



COLLEGIUM

THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2019



THE POSSIBILITY OF PLACE *by Professor Joy Moore*

One of the many gifts the last ten years has afforded me is the opportunity to think about the power of place, about what a place encourages and

discourages, makes possible and limits, implies and denies, clarifies and obscures, nurtures and withers.

I'm thinking about the idea of place again, while sitting in a tire store, waiting as the mechanics check my back-right tire, its worrisome tread tears, and its recent refusal to hold air. The floor is gray-blue linoleum, the chairs are black recliners with ready footstools, and *Matlock* is playing on the television toward which all chairs point. Beneath the banners of WHEELS, BRAKES, OIL & LUBE, I sit propped forward in a recliner, wondering how to direct my attention toward you and these thoughts rather than the regular interval of door dings and phone rings.

Much is made possible here: tire repair, without which I would be stranded on the bypass by afternoon, and the ongoing service of vehicles we've come to depend on; jobs for mechanics to practice their craftsmanship and assist the rest of us; the exchange of money and service through a local business that helps our city's economy. And while the waiting room's snacks and activities intend to distract us from boredom, it nonetheless provides a chair and a chance to make something of the hour.

Places shape activity, perception, and value, which shape people and what we attempt and achieve. That places form and are formed by us means we need, among other virtues, discernment and imagination. Discernment in recognizing that they shape us and considering how they shape us, in choosing where to spend our time because of what places do to us, and,

in light of these, engaging in imaginative work for our lives and communities. Because places shape us, because we can be shaped toward different ends, we do well to imagine what things we want for ourselves and our communities and how we can cultivate such realities where we are.

Places exist within other places, too, like coffee shops on college campuses, which is where I've developed a fair share of thoughts about this topic. In my work with Barefoots and Modero, I've been motivated by what we can make possible for our campus, located in this particular city, and the ways we can shape both shops to invite conversation, good inquiry, embodied interactions, and engaged participation in the abundant learning one's college years offer.

What a place lacks can provide impetus for creativity and change. That certainly informed our efforts to bring specialty coffee to Jackson and to Union. To offer another example, early in my time in Jackson, and in large measure due to a hunger for better conversation about the arts and culture, two colleagues and friends began a weekly meeting with a robust lineup of informal lectures and discussions on topics of film, music, art, and culture, from icons to the isolating effects of fences and garages. Likewise, it was the overabundance of chain restaurants and lack of local eateries, as well as small budgets and limited time after work, that compelled my friends and I to learn to cook better and to find ways to share meals together often. What we grew came from shared interest and imagination and developed because the soil was ripe for it.

And what of the place of the Honors Community? What has it made possible and nurtured and called forth? What has it discouraged, limited? It seeks to make possible shared inquiry around very central, very human

questions about wisdom and beauty, justice and right relations with the natural world. It limits our unexamined assumptions and tendencies to show off or hide in conversations. It encourages us toward real pursuit of truth and goodness and toward seeing such pursuits as a way of being, a lifelong learning. It invites us to care about one another's learning and understanding and to recognize that we can learn more together than alone. It does so because of the people who've shaped it—Dr. Huelin, Dr. Webb, the faculty and committee members, among others—and because of the students who've participated in it and who help one another to carry on these kinds of pursuits and conversations.

For these reasons, I consider the opportunity I've been given in the Honors Community a gift, an entrustment, and an invitation to participate in the life of this community. It means stewarding this place and all it holds and intends to offer those who come in and go forth, as each of you have.

I'm certain each of you could tell many tales about what the Honors Community—its place and people and culture—has made possible for you, provided for you, challenged in you, and called out of you, and I welcome you to write or visit and share. You've been part of this place and now carry it with you where you are. And wherever those places are, I encourage you to look in gratitude upon those who have shaped it thus far and invited you in, and to offer yourself to the good of those places and the people within. To imagine well and even to imagine small: a meal or a monthly gathering around a shared interest could cause real movement in the lives of those around the room, including your own. Remember, as Wendell Berry says, "it all turns on affection," and from Paradiso, St. Augustine nods.

HONORS *at* UNION

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

LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

by Dr. Emilie Huffman, '12

As a recent PhD graduate who is continuing on in academia, my life experiences in some ways have changed little compared to those from my undergrad career. I'm still interacting with students and faculty daily, walking to a cafeteria around noon, and learning just how similar all academic buildings look to each other—no matter where I am. I'm still learning, too, and some of the major themes in my life have seeds that were planted in my undergrad days. They've been applicable to the creative, personal and analytic aspects of my work, so *maybe* if your life involves any of those things, they'll be useful to you as well!

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

This is something that our professors work hard to encourage in us, but it's hard for me and hard for many of the best students I've had. As a grad student at Duke, I taught three types of introductory physics courses: one for physics majors, one for engineering majors, and one for premed students. The former two groups were invested in the subject matter and had more preparation in advance, and *yet I always got the deepest and best questions from the premeds*. Questions I wouldn't have thought to ask as an undergrad physics major myself. Why would this be the case?

The physics and engineering majors had their identities as "people who are good at physics" at stake. By asking simple questions, they risked revealing to their classmates that maybe they didn't know something supposedly obvious to everyone else.

But for the premeds, it was completely different. They may have been less prepared for physics, but they knew they needed to learn it. They also had no need to prove to others that they already knew their stuff. So while the premeds would often start at a lower level at the beginning of the year, they would exceed the physics/engineering majors in the depth of their understanding by the end of it, thanks to their newfound solid conceptual base.

I still had the attitude of the physics/engineering undergrads when I began graduate school. While I would ask my peers questions about things I didn't understand after class, I was too self-conscious to ever ask the professor in class. Like my own students, I was too interested in proving to the

professors that I was smart enough to follow their lectures immediately, even though I couldn't really.

But I quickly realized that this had to change when I started doing research. If I didn't stop my advisor right where I didn't follow something, my lack of understanding would only compound and I wouldn't be able to move forward with my own work. It's amazing how far you can get if you have even the most basic foundational understanding, versus how little you can do if you don't.

So don't be afraid to ask questions. It doesn't matter if someone learned something as an undergrad and you didn't. It doesn't matter if someone learned something in high school and you didn't. It doesn't even matter if some guy says he learned contour integrals in kindergarten and you didn't. You can still learn these things today—it's never too late. And I think for most of us, it's a gift to be able to share our knowledge with someone else.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE WRONG AND LEARN MORE

This point is related to the last in that again our ego can be the enemy. As we learn more, our reputation builds and more is expected of us, and so the last thing we want as "experts" is to discover that we are in fact wrong. When my results are questioned at conferences, my knee-jerk reaction is to defend myself and say the first counter-argument that comes to mind.

It's always in this situation that I most want to prove that I know things.

It's also always in this situation that I say the most wrong things.

Again, my advisor has been a good guide in this area. He's not afraid to admit when he doesn't know the answer to something, and he's willing to be convinced of an opposing point, but he also takes the time to really understand the question first and apply some analysis. He listens well and doesn't talk past a question. The key is not to let your insecurity or your ego get in the way of a potential learning opportunity.

Hard questions are good. Considering complications that you hadn't considered before is good, and honesty about where your comprehension is waning is excellent. After all, we're supposed to be after truth and understanding, so we should embrace the

opportunity to improve! Don't be afraid to be wrong and learn more, even when you're supposedly the one who should know it all.

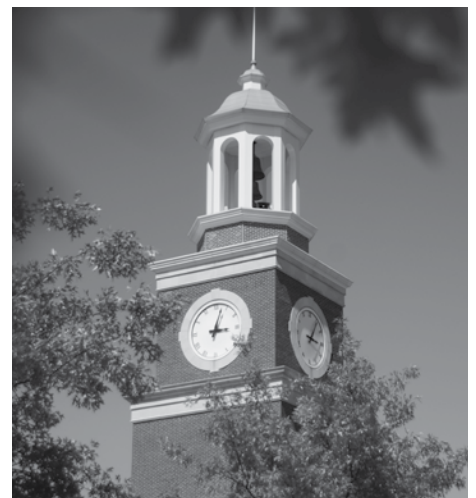
HEAR THESE SIX WORDS TODAY

My last point comes from an article I stumbled upon late at night in the middle of some endless quantum field theory homework that I didn't understand, and it has stayed with me since. In it, the author Rachel Held Evans discusses six words that a special education teacher used with her children: "I love to watch you play."

In the words of the article, "I thought of how desperately we adults need to hear these words too. . . . What a relief it would be to know the pressure's off. God delights in our living and breathing and working and praying and that delight is not something we have to earn by doing everything right. . . . We're not here to impress or perform; we're here to revel in God's delight. God just loves to watch us play."

In our work, especially if it is creative and if the work is one of our passions, it's easy to attach our identity to how well we are performing—how well we are doing justice to this vocation. But our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, and we do this through our play, however imperfect it may be, and regardless of how successful it is according to the world's standards.

I hope you find comfort in these six words too if you need it. While I'm definitely still working on asking questions, listening well to criticism, and keeping my work in perspective as an imperfect but fundamentally good form of play, the payoff is worth the effort. It's a fascinating universe to explore.



THE BOOKSHELF

2018 colloquium selections and reading recommendations from faculty and staff include:

Dr. Dub Oliver:

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life
by Tish Harrison Warren

Dr. David Thomas

Crossing to Safety
by Wallace Stegner

Dr. Scott Huelin

Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World
by Cal Newport

Dr. Justin Barnard

The Sunset Limited
by Cormac McCarthy

Dr. Ray Van Neste

The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance
by Sinclair Ferguson

Dr. Beth Madison

Practicing the Presence of God
by Brother Lawrence

Dr. Jill Webb

Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith
by Michael Reeves

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

Abigail Berends ('18): pursuing an MA in Urban Education through the Memphis Teacher Residency.

Janey Berends ('18): undertaking a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship in Peru, beginning in spring 2019.

Ellen Cline ('14): pursuing an MA in Counseling Psychology at the Seattle School of Theology and Psychology. Seattle, WA.

Amanda Couch ('18): ICU nurse. Columbia, TN.

Nick Dean ('14): studying Occupational Therapy at the Medical University of South Carolina. Charleston, SC.

Lydia de Wolf ('15): PhD student and Graduate Teaching Assistant in Math at Kansas State University. Manhattan, KS.

Kimberly (Chavers) Gardner ('17): private ESL tutor and tutor with Lindamood-Bell. Memphis, TN.

Rob Griffith ('15): Jackson Downtown Development Corporation. Jackson, TN.

Lauren (Bone) Kirk ('15): pursuing a Master's in Social Work and a Master's in City & Regional Planning from the University of Memphis. Jackson, TN.

Brennan Kolbe ('16): pursuing an MDiv at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Chicago, IL.

Mary Scarlett (Greenway) LaBerge ('17): artist with M. Scarlett Creative. Brentwood, TN.

Joseph McFatridge ('14): English teacher at Munford High School. Memphis, TN.

Amy Murdaugh ('18): pursuing a PhD

in Mathematical Sciences at Clemson University. Clemson, SC.

Ben Pinkley ('18): Quality Control Chemist for the Clariant Corporation. Louisville, KY.

Daniel Regan ('18): Accountant with Ernst & Young. Nashville, TN.

Kaylee (Gibson) Reid ('17): Client Services Coordinator at CBRE commercial real estate firm. St. Louis, MO.

Seth Reid ('18): studying law at Washington University. St. Louis, MO.

Alexandria Renckens ('18): Corporate Content Coordinator for Jabil, a product solutions company. St. Petersburg, FL.

Mason Ruby ('18): intern at theCO, coworking maker space. Jackson, TN.

Ryan Sinni ('18): pursuing a PhD in Literature at Baylor University. Waco, TX.

Jacob Lloyd Smith ('16): pursuing an MDiv from Southern Seminary. Louisville, KY.

Madeline Smith ('18): intern at the Cincinnati Zoo. Cincinnati, OH.

Andrew Stricklin ('15): in medical school at the University of Louisville.

Breanne (Sills) Vailes ('15): received her MSW and works as the Programming Coordinator for the Vocatio Center, Union University. Jackson, TN.

Lowell Van Ness ('13): Border Patrol Agent. Alpine, TX.

Alex (Burroughs) Vincent ('17): RN in Mother/Baby at Jackson Madison County General Hospital. Jackson, TN.

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

COURSE REFLECTION: JUSTICE

by Katie Allison, '20

During my time in the Justice course I learned much about the philosophical and practical applications of this specific subject, particularly war, the death penalty, civil rights, and many other topics. While justice in itself is a complicated topic, much of my own growth occurred in the places where justice and other subjects such as hope, forgiveness, and beauty weave together—I found myself grappling with nuances and conflicting ideas. I found myself asking how I should live and further, how I should live in relation to God and others around me. While justice was often discussed as a lofty concept, when the class was over I knew contemplating justice should be part of my daily life, and should interact with aspects of life such as hope, forgiveness, and beauty.

I care a great deal about justice, and injustice is something that I am extremely concerned about, but this preoccupation with injustice in the world often leaves me fighting a battle between hope and cynicism. Thus, when Dr. Barnard assigned a paper on the relationship between hope and justice, I was at a loss. Injustice should move us to weep, and to feel the sorrow that results from evil in the world. But as Eleonore Stump says, a focus on “the evils of our world and ourselves prepares us to be the more startled by the taste of true goodness when we find it and the more determined to follow that taste till we see where it leads.”¹ Hope for a just world is what drives us to do justice. This hope is not simply a wish—it is based in reality, and thus demands that the one who hopes take steps to actualize that for which one is hoping. This understanding is one in which we feel the longing for justice and hope for it to be accomplished while doing our part in accomplishing it. Hope “is painful because what is hoped for is not yet here.”² Hope moves us to see a glimpse of God’s justice—it moves our eyes upward and when our eyes are drawn back down we can see the divide between the world’s injustice and God’s justice. We then hope to bridge that divide in whatever small way we can.

Sensitivity to injustice can also make us reluctant to forgive, but reading Bryan Stevenson’s *Just Mercy* forced me to analyze

the manner in which forgiveness and justice interact. I was confronted with my own disparity of grace. It made me consider what forgiveness requires of me and how forgiveness is to be balanced with justice. Does it allow one to hope for retribution? Can one forgive and still wish that the oppressor/offender is given their due? I am still not quite sure of the answer to these questions, maybe partly because forgiveness is embodied and difficult to pin down without specific situations. However, Timothy Keller discusses two different forms of justice: *mishpat* and *tzadeqah*.³ *Mishpat* is retributive justice, or giving one what they are due. *Tzadeqah* is restorative justice that involves living in right relationship to others and God, a justice that would render *mishpat* unnecessary. Thus, forgiveness might itself be an act of justice—an act of living in right relationship to others. This journey towards forgiveness might be something like Dante’s portrayal of purgatory, moving towards that which one longs for, but enduring much pain in the process. In the same way that hope is painful because what is hoped for is not actualized, forgiveness is painful because an ultimate justice is not yet complete. It is painful to attempt to understand the one who has hurt you. It is much easier to paint him as a monster, to dismiss all traces of humanity. The price for forgiveness is the forgiver’s to pay, and it is long and costly.⁴ Yet, “If we are never obliged to relieve others’ burdens but only when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbor’s burdens, when we bear no burden at all?”⁵ If *tzadeqah* renders *mishpat* unnecessary, then this is a justice that produces harmony, and ultimately, rest. This does not mean that forgiveness is used to stifle the cries of the oppressed or wounded, but rather that it must be a piece in a much larger move towards justice.

During the Justice course I also felt conflicted between my love for beauty and justice—I worried that a preoccupation with



beauty might tend towards apathy regarding issues of justice, that beauty would distract me from noticing suffering. Cynicism towards both beauty and forgiveness might be rooted in the fear that justice wouldn’t be beautiful or lead to beauty. So, like any good honors student, I read a book after the course ended titled, *On Beauty and Being Just* by Elaine Scarry. Scarry makes the case that beauty actually makes us more just because the practice of noticing and attending to beauty is the very same practice one needs to address injustice.⁶ Both involve rightly ordered loves that allow one to respond in the correct manner, notice, and decenter one’s self. Beauty fosters a special attention to the *imago dei*, aiding the development of just responses, but at first I struggled to believe the beauty of nature or inanimate objects connected to justice. Yet beauty allows us to witness fairness in the aesthetic sense of the word, and thus pushes us towards an ethical fairness—both envision shalom.

Any encounter with beauty is the result of grace, and thus we might learn to have grace with others, aiding the pursuit of forgiveness, hope, and ultimately justice. I am still uncertain of many things, and I am still wrestling with how they apply to my life. But asking these questions has allowed me to see justice in many more ways and forces me to analyze the justness of my own soul. It has made me wonder at things I never expected and love justice more than I thought possible, and that might be the very point.

¹Eleonore Stump, *The Mirror of Evil* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

²*Ibid.*, 6.

³Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (Penguin Books, 2016), 10.

⁴“Celestin Musekura Interview,” Vimeo, Jan. 2018, vimeo.com/76649390.

⁵Jonathan Edwards, “Christian Charity,” *The Sovereignty of God in Salvation* (Jan. 1732), www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/charity.htm.

⁶Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH

The students of the Justice class travelled to Memphis for a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum and attended a lecture by Bryan Stevenson, activist, lawyer, and author of *Just Mercy*.

Dr. Ronald K. Rittgers of Valparaiso University delivered the 20th annual Scholar-in-Residence Lectures for 2018 on "The Irreducible Luther: Four New Interpretations." Dr. Rittgers is Professor of History and Theology at Valparaiso University, has authored two books on Reformation pastoral theology and practice, and is the President of the American Society of Church History. His lectures reflected on Luther as "a theologian of love," as well as a prophetic, mystic, and consoling voice.

APRIL

Honors co-sponsored Union's first "Phone-Free Day," complete with games, prizes, and reflections from Dr. Justin Barnard and Prof. Ashley Blair.

Freshmen in the Beauty class travelled to Chicago for their annual Art & Architecture Tour. They visited the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, and attended a performance of the Spektral Quartet at the University of Chicago.

Three current Honors students and Honors alumna Abby Thigpen presented papers at the Southeast Conference on Christianity and Literature, which reflected on the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Frankenstein*.

MAY

The seventh annual Honors Banquet recognized 34 students graduating from General Honors and Discipline-specific Honors, and commemorated Dr. Webb's retirement as Assistant Director with skits, speeches, and gifts.

Honors student and Applied Linguistics and Spanish major Janey Berends received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Peru, and the Tigrett Medal at graduation.

JUNE

Professor Joy Moore assumed the position of Assistant Director for the Honors Community. Professor Moore continues as Director of Barefoots Joe and Modero Coffee, although in a more supervisory role.

SEPTEMBER

The Honors Student Association founded an undergraduate writing club, known as Penmoot. Penmoot meets on Thursday nights and is open to the university community as a whole. So far it is off to a lively start.

OCTOBER

Students in the Wisdom class travelled to Baylor to present at the annual Symposium on Faith & Culture. This year's theme: "Stewardship of Creation."

DSH Physics student Christian Brown travelled to Hawaii to present some of his research at a meeting of the Nuclear Physics Division of the American Physical Society and the Physical Society of Japan.





HONORS COMMUNITY
1050 Union University Drive
Jackson, Tennessee 38305

COLLEGIUM : THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER : JANUARY 2019

HONORS *at* UNION

OUR DIGITS

Alumni 201 graduates in 5 years

where are they?



5 countries



28 states

what are they doing?



34%
in grad school



14%
teaching



8%
arts



13%
social or
spiritual care



18%
business

Current students

159 students in the Honors Community
in 68 majors

38 Discipline-specific Honors students
in 15 DSH programs



5% of undergraduate student body



25% of Resident
Advisors



30% of LifeGroup
Leaders



48% of Debate Team



38% of Awards Day
2018

Class of 2022 39 students representing

15 states

30.6 avg ACT

23 majors

72% female

13% minority