

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

VIEW

Fault Lines

Christian Identity in America | Homecoming | Friendship Beyond Dialogue

AUTUMN 2018
COVENANT.EDU

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Alumni and friends of Covenant enjoyed lectures, friendship, and fun at Homecoming 2018.





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



Students in the robotics club prepare their weather balloon, equipped with a camera, their group's photo, and a locating device, for launch. The picture below shows how high into the atmosphere their balloon went. To watch a video of the whole project, visit covenantrobotics.com.

CovenantNews



Two Covenant Students Pioneer Robotics Club

Abigail Gianis '19 and Nick Kiratzis '19 launched a robotics club at Covenant so that students would have a place to apply the information they learn in engineering classes. Gianis and Kiratzis founded the Covenant Robotics Club during the summer of 2017.

"I recognized the necessity for a creative, informative, and educational outlet for students in STEM fields," says Gianis.

New Strategic Plan

Covenant College has implemented a new board-approved strategic plan through the year 2025. There are five main trajectories outlined in the plan, which is designed to further the College's mission. First, the College will aim to enroll 1,100 well-qualified, traditional undergraduate students. Second, the College's endowment is a priority, with the goal of reaching a \$100 million endowment by 2025.

Third, the strategic plan describes an effort to establish the College as an insightful and indispensable voice for faithful Christians in this day and age. Fourth, the plan includes a goal of enriching the college community and encouraging healthy relationships between students, faculty, and staff. This initiative will include efforts to improve the working and learning environment for women and increase African-American enrollment.

Fifth and finally, the College will seek to offer a truly one-of-a-kind education, leveraging the strengths of existing programs and adding more distinctive programs. New programs will include study-away and internship opportunities built into the core curriculum.

Faculty Promotion & Appointments

Dr. Chris Robinson was promoted from assistant professor of sociology to associate professor of sociology. The College appointed Lindsey Fain as associate dean of the Graduate School of Education, and Arwen Matos-Wood as assistant professor of marketing. Fain earned both an MEd in educational leadership (2010) and a BA in middle grades education (2005) from Covenant College. Matos-Wood has a BS in apparel management from Thomas Jefferson University and an MBA from the University of North Carolina.

Three Covenant Faculty Members Present Seminars at 2018 PCA General Assembly

Three Covenant College faculty members led seminars at the 46th annual Presbyterian Church in America General Assembly in Atlanta, GA. Dr. Bill Davis, professor of philosophy, and Dr. Kevin Eames, professor of psychology, presented a seminar entitled “Suicide: 13 Reasons Why the Church Needs to Talk About It.” Dr. Ken Stewart, professor of theological studies, taught a seminar entitled “Why Do Thoughtful Younger Protestants Turn Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox?”

Theatre: *Peter/Wendy*

The Covenant College theatre department performed *Peter/Wendy* in April 2018. In this lyrical and dreamlike rendition of J.M. Barrie’s iconic play, the original story of Peter Pan is stripped down, highlighting the story’s most poignant themes. Though still true to the original plot and characters, this nonlinear and “atmospheric” rendition of *Peter Pan* explored more mature themes within the play, such as the limitlessness of imagination and the real presence of evil. *Peter/Wendy*, adapted by Jeremy Bloom, was selected by director and alumna Abigail Degraaf ’17 for her directorial debut.



Imago Dei Conference

Covenant College welcomed Rev. Thabiti Anyabwile to campus as the speaker for the College’s annual Imago Dei Conference. The conference is designed to provide a space for thoughtful dialogue and interaction around biblical personhood and often includes topics like identity, community, marriage, family, and what it means to be created in God’s image.

Rev. Thabiti Anyabwile is a pastor at Anacostia River Church in Washington, DC. After a few years as a practicing Muslim, Anyabwile was converted under the preaching of the gospel in the Washington, DC, area. Anyabwile is the author of several books, including *Reviving the Black Church*.

Covenant Appoints Two Vice Presidents

Jonathan Fitzpatrick was appointed vice president for admissions and marketing. Fitzpatrick comes to Covenant with seventeen years of experience in corporate marketing, including with Heinz and Land O’Lakes.



onCourse Revitalizing District Hill Cemetery

Faculty:

Dr. Alicia Jackson, Associate Professor of History

Class:

History and Culture of African Americans Since 1865

The Course:

History and Culture of African Americans Since 1865 is an elective history course that surveys the life and culture of African Americans from the Civil War to the present.

The Assignment:

Students were given the opportunity to participate in the District Hill Cemetery Revitalization Project. This collaborative project, led by Chickamauga residents Tom and Joyce Harrison, involves participants from Georgia State University, the Civil War Commission, and a senator from GA. The District Hill Cemetery, located about 15 miles from the College in Chickamauga, GA, was officially designated a “colored cemetery” in the early 1900s, though it dates back to the pre-Civil War era when it was used as a slave burial ground. In 2012, when the project began, the cemetery looked like nothing more than an overgrown garden—the few tombstones present in the plot were decayed and illegible.

Joyce Harrison grew up on the land surrounding the cemetery, where a number of her relatives are buried. Joyce, with the help of the Civil War Commission, received funding to conduct ground-penetrating radar to locate grave sites. They discovered at least 130 identifiable grave sites. With the help of Joyce’s father’s records and city records, they were able to compile a list of names of the deceased. Dr. Douglas Pardue of the College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia tasked his graduate students with creating a master plan for the site. Their goal is to “restore some of the dignity that the sacred space deserves” (District Hill Cemetery Master Plan Report). Students in Dr. Jackson’s class were given the task of researching and writing biographical reports on the lives of people buried in the cemetery. The efforts of Covenant students support the work of UGA as they provide more details about those interred in the cemetery, thus reclaiming the lost history of those buried in the cemetery.

Says Dr. Jackson:

“One of the things that was cool about this project was visiting the cemetery for the first time. Actually getting to walk on the ground made it so much more real for the students researching people buried there.”

Says a Student:

“Their lives were really connected to the broader history of the time. It was neat to see how someone’s personal life ties into all the things we’re learning in class. Your empathy really strengthens when you walk right where they are buried. You really feel like you’re standing on holy ground. So many people who have come before who are buried there had their own lives—real struggles and real joys.” -Juliana Mezner ’18

251

High school students who attended Covenant 360 in spring 2018

76

Varsity student-athletes who earned USA South All-Academic honors in 2017-18

23

Off-campus study semester programs

17.96

Tons of trash removed during the Mark 10:45 service project

1

Robotics club on campus

16

High school students who attended the inaugural Summer Institute

5

Books written by faculty in 2017

3

Consecutive conference regular season titles for the volleyball program

Fred Verwoerd, CPA, was appointed vice president for operations and finance. Verwoerd recently served as interim president of Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and for more than five years as Redeemer's vice president of administration and finance. Both Fitzpatrick and Verwoerd started at Covenant in summer 2018.

Dr. Jeff Dryden Authors *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom*

Baker Academic released *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom: Recovering the Formative Agency of Scripture* by Dr. Jeff Dryden in July 2018. Dryden, professor of biblical studies, dedicated the book to past and present New Testament Ethics students, who have challenged him to live an authentic Christian life.

A Hermeneutic of Wisdom explores how the Bible functions as a wisdom text, shaping Christian ethics and devotion. Rather than a "repository of historical facts and theological ideas," Dryden argues that the Bible is intended to "shape character, not just ideas."

Prof. Camille Hallstrom Publishes Two Book Chapters

Camille Hallstrom, founder of the theatre department, contributed a chapter to *It Was Good: Performing Arts to the Glory of God*, edited by Ned Bustard. The chapter synthesizes Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" with Hallstrom's expertise in the dramatic arts. Hallstrom also contributed a chapter to *Joyfully Spreading the Word: Sharing the Good News of Jesus*, edited by Kathleen Nielson and Gloria Furman.

Drs. Kelly Kaptic & Hans Madueme edit *Reading Christian Theology in the Protestant Tradition*

On January 25, 2018, Bloomsbury T&T Clark Publishing released *Reading Christian Theology in the Protestant Tradition*, edited by Dr. Kelly Kaptic and Dr. Hans Madueme. Kaptic is a professor of theological studies

and Madueme is an associate professor of theological studies. The book is divided into five sections, each covering a period of church history and important works from Christians of the past.

Dr. Kelly Kaptic Authors *The God Who Gives with Alumnus*

The God Who Gives: How the Trinity Shapes the Christian Story was released on June 12, 2018. Dr. Kelly Kaptic, professor of theological studies, collaborated with Covenant alumnus Justin Borger '06, a former student and the senior pastor of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Orlando, FL.

The God Who Gives aims to tell the Christian story through the lens of "gift." The book argues that to truly understand grace, one must first understand God's three great gifts: His Son, Spirit, and kingdom. Upon receiving these three gifts, believers are brought into loving communion with the triune God.

Dr. Scott C. Jones Co-Edits Book in Honor of Dr. Choon Leong Seow

Dr. Scott C. Jones, professor of biblical studies at Covenant College, co-edited "*When the Morning Stars Sang: Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*." It was published by De Gruyter in November 2017. Jones, alongside Dr. Christine Roy Yoder of Columbia Theological Seminary, edited essays by a group of twenty-three scholars from around the world. The essays focus on Dr. Seow's specialty in Old Testament wisdom literature, a passion passed on to Jones.

Alumni Michael Rhodes '08 & Robby Holt '93, with Dr. Brian Fikkert, Author *Practicing the King's Economy*

Published by Baker Books on April 17, 2018, *Practicing the King's Economy* is designed as a discipleship tool for use within the church and in the personal lives of Christians who

are wondering how to practically respond to the exemplary life of Jesus. Designed for every Christian in every stage, *Practicing the King's Economy* is what Joel Belz, founder of *World*, calls a "powerfully practical book." The authors argue that instead of giving leftovers, "the way we work, earn, spend, save, and give should always be oriented towards the King's economy."

Kuyper Lecture Series

Covenant College hosted Dr. Matthew Kaemingk as the speaker for the 2018 Kuyper Lectures. Dr. Kaemingk is an assistant professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary and the associate dean of Fuller Texas in Houston.

Kaemingk's research and teaching focus on Reformed public theology, Islam and political ethics, workplace theology, and theology and culture. Largely based on the ideas in his new book, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear*, Kaemingk's lectures addressed how Christians can uniquely respond to the growing refugee crisis.

Rookmaaker Jazz Festival & New Scholarship

The Rookmaaker scholarship, endowed by an anonymous donor, is a scholarship for incoming students pursuing jazz music education at the College. The scholarship is named in honor of the late Hans Rookmaaker, Christian thinker, arts scholar, and friend of Francis Schaeffer. To celebrate the new scholarship,



Covenant College hosted the first Rookmaaker Jazz Festival on March 12, 2018. In memory of Hans Rookmaaker's faithful awareness of Christ's preeminence in art, specifically in the jazz music community, the festival emphasized the value of the arts for Christian thinking and behavior.

Where Was the Bible?

Joel Belz '62 | *Former Moderator, PCA's 31st General Assembly*

It was mid-June, and we were driving home to Asheville from Atlanta following the 46th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. "I don't think," I told my wife, Carol, "that I've ever found myself heading home after an assembly with such a sense of sadness."

Having attended and/or reported on some 65 assemblies of various Presbyterian denominations, I think I have some grounds for comparison.

None of us enjoy losing a vote—especially on an issue we consider to involve an important principle. So I was still absorbing the assembly's rejection of a proposal that would allow the election of women to the Board of Trustees of Covenant College. After less than an hour's debate, the proposal had been defeated by a vote of 727-449-18.

But I am both a Presbyterian and a team player. I am willing to take my losses now and then—but not without a good-spirited protest.

I understand that the promotion of women to positions of authority in the mainline denominations was one of the hot-button issues that had led half a century ago to the formation of the PCA. For many teaching and ruling elders, anything that suggests a compromise on that issue needs to be dropped—and quick! "Don't even get near it," they say. For them, this is no merely political issue. It is a matter of deep principle for them, and in no way to be dealt with on the basis of pragmatic arguments.

The problem, of course, is that those of us who want to open the door for godly women to serve on the Covenant College board are also pursuing what we think is a matter of principle. We believe that the exclusion by gender of anyone from the work of the church, except where the Bible is clear in its order of things, is a costly mistake.

By itself, such disagreement between two parties of the church is not an unusual thing. We've divided—and often—over lighter issues.

But in this case, I suggest that those in the majority are worried about something unbiblical that might happen in the future while those of us in the minority are concerned about something unbiblical that's actually happening right now. Many in the majority are concerned that the PCA might drift in the not-too-distant future toward electing women as teaching and ruling elders. But many of us in the minority are just as concerned that while waiting for that possibility, our church is depriving women of privileges the Bible has never denied them and deprived our church of the benefits of those women's gifts, service, and leadership.

What sent me home under a cloud of sadness was the fact that in what should have been a robust debate over this tension between two "parties" in the church, this year's assembly spent almost no time at all discussing the biblical issues involved. With no stated biblical warrant, the assembly voted to set aside a serious question directly affecting more than half the PCA's 300,000 members.

To be sure, some highly practical issues affected the assembly's disposition of things. 1) The assembly was hurried, squeezing a full agenda into fewer hours than usual. 2) The Committee on Overtures, first adopted nearly ten years ago, seems to work well on most matters in its task of "pre-processing" issues before coming before the big roomful of over 1,000 delegates. I'm not sure it works as well on something as consequential as this issue.

My sadness is accentuated when I hear from an alumnus thinking now of channeling his giving to some other college. Or when I talk to a gifted senior who has considered transferring to a college more in tune with the times. Or when I am reminded of whole families who have left the PCA because they think our denomination is more interested in maintaining a conservative and even reactionary stance on a cultural issue than in discerning what the Bible itself says on the issue.

And that is my concern as well. I learned at Covenant, when I was a student there, that the Scriptures are the final arbiter of our disagreements. That's not the message the PCA General Assembly has just sent the world about how we operate our denominational college. I am sad that we think we get to pick and choose on such issues.

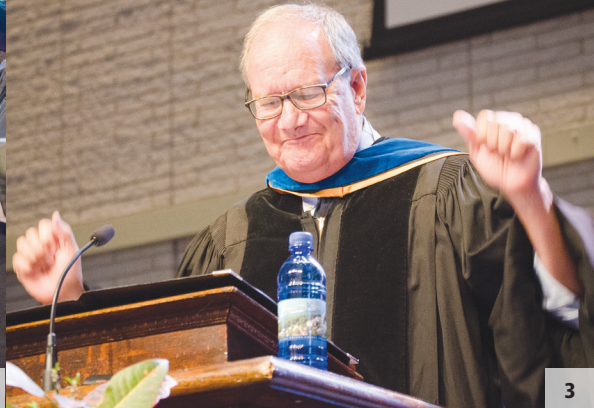




Dr. Heath Garris, assistant professor of biology, and Dr. Nola Hecker, associate professor of linguistics, approach a bat cave with their students. Professors Garris and Hecker taught classes in the College's inaugural Summer Institute in July 2018. The Summer Institute offered high school students the opportunity to earn college credit through two course offerings: The Language of Nature, taught by Dr. Garris, and The Nature of Language, taught by Dr. Hecker.

"Together, these courses highlight the things that are really special about human language and the way we are made to communicate," says Hecker. "It was really fun."

Both classes canoed on Nickajack Lake to a cave that is a wildlife refuge for the gray bat, where they observed the communication patterns of gray bats and other animals. To learn more, visit covenant.edu/summer.





CampusCollage

1-3 Convocation

Funny hats, bagpipes, and the College hymn "All for Jesus" made for a great start to the 2018-2019 academic year.

4 Imago Dei Lectures

Rev. Thabiti Anyabwile discussed "knowledge and the image of God" during this annual lecture series.

5 Rookmaaker Jazz Festival

Covenant hosted its first ever Rookmaaker Jazz Festival, featuring prolific artist Ruth Naomi Floyd.

6-8 Spring Formal

Art connoisseurs and dance masters alike enjoyed this all-time favorite event.

9-10 Covenant 360

High school students from across the country experienced a taste of life at Covenant.

11-13 Baker Tree

Covenant students celebrated their creative gifts at this annual festival.

14-15 Peter/Wendy

Mia McConnell '21 and Levi Orren '20 starred in this lyrical rendition of a familiar story.

16-18 Student Appreciation Day

Faculty and staff showed some love to the student body with snuggly animals, mini-golf, and more.

19 Senior Testimonies

Nabil Ince '18, Abigail Ogle '18, Gracie Woodrow '18 and Chase Waller '18 shared meaningful stories.

20-22 Senior Art Show

Senior art students put their heart and soul into their final exhibition in the Lucas Art Workshop.

23-24 Spring Festival Concert

Covenant's music department delighted the audience with music reflecting the splendor of creation.

25 Alumni Induction Ceremony

Seniors held their very own Covenant College alumni mug for the first time at this special ceremony.

26 Commencement

Families and friends of graduates joined together to applaud the Class of 2018.

See more at covenant.edu/facebook.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN AMERICA

Fundamentalist. Evangelical. Mainline. Methodist. Baptist. Presbyterian. Liberal. Conservative. Catholic. Protestant. Followers of Christ.

Christian identity in the United States of America has never been static. In the conversation you'll read here, three Covenant College professors reflect on religious history, the current cultural climate, and their own lives to explore what it means to be a Christian in today's America. Enjoy the following discussion between Dr. Jay Green, professor of history; Dr. Alicia Jackson, associate professor of history; and Dr. Steve Kaufmann '69, professor of education.

Growing up in the Church

Kaufmann: I was raised in a fundamentalist church, and I appreciate so much about that. We heard the gospel early and often, and my parents were godly people. But we also spent a lot of time defining the things we didn't do—we didn't smoke or drink or go to movies. That was a big part of my identity coming into college. When I was a student at Covenant, that urge to define myself by what I didn't do was broken and I started to think more positively about what my faith could mean and how I could engage and influence culture as a Christian.

Green: Sociologist Robert Wuthnow has observed that before World War II, American Christians tied their identities to denominations. They were Episcopalian, Baptist, Presbyterian, or Methodist. But over time, those identities faded and what mattered more was, regardless of denominational

identity, whether a person identified as "conservative" or "liberal." That observation rings true in my experience.

I grew up in a mainline United Methodist church. I was cognizant that there was a war going on for the soul of the Methodist church between liberals and conservatives. We seemed to understand that those in

leadership were the untrusted liberal elites, and we in the pews were the traditional, biblical Christians. At least that's how we saw it. I think we're seeing a full-flowering of this kind of thinking in America today. Similar to Steve's experience, my take on the situation was broadened and challenged once I went off to college. By the time I graduated, I had developed a greater tolerance for complexity.

Jackson: My experience was a bit different from Jay and Steve. I grew up attending an all-black church. Of course, the black church

is not monolithic, but in the church I grew up in, Easter was a big thing—everyone wore a hat. In many ways, I have some nostalgia for that time, and I look back on it fondly. It's sad for me to see some people looking down at the black church and the black experience and theology, as if it's deficient in some way. This kind of disdain can come from people within the black community or outside the community. That's a painful thing to hear as someone who grew up in that church community. It's my hope that conversations like this will encourage and invigorate people to seek out and join these churches.

Where We Come From: Perpetual Flux

Green: I think we tend to derive some comfort from imagining a past that had stability and a quietness associated with it. I think we need to recognize that the flux we're experiencing as Christians in

America today is something that has always existed. The dynamics of how it is happening right now are unique, and some of the circumstances are genuinely new, but what we're dealing with right now is far from unprecedented.

Kaufmann: I was thinking this morning of the Antebellum Period,

when an influx of Irish immigrants came to the United States and experienced a lot of backlash in American culture. The kind of turbulence that we see today is not new. It's been part of our experience, and Christians have participated in both sides of tensions from the beginning.

Jackson: My work focuses on the Reconstruction Period and particularly on African-American churches established during this era. In the late 1860s, freed people of color in the Southern

"I think we need to recognize that the flux we're experiencing as Christians in America today is something that has always existed."

"There is a blending in the 19th century of Christianity and American initiatives."

Methodist church experienced a tremendous amount of racial violence. As a result of their experiences under slavery and oppression experienced after emancipation, they came to a point where they could no longer worship with Southern Methodists, so they founded the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) church.

Today, African Americans are effecting a slow exodus from majority churches and communities because they feel as if the issues they are dealing with, be it contaminated drinking water, mass incarceration, or racial profiling, are set aside as unimportant issues. I would argue that the experiences of Christians of color today are reminiscent of what many experienced during Reconstruction. During these years, African Americans worked to navigate the waters between the economic and political constraints of white churches and the practice of their faith as individuals in a growing community.

Green: I think that white American Christianity has always been pretty intent on policing its boundaries and navigating the "threats" that exist from within. One of the dominant stories of the 19th century was policing against the threats of Roman Catholicism. Much of the language we hear about the threat of immigrants today can be found throughout the 19th century regarding the Irish and other European immigrants who were perceived as threatening American jobs and as

undermining the Republic and the idea of liberty itself. A sense of embattlement and threat has always been present in American life.

Kaufmann: Richard Niebuhr once compared 17th century Christians with 19th century Christians, saying that in the 17th century, Puritans were asking, "Oh, Lord, what is your will for us? What can we do to serve you?" In the 19th century, Christians turned that on its head and instead saw God as



Dr. Jay Green, Dr. Steve Kaufmann, and Dr. Alicia Jackson

there to serve their own agendas. There is a blending in the 19th century of Christianity and American initiatives.

Green: Nathan Hatch's book *Democratization of American Christianity* is a nice survey of some of the ways in which a lot of what we take for granted as "Christian" has been leavened by good, old-fashioned, 19th-century American individualism. When I learned about Christianity as a kid, I absorbed a brand of Christianity that came pre-formed with expressions of American, democratic, even populist norms. Because

we don't always have an historical awareness of how this came to be, we're less suited theologically to disentangle it now.

Not all of this is bad. One of the amazing things about Christianity is that it is culturally adaptive. But sometimes we take the expression of Christianity we're most familiar with, and accept it as "Thus saith the Lord." Doing so creates problems for us when we bump up against variant strains of Christianity that don't look like

the version we're familiar with or when theological norms ask us to critically engage, and maybe even push back on, some impulses of American life.

Jackson: Among African Americans, the church has been for many years a safe haven from external challenges and oppression. Since many black Christians have perceived the politics and economics of the world outside of their churches and communities

as somewhat hostile to them, I don't think they are at all surprised at where we are politically and socially today.

I think, in many ways, the movie *Get Out* (2017) is the black nightmare that has come true. It's the story of opening yourself up in vulnerability to someone and to a community and then finding out that you can't trust that community. What has happened in the last two or three years in the African-American community is a realization of, "Oh, we really are not fully embraced as being part of this community. We're still seen as the 'other.'"

Where We Are Now: Evangelicalism in Transition

Kaufmann: There are elements of evangelicalism that I think are biblical: the conversion experience, the relationship to Jesus Christ, the belief that the Bible is the word of God. These beliefs are at the heart of evangelicalism, and I'd hate for it to be the case that evangelical leaders' present diversion from these beliefs would cause us to lose our way. I want to see us come back to these basic tenets of evangelicalism.

Green: At the same time, I do think there are some features of evangelicalism that are genuinely problematic. Evangelicalism often displays a low or non-existent view of the church, making us especially vulnerable to the culture of celebrity. Evangelicalism also has a tendency toward sentimentalism and nostalgia. So I do think there are some things baked into evangelicalism that we ought to be concerned with—not because the *term* is bad, but because the culture of evangelicalism opens itself up to these issues.

Jackson: I also think it's good to remember to ask who the term "evangelical" includes. Growing up in the black church, I never thought of myself as evangelical. I just thought of myself as "Christian." My pastor always emphasized the unity of the body and how we are a family with different first names (Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian), but all having the same last name in Christ.

Kaufmann: One other wrinkle for evangelicalism is that we don't have a robust social theory. Roman Catholics are far more developed than we are in that area. So, we get to a point in history like where we are now and I'm not sure we have the weight of ideas and categories to handle it. I think that may be why a number of evangelical leaders are reverting to pragmatism instead of a body of work that

says, "Here is what justice looks like."

Jackson: I was recently reading John 19 in my devotions: Jesus is brought before Pilate, and the high priests essentially say, "Our only authority is Rome." I thought, "yes, *this is what we're experiencing today.*" Individuals who are supposed to be spiritual leaders have given allegiance to Caesar and not to the iron sharpening iron of Scripture. That is one of the things that I really grieve over. We are not living out the very things we espouse as Christians, and we need to be about our Father's business and about the truth of the Word.

Kaufmann: There really should be a certain edginess today around Christians—recognizing the gap between where we are and where we ought to be. If we

"We have become far too comfortable. We want to make our lives here easy, and while we may send missionaries to other parts of the world, we want to be comfortable here."

as Christians forget that and just turn pragmatic and put our morality in the corner so that we can enjoy power for a season, I think we'll regret it.

Jackson: This generation has such a desire for authenticity, and when young people start seeing people putting their faith to the side, something becomes clear to them: *This isn't real, is it? It's just convenient.*

Green: Ten to fifteen years ago, I thought that evangelicals in the United States were adapting successfully to the notion that we were going to have to figure out what life was going to be like on the margins, as a minority voice with diminished cultural power. There was some good writing that came out at that time about trying to re-discover what must have been like for the

early church to live under oppression and the threat of extinction. Doing so in those circumstances shaped the faithfulness of those early Christians. But over the past few years, I've realized that we are not as comfortable with that idea as I thought we were. Instead, there has been a doubling down on the search for and reassertion of power. I have been shocked by this turn. It turns out we're nowhere near being ready to live life on the margins of a post-Christian culture.

Jackson: You know, I think that reveals that we have forgotten that this world is not our home. That's a big theme in the African-American church: We're just passing through and only here for a little while. As a larger community of faith, we have become far too comfortable. We want to make our lives

here easy, and while we may send missionaries to other parts of the world, we want to be comfortable here. That is so unfortunate and I think all of us need to meditate on the fact that this is not our home.

Kaufmann: Amen. We are in danger of becoming just another group that is willing to do whatever

we can to protect ourselves—even create unholy alliances—because we're forgetting that this world is not our home. We're also forgetting that we're called to love our neighbor, no matter who that is: the immigrant, the person on welfare, the inmate. Christians should be the ones who are tending to these needs, not simply trying to save our brand.

Where We're Going: The Global Church Will Lead the Way

Jackson: It's easy to want to throw everything out and start over, but we are told over and over in Scripture to remember the past. When the Israelites were led out of Egypt, they were told to remember the past. On the flip side, we are also really big idol makers, so we can make the past

"I want faith-based institutions like Covenant to exist for a long time, but I also want the voices of Christians to have integrity and real moral authority."

an idol and hold it up in nostalgia. I think the church has to be mindful of both of these things. And in all of this, we need to be wary of pride. It is so easy to put other people below us and look down on and disparage them. Those of us in Reformed circles need to be mindful of all these things. We need to be wary of pride, refuse to idolize the past, but also not discard or dismiss the past.

Kaufmann: Several years ago, I went to a lecture given by Richard John Newhouse about the rise of faith in New York City. Before World War II, the question was whether Christianity would even survive in the city. After the war, when the world started coming to New York City, they brought vibrant faith with them. The same is true today. The Holy Spirit is moving in the Southern Hemisphere. Where is the PCA? Where is Covenant College? I think if we could mirror the dynamics in New York City, we would be amazed at what that might mean. Christianity is a global religion. I think we need to listen to and read things from Christians who are living outside of our own spheres.

Green: Interestingly enough, over the last few years, I've actually become more patriotic. I think I took some of our founding principles, governing systems, and institutional norms for granted. Now that they are under threat, I desperately want to protect them. I think in some ways I've made an idol of the comfort I've experienced within our functioning

democratic institutions. Then I start to think about all of our brothers and sisters around the world who live under constant threat and despotism and I realize that I am hankering for a kind of comfort of government stability that I may never experience again. Maybe I need to be OK with that.

Kaufmann: That resonates with me. I also think this is a good place where Christians can speak into American values and culture. You cannot have the common good without robust institutions. Christians should be the ones who are advocating for the three-level view of society, with institutions operating between the individual and the state. We

"Sometimes unity can only come through hostility and suffering."

should be pro-family, pro-community, and supporting our schools and other institutions. Christians should be able to speak into these things and able to articulate why they're so important.

Jackson: I do think that life in the margins will be a purifying experience. We'll have to face the question of whether we will still profess our beliefs if they mean that we will suffer in difficult circumstances. I also think that in times of suffering, all of our labels and divisions mean less. I had an experience in a place where there was a significant amount of hostility toward believers, and the dividing line became as simple as: Do

you know Jesus and do you love God? The answer to that one question united us. Sometimes unity can only come through hostility and suffering.

Kaufmann: I've had the opportunity to teach in a few different countries. It was humbling to be with fellow believers in China. These believers, materially speaking, had nothing. But they were sold out to Jesus Christ. There are many experiences of vibrant belief, the Spirit at work around the world, in believers who are oppressed.

Green: I think it's worth noting that, right now, Christians' pursuit of power has led to greater legal and political ease for some believers and for Christian institutions in the United States. But at what cost? I want faith-based institutions like Covenant to exist for a long time, but I also want the voices of Christians to have integrity and real moral authority.

There are voices of moral authority outside of Christianity that are making bold, challenging critiques on issues including the treatment of African Americans by the police, mass incarceration, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. It grieves me that people do not associate that kind of moral courage and discourse with biblical Christianity. I think ceding that kind of moral authority to others harms our witness.

Kaufmann: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). 🌊



Fault Lines

by Dr. Elissa Yukiko Weichbrodt '04
Assistant Professor of Art

IN 2007, THE COLOMBIAN ARTIST DORIS SALCEDO MADE A LITERAL CRACK in an art museum floor. But this was not a little crack. It was a meandering, 548-foot-long crack that began as a hairline fracture and then grew to about a foot at its widest point. And it wasn't in just any museum. This was the Tate Modern, home of Britain's national collection of modern and contemporary art. And she was *paid* to do it. For several years, the Tate Modern commissioned artists to make work specifically for Turbine Hall, a huge, 6-story-tall room. But when Salcedo was given the chance to fill the space, she chose instead to divide it.

The reaction was mixed. Thousands of people came to see it. Many, yes, *cracked* jokes. Others, like the woman who was on her phone and looking for friends, tripped. The *New York Times* reported one tourist stating, "Art is dangerous sometimes." And indeed, Salcedo's crack was dangerous in at least two ways. It was a threat to people

"Art is dangerous sometimes."

who weren't paying attention, and it was a threat to people who preferred to not think about ruptures in their own lives and systems.

I do not like dangerous things. I am not a naturally bold person. I would consider

fear to be one of my besetting sins, though I didn't really realize this until I was a student at Covenant College. I was afraid that my theology was wrong, afraid to disappoint people, afraid I'd never get a job or get married or have children or have a fulfilling life.

During my years at Covenant, the Holy Spirit repeatedly confronted me with this sin of fear. My schedule was populated with classes that were uniquely equipped to make me squirm.

I took Twentieth-Century History with Dr. Follett. And it undid me. Really, how was the twentieth century so bad everywhere and how had I not really absorbed this before?! And then I took Critical Theory from Dr. Wildeman and Art and Criticism

"A request for present help is bound up in a truthful accounting of a communal past."

from Prof. Jeff Morton and found myself grappling with new ideas that seemed so powerful but also threatening to my cozy sense of self. I was afraid.

I was afraid that these unfamiliar ideas actually made too much sense to me. I was afraid that recognizing gross sins of our collective past meant that I couldn't be proud of my present identity. I was afraid that acknowledging the suffering in the Belgian Congo would make my own personal suffering inconsequential. And how could I reconcile a God who was supposedly loving and sovereign with these histories of pervasive oppression and exploitation? I was afraid that if I couldn't account for this seeming contradiction, then God would have to disappear altogether.

It felt, in a lot of ways, like a great crack rippling through me—an unstoppable rupture.

Doris Salcedo titled her crack *Shibboleth*, a reference to Judges 12 where the Gileadites sifted out their enemies by asking them to say the word "shibboleth," which sounded different in different dialects. Saying "sibboleth" became a death sentence. The term has since come to mean a custom, phrase, or use of language that acts as a test of belonging to a particular social group. It is an exclusionary tool. Salcedo cracked open the floor in an effort to make visible the hidden ways in which we police our boundaries—the impossible tests that we give to others in order to maintain our own comfort or sense of security.

Something akin to this happened in me as a college student. The fault lines had always been there, but now they were pushed up to the surface until the chasm could no longer be ignored. And yet, because God is kind and faithful, this fracture would become the

site of learning and healing.

A few years later, I went to graduate school to get my doctorate in art history. There, I discovered a litany of ways that God's image had been abused and denied in images, even aesthetically pleasing ones. But there was also so much beauty to discover, so many instances of image bearers making things that helped others see the world in exciting, dignifying ways.

While working through this tension, I began to take notice of how the people of Israel narrated their history. How do we look *back* rightly? Throughout Deuteronomy, for example, the people are constantly reminded of their deliverance from slavery. In 1 Samuel, Samuel marks the site of God's mercy with an Ebenezer, a stone that served as a physical reminder of God showing up and interceding in a visible, tangible way.

"Faithfully telling history demands that we recall both the moments of triumph and the moments of abject failure."

But there is another aspect of Israel's history telling, and that involves marking their failures. The flip side of an Ebenezer is a place name like Marah, where the water was bitter, or Meribah, where the people tested the Lord.

Psalm 106 brings these practices together in a strange and wonderful unity. The psalmist recounts in excruciating detail the many times that the people of Israel forgot

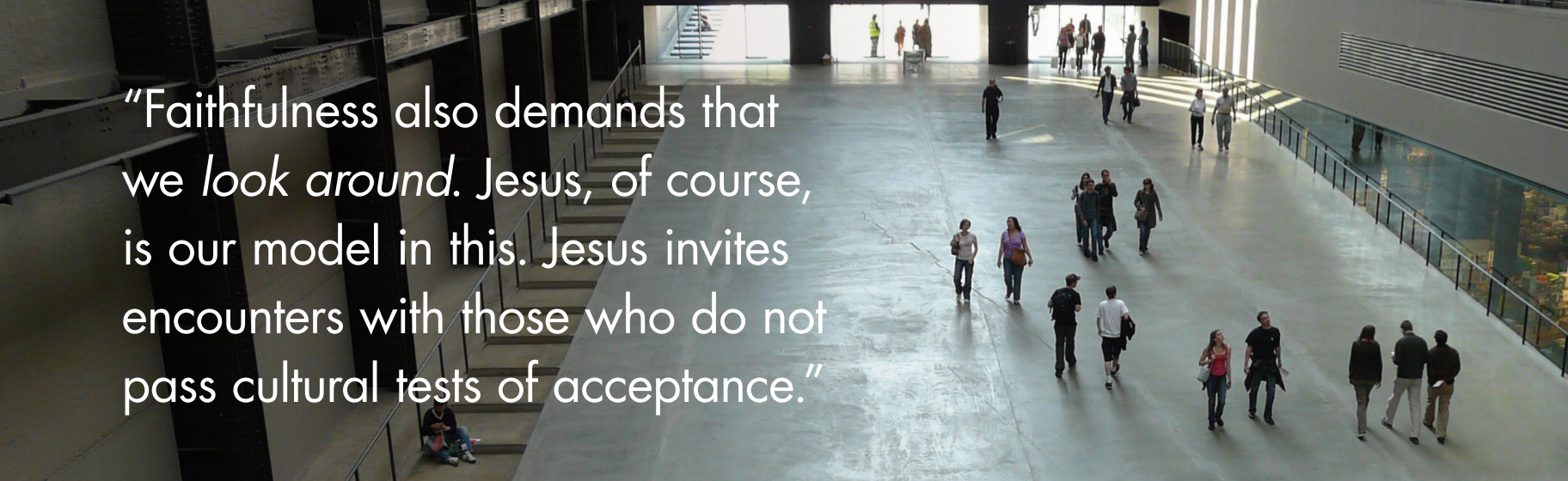
God, despised Him, murmured, rebelled, and yoked themselves to idols. Read it out loud. It takes a painfully long time to get through thirty-seven verses of failure. And yet. The psalm's penultimate stanza is a recounting of historical grace: "For their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the abundance of His steadfast love." The psalm then concludes with a petition and a blessing: "Save us, O Lord!" and "Praise the Lord!" A request for present help is bound up in a truthful accounting of a communal past.

Faithfully telling history demands that we recall both the moments of triumph and the moments of abject failure. The psalmist is not ashamed to recount his community's shortcomings. Should we call him unpatriotic? Cynical? Ungrateful? No, it is precisely through detailing their failures that he finds the certainty of God's grace. God and God's actions become the crux of this historical narration.

Furthermore, this kind of history-telling provides a context for our present, individual suffering. Throughout Psalm 106 the psalmist uses the pronouns "they" and "them," referring to the people of Israel

in the past. But, the recitation of history is actually preceded by a personal pronoun: "Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them."

A strange thing happened in that gallery in London in 2007. Visitors began to inspect Doris Salcedo's crack. They paced up and down its length over and over again. They got down on their hands



“Faithfulness also demands that we *look around*. Jesus, of course, is our model in this. Jesus invites encounters with those who do not pass cultural tests of acceptance.”

and knees and pressed their cheeks to the floor to peek into the fissure. Some stuck their heads into the gap. Emboldened, perhaps, by recognizing the crack as an artwork—rather than a geological threat—people contorted their bodies, trying to understand the nature of the rupture, this *Shibboleth*.

Faithfulness also demands that we *look around*. Jesus, of course, is our model in this. Jesus invites encounters with those who do not pass cultural tests of acceptance. When a woman creeps into a room full of men, uninvited, and begins to wash Jesus’s feet with her tears, she breaks every social taboo and every rule of order that the Pharisees had known. But Jesus calls her actions beautiful and lifts her up as a model. He sees her at the margins, and He centers her, despite how uncomfortable she makes everyone else at the table.

And it is Jesus who is grieved by the suffering of those whom He knows personally, but also of those who are strangers. In the midst of His own humiliation in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ remains aware of others. He knows the agony that awaits Him, and yet He sees Malchus, a slave, whose ear has been sliced off by an impetuous Simon Peter. Peter, who failed to look back or to look around, disfigures another man’s body. “Enough of this,” Jesus says, and He reaches out and heals the slave who has no recourse to justice on his own.

When Jesus recognizes Malchus’s suffering, does it diminish the reality of

His own pain? Of course not! Sometimes we believe that dignity is a pie to be divvied up among us. We worry that if we grant dignity to one group’s suffering or accounting of history then there is necessarily less available for us. But this is foolish. We make God small when the reverse should be the case. For, after all, if Jesus is coming back to make all the sad things untrue, then the more sad things we know, the *bigger* Jesus must be to undo them. The cracks are already there. Calling out the brokenness does not diminish Jesus’s power. It *magnifies* it.

But sometimes the admonition of Galatians 6 or the call to lament feels utterly impossible. How can we bear one another’s burdens without being crushed ourselves? Many of us—too many—have endured deep personal suffering.

We have lost the ones who loved us best, our bodies have given out, we have been violated by those we trust, and darkness has at times been suffocating. How can we really care—not just post Facebook statuses about—gun violence, racism, immigration, sexuality, abortion, Syria, human trafficking, the opioid crisis, and still function? Jesus offers a tenable path in Matthew 11.

“Come to me,” He says, “all of you who are burdened and weighed down...my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” It is not our performance of lament, our virtue-signaling or wokeness that eases the weight of darkness. It is Jesus. Jesus,

necessarily bigger, stronger, reconciling all things to Himself, on earth and in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross. We know the end of the story. Creation, fall, redemption, *consummation*. And because we have this hope, we can be unafraid to poke our heads into the cracks that appear, to get onto our hands and knees and to see the fault lines of sin that run through our hearts, our relationships, our histories, and our systems. We do this not because we are cynical or to distract from the gospel or because we refuse to forgive and forget. No, we do it because we are unafraid.

If you go to the Turbine Hall in the Tate Modern now, you might notice something. The crack is gone, but there is still a scar on the floor. It’s faded, polished away by thousands of visitors in the intervening years, but it is still there: a rupture that has been restored.

A scar also remains on the hands and side of our Savior in glory. The actual embodiment of forgiveness carries a wound. His resurrected body bears the mark of His love for you. And that perfect love drives out fear. So, do not fear the fractures. Let not your hands grow weak. The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you by His love. He will exult over you with loud singing. 🙌

This piece is adapted from Dr. Weichbrodt’s 2018 commencement address. You can watch her full address at covenant.edu/commencement18.

HOMECOMING 2018 was the College's most-attended homecoming to date. Nearly 900 alumni came home to the mountain for the weekend events.

It was a beautiful sunshine-and-blue-skies weekend on the mountain as alumni, young and old, rekindled friendships and revisited memories of their time as students. The weekend began with a performance by an alumni choir, led by Dr. Scott Finch '96, and concluded with a spectacular firework show after the men's soccer game at Scotland Yard.

2018 ALUMNI of the YEAR

David '75 & Rebecca Van Wechel Morton '74 *Alumni of the Year*

From completing his residency in Philadelphia's inner city, often treating victims of gang warfare, to serving in multiple vital roles for hospitals in Africa, David has given himself entirely to alleviating the suffering of the poor and the outcast, and Rebecca has been his constant partner in this ministry. Currently, David holds the position of deputy medical director and doctor of Nkhoma Hospital of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. David's tireless commitment to the patients, operations, and sustainability of Nkhoma hospital has changed and saved many lives. Rebecca has ministered in countless ways to children in the children's ward, as well as to their mothers, helping provide clothing and other basic needs. After many years of faithful service, David and Rebecca plan to retire from overseas work at the end of this year.

Michael Rhodes '08 *Young Alumnus of the Year*

Michael serves as the director of community transformation at the Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies, heading up efforts to prepare Christian leaders with tools for community development. He is also one of the authors of *Practicing the King's Economy: Honoring Jesus in How We Work, Earn, Spend, Save, and Give* (Baker, 2018).

Kenny Lee '81 *Volunteer of the Year*

Kenny, a Lookout Mountain, GA, resident, has worked tirelessly to unite the Covenant family to the community on Lookout Mountain through various initiatives. He has paved the way for many students to gain practical skills and work experience to meet the community's needs.



Friendship Beyond Dialogue

IN HIS 1967 TEXT, entitled “Par-delà le dialogue” [Beyond Dialogue], Emmanuel Levinas writes about the Ten Points of Seelisberg (1947) and the friendship between Jews and Christians that undergirds the organization Amitié judéo-chrétienne de France. The Seelisberg conference takes place in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and Levinas writes the essay in the aftermath of the Algerian War. History weighs heavily on the philosopher’s writing on ethics: how can people possibly get along, with all the suffering in the world? The essay ends with an invitation to readers to *think* like the Little Prince, which is also an invitation to *imagine*. The Little Prince’s reaction upon seeing a picture of a parallelogram invites us readers to imagine an “unconditional friendship” that lasts even when dialogue falls short of answering exceedingly difficult questions. Here is the conclusion to Levinas’s text:

“Beyond dialogue, a new maturity and earnestness, a new gravity and a new patience, and, if I may express it so, maturity and patience for insoluble problems...[T]hat attitude before insoluble problems, what can it be, and what can it contribute? ...[L]et us think, like one of my young students, of Saint-Exupéry’s little prince, who asks the pilot stranded in the desert, who only knows how to draw a boa constrictor digesting the elephant, to draw a sheep. And I think what the little prince wants is that proverbial lamb who is as gentle as a lamb. But nothing could be more difficult. None of the sheep he draws pleases the little prince. They are either violent rams with big horns or too old. The little prince disdains the gentleness that only comes with extreme age. So the pilot draws a parallelogram, the box in which the sheep is sleeping, to the little prince’s great satisfaction. I do not know how to draw the solution to insoluble problems. It is still sleeping in the bottom of a box; but a box over which persons who have drawn close to each other keep watch. I have no idea other than the idea of the idea that one should have. The abstract drawing of a parallelogram—cradle of our hopes. I have the idea of a possibility in which the impossible may be sleeping.”

“The object of our hope
is not sleeping but standing.”



by Dr. Jiewon Baek, assistant professor of foreign language

Our efforts at tackling difficult problems are like that of a pilot stranded in the desert, who tries to draw a sheep. None of the solutions the pilot has to offer quite cut it, until he sketches a box that does not logically resemble a sheep. The pilot’s encounter with the Little Prince generates a friendship that Levinas characterizes as a new maturity, earnestness, gravity, and patience.

An academic community gives a small but important example of such encounters; indeed, Levinas credits one of his students for having taught him to think like the Little Prince. Simone Weil writes in her 1942 essay, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God,” that academic study’s “deep purpose should aim solely at increasing the power of attention with a view to prayer.” When

knowledge falls short of solving difficult problems, the practice of a mundane or deep-thinking exercise can develop in us an attitude before history’s insoluble problems, directing our attention and affection towards God. With the earnestness, maturity, and patience developed through prayer, we learn to hold our attention and affection towards others, even in a friendship beyond dialogue. *“I have no idea other than the idea of the idea that one should have.”* The attitude is abstract, to be sure, yet humble. The Little Prince’s pleasure and satisfaction at the pilot’s drawing attest to a humility before the truth of something greater than any idea that our masterpieces can communicate. With humility, we in the church, as people who have been drawn near, keep watch, for the object of our hope is not sleeping but standing (Revelation 5:6-10). 🕯

ALUMNI NEWS
INTENTIONALLY
EXCLUDED

Faithful in Exile

THE VENEER OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE in our country is cracking, if not completely disintegrated. As the president of a college that remains committed to biblical positions on matters like marriage and human sexuality, I am acutely aware that American culture is, at best, indifferent to Christianity and more often—and worse—hostile to the Christian faith. Despite the profound influence that Christian men and women have had in the history of our nation, we find ourselves exiles in a land that worships other gods—gods of self-determination, greed, authenticity, and pleasure. Reflecting on the state of Christianity in America today, I can't help but think of the situation Daniel found himself in as an exile in Babylon.

Reading Daniel's account of the exile can provide a helpful guide to answering two important questions: Where is God? And how do we live the Christian life here? These two questions are pivotal if we are to live the Christian life in an increasingly post-Christian culture. The order of the questions is also essential. We cannot adequately explore how to faithfully live the Christian life in exile until we first answer: where is God?

Where was God in Babylon? Daniel leaves us with no doubt. In Daniel chapter 1, he continually reminds readers that the *Lord gave* them into the hands of Babylon, that *God gave* him favor with leaders in Babylon, and that *God gave* Daniel and his friends the ability to learn and gain wisdom and skill. Despite all of the evidence that God had abandoned his people, despite the horrific catastrophe of subjugation and deportation, Daniel remains confident that God is orchestrating it all. Reading Daniel's account today, we can see a foreshadowing of the cross, where God willed the death of His own Son on our behalf. This knowledge allows us to confidently answer the first question, "Where is God?" As awful as it may seem, God is here and even the most powerful forces on earth cannot thwart His purpose.

With this in mind, how do we live the Christian life *here*, where it might seem at times like God has lost and we are on "the wrong side of history"? Daniel's account chronicles a familiar strategy: the Babylonians targeted Judah's young, intelligent, skilled elites. They provided them with education and gave them new names and identities, which often included names of Babylonian gods. How did Daniel remain faithful to God in the midst of a calculated and aggressive re-education and assimilation campaign? Daniel 1:8-16 and 19-20 help answer this question. Daniel resolved to not defile himself, down to the "little things" like eating food sacrificed to idols. Even in secret, Daniel remained faithful, rejecting the lure of the comfortable Babylonian life. In humble confidence, Daniel maintained his distinctive and peculiar lifestyle as a member of God's household.

This example challenges us to ask ourselves a few difficult questions: How peculiar are we? How set apart? Do we have the courage to be different, even in small things—even in secret? Do we live lives of humble confidence? If we're honest, we may not like our answers to all of these questions. But we can look to the testimony of Daniel for encouragement. We can remember the humiliation of God's own Son that has made a way for us to sit down at a banquet table that will make Nebuchadnezzar's royal table look like a pile of crumbs on the floor. We can cling to the good news that even though the world may seem like it is coming unglued, God is not far off. He is here and He is in control.

We do not need to despair. Though nations rage, though kingdoms and our country totter, the Lord of hosts is with us and the God of Jacob is our fortress. In light of what He has done for us, in light of the humiliation He willed upon His own Son for our sake, and in light of God's faithfulness to Daniel in the midst of exile, let us seek to be a peculiar and faithful people. Let us be a church that is committed to serving the land where we have been exiled. 🙏



J. Derek Halvorson '93
President

“Do we have
the courage to be
different, even in
small things—
even in secret?”



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Every year, students at Covenant join new clubs and student organizations at Covenant Connect (affectionately known as CovCon). CovCon provides students with the chance to join a club where they will engage new issues, activities, and relationships that will grow and stretch them during their time as a student. Student clubs at Covenant are diverse, interesting, and sometimes unexpected. Clubs featured at this year's CovCon included *The Bagpipe* (student newspaper), the multicultural club, speech & debate society, Tri-Beta (biology honor society), pre-law, ballroom dance, an improv team, and many more. For a full list of the clubs and student organizations available at the College, visit covenant.edu/clubs.