

HEAD LINES

A message from Chip Denton, Head of School



January 19, 2022

Dear Trinity Community,

On Saturday, January 15, I made breakfast for two of my grandchildren who had spent the night, read *The Lorax* with them, and taught my grandson what a chisel can do as we installed a latch on a new pocket door at our house. I had also hoped to write the first draft of the next Head Lines, but first I wanted to get a bike ride in. That ride, which is already infamous, wrecked many things and changed more than I can now know. My intended Head Lines was one of them. A philosophical musing on “Learning in Omicron” seems a little tone-deaf right now. A few days out from my accident, sitting at home in a sling and a back brace, waiting on surgery, it seems fitting to talk about this thing that has come to pass.



I want to begin by saying how grateful I am. There is no way, I know, to speak this profound truth without sliding into a cliché. But I have had moments of unprecedented gratitude in these last few days: when I first opened my eyes lying on the ground at the scene and realized I was alive and could move my arms and legs; when I saw my family at the ER; when I turned my phone on the next day and saw the texts and emails from the Trinity community and others. These were George Bailey moments. I should have been more seriously injured—the physics were never in my favor. I am bruised and broken, but mostly I am amazed by the kindness of God, who spared my life, and who put me under the care of excellent medical professionals (including a Trinity parent who is an expert in humeral and shoulder surgery)—a God who gives sleep and healing and rest to the weary. Praise him!

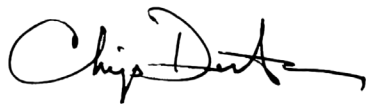
The second thing this wreck has wrought is a lot of pondering. I have questions. Why was I spared and not my friend Brent Clark? He went outside to mow the grass, and I went out to ride a bicycle on a road with cars. What is God saying to me? I believe that C. S. Lewis was right that God whispers to us in our pleasures but shouts at us in our pains. I’m pretty sure he’s shouting at me right now. Some of you will be rolling your eyes and saying, “You think? It’s time to get off the road!” You are probably right, but I think there is more. “I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. I wonder what those are. A friend texted these wise words: “May God guide you as you ponder and learn from this nearly tragic experience. May it lead to clarity, gratefulness, worship, focus, and joy.”

There is also a sadness. I have called this my last bike ride—at least on the road. I have not been ignorant of the risk, but I have ridden on. Some of you will, understandably, wonder why. I don't think I exaggerate when I say that cycling has helped me manage the challenges of a stressful job and a busy life. I have ridden for my body, but also for my soul. There is nothing like a long, hard climb to take your mind off your troubles and give you perspective and a fresh start. Some of my best ideas have dawned on me in the middle of a ride. My perfect day would go like this: read, ride, write, and always in that order, which is generative and productive. It has been a sad joke in the Denton household that no one wants to be with Dad if he didn't get his ride in. A friend who knows this about me quipped shortly after the accident: "Chip, if you really want the kind of high that biking gives you, at your age, it might be safer for you to take up smoking." I don't deserve sympathy for this sacrifice; it's probably long overdue. But it is a sacrifice all the same for me, and that brings me to my last reflection.

God never crucifies except he resurrects. His purposes are always constructive, benevolent, edifying. Who knows whether walking (the only approved form of exercise in the coming months) will bring me joy I never knew on the bike? And it may be that Trinity will be transformed in some important way through this accident—certainly others are already stepping in and stepping up. It is not, in my humble opinion, time for me to go yet, but it is time for us to plan and pray. This has been about as good a drill in leadership transition as we could have devised. I thank God for Jez McIntosh and our team of leaders, who have risen to the challenge.

As always, thank you for your partnership and support. I have never felt it more powerfully than in the last few days.

Non Nobis,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chip Denton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chip" and last name "Denton" clearly legible.

Chip Denton
Head of School