And these saints speak to us for God, when we by ourselves find hope elusive. Faith and hope become powerful and healing when they come to us through genuine love.

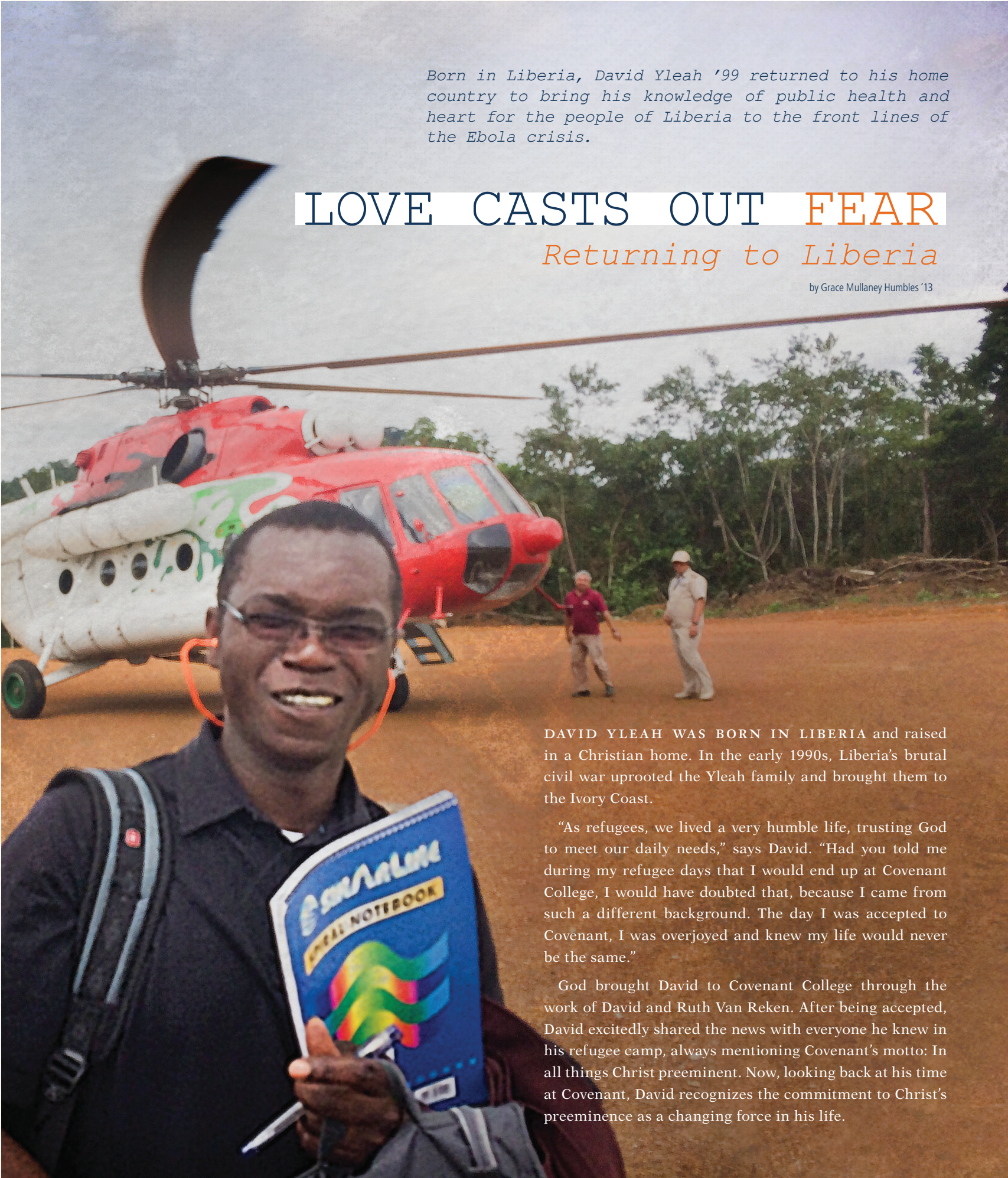
Reflecting on this powerful healing in the context of Christ’s death and resurrection, my wife, Tabitha, wrote these words:

“Suffering can be like a famine: a famine of comfort and peace, a famine of joy and health, a famine of community and self-worth. To this famine Christ offers the feast of Himself.”

Christians themselves give and receive love, but it is always ultimately a response to and an extension of God’s love. In the crucified and risen Messiah we encounter the love of God, who on the cross and through the resurrection acts as the Prophet, Priest, and King. He is the one who not only sympathizes with us in our weakness, but who has secured our redemption and wholeness, and thus can declare it accomplished with final certainty. Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again. Only in Him can we appropriately see our suffering and the suffering of others through the lens of faith. 🕊

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[Listen to a chapel address on this topic by Dr. Kopic at covenant.edu/suffering.](http://covenant.edu/suffering)



Born in Liberia, David Yleah '99 returned to his home country to bring his knowledge of public health and heart for the people of Liberia to the front lines of the Ebola crisis.

LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

Returning to Liberia

by Grace Mullaney Humbles '13

DAVID YLEAH WAS BORN IN LIBERIA and raised in a Christian home. In the early 1990s, Liberia's brutal civil war uprooted the Yleah family and brought them to the Ivory Coast.

"As refugees, we lived a very humble life, trusting God to meet our daily needs," says David. "Had you told me during my refugee days that I would end up at Covenant College, I would have doubted that, because I came from such a different background. The day I was accepted to Covenant, I was overjoyed and knew my life would never be the same."

God brought David to Covenant College through the work of David and Ruth Van Reken. After being accepted, David excitedly shared the news with everyone he knew in his refugee camp, always mentioning Covenant's motto: In all things Christ preeminent. Now, looking back at his time at Covenant, David recognizes the commitment to Christ's preeminence as a changing force in his life.

“Covenant gave me the freedom to live out my calling with Christ as the central person guiding me in all things,” says David. “The preeminence of God in my vocation, in my daily life and activities, has radically changed me. It gives me a balanced orientation to love mercy, love justice, and walk humbly with our God.”

Through relationships at Covenant with former president Frank Brock, Lookout Mountain residents, professors Tim Morris '83 and Jerry Wenger, and many others, David grew in his understanding of biology and the call of Christ on his life. Every spring break, he went on mission trips to New York with Covenant staff member Susan Green, where he served the urban poor.

“Oh, how those trips blessed me,” says David. “They allowed me to see the depravity of our world through the eyes of addicts, but they also allowed me to experience the radiance of redemption that Christ brings when the chains of addiction are broken.”

After graduation, David earned his master's degree in public health. He lives with his wife and children in California, where he serves with the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health.

In 2014, as word began to spread about the growing Ebola crisis in West Africa, David sensed God's call on his life.

“The images streaming on our television screen were familiar,” says David. “They were close to my heart. I had lived and walked many of those streets. I also felt a deep sense that God had given me the skills needed to help Liberia respond to a crisis of unbelievable magnitude.”

David notes that Liberia was recovering from fifteen years of war and had as few as 250 physicians in a country of 4.5 million people. With a weak and fragile healthcare system, skilled labor was hard to find and the men and women who *were* trained were overworked and overwhelmed. David knew that serving in Liberia would mean leaving his well-paying job for a year, or more. He knew it would mean sacrifice for his family. But he also knew that Liberia needed willing partners who could help the country respond to this crisis.



A visit with the Ministry of Health and the United States public health services team



Ebola-safe burial site at Disco Hill Cemetery



The dead are removed at an ELWA Ebola treatment unit

"I was faced with a decision between believing that God is able to provide for our needs or staying in California and enjoying the comfortable, suburban lifestyle I was accustomed to," says David.

David and his wife fervently prayed and sought wisdom from trusted friends and family. With encouragement and support from family and friends, David decided to take a leave of absence from his job and go to Liberia. Today, after four trips to the country, he has seen God's faithfulness magnified through his time in Liberia and in the protection and provision his family has received.

During his trips to Liberia, David primarily works with the Liberian Ministry of Health, which is responsible for leading and coordinating all Ebola-related efforts throughout the nation. He also collaborates with an Eternal Love Winning Africa (ELWA) treatment unit.

"I particularly chose to be embedded within the Ministry of Health because I felt that this was the entity with the greatest need and where I could have a significant impact," says David. "This strategic placement has allowed me to partner with major national and international leaders in Liberia along with mission organizations, and given me unprecedented access to members of Liberia's executive branch of government."

David is confident that before coming to Covenant he would not have chosen to work with and in government. Many of the people in his home culture believed that the government was corrupt and beyond redemption.

"Covenant radically transformed my view of the places we perceive as darkest in this life," says David. "It is in those places that God can use our lives to shine brightly, if we allow Him to work in and through us to influence others. This is one of the key messages I use to challenge church leaders in Liberia. I want them to encourage their congregants to break out into spheres of society perceived as corrupt and depraved, so that they can bring light and hope and transformation."

"I left Covenant with a big heart, having spent four years acquiring a world-class education and learning how to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Going to Liberia was a natural product of that inner conviction and love I acquired many moons ago while at Covenant."

David recalls a vivid memory of the human burden of Ebola. On his second trip to Liberia, he met a young boy being released from an ELWA Ebola treatment unit (ETU). At nine years old, the boy was the height of David's six-year-old son. He wore a red T-shirt, tucked into blue jeans, and David found him wandering around the grounds, with nowhere to go.

"For this boy, triumph over a deadly and unseen enemy was not greeted by joys, excitement, or jubilation of family members," says David. "No family member was on site to receive him because his surviving family members were now quarantined after the Ebola death of a community member. I wanted to embrace him, to congratulate him, to take him home, to bring him with me to the U.S. All of my sincere thoughts turned into unspeakable emotions as I imagined the boy being my own son."

David's passion for this young boy and for the many men, women, and children suffering from the Ebola crisis has become a family passion. He and his wife encourage their three children to give away something special for the children in Liberia. The entire Yleah family is consistently lifted up in prayer by family members, friends, and their church.

"I believe the Lord is giving our family an utter sense of how blessed we are just by living in the U.S. and being loved by so many people who show us that we are not in this alone," says David. "The Lord is molding us to learn how to sacrificially give to others and serve others through our talents. We pray that our children grow up seeing the

world as God's world, having a kingdom-heart for this world, and contributing to redeeming it for Christ in whatever way our Lord chooses to use them."

Although the World Health Organization declared Liberia Ebola-free in January 2016, the work is not done. David encourages the Covenant community to pray, give, and take part in bringing healing to this part of the world. As of the fall of 2015, the largest outbreak of Ebola has led to 26,502 infections and 11,312 deaths. Liberia and neighboring countries will struggle for many years to recover from the Ebola crisis. Some estimate that it will take Liberia ten years to recover and rebuild its healthcare system.

"Pray for the spiritual healing of the Liberian people," says David. "Disease in our world reveals the general effect of the Fall. I believe that the Lord can bring restoration, hope, and vitality to these nations by using members of the greater Covenant community. Many Liberians believe, and are encouraged when their brothers and sisters come alongside them to encourage them with such a message."

From a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast, to the top of Lookout Mountain, all the way back around the world to Liberia—David's journey is marked by the hand of a faithful God.

"I left Covenant with a big heart, having spent four years acquiring a world-class education and learning how to be the hands and feet of Jesus," says David. "Going to Liberia was a natural product of that inner conviction and love I acquired many moons ago while at Covenant." 🙏

Ministers of Reconciliation

by Grace Mullaney Humbles '13

Six years ago, Marshall '08 and Katherine Whitmire Teague '06 thought they would spend the rest of their lives in Oregon. The couple began thinking about eating, land, and animal husbandry. Today, they live with their two daughters in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, where they operate a sustainable farm called EdenThistle.





Katherine and Marshall are pictured here at EdenThistle with their daughters, Haddie and AnnCarter.

MARSHALL AND KATHERINE TEAGUE WERE LIVING IN BEND, OREGON, working with horses and children at a ranch ministry, when a simple conversation changed the course of their lives. During dinner one night, a friend brought up a discussion about food and made the point that, as believers, we should probably think differently about what we eat and how we eat.

"I didn't refute it," says Marshall, "but it didn't seem like something I needed to spend time dealing with."

At the end of the conversation, the friend told them he was considering homesteading and becoming a farmer. Marshall left thinking that the idea was pretty foolish. Without knowing it, the Teagues' friend had planted a seed that would eventually become EdenThistle Land Stewardship Company.

As Marshall and Katherine began to explore the theology of what it means to care for and steward creation, they became increasingly convinced that food and farming and ideas they had recently shrugged off as unimportant may be part of God's call on their lives.

"We needed to address the fact that from Genesis to Revelation there is a consistent care shown by God for His creation and there's a consistent role that man is to play," says Marshall.

Although they loved their life in Bend, the Teagues realized they were being shaped and prepared to come home to Lookout Mountain, where they started EdenThistle.

From the beginning, the Teagues wanted to produce a real product and participate in a real market. Today, they offer an active buyers club where locals can purchase pasture-raised meat and eggs on a regular basis. Embedded in these day-to-day operations is a desire to abide by the design of their animals and to act as ministers of reconciliation for the land.

"Paul talks about how we are brought in, by Jesus' grace, to the ministry of reconciliation," says Marshall. "So we want to be participants in the ministry of reconciliation with our land."

At the farm, the Teagues seek to practice responsible animal husbandry as they care for goats, hogs, horses, and chickens. At the same time, they are committed to stewarding their land through sustainable practices that restore and enrich their grass and soil—which in turn feed their animals and produce high-quality and healthy meat.

The name EdenThistle points to the in-between place where all mankind lives.

"At Covenant we talked a lot about the now and the not yet," says Marshall. "The whole company is designed around the idea that God in the garden clearly shows that there is design both to creation and to us and there is a manner in which it should all operate. That's the Eden part."

Marshall explains that the "Thistle" calls us back to the reality of the Fall. The Fall is real, and the Fall's consequences are very real.

"Our farm, or wherever we participate in stewardship, will never be perfect," says Marshall. "We are doing all of this in waiting for the perfection to come down to us. We

Learning Farm at EdenThistle

The educational nonprofit arm of EdenThistle

The Teagues' passion for reclaiming their role as stewards of the earth has naturally led to an educational component in their work at EdenThistle. The Learning Farm at EdenThistle seeks to empower people as stewards of creation. This nonprofit arm of EdenThistle provides individuals and groups with the opportunity to personally engage with the concepts and practices of sustainable food production by hosting events, welcoming volunteers, and investing in interns.

Helping Each Other Grow

by Dr. Russell Mask,
associate professor of
community development

With the encouragement of Marshall Teague and his fellow alumni Christian Man '09 and Michael Rhodes '08, the community development department began an agricultural development course in the fall of 2015. Half of the thirteen agricultural students participated in field practice at EdenThistle. Students also created feasibility studies for new agricultural products—three of which were prepared for EdenThistle. Designing and implementing a new academic course is quite a lot of work, but it is also encouraging to see energized students working hard in a class and in the field—quite literally in this case. I am thankful to work at a place where we can be challenged by students and alumni to learn new things and then challenge them in return. Praise the Lord for His care and concern for the land and critters of all types that He gives us to steward.



are just one voice in the song of the waiting for the return of Christ.”

The Teagues’ regularly open up their farm to anyone who wants to visit, eager to share their love for their work with others.

“The church should be renowned for our care for the earth,” says Marshall. “But we aren’t traditionally known for this. In fact, we’re often known for not caring about the environment.”

The Teagues note that the care of God’s creation often naturally leads men and women into a deeper knowledge of God. Students from Covenant have participated in processing chickens at EdenThistle. During the half-day process, students get to witness the bloodshed that it takes to bring meat to our tables.

“If you allow yourself to see it, you are constantly, daily, entering into a rhythm of sacrifice,” says Marshall.

All of Marshall and Katherine’s work at EdenThistle is driven by their understanding of the call to stewardship. If we are called to image God in our care for His world, how should that inform the way we live? How should it transform our understanding of creation? How should it impact the way we eat? Marshall and Katherine live out their answers to these questions every day at EdenThistle. 🌿

You can learn more about EdenThistle and the Learning Farm at edenthistle.com and ourlearningfarm.org.

“If you allow yourself to see it, you are constantly, daily, entering into a rhythm of sacrifice.”



Embodiment Matters

“I’M GOING TO PULL AN ALL-NIGHTER to finish this paper. I can sleep over the holidays.” “Food is just fuel. Who cares if I have a Snickers for breakfast?” “It’s just their body. It’s just on a screen. They consented.” These statements betray that we believe that our bodies don’t matter much. That they can be abused with little consequence to the other parts of the self. It’s the dominant belief in American culture and a long-held view that finds its roots in Plato and Aristotle. This dualistic view teaches us that our bodies are jetsam to the soul and our lives are improved when relieved of the burden of the body. The danger of this dualistic view, besides it being untrue, is that it easily leads to the objectification and devaluation of ourselves, others, and creation.

The body can be limiting, and that can be frustrating. We feel that its materiality, vulnerability, and neediness hold us back, and we believe that this should not be the case. Yet, I have begun to see the constrained and needy body as a positive thing. When my body falters in exhaustion or illness, my pride is pruned and I am reminded that I am limited for a reason—principally, that I am not God. Our culture hates vulnerability, dependence, need. But it is in fact the heart of human flourishing, because we were created to be in need of God’s help and provision and the help and provision of others. Need and acts of self-giving love are the soil of community and connection.

While we have a fantastic theology of the body available to us in the Bible, we hear little about it beyond what the church tells us our bodies are *not* for. Little attention is given to what they *are* for. Thus, our bodies have become isolated in our culture. We have become suspicious of touch and the body communal. With great difficulty, we attempt to live out an embodied experience without an understanding of what it means to be soul enfleshed. We do not understand that Christian spirituality is not freedom from the body, but freedom within the body. That Christ’s embodiment dignifies and exemplifies this for us.

Unfortunately, the wealth and space of the West have allowed us to become too private and individualistic. This is problematic for bodies that were created for community. Embracing bodily existence is a needful tonic for us. It benefits us to bump up against the messy



by Kayb Carpenter Joseph, professor of art

“I have begun to see
the constrained and needy
body as a positive thing.”

lives and bodies of other embodied persons—to experience people of all ages, especially the very young (who remind us how enjoyable a body is) and the very old (who show us the natural course of embodied existence and how to lean into the Lord and others when our earthly bodies fall ill and decline). It is helpful to be with healing bodies, birthing bodies, breastfeeding bodies, working bodies. They remind us of all the amazing things the body does, that the body is not lowly or disgusting because it isn’t always presented in a way that is visually appealing or most comfortable to us.

We would benefit from touching one another more, in rejoicing, mourning, worshipping, and daily greeting one another. Our entire church embraces one another in our sung benediction every week. It is the living out of the Eucharist, becoming the body of Christ. It is a physical symbol of the interconnection between people, a moment that unites and refreshes us.

Sadly, we have allowed our fear of prurient behavior, or the possible appearance of it, to kill our communal embrace. In so doing, the only touch we see displayed is on a screen and is often sexual. Our fear has caused the very thing we feared to be the only available reality. One curative is to help people reimagine the body in a positive and Christian way. This will be a healing balm in our lives and for those around us. 🙏

Listen to Professor Joseph’s chapel address on embodiment at covenant.edu/EmbodimentMatters.

ALUMNI NEWS
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Sabbath Rest

I BEGAN A REASSESSMENT—or maybe I should say that God initiated a reassessment—of how I think about the Sabbath several years ago, after reading an article in the *Harvard Business Review* entitled, “The Making of a Corporate Athlete.” I enjoyed the article so much that I bought the book by the article’s authors. I was struck by their thesis: that the key to high performance in an athletic or a corporate setting is regular, rhythmic oscillation between the expenditure of energy (stress) and energy renewal (recovery).

As I dove deeper into the authors’ descriptions of recovery routines—the three dribbles and deep breath by the basketball player at the free-throw line, the full month away from tennis every year by the successful tennis pro, and the one full rest day every week that ensured maximum performance during the other six days of the week—I thought, “This is genius!” And then I thought, “Wait ... I think I’ve heard this somewhere before.”

And, of course, I had. I knew that the Christian Sabbath had its roots in the creational order, in the rest day that God took after creating the world—that the rhythm of six days of labor followed by a day of rest and recovery was built into the creation paradigm. I knew that Jesus had said in Mark 2:27 that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath—that biblical commands to observe a day of rest and worship were intended for humankind’s benefit and flourishing. But I had somehow managed to miss for the most part a truth that was clearly presented in the testimony of Scripture ... and confirmed in common grace insights in the pages of the *Harvard Business Review*. What for me sometimes felt like a burden is in fact a blessing. The Lord’s Day, the Christian Sabbath, a day every week devoted wholly to worship and rest and fellowship, really is a wonderfully good gift—one that we ought to cherish, and preserve, and take advantage of.

Well, how so, you might ask? How is the Sabbath a gift? And how ought we to use it? First, it is good for us to have a day that’s set aside for worship. The act of gathering as a fellowship of believers to hear God’s Word preached, to pray together, to sing God’s praises together, and to participate in the sacraments is a critical way to reorient ourselves on a regular basis in the midst of the constant onslaught of competing idols. Second, it is good for us to have a day that’s set aside for physical rest. Life is busy, and running non-stop will only ensure that we burn out. It’s good for us to have a regular day set aside for emotional rest. We easily become weighted down with the emotional burdens of life in a broken world. Observance of a Sabbath rest provides space for us to process those burdens, to set them in context, to bring them before the Lord, and to seek counsel from others. The Sabbath provides time for meaningful fellowship as well—for maintaining and developing the relationships that are critical to our flourishing as beings created in the image of a triune, relational God.

Sabbath observance also aids us in living deliberately. If you’re really going to extricate yourself from the mad rush of 24-7-365 living in the 21st century, you have to be purposeful about it. We have to think ahead, and plan ahead, and perhaps even work ahead (like the Israelites collecting two days worth of manna on the sixth day of the week) in order to observe a Sabbath. Doing so frees us up on the Lord’s Day to give ourselves to worship, rest, and fellowship, and it also helps to develop in us a habit of deliberate, intentional, purposeful living that is increasingly rare in this world. 🙏



J. Derek Halvorson '93
President

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Listen to President Halvorson’s chapel address on
Sabbath rest at covenant.edu/SabbathRest.

For millennia, battlements have fortified cities, walls, and towers. Pictured here is a construction crew installing the first of sixteen pieces of crenelated battlements onto the Carter Hall tower. Returning to the building's original design, two tiers of battlements will top the Carter tower along with a lighted cupola.

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