

THE MAGAZINE OF GORDON COLLEGE

STILLPOINT

FALL 2025



Stillpoint THROUGH THE DECADES

UP FRONT

with President Hammond

A Place for Faith in the Marketplace of Ideas

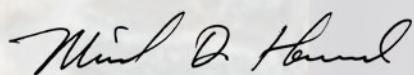
I have been deeply inspired by the life and work of Makoto Fujimura, whose art and writing remind us that faith can and should be integrated into all aspects of our lives—even our professional endeavors. His artistic expression of the redemptive power of creativity challenges us to live out our faith with excellence and commitment to truth. When we do, the most innovative, hopeful and transformative ideas are given room to emerge.

Engaging the marketplace of ideas doesn't mean abandoning our convictions or conforming to the culture around us. Rather, it means stepping into hard conversations, seeking common ground and committing to honoring and affirming the image of God in others.

This celebratory issue of STILLPOINT beautifully demonstrates how the Christian faith is integral to the marketplace of ideas. It echoes Gordon College's charge of graduating men and women distinguished by intellectual maturity and Christian character, committed to lives of service and prepared for leadership worldwide.

Enjoy a look back at some of the most compelling, engaging writing from STILLPOINT over the decades: a thoughtful perspective by Marv Wilson on peace in the Middle East; reflections from an alum who narrowly escaped Tower II on September 11, 2001; the beauty of a mother creating a welcoming space for her autistic son; and a recounting of the founding of a program in the Balkans birthed out of war, to name a few.

What unites these stories is a shared vision: that our calling as Christians is to reflect the Creator—not only in what we believe, but in what we build, restore and imagine. May this be an encouragement, wherever you are, to keep creating.



Michael D. Hammond



Dr. Michael Hammond is the ninth president of Gordon College. He is pictured here with renowned contemporary artist Makoto Fujimura.



Congratulations Class of 2025

This May Gordon conferred degrees on 322 undergraduate students and 98 graduate students: 150 students graduated with honors, including 13 students who maintained a 4.0 grade point average. A special remembrance of Amanda Costa was shared. A shining light among her classmates, Amanda passed away in October 2023. Her name was added to the ranks of Gordon alumni as an Honorary Alumna.

Internationally renowned artist Makoto Fujimura served as this year's Commencement speaker and shared, "As you walk the steps to this stage, may each step become a prayer, a new beginning to know the world for the first time. . . Rise above into a world of abundance that God is providing for you today. Because you have been given wings to be a poet of the Word. You are an artist of the Kingdom. . . Go now into the art of becoming."

For his profound engagement bridging the gap between Christian faith and artistic expression, Fujimura was conferred a degree of Doctor of Fine Arts honoris causa. An honorary Doctor of Business Administration was also given to Richard Timothy Breene for his international influence in the realms of business innovation, transformation and strategic growth.



Watch Makoto Fujimura's full commencement address.

Save the Date: Upcoming Gallery



Paintings by Makoto Fujimura will be displayed in the Barrington Center for the Arts as part of a new exhibition, "Into the Silence: Winter into Spring" beginning August 27 through October 15, 2025. The Adams School of Music

and Arts will host a reception with the opportunity to hear from Fujimura and Bruce Herman, painter and former Gordon College Lothlórien Distinguished Chair in Fine Arts, on September 6.



STILLPOINT

The Magazine of Gordon College
VOLUME 40 NUMBER 1

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Marilyn Helgesen '74, Alumni News
Anne Lang, Copy Editor

A special note of thanks to the former editors and contributors who have reshared their works for this issue.

MISSION

STILLPOINT magazine is one of two keynote communications (along with Gordon's website) that exist to connect the extended Gordon community to the life of the College. STILLPOINT offers meaningful, relevant news and stories to educate, inspire and engage Gordon and Barrington alumni, parents, donors and friends.

Opinions expressed in STILLPOINT are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gordon College administration.

Send feedback and story suggestions to stillpoint@gordon.edu.

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PRINTING

Flagship Press | North Andover, MA

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INSPIRATION

Growing with Grace

Marge Dwyer, Director of Graduate Enrollment and Marketing

The sign on the wall of Marge Dwyer's office states, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It's a daily reminder to rely on Christ through challenges and to remain grounded in faith, remaining content no matter the circumstance. Since returning to Gordon as the director of graduate enrollment and marketing, Marge reflects on that passage often as she takes on the exciting and meaningful work of growing enrollment in the College's graduate programs.

"It's an exciting time at Gordon," she says, "as the College continues to expand its offerings to meet the needs of today's students far beyond the traditional undergraduate experience."

Gordon College, long known for its close-knit residential campus and strong liberal arts foundation, is now reaching new communities through flexible graduate programs designed for working professionals, educators, ministry leaders and change-makers. From master's degrees in leadership, education and theology to cutting-edge programs in the sciences and the expanding field of mental health, Gordon is building pathways that equip students to serve faithfully and lead confidently in every sector of society.

These programs are intentionally designed to be accessible, offering online and hybrid options that allow students to stay rooted in their communities and careers while pursuing advanced education.

The growth of Gordon's graduate offerings signals a broader vision: to be an institution for learners at every stage of life. It's a powerful reminder that the mission of Gordon is alive and evolving. Whether someone is seeking to deepen their



expertise, advance in their career or respond to a calling, Gordon is equipping them to do so with both excellence and purpose. This expansion reflects the College's commitment to preparing people to serve and lead in a variety of contexts.

As Marge puts it, "The Gordon you love is growing—and the best is yet to come."

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40
years
of
Stillpoint

The first issue of STILLPOINT was published in 1985, following the merging of Gordon and Barrington College. In this issue we look back to reshare some of the inspiring stories STILLPOINT has told and look forward to the future, untold stories STILLPOINT has yet to uncover.

NEWS | Campus News and Happenings



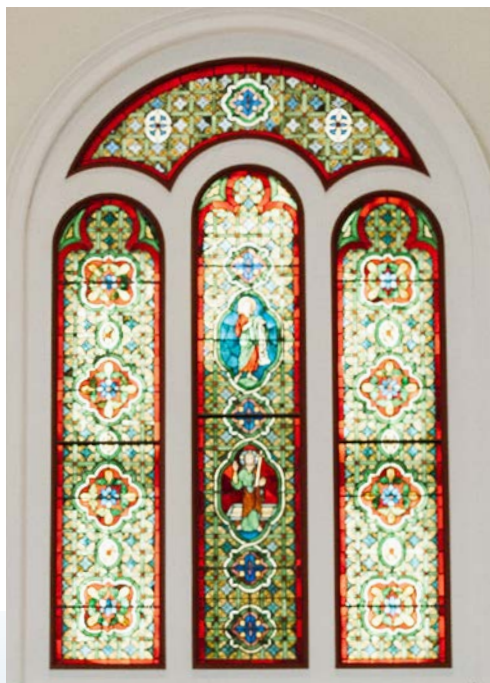
Hope and Health Conference

The Master of Public Health program's third annual Hope and Health Conference took place in April 2025. Speakers and attendees represented organizations from a variety of sectors, including churches, universities, nonprofits and city health departments, all unified by the same desire: to build partnerships to improve their ability to serve and love vulnerable communities.

Chapel Refresh

A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel's interior underwent a renovation this summer—fully funded by a generous, philanthropic donation of \$3 million. As part of the project, views of the Chapel's cross and historic stained-glass windows will be fully unobstructed for the first time.

These beautiful windows boast bright reds and greens and have graced both of Gordon's chapels—the A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel and the earlier Prince Chapel—for many years, but their history dates back much further. Initially brought from Europe by Frederick Prince, a *Tartan* article from November 8, 1957 noted that "the rare stained-glass windows featured in the chancel [of Prince Chapel] are from a medieval church built between the tenth and fourteenth centuries."

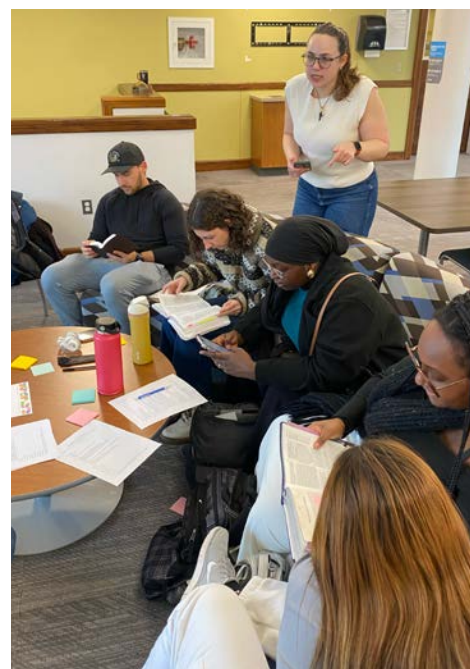


Spiritual Pursuit Week



In March 2025 46 students led the Gordon community in 23 spiritually focused practices in spaces across campus.

From worship and teaching to art and acts of service, our students invited participation and exploration of the ways they best experience the boundless love of Christ.



NEWS Campus News and Happenings



Retirement of Gordon Faculty and Staff

The end of the 2025 academic year marked the retirement of nine faculty and staff members who served Gordon for over 200 cumulative years. A sincere thank you for all you have done for the Gordon College community!

Alton Bynum - 35 Years

Superintendent of Grounds and Physical Plant

Sybil Coleman '64 - 38 Years

Professor of Sociology and Social Work

Norm Jones - 40 Years

Professor of Theatre Arts

Leonid Kurochka - 20 Years

Custodian for Physical Plant

Priscilla Nelson '74 - 23 Years

Professor of Education

Janet Potts '80 - 40 Years

Assistant Registrar and Graduation Coordinator for the Office of the Registrar

Philip Re - 17 Years

College Mechanic for Physical Plant

Bonnie Ross - 9 Years

Administrative Coordinator for Academic Affairs

Kent Seibert - 17 Years

Professor of Economics and Business



New Offerings in Community Transformation

The School of Ministry, Theology and Biblical Studies launched its first graduate degree offerings: a Master of Arts in Theology for Community Transformation and a certificate program in Scripture, Theology and Transformation.

These new programs will provide flexible, theological education for leaders seeking to be at the forefront of active change in their communities.



School of Business Students Volunteer at the NFL Draft

Destiny Polynice '27, Luke Lindas '27, Madison Vavala '25 and Gunnar Lucuk '26 enjoyed a front-row seat to the business of football at the 2025 NFL Draft. David Hughes (sport management) traveled to Wisconsin with the group to volunteer on the NFL Draft Experience Team.



Faculty Publications, Presentations & Features

Craig Story '89 (biology) and students were profiled in *Christianity Today* for their work in cancer research. Story has been working on immunofluorescence microscopy in partnership with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.



Read the article in its entirety.

Nora Kirkham '16 (English) contributed a chapter for the publication of *The Routledge Companion to Sally Rooney*. The volume highlights the significance of Rooney's work in contemporary literature and expands on its sociopolitical relevance.

A revision of her dissertation, **Joanna Kline '05** (Old Testament) recently published *Narrative Analogy in the David Story*, where she examines parallels between the biblical story of David and the narratives about Jacob, Judah and Joseph.



In February 2025 **Sarita Kwok** (music) performed and spoke at The Veritas Forum on the topic of "Think on These Things: Faithful Attention in an Age of Distraction" in collaboration with thought leaders Jeremy Begbie and Andy Crouch.

Kaye Cook (psychology) presented "Experiences of Divine Forgiveness among Christians across Countries" at the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University.



Watch the seminar online.

Jason Myers (New Testament) presented a paper at The Creedal Spirit Conference in London in April 2025. The conference was centered around the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed.



Awards & Recognitions

Karl-Dieter Crisman (mathematics, computer science) received the 2024 Northeast Section Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching from the Mathematical Association of America.

Sean Clark '88 (kinesiology), **Craig Story '89** (biology) and **Dan Norton '05** (psychology) received a National Institutes of Health (NIH) subaward, collaborating with a team at iPACES LLC to study technology that could make a dramatic impact on the Parkinson's community.

Kenann McKenzie-DeFranza (education) was appointed commissioner for the Essex National Heritage Commission, a nonprofit that supports the preservation and enhancement of Essex County's historic, natural and cultural places.

Greg Deddo (art) served as a juror for the second edition of the *New Christian Makers*, the only juried publication exclusively for Christian makers.

Jennifer Brink (Office of Academic Advising) was selected as one of only 20 individuals from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) to be part of Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE)'s summer seminar on supporting students' search for meaning.

Grants

Scott Hwang '05 (Office of Student Life) has been awarded a \$50,000 Educating Character Initiative Capacity Building Grant from the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University to pilot an Intergroup Dialogue Program at Gordon during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Rachel Yoo (communication arts) and **Minji Kim** (music) have been awarded a \$198,950 grant by the Creative Arts Collective for Christian Life and Faith at Belmont University for their initiative "Performing Shalom Through Music and Storytelling." Their work will include recruiting individuals from churches across the Greater Boston area to form a unified, multid denominational choir of 50–100 people.

Carmen Queen (Community Engagement) has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Adelaide Breed Bayrd Foundation to expand Community Engagement's College Day program by building new partnerships with programs serving pre-collegiate students in the city of Malden.

40 years of Stillpoint

STILLPOINT was first published in fall 1985 as a way to rebrand the alumni magazine following Gordon College's merger with Barrington College.

In the words of late Gordon President Richard F. Gross in the first edition of **STILLPOINT**, "After the frenzied activity of this merger year, we need a 'still point,' a quiet place in which we can reflect on the changes which have affected our College and, in the case of many from Barrington, our very lives."

"We hope that **STILLPOINT**, the new magazine for our alumni and friends, will provide such a vantage point and give you an opportunity not only to reflect on issues significant in the life of the College but in your own lives as well."

And so, here we are. Over the course of 40 years, **STILLPOINT** has published more than 100 issues. This issue is in celebration of the people and stories **STILLPOINT** has shared and offers a curated glimpse into some of the profound moments and ideas highlighted throughout the past four decades.

Some articles have been edited for length. Others have been expanded to include an update from the article's author or subject. We hope you enjoy this walk down memory lane and discover moments of encouragement and inspiration from the Gordon College community we all know and love.



Heather Korpi
(2017–2024)

What one issue, article or story stands out to you after all these years?

It's so hard to choose just one from the wealth of incredible stories I've had the privilege to share over the years. Every new issue our team worked on together felt like my favorite, but I particularly loved working on the "Gordon Heritage" issue where we celebrated the influential women across Gordon's history. I loved being able to elevate so many intelligent, hard-working, committed women who care deeply about their faith, family, community and career. We got to dive deep into the treasure trove that is the Gordon Archives; conduct several fun and fierce photoshoots with students, faculty and alumni; and share important, inspiring stories of trailblazers, renegades, stalwarts and stewards.



Patricia Hanlon (2006–2017)

What was your favorite section to work on?

Believe it or not, my favorite section was Class Notes. It's a finicky editing job—so important to get names and other details right (you hear from people if you don't!). But I always learned something fascinating about Gordon and Barrington alumni in going through the Notes.

What **STILLPOINT** issues stick out in your memory?

I can think of three in particular: the one about cyberspace, 50 Under 50 and the issue that commemorated 125 years of Gordon College. It was a special privilege to look through the history of the United College of Gordon and Barrington and to touch base with former Gordon and Barrington professors and staff in my research.



Memories and musings from STILLPOINT'S editors



**Pat McKay (Assistant Editor 1989–1994,
Editor 1995–2006)**

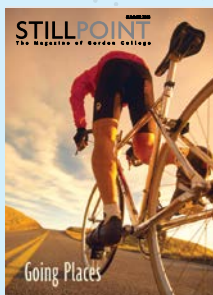
What does the name STILLPOINT mean to you?

The name STILLPOINT was taken from T. S. Eliot's poem "Burnt Norton" (No. 1 of "Four Quartets"): "a place of inner peace and refuge in a turning, changing world"—thought by some to be a spiritual reference. Being at Gordon and editor of STILLPOINT was my still point; I loved it.

What did you enjoy most about the STILLPOINT editorial process?

I relished taking notes from an interview and—much like putting a puzzle together—working closely with design and layout to arrange and rearrange the pieces until they made a complete and satisfying whole. Before the onset of desktop publishing, we used a light table to meticulously lay out pages that were then sent to a printing establishment. Great strides in technology evolved during that era, easing the intense labor in publishing and printing.

I was beyond excited to see the printed copy of every issue, of which there were 33 during my tenure. It became the goal for STILLPOINT to earn awards at the national annual editors' conference sponsored by the Evangelical Press Association (EPA). STILLPOINT took several awards in various categories during those years, but the jackpot was the EPA Award of Excellence for the three issues of 2003, the crowning event of my 11 years as editor of STILLPOINT. A judge wrote: "Your magazine seems to be the perfect still point in this era's turbulent and frenzied magazine world."



Covers of the award-winning 2003 issues



Anne Harper (1989–1994)

What did you love most about being a STILLPOINT editor?

The brainstorming and collaboration to make each issue. A faculty member might be thinking about an issue or researching something, which would piggyback with a recent contact for the Development Office. Director of Public Relations Harry Durning, who was my boss and a faculty member, or another faculty member might share in the Pendragon over a coffee break about a student's thinking, writing or summer ministry experience. Dr. Nate Goff knew our alumni and could provide appropriate alumni contacts, as could associate editors Deb Nash and later Pat McKay.

I was always amazed how the Lord put each issue together, including the photos and artwork. The joy for me was in putting it all together to showcase what Gordon and its community is and to encourage readers to keep learning.



Nancy W. Smith (1985–1988)

Cover of the first STILLPOINT issue from fall 1985

Strife in the Land of Canaan

Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on the Holy Land

By
Marvin Wilson

PUBLISHED
SPRING 1988



On July 1, 1987, NBC-TV broadcast the documentary “A Dream is Dying”—the “dream of peace” between Jew and Arab.

I believe that dream is not dying. The people of Israel—both Jews and Arabs—desperately want peace. The debate comes not about the dream of peace, but the best way to achieve a lasting peace.

The current crisis basically boils down to this: (1) Israel wants security and recognized borders; (2) Palestinians want self-determination and a Palestinian homeland or state.

From Bible times Jews have always lived in Eretz Israel, the “Land of Israel.” Throughout the centuries religious Jews never let go of God’s covenant promise to Abraham: “The whole land of Canaan I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you” (Genesis 17:8). When the U.N. voted into being the Modern State of Israel (1947), Jews around the world saw this as an act in keeping with God’s historic commitment to his people’s ancestral homeland.

Today, Israel’s greatest enemy appears to be itself. This tiny country is destroying itself internally by strident dissension between secular and religious Jews. There are major differences among Israelis on how to deal with the Arab community. To cite but two examples: on one hand you have the Shalom Achshav or “Peace Now” movement, which advocates a negotiated compromise sharing the land, achieving equality and arriving at a non-military solution. On the other hand there is Meir Kahane’s party, which says, “Expel all Arabs from the land; they are not going to be happy in a Jewish state.”

Exacerbating the divisions between Arabs and Jews is the vicious rhetoric and stereotyping from the media and from leaders of both communities.

Examples: “Zionism is racism.” “Arabs are terrorists.” (One person’s “terrorist” is of course another person’s “freedom fighter.”). . .

The truth is there are those who are good and upright representatives of each community and there are those who are not. Stereotyping and caricatures must be avoided. Defamation of each other serves merely to perpetuate the problem.

One source of current tension is the fact that Israel has become a powerful military state. Surrounded by a host of Arab nations—all of whom, except Egypt, do not recognize her right to exist—Israel has become more and more a garrison. The hills around Jerusalem and in much of the West Bank are ringed with some 130 Jewish settlements. Many of these are built on land that originally belonged to Palestinians, but which now has been taken for “security” reasons. Certainly a moratorium on building more West Bank Jewish settlements must be adhered to if the peace process is to advance. Whereas the prophets of Bible times warned against trusting the arm of flesh (military might), modern Israel is largely a secular, military economy.

Another problem Israel faces is the fact that time is running out. Something has to be done about the Palestinian problem. There are hundreds of thousands of refugees. The failure of the surrounding Arab nations to help address this problem has frustrated the Israelis. Yet, Israel’s prophets call her to practice justice and compassion toward those they consider “strangers” in the land (i.e., the homeless, displaced and powerless). . .

There is also the need for full self-determination for Palestinians. What has kept the peace talks from progressing is that Israel will not talk to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO charter calls for the liquidation of the

Dr. Marvin R. Wilson is a professor emeritus of biblical and theological studies. He taught at Gordon College from 1971–2018 and previously taught at Barrington College for eight years.

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state of Israel, and Israel considers the PLO a “terrorist” organization. Israel will talk with “moderates”, such as Saddam Hussein, but they do not represent the larger Palestinian cause. Most PLO supporters, however, are tired of war and violence. They want to talk—to negotiate peace without guns and bullets. But many Arab leaders are afraid to talk to Israel. Recalling that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came forward and was assassinated, their stance toward Israel has continued to be “no recognition.”

Perhaps the main obstacle to peace between Jew and Arab is that a crucial part of the nationalism of each is a denial of the other. To negate the other seems more important than to seek mutual recognition, compromise and friendship. Bitterness, hostility and hatred must be turned around by love, trust and a spirit of hope.

I have met someone in the Arab community who believes there is a solution. His name is Suhail Ramadan, and he pastors an Arab church near Nazareth. . . Pastor Ramadan believes only God’s love can remove bitterness, hatred and nationalistic pride that seeks to cancel the other people out. Indeed, it is because of God’s love that he is able, in his words, to “bless the Jew”—not for his politics, but because the Jew is his forebear in the faith. Salvation

is from the Jews, without whom Pastor Ramadan, and indeed, no Christian, would have their faith today.

Because both the Israelis and Palestinians are tired of war, I believe they stand on the threshold of a golden opportunity to negotiate a settlement. As for the world’s Christian community, we must refrain from easy, quick-fix solutions to the incredibly complex territorial and political problems facing the Israelis and Arabs.

The continuing conflict in the Mideast is not so much a struggle between right and wrong, good and evil; it is a conflict between two rights, between two peoples who have occupied with deep devotion the same territory for several thousand years; it is a family dispute between “cousins.”

God is on the side of justice. He loves all people. One cannot be pro-Arab and anti-Israeli; neither can one be pro-Israel and anti-Arab.

What then is our responsibility? It is to pray, to encourage and to work for a permanent, just sharing of the land between two peoples, Arabs and Jews.

A 2025 perspective. . . By Marvin Wilson

Today when viewing the wider Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is important to distinguish carefully the terrorist objective of Hamas to destroy the people of Israel from the largely non-violent aspirations of many Palestinians who simply wish to avoid bloody conflicts and live in peace and prosperity. In this regard it is also important to note that more than two million Palestinians currently live within the state of Israel, hold Israeli citizenship and have a choice to run for a seat in the parliament of Israel.

There have been many significant developments since my 1980s article, including the Palestinian Intafadas (uprisings) and the more recent Hamas attack on Israel. The First Intafada (1987-1993) and Second Intafada (2000-2005) were largely confined to uprisings in Israel proper and the West Bank. This included protests, stone throwing and certain violent activities aimed at Israelis.

In 2007 Hamas began governing the territory of Gaza. For years Hamas fired rockets indiscriminately upon Israeli towns surrounding the territory. On October 7, 2023, matters came to a head when Hamas conducted an unprovoked, surprise early morning attack on 1,200 mostly Israeli civilians. This brutal massacre and the abduction of

more than 250 people is the largest mass destruction of Jews since the Holocaust.

A more promising development is the Abraham Accords (2020), a document intended to deepen diplomatic ties between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and other countries of the Middle East. The document promotes understanding, culture, security and peace among the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It provides an initial framework for improved relationships and the pursuit of common goals so peoples of the region may thrive.

The only viable pathway to a lasting peace is through words and just actions, not through destruction and violence. We must encourage a diplomatic settlement of differences. The territory of Gaza must be rebuilt and a permanent, recognized homeland for the Palestinian people must be established. Let us all remain hopeful that soon a brighter day will begin to shine for Israelis, Palestinians and all the people of the Middle East.

*Read Marv’s original
article in its entirety.*



The Miraculous and the Mundane

Reflections of a Christian in the dramatic arts

By
Norm Jones

PUBLISHED
SPRING 1989

"When it began, I couldn't figure out why anybody would have a guy like that as a character in a play."

I was fascinated by this reaction from a student to a recent play we performed, entitled *Orphans*. One of the characters was a young man named Philip who had no contact with the world apart from his older brother. Philip was painfully shy and socially inept. "But," the student continued, "after about 10 minutes, I loved the kid. I couldn't wait to watch him on stage, and I was 'blown away' by some of the stuff that he said. Simple words, but I can still hear them in my head. Who would have thought that such an innocent kid would move me so much?"

The arts reveal the miraculous in the mundane. One of my favorite characteristics of theatre is its ability to give a voice to the "common man." It's sometimes very difficult to see the miraculous in the multitudes of faces we see every day, to be able to recognize them as eternal beings. The arts can help us to recapture that ability. We get all dressed up, pay our money for our tickets, walk into the theatre and pretend. . . Just as children believe that the big empty refrigerator box in the backyard is a ship that can sail across the ocean, we believe that the people on stage are from Salem Village, Massachusetts, in 1692, or Norway in 1874, or anywhere the imagination of the playwright or director takes us. The term "play" is no mistake.

We watch and listen to Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* as he struggles with the internal and external conflicts of his life. "Silly Willy Low Man." The most common of common men. No one would notice him if he were in our real life. He says to his wife, "Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people

don't seem to take to me. I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me by. I'm not noticed."

His wife knows that there is no such thing as a "common man." Later in the play she tells her sons, "I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person." We sit in the audience and know she's right. She has revealed the miraculous in the mundane: a man made in the image of God.

One of my favorite characteristics of theatre is its ability to give a voice to the "common man."

"In the beginning, God created. . ." This is the first thing we learn about God in the Bible. He created the light and the darkness, the water and dry ground, the plants and the animals. And finally, God created man. From the most mundane of elements, the dust, he fashioned the most miraculous of beings. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

Each one of us is a creative person made in his image. The challenge for me, as a Christian involved in the dramatic arts, is to discover how to express that in my calling.

A statement made by Dr. Marvin Wilson has stayed with me. He said that the words "work" and "worship" come from the same root word in Hebrew, and that there is, therefore, something potentially sacred in our every act and in every moment of every day. That struck me, and I've

Norman M. Jones, professor of theatre arts, taught at Gordon from 1985 until his recent retirement in 2025. In that time he directed 58 plays and supervised 45 student-directed productions.

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sought to apply this concept to my involvement in theatre. Theatre can become an end in itself, without life and without hope. But when a stage production is approached as a means of worship, as a way of drawing closer to God, the creation of art on stage becomes an incarnational act. . .

We are faithful to the characters and to the work of art as a whole. We attempt to discover the truth of a given story by allowing the characters to tell it themselves. It's risky, but that's the way it ought to be. We have no way of knowing if a play is going to work when opening night finally comes. That is not only because we wonder if the set is going to stay up or if the lights are all going to work at the proper time but because we have been entrusted with a sacred task: the creation of the story for the audience. We must assist them, in a leap of faith, to discover the miraculous in the mundane.

In embracing the idea of worship of God through the arts, we accept the risk and mystery of the incarnational experience. Shortly before Christmas my wife and I experienced the birth of our son. The bringing of a new life into the world is nothing short of a miracle. Suddenly a new eternal being is among us. But the full impact of the event is yet to strike me. Perhaps it never will. Such powerful experiences are almost too much for us. We can only experience eternal truth in some peripheral sense.

In a much smaller way, I face this same struggle in the creation of dramatic art. By attempting to encapsulate the truth of a play, to grab it and name it, it is gone. I have lost it. By attempting to formulate it, I destroy it.

As a friend recently shared with me, the Transfiguration offers an example of this. Peter wanted to save the experience of the Transfiguration, to formalize it, to bottle it up to share with others. Jesus' reply was simply, "No one must know of this experience until the Son of Man is resurrected." We deal with our spiritual experiences in much the same way. After a wonderful encounter with God, we think if we can get the formula down, we'll have it again. . .

We must assist them,
in a leap of faith,
to discover the miraculous in
the mundane.

Despite the difficulty of capturing and expressing the miraculous through the dramatic arts, we will continue to try and work as hard as we can to bring God's message in that way. "All of writing is a huge lake," says writer Jean Rhys. "There are great rivers that feed the lake, like Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. And there are mere trickles, like Jean Rhys. All that matters is feeding the lake." We will continue feeding the lake, even though at times our efforts feel like nothing more than a drop of water, because occasionally we are given the privilege, however fleeting, to grasp the eternal.



Following Norm's retirement in the spring, Gordon is thrilled to welcome **Mara Sidmore '95** to the Adams School of Music and the Arts as professor in the practice of theatre arts. Mara has held faculty positions at Northeastern University, Emerson College, the Boston Conservatory, Bentley University, the Winsor School and Boston Arts Academy. She was also the artistic director of applied theatre practice at Harvard University's Bok Center for Teaching and Learning and the drama coach for Emmy Award-winning children's television series *ZOOM* and *Fetch! with Ruff Ruffman* at WGBH Boston.

Read Norm's original article in its entirety.



All Rise. . .The Honorable Herman J. Smith Presiding

By
Pat McKay '65

PUBLISHED
SUMMER 1997



Herman J. Smith Jr. '70, was chair of the Gordon College Board of Trustees, served as an associate justice for the Boston Superior Court of Massachusetts for almost two decades and was a law professor for Boston University's School of Law for over a decade.

Superior Court Judge Herman J. Smith Jr., a 1970 Gordon graduate, spends his days hearing disputes and making sure all parties are treated fairly in his courtroom in Cambridge, MA. "The Scriptures teach that the poor, the widows and the orphans must have their day in court," he says. "While the wealthy are able to be better represented, the poor are not to be disfavored out of fear of those who wield power."

In 1974 Smith earned a Doctorate of Jurisprudence from the Boston University School of Law, but not without first wrestling with God's call on his life. When he realized just how secular law school was, he dropped out for a time and reconsidered an earlier direction toward ministry. But he determined his heart was not in pastoring—that he could take his Christian convictions into the practice of law.

After law school Smith was a staff attorney for Greater Boston Legal Services and then served as assistant to the director of the Legal Services Corp. in Boston. He became an associate clinical professor at the Boston University School of Law in 1979 and since 1990 has served as an adjunct professor. In 1990 he was appointed to the Boston Housing Court and in 1994 to the Superior Court in Massachusetts.

"In the Housing Court there are lots of very sad cases," Smith says, "often unrepresented parties for whom shelter means as much as a \$10 million settlement would mean to a large company. Sometimes disputes are between family members or good friends. In such cases I reminded them of the priceless value of friendship and encouraged them to restore relationships—resolve their differences rather than force court orders."

"There is a meanness in our society today," he concludes, "an unwillingness to work things out. Judges who have sat for more than 20 years say it's worse than ever. I believe the breakup of the

family is primarily to blame. If socialization skills aren't learned in the family, they aren't learned at all. By the time they come to court, it's often too late; all I can do is stop the activity." . . .

Smith has been particularly influenced by an Israeli judge, the Honorable Jacob Bazak of the Jerusalem District Court. Bazak implores judges to look closely at the scriptural meaning of justice and righteousness and not to blindly apply the law. ("The Meaning of the Term 'Justice and Righteousness' in the Bible," *The Jewish Law Annual*, Vol. VIII) For instance, in a contract case in which the letter of the law is clear, Smith says a judge should look at whether there is unjust enrichment; whether one party acted unfairly; whether conditions made it impossible for one party to comply; whether there was a violation of covenant.

Judge Smith believes our society's foundation for determining right and wrong is quickly dissolving; laws are frequently changed to satisfy political agendas, endangering our cherished freedoms. He believes "political correctness" is by definition anti-freedom. He worried about it back in the '60s when military recruiters for ROTC were obstructed by protesters at universities across the United States.

"The prevailing attitude amongst the protesters and their supporters," Judge Smith says, "seemed to be smug justification in their behavior—that the ends (ending the Vietnam War) justified their means (impairing freedom of speech). This abuse of the First Amendment suggests a double standard: a person may exercise his/her freedom of speech so long as that speech is politically correct. I find such abuse of the First Amendment to be intolerably offensive."

Smith believes with the Apostle Paul that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers

Stillpoint THROUGH THE DECADES



of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12, KJV). At a recent statewide judges' conference, one session focused on foundations for judicial decision-making. The speaker argued that judges should not allow extra-judicial concepts—for instance, religious beliefs—to influence judicial

discretion. Many of the attending judges strongly objected, claiming that an individual's faith informs him or her in matters of justice, fairness, right and wrong.

"When I look at myself in the mirror at the end of the day," Judge Smith says, "I want to know I remained true to my values and beliefs while on the bench that day—that I did not violate my profession or my Lord."

When does divine law supersede human law? That's a tough one, the judge says. The easy situation is refusing to oppress the orphan—applying justice rather than the letter of the law. The more difficult case is to apply a law he doesn't believe in. . . Smith and some of his colleagues simply refuse to sit on such cases because of conscience. . . "Judges must be courageous," he concludes.

When Judge Smith isn't on the bench, his favorite pastime is computers. In addition to doing legal research, he likes to surf the 'Net, check out on-line services and new software.

He enjoys a bit of programming and is always "tweaking for efficiency," much to the distress of his wife Denise. He is involved with an advisory committee for automation of the trial court system and enjoys trying to "fire up" his colleagues—especially the older ones who want little to do with computers.

When asked about his years at Gordon, Smith's initial response is, "I was a goody-two-shoes." But then a smile turns to laughter. "Well, there was one time I played a prank on my freshman RA, Mark Small ['68]. I rigged a small, harmless but, very loud firecracker to the inside of his door. I heard him coming down the hall singing Bob Dylan's 'Don't Think Twice, It's All Right.'"

By now Smith is howling uncontrollably as he tries to finish the story. "I heard the key—my roommate knew. Mark pushed the door open, and right in the middle of a note, that thing exploded. He leaped into the air and bellowed, 'Smith, get over here.' I ran and hid in my closet, but he came straight to where I was—I was laughing so hard. I guess he saw the humor in it, because he let me off . . ."

"Gordon has been good to me," Smith says. "My guidance counselor at Boston Latin wanted me to go to Dartmouth. But I insisted on going to Gordon, and I've never regretted it. The quality of education is superb. Gordon prepared me very well for law school and for life. It equipped me with academic discipline, a striving for excellence and thoroughness. It gave me the foundation I needed to integrate faith and knowledge."



A recent reflection. . . By Herman Smith '70

Like discovering old photographs from one's youth, reading this article evokes both fond memories and the soberness that comes with age. My tale about Mark Small and the firecracker made me heartily laugh all over again. My more serious observations have not changed over the arc of my career and retirement; if anything, the seriousness and complexity of the issues have increased.

For example, my "meanness in our society" and "our society's foundation for determining right and wrong. . . quickly dissolving" observations are not only as true today as they were in 1997 but even more widespread. Deep-seated moral relativism, identity politics and the tyranny of the self have infected our justice system and led this country into increasing lawlessness. If, increasingly, the basis of our courts' judgments is less objective truth and credible, reliable evidence, but more political/social ideology, then increasingly, the courts will render unjust rulings.

As a Christian judge I was committed to the rule of law primarily because my Lord and God commands it. The Bible repeatedly commands judges not to show partiality, neither to the rich nor to the poor, but to judge all cases with justice and righteousness, based upon credible evidence and the testimony of at least two witnesses. In looking back, I did not leave my faith in Christ outside the courtroom.

After this article I continued teaching law and judging until 2011, when I retired from the bench. My dear wife of 28 years, Denise, died in 2010 after a long battle with cancer. The good Lord used my church, friends and family as his means to comfort me in my grief. And in 2014 the Lord blessed me with remarriage to Ruth, a friend at Park Street Church, whose husband, Bill, had also died from cancer.



Read the original 1997 article in its entirety.

My Peace I Give You (John 14:27)

By
Glenn Bucci '87

PUBLISHED
SPRING 2002



Following Gordon, Glenn Bucci '87 became a claims adjuster, assisting people whose homes and businesses had been destroyed by fire, water and other disasters.

On the morning of September 11, by 8:30 I was at my office at the World Trade Center on the 36th floor in Tower II. One of 200 employees who work for an insurance broker called Frenkel & Co., I'm a senior advisor in the Commercial Claims Department, dealing with accounts such as Mercedes Benz and Tiffany's. As I did every day, I enjoyed the beautiful view of the Chrysler Building.

Around 8:45 my coworkers and I heard an explosion at the other tower and were horrified to see building and airplane debris raining down. We first thought maybe a small plane had hit the building, but when we saw the huge hole, the flames and thick dark smoke, we knew it was more than that. . . Then an announcement was made that our building was okay.

If I had listened to that announcement and stayed in my building just 10 minutes longer, I may not have come out alive. I realize now just how little control we have over our lives and how carefully we must make decisions daily.

**Nevertheless, from the time
the building was hit,
I had an inner peace.**

All of us in my office feared for our lives and rushed to the staircase, already packed with people trying to get out. We were anxious as we moved very slowly down the 36 flights of stairs. I thought about my wife and children. Did they know what happened? Would I be able to get home? . . .

Nevertheless, from the time the building was hit, I had an inner peace. I didn't know what would happen to me, but I heard the song "How Great Thou Art" in my mind—the choir in my church had sung it the week before. I felt God's presence with me, and I put my trust in him in a situation that was totally out of my control.

Once I escaped the building, I went across the street and stared at the scene, as many others did. There was gray debris covering the entire area, like a blanket of death over the cars, streets and people. I watched with anguish as people jumped to their deaths, following with my eyes only part of their flight downward; I chose not to have in my mind for the rest of my life the image of bodies hitting the ground. . .

I was still standing across the street when the second plane went through my building. Though the impact wasn't visible from where I stood, the force of it caused a huge fireball to come right at me, with tons of debris. By then I felt sure New York was under attack, and I had no idea what building was going to explode next. At that point I ran as fast as I could down the street. Though I saw terror all around me, I continued to have a foundation of peace in my heart.

I managed to get to a subway several blocks away. The disaster was too recent for the city to have stopped the trains yet, so I was able to get to Penn Station and catch a train heading home to Long Island before the city was shut down. . . As I looked back at New York City from my seat on the train, only one Tower was standing. I reached my wife on my cell phone—she hadn't learned of the disaster at that point. I assured her I was all right and on my way home, and told her to turn on the TV.

I later learned of friends who didn't make it out of the building, and I attended a memorial service for a friend named Kevin. About the same age as I am, he had a similar job with a different company; we rode on the same train every morning. His wife had cancer, and he had two young children. At his service no one could maintain composure. I could imagine the service being for me instead of for him. . .

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At my church the Sunday following September 11, all who had been at the World Trade Center on that fateful day were asked to stand; I was the only one involved out of 2,500 people. As I walked to the front of the church for prayer, I hoped my best friend, who is a deacon, would come with me. He did. When he hugged me, I started crying and felt a release of all the feelings I had had from the time the first plane hit. As I released all my hurts, God replaced them with feelings of peace. . .

While processing such trauma takes time and happens in various ways, one of the things that has helped me is a foundational understanding of God and how he relates to us personally. . . Like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* we can talk to God all through the day—that's one way we can pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5: 17)—telling him how we feel, what we're afraid of, and thanking him for being with us. It's why in the midst of fleeing from the

World Trade Center I felt an underlying peace. . . If we spend time with the Lord, reading his Word and praying daily, our situations will not dictate our actions. We need not live in fear, because we have the knowledge that God will be our protector and provider.

That doesn't mean we won't have difficult times, but he assures us he'll always be there to carry us through them. In our own strength and by our own willpower, we will fail. If we allow him to be in control, he will make our paths straight.

...we have the knowledge that
God will be our protector
and provider.

Psalm 27 has taken on new meaning for me since September 11: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my Life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. . . . Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!"

Looking back and moving forward. . . By Glenn Bucci '87

Reading this reflection feels like a different lifetime. When I visit New York now, it feels like I am visiting my past, and all the memories and experiences of that time come back. After this experience my priorities changed from climbing the corporate ladder to being more available in my family's life. The Lord opened the door for a new insurance job in Pennsylvania, and our family moved near Lancaster.

...my priorities changed from
climbing the corporate ladder to being
more available in my family's life.

After 9/11 I had questions for the Lord. My biggest question was: How can a loving God allow disasters and tragedies to happen? We know he gives us free will, but we also know he is a just God.

In response the Lord told me when we hurt, he hurts—just like a parent hurts when their children hurt. When Jesus went to Bethany after Lazarus had died, he saw Mary,

Martha and others crying. He was overwhelmed with grief and cried. Why? Because those whom he loved were hurting, and it hurt him to see them hurt—even though he knew he was going to raise Lazarus!

The Lord has used my testimony several times, including speaking at men's breakfasts and churches. In retelling my story, I also share what the Lord has showed me about living after tragedy.

In this world we may have trials, but God said: "Do not lose heart, for I have overcome the world." God uses circumstances to refine us and draw us close to him. We then can use our past experiences to minister to others who are going through similar trials. James 1:2-4: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."



A Farm to Call Home

**Farmsteads of New England began with a question to myself:
“What is going to become of Andrew when he grows up?”**

By
Deborah
DeScenza Gray '78

PUBLISHED
SUMMER 2007



Deborah DeScenza Gray received her B.S. in elementary education from Gordon in 1978 and an M.Ed. in learning disabilities and emotional disturbances from the University of Virginia in 1979.

My son, Andrew, was born with a rare metabolic disorder and is considered to be intellectually disabled and autistic. I say “considered” because he’s never responded to an IQ test in a way that is measurable, so we really don’t know his level of intelligence. And autism is a disorder that is diagnosed based on observable behaviors—it isn’t one condition with one cause. Put simply, Andrew behaves in ways that lead people to give him these labels.

At 24 and nearly six feet tall, Andrew can walk, climb and run in his own fashion. He is in constant motion and has virtually no attention span. He is strong in short bursts. He understands everyday communication but is nonverbal, communicating his wants and needs by a few idiosyncratic gestures and by taking people by the hand and guiding them to whatever he wants help with. He loves attention but has no understanding of socially appropriate behavior.

He might wrap his arms around a perfect stranger, swipe a hat off their head to play with or, if the mood strikes, slap them as he walks by. He is apt to run screeching with delight through large stores. He feels compelled to find the most perfectly matched pair of things, such as spoons or coat hangers. I avoid the clothing departments of stores at all costs when he is with me since he is likely to start stripping clothing off hangers to find the two hangers that feel best together in his hands.

As he grew up I was always wondering about his future. I learned that in our home state of New Hampshire the only model for day services for the developmentally disabled was full community-based services emphasizing competitive employment. I knew Andrew would need something different. I thought about his strengths and weaknesses and decided a farm would be the perfect setting for him.



Farms have a multitude of concrete tasks that would give him the chance to do meaningful work with readily observable results so he would understand why he was doing each task. Farms also have lots of space—he would have plenty of opportunities to expend his excess energy without the worry of traffic or the need to be constantly socially appropriate.

As I researched this idea, visiting farms and similar residential settings, I decided a farm might be a great setting for other people with similar needs. I knew it was important that Andrew not be isolated; I’d learned that one of the biggest complaints of developmentally disabled adults is loneliness, and the direct-care staff working with these people also often feel isolated and don’t have the support they need. I started dreaming of a farmstead where several people with autism and other developmental disabilities could live, work and play together with the support of a group of mentors who could also be a support to each other.

When Andrew turned 16 in 1999, I decided it was time to make the leap. I quit my full-time position as a special education teacher and program coordinator and began working on developing a farmstead. Farmsteads of New England (FNE) was incorporated in 2000 and got its tax-exempt status in 2001. We began fundraising and were able to purchase the beautiful and historic Rosewald Farm in Hillsborough, NH, in 2003.

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We now have five people with developmental disabilities living on the farmstead, another five who come regularly for day services and a list of people who are waiting for us to build more residences. Additionally, we've provided respite services to about a dozen other people and their caregivers over the past few years. Our residential program focuses on life skills such as meal preparation, doing laundry and grocery shopping, while our day services are a more structured combination of vocational and recreational activities, including caring for animals, working in the garden, making crafts, baking, running the farmstand, swimming, snowshoeing and taking nature walks.

The residents—our “farmers”—come to understand the cycles of nature by seeing fields tilled, seeds planted and watered, plants growing and bearing fruit and then the harvest. People frequently eat as they pick—and that’s okay. Everyone helps make a big lunch each day using our own produce. We sell extra produce at our farmstand, and our farmers love running up to the office to tell me what they’ve sold. Everyone gathers in the barn each spring to watch the baby animals being born; we generally bottle feed at least one kid or lamb each year, and those animals become especially friendly. Each day the farmers are able to feed the animals and watch them grow. Everyone has his or her favorite.

We are about to expand so we can provide services to more people. We plan to build a cluster of six residences that will each have four one-bedroom apartments surrounding a common room. In most cases there will be three people with developmental disabilities and one nondisabled mentor living in each building. After over two years of planning, we are about to begin construction of the first two of these residences. These apartments will give each person as much privacy and independence as possible, the companionship of friends nearby and as much support from mentors as needed.

We gave Farmsteads of New England a plural name and a wide geographic reference intentionally. We didn’t want one farmstead to grow too big and become impersonal, and we figured that once we had worked out the kinks it would make more sense to duplicate the model than to force other people to reinvent the wheel. We get inquiries from parents in other states and even other countries almost every week. We’re hoping that in 2008, after we’ve been up and running for five years, we will be able to start a second farmstead.

My goal is to have our farmers go to bed at night feeling tired from having had a full day, feeling proud for having accomplished something important and feeling content knowing they have friends, a home and a good life.

An update from the farm. . . By Deborah DeScenza Gray '78

Wow! A lot has changed since 2007! Our first two new residential buildings were finished in 2008, and the next four buildings were completed in 2011. Each building has four one-bedroom apartments surrounding a common room, which provides maximum privacy for each resident while also offering easy access to socialization and support.

I have always underestimated how difficult things will be—which is actually a good thing or Farmsteads would not exist! Twenty years ago I thought we’d have a farmstead in every state in New England. Today, we are still developing our second farmstead in New Hampshire, and there is an extensive waiting list for services.

In 2009 we began providing day services at a leased second site in Epping, NH, and in 2017 we purchased additional property in Epping to add residential services there. We plan to construct eight residential buildings, each with four apartments. So far we have two buildings completed, three should be completed by the end of 2025 and funding is still being sought for the final three!

In 2023 we entered into an affiliation agreement with One Sky Community Services, which is one of NH’s area agencies. They now provide the management of Farmsteads, and I have recently retired! My son is now 42 years old, the oldest person living with his particular metabolic disorder—neonatal form of glycine encephalopathy, and he still lives on the farmstead, supported by amazing staff.



Sporks:

Notes From a Youngish Alum

Installation 20: A Commutist Manifesto

On the commuter train into Boston, I religiously sit in the quiet car, employing odd tricks to ensure a two-seater to myself, such as putting my bag next to me and pretending to rifle through it. It is the kind of semi-deplorable trait that non-New Englanders cite as evidence for the common misconception that northeastern types are cold and unfriendly.

So let me clear the coastal air here and say that silence is not always an unwillingness to listen to a stranger; sometimes it expresses a desire to take in all the strange surroundings. Meeting people where they're at, in other words, requires acute attention to that "at."

No matter what I'm reading during the morning commute—student papers, say, or the novel *Infinite Jest*, heavy with Boston locales—on each trip I reflexively look out the window at the same points, usually where land meets water. Out the windows looking east, serpentine tributaries carve smoothly into the marsh, and smokestacks give way to harbors in a way that worries me; we've been an industrial people so long, such sights appear serene.

The subway is an intermediary between street rage and commuter rail zen.

Through the window on the other side: urban decay brightened by bold swaths of graffiti, names like ICH and DROID. Faded logos of long-gone companies now merge in a seamless chain with sprayed art, and for miles the landscape is a run-on sentence: NOW LEASING GLOBAL FUGUE MAPLE HALT EVERGREEN CUTZ#ERAX.

The places that run on either side of the tracks have become living galleries, curated by so many graffiti artists and businesses because there is a cross-section of regional eco-culture that passes through every day. In some weather the window becomes a mirror: You see yourself ghost-like and seated, a reminder that you are a part of all the decay, the renewal, the slice of sun through cloud-cover bouncing off a skyscraper like a tower of Babel fighting for light.

What does it mean to pass so many lives so fast on a daily basis? Which houses today will be the ones to break their routines, and how many people's routines involve daily fantasies about breaking routines?

On a recent commute back to the North Shore, my train was stuck at Chelsea, the first stop. A frazzled blonde woman was ushered down the aisle into the quiet car where I was sitting and brought into the bathroom. Soon after the conductor explained that the woman was having a panic attack. A nurse and then an EMT, both off-duty, stood and offered their services in an urgent but unassuming way. After they calmed the woman and helped her to a seat on the train, an old man yelled, "This is the worst train ride ever!" No one rose to rebuke him; no one rose to concur. He yelled more loudly, "I DON'T HAVE TO BE QUIET!" Still we sat there, not giving in to his ploys to roil and disrupt, and he moved to the side, finally, it seemed to me, hearing the message quiet and clear.

As I walk from my Back Bay office to the subway, I am amazed at how different the city's car culture is from the train. Boylston Street is a wild, metallic tangle of honks and screeches, of Doppler Effect sirens and pedestrian fists pounding on car hoods. In cities there is a myth that cars create a kind of hermetic, armored extension of self, not so much about protection but a false sense of individualism. Most of the time getting cut off is less about reckless driving than about reacting when a stranger has taken away a driver's lead.

The subway is an intermediary between street rage and commuter rail zen. The sardine-can experience of a Green Line trolley tends to yield a sense of together-in-the-mess. During a recent unprompted conversation, a stranger regaled me with tales of his love for the train, and how it taught him to coexist in such a diverse place. "As you get older, y'know, as you grow, you realize that's all anybody is: people," he said. "There's nothing weird or specific about it."

As we pulled into North Station, I opened my mouth to ask his name, to seal this exchange in some meaningful way. But as the squeal of an arriving Orange Line train sounded, he bolted up and started running, saying only, "Oh shoot—that's my train."



By
Bryan Parys '04

PUBLISHED
SPRING 2015

Bryan Parys is happy to see you again. He still writes on the train and has filled 15 pocket notebooks while commuting. He wants you to know he's now a three-seater person and puts his bag under his seat. He sees this as personal growth. The quiet car went away during the pandemic, but he has ear plugs, and he's not afraid to use them. Happy 40th, STILLPOINT. Without you, as Eliot said, there would be no dance.

Stillpoint THROUGH THE DECADES

Lessons from the Margins

How a war survivor's experience inspires students to practice peace and engage with the excluded

By
Heather Korpi

PUBLISHED
FALL 2017

"My family came across a barricade on the road near our hometown as we were returning from our summer vacation on the Croatian coast. Two men with guns stopped us and wanted to take away my dad. My mom refused to let them do this and protested that if they take him, they will have to take us all. After a long discussion, they let us go with the message that we will starve in our town, which was now surrounded by Serbian military."

Petra Belkovic Taylor '03 recalls the summer of 1991, when the Croatian War of Independence broke out. At age 11, it was her first encounter with war.

Prior to that, in her small hometown of Slunj, set in the mountainous region of central Croatia and famous for its mills and waterfalls, "Serbs and Croats shared their lives without much attention to ethnic differences," her husband, James '02, shares. "They ate barbecue together; they watched each other's children; like any group of neighbors or friends, they knew all about each other and formed a tight community."

But in the span of a few years, he says, ethnic tensions began to rise. "Neighbors—Serbs and Croats—began to become suspicious of one another. This suspicion gave rise to fear, and this fear gave rise to enmity and violence. This violence forever changed Petra's life and the life of her family."

REFUGE AND STRENGTH

That summer, in what was once an idyllic home, "We lived for about three months without any supplies and with constant bombing around and later in the town. My mom, dad, five-year-old brother and I fled the town a week before Serbian forces entered it."

Suddenly displaced, the Belkovic family proceeded on an arduous day-long journey south through Bosnia and eastern Croatia. Eventually they found refuge with relatives in Zagreb, where the war was less severe.

"My parents led us through this uncertain journey by faith and prayer," says Petra. "We got stopped by various militaries and militias all along our travel. The miracle was that no one took us off the road. Many people along this road ended up in prisons and concentration camps."

They remained refugees for four years—in Poreč and then back in Zagreb—forced to exchange a life of normalcy and comfort for "a number of macro and micro rejections that all people at the bottom of society face," Petra says. Her grades were lowered, and she was refused a spot in the school choir because of her status.

It was a time of searching and stumbling: Who am I when all I know has been lost? She grappled not only with her identity as a refugee but also with the fact that woven together in her own DNA were the very two strands at war with one another. Her father was a Croat, and her mother, a Serb.

"In Yugoslavia, as far as I understood, we were all Yugoslavian," she says. But "in a climate that forced people to divide along ethnic lines, there was suddenly no common ground to stand on."

As they waited in lines for food and clothing, worried about the safety of family members who were still in war zones and faced marginalization, the Belkovics clung not to their Croatian or Serbian heritage but to their identity in God. "In their Christian conviction," Petra says, "my parents stayed firmly together" even as the country around them—and the many mixed marriages that once existed—crumbled.

James '02 and Petra (Belkovic) Taylor '03 are directors of the European Center for the Study of War and Peace.



Read the
original 2017
article in its
entirety.

IN PURSUIT OF PEACE

How was it possible for neighbors who trusted each other with their children and welcomed them into their lives daily, to turn against one another and be willing to use violence against one another? Why were people so willing to abandon peace for war?

The questions that haunted James and Petra for years gave rise to what is now Gordon's Balkans Semester for the Study of War and Peace. "Although these questions took shape around the specific example of Petra's own life in Slunj, they are relevant to all of us," James says. "We fashioned the program not simply to learn about conflict in the Balkans—although we do that—but to use Croatia and the Balkan states as a backdrop for exploring issues of universal significance."

Against the backdrop of historical Austro-Hungarian architecture, cafe-lined streets and the vivid orange roofs of Zagreb, the cohort meets daily at the European Center for the Study of War and Peace (the Croatia-based nonprofit, founded and run by the Taylors, that encompasses Gordon's Balkans Semester). They take courses taught by James and Petra, regularly hear from local speakers who share their own unique experiences and enjoy intensive electives from Gordon faculty who make three-week treks to teach from their disciplines.

"Violence is too ubiquitous and peace too tenuous to think that we can make headway without engaging in a robust and prismatic study of these issues through political science, sociology, peace and conflict studies, literature, history, theology and philosophy," James says. "You begin to see that we need each other in this process."

This multidisciplinary, multifaceted approach feeds into all aspects of the program. Students gain firsthand experience through required internships—from sustainable development and farming to working for government watchdog groups, refugee services and women's rights organizations. Cross-cultural communication workshops and language practice (with guest speaker Mila, the bilingual five-year-old daughter of James and Petra) help students navigate their work in an unfamiliar culture and place.

With Zagreb as their home base, the cohort also sojourns to areas that were ravaged by and are still recovering from the most recent war. "Being here in a region that has been constantly embattled by war and that still suffers from ethnic divisions allows for the experience and threat of violence, and the challenge of reconciliation to be much more palpable," James says. . .

Violence hits home as students visit Srebrenica, Bosnia, the site of the largest genocide committed in the Balkans during the 1990s. And in Slunj, Petra's parents share their stories as Christians who refused to be separated by ethnic wars. The intensive learning and immersive living experience culminates in final presentations at a professional conference, followed by a time of unwinding and debriefing in Vis, an island in the Adriatic Sea.

As students return and reintegrate into their own communities and homes, the main takeaway, say James and Petra, is that conflict cannot be ignored. "I can't just sit back any longer because I've seen what happens," they often hear. The result is a new way of seeing humanity.

"I learned a very important lesson as to what it means to be excluded, powerless, marginalized and dismissed before being heard," Petra says. "We hope our program allows students to engage with these themes and consider creative and empowering responses to practices of exclusion."

The Balkans Semester for the Study of War and Peace marked its 10th anniversary this year. Over the summer professors, friends and more than 20 alumni gathered to celebrate the impact of the program and their continued passion for peace and reconciliation.

Learn more about Gordon's
Balkans Semester.



What has faith to do with healthcare?



Dr Sean Clark '88 is Gordon's director of health professions and professor of kinesiology.

Many of us are familiar with Jesus's title as the Great Physician—the miraculous healer of both bodies and souls. Dozens of times throughout the Bible we see Jesus referenced as such. We know the story of the woman who bled for 12 years, the Centurion's ill servant, the paralytics and lepers and blind people, the daughter of Jairus and Jesus's close friend Lazarus—all who were healed by the Great Physician.

And while these examples were all undoubtedly miracles from God, the life of Jesus helps frame a biblical understanding that can impact the way we think about, address and deal with healthcare in our modern contexts.

All throughout Scripture, Jesus walks with the marginalized and exhorts his followers to do the same: give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, shelter to the homeless, clothing to the naked and care to the sick. The needs to be met are physical, unique to the flourishing of the human body—one of the centerpieces of all creation, God's handiwork.

As healthcare practitioners we acknowledge the body is a temple to be stewarded as a gift from God. We prescribe and embrace healthy practices like regular exercise, nutritious meals and good sleep habits. For Christians in healthcare, stewardship of bodies is inherently spiritual; we see the human body as the earthen vessel through which the spirit and soul function.

Healthcare is also redemptive. The consequences of poor choices, misfortune, the aging process and disease fills our waiting rooms. As we implement and utilize our knowledge and understanding of the body and medicine, we begin to see healing, recovery from injury or illness and resumption of a normal way of life. These small, redemptive, healing moments are tiny ways of participating in the redemption of the entire created order.

Throughout that redemptive process—no matter how small—we practice hospitality. As patients sit with providers, they invite us into their story: their family health history, their concerns, pains and fears. Many times this means an invitation into the messiness of life. In the tough moments being hospitable in hardship may mean walking with someone through terminal illness, conveying hope without skewing them toward false promises.

But perhaps more often, hospitality comes down to choosing love in the everyday ways.

But perhaps more often, hospitality comes down to choosing love in the everyday ways, like sitting a minute longer with a patient despite being incredibly stretched for time, so that they feel valued. Choosing love means maintaining a posture of humility despite hard-earned degrees and expertise. Choosing love means practicing grace and trust with coworkers so you can function together to best serve your patient.

Our call as Christians who serve the Great Physician is to care for those who are in need, those who others may neglect. In healthcare, as in many other fields, that's not always easy, but it's the power of Christ that allows us to be able to step into the gap and to care with both competence and compassion.

By
Dr. Sean Clark '88

PUBLISHED
SPRING 2023



The Future of *Stillpoint*

When STILLPOINT was first published, it was launched with the following editorial mission:

"*STILLPOINT*, the Gordon College magazine for alumni and friends of Gordon and Barrington, is published three times a year—fall, spring and summer. Letters, unsolicited manuscripts, art and glossy black and white photos are welcomed for possible inclusion in the magazine." (1985)

Since then STILLPOINT has evolved. Some years saw three issues published annually, others just one. We've introduced new sections, welcomed talented editors and writers and celebrated award-winning STILLPOINT issues. Along the way STILLPOINT has embraced new tools and technologies—including the welcome addition of digital, colored photos!

As we reflect on STILLPOINT'S 40-year journey, we want to hear from you. We've created a

brief survey to gather your ideas and input. It should only take a few minutes, but it could have a lasting impact on the future of our magazine.

We look forward to honoring the publication's history and legacy while also creating room for new stories and inspiration. The following pages offer just that—new content and alumni updates. We celebrate the talents of our student body with a publishing of this year's Jerusalem and Athens Forum essay winner and feature a thoughtful perspective from a shrink with a sign.

Here's to a bright future of STILLPOINT with impactful stories that inspire you, promote conversations and keep you connected to the community of Gordon College.

Help us shape
Stillpoint's
future by taking
our survey!



WARNING: INGREDIENTS MAY CAUSE UNCONTROLLABLE CHITCHAT

I have done the impossible. I created the first talking serum: an elixir that makes even the most tight-lipped person talk. The recipe is the following:

In a large pot combine garlic harvested from the large hills, an onion planted in a row and oil made of the juice of olives. Next comes only the finest tomatoes, pureed and sent through a ritual of salting and herbing. A dash of basil. A dash of oregano. A bit of plant-based milk. And a special ingredient called *saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Just like that, you have replicated my serum. Disclaimer: Serve over cooked pasta for best results.

Okay, so maybe I did not invent this mixture myself. My family has always been a “food is love” family. The best gift is sweet, savory, salty or spicy and comes in a Tupperware container. Nothing is quite like good food, and nothing is better than sharing that food with others.

We often say “breaking bread” as a way to describe showing love. The phrase is found twice in Acts Chapter 2 to describe the members of the Church: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Some of my best conversations, filled with laughter or deep connection, happen around the dinner table. This is a space of incredible love. At least some of the time.

Almost every night in college, I eat my dinner alone, and honestly, I have made it this way. We have created a bend in culture diverting us away from shared meals. Our breakfasts have been replaced by coffee to go. A lunch break is just a time to escape from the public. Dinnertime has become a nuisance to be drowned out by Netflix or YouTube. I find one of the hardest parts of this cultural curve is how much we have forgotten how to spend a meal together. Now, when I am invited to dinner—and don’t cancel—I am out of practice. I want the person I am with to fulfill the role of entertainer, and I, the observer.

To truly learn to talk, we must target this exact mindset. We absorb ourselves in a false distance between us and an invisible stage. This is not just the internet’s fault—although it plays a

part; every classroom, workspace and church is designed for one person to talk and everyone else to listen. Restaurants and coffee shops now focus on quick in-and-out. Neighborhoods can be hostile, and it’s rare to see people stopping to talk to one another. It is no surprise that we have begun to lose our ability to have dialogue.

This is why I set out to make my special serum. The best way to tear down this illusion of separation is by reclaiming the connection. This is not a spectacular crash, but must be piece-by-piece. My issue with feeling out of practice would be solved if I simply shared a meal more often.

However, this problem is larger than the frequency of time together or the number of breads broken. My intention is not to return to some fantasy past where things were better, because many of the changes brought by modernity are good. I want us to tear down this barrier without dividing among identities, cultures, races or abilities. To break bread is to live in fellowship. We should strive for fellowship with people who may not look or act like us.

It is vulnerable to share your life with others, especially if those people are very different from you. But the richness far outweighs the fears.

So my house, this Friday night. You bring dessert, and I will make dinner. Show up at five thirty and expect to leave at ten. I want nothing more than to talk and listen with you.

El Gerrard '25 is an art major with a business administration minor from Natick, MA, and an aspiring artist whose work explores our interactions with divinity throughout mundane life and our human condition of community. Gerrard hopes to continue writing and creating while pursuing a career in art administration.

This year’s essay submissions responded to the theme of “Ready to Listen, Learning to Talk.”

Honorable Mentions

Learning to Talk: Let Your Candle Shine
by Sefora Morales '26

Wait, Who's Ready to Listen?
by Aiden de Vries '25



Full versions of these essays are available at gordon.edu/jafessay.



Pizza

FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

By Reid Swetland '89

The last minute is still a minute. Life is a series of adjustments. Time does not heal all wounds. Asking for help isn't giving up. It's refusing to give up.

Those are just a sampling of the signs I've held since starting ShrinkWithSign on Instagram—with the disclaimer that advice written on cardboard is not a substitute for therapy. Using pizza boxes and employing humor, I've shared around 200 posts in hopes of giving people something to think about and poking holes in the false beliefs we often hold. (That's a lot of pizza.)

The idea stemmed from a viral social account and Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. But my observations and pithy one-liners date back a few decades.

Gen Z missed much of the gradual technology adoption

Confidentiality is my superpower.

I started in the Gordon College Counseling Center 26 years ago, and since then I have seen over 1,500 students. That's more clients than a practicing counselor might see in their lifetime.

In that time I've encountered three generations. The one that was here when I started—Generation X, the one that passed

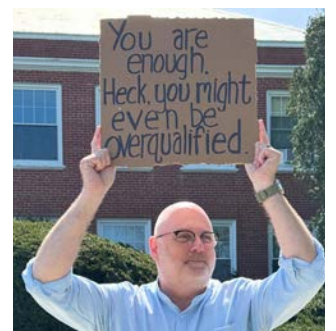
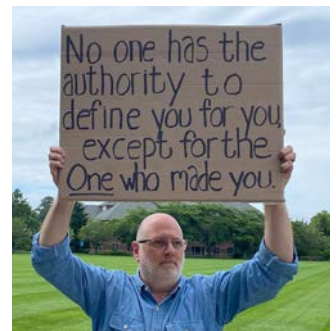
through—the Millennials and our current one—Generation Z. I've met with students amidst their highs and lows, and I've seen the effects of 9/11, the economic crash of 2008 and the 2020 pandemic.

No one event has had such an obvious generational impact than the introduction of social media, the smartphone and the internet in general. As humans we have had to learn how to emotionally integrate technology. But having access to a world of information before you're mature enough to understand it has placed an inappropriate expectation to emotionally manage all that young people are exposed to.

You are enough. Heck, you might even be overqualified.

Around 2009 the counseling center began to see an uptick in students seeing us for anxiety. By the late twenty-teens we were seeing our highest number of students ever. Jonathan Haidt's book *The Anxious Generation* documents this really well.

For me, as someone with a front seat to generational shifts, I've witnessed the correlation between the increased rate of technology adoption and the uptick in student anxiety. We quickly moved from desktop computers to laptop computers to computers that fit in our back pockets. An endless pool of content, self-deemed cultural influencers and nonstop news coverage is at our fingertips.



Signs previously featured on @ShrinkWithSign.

Gen Z was given smartphones during some of their most crucial developmental years, missing much of society's gradual technology adoption. At the same time, we set higher standards with higher expectations for them—academically, socially and emotionally. Students were not so subtly told, “You’re chronologically 15, but intellectually you should be enrolled in college level, AP classes.”

We missed the signs our kids weren’t ready for some of these challenges, and we threw them into the deep end. Cue increased levels of anxiety and a generation of people feeling fragmented rather than fully integrated into society.

Everyone has mental health.

So now what? Now we look for ways to encourage dialogue and meet our young people where they are—on college campuses and Instagram.

Our team in the counseling center gauges mental health by asking, “What’s the degree of impairment?” If someone is feeling anxious, if someone is feeling low, if their anxiety or depression is keeping them from doing the things they want or need to be doing—it’s time to seek out some help.

An endless pool of content, self-deemed cultural influencers and nonstop news

A lot of times people wonder, “Why am I feeling this way?” Or, “Why can’t I figure out X?” The problem with asking “why?” is that it’s a rational question trying to answer something that may be more emotionally rooted. And for that, we have to ask other questions.

In the same way that everyone has physical health but may not have a physical illness, everyone has mental health but maybe not a mental illness. We are all thinking and feeling human beings. It’s important to recognize our intellect informs what we’re seeing in the world, and our emotions inform us about how we’re doing. We can’t separate them, yet we’ve all heard “not to trust your feelings.” This dichotomizing of our rational and emotional selves also fragments our sense of wholeness.

Circumstances are hard. Life is challenging. And our emotions are responses telling us what we need to do to take care of ourselves during those key moments.



It’s also important to recognize that being made in the image of God demonstrates the importance of being emotional beings. We don’t often think about God as having emotions, but throughout Scripture he certainly demonstrates emotion.

No one has the authority to define you except the One who made you.

The world is full of people who will assume an authority to speak into our lives without asking. Words that are controlling or try to conform you to someone else’s image of you can be distracting from who God is calling you to be. That even goes for counselors—I cannot define someone’s progress for them.

For now bad puns are how eye roll, so I’ll keep eating pizza and sharing mental health advice and adorkable dad jokes to ShrinkWithSign on Instagram. Can anyone help me trademark adorkable?



Reid Swetland '89 is the associate dean for mental health outreach in the Gordon College Center for Student Counseling and Wellness. Check out Swetland’s latest signs on Instagram at @ShrinkWithSign.





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