

THE MAGAZINE OF  
**gordon** COLLEGE



# Pulling Together

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# Up Front

with President Hammond

Michelangelo's *David* is recognized worldwide as a masterpiece. Massive in size, it was originally designed to be displayed on the façade of the Cathedral in the center of Florence. Because Michelangelo displayed the human form with such power and strength, it is easy to forget that the biblical account of David portrays his youth and humble physical weakness, which pointed to the remarkable courage he displayed in battling the giant warrior Goliath.

Scholars tell us that David likely penned Psalm 34 after the defeat of Goliath and the Philistines. This was a remarkable moment of victory, and David reflects on the character of God instead of his own triumph. Psalm 34:18-19 reads:

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."

His battlefield victories and God's anointing propelled David to the position of King of Israel. And yet, his complex love for God was marked by moral failure and a lack of courage to steward his powerful position well. David sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, valuing his own selfish desires over humble service to the people of Israel. In Psalm 51, after his confrontation by Nathan, David reflects again on the character of God and his own failings:

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me [...]

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."

These two episodes demonstrate the power of godly, sacrificial courage and the depths of sadness that accompany selfish cowardice. Most of us will not have to muster courage to defeat a giant warrior and enemy troops in a battlefield duel. However, we will have daily moral choices to steward our authority over others. The courage to pursue God's calling and be obedient is what we all need each day to resist the easy pathway of selfishness and compromise.

At Gordon College, we have always fostered education built on the moral and ethical values that undergird our professional and intellectual work. The "School of Christ" at Gordon prepares graduates to love God with their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and it instills the courage to love others around them.

As we start a new year and begin a new chapter for *The Magazine of Gordon College*, I encourage you to reflect on your life's courageous moments and use those moments of strength to continue courageously on your path towards God's calling.

Grace and Peace,

*Mike D. Hammond*



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Throughout its 40 years, **STILLPOINT** has served as *The Magazine of Gordon College* offering stories, inspiration, and updates from campus and our alumni community. With this issue, and following the College's 2023 brand renewal, we've refreshed the magazine's look and feel with a focus on greater accessibility and readability. We invite you to continue this journey with us, as the legacy of **STILLPOINT** lives on in a new form.

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## A Gordon **STILLPOINT**

20 years ago, **STILLPOINT** revealed a new look and feel for the magazine that more closely aligned with the College's 2005 rebranding.

As part of the magazine's redesign, Editor Patricia C. Hanlon introduced a column entitled Inspiration with the purpose of featuring "a different writer from the Gordon community in every issue, each writer reflecting on what he or she has been inspired by."

To honor the inspiration **STILLPOINT** has been to our community, we have renamed this column A Gordon Stillpoint with the hope of uncovering profound memories and moments of God's "still points" in our lives.

Beginning with our next issue, we welcome Gordon community members—from alumni to students, from faculty to staff, from donors to parents—to inspire others and share reflections on still points from their time at Gordon and beyond.

Here are a few moments that continue to warm my soul when I look back on my still points at Gordon. The view from Chase Hall of freshly fallen, undisturbed snow across the Quad. The calming of a weekend as we gathered by candlelight in the Chapel for Catacombs. The rock overlook behind Tavilla that offered a quiet place to pause and take in the beauty and nature of our campus.

Now it's your turn. What memory from your Gordon journey still sticks with you to this day? What has been inspiring you recently?

Editor  
Amber Joy Dempsey '13

*Submissions for A Gordon Stillpoint can be shared for future inclusion and consideration at [gordon.edu/Magazine](http://gordon.edu/Magazine).*



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### Mission

*The Magazine of Gordon College offers timely perspectives and impactful stories to engage, inspire, and keep you connected to the Gordon community.*

### Letters to the Editor

Feedback and story suggestions can be emailed to [magazine@gordon.edu](mailto:magazine@gordon.edu) or mailed to: Editor, *The Magazine of Gordon College*, 255 Grapevine Road, Wenham, MA 01984

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# News: On The Grapevine

CAMPUS NEWS AND HAPPENINGS

## Christmas at Gordon

The College's Campus Lighting Festival moved to Frost Hall where we lit an evergreen tree first planted by Alton Bynum Jr.—who had hopes of one day using it to celebrate the Christmas season. We also welcomed over 30 faculty, staff, and students to share their creativity in a Christmas Marketplace.

The Christmas Gala at Gordon College celebrated its 35th year. Over 300 students and community members showcased their talents in this annual event, featuring the Gordon College Children's Choir and the Adams School of Music and the Arts choral and instrumental ensembles. The carefully curated Christmas readings and "all-carol sing" have become beloved traditions.



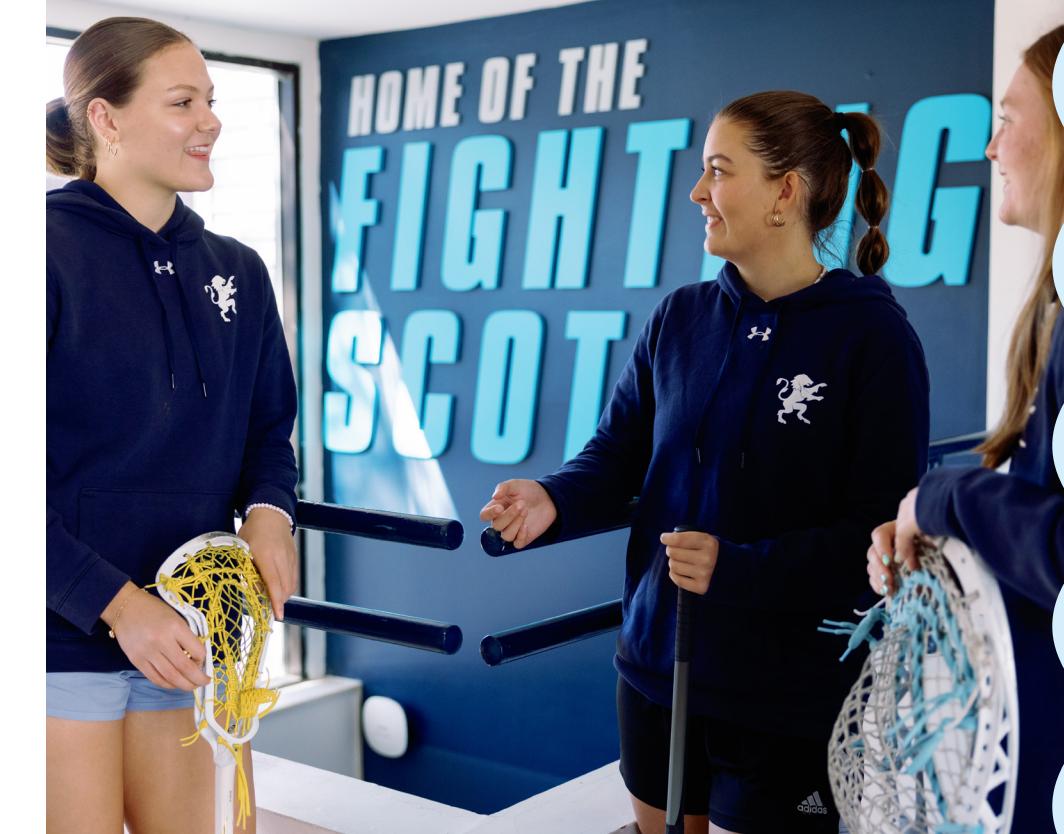
## Living Learning Communities

This fall, Residence Life launched "Living Learning Communities" in our Village houses. Focused on the themes of Spiritual Formation, La Vida, and Creative Life, students are joining together in their affinities to fellowship through learning, community, and outreach opportunities.



## Five Ponds Creative Writing Festival

Mark Stevick '87 has received a grant to bring the **Five Ponds Creative Writing Festival** back to Gordon College on March 28. Sessions will include topics like Nature and Technology in Poetry and Teaching Creative Writing in High School. Special readings will be given by Paul Harding, author of *Tinkers*, and January Gill O'Neil, former director of the Mass Poetry Festival. Register for the FREE festival and see the full list of presenters at [fivepondsfestival.org](http://fivepondsfestival.org)



## Gordon GamePlan

Led by **Thomas Hurley '14** and the Career and Connection Institute this past fall, Gordon GamePlan is a new career development program for student athletes. An exploration of how NCAA Division III programs and their schools can collaborate to effectively resource impactful professional development opportunities for student-athletes, sessions included resume building workshops, special speakers, and Gordon alumni panels.



## Goss Receives Sidney Perley Award

**David Goss '74**, assistant professor of history, received the Sidney Perley Award for his contributions and dedication to the study and dissemination of Salem, Massachusetts history. Goss has served in leadership positions at the Peabody Essex Museum and the House of the Seven Gables, and he has authored several books including *Daily Life During the Salem Witch Trials*, *Documents of the Salem Witch Trials*, and *The Salem Witch Trials: a Reference Guide*.

## 2026 Upcoming Events

**January 14–March 4**  
*Speak Yet Again* Art exhibition by Kelly Foster, associate professor of art

**January 29**  
Annual Franz Lecture Series: Dr. James Taylor program director for the Balkans Semester for the Study of War and Peace

**February 4–8**  
Clash of the Tartans

**February 16**  
Explore Gordon with Admissions

**February 17**  
Music Experience Visit Day

**February 19**  
Explore Jazz Improv Workshop

**February 19–March 1**  
Spring Musical: *Twelfth Night*

**February 21**  
Saturday Campus Tour

**February 21**  
Theatre Experience Visit Day

**March 27**  
Accepted Students Day

**March 28**  
Five Ponds Creative Writing Festival

**April 10**  
Accepted Students Day

**April 24**  
Explore Gordon with Admissions

**May 16**  
Commencement



Explore Gordon's full calendar of events!



# A New Era for Music at Gordon: Adams Center for Music

**Scheduled to break ground in summer 2026 and open in fall 2028**, the Adams Center for Music will bring all of Gordon College's music programs, including choral and instrumental ensembles, under one roof for the first time in the institution's history. The new building, adjoining the existing Phillips Music Center, features striking glass apertures along the campus pathways allowing direct views into all the key performance and

rehearsal spaces—symbolizing transparency, creativity, and connection.

The Adams Center will feature best-in-class performance and rehearsal spaces, including a 500-seat performance hall, large ensemble rehearsal room, and dedicated spaces for choral and music education—all with sweeping views of A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel and the campus landscape.



The stage of the performance hall will accommodate a variety of performances from large choral orchestral masterworks to chamber music. Wrap-around seating, enveloping the performers, provides each audience member with a deeply immersive and communal musical experience—offering a shared, intimate engagement among performers and audience members alike.



"This is more than a building; it is a catalyst for transformation. The Adams Center for Music will open new opportunities for our students and faculty, serve as a magnet for world-renowned performers and educators, and extend an open invitation to our surrounding community. Acoustically and visually, it will be a space of inspiration."

—Dr. Sarita Kwok,  
Dean of the Adams School  
of Music and the Arts



**The Adams Center for Music is made possible by a landmark planned gift from Stephen and Denise Adams, champions of the arts and higher education.**



Learn more here  
about the Adams  
Center

# PULLING TOGETHER: The Gordon Rowing Story

AMBER JOY DEMPSEY '13



Photo by Kimmy Stevenson '28

During her Gordon admissions interview, Maddie Hopkins '18 remembers the counselor pausing at her short list of activities: "You do know we don't have a rowing team, right?" Maddie laughed, "Oh, don't worry. You will."

And just a few years later, we do. Gordon Rowing has grown from a single member—Maddie—student club into one of the College's most competitive and distinctive athletic programs. Complete with men's and women's teams, a bustling boathouse in Essex, and national championship banners—Gordon rowers have gone stroke to stroke with powerhouse programs, even beating out esteemed Ivy League teams.

## From student vision to collegiate club

As the daughter of two rowing coaches growing up in Saratoga, New York, Maddie was on the water by age six. And while Gordon College didn't look like the right fit due to its lack of a rowing program, she purposefully chose Gordon over other schools for personal reasons—proximity to family in New York and a college experience that allowed her to row and pursue her love of theatre.

**Gordon rowers have gone stroke to stroke with powerhouse programs, even beating out esteemed Ivy League teams.**

"In my conversations with Division I rowing program schools, I discovered you're often not allowed to do both rowing and theatre because they are viewed as mutually exclusive. Gordon had a very strong theatre program, and I knew I could continue rowing on my own. That's pretty much how I wound up here."

As a freshman, Maddie quickly got involved with the technical production of theatre—from working in the light booth to making-up actors. But she knew she would have to be intentional about finding a way to get out on the water and row.

A family friend was a member of the Cambridge Boat Club. "If you're lucky enough to have a rack in a boathouse, you have to row a certain

number of miles to keep the rack," explained Maddie. "For that first fall and spring, I rode to log miles for an injured family friend. That was how I kept rowing and training," said Maddie. "I wasn't competing, but I was still training." While logging miles was getting her on the water, she started to miss the competitive element of the sport. So, when her spring semester entrepreneurship class encouraged students to think creatively about a known problem or opportunity, she found herself drawn back to the idea of bringing rowing to Gordon.

"The challenging thing about a rowing program is that it's really expensive," Maddie reasoned. "But what if I could design rowing in a way that didn't cost the College anything? Then could we have rowing?"

As part of her coursework, Maddie proposed a rowing club to the Gordon College Student Association (GCSA) and received approval in 2015. That summer, she worked alongside her father to raise \$60,000 for the program at Gordon—a remarkable amount for any student club—and purchased the College's first boats.

## Building a collegiate program

The launching years were challenging for both Maddie and the rowing club. From 2015 to 2017, "it was me and one or two guys every season." Some of the hardest moments came training alone on cold mornings. "Rowing is not inherently fun—it's very hard. When it's forty-five degrees outside and you're all by yourself, you're like, 'I am doing this just for me. There's nobody else benefiting. There's no team to show up for.'"

Skillfully, Maddie's personal racing success kept her dream of a Gordon rowing team alive. In 2016, during her sophomore year, she placed second at the Dad Vail Regatta. "I was the fastest American at that race," she said with a laugh—the first-place winner was from Queen's University in Canada.



Coach Maddie Hopkins '18

In 2018, Maddie placed fourth in her heat and seventh overall at the American Collegiate Rowing Association (ACRA) National Championship.

The defining moment came later in 2018, a month before Maddie's graduation. "Jon Tymann, then Gordon College's Athletic Director, asked me to come by and discuss what would happen to the rowing program after I graduated. He also shared that a donor wanted to provide the funding to buy the team a boathouse, and if they could hire a full-time coach, they'd do it. In other words, would I take the job?"

While surprised by the offer, Maddie was excited at the opportunity to take on full leadership of Gordon's boathouse and rowing program.



Photo by Kimmy Stevenson '28





## Competing with the best

"In the fall of 2018, we started with six men and no women," she recalled. "But my dad told me, 'I promise you, at Gordon, the women's team will take off.'"

He was right. For the 2025-26 season, the Gordon rowing teams roster 15 women and eight men. The women compete in both open weight crews and varsity lightweight boats, while the men race as lightweights in the Intercollegiate Rowing Association. That puts Gordon side by side with programs like the University of Wisconsin, Princeton University, MIT, Georgetown University, and Stanford University.

"We are the only Division III in the lightweight league," Maddie explained. "Everyone else is Division I, with twice the number of practice days. From day one we're fighting an uphill battle—but that makes it even more exciting when we succeed."

The Gordon men's team has won scrimmages and heats over Harvard University on the Charles River and University of Pennsylvania at Nationals. "That was awesome,"



"In 2023, I went to China with Tiana Fox '24 as the Women's Rowing Head Coach for the World University Games," shared Maddie. "We trained at the OKC National High Performance Center, and Tiana raced at the ACRA Nationals that May. At the US Summer Nationals in July, we won the women's four."

In the span of three months, Tiana became a national champion twice and made the United States World

Maddie reflected. "It showed everyone what our men could accomplish."

**From day one, the program's growth has been fueled by creativity, grit, and determination.**

The women's open weight crews have been fixtures at ACRA Championships—often outperforming established programs from across the country and around the world—becoming three time national champions.

University Games squad in China. "Training to be a part of the University Games was difficult, and I couldn't have done it alone," said Tiana. "Gordon's rowing program and Maddie as my coach helped prepare me with prayer. I was placed in a lot of challenging rowing positions, but that helped me get comfortable with different seats. Rowing has taught me that I can power through difficult situations knowing that the pain won't last."

## Building more than a team

From day one, the program's growth has been fueled by creativity, grit, and determination. Maddie's entrepreneurship class vision for a self-sustaining program has paid off.

Today Gordon maintains a fleet of 40 boats—an impressive arsenal for a small program—and a lively boathouse community. The boathouse serves over 70 masters, high school, and middle school rowers.

Rentals, community programs, and Kinderskulls—the boathouse's youth camp—not only sustains the team financially but also connects students with alumni, local professionals, and families.



Photo by Kimmy Stevenson '28

## An inspirational future

"Under Coach Hopkins's leadership, our program has become a model for lightweight rowing," said Jason Linders, Director of Athletics. "It's an outstanding example of when you choose to glorify God through the sport, build your confidence, and expand determination—anything is possible. This team's accomplishments are proof of that vision."

**You can pick races and events in such a way that everyone gets their moment.**

"Our boathouse is full of people who've had really impressive careers and are in a place to mentor our rowers," Maddie said. "It's incredible. We have everyone from trauma therapists to environmental lawyers offering advice and internships. It's everything I've ever wanted for our students and community."

For the College's students, the impact of Gordon's rowing program extends well beyond graduation. At the 2025 Head of the Charles, 15 Gordon alumni reunited to race in the Men's and Women's Alumni Fours.

"We have an alumni group chat, and we all had matching shirts," Maddie laughed. "This group isn't just program alumni—they were my peers. I started so young that some of my first athletes were older than me."

Former teammates remain invested in the next generation, too. "When I send videos of our freshman four to our alums, they're all like, 'Oh, there it is. It's coming back!'"

## A Glossary for Rowing Lingo

**Open Weight** (sometimes called "heavyweight") – There are no weight restrictions.

**Lightweight** – Athletes must fall within specific weight limits.

**Masters Rowers** – Competitive or recreational rowers aged 27 and over.

**Four** – A smaller racing shell with four rowers plus a coxswain.

**Coxswain ("cox")** – The non-rowing team member who steers the boat, gives commands, and sets race strategy.

For the first time in program history, Gordon alumni participated in both the Men's and Women's Alumni Fours in the 2025 Head of the Charles.



people to shine. You can pick races and events in such a way that everyone gets their moment," she shared. "That's a really sweet thing."

With a talented freshman class, national-level competition, and a growing alumni network, Gordon Rowing is poised for even greater heights. "We're blazing a trail," Maddie said. "We're creating a model for Division III lightweight rowing, and we're setting an example for what it looks like to dream big and make it happen."

In rowing, as in life, confidence backed by determination has a way of making the impossible a reality, and the growth of Gordon's rowing program shows that. In Maddie's own words from that first admissions interview: "Oh, you will."

## Gordon's Rowing Programs



**Head Race** – A timed race against the clock, usually rowed in the fall.

**Sprint Race** – A side-by-side race over a shorter course (Olympic style racing).

# Building the Reading Brain: How Parents and Teachers Can Prevent Reading Failure



**Julia Brink D'Onofrio '05, M.Ed. '10** is an instructor teaching professor of education within the Herschend School of Education. She graduated from Gordon with her Bachelor of Science in psychology and early childhood education and a master's degree in reading intervention. Julia is currently enrolled in a doctoral program with a concentration in reading science.

**Written language is essentially spoken language on paper.**

Reading proficiency in our nation is very low. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, in 2024 only 31% of fourth-grade students in America could read at or above a proficient level, and even in highly educated Massachusetts, that number is only 40%.

You might be hearing these statistics for the first time, or perhaps you're tired of hearing the discouraging reports and statistics that pour in from the media about our educational system. If you are a parent, guardian, grandparent, or caregiver, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by information about reading failure in the United States. You might also feel uncertain about what steps you can take to lower the risk of your child becoming part of these discouraging statistics.

Even more likely, you try reading to your child, but are still left wondering, "Is this all I can do? Is reading failure preventable for the children in my life?"

## *The good news*

Yes, reading failure can be prevented! In 1998, Dr. Joseph Torgesen synthesized research from the field of reading science in his groundbreaking article, "Catch Them Before They Fall: Identification and

Assessment to Prevent Reading Failure in Young Children."

Torgesen found that children who fall behind in literacy skills by the end of first grade rarely catch up to their peers. And while later research has continued to confirm these findings, it has also shown that targeted, evidence-based instruction can significantly reduce the risk of reading failure.

Reading research points to three key predictors of early reading success: letter knowledge, concepts of print, and the segmentation of sounds. Effective instruction in kindergarten through second grade must focus on building these foundational skills. So what exactly are they?

Letter knowledge refers to a student's ability to accurately and automatically name uppercase and lowercase letters. This skill is more challenging than most adults realize. Children are born with a visual system that ignores positionality, which is crucial for identifying letters. A lowercase "b" is different from a lowercase "p," yet their shapes match. When students begin connecting letters and sounds, misidentification could lead to very different meanings, such as big vs. pig. Young children need to learn to pay close attention to letter shapes, connect them to their



names, and learn to attach a sound to the corresponding letter shape. This marks the beginning of phonics instruction.

The second key predictor of reading success is understanding concepts about print—both the form and function of print. In English, print is read from left to right, top to bottom. Children learn how to hold and manipulate a book. They learn that the words tell the story, not just the pictures. And while these simple concepts are often taught through reading books out loud before students even enter school, they must be taught explicitly so that students can succeed as readers.

The third predictor is the ability to segment or separate sounds in spoken language. Written language is essentially spoken language on paper. Children must first be able to identify sounds in spoken language before representing them

in text. Students practice segmenting sounds by starting with the identification of the first sound in a word, then the last sound, and finally the middle sound in a three-letter word such as "cat."

## *The science of reading*

Unlike language acquisition, reading is not a skill that is naturally learned. Children learn to speak by speaking and being exposed to language in their environment, but they do not learn to read by reading and exposure to print. This idea is central to the "reading wars."

Prominent educational leaders used to believe that literacy could be learned naturally. Educators were expected to expose children to literature and foster a passion and love for reading. Many curriculum materials, teacher preparation programs, and textbooks are still built on this belief.

**According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, in 2024 only 31% of fourth-grade students in America could read at or above a proficient level.**

# Doctor of Education



If you are a teacher interested in learning more about reading instruction and how to support your child, consider enrolling in Gordon College's Science of Reading certificate.



This idea took hold in US education before brain imaging and eye movement studies were conducted. The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of research spanning cultures and languages for over five decades. Scientists have learned that our brains aren't naturally wired for reading and writing. In fact, the brain "recycles" language neural networks to create neural pathways for literacy. Developing the ability to read requires explicit and systematic instruction.

And here's where the importance of segmenting the sounds of spoken language comes into play. Children must learn to identify the smallest units of sound in spoken language and then connect those sounds to letters and combinations of letters. Writing systems are codes invented arbitrarily. Children must be taught to crack the code by mapping spoken language onto written symbols. They must practice mapping sounds to symbols and then blending those sounds to read a word. These skills can be strengthened by "playing with sounds." As a caregiver is driving, they can ask the child, "What is the first sound in 'bus?'" Or "What is the last sound in 'truck?'" Children must learn to pay attention to the sounds in words. These sounds are then mapped onto symbols and

letters. Magnetic letters can be utilized to have the child practice identifying the sound that the letter represents. The caregiver can ask, "What sound does the letter 'p' represent?" Teaching this process explicitly and providing systematic opportunities to practice reading and writing words builds neural networks.

These practices cannot be rushed or skipped. Students must practice reading and writing words to build neural networks and store words so they can be recognized instantly; this is not the same as memorization. Eye movement studies show that proficient readers process every sound that letters represent in a word before the eyes even fixate on the letter!

Once students learn sound-letter connections, they must practice decoding words. As they continue practicing, the brain builds the neural networks and begins to store these words in the familiar-words area of the brain. Brain imaging shows that this part of the brain is only active in literate children and adults. This critical use of brain imaging informs how children learn to read and which instructional practices are most effective.

Reading comprehension results from the combination of word recognition and language comprehension. The three predictors mentioned earlier focus on word recognition skills. Language comprehension can be developed through reading and conversing with your child. Students need strong language comprehension skills, such as syntax, vocabulary, background knowledge, verbal reasoning, and literacy skills. To improve literacy proficiency levels, teaching these skills must be integrated into our elementary curriculum. As children reach fourth grade, language comprehension skills and oral language become a stronger predictor of proficient reading comprehension.

## Bringing it home

During the 2020 pandemic, many parents got a front-row seat to reading instruction as they sat alongside their kindergartners' and first graders' classes. In reading exercises, they saw firsthand that their children were being told to memorize or guess words. When children were given text they hadn't seen before, they couldn't read it. Parents, many of whom were taught phonics and letter-sound correspondence as children, quickly recognized these "reading tactics" as ineffective.

Today, much of the discussion and national push for change in reading instruction within local educational systems is driven by parent advocates. You can support your child's reading skills in the early years by asking questions about their instruction around these essential components: letter knowledge, concepts of print, and sound segmentation.

Don't hesitate to ask the school to monitor the progress of reading skills if your student is struggling. Specific assessments can quickly identify if students are making sufficient progress toward the end-of-year goals.

If we commit to working together, both as educators and as caregivers, we can reduce the risk of reading failure and build foundational literacy skills for our children. Together, we can drastically improve America's reading proficiency level.

**Students need strong language comprehension skills, such as syntax, vocabulary, background knowledge, verbal reasoning, and literacy skills.**

As the College's inaugural doctoral program, Gordon has launched a **Doctor of Education in the Science of Learning** to empower and equip scholar-practitioners to meet the growing needs of our nation's literacy crisis. This new program will prepare educational leaders to identify problems within their education systems and implement evidence-based strategies to address them.



# Who Just Stares at a Fire Alarm?

Emotions as Signals for Learning During Doubt

It is fair to say that most people would describe these behaviors as odd.

Imagine for a moment that you are sitting at your kitchen table on a winter morning. You are sipping your preferred beverage. No one is bothering you. Suddenly this serene moment is shattered by the shrill sound of a fire alarm. You don't smell smoke, so this disruption catches you by surprise.

There are at least two unhelpful responses in this scenario. First, you could ignore the fire alarm and go about your morning. Second, you could locate the offending alarm and stare at it. It is fair to say that most people would describe these behaviors as odd at best and dangerous at worst. Unfortunately, these are often the ways people respond to the emotions that arise in the face of spiritual or religious doubt. We either ignore or fixate

on their presence. And yet, if we consider the purpose emotions play in these contexts, another approach might emerge.

## Emotions as signals for learning

Emotional responses often act as signals for learning in the life of the individual. The shame, fear, or anger that arises in the context of doubt are no different. Doubt reflects a moment of uncertainty. It provides a tension between our prior understanding of reality and how reality actually functions. As with the unexpected fire alarm, our negative emotions signal our unwilling participation in this temporary space.



Once negative emotions arise in response to doubt, we can let them go. They've done their job. They've alerted us to a change in our environment. We can acknowledge these emotions and

Finding a resolution to doubt can feel incredibly important.

move on to address the doubt. Finding a resolution to doubt can feel incredibly important, which might make it difficult to move on from these negative emotions. Fortunately, we don't have to do this alone.

## People don't usually walk on water

The story of Jesus walking on the water with the apostle Peter provides an example of how we might consider doubt within a community. In the book of Matthew, this story begins with Peter and the other apostles on a boat. As they awake to see Jesus walking on the water, they assume he is a ghost.

When Jesus identifies himself, Peter asks Jesus to welcome him onto the water as proof. After Jesus obliges, Peter walks out, becomes afraid, and begins to sink. Peter's emotional response is reasonable.

Jesus shifted his understanding of reality. People don't walk on water. And

yet, there they were. If we only focus on Peter's fear, we might miss the lesson from Jesus' actions.

During Peter's anguish and descent into the water, Jesus catches him and asks why he doubted. At this point, Jesus could have rebuked Peter and cast him aside, as we often do to those struggling with doubt. Fortunately for Peter—and for the rest of us—our God seeks communion with humanity, even during our moments of doubt. Rather than casting Peter aside, Jesus climbs into the boat with Peter and the other apostles.

## Walking alongside those who doubt

Jesus' actions teach us to join in community with those who doubt. We don't need to resolve doubt for those in our community. Rather, we are to walk alongside those who find themselves unsettled by this learning process. We can help them move beyond the negative emotional signals so they might reconcile their past and present understanding of God, their reality, or the irreligious community.

Negative emotions, just like the fire alarm, are tools. Reframing them as signals for learning can encourage religious and spiritual flourishing as we journey in life together.

Jesus' actions teach us to join in community with those who doubt.



**Ryan Daley '13, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of psychology. His research examines how memory for social and emotional information can be used to provide insight into the evaluations we make about ourselves and other people.



# Class Notes

ALUMNI NEWS, STORIES, & UPDATES

## 1900s

## '50s

**Eleanor (Lewis) Pelley '50B** went to be with the Lord she loved on June 18, 2025. She was 96. Her Barrington training prepared her for a life of full-time Christian service. After Eleanor married James H. Pelley, the couple were missionaries in the West Virginia coal mines and then in Liberia, West Africa, working for ELWA Ministries. Upon returning to the US, they started the Christian Radio Station WIHS in Middletown, CT, where they served until retirement. Eleanor liked to share her memories of Barrington Bible College, where she was a student and faculty member. She traveled to represent Barrington with a women's trio and was secretary for WPTL, the College's radio station. She is greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.

## '60s

**Raymond Fowler '60** is still writing books at age 91. As of August 2025, he's written 17 books, all available on Amazon. One of the latest is titled *Unmasked: The Holey Bible and the Ugaritic Texts*.

**Artis (Flexter) Dixon '62B** passed away on June 8, 2025. Artis, an R.N., served as a faithful pastor's wife in addition to 25 years as a missionary in Kenya, where she taught nursing at Kijabe Hospital and served as a librarian at Moffat College of Bible and Rift Valley Academy. She leaves behind **Norman Dixon '63B**, her husband of 61 years; two sons, Daniel and David; several grandchildren; and one great-grandson.

On January 18, 2024, **Elaine Kay (Dahlstrom) Braley '66** died after a brief struggle with pancreatic cancer. She was married for 57 years to Richard Braley. Kay is survived by her husband, two children, and two grandchildren. In addition to her Gordon degree, she had an M.A. in Pastoral Counseling from Emmanuel College in Boston. She retired as Director of Case Management, Department of Mental Health,

Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She was an active member of Grace United Methodist Church in Des Moines, IA.

## '70s



**Mark Ferrin '72** had a bone marrow transplant in May 2025 at Mass General in Boston. He felt surrounded by the love of God, family, church, friends, and college classmates. He is

feeling good now and back to playing tennis and coming to Gordon sports events.

In her third year at Gordon, **Virginia (Riposta) Heslinga '74** married Jerry Heslinga (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary '73, now Rev. Dr.). When they moved to Ohio for Jerry's first job, she transferred to Marshall University and learned the truth of something often said at Gordon: "Many people think Christian college is not as rigorous as secular universities, but you are getting a top education at Gordon." Now, she

has taught for over 50 years at all levels and in multiple countries. She has an M.A. and Ed.D. in education and has published articles, short stories, historical fiction, and memoirs. Gordon gave her a strong foundation through professors, lifelong friendships, Gordon Players, challenging course content, dorm talks by Elisabeth Elliot Leitch Gren, and faith perspective on learning.

On May 24, 2025, **Jill (Moir) '75** and **David Crum '75** observed 50 years since their graduation from Gordon. Then on May 31, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Their 10 sons, one daughter, nine of 10 daughters-in-law, one son-in-law, and 33 of their 36 grandchildren, plus other family and friends gathered the following day for a massive party. For David and Jill, it all began at Gordon.

**Melinda (Rowe) Williams '78** returned to Middlebury, VT after 30 years in MA. She teaches 20 piano

students at Middlebury Community Music Center. She loves being back at Memorial Baptist, her childhood church, which her father pastored for 26 years. There, she works part time as an office administrator, serves on the Discipleship Board, subs for the church pianist, and teaches Sunday School. Over the past 26 years, Melinda has used her graphic design skills for her church and various organizations. Recently, life grew more precious when she became "Mimi" to her two-year-old granddaughter.

## '80s

**Becky (Pendleton) Manos '80** enjoys being a substitute teaching assistant and substitute teacher in Falmouth Public Schools, particularly when she works with special needs children. She also loves teaching arts and crafts after school several times a year. Her husband, Peter, is a substitute bus monitor and driver, also for children with special needs.

After more than 30 years as an administrator in Christian, private, and public schools, **Wendy (Lyon) Wright '81** has retired from school administration and stepped into a new season. She recently joined staff at The Belonging Co College in Nashville as Director of Finance. The Belonging Co College is a ministry of The Belonging Co and a regional campus of Southeastern University. Wendy is grateful for the opportunity to continue serving students and faculty, while also enjoying life in Nashville, where she is close to her grandchildren.

**Laurie (Wynn) Fiedler '82** has retired after 36 years as an attorney and moved back to the North Shore from New Jersey, along with her husband, Alan, and son Adam. They are settling into their new Ipswich home and look forward to reconnecting with Gordon friends in the area. Laurie's daughter, Amber, graduated from Gordon in 2013, and her son Andrew graduated from Gordon in 2017.



## '90s

On August 2, 2025, **Amy (Macera) Snyder '94** went to her final home. Amy earned her B.A. in history at Gordon, where she played volleyball and met lifelong friends. She received her History Teacher Certification (M.A.) and then her Museum Studies Certificate from Tufts University. Amy's 28-year career included education and executive director roles at two schools and six museums. At the Holocaust Museum and Education Center of Southwest Florida, she was named a Lamed Vavnik. In Jewish folklore, a Lamed Vavnik counteracts evil, preventing the world's ruin through kindness and righteousness. She was also featured in the prestigious award program "Extraordinary Women of SWFL." Amy married Kevin Snyder on September 26, 2009. Kevin always cheered for Amy's successes and remained devoted in her fight against cancer. Beyond her brilliant career, Amy's loved ones will most fondly remember her megawatt smile, gentle ways, and love for Jesus. Amy yearned for all to know Jesus's love and lived her life accordingly.



**Maria (Sedaca) Faircloth '96** was awarded the Library of Virginia's 2025 Anne & Ryland Brown Teacher Research Fellowship for her study "David Walker Spoke First, So Why Does Nat Turner Get the Credit?", which explores Walker's 1829 Appeal and its impact on Virginia laws and abolitionist history. Vicky began work as an adjunct history professor at Old Dominion University. She also teaches AP US History and dual enrollment courses in Virginia Beach public schools. At Virginia's colonial museums, she

lectures on colonial Virginia and its Indigenous peoples. Her research focuses on connecting descendants of enslaved individuals with descendants of families who enslaved them, fostering recognition and reconciliation of historical injustices.

## 2000s

## '00s

"The Home for Little Wanderers," the nation's oldest child welfare agency, appointed **Brian Mulroy '00** to its Board of Directors. Mulroy is Chief Financial Officer of Semrush, a leading digital marketing technology platform. With more than two decades of finance leadership experience at top global tech firms, he brings deep financial and operational insight to The Home's governance and long-term sustainability strategy. Mulroy holds a bachelor of business and mathematics from Gordon College and a J.D. from Suffolk University Law School. To learn more about The Home, visit [thehome.org](http://thehome.org).



## Estate Planning for Kingdom Purposes



Email [Dan.White@gordon.edu](mailto:Dan.White@gordon.edu)  
to learn more from our Senior Director of Planned Giving

**Esther (Pier) Littlefield '02** and family relocated from Maine to Tennessee in May 2023. Esther is now Associate Director of Marketing for EntreLeadership at Ramsey Solutions. Her husband, Scott, is Audience Support Lead at K-Love. Their daughter, Kirsten, is heading into her junior year of high school and participating in the Nashville Zoo volunteer program, ZooTeen.

**Jenn (Fisher) Klein '05** created the *Giving and Gratitude Journal* (available on Amazon) to create a ripple effect of generosity around the world. Her business, "You Are a Philanthropist," has a podcast, merchandise, and coaching services. Jenn found her life mission after becoming a parent and writes in her book *Giving is Selfish* about Gordon's influence on this calling.

**Ian Corbin '06** is Founding Director of the new Public Culture Project at Harvard University, which aims to bring existential, moral, and spiritual questions to the forefront of our public conversations. He believes there is a unique need for this kind of project in our moment and, happily, a historic opening to new kinds of conversations.

Along with their four children, **Jennifer (Specht) '06** and **Timothy Easley '06** still call Binghamton, NY home. Their eldest daughter is a high school senior looking to start college in 2026. Jennifer is Choral Director at Binghamton High School and Adjunct Professor of Music at SUNY Broome; she is also a quarter finalist for the Music Educator of the Year award (2026) with the Grammy Museum. Timothy completed his M.Div. at Evangelical Seminary in 2019 and his Th.D. at Kairos University in 2025. He was a pastor for 15 years and is now joining Ross Corners Christian Academy as their high school history teacher.

## '10s

Very early in the morning of December 29, 2024 **Erin (McNaughton) '16** and **Matthew Lewis '16** welcomed their first child, Vivian Cole, to the world. Currently, Matthew teaches social studies for Gloucester Public Schools, and Erin serves as Assistant Director at The Jimmy Fund. Along with their beloved dog, Daphne, the family of

three make their home along the shores of Chebacco Lake in Hamilton.

**Aaron Ross '17** was ordained to the Anglican/Episcopal priesthood in Boston, MA on June 7, 2025. He currently serves as Curate at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in Duxbury, MA. He also serves as a chaplain in the US Army Reserves. Aaron, his wife, and their two children (ages 4 and 1), are fond of the beach, reading good books, and exploring more of New England one weekend at a time.



**Annalise (Nakoneczny) '18** and **Carl Kraines '18** were married on October 11, 2025 to the utter delight of their friends and family. Carl is the Office Manager for North Shore Community Baptist Church in Beverly Farms, and Annalise works as the Young Adult Librarian at the Sawyer Free Library in Gloucester. They look forward to a lifetime of adventures and serving others together.

## '20s



**Micah J. Marrapodi '22** will finish his Master of Arts in English this spring at Rhode Island College. He was awarded two Graduate Assistantships (with full tuition remission), received graduate induction into Sigma Tau Delta by

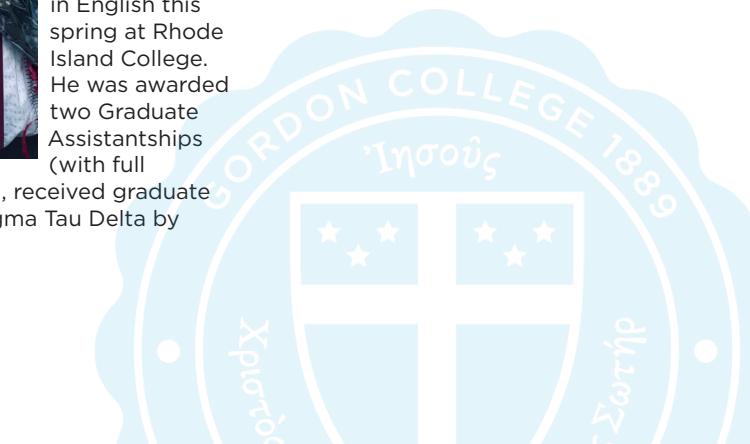
faculty nomination, and published "A Three-Pronged, Interdisciplinary Media Studies Approach & Jack Stauber's OPAL" in *Response: The Journal of Popular and American Culture*.

**Ellen (Grosh) '22** and Tyler Rupp welcomed their first child, Carter Thomas Rupp, in June 2025. They currently live in State College, PA where Tyler is an electrical engineer and Ellen serves as a pastor with a nontraditional church planting network, the Holy District, through the Brethren in Christ Church.

**Anne (Shearer) '24** united in marriage with Noah Burgdorf on June 29, 2025. Noah, who graduated from Lee University (TN), is a seminary student at Gordon-Conwell. Anne manages Manchester by the Book and works as a freelance journalist. They attend Center Grace Church in Beverly, MA. The couple met in May 2023 at the WORLD Journalism Institute and have both published pieces with WORLD News Group. They find marriage incredibly sweet, and their days are filled with laughter.



**Grace (Romeo) '24** and **Oscar Stout '22** were married in September of 2025 and live in Peabody, MA. Grace works at Gordon as a designer in the Marketing department, and Oscar works as a program coordinator for Waypoint Adventure. They enjoy staying connected to their Gordon community on the North Shore.



# Making summer plans?



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- Give graduation year (and maiden name, if applicable).
- Submissions to Class Notes must be contributed by the alum featured and written in the third person.
- Remembrances may be submitted by the surviving spouse, executor of the estate, or surviving parent or child in the absence of a surviving spouse. Unfortunately we cannot print obituaries received from other sources.
- Notes from individuals are intended only for sharing with the Gordon alumni community and do not suggest or represent an endorsement by the College. Gordon College reserves the right to edit or omit submissions.

**Update your contact info and share Class Notes**



The deadline for the Summer 2026 issue is April 1, 2026. Please submit your news at [www.gordon.edu/magazine](http://www.gordon.edu/magazine)



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