



# COLLEGIUM

THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016



## CONVERSATION

Dr. Scott Huelin

**Conversation.** What a rich and winsome word. It might bring to mind images of friends gathered around food and drink, sharing life together. Maybe ‘conversation’ suggests a vigorous engagement over ideas in a seminar room. Or perhaps the word reminds you of long, soul-baring, soul-healing talks with distant loved ones on the phone. In any case, good conversation is a staple of a flourishing adult life.

Once we hosted an adults-only dinner party at our home, and our sons, who were fairly young at the time, made themselves scarce while keeping tabs on what was transpiring downstairs. Afterwards, my elder son descended the staircase with a quizzical look on his face. “Dad, you said this was going to be a *party*, but all you guys did was sit around and *talk*.” To which I glibly responded, “Talking is how adults play.” My son’s puzzled expression turned pensive for just a few moments before he scampered upstairs to bed.

In the years since, I often have wondered whether there might have been more wisdom in that comment than I was able to see at the time. Both conversation and play are undertaken for their own sakes and not for some other purpose. Like play, conversations, really good ones, are open-ended. When they are not, one or more participants will feel manipulated. While good conversations are not scripted or predetermined, they do, like children’s games, follow certain rules and conventions. The courtesies of conversation—turn-taking, empathic listening, awareness of your audience’s level of engagement and understanding—keep the practice orderly and rightly ordered. Moreover, adult conversation, like child’s play, helps us enter the social world and find our place in it. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the oldest and most fundamental meaning of ‘conversation’ is “the action of living or having one’s being in a place or among persons.”

Whether you are a current or former Honors student, your sense of belonging in Honors was likely forged in conversation, through which you learned to ask good questions, take seriously the ideas of others, and to have your own ideas examined and challenged. As you became enamored with and proficient in the art of academic conversation, you may also have discovered a belonging to a much larger cohort of comrades: Augustine and Luther, Aquinas and Lewis, all those who compose the Christian intellectual tradition, a communion that extends across space and time. And no doubt, for many of you, these conversations have brought you closer to God, in whose Trinitarian life is the ultimate conversation of three Persons who have Their being precisely in turning toward One another in love.

As ambitious as it may sound, our hope for this newsletter is that it, too, might reach across space and time to renew and extend those conversations that were central to your Honors experience, that did so much to shape our self-understanding and to locate us among those who seek out the mystery of things in and through the great conversation that is the Holy Trinity.

## 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

Students hit the road to share about Honors with Memphis & Nashville highschoolers. This ‘roadshow’ features a farcical skit of a stereotypical seminar, written and performed by students.

The Beauty class ventured to Chicago for a 3-day Art & Architecture tour in April, the first time since 2013 that the class has gone so far afield. Plans are underway for a repeat in Spring ‘17.

DSH math student Joshua Stucky won Best Paper at the North Central Regional Kappa Mu Epsilon Convention where he presented his research in April.

University Honors graduate Nathaniel Magnuson won the Tigrett Medal at commencement in May, marking the fourth consecutive year for an Honors graduate to take the medal.

37% of 2016 Honors graduates have already been accepted to grad school.

Upperclassmen kicked off the 2016-17 schoolyear by hosting a potluck & *ceilidh* dance for freshmen in August.

The Honors Community began an initiative supporting Fulbright applicants university-wide, with its first submission in October.

43 freshmen in the Wisdom class traveled to Baylor University, where 15 of them presented at the annual Symposium on Faith & Culture.

## HONORS *at* UNION

EXCELLENCE-DRIVEN CHRIST-CENTERED PEOPLE-FOCUSED FUTURE-DIRECTED

## LIFE AFTER COLLEGE: SURPRISED BY THE GIFT

Mary Alisa (Techentin) Duchek, '11

I cherished the idea of staying and working in Jackson after graduation, but God had very different plans for me. The transition was completely surprising, deeply challenging, but undoubtedly a beautiful gift from God, so that I was amazed how much life after college asked me to change my ways of thinking to receive the gift well.

Discerning my vocation in school, I felt sure I heard a call to work with children. But when I graduated as a History major with Spanish and Honors minors, I had a hard time finding employment in schools. I staved off my anxieties by spending the summer as I always had, at the community sailing program in Maine where I had grown up and achieved my dream of becoming an official instructor. I picked up seasonal work babysitting and spent my days on the ocean to my heart's content, but eventually grew moody and depressed about my lack of long-term employment.

October brought a whirlwind of life changes. A far-flung resume found its way to a wonderful family in the mountains of Colorado who hired me to help with the at-home Waldorf schooling of their five girls. Saying "yes" and moving so far into the unknown felt terrifying. Friends and a mentor told me they thought it unwise. I brought a myriad of doubts to God in prayer throughout the uncomfortable transition. My hurried roommate search (a haphazard, unexpectedly brilliant Googling of "Boulder Christian") led me to the Graduate Christian Fellowship of Intervarsity at the University of Colorado, and two students who happened to need a housemate right away. I showed up at the

Denver Airport with just two bags and my summer savings, nervous but determined to succeed in what I knew was a pretty different environment for me.

I had never seen myself as an adventurous or athletic person, but found I needed to change those self-perceptions. On days when I didn't borrow a car, I biked eight miles to work: a crazy trek across Boulder and up into the foothills of the Rockies that took a couple of hours (rewarded by golden sunrise reflected off the snowy far-off Continental Divide and a welcome meal of waffles from my new friends).

During my first week in town, my roommates introduced me to their Intervarsity friends, including Matthew, who is now my husband. He didn't have a car either, so we biked together to all our early dates, which I thought was really novel and more charming than difficult. I've never felt as knowledgeable, connected, involved with any town I've lived in before, and I credit the slower pace, fresh air and big view of many bike rides for that blessing. I never expected the actual teaching to humble me so much. I learned what "Waldorf," "homeschool," and "unschool" meant. This sensitive and flexible educational approach tripped me up at first. I thought children had to be told what to read, what to do, what to write, what to obey, but that wasn't the right role for me in my new job. I learned to listen, primarily. Since then, my students have started businesses, traveled the world, and gone to high school. It's pleasing and amazing to see how they have thrived (and I have too).

Though I immediately started dating my first boyfriend, I intentionally based my life after college in Christian community. My instant connection with a vibrant Intervarsity group led me to as many deep relationships with kindred spirits as I could maintain. I joined the leadership of the campus prayer group and got involved at two churches (the Catholic university parish, and a small Baptist church). We spent most of our free time in the company of friends, and purposefully cultivated relationships apart from each other. We went hiking and camping and made lots of potluck food. We prayed with our roommates and joined intellectual discussion groups or led them ourselves if we were really interested. We even grow our garden in community.

These relationships, the growth and love of the children I've worked with for the past five years, and the addition of my own little child are my joy and my measure of "success." As our family grows, our need to intentionally maintain connection with those around us intensifies.

Open-mindedness and receptivity to God's plans seemed crazy and difficult at the time but have yielded more blessings than I ever imagined. I've changed more after college than during (and that's a big statement), but I acknowledge each new challenge and delight as from God. That receptivity, constantly guided by prayer, led me to deep fulfillment as I transitioned to being a married woman with a strong Catholic faith, a rich Christian community, and joyful work that fulfills my vocation as teacher and now mother.

## 2017 IN THE WORKS

**Dr. Barnard** goes on research leave in the spring. Much like Rabbit, in A.A. Milne's "In Which Kanga and Baby Roo Come to the Forest, and Piglet Has a Bath," Dr. Barnard aims to write some things down. He hopes that what he writes will turn out at least as well as Rabbit's "PLAN TO CAPTURE BABY ROO."

A new interdisciplinary minor is in the works. Housed in Honors but available university-wide, the **Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies minor** will hopefully be available by Fall 2017.

**Dr. Padelford** will never stop teaching wisdom, but Fall 2016 marks his last time doing so for an Honors course, prior to his retirement next summer. Dr. David Thomas from the History Department will join the Wisdom teaching team for Fall 2017.

The **2017 Scholar-in-Residence** will be Marilyn Chandler McEntyre. Dr. McEntyre is professor of medical humanities at the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program and is a poet, essayist, and memoirist. Her book *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* has become a staple of the freshman Wisdom class. She visits March 21-31, 2017.

## THE BOOKSHELF

This fall piloted a series of faculty-led book discussion groups, intended to replace the old colloquia model. Each group runs for half a semester and may include up to 5 students from any Honors program, year, or major. Texts chosen by faculty for this fall's colloquia are shared here as recommended reads.

**Dr. Geoff Poore**

*Science, Faith, and Society* by Michael Polanyi

**Dr. Phil Davignon**

*The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* by Daniel M. Bell, Jr.

**Dr. Dub Oliver**

*Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel* by Russell Moore

**Dr. Justin Barnard**

*Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* by Lesslie Newbigin

**Dr. John Netland**

*Silence* by Shusaku Endo

## Dean Wordsmithing

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## WHERE ARE THEY NOW

**Blair Baugher ('15):** ICU nurse. Methodist South Hospital.

**Taylor Brazil ('16):** MDiv. Beeson Divinity School.

**Victoria Brooks ('14):** MA in Screenwriting. Regent University.

**Katherine Burgess ('15):** Education reporter. Jackson Sun.

**Hannah Clardy ('12):** PhD in Hebrew Bible. Univ. of Edinburgh.

**George David Clark ('05):** author of *Reveille*, professor at Washington & Jefferson College. Pittsburgh, PA.

**Zack Clemmons, Dylan Pelley, & Sam Strickland ('16):** teaching at Aspen View Academy. Castle Rock, CO.

**Ellen Cline & Sierra (Owens-Hughes) Estes ('14, '15):** Estes + Cline Ceramics. Houston, TX.

**Katie Eudy ('14):** PhD in Biochemistry. Miami University.

**Cameron Faulk ('15):** Pharmacy School. UT Memphis.

**Anna Goodman ('16):** JD, Pepperdine University School of Law. Malibu, CA.

**Jay & Rob Griffith ('14, '15), Taylor Hare ('14):** writing music & playing with their band, FlyCo. Nashville, TN.

**Joshua Guthrie ('15):** engineer. Jackson, TN.

**Ben Hamilton ('14):** graphic design at Zehnder Communications and Ben Hamilton Creative. Smyrna, TN.

**Melissa Hardman ('16):** MA in Speech-Language Pathology. University of Memphis.

**Zach Heinfeld ('14):** Fidelity Investments. Arlington, TX.

**Ward Howard ('15):** PhD in Physics & Astronomy. UNC Chapel Hill.

**Emilie Huffman ('12):** post-doctoral physics research. Universitat Bern, Switzerland.

**Joanna Huffman ('14):** after relief work in South Sudan, nanny. Jackson, TN.

**Chelsea Johnson ('16):** MS in Aerospace Engineering. GA Tech.

**Amanda (Johnson) Keller ('15):** high school Spanish teacher. Jackson, TN.

**Emily Knight ('15):** financial institutions auditor. Jackson, TN.

**Philip Kurtzweil ('15):** high school math & science teacher, Augustine School. Jackson, TN.

**Iona (McHaney) Marcellino ('16):** RN, Jackson General Hospital. Jackson, TN.

**Betsy Marsch ('14):** Betsy Marsch Studios. Nashville, TN.

**MaryAnn McClendon ('14):** elementary & middle school music teacher. Jackson, TN.

**Kaitlin Nonweiler ('14):** refugee services coordinator. Owensboro, KY.

**Megan Pinckard ('14):** finished MAPH, University of Chicago, now bookseller. Boston, MA.

**Katie Ritchie ('14):** church plant launch team. Cape Cod, MA.

**Liana Saffel ('12):** Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics. Dallas, TX.

**Josh Smith & Charlotte Cline-Smith ('11):** urban farming at Cultivate KC & communal living with Selah House. Kansas City, MO.

**Bree (McCuin) Snow ('15):** math & history teacher at an inner-city classical school. Glendale, AZ.

**Kathleen (Hartsfield) Spicer ('14):** sales development rep at Emma. Nashville, TN.

**Zachary Thompson ('14):** church planter. Salt Lake City, UT.

**Kevin Vailes ('04):** high school humanities teacher, Augustine School. Jackson, TN.

**Jane (Owen) Valentine ('15):** MA in Bioethics, Trinity Graduate School. Chicago, IL.

**Lowell Van Ness ('13):** Master of International Affairs. Texas A&M.

**Katelyn Walls ('16):** MA in Arts & Religion, Yale University.

**Katie Watson ('08):** TESOL teacher. Jackson, TN.

**Trey Weise ('14):** MA in Philosophy. Duquesne University.

**Jenaye White ('15):** publicist, LifeWay Christian Resources. Nashville, TN.

**Stephen Wunrow ('15):** MA in Biblical Exegesis. Wheaton.

Want to update us on what you're doing? Email us at [honors@uu.edu](mailto:honors@uu.edu) with your most recent news and contact info.

## COURSE REFLECTION: BEAUTY

Dr. Jill Webb

What *about* Beauty? Of all the sorts of things which could be said about beauty, the goal here shall be to say something of the experience of the study of Beauty at Union University. Naturally, such a decision confines the conversation to a small community of learners, now alumni, and to me, still trekking after 5 years of teaching Beauty. Surely, our experiences were marked with variance, but I suspect that momenta of what Beauty does have been shared by all.

The initial finding from my inquisition of Beauty: “This world is a great sculptor’s shop. We are the statues and there is a rumour going round the shop that some of us are some day going to come to life” (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*). How so? My experience of Honors life in general was such that millennia-deep questions on humanity, creation, and the nature of God took up residence in the middle of daily life. It was as though a mammoth throne appeared in the middle of my living room (I was not on it) and I stared, perpetually struck in blank amazement, asleep or awake. Do I exaggerate? Beauty life, on the other hand, was something like a morning fog. Light is all around enveloping you, but you distinguish one thing from another only when it looms up just in front of you. The *things* in the main would not disclose their intrinsic beauty, nor their dregs of suffering; they greeted, then pausing or fleeing, demanded my attention. There came (I can’t say when) a dawn of clearer sight aided by gifts of nourishment from colleagues in arts and sciences, theology, and philosophy. The beauties eventually found me receptive; they disclosed their task and chiseled away. I was the statue.

I have seen and heard that students had responses like, and unlike, my response. “Beauty was my purgatory.” “Soul wrecking.” “I’m still thinking.” “I made sense of it later.” Perhaps as alumni, still you are asking what Beauty was about. In what follows, I offer images of how Beauty may have formed the ‘statue’: *ink*, *imprint* and *graving dock*.

My grandfather was a printer in the days before computers, so he didn’t find it odd to be printing companies’ journals, the kind that give the reader a printed record of what marks of significance have been left on the days

and months and years of common experience in that company’s work-a-day world. One journal was called *Ink* and another *Imprint*, both titles reflecting the textual deposition of thought and work of that company. Did your Honors experience with Beauty create an imprint? Were you visibly marked by the pressure of beauty’s forms? If your answer today is “yes” then like the eagle’s imprinted child, you learned to become the eagle. Your thought and action is marked out by an emerging governorship of the territory gifted to you, crag, stream, and summit. Would you name your journal *Imprint*?

Or did Honors experience with Beauty seem to chaotically spill some ink, ink splattered over your fingers and faces (and papers), the form not yet—quite-visible? Unfinished thought about beauty. Unfinished work of learning. Do you sense being stymied by a numb sleep? Would you name your journal *Ink*? If so, let’s get honest. There are days we don’t seem quite up to it. Beauty makes demands, demands we can’t keep, so “leave us alone,” we say. There’s the rub: Beauty simply won’t stand for any nonsense about us. Beauty won’t let us be left alone. Or at least if we manage to be left alone, beauty didn’t leave us there, with ink all over our faces.

Now for the *graving dock*. A nautical term, the *graving dock* is where ships go for repair. Modern docks are boxes, accepting any ship that fits the dock’s length and width. In contrast, pre-modern graving docks were shaped like the ship to be docked, side supports following the contour of her bottom, and minimal water needing to be drained away. I contend that the old dry dock seems more apt for an image of what Beauty does: advance planning required on form and fewer appurtenances necessary to get ‘er damaged form docked and receptive to repairs.

While at dock, the old ship’s barnacled bottom could be scraped and burned (graved). Parts of her structure could receive a wood-patch inserted in



defective planks, *graving pieces*, to keep her afloat or her company firm-of-foot. Being at dock is costly, time consuming, and the repairing takes a community of specialized craftsmen. How does the old ship see things? If she could talk, she might say she’s feeling “high and dry” or even “alone,” even though the community is at work on her,

scraping and patching, to get her back in commission. Would you name your journal *The Graving Dock*?

Humans in the *graving dock* may feel, admittedly, lonely. During the night of the soul, the human ship is likely to be solitary, objectively so. But, solitariness is very different from “high and dry.” To be solitary often leads you to meet something; a beautiful. You may be greeted by the hawk lightening onto a bony tree, or the worm itself unaware (but you know) of wet grass about to thwart its desiccation. You may be taken in by a painting you’ve seen, but not seen, a dozen times before. Perhaps the guitar gathering dust in one corner invites you into a few bars, or the blank paper calls you for a line or two or poetry. Solitary is good, if you pay attention; you can do solitary (especially in fellowship), as long as you pay attention. So as alumni you’ve caught me in a Weil quote. “The habit of attention is the substance of prayer.” When you pray and all is splattered ink, when you pray as one imprinted, when you pray as one in the dock, pray for more beauty in the morning fog. We all want to be a ‘beauty’, even though as fallen creatures we often aim wrongly at it. Beauty entreats through the beautiful, makes demands, chisels, but He will not leave you alone. Be the sculpture. Just ask. He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle.

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To aid further reflection on this subject, we commend the following poem (on reverse side).

## EVERY RIVEN THING

*Christian Wiman (b. 1966)*

God goes, belonging to every riven thing he's made  
sing his being simply by being  
the thing it is:  
stone and tree and sky,  
man who sees and sings and wonders why

God goes. Belonging, to every riven thing he's made,  
means a storm of peace.  
Think of the atoms inside the stone.  
Think of the man who sits alone  
trying to will himself into the stillness where

God goes belonging. To every riven thing he's made  
there is given one shade  
shaped exactly to the thing itself:  
under the tree a darker tree;  
under the man the only man to see

God goes belonging to every riven thing. He's made  
the things that bring him near,  
made the mind that makes him go.  
A part of what man knows,  
apart from what man knows,

God goes belonging to every riven thing he's made.

*Printed by permission of the poet*



HONORS COMMUNITY  
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COLLEGIUM : THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER : DECEMBER 2016

# HONORS *at* UNION

## OUR DIGITS

**Alumni** 120 graduates in 3 years

where are they?



6 countries



25 states

\*includes IDS grads

what are they doing?



**38%**

gone to grad school



**15%**

teaching



**13%**

pursuing arts



**8%**

church-related fields

## Current students

168 students in the Honors Community  
 18 Discipline-specific Honors students  
 in 12 DSH programs



7% of undergraduate student body



33% of RAs



40% of LifeGroup Leaders



25% of class officers



25% of Awards Day annually

## Class of 2020

43 students representing

12 states

9 denominations

30.4 avg ACT

28 majors

67% female

16% minority