



people

Genesis 1:26-31

KAIROS

The Voice of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Students

5/13/2019

AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ISSUE 338

Inside: poetry, reflections,
congratulations, and more!

Editor

Sheth LaRue, Middler MDiv.

Sheth was born at a young age and has been introverted and under-confident for most of his life (except for a brief period from August 18 to August 23, 1997). Avid fan of pie and Led Zeppelin. The most famous person he ever met is a tie between Barry Lopez and Rich Karlis, neither of which are very famous. He wants humanity to be nicer, kinder, and more loving. And to laugh more. Fears spiders.



Designer

Reba Balint, Junior MDiv.

Combining her passions of Fine Arts and Religion, Reba is very excited to be the new designer for Kairos. She loves denim jackets and music she wasn't yet alive to originally listen to. She believes in sharing cheerfulness whenever possible. Has deep respect/fears for bees.



Gratefulness may, at times, seem insincere if it is easy, abundant, or overflowing.

Thankfulness may seem inauthentic if it is offered freely to everyone.

Gratitude may seem illegitimate if it is given in response to just about anything.

But seeming isn't knowing.

εὐχαριστέω

Every single person on this campus has goodness within them.

Every single person on this campus has worth within them.

Thank you for contributing whatever percent of yourself you were able to this past year. Thank you for your strength. Thank you for your weakness.

I'm so grateful to get to see your growth. I'm grateful you get to see mine.

My heart is full of gratitude for you all.

I hope it shows.

Untitled - Kimberlee Runnion, Junior MDiv

As a depressed teenager, I looked up into the sky and saw Orion:

Powerful, strong, warrior;

Watching over me, protecting me.

And I felt comforted.

When I miscarried in my 20s, I looked up into the sky and saw Orion:

A twirling, dancing, girl;

Watching over me, cheering me on.

And I felt comforted.

When my preteen son raged against the world, I looked at the Big Dipper on his cheek,

A constellation of freckles that matched those on my back;

Connecting us, biology where there was no biology.

And I felt comforted.

And in the windowless hospital ward that was our home for two weeks,

where we couldn't look up and see the night sky, I looked around

And I saw people;

Friends, chosen family, doctors, nurses,

A parade of warriors and dancers:

Watching over us, protecting us, cheering us on.

And I felt God.

Hey y'all! It's been over two months since I crossed the Atlantic to go back to my beloved Groningen. This update is mainly a thinly veiled attempt at getting as many of you as I can to come on over. So let's start at the beginning, coming back to the Netherlands ...

As soon as I stepped out of the airport, I was met with an ice-cold deluge which made my Christmas trip to New York seem like a vacay to the Bahamas (no, it's not usually that bad). Luckily, my wonderful boyfriend had secured means of transportation for the occasion. I hesitate to use the word "car", as I doubt the vehicle in question would even be allowed to serve as a cart on a Texan golf course. While we were being rocked in our buggy by the winds and torrential downpour on the two-hour-drive back to Groningen, I reflected on my time at APTS.

And now I still find myself reminiscing about Austin an awful lot. I miss the beautiful campus, the Texas sun, bacon and pickled okra, and, above all, I miss the people. I'm still amazed at the extent to which y'all welcomed me and allowed me to be part of your lives for a little while. I'm not sure if I ever voiced my gratitude properly. Then again, the fact that I'm rubbish at keeping in touch doesn't exactly help with expressing how much it meant to me. While I'm waiting for the right time and funds to come back for a visit, I figured the next best thing would be to get some of y'all to come here.

You should consider doing what I did and embark on the adventure of a lifetime by studying abroad. Actually, scrap the "consider" part, just do it. And if you're going for abroad, a term at the Protestant Theological University in Groningen is the way to go. I won't try to sell you on the academic program, though it's English-taught, stellar and definitely worth the trip in and of itself. If you want to learn more you can visit www.ptthu.nl or let me put you in touch with more knowledgeable people.

Instead, I'd like to talk about the stuff you won't read on websites. Like the feeling you get when the sunlight dances on the water of one of the many canals, while you're strolling past beautiful century-old mansions and warehouses, are indescribable (see what I did there? I just described it). Groningen is known as the city which has always had the feeling of a village, and "gezelligheid" - the untranslatable Dutch word meaning coziness-with-all-the-people-you-like- and-a-cold-beer (or non-alcoholic yet equally delightful beverage). Also, about a quarter of the city's inhabitants are students, so it's young, vibrant and filled to the brim with opportunities for fun. It's an extremely safe city, and is consistently rated one of the happiest cities in Europe.

Even if you don't choose to study in Groningen (there's a PThU location in Amsterdam), you'd still get to enjoy the fact that literally everybody speaks English. Plus, the Netherlands are an awfully convenient starting point for visiting the rest of Europe - Berlin, Paris and Brussels are literally a train ride away and there are many other options to travel literally anywhere in Europe. And trust me, you'll have the time to visit there.

Apart from teaching me a lot about new places, my semester abroad has taught me about the thing I always carry with me – myself. No, I didn't "find myself" or anything like that. However, the change in people and circumstances was truly transformational and helped me distinguish my calling. It opened my eyes to the ways in which some aspects of my faith are more culture bound than I previously realized. It showed me what it's like to be a guest, an outsider of sorts. By completely submerging myself in this new context, I caught a glimpse of the surprising ways in which the Spirit works. I truly think every church-person should have these experiences. Thank you for giving them to me.

Love,
Alexandra



The Greatest Tale Ever Told: A Story About People –
Wilson Nicholson, Middler MDiv.

It was a dark and stormy spring day in April of 2005. I was a junior in high school, and the lunch bell rang. As I was exiting my Latin class, I saw my friend Geoff in the hallway. Since it was lunch time, and juniors and seniors at my high school could leave campus, he asked if I had any lunch plans. When I told him that I did not, he said, "Great! Neither do I. Let's go to the Wendy's about five minutes down the street."

I agreed to go with him, but little did I know the events that followed would change my life forever. This would even be a story that I'd still be telling people after I turned 30. We headed to the parking lot, hopped in Geoff's car, and just like that we were off. As we continued along our journey on that fateful April day, Geoff and I talked about the usual things. We talked about baseball because we both played on the baseball team. We talked about the musical genres of punk rock and ska because we both had similar tastes. We talked a little bit about school because we were in the same computer literacy class. And then we got to talking about what we were planning to order. I didn't go to Wendy's often, so I was a little hesitant to make a choice. I asked Geoff what he usually ordered, and he said that he usually gets the #4, which is the spicy chicken sandwich. I thought to myself, you know that sounds pretty good. I think I'll get one of those as well.

As we approached the entrance to the Wendy's drive-thru, we noticed an intense argument between two individuals in the parking lot. We saw one man with his arms raised and glaring at the other. The other man's face was beginning to turn dark red. You could tell he was outraged because you could hear him screaming about something to the one with raised arms. I couldn't tell whether they were arguing about a parking spot, or if one man hit the car of the other. But it was a passionate and angry encounter between the two of them. They could have cared less about the rain. Whatever they were arguing over was clearly more important than getting drenched with water. I was concerned the argument might lead to violence. It was a startling sight to see at first, but after we passed them and pulled into the line, I didn't think much of the argument taking place right next to us. One of us probably should have done something about it, but sadly at that time we made the poor choice not to. I have never forgotten that choice. That decision still haunts me to this very day.

Once we were in the line, I gave the menu another glance just to be certain I had made the right choice with the spicy chicken sandwich. The line was running really slowly so I had a lot of time to deliberate. We finally pulled up to order, and I stuck with the spicy chicken sandwich.

I didn't always share the same opinion with Geoff when it came to food, but I trusted him on this one. I ordered one spicy chicken sandwich with cheese, fries, and a Dr. Pepper. I thought to myself, you know, this is going to be a pretty good lunch. But that sense of enjoyment quickly shifted. We realized we had been in line so long that we might be late to our next class. We still hadn't pulled up to the window to get the food we had ordered, and still had a few cars in front of us. Finally, we pulled up to the window. A kind man, not much older than we were, was waiting for us as we pulled up. We talked briefly about the weather and exchanged pleasantries as we gave him our payments for the food. Then he handed us our order with a smile, we thanked him, and drove off. I replay that interaction again and again in my mind because of the events that followed. I only wish we all could have been warned regarding the situation we were all about to be caught in the middle of.

Since we were running late, Geoff and I were trying to decide whether we should eat in the parking lot like we had planned or if it'd be best for us to eat in the car while he drove us back to school. While we were deliberating, I noticed the two men still arguing in the rain. It looked like the argument had begun to escalate even further. While we were watching the argument continue to unfold before us, I began to inspect the contents inside of the Wendy's bag. I ate a fry, took a sip of my drink, and then grabbed my sandwich. The fries were delicious, and the sandwich was warm. This was a good choice I thought. Whatever we decided to do, I knew that no matter what I was going to enjoy this meal. As we were talking and I began to slowly unwrap my sandwich, I noticed something quite odd.

All of the sudden I heard a BAM! Geoff had accidentally dropped a few quarters, and then I told him the news. I asked if he remembered my order. He told me that he remembered me ordering the spicy chicken sandwich with cheese, fries, and a Dr. Pepper. I told him that there wasn't any cheese on my spicy chicken sandwich even though I had ordered it with cheese. I was upset that Wendy's didn't get my order right. I had really wanted cheese on that sandwich. It was a really disappointing moment knowing what could have been. Maybe next time the chef at Wendy's will remember. People are really interesting, aren't they?

But a Brief Moment - Ezequiel Herrera, Senior MDiv.

It seems it was yesterday we arrived on campus ready to learn, ready to be shaken. We couldn't wait, couldn't start soon enough, to begin the transformation and absorb it all. A definition of faith by Calvin was given - some embraced it, others ditched it... one person stuck with the one Bonhoeffer used to live faithfully as a Christian in defiance of Hitler.

Doctrines and theologians were discussed argued and fought over during lunch. No one won any arguments we were simply shaping our theological thoughts. Biblical languages and world religion were taught, some were good at them and even excelled, others honestly wanted to get those out of the way, and did what they could to move the ball closer to (the) gate.

As senior students we have learned our way around, we are having fun, now we are having a ball, but the bells are tolling, the time is approaching, we hear the Dean of Students calling, "Hey friends it's time to get going!" Seminary experience was but a brief moment, one to be adored and treasured for every moment...

We will revisit it again and again when life seems as wreckage...impossible to comprehend. A brief moment has been, what a time, what a gift. Goodbye y'all, our tears are rolling, the train conductor is shouting, "Hey, people can't wait any longer." We must endure the pain of saying goodbye to classmates and friends, staff, and faculty until we rendezvous again.

Sunrise People - Jonathan Freeman, Junior MDiv.

I cannot wake to an alarm anymore.
Don't tear me into this moment without
Showing me the future.
I need to see the sunrise.

The morning air is just as cold,
And I'll still trip on the dark ground.
But I will get up
Each time, until I get there.

Every silhouette
That stands between myself and the horizon
Will matter.

Each will be closer
And brighter than the last one was-
Enraptured.

And when my foot at last hits the shore,
Where yours hit it moments before,
The sun will be up.
And I'll see your face.
And fear will be love.
And we'll be awake.



As the academic year draws to an end, I would like to highlight the accomplishments of our student association and so I write this note as moderator of it (2018-2019) and on behalf of the ISA.

We started the academic year with five students and two faculty advisors - Dr. Gregory L. Cuéllar and Dr. J. Owens-Jofré - whose wisdom, guidance, vision and mentorship were instrumental in the success we were able to achieve as a student group during this period. One of the first actions we took was to change the name of the student group from *Hispanic/Latino Student Association* to *Latinx Student Association*. The rationale behind the move was to reflect a more inclusive language and embody a broader welcoming and hospitable practice towards everyone.

As the ISA, we participated along with others in a supporting and collaborative role. Among those events in which we participated (in the broad sense of the word/latus sensus) were:

Student Delegation to the southern border in December 2018. We not only contributed financially, but our faculty advisors as well as one of our members, Estela Sifuentes, were active participants in the event.

Annual Conference of the Hispanic Mission Ministry Network. This is a program under the direction of Education Beyond the Walls, and sponsored by the Synod of the Sun.

We actively participated in the **Cruzando La Frontera 2019 Event (La Iglesia Migrante/The Migrant Church)**. This is an educational event with the main goal of providing high quality educational opportunities for Spanish speaking churches and communities beyond the walls of the seminary campus. Dr. Cuéllar and Dr. Owens-Jofré were two of the five keynote speakers at the event.

Día de los Muertos (Day of the Death Nov.1-2). This celebration/worship service has become a staple in the seminary life and even beyond. This year was particularly special for several reasons. One was the decoration of Shelton Chapel and the altar created by Diana Small, a graduating senior and a local artist. She shared her time and talents to create an altar worthy of the celebration. The second was the meaningful worship service prepared by ISA members. Dr. Cuéllar preached a prophetic sermon which was also a call to action and planted the seeds which eventually germinated, resulting in the student delegation traveling to McAllen for several days. Angela Williams (graduating senior) and several others played pivotal roles in the mobilization of students, faculty members, and both regional and national figures of the PCUSA who participated in this event.

HESED 2019: A Changing Homeland. The celebration of this event was the crown jewel of the ISA. Along with Dr. Cuéllar, Dr. Owens-Jofré, Dr. Asante Todd, the African American Student Group, SAV office staff, the student body president, Carrie Winebrenner and others, the ISA shared the gifts and talents of our group to help make this event a success. We were able to involve and employ the gifts, talents and resources available from the student body. The end result was an extraordinary and astonishing success. We would be remiss if we failed to highlight the amazing contribution and effective leadership of the co-moderators, Estela Sifuentes and Usama Malik, whose organizational skills and creativity were instrumental in the success of this enterprise.

Among the lessons learned during this period, was the importance and significance of teamwork and collaborative efforts. We made it a point to reach out and invite others to participate and be an integral part of our ISA events and the positive outcome was palpable and notable.

I leave you with this blessing: May God continue to bless APTS to be a seminary where students of color can obtain a theological education, and thus become agents of change, transforming and improving the lives of those they encounter on their faith journeys.

How do you map this?

your heart's blood facing you
screaming in rage, dagger-eyed

The mechanical is straightforward
bathe clothe feed

and the job does start out as mechanical—
mind-numbing, repetitive, flat

Now the balance swings:
heart-breaking constant ingenuity:

Give space for failure!
Don't leave room for irrevocable choices.
*she walks into irrevocable
it's her front door*

Make clear boundaries,
but not too many.
*you will have to defend them
like a medieval keep*

Be
consistent
*consistent like Gibraltar,
surf booming through the crevices*

God, love that walls us in,
and your never-failing presence

enduring all
surrounding all

I feel so perishable,
bound to an immortal task.

By Kimbol Soques, Junior MDiv.

Reflections on Global Partnership -
Axolile Qina, Global Partner

Austin Seminary has been a rather interesting experience for me. My time here has given me a lot of space to reflect about my own career aspirations, my spiritual walk and relationship with God, and an opportunity to build relationships with people I probably would have never met, if I did not come to Austin Seminary. From the moment I arrived I felt welcomed, safe, and comfortable. This was important for me and my family back at home, as we were very worried about the shooting events that we had seen on the news in the United States. Furthermore, the relationships I have begun to build here are relationships I hope to continue to be part of, even after my time here at the Seminary. The conversations, spaces of sharing theological perspectives, and listening to other people's stories provided a sincere connection with people in this community in a deep and very meaningful way.

The challenges were, however, the food. In the beginning I could eat everything, but along the way I got quite sick and have subsequently had to watch my diet. This was rather difficult, because I normally eat everything, but clearly my body did not respond well to some foods along the way. In addition, as a Global Partner student you are basically in all three of the year groups' on the campus. It was challenging to build real genuine relationships with each group, as you start building relationship with the first year group from the welcoming week, and then you have to play catch up with the other year groups' in the classrooms and other community events.

It would be helpful, perhaps, that the welcoming be situated amongst all year groups' so that the community vision of the Seminary can be better executed, and also be beneficial to Global Partner students who will basically be situated within all of the year groups' through the various classes that they take together.

Moreover, I sincerely hope that this Seminary continues to place emphasis on building community. This is specifically consistent with our African concept of Ubuntu, which means when translated: "a person is a person through/ because of (other) people" (umuntu ngumtu ngabantu). However, to realise this, which is connected to the challenge of relationship building that I experience, is an emphasis on creating spaces for real and genuine relationships. Although the Seminary is attempting this already, more spaces can be established that can be helpful to better facilitate the community vision of the Seminary. Then people of various cultures, races, religions, identities and continents, can learn from one another in community through genuine and real relationships that are facilitated from those spaces. The realization of this vision - and the hope that I have for the Seminary - is important because it allows the Seminary to be a space of inclusivity whereby it continues to embrace diversity, which then, in turn, continues to prepare future leaders from this Seminary to do the same when they are sent to lead their congregations and lead within society.

May God continue to bless and guide you all and thank you for the opportunity!



A Charge - Andrew Frazier, Senior MDiv

Look each other in the eyes. Be authentic. Listen. Listen again. Ask for help. Know that you are enough.



A Benediction - Andy Gerhart, Senior MDiv

May we learn to love better. May we know the comfort of human friendship and the company of earth. May our gifts be used to bless the world.

Class of 2019

MDiv

Caroline Barnett
Matthew Cardona
Andrew Frazier
Andrew Gerhart
Jennifer Hallberg
Madeline Hart-Andersen
Debbie Head
Ezequiel Herrera
Todd Jones
April Long
Megan McMillan
Derrick Oullette
Alexandra Pappas
Devon Reynolds
Estela Sifuentes
Diana Small
Angela Williams

MATS

Daniel Awuah
Margaret Burns
Caralee Sadler
Axolile Qina

MAYM

Katharine Bair
Jordan Burk
Zachary Cheeseman
Teresa Kingsbury
Katherine Reed
Caleigh Smith
Jose Suarez

MAMP

Roy Collins, Jr.
Webster Kaisi, Jr.
Vicki Schwarz

DMin

Sarah Allen
Rosanna Anderson
Andrew Holmes
Daniel Jezioro
Christopher Joiner
Brandon Lewis
Joe MacDonald
Gregory Massey
Amy Moehnke
Anthony Scoma

the back page - Sheth LaRue, Middler MDiv

Graduating Seniors: I'm not good at saying goodbye. I don't always know how to express myself because I don't know if I'm going to see you again. 'Goodbye' is too final - it's like saying 'We shall never meet again!' But at the same time, 'see ya later' is too promissory - I will forever feel obligated to seek you out if we're within a 100 mile radius of one another. I've been contemplating what to say to you in these final days of our living together in community.

I want to start with thanking you. Thank you for your warm welcome as I arrived on campus. Thank you for your encouragement as I struggled where you once struggled - emotionally, mentally, and academically. Thank you for your commiseration with ridiculous classes, empathy at the loss of life, and counsel during relationship struggles. Thank you for helping me learn Hebrew and Greek, theology, ethics, and the entirety of the Bible. Thank you for guiding me as I made good choices and bad decisions; encouragement when I complained to the Deans (Gaventa and Jensen); peer-pressure to sample queso and kolaches. Thank you for being compassionate pastors, helpful classmates, and excellent friends.

To Daniel Awuah, Webster Kaisi, Axolile Qina, and Alexandra Matz - thank you for sharing yourselves and your families with me. Thank you for teaching me about new and different ways to think about God. Thank you for your undying faith and unwavering love for our God. Thank you for showing me grace and forgiveness when I was insensitive, uneducated, or unaware, and thank you for gently guiding me to new ways of thinking.

I leave you with this benediction attributed to Bishop Woodie White given during the 1996 UMC General Conference:

And now, may the Lord torment you.
May the Lord keep before you the faces
of the hungry, the lonely, the rejected and the despised.
May the Lord afflict you with pain for
the hurt, the wounded, the oppressed,
the abused, the victims of violence.
May God grace you with agony, a burning thirst for
justice and righteousness.
May the Lord give you courage and strength and compassion
to make ours a better world,
to make your community a better community,
to make your church a better church.
And may you do your best to make it so,
and after you have done your best,
may the Lord grant you peace.

much love. sheth.

Program of Study Committee

Is there anything about the curriculum in your program at APTS you would like to change? If so, please let us know! The Program of Study Committee is looking for your feedback on how you think your specific degree program might be improved. The Committee looks at different degree programs in rotating years; next year the POS Committee will be specifically reviewing the MDiv curriculum. But we welcome all comments, general or specific, about all programs.

**Please send any current suggestions to
Nick or Andy -
nick.demuynck@student.austinseminary.edu
andy.gerhart@student.austinseminary.edu**

kairos καιρός

(n.) the perfect, delicate, crucial moment;
the fleeting rightness of time and place
that create the opportune atmosphere for
action, words, or movement

2019 Calendar

MAY 13 - 17

READING WEEK - STUDY HARD!

MAY 20 - 24

FINALS WEEK - WORK HARD!

MAY 21

SENIOR CHECK OUT

Trull Business Office,
All Day

MAY 24

BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPRING MEETING

MAY 25

BACCALAUREATE

UPC, 6:00 pm

MAY 26

COMMENCEMENT

UPC, 2:30 pm

JUNE 3

SUMMER TERM BEGINS