

Baylor Symposium on Faith and Culture 2024: Renewing and Reimagining Institutions for the Common Good

Reinventing Community, Recovering Resiliency, & Regaining Sound Spirituality: A Psycho-Social & Existential Approach to a Healthy Cross-Cultural Functioning of Individuals and Agencies

Naji Abi-Hashem, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR)

With the gradual disappearance of cohesive-integral communities, which normally bond people in a tight-knit glue within the larger societies; and with the augmented impacts of globalization and the widespread of digital invasion, there has been obviously a significant increase in relativistic-morality, individualistic isolation-alienation, situational ethics-morality, and marked socio-cultural “confusion of norms.” Many people groups and nations are gravitating around extreme homogeneous “camps” for comfort, solidarity, and safety. They become increasingly rigid and locked down in their minds and belief-systems-preferences, often demanding or imposing their ideas-views-interpretations on others as the only criteria for social justice and acceptable morality. Very few are willing to share common-spaces or mixed-neighborhoods, build bridges on common-grounds, show unconditional acceptance/good-will, or collectively pursue the welfare of others under the “common-good” principle. Fundamentalism and Fanaticism are growing to become almost virtues resulting in boasting attitudes and un-negotiable stances on what is the ultimate right, superior ethics, and pure truth (called Purism). Here we argue that the tendency to rigorously hold on to traditional fundamentals, and search for-or hold unto-what is uncontaminated truth, can easily lead to selfish-egoism, unhealthy-extremism, and rigid-legalism. Currently, and among the recent acute trends, there seem to be two opposing waves/movements: One promoting strict cultural heritages and traditional values coupled with a particular-conventional-doctrinal hermeneutics of truths (final sacred authority/biblical truth), and the other wave/movement promoting an open-ended inclusive-liberalism, a diverse equality, a materialistic-secular humanism, and a contemporary version of agnosticism-atheism, called “The New Atheism.” On the religio-theological level, the largest-fastest growing world religions, namely Christianity and Islam, seem to be competing in their evangelistic-apologetic efforts to spread further and deeper and to recruit/train/disciple new followers. Each claims an exclusive-unique message and an authentic-divine revelation. Although their missionary efforts and tension of outreach are growing in many regions of the world, moderate scholars from both sides meet on regular basis for Inter-Faith Dialogue and mutual understating, a truly positive sign of Good-Will (I personally have been part of such productive forums in the Middle East/Lebanon). At times, any of these movements (skewed worldviews, intense-inconsistent ideologies, polarized-popular politics...) appear to be passionately fanatic or militant in promoting their agendas, and thus causing social troubles-disorders and various psychological harms! In this presentation, we will re-examine the root causes of private-personal-individual versus group-collective-social Narcissism. What is feeding the sense of Entitlement among children, adolescents, and adults, especially in affluent societies?

Why is the sentiment of “Nationalism” and “Exceptionalism” significantly rising in many communities and nations around the world? We will explore the common psychological feature of fundamentalism, extremism, and radicalism, and attempt to provide practical suggestions for professional-helpers/educators and clinical caregivers. We will re-visit the marks of a healthy community and how to begin restoring its functions and enjoying its benefits, to draw from its elders-mentors-sages to utilize their generational wisdom stored in their tribal-entity, and to build healthy endurance and encourage-enhance Resiliency. This presentation will emphasize the crucial importance of acquiring basic cross-cultural communication, resisting the temptation of having a “black & white” mentality or an “either-or” schematic-paradigm, developing and maintaining a balanced worldview, learning relational-skills with individuals and groups who display skewed views or radical tendencies (and how to help them even-out, acknowledge other perspectives, and begin the “de-radicalization process” as part of their mental-emotional-social healing), and finally cultivating the virtue of cultural humility, when dealing with various backgrounds, heritages, and sub-cultures, whether among minority or majority populations.

How not Who: A Framework for Faith-Based Institutions to Reclaim Relevance and Serve Their Purposes

Candi Alexander, Fresno Pacific University

The 2024 Baylor Symposium on Faith and Culture invited explorations into the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of educational institutions so that they might be better equipped to serve their purposes. The invitation provided many possible questions to consider. However, one question seemed to embody a few other questions that begged for attention: “How can institutions reexamine their mission and recontextualize their practices to meet the needs of modern society in ways that stay faithful to their purpose?” Indeed, if higher education is to continue playing a vital role in society and foster spaces for community, if it is to encourage learners to embrace and cultivate their talents, if it is to come alongside learners as they run the race that is before them, those who serve in higher education need to mend fractures, scrutinize mission statements, and realign practices. Critical reflection on the literature, accreditation standards, and more than 27 years of experience serving in accredited higher education as both a faculty member and as a staff member points to the need of a new operational framework for faith-based institutions so that they can get back to their missions of supporting human flourishing.

Although there are individual frameworks for faith, accreditation, and learning environments, there does not seem to be a framework that supports faith-based institutions of higher education in teaching learners how to be in such a way that they serve both prospective and enrolled students, both faculty and staff, as well as the institutions themselves and the public. Instead of addressing who faith-based institutions want to be, this new framework addresses how faith-based institutions could be. Prospective and current students have been and are looking for people, places, and ideas to help them know how to be regardless of who they will be. The answers to the latter question these days are endless in what Paul LeBlanc (2021) calls a “rapidly changing jobs landscape” (p. xviii) where one student’s career includes social worker, parent, professor, and another student’s career includes linguist, sales associate, Bible teacher. Learning how to be no matter who one is at any point in time must be mirrored by courageous faith-based institutions if they are to stay relevant and serve their purposes.

Artificial Intelligence and the Common Good

Roger Alford, University of Notre Dame

“What are the challenges and opportunities for institutions in the midst of technological shifts?”

We are on the cusp of a new technology revolution. With the introduction of ChatGPT, artificial intelligence has experienced its iPhone moment. Just as the introduction of the iPhone in 2007 changed the way we communicate, the introduction of ChatGPT in 2022 will change the way we work. This public embrace has led to an AI race driven by the expectation of huge financial rewards without regard to the costs to the common good. The inevitability of the widespread adoption of artificial intelligence is now taken for granted.

To be sure, artificial intelligence promises huge benefits, including increased productivity, reducing human error, and solving complex problems. But these benefits come at enormous costs. Big Tech companies are spending billions to develop AI applications while ignoring these societal costs.

For example, the list of jobs that AI will displace or reduce is staggering. Autonomous vehicles will displace truckers and taxis. So too will AI displace many automated jobs such as accountants, data analysts, and sales. Artificial intelligence will generate content indistinguishable from human-created output, displacing or threatening the jobs of academics, publishers, lawyers, and other content creators. Just as international trade has threatened millions of jobs in the manufacturing sector, AI will threaten millions of jobs in the service sector.

The widespread use of AI also raises ethical problems, exacerbating discrimination, threatening personal privacy, undermining community engagement, and promoting polarization. AI is biased against outliers and toward dominant positions. When Amazon used AI to screen resumes based on previous hires, it downgraded female applicants. Because AI is so good at predicting patterns, it fundamentally threatens consumer privacy even without direct access to personal information. Big Tech companies earn billions from ad revenue by using AI to feed consumers ever more information that reinforces their priors.

These are near-term, real-world threats. But there are also catastrophic risks such as rogue AIs or their malicious use to cause harm. More broadly, AI poses ethical risks, threatening to dehumanize society, destroying the social fabric necessary for human flourishing. Humans desire a sense of purpose and belonging that comes from productive work, community engagement, personal interactions, and civil discourse.

Universities, especially Christian universities, should be at the forefront in highlighting the centrality of humans who are made in the image of God. They should expand their mission to address the practical, existential, and ethical risks of artificial intelligence.

Institutio Mathematica: Discovery, Invention, and Renewal

Blake Allan, Baylor University

Thousands of students today meet mathematics as a practice of making “meaningless marks on paper,” as mathematician David Hilbert is rumored to have described it. This impression typifies a common issue in mathematics curricula: a lack of opportunity for insight which leaves students merely the manipulators of neutral information. In order to apprentice students in mathematics as a liberal discipline, it is imperative that educators cultivate occasions for discovery, calling students to “participation in a good beyond the isolated self”, in the words of Phillip J. Donnelly.

To address this issue, this presentation examines curriculum through the etymological connections at work in the understanding of institutio as “formation,” a usage exemplified by Quintilian’s famous Institutio Oratoria. From this vantage, I argue that the rhetorical task of Invention, in the sense of the Latin term invenio meaning “I come into”, is essential for mathematics pedagogy. This presentation will proceed to consider each of the five common topics of Invention, examining its present appearance in the curriculum, and suggesting a means by which it can be better incorporated into current practice.

By doing so, I also contend that such considerations are not limited to mathematics, but have echoes in other corners of our educational institutions. The presentation concludes by identifying some of these common threads from the topics of invention, and their applications to other disciplines.

Blessing Our Communities: A Study Assessing Nazarene Church Involvement in Local Communities

Daniel Allen, Olivet Nazarene University

This study aimed to assess the extent to which church leaders in a Protestant denomination believe they are contributing to the good of their neighborhoods and local communities. An assessment of leaders within the Church of the Nazarene on the topic of "blessing our communities" was initiated and data was collected in the Spring of 2024. The research was conducted in partnership with the denomination. About 670 church leaders in the Midwest were contacted and invited to participate in a web-based survey and several pastors contributed additional, qualitative feedback. The results were intended to give the Church of the Nazarene a better understanding of the work being done in local settings and address areas for improvement. Findings show that Nazarene churches in the Midwest perceive themselves to be blessing their communities by embodying a faith-informed presence, fostering social well-being and building relationships, and providing spiritual resources. Most respondents believe their church is working toward building close relationships with those in their neighborhood and most also believe in the resiliency of their churches to promote good in their local communities. Churches purport to act as a source of spiritual guidance for members of their community when it comes to faith and spiritual questioning. Overall, however, the findings were not positive, as leaders reported that more local work could be done. Areas where churches see the need to improve include meeting the basic, physical, and mental needs of their communities and addressing local economic concerns. Implications for churches in terms of future practices that might promote community flourishing include forming partnerships, actively listening to the communities themselves regarding their needs, re-envisioning the idea of "being a blessing," and contextualizing community well-being to each church's unique setting.

The Art of Renewing Institutional Narratives

Matthew Aughtry, Baylor University

In 2020, Baylor Chapel found itself grappling with a profound crisis of identity. A firestorm of controversy erupted that February, challenging the core of what had long been a cornerstone of the institution's Christian identity. This upheaval was not merely about isolated incidents or minor disagreements, nor was the challenge only about addressing the immediate concerns but also in finding a way to forge a future for one of Baylor's oldest core pillars.

This crisis would collide with an even greater global groundshift: the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic swept across the globe, bringing with it a wave of uncertainty and disruption that extended into every corner of life, including the realm of institutional practices and traditions, it rendered many traditional modes of operation obsolete overnight, forcing institutions everywhere to rethink their approach to engagement and community building.

In this time, Baylor Chapel found itself facing a dual challenge: not only was it dealing with a crisis of identity and purpose, but it was also contending with the necessity of adapting to a new, virtual landscape. Ironically, it was this very dismantling of tradition and normalcy that created an unexpected opportunity for Baylor Chapel to reengage with its foundational narratives in a novel and impactful way. With the physical chapel spaces closed to congregants and the usual modes of worship and community interaction disrupted, Baylor Chapel turned to innovative electronic mediums to reach its audience. This shift not only addressed the immediate need for continuity but also catalyzed a deeper reflection on the essence of its message and its modes of delivery.

In addressing these challenges, the chapel's leadership drew on the insights of prominent thinkers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and C.S. Lewis to inform their approach. This paper will reflect on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics a framework for understanding how meaning is constructed through the interpretation of texts and traditions, Ricoeur's understanding of narrative identity, and C.S. Lewis's use of media and narrative to renew interest in foundational truths through beauty.

The Asbury Outpouring & Beyond: Awakening a Generation

Sarah Baldwin, Asbury University

In February 2023, thousands of young adults representing at least 300 colleges and universities across the country, arrived on the campus of Asbury University, to experience an “outpouring” of the presence of God. Students lingered in simple worship, sharing testimonies of healing and confessing sin, often kneeling at a wooden altar rail, in a response to a spontaneous act of God. An embodied faith experience, shoulder to shoulder with other people, unproduced worship and simple preaching in a holy space, characterized these days. With over 56 million TikTok views and "Asbury Revival" as a top google search in several countries that February, Wikipedia classified this event as a cultural phenomenon. Phenomenon or spiritual movement, young adults showed up to experience Jesus. What does the “Asbury Outpouring” mean for institutions committed to nurturing faith in today’s University? Since the “Asbury Outpouring”, many colleges have reported unplanned worship events and even mass baptisms. Is God awakening this generation? What does the seemingly contagious response to God mean for the universities supporting Generation Z at such a time as this?

The “Asbury Outpouring” engages a holy and renewed imagination for worship, faith, holiness, unity and spiritual hunger in the context of a university’s mission for the common good. For centuries, the university campus was the place of spiritual development and formation. Is it possible that even in these days, God is still on the move on the college quad? Are we at the beginning of a new great awakening?

The “Asbury Outpouring” also ignites exploration in the partnership of the university and the church for a renewed commitment to faith. Could the church and the college work together with a shared hopeful vision in new ways for an awakening of God?

In this presentation, we will explore how young adults responded to the Holy Spirit in February 2023, the role of social media, the continual movement of God on college campuses, the unique cultural moment and how this informs the work of the university with the church “for such a time as this”. The “Asbury Outpouring” invites a fresh vision of the role of the university and the work of faith. We are called to be people with a holy imagination for the role of the university in the spiritual formation of each generation within their unique cultural context and spiritual need. From eyewitness account to current interviews, Dr. Sarah Thomas Baldwin shares her own personal experience from a front row seat at Asbury to the signs of revival and university around the country for the future of faithful higher education.

Building Bridges in Uncertain Times

Sharenda Barlar, Wheaton College

Susan Dunn-Hensley, Wheaton College

Roman bridges in early civilization linked two seemingly uncrossable spaces and created movement and unity within areas that had previously been separated by language and people groups. Today, those bridges still stand and remain in use in many European countries as a testament to their brilliant engineering. It goes without saying that the liberal arts and languages build bridges between different people groups and cultures, but can languages and literatures create bridges within departments and divisions? How can language and literature departments connect with those within and outside of academia to create long-lasting partnerships?

This presentation will use data gathered within the Modern and Classical Department of Wheaton College to show how more students declared majors within the Spanish language section when faculty members collaborated with other divisions and made connections within divisions. In addition, after tracking study abroad programs in Spanish since 2020, program directors will give examples of how they are growing in majors by thinking creatively during semester and summer programs. The Summer Institute, a rising high school junior and senior program, is in its third year at Wheaton College. Professors from different disciplines collaborate to create innovative two-week introduction courses and the data overwhelmingly shows that students often choose Wheaton after this program. We will also include a discussion to generate ideas and takeaways.

Vocational Living and Advancing the Common Good

Matt Bowman, Union University

The term “calling” is not unfamiliar in the culture of Christian institutions. Christian ecclesial bodies regularly encourage members to answer God’s call upon their lives. Similarly, Christian colleges and universities often describe aspects of their mission in relation to equipping students to discover and pursue their lives’ calling.

However, what do these institutions mean when they say “calling”? Is calling in a religiously-shaped context primarily about embracing a call to serve in some sort of official capacity, such as a pastor, priest, missionary, or church member? When colleges and universities discuss calling with their students, why is it so often connected primarily, if not exclusively, to students’ future career paths? Could it be that both Christian ecclesial and educational institutions need a renewed vision of “calling” so that they might do the hard work of reimagining how to equip their congregants and students to pursue a more robust, holistic understanding of “calling” or, perhaps more appropriately, of “vocation”, which will lead to those congregants and students also pursuing the common good in the wider culture?

Drawing on recent doctoral research among college students on a Christian college campus, this paper will challenge Christian institutions to rediscover the biblical doctrine of vocation and how it can transform conversations regarding calling so that it is no longer limited to official roles within the church or to merely one’s chosen career path. Instead, this renewed understanding extends across all arenas and all seasons of life as Christians pursue faithfulness to Christ and advance the common good in the world. This vision of vocational living offers institutions of faith the opportunity to guide students toward a calling that is beyond mere individualistic pursuits and toward a vision that glorifies God, serves the common good, and promotes human flourishing.

The study’s findings illustrate that students generally fail to understand vocation and calling in theological terms but predominantly and primarily understand these concepts in relation to their work or anticipated career path. This presents an opportunity for institutions to reconnect students with the historic doctrine of vocation, which will also help address practical issues related to a work-as-calling mindset. These issues include, but are not limited to, the anxiety students described experiencing in the vocational discernment process and the phenomenon of “workism” (Thompson, 2019) experienced by many young professionals. Findings from this research also revealed opportunities for Christian institutions, like the church and the academy, to partner in developing ways to serve the families of students to help students arrive on campus as freshmen with a more theologically thick understanding of vocation and calling that may lead to decreased experiences of the previously mentioned anxiety related to vocational discernment.

As God’s restored image-bearers in culture, Christians have the opportunity and responsibility of pursuing the common good in society. Living vocationally provides an integrating framework for life, faith, and work in an ever-fragmenting world, allowing Christian believers to be a blessing to one another and the broader culture.

The Scholastic Usury Prohibition's Insights for the Common Good

Miguel Brand, The University of St. Thomas

The old Christian prohibitions of usury are of little interest to most and may seem an outdated relic of a backwards theocratic age and a faulty understanding of finance. How could something which drives business investments and economic growth be a sin? Apart from obviously exploitative loans and ones imprudently taken out, loans are a force for good in society, we tend to believe. So why then should we not allow for some compensation for this service to society by charging interest? But then again, we as a culture have a fractured conception of the good and especially the common good. Some things which might seem to benefit society may only be good from a bent perspective.

Thomas Aquinas provides us with a distillation of the Scholastic condemnations of usury and those in the broader Christian tradition. This paper will focus on his account of the sin of usury presented in his *Summa Theologiae* and treatise *De Malo*. Following Pierre de Lauzun, Jeremy Bell, and Christopher Franks's exploration of this question, I would like to highlight how this critique gives us several valuable insights into the nature of money and of man's social nature. To Aquinas and the Scholastics, because of the nature of money, its "use" and "ownership" cannot be separated in such a way that it could be "rented out" for interest. Further collecting usury does not respect the telos of money and the balance between nominal and real value which it requires, and it violates the equality between what is asked for and what is provided in a contract. Even the apparent exceptions to this prohibition, such as the *societas* or trade partnership, only serve to further underline this key concern of maintaining justice in exchange.

And thus, I would like to argue that contrary to the claims that this prohibition is simply an example of either a blind faith in an arbitrary Divine command or a primitive understanding of economics, Aquinas shows us that a strong conception of justice and common good in markets lies at the heart of the old usury prohibition. This should raise many questions for our own time since in our society we tend to take the question of the justice or injustice of charging interest for granted (with, of course, the exception of Islam.) How should we, as Christians in the twenty-first century approach this question? Is there a way to square the norms of our financial practices today with these Scholastic principles? Or might we have to think of potentially radical new ways of approaching finance as many Muslims have? I believe that Aquinas and the Scholastic's analysis of the question of usury may help guide us in reimagining financial institutions for the common good.

The Church: Institution or Organism?

Richard Bulzacchelli, University of Dallas

This side of the Parousia, the Church, inasmuch as it is both a way in which society is organized and a force for organizing society, will always exist within an institutional framework. The institutional structure of the Church, however, is, for the most part, an overlay, which has evolved over time, as the Church has organized itself in each new age, according to familiar institutional forms found in the dominant culture. The highly institutional, corporatized structure of contemporary Western society, therefore, finds itself reflected in the Church, today. Taking as our model, the Catholic Church, we can see that it has become highly bureaucratic and managerial in its practical organization, and this practical organization often shapes the way we frame our questions and formulate our responses. It can be difficult for the Church to resist the pull toward hyper-institutionalization, reducing itself, in Kantian fashion, to an NGO serving only secular, social interests, with a veneer of religious mythos serving solely as a narrative framework at the service of those ends. The same patterns of decay that plague today's secular, corporate, and political institutional life can be found in the Church, resulting in all the same sorts of problems, from the merely neglectful to the properly nefarious. But for Catholic and Orthodox Christians, the Church is constituted in its essence through Eucharistic Communion in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, ingrafting us into his Body as an organism. The institutional structure of the Church is not a bad thing in itself, but it is not the essential thing, either. How can the Church negotiate this relationship in today's highly institutionalized society without losing sight of the organismic essence of the ecclesial reality? And what might the Church look like in the future, as our society's trust in legacy institutions faces a crisis point, pointing, perhaps, to a sociological paradigm shift to a post-managerial age?

Building a Philosophy for Values-Based Leadership in Faithful and Secular Situations

Taylor Bunn, Hope 4 All

Amy Britton, Michigan State University

In this paper, the researchers seek to understand how participants apply faith-centered leadership principles in secular situations and how building a leadership philosophy helps leaders live and lead inside their values. The qualitative study explores Christian scripture along with seminal leadership texts from authors including Simon Sinek, Brene Brown, and Stephen R. Covey, discovering trends and patterns among expert advice for developing and intentionally leading from personal core values. Through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, we connect ideas from current leaders to the literature, providing topical examples of the challenges facing leaders and the benefits of creating a personal leadership philosophy for a solid, values-based foundation.

Faithful leadership in secular situations involves guiding with integrity, ethical principles, and a commitment to serving others, regardless of religious context. Such leaders are characterized by their honesty, transparency, and accountability. They prioritize the well-being of their team, fostering an inclusive and respectful environment. By consistently demonstrating empathy and fairness, they build trust and inspire loyalty. Faithful leaders also exhibit resilience and courage, making difficult decisions with a moral compass. They are guided by a sense of purpose and a vision that transcends personal gain, focusing on the greater good. In doing so, they create a positive and productive workplace culture, driving success through the power of ethical leadership and unwavering commitment to core values.

Applying faith-centered values in secular leadership situations can be challenging due to diverse beliefs and potential conflicts between personal convictions and organizational norms. Leaders may face resistance or misunderstanding from team members who do not share their faith, making it difficult to find common ground. Balancing faith-driven principles with the need for inclusivity and respect for all viewpoints requires sensitivity and tact. Additionally, ethical dilemmas may arise where faith-based values clash with secular business practices or objectives, compelling leaders to navigate complex moral landscapes. Maintaining integrity while ensuring fair treatment and avoiding favoritism can be demanding. Ultimately, leaders must strive to uphold their values without imposing them, fostering a respectful, inclusive environment that honors both personal beliefs and professional responsibilities.

Being-for-the-Other: A Christian Framework for Transforming Incarceration

Dr. Aaron R. Burdge, Alterity Psychology Services

Kylie M. Burdge, Brigham Young University

Kiara M. Aguirre, Brigham Young University

The institution of incarceration often faces criticism for its propensity to perpetuate recidivism and marginalization. This presentation, drawing from Dr. Aaron R. Burdge's (2000) dissertation and his group therapy work with inmates, proposes the reimagining of incarceration within a Christian framework such that it might lead to repentance and redemption.

Theories of criminality are grounded in assumptions of necessary determinism and egoism (Burdge, 2000; Burdge et al., 2024), positing that inmates are inherently self-interested, and their behavior is determined by outside forces. Consequently, conventional psychological treatments for inmates primarily utilize self-focused framework which is a perspective that encourages an intense orientation toward one's internal experience. The assumptions of determinism and egoism, however, are antithetical to Christian teachings and cannot lead to the kind of rehabilitation and redemption that would allow for an inmate's successful community reintegration.

Burdge's proposed Agentive Criminality Theory, challenges the notions of egoism and determinism, instead positing that freedom requires truth and that human beings are agentic, changeable, and ought to be for the other. This theory aligns with Christian theological understandings of human nature, emphasizing agency, responsibility, charity, and the possibility of repentance. Central to this framework is being other-focused; true freedom and transformation come from responding to needs of others. A deterministic, self-focused mindset, conversely, limits inmates' freedom and potential, confining them to physical and mental constraints that contradict their inherent agency and interconnectedness with others.

The current system exacerbates issues faced by inmates by isolating them, offering self-focused therapy, and neglecting community reintegration opportunities. To foster genuine rehabilitation and reintegration, we must acknowledge and nurture the inherent agency and responsibility of individuals toward others. This demands a change of heart — a shift from self-interest to a commitment to the well-being of others. By facilitating this change of heart, inmates expand their freedom and pave the way for their release and successful reintegration into society.

By making explicit the connection between Burdge's theory and Christian principles, we advocate for an approach to incarceration that prioritizes three key areas: a) ethical treatment, b) personal responsibility, c) and reintegration, all underpinned by Christian ethics. First, improving incarceration conditions to reflect the inherent dignity of each human being. This includes providing opportunities for meaningful work, education, and spiritual growth, as well as respectful treatment of all inmates. Second, personal responsibility would be emphasized by shifting from punitive measures to focus on reconciliation and healing through restorative justice practices (Wallace & Wylie, 2013). Finally, reintegration efforts would emphasize personal and spiritual development, supported by community organizations, religious and otherwise, to

prepare inmates and their families for responsible societal return. While inmate treatment should be based on Christian ethics, adopting a Christian faith itself would not be required.

This proposal aims to contribute to the broader discourse on institutional reform by offering a theologically grounded alternative to the prevailing models of incarceration. By integrating Burdge's theory with Christian ethics, this proposal offers a transformative alternative to traditional incarceration models, aiming to cultivate redemption and ethical treatment within the prison system.

Christianity and the University: Educating for Universal Priesthood and Friendship

Sam Byassee, Baylor University

In this paper, I explore the role the Judeo-Christian faith tradition might have to play in the restoration of the modern university. My approach comprises two parts: one, an inspection of the modern university's account of knowledge followed by reflection on the account from the Christian tradition, and two, a model or concept of pedagogy informed by the Christian tradition and which the university might do well to take up.

Reflecting on the development of Western culture since modernity, I argue that the enlightenment project and the rise of modern scientific practice are greatly funded by the illusion of apotheosis, that is, the conviction that we are God. In the enlightenment project—largely coincident with the Reformation period—thinkers turned from the magisterium to their own minds as the source of all that could be known or said about the world. This marked a direct deflection from our human bodily ways of knowing and being in the world, a deflection from our implication in the material world not only about which but within which we speak. Along a similar line, modern scientific practice is considerably shaped by a kind of deification of the scientist, where the scientist invents a world to which they are external and over which they have absolute surveillance. In David Bentley Hart's phrase, a methodology became a metaphysic. The result is a model of knowing the world predicated on the domination and exploitation of the resources and materials of that world. Turning to the Christian tradition, we find as early as Genesis 3 that the foundation of all human knowing is the knowledge that we are not God. If the university recognizes and acknowledges this as the starting point for our intellectual pursuits, we will be better equipped not to manipulate or commodify the world for our greed but to facilitate its healing and direct its praises to God. In this section, I draw on Stanley Cavell's reflections on knowledge and skepticism in *The Claim of Reason* as well as the writing of Alan Jacobs and David Bentley Hart on the nature of modern scientific practice.

Second, I look at the practice of teaching in the university. Teaching in the modern university today is largely conceived in terms of conveying information to other subjects in a room, and further, conveying facts, descriptions, rather than prescriptions, telling them what they should do. Contrariwise, I advocate a vision of teaching whose end is the creation of a common life together, that is, friendship. Tracing this account across the Judeo-Christian tradition, I draw on Herbert McCabe's comments about the relationship of the decalogue and friendship, and call attention to the intimate connection of teaching and friendship in the canonical gospels. Finally, I argue that in the modern liberal account of freedom, teaching with prescriptions is authoritative and an impingement, but in the Christian account, we tell each other what to do on the way to freedom.

Roundtable: Renewing and Reimagining Interdisciplinary Conversations Through Baylor's Faith and Science Colloquium

Katie Calloway Sueda, Baylor University

Eric Martin, Baylor University

With its ascendant academic profile as a research institution and with a commitment to maintain an unambiguously Christian outlook, Baylor University is poised to be renewed and strengthened as an institution through conversations exploring the interrelations between science and religion. Many undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff at Baylor and other church-related institutions are eager to synthesize their faith with higher learning; moreover, when these important conversations do not take place, members of these groups are often susceptible to the problematic yet widespread trope that there is some necessary conflict between science and religious commitment. Baylor's "Faith and Science Colloquium," an informal discussion group comprising faculty, staff, and graduate students across STEM and humanities, arose organically over six years ago to address this need for thoughtful conversations about topics related to science and faith.

This proposed roundtable aims to widen the circle, with experts across a range of disciplines briefly introducing a few of the productive topics and questions this group has entertained recently, toward further and broader conversation. Some contributors are trained in fields often represented at the IFL Symposium, such as theology, philosophy, and history. Others, however, are from disciplines that have seldom been represented at the conference, including physics, mathematics, and microscopy; these experts are ready and willing to join the conversation. Adding these voices, we believe, will contribute to Baylor's renewal and growth as a place of faith seeking understanding and could benefit interlocutors from other institutions as well.

Before what we hope will be a lively Q&A session, contributors will each spend 8 minutes briefly discussing such questions as:

- How (if at all) does science reveal the "mind of God"? What aspects of God does science reveal?
- What can natural scientists and practicing Christians learn about each other if they recognize their shared reliance on imagination?
- Can theologically grounded interdisciplinary inquiry provide a way to navigate the competing principles vying for credence in the current mathematical landscape?
- How should Christian institutions of higher learning address the unfolding crisis of food injustice and insecurity?
- How does the increasingly viable multiverse paradigm enable theists to perceive the creative nature of God in new ways? What about the infinitesimal worlds now accessible to human apprehension via microscopy?
- What lessons can the history of dialogue between scientists and theologians teach us about harmonizing the scientific search for truth with both theism and human dignity?

Rather than dealing with these topics exhaustively, participants will explain and lay them out for further discussion. Our hope is that Baylor and other church-related institutions will be inspired by this roundtable to continue thinking through how the truths uncovered in STEM fields and those held by Christians can mutually sharpen and deepen each other.

Housing for Human Flourishing

Angela Carmella, Seton Hall University School of Law

How should institutions better serve those on the margins of society? How should institutions address marginalizing systems and structures in society?

How can institutions better supply communities with resources, practices, spaces, connections, and narratives that contribute to human flourishing?

These are the questions that interest me. I am a law professor and think that law is one of the institutions that needs renewing and reimagining. I would like to present on the ways in which property/land use laws can be used to guide private actors to create safe and affordable housing in thriving neighborhoods so as to respect the dignity of the human person and the family and promote the common good. In Catholic social thought, everyone—especially private actors and institutions—is responsible for promoting the common good. Law and the state play an important role in encouraging, structuring, and coordinating this private activity.

There are several categories of private actors critical to promoting the common good in connection with housing and neighborhoods: landlords, developers, homeowner associations, and churches. Landlords control the physical condition of rentals and ultimately the safety and habitability of the units. Developers propose projects that can affect the affordability of rents and home ownership in the vicinity and that might result in the displacement of existing residents. Homeowner Associations are involved in controlling the conduct of entire neighborhoods in ways that can determine whether community thrives or withers. And churches own lots of closed, unused properties, particularly in urban areas, that are in need of adaptive re-use. Laws that affect the condition of housing, the access to housing and neighborhoods, the neighborhood environment, and the flexibility of property uses can be designed to encourage these private actors to support human dignity, development, and solidarity. By contrast, the common good is thwarted by laws and policies that exclude whole segments of the population from housing as has been done in the past and which continues in more insidious ways today.

Churches in particular have some difficult decisions to make. They of course have the right to sell unused property to developers for market rate development. But I would argue that churches should make every effort to retain the sacredness of their once-sacred spaces by ensuring not only beautiful adaptations but also socially responsible uses. Dedicating the property to housing, or to other religious uses or charitable, cultural, or community uses, is a noble goal. The development of affordable housing would exemplify Christian love in action, and make a direct contribution to human flourishing and the common good.

Students in the Margin (International Students), Lessons from the Old Testament Laws

Moon Kwon Chae, Department of Religion, Baylor University

The Israelites' experience as immigrants is at the center of the Old Testament faith. God called Abraham to be an immigrant. Also, God delivered the Israelites at the peak of their oppressive experience as immigrants in Egypt. Their time in Egypt not only ended with God's deliverance but also laid the historical foundation for their community ethics, particularly concerning marginalized people such as immigrants, orphans, and widows. The Old Testament laws reflect these core principles of how to treat the marginalized. This paper focuses on the issue of immigrants, drawing connections to international student issues.

The Pentateuch includes four different law codes: Covenant Code (CC), Deuteronomic Code (DC), Priestly Code (PC), and Holiness Code (HC). Each code represents its own characteristics concerning immigrants while sharing some commonalities. This paper will provide a summary of core values and applications in these four law codes and draw insights relevant to international student support and study abroad programs.

The Covenant Code shows the earliest and least developed stage of laws related to immigrants. Its principle can be summarized as the prohibition of economic and legal oppression. The CC prohibits powerful Israelites from taking advantage of economically and legally vulnerable immigrants.

The Deuteronomic Code expands on immigrant laws and significantly develops the CC. In addition to prohibiting oppression, the DC introduces charity laws, which ensure systematic and consistent support for economically disadvantaged immigrants. Furthermore, the DC incorporates immigrants into the covenant with God.

While the CC and DC emphasize compassion in social, economic, and civic dimensions, the Priestly Code focuses on religious and cultic matters. Its basic principle is the equal application of the law to both Israelites and immigrants, promoting fairness before God. The Holiness Code goes further, requiring immigrants to avoid abominable practices to maintain the community's holiness. Immigrants are encouraged to actively participate in the core matters of the community, rather than being passive beneficiaries of protection and support. The HC even suggests that Israelites are like temporary immigrants before God.

The Old Testament laws should not be regarded as the law of nowadays. Since the OT laws cannot cover every issue, they only provide guiding principles. The principles derived from these Pentateuchal law codes offer fresh insights and theological justifications for how to treat immigrants, including temporary students who lack familial, social, cultural, and economic foundations in a new land. The Old Testament laws progress from appeals to compassion to more systematic support and, in core community matters, demand equal standards for immigrants. This analysis and synthesis of the Old Testament laws offer timeless lessons applicable to issues concerning immigrants, international students, and marginalized individuals. The role of institutions is first to develop their own system for international student support and study abroad

programs and second to teach the principles and information to individual members of the community, including faculty, staff, non-international students, and international students.

The Character of Entrepreneurship: Preparing Tomorrow's Entrepreneurial Leaders

Kerri Cissna, Miami University

Ethan Hoeft, Miami University

Nicole Haddad, Southern Methodist University

Steve Rice, Northwestern Michigan College

An entrepreneur is commonly seen as an innovator, a source of fresh new ideas, goods, services, and businesses that are useful, solve problems, and add value. Leaders with an entrepreneurial mindset are able to identify problems, convene interdisciplinary teams to generate unique solutions, and stay committed throughout the iterative process of refining, which typically includes failure and resilience. This session will focus on teaching the virtues of character that align with an entrepreneurial mindset, while providing pedagogical innovations for cultivating habits that aim venture creation at the common good of humanity. Experts will share practical examples for applying human-centered design and creative problem solving techniques to empower the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders. Participants will gain strategies for integrating virtues of character into an experiential learning model for entrepreneurship across any discipline, having lasting benefits on the greater societal good.

If entrepreneurs place their sole focus on creating a profitable company, they might neglect the opportunity to create ventures that align with personal values, benefit the greater good, and lead to human flourishing. This is where the cultivation of character can have a profound impact on entrepreneurship education and pedagogy.

Character education fosters social responsibility and ethical entrepreneurial behavior. As the world faces complex challenges, the need for entrepreneurs to prioritize the interests of people, and the greater good of humanity, has never been more evident. This session explores the integration of virtue ethics to complement the development of creative mindsets and equip students with the tools necessary for sustainable and socially conscious entrepreneurship.

By emphasizing virtues such as empathy, curiosity, courage, resilience, and co-creation/collaboration, we seek to instill in students a deeper understanding of the role entrepreneurship can play in shaping collective values, cultural norms, and the preoccupations of society at large. The session will delve into various approaches, strategies, and pedagogical innovations that are currently employed in entrepreneurship courses to cultivate virtues alongside creative mindsets and design thinking methodologies. By integrating character into the curriculum, educators can empower students to embrace an economic behavior that contributes positively to interests of both individuals and communities.

This panel aims to shed light on the role of character education in inspiring students to envision entrepreneurship as a means to effect meaningful change and address societal challenges. By fostering a culture of empathy and responsible leadership, character education seeks to nurture a new generation of entrepreneurs driven by a commitment to the common good and sustainable development. This session highlights the pressing need for cultivating character in entrepreneurship, and provides a roadmap to create a pipeline of entrepreneurs who prioritize

social impact and engage in economic behavior that aligns with the interests of the people, leading to a more just and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

Vocational Formation, Belonging, and Higher Education

Dr. Christopher Cobbler, Abilene Christian University

Vocational formation and belonging are complimentary concepts. Vocational formation seeks human flourishing by attending to the healing of our social environments. Vocational formation is responding to God's invitation to participate in the healing of creation from a particular social context, with others, for the sake of the world. Belonging, then, is the natural consequence of such an endeavor. This paper assumes the notion of institutional belonging in Christian higher education to be a kingdom characteristic that is best realized through the various postures of vocational formation. Radical hospitality, missional eschatology and communion with God are among the distinctive qualities of vocational formation. It is my belief that environments will naturally exhibit genuine belonging as they embrace these postures.

Vocational formation is a critical theological concept that considers the intersection of everyday work with an invigorated understanding of God's preferred and promised future. While vocational formation certainly has Edenic characteristics, it's important to clearly identify a robust pneumatological theology of work distinguished from the static framework of preservation that shows up in protological theologies which often deny the dynamic nature of Spirit led eschatological continuity. An anticipatory experience of God's new creation through our work, then, is fundamental to the understanding of vocational formation.

It is the endeavor of this presentation to explore how online higher education might imagine its own calling to nurture the vocational identity of students, faculty and staff while honoring social, geographic, and demographic particularity. The aim for such an endeavor is to undermine the ubiquitous presence of classism and the acceptance of harmful expressions of Western productivity which often accompanies our definition of calling as it relates to contemporary professions. I aim to explore how a student's social location best equips them to discern where the Spirit might be inviting them to participate. It is the general position of traditional higher education to engineer elaborate ecologies with a standardized student formation process. The role of formation in online education, however, depends on a student's ability to continue engaging meaningfully with their immediate social locale.

Further, it is necessary for students in online higher education to understand their God given identity apart from their occupation, profession, or station. A student seeing themselves as a full representation of the Imago Dei is crucial to discerning one's vocation. Vocation, then, is most concerned with God given identity along with Spirit infused charisms, not a particular job title, which makes room for a plurality of employment without insisting upon occupational hierarchy or theological inferiority with regards to any particular profession. This discernment is deeply nurtured by a posture of listening, hospitality and radical openness to the Holy Spirit who exceeds our horizons of expectations and infuses our imaginations with kingdom possibility.

Through this presentation I aim to communicate a concise definition for vocational formation, reflect on some of the best practices I have discovered and provide insight into an approach to vocational formation that nurtures institutional belonging and resists harmful

iterations of standardization and theological reductionism and ultimately privilege a robust dialogical community.

Biblical Insights Regarding the Most Neglected Legal and Political Virtue: Wisdom

Robert Cochran, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia

The United States is starkly divided. This conflict plays out in political and legal institutions. This essay (which I hope will be the basis for a book) looks at four biblical concepts that might inform public discourse and draw people together from a broad range of religious, secular, and political viewpoints. It will focus on the fourth. The four biblical concepts are:

- (1) Creation: God created humans in his image, and as a result, humans have God-like worth, God-like responsibilities, God-like abilities, and God-like community (reflecting the Trinity). All these qualities have implications for law.
- (2) The Fall: However, we are fallen; we are inclined to prefer ourselves and people like us. Both citizens and government officials are fallen. As numerous Old Testament stories illustrate, there are great dangers in both too little and too much government.
- (3) Justice: Demands for justice for the “widow, the orphan, and the outsider” resound throughout the Old Testament. Jesus continues this call for justice, but brings a new emphasis on agape—self-sacrificing love. Agape is the standard by which God judges all humans and all human institutions, including law. As William Temple suggests, justice is “love applied in social organization.”
- (4) Wisdom: Political wisdom is the means of determining what justice requires in a particular place and time. Tragically, wisdom is a much-neglected political and legal virtue. Wisdom is both a source and a product of good law. Biblical sources of wisdom include the wisdom literature, but also the Mosaic Law and biblical history. Wisdom is most likely to emerge through a diversity of voices in thoughtful conversation, but thoughtful conversation about law and politics is sorely lacking in today’s world. Institutions, including universities, political associations, courts, and legislative bodies need to be places where thoughtful discourse occurs. Unfortunately, today there are few forums where one can hear and thoughtfully consider a diversity of opinions. We need forums for intellectually diverse public discourse.

Professionals, Justice, and Civility

Robert Cochran, Senior Fellow

Elizabeth M. Fraley, Baylor University School of Law

Jennifer Lee Koh, Pepperdine Caruso School of Law

“Professionals and Moral Responsibility”

This paper will explore two moral challenges faced by professionals--including doctors, religious leaders, psychologists, businesspeople, musicians, and engineers. Professionals face the danger that they will deprive clients of dignity and the danger that their work will harm third parties or the public.

First, aspects of professional education and practice tend to lead professionals to depersonalize clients and other people. A few examples: at the beginning of law school, students are horrified at descriptions of injuries people suffer in criminal law and torts cases. Within a few weeks, such descriptions have become commonplace and professors have taught students to ignore injuries, unless they are relevant to a case's outcome. At the beginning of medical school, students are troubled by the diseases and injuries they study, but professors teach them to focus only on aspects of injuries that are relevant to a potential remedy. Other forms of professional education generates similar problems. When professionals enter practice, after dealing with similar problems multiple times, they tend to grow insensitive to those who suffer harm.

Professionals are also likely to be insensitive because professional education and practice tend to generate arrogance. Admission to professional schools generates proud students (and proud parents). Professional schools highlight the high qualifications of their admitted students and the importance of the work their graduates will do. When professionals begin work, other people are likely to admire and envy them. Arrogance can cause professionals to be insensitive to clients, as well as over-confident in their judgments.

A second set of challenges arise because professionals, clients, and the general public are likely to have conflicting values and conflicting interests. Professionals come to their work with their own moral values, but they work for people who may have different values. Professionals and their clients face challenging moral issues: Should a counselee leave her spouse? Should a corporation consider its impact on the environment or only shareholder profits? Should a patient have cosmetic surgery that carries a risk of death? Should a client sue his brother alleging a breach of trust? How should the professional and her client approach such issues?

Two questions typically define the moral relationship of professionals and the people for whom they work: (1) In making decisions, are the interests of other people considered? and (2) Who controls moral decisions? Some professionals are authoritarian, telling their clients, patients, etc. what to do. Other professionals are deferential, having no input in decisions and working under a sort of vicarious morality. Another option is that the professional raises the interests of other people and engages the client in moral discourse. The professional and client determine what to do together. I will argue that professionals should raise the interests of other

people as a matter for moral discourse, but that as a matter of client dignity, clients should generally control decisions.

“Civility and Civil Discourse”

This paper addresses a challenge facing both the legal profession and society more broadly: how to disagree without being disagreeable. The adversarial nature of the law, especially in a litigation setting, may often require advocates to take opposing positions. Historically, though, attorneys were able to battle in the courtroom but set that aside at the end of the day. This skill seems to be eroding. The term civility derives from the French and relates to the concept of being a good citizen. As our society becomes less able to differ on topics without resorting to ad hominem attacks and worse, we risk the very fabric of our democracy if we cannot be civil citizens.

As society becomes less civil and less willing to engage in civil discourse, law schools face a heightened need to instill civility as a cornerstone of being a lawyer. The inherently adversarial nature of the legal profession often involves intense conflicts and high-stakes situations. For the system of justice to function, those representing clients must be able to negotiate, debate, and disagree without being disagreeable. Civility fosters a respectful and collaborative atmosphere, enhances the administration of justice, and upholds the integrity of the legal profession. Civility also provides a better culture for lawyer well-being. This paper will examine the historical context of civility in the legal profession, its ethical underpinnings, the practical implications of cultivating a civil legal practice, and the importance of addressing professional expectations of civility beginning in law school.

The need to be civil and engage in civil discourse impacts professionals beyond the law. Professionals in all fields need to learn to manage conflict and engage collaboratively in better decision making. To the extent professionals model better civil discourse, we can have a beneficial impact on society, especially in an election year. Given that nearly 50% of the countries of the world will hold key elections this year, civil discourse can influence how we view candidates and their differing positions on issues. Civil discourse demonstrates that we often will share the values being discussed; we may simply assign different weight to different values. Recognizing that the issues are more nuanced and working together to find commonality can lead to consensus or, at the least, agreeable disagreement.

Law schools must be training prospective lawyers in these skills, both formally and informally as part of the hidden curriculum. Faculty modeling this behavior can provide guidance. Lawyers who serve as leaders and model civil discourse enhance the profession and our society. This paper and discussion suggest that this is an elephant best eaten one bite at a time.

“Christian Lawyers and the Pursuit of Justice”

Politically conservative Christian lawyers in the United States have become remarkably influential in recent years. Given that Christian lawyers have long comprised a meaningful (but

not exclusive) slice of conservative legal movements in the United States, this is not surprising. With such lawyers' increased prominence, continued political polarization throughout the country, and reports of a contemporaneous decline in religiosity in the United States, the prospect of Christianity becoming synonymous with conservatism seems greater than ever. Depending on one's perspective, this trend may be cause for rejoicing or lament. But the idea that the default form of public interest law for the Christian lawyer is as advocate for the conservative movement amounts to a concept worthy of further reflection.

What about lawyers who also identify as Christian and work on behalf of causes that fall outside the priorities of the conservative right? Throughout the scriptures, many verses specifically reference populations at the heart of causes and practice areas in which lawyers regularly seek to pursue good on behalf of those at the margins of society, such as immigration, criminal defense and criminal legal system reform, housing, human rights, racial justice, or low-wage workers' rights, to name a few. While conservatives have at times expressed support for dimensions of these issues, such causes have not served as the primary rallying cries for the Christian right.

Assuming, however, lawyers who profess the Christian faith and work towards the common good outside the context of the political right do exist, who are they? And why do they seem so invisible? I will discuss the results of a qualitative, empirical research project of lawyers who identify as Christian and who engage in various forms of public interest work not widely associated with the conservative right. Through 31 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted from June 2023 to March 2024, the study sheds light on a largely unstudied and overlooked group of lawyers. The interviews suggest that these lawyers find deep resonance between their faith and public interest work, but are often out of place in both traditional Christian environments as well as (to a lesser degree) in secular progressive ones--and encounter little to no institutional support for their dual identities. In turn, they have adopted a range of ways to respond to the dissonances that arise around their personal faith, justice commitments, faith communities and professional contexts.

This study provides a detailed snapshot of a typically hidden set of lawyers whose experiences and insights provide perspective on broader and often controversial discussions about religion, law, politics, and the role that lawyers play in that shifting landscape. It also has implications for how we conceive of law and the legal profession as a broader institution that exists for the common good.

Love Thy Neighbor? Thinking Historically about the Promise and Peril of “Civility”

Patrick Connelly, Mississippi College

In 2014, Hua Tsu wrote a provocative New Yorker essay titled “The Civility Wars,” in which he expressed skepticism over the value of the term “civility” itself. Tsu argued that the term lacks “a tidy history” and saw it as a coercive tool, or “a way of sanding down the edges of conversation.” He noted that the right suspects civility is “political correctness by a different name” and the left suspects it is “a way of silencing dissent.” While he concluded that there should be “nothing controversial about everyday kindness,” his article ended on a note of deep skepticism and suspicion that the term has any value going forward.

What is remarkable is that this essay was written ten years ago—prior to the populist uprising in the 2016 election, the racial reckoning of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic, or the insurrectionist impulses of January 6, 2021. It is fair to say that if anything, skepticism about the idea of civility has only grown in correlation with increasing distrust in political, medical, religious and educational institutions, to name a few. Is civility even worth recovering or reimagining at this point?

This paper will begin with a brief panoramic historical survey of the concept of civility itself, before focusing primarily on its usage and understanding in a modern American context. I will highlight critiques of civility as they pertain to the civil rights era, in which the concept was employed in resistance to the Black freedom struggle, before looking at the evolution of the term in more recent reflections on civility in the age of “culture wars.” Authors considered include James Davison Hunter, Stephen Carter, P.M. Forni, Teresa Bejan, and John Inazu. Historical thinking about civility will provide a foundation for discussing what prospects the idea and term “civility” possess going forward.

I will conclude with a discussion of these prospects and what value there might be in reimagining the concept in terms of Augustinian notions of friendship or through the reinvigoration of “neighborliness.” I will also explore what role missional institutions of higher education might play in cultivating what there is to redeem in the concept. I will conclude by exploring whether “incivility,” or a rejection of neighborliness, is a luxury for the privileged, for those who fight for cultural and political power on taken-for-granted assumptions of institutional stability, material prosperity, the rights of citizenship, and the rule of law. Does the luxury of incivility accomplish its own sanding down—that of the very foundations which make it possible?

Small Practices for Vibrant Common Life in the Classroom

Julia Daniel, Baylor University

Our discussion of preparing university students for vibrant participation in the common life is often future-focused; how will we have readied them for life after graduation? How will they bring forward virtues and skills into the “real world” for the good of all? And while there’s been energizing and necessary work expanding the university experience beyond campus, the classroom still persists as the most iconic and day-to-day place where both students and professors live out their membership in the institution of the university together, as well as their fellowship in the Body of Christ in faith-based institutions.

In this paper, I argue for returning to the classroom as a locus of common life, not a rehearsal for one. This practical, ground-up approach to thinking through how universities participate well in the common life focuses on micro-practices in the classroom as ways we can not just model but manifest a flourishing common life together. Participants will leave with an instantly implementable tool-kit of small practices that have large consequences for classroom culture.

Turning our focus back to the classroom also invites an exploration of how we support professors in their rooted common life alongside shifting populations of students. Much university-focused pedagogical and institutional scholarship rightly focuses on the student experience. For example, in studies of virtue pedagogy, most often the main question is: how can we cultivate virtue in students? Less frequently do we ask how we can cultivate virtue in ourselves, let alone how the students cultivate it in us. The common life of the classroom provides us all with a space of mutual discernment and formation, a posture which requires a great deal of humility and offers a great reward of joy.

In this paper, I draw on the work of John Bennett, Melanie Howard, and David Anderson to argue for the value of some practical, small-scale shifts in our classroom practice grounded in the principles of biblical neighborliness and hospitality as paths towards meaningful common life in classroom communities. From how we handle late work to tough conversations about grades to the ways we invite students to hold us accountable or even how we talk about students with our colleagues, we can co-create life-giving communities with our students. As such, classroom culture and labor should not be treated as simply anticipatory; it is already a common life well lived.

Bored, Busy, and Burned Out: Christian College Students and the Vice of Acedia

Phil Davignon, Union University

Christian colleges exist at the intersection of three institutional spheres: the academy, the professions, and the church. As faith-based institutions they affirm the inherent goodness of the created world and a broad understanding of vocation, yet they are also beholden to stakeholders—accreditors, graduate programs, and employers—whose sole interest is the professional competence of their graduates. Students are caught in the middle of these competing concerns. They frequently describe themselves as overwhelmingly busy, while also experiencing a sense of malaise toward their coursework and the faith traditions of their upbringing. This presentation argues that this busyness and malaise are symptoms of the vice of acedia, understood as sadness at the spiritual good—a kind of existential boredom.

For many students, college marks the beginning of a life stage they face the task of discovering a sense of purpose of forming a stable identity. Yet the primary sources of identity available to them are consumption and productivity—defined by one's job title and income. Many Christian colleges aspire to endow their students with a Christian worldview, while also treating education as an instrument to advance their careers. Do Christian colleges offer clear pathways to resist acedia, or unintentionally reproduce busyness and spiritual malaise by privileging approaches to education that obscure the inherent goodness of creation and everyday life? This presentation explores these questions by discussing the early results of a new study of Christian college students.

Building Institutions of Hope

Margaret Diddams, Christian Scholar's Review

When organizations are conceptualized with their ultimate goals in mind, they transcend their physical and operational aspects. They become structures that foster a collective telos, a purpose that benefits those they serve and empowers those who strive to achieve this purpose. This is the essence of institutional hope, as described below, that transcends the day-to-day workings of modern organizations to create social change.

Institutions are a special type of organization. They are held in such high regard for their external mission and the way they function internally that others look to them as models for their own lives or how collective life should function. Not-for-profits such as World Relief or the Gates Foundation or for-profit companies that adhere to ESG (environmental, social, and governance) principles, such as Microsoft or Bank of America Financial, exemplify organizations seen as institutions. While we are at a cultural moment where there is very little trust in traditional institutions, people still look to institutions, not individuals, to drive positive social change. This expectation takes nothing less than hope.

Hope is a somewhat amorphous concept. We hope for good weather, a long-lasting marriage, that our children stay out of trouble, for tenure, a happy retirement, and for the Kingdom of God to be fully restored at the return of Christ. Philosopher Alan Mittleman defines hope as “both a fundamental orientation within the present and an anticipation of a desired future.” Without its religious moorings, hope is seen in the social sciences as an agentic practice for getting us from point A to point B. Yet, as Augustine wrote, "Hope isn't hope if its object is seen." Hope for Christians is not so much a human program of self-help as a virtue infused by the Holy Spirit so that we might be drawn more closely to God.

The work of the Holy Spirit rejuvenates churches and movements as well as individuals, providing both institutional and individual hope. In this paper, I will talk about the institutional hope exemplified by Mendenhall Ministries, founded in the 1970s by civil rights leader John Perkins in Mendenhall, Mississippi, to build economic, relational, and spiritual vitality in his community based on his philosophy of Christian community development. I will end my paper by describing Seattle Urban Impact, a Christian institution in the south end of Seattle founded on these principles, and its impact for the past forty years on its local community and in developing leaders to take on leadership responsibilities far beyond its own mission.

Post-Digital Human Learning Institutions: Language, Memory, Intelligence

Phillip Donnelly, Baylor University

What happens to the means and ends of human learning institutions in the age of “machine learning”? In order to begin thinking clearly about such questions, we might first note that, like the terms “language,” “memory,” and “intelligence,” the application of “learning” to a machine is actually a metaphor. The root issue here is not merely semantic. Amid our cultural amnesia about the metaphoric use of these terms, contemporary culture has increasingly reimagined the human in terms that are reducible to algorithmic operations, thereby re-imagining ourselves in the image of the machine. As a result, institutions of human learning face a variety of challenges, but the most acute problems arise from the widely shared presumption that probabilistic discursive algorithms are an adequate substitute for thinking. I argue that there are pedagogical practices that institutions should prioritize if they are concerned with human learning. This presentation unfolds in three parts. The first section briefly explains the differences between the metaphoric and non-metaphoric use of the terms, “language,” “memory,” “intelligence,” and “learning.” The second part explains what is at stake in the widely presumed reduction of human consciousness to a mechanistic process, specifically as it relates to the primal grammatical relation between words and reality. The final section outlines four basic modes in which human learning occurs and explains why only two of them (what I call “direct” and “indirect” instruction) may be scaled for mass communication, while the other two (“dialectical inquiry” and “apprenticeship”) are not. To the extent that our institutions are driven by generalized probabilistic calculations (with regard to learning or research), they will tend to exclude or presume the irrelevance of human learning that concerns interpersonal individual particulars. Ultimately, this presentation proposes two things: an alternative to the presumed social imaginary of mechanized consciousness and a vision for pedagogical priorities among institutions that ostensibly serve human learning.

Catalyzing Thriving Learning Communities

Jonathan Eckert, Baylor University

Marilyn Rhames, Baylor University

Bill Sterrett, Baylor University

Grant Morgan, Baylor University

Effective educational leadership catalyzes work that supports thriving learning communities (Wenger, 2000). Derived from the definition of a catalyst in chemistry, a catalytic leader accelerates improvement sustainably because the work is not about the individual leader (Author, 2024). Building on work from South Carolina (Author, 2023), we are conducting a federally funded grant project in five districts in Mississippi to reduce substance use/misuse. Instead of introducing curriculum or replicating other failed attempts to reduce the prevalence of negative outcomes (Lynam et al., 1999; West & O’Neal, 2004), we engaged in a year-long networked improvement community (Bryk, 2020; Bryk, 2015; Bryk et al., 2015; Peurach, 2016) with 11 middle and high school teams consisting of building administrators, counselors, and teachers from five districts. The teams and planning year were essential for contextualizing improvement goals.

The focus of our work was on developing joy (Author, forthcoming) through:

- 1) positive community norms (Linkenbach et al., 2021),
- 2) enhanced relationships between students as well as students and educators, and
- 3) increased student engagement within and beyond the classroom.

We arrived at these interventions through the year-long process built upon five tools derived from improvement science. The purpose of this paper is to describe the process, undergirding research, and provide a playbook for school improvement across districts.

These five tools build on the significant work of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Bryk, 2015; Bryk, 2020; Bryk et al., 2015). However, in our work with schools, we have identified a need to streamline and accelerate some of the improvement science work due to district time constraints. Because we do not adhere to all the tenets of networked improvement communities, we use the phrase “catalytic improvement communities” (Author, 2024), as we come alongside good work that is already occurring in an attempt to accelerate that work.

Building on the tenets of collective leadership (Author, 2019; Author, 2023; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Louis et al., 2010), school improvement is contingent upon administrators and teachers leading together. Collective leadership is correlated with collective teacher efficacy (Author, 2023; Goddard et al., 2000). In this way, work is co-owned, and teams of leaders catalyze improvement by accelerating positive work already occurring in the school (Author, 2024). Teams of administrators and teachers use a five-tool framework to identify adaptive challenges—challenges that require a change in mindset because the problem and solution are unclear (Heifetz, 1994)—that comprise our adaptive challenge framework.

The process of involving five districts in catalytic improvement communities in the design of interventions to support thriving learning communities has significant implications. The work builds on networked improvement community research and has implications on how to reduce negative outcomes by focusing on the positive, joyful collective leadership of administrators, teachers, and students.

Restoring Vision for the Common Good: Designing a Curriculum for Virtuous Leadership

Erin Ellis, Baylor University

Chelsea Sentell, Baylor University

Each year, students experience weariness of doing good as opportunities to serve and engage communities are increasingly tangled with the pressure to perform, achieve, and develop as leaders. The natural response to a world that celebrates and elevates resume virtues is to continue doing good works without a vision for the flourishing that the works are meant to bring about. For Student Development professionals, this presents a compelling question:

How might we empower students to not only persist in doing good, but to see themselves as implicated in the call to work restoratively toward the common good?

In response to this question and in support of Baylor Student Life's commitment to embolden students toward the habits and virtues necessary to faithfully and authentically lead for the common good, the presenters are preparing to pilot a semester curriculum designed for students to practice habits that promote the cultivation of virtues necessary to lead with the flourishing of self, neighbor, and society as the central goal.

The course is designed to help student leaders develop a theoretical understanding of Leadership for the Common Good, but the primary objective is for students to integrate principle into practice. The curriculum prompts students to not only think about habit and how they could contribute positively throughout their college careers, but also to consider how those habits might be tangibly and generatively applied in their future vocational contexts.

By piloting this curriculum with a highly influential student population that has significant capacity for promoting positive change within Baylor's campus context, we hope to introduce a pathway for student leadership learning that integrates virtue development with practicable application and has immediate positive effect on the campus community.

In this session, the presenters will expand upon this concept and outline their process for designing a curriculum inspired by Baylor Student Life's Leadership for the Common Good Framework. During this time, we will:

- Introduce the institution's guiding framework and pilot student population
- Explore the collaborative process of curriculum development, from establishing learning outcomes to curating course materials
- Highlight the importance of creatively incorporating elements of beauty and hospitality
- Provide examples of key assignments and activities meant to stir students' commitment to a restored vision.

Participants in this session will be invited into a sustained discussion regarding the implications for future practice and opportunities to introduce a similar curriculum within their own contexts. What might it look like to share a framework for virtuous leadership? How might we encourage individuals to develop constructive habits? Where might there be strategic

opportunities to put habit into practice that people and communities may experience a restoration of vision for the common good through good work with one another?

Love Like Jesus: Transforming Institutions for the Common Good

Allison Fannin, Baylor University

Dr. Amy Sloan, Baylor University

This proposal explores the theme of renewing and reimagining institutions for the common good through the transformative power of Christ-like love. It addresses the context of the Baylor Symposium on Faith and Culture, emphasizing the importance of incorporating biblical principles of love into institutional reform. The paper investigates the theological foundations of Christ-like love, drawing on critical scriptural references such as John 13:34–35 and Matthew 22:37–40 and highlights the characteristics of Jesus' love as sacrificial, inclusive, and transformative (New King James Version Bible, 2021 John 13:34–35; Matthew 22:37–40).

Examining the historical context of this topic involves reflecting on the early Christian community as a model, and the role of agape in Christian thought and practice. The proposal identifies current challenges within modern institutions by analyzing failures in sectors such as education, healthcare, and governance and discussing their societal impact through case studies of affected populations (Blanchard & Hodges, 2016).

A critical aspect of the proposal is the application of principles of Christ-like love to institutional renewal. It defines these principles in modern contexts, translating biblical teaching into contemporary institutional frameworks. The document outlines practical strategies for integrating love, compassion, and justice into institutional policies and practices and provides examples of successful implementations in various sectors (Lysaught & Kotva, 2012).

The importance of this topic extends to the ethical principles that form the foundation of institutional structures and practices. Ethical and servant leadership, rooted in Christ-like love, are essential for transforming institutions and promoting the common good. Ethical leadership emphasizes integrity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that institutions act in the best interests of all relevant groups. Servant leadership, characterized by a commitment to serving others, promotes a culture of empathy, respect, and collaboration. Together, these leadership approaches can drive systemic change, guiding institutions to prioritize human dignity and well-being (Irving & Strauss, 2019).

Reimagining institutions through the lens of love provides a pathway to creating inclusive and supportive environments in education, healthcare, and governance. This approach includes designing learning environments that foster holistic development and community engagement, implementing patient-centered care models that ensure accessibility and equity, and developing policies that reflect compassion and social justice (Covey, 1991; Nord, 2014; Solomon, 2017).

Case studies of institutions that have successfully integrated these principles are presented, offering insights and best practices. The conclusion recapitulates the significance of Christ-like love and ethical and servant leadership in transforming institutions, issuing a call to action for communities and institutions to embrace and implement these principles. The paper also suggests future directions for research and practice in this area, aiming to inspire ongoing dialogue and innovation in institutional renewal.

The Role of Institutions in Engaging and Educating Students Toward the Pursuit of the Common Life

Emma Freemyer, Baylor University

An unfortunate but undeniable characteristic of modern culture is a deep distrust of institutions. Repeated mistakes and problematic leadership have led many to question the value of maintaining these establishments. As skepticism grows, the question of whether society benefits from institutions has become increasingly pressing. What role do institutions play, particularly in engaging and educating students toward the pursuit of the common life? This essay argues that institutions play an essential role in passing on practical knowledge, preserving our rich inheritance of accumulated wisdom, and preventing society from devolving into chaos and animalism. Examining the perspectives of thinkers such as Michael Oakeshott, Russell Kirk, and Yuval Levin can provide a better understanding of why maintaining institutions is crucial for the well-being of society.

Michael Oakeshott, in his work “Rationalism in Politics,” distinguishes between two types of knowledge: technical and practical. Technical knowledge can be transcribed into rules and procedures, while practical knowledge is acquired through experience and tradition. Oakeshott argues that practical knowledge, which encompasses wisdom accumulated over generations, cannot be fully articulated in written form. It is imparted through lived experience and social practices, making institutions uniquely suited to passing on this form of knowledge. Educational institutions, for example, provide students with more than just a theoretical understanding, as they also offer the experiential learning necessary to navigate complex social and professional landscapes.

In “Burke and the Politics of Prescription,” Russell Kirk presents tradition as an invaluable inheritance. He argues that this collective wisdom, handed down from our ancestors, forms the bedrock of a stable and flourishing society. Kirk warns that discarding this inheritance would leave individuals without the accumulated knowledge needed to thrive. By preserving tradition, institutions ensure that each generation benefits from the hard-earned lessons of the past, fostering a sense of continuity and purpose. This inheritance includes not only cultural and intellectual achievements but also moral and ethical frameworks that guide individuals in their pursuit of the common life.

Kirk uses the metaphor of “mayfly men” to describe individuals who live disconnected from tradition, likening them to flies that live only for a day. Without the guidance of inherited wisdom, these individuals are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, never achieving true progress. Yuval Levin extends this idea by arguing that without some form of direction, people become slaves to their base desires, losing their humanity and dignity. Levin asserts that tradition provides the best form of guidance, as it is a cumulative body of knowledge that has been tested over time and is more adaptable than any modern theoretical framework.

Given these perspectives, it becomes clear why institutions are indispensable. Institutions are responsible for transmitting a sense of responsibility and continuity. By fostering respect for tradition and practical wisdom, institutions help individuals develop into well-rounded, morally

grounded members of society. They ensure that the pursuit of the common life is informed by the rich heritage of human experience, preventing the fragmentation and chaos that can arise from a purely rationalist approach to progress.

Uniting Things by Holding the Centre: Immanence, Transcendence, and Restoring Institutions for the Common Good

Madeline Garrett, Brigham Young University

Edwin Gantt, Brigham Young University

This paper will explore what is required for success in the vital project of restoring and sustaining key societal institutions, whether academic, ecclesial, or political, and will do so through the combined lens of Rieff's (2006) notion of first, second, and third worlds, and Taylor's (2007) analysis of immanent and transcendent frames. First and second worlds, according to Rieff, are those in which moral structure is seen to be located in the external and transcendent. For first worlds, this transcendent grounding is often mythical in nature, while for second worlds, such a grounding is found in God and characterized by faith. In contrast, Rieff maintains, third worlds are those that reject notions of any transcendent reality and which consequently base their moral structures on things secular, immanent, and self-grounding. Rieff's cultural worlds are closely mirrored by what Taylor describes as transcendent and immanent frames. Transcendent frames, according to Taylor, are worldviews that take for granted the existence of a sacred order or reality beyond the natural, material world and understand human being and flourishing in those terms. On the other hand, Taylor's immanent frames, similar to Rieff's third worlds, view human being and purpose in strictly secular terms and see belief in reality beyond the natural, material world to be merely one option⁷ – albeit a less plausible option – among many.

In this paper, we will argue that many contemporary approaches to understanding, improving, and sustaining key societal institutions reflect the presumptions of immanent frames and cultural third worlds, grounded as they are in naturalistic, secular values and conceptions of the common good. We will demonstrate that because such worldviews can only justify their moral structures, standards, and aspirations on the basis of cultural, political, and historical contingencies, their assumptions and values are inherently evanescent, volatile, and confused. As such, those assumptions and values cannot provide a stable, viable foundation from which to restore and strengthen our most important institutions, nor can they offer any substantial, meaningful vision regarding the purpose to which institutions should or could be restored. Following this analysis, we will argue for the essential and central role that faith and faith traditions, as cultural second worlds and transcendent frames, because of their stable grounding in a sacred order and “extrinsic justification for moral codes” (Trueman, 2020, p. 75), can and ought to play in the genuine restoration of institutions to their proper promotion and facilitation of the common good.

The Institution of the Family in Literature

Brent Gibson, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Undergraduate Students of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Undergraduate students will present papers.

Abraham's Sons and the American Century: America as a Theological Question from Lincoln to Luce

Dallas Gingles, Southern Methodist University

In "The Civil War as a Theological Crisis," Mark Noll argues that Abraham Lincoln's reflection on providence was subtler and much more profound than the dominant theologians, philosophers, and preachers of his time.

In this paper, I follow the lead of Noll and others to treat Lincoln as an American political theologian. I interpret Lincoln's argument as posing America as a theological question to itself. This is similar to the way some have called America, "an almost chosen people," making America both an aspiration and a failure—an ambivalent good, but a real one. Lincoln inaugurates a line of American political theology that other thinkers take up in different ways.

One of the central thinkers in this tradition is Reinhold Niebuhr. For many years, anxious conversations in the guilds of Christian ethics and religious scholarship more broadly have revolved around the question, "where is the Niebuhr of our time." In response, some have argued that Niebuhr is simply a product of the easy Protestant consensus of the 20th century. This is certainly true so far as it goes. My paper asks how far it goes by asking not about Niebuhr, but about Henry Luce—"where is the Henry Luce of our time."

Luce was an American institution builder of the first order. He was the owner of "Time" and other publications, and his mission was to shape the self-understanding of middle America. In so doing, Luce helped create the easy Protestant consensus that made Niebuhr possible. The word mission is apt. The son of protestant missionaries, Luce conflated the fervor of foreign missions with the excitement of the American dream, crafting a vision of what he called, "the American century." Unlike the easy caricature of an idolatrous capitalist who put the gospel to work for his own ends, Luce allowed his conflation to run both ways. It informed his vision of America as much as it did his understanding of the gospel, and it drove him to help America pose itself as theological question.

Niebuhr was better equipped intellectually than Luce to bring Lincoln's vision of America from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. But, Niebuhr's influence was made possible in no small part by Luce and others like him. As Jeremy Sabella puts it, by putting Niebuhr on the cover of 25th anniversary edition of "Time," Luce "gave Niebuhr's message...a megaphone."

One challenge of our time is that no matter how many Niebuhrs we have, we do not have even a single "Time" to make them intelligible, much less to give them a megaphone. We need institutions--especially institutions of theological higher education--whose mission is to help pose America as a question to itself. Here we may learn more from Luce than Niebuhr.

In the end, then, my argument is not actually about Lincoln, Luce, or Niebuhr. It is, rather, a normative argument, that a flourishing common life depends on institutions—and institution-builders—dedicated to the sort of work that makes a Lincoln or Niebuhr possible.

Crafted for Change: Leveraging Institutional Partnerships for the Common Good

Jennifer Golden, Abilene Christian University

Dr. Laura Phillips, Associate Professor of Management Sciences, Abilene Christian University (ACU)

Dr. Eliecer Vargas, Coordinador de Maestría Internacional en Turismo Sostenible, Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE)

Ana Schwager, Senior Community Outreach Program Manager, Southwest Airlines (SWA)

Institutions must work collaboratively because complex problems call for creative solutions. This session presents a case study in which U.S. and Costa Rican educational institutions partner with businesses to create a more equitable and sustainable future. This occurs while also educating future business leaders through the use of proven practices in experiential learning, which scholarship and practice support (Hanstedt, 2018; Kanashiro et al., 2020; Pritchard, 2020; Willness et al, 2023).

Our panel includes representatives from ACU, CATIE, SWA, and Wearsos. This diverse group will discuss the benefits of our six-year partnership, specifically how we have collaborated to reduce waste, empower local artisans (especially women), and build economic sustainability in rural communities. Although specific projects and participating students change, progress continues due to the consistency of the underlying partnerships.

ACU: Students take a consulting class, prepare for a cross-cultural experience, and spend one to two weeks in Costa Rica with clients, presenting their deliverables at the end of the course.

Goals:

- Societal impact—increase access to educational and economic opportunities
- Student learning examples
 - Cultivate cultural awareness and partner across cultures
 - Practice tackling difficult problems

Benefits:

- Provide support for entrepreneurs
- Provide outside perspectives on community development programs
- Magnify the impact of SWA's investment in Costa Rica

SWA: SWA's Repurpose with Purpose program aims to reduce environmental impact and boost economic development, with a focus on Costa Rica.

Goals:

- Societal impact—sustainability, employment, and skills training

Benefits:

- Provide materials, training, and sponsorship to local entrepreneurs
- Financially support ACU's travel

- Provide feedback to ACU professors

CATIE: CATIE invests in regional economic development. One of their programs uses SWA seat leather.

Goals:

- Provide job skills, training and employment opportunities locally
- Host cross-cultural programs with other universities

Benefits:

- Established local relationships
- Provide challenging business problems for ACU students
- Co-create solutions with student groups

Wearsos: Wearsos is an entrepreneurial fashion venture that creates products from upcycled materials to empower local women.

Goals:

- Provide job skills, training, and employment opportunities locally
- Create high quality, fashionable products from upcycled materials

Benefits:

- Established local relationships
- Provide challenging business problems for ACU students
- Co-create solutions with student groups

Discussion and Outcomes:

This panel seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with institutional collaboration. Our goal is to inspire other institutions to embrace collaborative approaches that leverage resources to work toward the common good.

Key questions:

- How can interdisciplinary collaborations be structured to maximize impact?
- What are some best practices for fostering effective partnerships?
- How can organizations balance individual missions while working towards shared objectives?

Underground Philanthropy: Giving and Volunteering in Clandestine Contexts

Jamie Goodwin, Wheaton College

Introducing Underground Philanthropy

Over the years, the research roads I have traveled led me again and again to religious grassroots groups. In Cuba, I met Pastor Eduardo Otero, who created a foundation in Spain to funnel donations from the United States to Cuba, avoid the embargo, and help pay his house church pastors' salaries (Goodwin, 2021). In Southern California, I studied with Reverends Melvin and Ada Valiente, who coordinate an underground network to host undocumented immigrants (Romero, 2020). In Indianapolis, I listened to U.S. Muslim leaders recount how they gave in secret ways when the government froze the assets of relief organizations after 9/11 (GhaneaBassiri, 2017). What happens, I began to wonder, when religious pro-social beliefs conflict with laws and social norms? Over time, I found literature that informed these experiences and began to call it underground philanthropy, a concept borrowed from the scholarship of underground economics (Ferman et. al, 1987).

Much has been written about informal philanthropy (Borstein, 2009; Wiepking et. al, 2021; Barman, 2017; Kumi, 2019; Schervish & Havens, 2002) and philanthropy among immigrants (Appe, 2024; DeSourza et. al, 2023; Brazal and Dávila, 2016; Reyes, 2021). Yet while informal giving is arguably understudied, much less is known about giving that takes place in the shadows because it is illegal, dangerous, or pathologized. Underground philanthropy reflects the writing of Sudhir Venkatesh, who examined underground economies in Chicago and New York City and found that such systems help those on the margins of society to 'float' (2006, 2013).

Religion and Underground Philanthropy

People who give and volunteer underground often do so motivated by their religion (Wild, 2010; Aziz, 2011; Kurniati et. al, 2023; Robbins, 2006). They act while seeking moral coherence between the tenets of their faith, the laws of their country and the social rewards of their religious networks. As one volunteer in the immigrant railroad stated for CNN, "It's hard as a Jew not to think about both all the people who did open their doors and their homes and take risks to safeguard Jews in moments where they were really vulnerable, as well as those that didn't. We'd like to be the people who did" (Lah et. al, 2017).

Proposed Study

John Mackay writes of two different attitudes in the search for knowledge – the balcony and the road. The balcony is a more distant place for study. In contrast, he states, "By the Road I mean the place where life is tensely lived, where thought has its birth in conflict and concern,

where choices are made and decisions are carried out. It is the place of action, of pilgrimage, of crusade, where concern is never absent from the wayfarer's heart" (1941, p. 29-30).

This study is a research approach from Mackay's Road, developing the interdisciplinary concept of underground philanthropy with a review of anthropological, ethical and theological literature. It will also highlight cases in Cuba, immigrants in the Southern U.S., and U.S. Muslim communities.

The Sublime in U.S. National Parks Photography

Julie Grandjean, Texas A&M University-Commerce

The first American national park, Yellowstone, was established in 1872. National Parks are an inherently American invention and institution, focused on the preservation and protection of nature and American heritage. As Wallace Stegner famously claimed (1983), "National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." The creation of Yellowstone National Park opened the door to the establishment of more parks throughout the country (and internationally), and was due in part to the work of photographers sent to the region to record its beauty and lobby representatives to protect the area. William Henry Jackson, Carleton Watkins, and most famously Ansel Adams have focused their careers on photographing American nature, and the "immanence of spirit in the landscape" (Goldberg, 1991, p. 47), the Sublime. I argue that the establishment of National Parks, as an American institution, emanates from this Sublime made evident in these early examples of nature photography.

Reimagining the Practice of Mixed-Gender Friendship in Church

Ian Gravagne, Baylor University

Justice Flint, Baylor University

Katie Calloway, Baylor University

Viewed by Christians as an institution established by Christ Himself, the church since its very inception has occupied an anachronistic place in human society: simultaneously bearing an “ahead of its time” message while also often finding itself “behind the times” culturally. This paper posits (1) that a theologically grounded reimagining of mixed-gender Christian friendship may be overdue, and (2) that the thoughtful practice of mixed-gender friendship can potentially strengthen church congregations and better position the church as a cultural cornerstone for vibrant and supportive relationships everywhere.

The harmonious whole created by the dynamic interplay of gender difference, while exemplified in marriage, is not intended only to be found in that institution; unity across gender difference is vital to the functioning of the church. To truly be a family in Christ, we need spiritual brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers. While embodying spiritual siblinghood and parenthood necessitates grappling with the tension of living in the “already-not-yet” of being family in Christ yet also being able to be married and given in marriage, this challenge should not dissuade us from attempting to find the balance. Cultivating healthy mixed-gender interaction in church starts with refusing to view one another as potential liabilities, instead placing our common spiritual regeneration and common humanity front and center. Cultivating the function of church as a family will necessarily positively impact its ability to fulfill its divine mission of making disciples and modeling the love of Christ to the world.

Christians can also consider the benefits and drawbacks of mixed-gender friendships through the lens of history: what have philosophers and theologians of the past said on this subject, and what examples have there been of beneficial or detrimental mixed-gender friendships? Here we give two competing historical views of mixed-gender friendship, by Aristotle and Richard Baxter, before turning to two examples of friendships that flourished between men and women without giving rise to problematic dynamics. These friends are Mary Boyle Rich (1624-1678) and George Berkeley (1626/7-1698), and John Adams (1735-1826) and Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814). Though many instances of such friendships could be brought forward, these are especially instructive because they were conducted by people many would consider moral exemplars: the first case involves a devout English Puritan and the second an American “founding father.”

The paper will conclude with constructive observations for Christian mixed-gender friendship, including simple practices to help build a church culture that nourishes mixed-gender friendship while acknowledging appropriate boundaries.

Using Institutions to Ensure Food Security and Resilience in our Communities

Craig Gundersen, Baylor University

Hope Koch, Baylor University

Kevin Koch, Callaway Foundation

Food insecurity has emerged as the leading indicator of well-being for vulnerable Americans. This is for two primary reasons. First, the magnitude of the problem is staggering with over one-in-eight Americans are food insecure. While this had fallen by over 35% by 2021 since its peak during the Great Recession, it rose substantially in 2022 due to food price inflation. Second, there are serious consequences associated with food insecurity. This includes numerous negative health outcomes, higher health care costs, and higher mortality.

The extent of food insecurity would be far higher in the United States without the tireless efforts of Christians across the country. Central to our Christian faith is the demand made by Jesus to help those among us who are most vulnerable, particularly those who face obstacles to obtaining enough food for themselves and their families. Christians meet this call by working within institutions across several dimensions. First, we serve as witnesses to Jesus' teachings. Second, we seek to bring glory to God in whatever form such work takes. In doing so, one of the outcomes is economic growth, which leads to more opportunities for the most vulnerable. Third, we provide direct care to those in need. This occurs daily in, among other places, our churches and Christian social service organizations.

In this panel, three distinct perspectives on how we as Christians are called to make sure our institutions more effectively serve the Christian call to help alleviate food insecurity in our country.

Craig Gundersen, Snee Family Endowed Chair leads off the discussion by defining food insecurity its determinants. He then turns to some of the interventions that have helped address food insecurity with an emphasis on the two most important of these - SNAP and charitable food assistance.

Next on our panel is Kevin J. Koch, Chair of the newly formed Texas Food Systems Security and Resiliency Planning Council. He will discuss the efforts in Texas to build resilient food systems through the Texas Food Council. Kevin will talk about the Food Council's work in developing a food security and resilience plan for the state which addresses the logistical challenges of food distribution with an emphasis on managing risks associated with disasters. By studying the flow of food across large and small food retailers and food banks, the Food Council will build resources to mitigate food system disruptions and protect our access to food.

Our panel concludes with Hope Koch, Godfrey Sullivan Professor of Information Systems and Business Analytics. She will discuss how a technical platform could help address food security and resilience. The platform could bring together all food production and distribution players to share vulnerability information, collaborate on mitigation strategies, and coordinate responses.

Spiritual Practices and Institutional Renewal at the Intersection of Church and Academy

Paul Gutacker, Brazos Fellows

Elizabeth Corey, Baylor University

Jonathan Kanary, Baylor University

Ryan Butler, John Brown University

This panel explores the intersection of spiritual practices and institutional renewal. Drawing on theory and practice, the papers pose several questions: how do institutions shape, and in turn are shaped by, practices of worship, leisure, and study? What possibilities for collaboration are emerging between local churches and institutions of higher education? And how might we reimagine institutions in ways that better serve spiritual and holistic flourishing?

First, in her paper, Dr. Elizabeth Corey brings the writings of philosopher Josef Pieper, particularly his diagnosis of our contemporary culture of “total work,” to bear on the aims and outcomes of educational institutions today. She draws on her experience of reading and teaching Pieper’s *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* in various institutional settings, including both the academy and the church, and with various kinds of students. Corey reflects on the transformative possibilities of Pieper’s philosophy, asking how his critique of the cult of achievement might not only produce institutional renewal but also inspire the formation of new institutions that contribute to the common good.

Then, in his paper, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Kanary explores how institutions both shape and are shaped by corporate worship. Drawing on his work on the committee that revised and published the 2019 Book of Common Prayer, and his experience leading and teaching others in praying with the BCP, Kanary invites us to reconsider the prayer book as itself an institution. How does the process of prayer book revision help us better understand institutional renewal? In what ways does prayer book revision respond to, and shape, the needs and desires of various communities and institutions? And how might corporate worship create and facilitate holistic growth (spiritual, intellectual, relational) within institutions?

Finally, Dr. Paul Gutacker’s paper explores how institutions of higher learning might collaborate with local churches in theological renewal. He diagnoses several difficulties, both institutional and cultural, that constrain theological inquiry outside of the academy. Then, drawing on the work of Paul Griffiths and others, as well as his experience teaching theology in non-traditional contexts, he offers an account of theological study that opens up new possibilities in and for the local church. In this vision, theological study is a way of loving God with all our minds, and thus properly the work of amateurs rather than professionals. Pursuing and collaborating in this vision, Gutacker argues, proves mutually beneficial to institutions of higher learning and local churches.

Dr. Ryan Butler, director of the Honors Scholars Program at John Brown University, will serve as chair and respondent for the panel.

Re-Imagining Bildung and the Common Good

Dahlia Guzman, UTRGV

To address the issue, I'll look at the concept of bildung to argue that it can be reexamined and repurposed to accentuate how the Liberal Arts contributes to the common good.

Bildung refers to the pursuit of “educative self-formation.” Since its emergence in the 18th century, bildung has been “the guiding concept underlying the rise of the humanities” even though bildung has been shaped and reshaped by changes in educational values and the societies at large in which it is practiced.

Implicitly, bildung is the foundation of the liberal arts goal that serves the common good, broadly construed as the value of teaching individuals the skills necessary to allow them to imagine and work towards their own goals, define their own happiness, and live as authentically as they can: Educative self-formation. In this way, we all benefit from this seemingly individual work.

I make two claims: one is that while there should not be one, singular common good, there is such a thing as a common good and that the Liberal Arts can contribute to the renewal and reimagination of institutions to help foster it by casting a critical eye on its own values, assumptions, and practices that have influenced the values instantiated in the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) offered in university courses.

My second claim is that we should allow students to insert themselves into the curriculum; to show that a neutral and impartial stance is not always necessary in an educational setting.

There has been much success with these SLOs, but there is also marginalizing of large numbers of students. Not because these skills are no longer valuable, but because we have assumed that there is one specific approach in how these skills are taught, measured, and achieved.

In the article, “Is Bildung possible in the Classroom,” authors point out that bildung is not just about the self. “It refers, on the one hand, to the development of selfhood and inner life, but on the other hand, it means to cultivate our diverse talents into a balanced whole through active engagement with the world around us.” Their position allows students to use their own experiences to compare and contrast with concepts from readings; to question claims, and to find and generate meaning for themselves, and contribute to the common good in an original way.

Nurturing Faculty Flourishing: Designing Holistic Supports for University Faculty

Jan Elaine Harris, Lipscomb University

Laura Morrow, Lipscomb University

Universities exist to train the next generation of scholars who will inspire and innovate for humanity's common good. While Universities are designed to support the success of Undergraduate and Graduate Students, often these institutions have not given as much attention to the Flourishing and Well-Being of their Faculty Members.* In the 21st century, University Faculty no longer resemble refined experts living in an ivory tower, whose only requirement is to publish or perish. Faculty design courses accessible to different learning modalities, mentor and advise students, model professionalism, as they continue to produce the cutting edge research that supports the accreditation and reputation of their Universities. As most Faculty member's workloads have increased, University communities have struggled to provide adequate resources, practices, and spaces, to support them. In Lipscomb University's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), we are attempting to develop a more nuanced approach Faculty Well-Being and Flourishing. From the appointment of a Faculty Fellow for Faculty Well-Being, to the implementation of the Catalyst Coaching program, as well as funding Faculty Grants to support the Scholarship of Teaching, Lipscomb's CTL seeks to foster programs/initiatives inspired by Harvard's Flourishing Measure and its Five Domains. Our presentation will address programs implemented in support of Faculty and in individual Colleges. We will discuss campus wide initiatives, and aligning our Faculty supports with Lipscomb's Core Values, as well as our successes, failures, and room to grow. Our session will provide resources and hopefully, raise questions about how to reimagine faculty care, and avoid faculty burnout.

*We are not distinguishing between tenure track, instructors, part time faculty, and/or adjuncts.

Reimagining Augustine's Two Cities

Barry Harvey, Baylor University

There are numerous challenges connected to the notion of the common good in the modern context. In his recent book James Davison Hunter contends that in place of a meaningful common life underwritten by a shared sense of the common good in the United States, we have warring hegemonic projects that are visible in matters of public concern, but which are rooted in conflicting conceptions of competing forms of life. In such circumstances does anything of significance remain in the idea of civil society, those intermediate associations between individuals and states that traditionally have been the bearers of the common good? These associations still exist, but their former role has been largely usurped by state and market, re-tasked to cultivate identities and virtues that allow humans to be productive and compliant citizens, workers, and consumers.

Compounding the enervation of civil society, says Alasdair MacIntyre, is the effacing of the difference between common goods and public goods. Public goods are those that individuals qua individuals need to achieve their self-chosen ends, but which they cannot provide for themselves: security from external threats, law and order, roads, public education, etc. Common goods, by contrast, are those pursued by individuals qua members of a group or as participants in various activities. In the absence of a shared common life, in terms of which individuals identify themselves as members of a common project, all that remains are public goods to assist autonomous individuals as they pursue their chosen goals.

Reviving a common life and replenishing depleted social capital are prime challenges for the associations of civil society. The challenge for the church, however, lies along a different axis, having to do with whether identifying it as one mediating institution among others is true to its calling as the body of Christ. According to both Scripture and tradition the church is not a policy maker or problem solver for what ails democratic social orders, assuming that they can be “fixed” (a prospect for which Davison is not optimistic). Its mandate is instead to offer to the world a political alternative, a demonstration project, if you will, to give the nations of the world the opportunity to see for themselves the kind of social life that is possible for those have been engrafted into the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

God does not gather together Christ's body from every tribe and language and people and nation to play a supporting role, together with all the other mediating institutions, on the one public stage that is the nation-state. Because we have become accustomed to think of Augustine's two cities as two distinct domains, one temporal and the other spiritual, William Cavanaugh suggests that we think of them as two intermingled performances on the one space of creation, the one a tragedy whose theme is that of inevitable conflict and violence, the other an interruption of that tragic tale with the history of salvation, the comedy of redemption.

Forming Solidarity: Institution-Based Community Organizing as a Practice of the Common Good

Nicholas Hayes-Mota, Santa Clara University

In recent decades, institution-based community organizing (IBCO)* has attracted growing attention from social scientists, ethicists, and theologians as a particularly promising approach to democratic politics. Associated with international networks such as the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) and Faith in Action (FiA), IBCO builds large federations of civil society institutions—religious congregations, community associations, labor unions, schools, and so on—in urban, metropolitan, or regional areas that collaborate advance shared political objectives. Because it intentionally builds solidarity across lines of class, race, culture, religion, and political ideology, and promotes cooperative action for democratically determined ends, IBCO has a credible claim to exemplifying a “common good” approach to politics, and indeed organizers within this tradition have often identified the common good as their central orienting value. Yet in what specific ways can IBCO be said to promote the common good? And what larger insights might it offer into how institutions can best pursue, and contribute to, the common good within our pluralistic and fractious society today?

In this paper, I engage these questions by arguing that IBCO is an exemplary form of practice, in Alasdair MacIntyre’s sense, that forms solidarity and advances the common good at four interconnected levels. At the individual level, IBCO develops new capacities, skills, and virtues in the persons who participate in it, such that they become more capable of desiring, reasoning about, and acting for the common good as an intentional object of pursuit. At the interpersonal level, IBCO builds and extends relationships of solidarity among persons, generating new collective capacity to discern, decide upon, and act for the common good together in concert. Simultaneously, by building solidarity not only among isolated persons but within and between the institutions to which they belong, it operates in an analogous way at the institutional level, thereby forming its participant institutions toward the common good as well. Finally, at the larger societal level, IBCO advances the common good by promoting processes of democratic deliberation and collaboration, re-ordering unbalanced (and often unjust) power relationships, and advancing prudent reforms that promote the fuller participation and flourishing of society’s members.

Analyzed in these terms, IBCO thus offers valuable insight into the complexity of the common good itself, and the multiple levels at which its pursuit can, and must, take place. At the same time, it furnishes a compelling illustration of how these levels can be integrated in practice, through forming the virtues, relationships, and structures of solidarity in which the common good itself subsists. Furthermore, while IBCO itself is a coherent form of practice, it is also a complex of many more particular “micro-practices,” many of which can be adapted and employed to advance the common good in other practical and institutional contexts. The paper concludes by considering some of the forms this might take.

* What I and others call “institution-based community organizing” is sometimes also referred to (by scholars and practitioners) as “broad-based,” “faith-based,” or “congregation-based”

organizing. Though these terms have subtle differences in meaning and scope, they generally refer to the same broad form and institutionalized field of practice.

We Have Met the Enemy, and He Is Us

Timothy Heckenlively, Baylor University

Having come of age during the industrial and scientific revolutions, we Americans are a nation deeply accustomed to finding programs and solutions to address our problems. There are many benefits to our “can do” spirit, but it also has a dark side. Our national inability to cope with complexity and open-endedness was on full display during the pandemic, and our churches were more often catalyst than cure. In this paper, I call for Christians to embrace nuance and patience, an approach at odds with the instinctive reactionism, restorationism, and revivalism.

I begin with definitional problems. Whose “good” ought we to advocate and on what basis? Is “good” an a priori Platonic ideal or, in public life, are we speaking of a spectrum of goods, rather more like Aristotle? The adjective “common” is no less problematic. We inherited it from Latin *communis*, a word whose semantic field ranges from that which is broadly shared to that which pertains only to those within the same city-walls. The temptation to define *communitas* in the narrowest possible sense is not several decades old, but several millennia. Lastly, “institution” comes from the Latin *institutio*, which originally connoted customs and precepts more than formalized offices. But competing customs are a natural source of conflict. The same Indo-European stem that gave us Latin *institutio* also gave us Greek *stasis*, civil war.

Such definitional complexities intersect poorly with core aspects of American religious experience. New England was born of reaction: firstly, to Catholicism; later, to the established Church of England; eventually, to taxes and the crown itself. If nation-states had DNA, a spirit of insurgency would be one of our dominant traits. Restorationism complements this instinct for opposition, emphasizing perception of unbiblical or unapostolic practice as the locus of parochial or denominational identity. Revivalism completes this triad of mutually reinforcing tendencies. It calls for return to a lost ideal, fueling our originalist quests. At the same time, it can imbue those quests with a sense of reactionary and (frequently in U.S. history) grandiose apocalyptic fervor.

Recognition of these tendencies will not solve anything quickly. Rather, I imagine something more like recovery from addiction as a model. The first step is admitting that we have a problem, and that it leaves us barely able to answer hard definitional problems for ourselves, let alone an increasingly diverse nation. In time, if we embrace the process, we may come to understand our collective triggers, motivations, and self-deceptions. Rather, if I embrace. Each of us must shoulder his or her own cross of deconstructing our idols that we may find deeper faith and live in imitation of Christ.

Lessons from the Liberal Arts: Honors Humanities Curriculum and the Common Good

Logan Hoffman, John Wesley Honors College at Indiana Wesleyan University

In contemporary society, the liberal arts are not commonly viewed as significant or even desirable influences in charting the future. Technological advancements, political movements, and market forces (among others) are seen as the most important drivers of societal change. The liberal arts, meanwhile, are increasingly viewed as esoteric to the point of being delusional, at best an indulgence for the aristocratic class with time and money to waste. For most regular students, the narrative goes, the liberal arts are little more than a means of accumulating unwanted educational debt, with little to no relevance for the life one might live after graduation. Unfortunately, many of the liberal arts curricula in modern American universities do little to dissuade students of that belief. Unwieldy and disjointed collections of survey courses do little more than test a student's perseverance and short-term recall.

My experience teaching Honors Humanities in the John Wesley Honors College at Indiana Wesleyan University has given me the chance to witness something better, a curriculum in which the liberal arts work cohesively across disciplines to instill in students a telos which calls them to frame their careers as contributing to the Common Good and shapes their imagination for that future contribution. This paper will use the course I teach each Fall to every cohort of incoming freshman, "What is Truth?," as a case study in the ways the liberal arts can engage students in the process of reimagining their lives and careers as contributing to the common life of their communities.

I inherited "What is Truth?" from the founding Dean of the John Wesley Honors College, Dr. David Riggs, after his untimely death in 2022. Taking on his course allowed me to learn from him once again, as I began to see how this foundational course served to frame the entirety of the Honors Humanities liberal arts curriculum for Honors students. In short, "What is Truth?" introduces students to the goods that the liberal arts curriculum as a whole provides, furnishing them with a common language that will be used throughout their education, a shared "narration of reality" which will undergird all that follows, and a vision of a telos to guide their educational and vocational choices. The result is a liberal arts curriculum that guides students in making sense out of the world using a variety of tools, whether theological, literary, historical, or scientific, and points them toward a telos that should inspire and inform their engagement with their chosen discipline and career. The paper will conclude by drawing lessons from this case study for liberal arts programs more generally, suggesting ways that the liberal arts can take a leading role in shaping a society and institutions dedicated to the Common Good.

Welcoming Imagination by Tabling Invitation, Participation, and Communication

Julia Hurlow, Taylor University

In the account of the formation of the earth in Scripture there was a shared goodness for all of creation. The poetic language of Genesis offers imagery for an expansive setting of creativity, inclusivity, meaning, purpose, and belonging. Written accounts included, yet not limited to, light, darkness, water, skies, land, vegetation, creatures, and humans. There was a responsibility to care for the land each would inhabit. All of creation was interdependent with one another, bearing the image of the Triune God. All the necessities fashioned together to provide each living thing with everything needed to thrive. The foundation for the establishment of the common good commenced.

Yet, as time has passed, so has a corporate desire to disengage in the common good. There are disjointed missions, isolated individuals, and sterile ideas running rampant throughout culture. Institutions of higher education learning profoundly mirror culture in the division of shared flourishing. The cultural markers of increased loneliness are running parallel to perceived opportunities to engage advances that limit the amount of human contact necessary to live among each other.

In this time stamp of history, educational communities have an incredible opportunity to offer invitations for people to take a seat together at one of the many tables splattered throughout campus. To take time to pause, table together in conversation of orthodoxy that is at the root of the shalom goodness outlined in the Genesis story. It is a time to look forward with holy imagination for how to embody orthopraxy of moral character and virtue.

What if the table was a leveling place for incarnational relationships to hold nuance, perspective, experience, ideas, and stories as a way of neighborly kindness? What if a hospitable space was an incubator for participation? What if people asked curious questions and then waited to listen with a non-judgmental disposition? What if the tilling of soil of communication would together cross pollinate ideas to plant to one day harvest a future full of transcendent goodness?

We are neighbors here on this earth with a desire to belong as well as caretake with one another. Australian artist and academic, Lilla Watson, has so beautifully stated, “If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together.”

May each of us gather around the ideas of the integration of faith and learning find the table to be a place of gathering. May we offer equity for all who come. May there be an expansive imagination for how intentionality can set spaces of inclusivity by offering invitation to all, come, and have a seat at a table together. May each of us bring the particularities of our personality and participate freely. May we communicate with compassion, season our conflict with sincerity, and generously engage in celebration. May there be abundance of fruitful ideas to reimagine a common way of goodness for the future of institutional learning.

Living into the Tension: Faith and Justice Curriculum Development

Erin Johnson, George Fox University

Jason Fileta, George Fox University

How can institutions create opportunities for students to develop pathways to address racism and injustice in order to move our communities towards a more just society focused on the wellbeing of all of humanity?

We are in a season of existence where we often find a polarization of faith communities and efforts to pursue anti-racism, justice, and policy advocacy. Students often find themselves being split apart, forced to choose one way or another - keeping their faith or addressing injustice. There is a need for educational institutions to create spaces for students to explore, wrestle, and discover their answers of how to be a person of faith and attentive to the common good and wellbeing of all people. Higher education institutions need to create spaces for emerging adults to critically analyze their learned practices, behaviors and beliefs while exploring new ideas and ways of thinking and being.

The Bachelor's of Social Work Program at George Fox University has partnered with the university's Associate Vice President, Inclusive Excellence/Chief Diversity Officer to develop curriculum providing students an opportunity to explore the relationship between faith and justice, faith and diversity, and faith and advocacy. This proposed session invites attendees to explore the different ways programs and institutions can lean into the challenges of faith integration with justice and anti-racism beliefs and practices. The goal of creating student centered learning spaces to engage in critical thinking and examination of their own faith and beliefs can create a stronger way forward for young adults to develop their own beliefs and practices that honor their faith tradition and a commitment to justice. The process of deconstruction and reconstruction of one's faith and practice requires a supportive environment, a knowledgeable and empathetic leader, and relationships centered on compassion.

In this session the presenters will provide an overview of their process of assessment of student developmental needs, university resources, and development of seminar based curriculum to create a space for intra and interpersonal development. Participants will be invited into an ongoing conversation about how to help students navigate a polarized society where extremes have become the vocalized normative response to issues of injustice. We will discuss together how we can manage our own unrest while also leading students through their experiences of questioning, wondering, and hoping for what might come from the work of anti-racism and justice oriented learning and being.

The Ivory Tower of Babel: The Confused Telos of Modern Universities and What to Do About It

John Kainer, UIW

This paper describes the classroom environment and campus climate at modern universities and questions whether these classrooms with their current norms are compatible with human flourishing. Moreover, I endeavor to show how universities with a religious affiliation are particularly positioned to promote human flourishing through a renewed understanding and emphasis on the liberal arts.

Regarding the modern campus climate, in his 2016 Hayek Lecture at Duke University, the moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt argued that the modern academy was claiming to serve two incompatible sacred values, truth and social justice. He lays out a broad definition of social justice scholarship, namely, that when one finds disparities of outcomes by race, gender, sexuality or other group identity that the culprit is presumed to be social injustice. He contrasts that model of scholarship with the model that has not justice as its ultimate end, but Truth. In the end, he contends that universities can serve either of these sacred values, but they cannot serve both, and they should be transparent about which one they ultimately serve. The ultimate ends or telos should frame everything about a university. If the university wishes to be a place of learning and research, it seems clear that it must choose truth. After all, what are students paying to learn if not the truth? Yet many universities have opted to try to pursue both truth and social justice. This has produced a Babel-like situation in the Ivory tower: professors talk past each other, students are either checked out entirely or so adamant that nothing short of sweeping social change is acceptable, and freedom of expression is constrained by the administration in an inconsistent manner. In such an unstable environment, people are not willing to risk speaking openly and plainly for fear of retribution and, since honesty and curiosity are important parts of building relationships, relationships are difficult to develop. This is a big problem for our hypersocial species.

The modern classroom is the ultimate battleground for these values because the rights of students to speak and question are more precarious than professors or administrators. In my experience, students often articulate the importance of social justice and downplay truth as something that is entirely personal. The first things they notice about an author are usually related to the author's identity and, often, students select one or more of these variables as a reason to write off what the author has to say. Worse, faculty are encouraged to engage in this exercise as a part of an effort to decolonize the classroom. Far from decolonization, this is an attempt to recolonize the classroom by another name.

Finally, religious institutions of higher education must have the courage to choose truth as their ultimate telos. They should require liberal arts as the basis of every degree they offer and, more than that, they should invite students into the liberal arts tradition. To be invited into the tradition is to be invited into relationship with the writers and artists studied. This requires that modern students not only read the text but let the text read them as well. It is to see that one can no more explain away Plato than one could explain away oneself. In so doing, the writers and

artists become our friends, our mentors, and our interlocutors. An institution with such a curriculum would be both ancient and new, challenging students because it wants the best for them—true freedom and flourishing.

Tragic Sensibility and Antifragile Leadership

Kevin M. Kambo, The University of Dallas

To explore what liberal education might contribute to developing and preserving institutions, I suggest that we consider the place of tragedy, literary and historical, in the formation of leaders. Specifically, I propose turning to classical, ancient conceptions of tragedy as a way both better to understand what tragedy is, and more clearly to appreciate one way of responding healthily to suffering. Through these explorations I develop an argument that cultivating tragic sensibility helps us more wisely navigate both our own suffering and that of others. And this sensibility is one that leaders always need to perform their duties competently.

My focus will be on Plato's *Philebus*, with reference to the Greek tragedians informing Plato's thought. The tragedians are helpful because they do not use the term tragedy simply to mean any instance of human suffering. In their works, tragic action often concerns responding to past suffering or errors. What these stories reveal is that human beings' responses to pain and suffering often make things worse. It is against this background that I consider Plato's treatment of tragedy in the *Philebus*, where Socrates speaks of directing philosophical attention "not only on stage but also in all of life's tragedies and comedies" (50b), thus moving tragedy from a poetic genre to an ethical-historical category. In the dialogue, Socrates defines the tragic figure as one in whom both power and ignorance are united, not unlike many, indeed all, institutional leaders.

Both Plato and the tragedians helpfully highlight that human action is rarely—if ever—that simple: human beings often act in response to situations outside of their control, and to think otherwise is to interpret events wrongly. Furthermore, these Greeks are attuned to how many of the roles we play and the evils we experience are inherited; as such, they continually warn us against the delusion that we can escape legacies. Finally, Plato and the playwrights are sensitive to how tragic figures are certain of their own wisdom and virtue even though they are impure both in their understanding and their motivations. Assuming oneself to be pure and one's opponents to be impure tends to lead to institutionally destructive tactics, such as cover-ups and scapegoating.

The insights encourage us to develop tragic sensibility, i.e., an intimate appreciation of human fallibility and willingness to face and accept failure. This sensibility allows us to avoid despair and presumption in the face of evil in the world; it allows us to encounter evil with a certain psychological equipoise and peace—not to be confused with apathy—that makes us steadier and more effective agents of justice. Whereas tragedy often involves a wrong response to suffering, tragic sensibility grants us the capacity to expect and meet suffering without surrendering to indifference or hypersensitivity. Nassim Nicholas Taleb describes as antifragile what can improve when experiencing uncertainty or exposed to its own error. I argue that tragic sensibility is an antifragile disposition to cultivate in institutions and their leaders.

Collaborating for the Common Good: Private Higher Educational Institutions & Large-scale BAM Enterprises

James King, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
Dwight Nordstrom, Pacific Resources International

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention states:

“To live generously is to extend His fame – so that all nations, peoples, languages and tribes may know His name. We exist to take the gospel to every corner of the earth...”
(<https://www.imb.org/generosity/>)

Business professionals have an uncommon opportunity to have welcomed access to all of those nations, peoples, languages, and even tribes through business using their uniquely gifted abilities. Private higher educational institutions and large-scale Business as Mission enterprises, through collaborative efforts, have the unique ability to prepare future business professionals to lead in such businesses in every corner of the earth.

The paper will examine the roles of both types of parties in such collaborative efforts. We will explore the need of private higher educational institutions to prepare focused business students in Business as Mission courses and programs as well as interdisciplinary programs between business, Christian Studies, and other professional programs within the university for business-related activities in not-for-profit organizations such as healthcare, education, and ministry. We will also examine the role of large-scale BAM enterprises in providing content for courses, guest speakers, internships and full-time jobs for students, mentorships for faculty members, participation in research projects, and financial support.

The paper will examine, independently, the related activities of both University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and Pacific Resources International. Activities at University of Mary Hardin-Baylor of special interest include practical activities involved in the senior-level BAM course as well as in other related courses in the McLane College of Business. It will also examine the variety of aspects seen in the relatively new, and relatively unique, interdisciplinary bachelor's degree in Transformational Development which requires major subject areas of Business and Christian Ministry.

The paper will also examine the practices of Pacific Resources International in the acquisition and management of large-scale enterprises in the 10/40 window. Special emphasis will be placed on looking at the acquisition and management of a newer environmentally focused enterprise in Texas in which PRI has invested US\$ 8-figures with the goal to prove-out a scalable and modular factory capable of expanding many times in especially Islamic, but also other, areas of the world with a less than 2% Christian population. The paper will also show how Pacific Resources International provides BAM opportunities for business practitioners of a variety backgrounds, part-time, full-time, and volunteer. It will also show how Pacific Resources International supports activities and projects in multiple private higher educational institutions.

The paper will conclude with projections of upcoming and future collaborations between our two organizations, our individual and combined collaborations with other organizations, and collaborations between other organizations.

Ethical Leadership: Rebuilding Citizen Trust in Government

Stephen King, Regent University

Introduction. Citizens' trust in government is at an all-time low. Pew Research (2019) documents the precipitous decline over the last 70 years. For example, in the 1950s 75% of adults surveyed trusted the federal government to do the "right thing." By 2022, that same percentage dropped to below 20%. Some reasons that contribute to the growing citizen distrust include insufficient accountability of public officials, disregard for the rule of law, corruption, and many others. The resulting consequences include partisan gridlock, civic disengagement, and social disorder (Chanley et al., 2000). While there are many variables to consider when trying to address the problem of decreasing citizens' trust, this essay will focus on one: reviving the role and function of ethical leadership. The key question is: "How does ethical leadership contribute to rebuilding citizen trust in government?"

Overview. Studies articulate a relationship between demonstration of ethics and perception of trust in governments (Feldheim and Wang 2004). While the foundation for most trust is interpersonal, that is between individuals, trust in institutions, such as government, is largely a "fiduciary relationship," where citizens collectively believe government acts in their "best interest" (2004, p. 64). Unfortunately, when government acts otherwise, such as entrepreneurially or ideologically, then the concept and function of government leaders as civil servants depreciates (Terry 2003). This can result in decreasing citizens' trust in government. To reclaim the civil servant-citizen relationship requires among other things a reexamination of how and why government leaders act. We believe this begins with acknowledging government officials as ethical leaders.

While there are many definitions of ethical leadership (Lawton & Paez 2015; Mihelic, Lipicnik, & Tekavcic 2010), a common principle among most definitions is identifying a morally sound relationship between leader and follower (Burns 1978). Our definition of ethical leadership builds on this construct. We define ethical leadership as the relationship between leaders and followers that demonstrates the triangulation of three virtue characteristics: embracing integrity of character, adhering to fidelity to authority, and pursuing community responsibility (King 2023). This definition reinvigorates the fiduciary relationship, which in turn creates and sustains a stable organizational environment, leading to an institutional culture of integrity and trust (Ciulla 2003). Clearly, if ethical leadership is to have any effect on rebuilding citizen trust in government, then government leaders, both political and administrative, must (re)establish and develop a public trust with citizens via intention of purpose and presentment of actions that reflect virtues of honesty, integrity, transparency, and responsibility among others.

Conclusion. The essay is arranged accordingly. First, we briefly identify and discuss key elements of the U.S. government that both pose challenges to and create opportunities for ethical leaders to establish and maintain a relationship of trust between the citizen and government. Second, we describe the three characteristics mentioned, identify, and discuss measures of each that demonstrate conceptual linkages between the practice of ethical leadership and the

rebuilding of citizen trust in government. Third, we conclude by discussing potential implications regarding the practice of ethical leadership upon citizen trust in government during times of political and administrative crises. In summary, ethical leadership is a critical variable for contributing to the rebuilding of citizen trust in government.

Reimagining Higher Education: Collaborative Strategies for Societal Impact

Hope Koch, Baylor University

Andrew Schwarz, LSU

Higher education is under attack. Legislators, CEOs, parents, and students criticize higher education's role in society. Online learning platforms such as Kahn Academy are emerging as formidable competitors by launching their own educational endeavors to prepare students for future jobs (Khan 2024). Higher education needs to build new business models to embrace the forces acting upon it. Based on our field experiences, we will analyze the forces impacting higher education and share collaborative strategies that can enhance universities' value to society.

Legislation and hiring practices are impacting higher education. At both the federal and state level, legislation like the College Cost Reduction Act (HR 6951) (Foxy 2024a) and Texas House Bill 8 encourage universities and colleges to lower costs and offer programs that lead to high-paying jobs. The legislation shifts educational funding from enrollment to outcomes, forcing universities to focus on strategies leading to better graduation rates. The College Cost Reduction Act proposes holding universities financially responsible for unpaid student loans and overpriced degrees that leave students burdened with unaffordable debt. Furthermore, employers are embracing skills-based hiring and removing “their degree requirements from good jobs (Stand Together, 2023).

We propose that intersectoral collaboration can help higher education address the challenges posed by society’s demand that universities prepare students for good jobs and not leave them burdened with debt. Given intersectoral collaborations’ effectiveness in addressing efficient resource utilization by pooling skills and resources (Oickle 2014), it is well suited for addressing the multifaceted problems facing higher education.

We will present two case studies of successful intersectoral collaborations: the Texas Institute for Electronics (TIE) and the Unity Workforce Grant. The Texas Institute for Electronics brings together universities, community colleges, businesses, and K-12 schools to train people to work in Texas’ emerging semiconductor industry. Building upon the US CHIPS Act passed in 2022 (The White House 2023), the Texas CHIPS Act formed the Texas Institute for Electronics. Our government passed both acts in response to the CHIPS shortage America faced in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about CHIPS's role in our daily lives and national security (The White House, 2023).

The Unity Workforce grant exemplifies another successful collaboration, bringing together the Do It Greener Foundation (a non-profit organization), Digital Twin Studios (a for-profit organization), Meta Technologies (a Fortune 500 company), Betaversity (a university-backed startup), and LSU. In Spring 2024, this consortium implemented a program in two local high schools, training underserved students to create real-time 3D content.

Drawing on these examples, this paper proposes several strategies for universities to build meaningful intersectoral collaborations:

- Developing a “pathways to professions” shared resource to help people identify and prepare for the jobs of the future
- Rethinking college admission systems to support continuous skill-building
- Pooling courses and faculty across educational institutions

By embracing these strategies, higher education institutions can better align their missions with societal needs and restore public trust in their ability to contribute to the common good.

Panel Discussion: Reimagining Healthcare Professions through Collaborative Partnerships

Hope Koch, Baylor University

Dr. Hania Janek, Senior Vice President, Clinical Medical Education, Baylor Scott & White Health; Associate Dean, Campus Operations, Baylor College of Medicine, School of Medicine, Temple Regional Campus

Dr. Christy Ponce, President, Temple College

Dr. Jason Carter, Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences, Baylor University

How can we reimagine healthcare professions to support the well-being of healthcare professionals, patients, and our healthcare system?

Our healthcare system faces an unprecedented demand for skilled professionals. Unfortunately, educational resources and infrastructure to train more professionals are limited. The number of medical school seats and residency training slots is insufficient to meet the growing physician demand. There is a shortage of clinical training sites, and many institutions struggle to implement advanced technologies and simulation tools into their curriculum. These challenges impact the public's access to healthcare and can lead to strain during public health emergencies like the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Our healthcare workers feel this strain, with many exiting health professions due to burnout and stress.

Addressing these challenges requires reimagining health professions and making education more accessible and innovative.

Panelists:

The following distinguished panelists representing a spectrum of educational and healthcare institutions committed to advancing health professions will explore how strategic partnerships can address the shortage of skilled healthcare professionals.

- Dr. Hania Janek, Hania.Janek@BSWHealth.org, Senior Vice President, Clinical Medical Education, Baylor Scott & White Health; Associate Dean, Campus Operations, Baylor College of Medicine, School of Medicine, Temple Regional Campus
- Dr. Christy Ponce, Christy.Ponce@Templejc.edu, President, Temple College
- Dr. Jason Carter, Jason_Carter1@baylor.edu, Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences, Baylor University
- Facilitator: Dr. Hope Koch, Hope_Koch@baylor.edu, Information Systems & Business Analytics Professor Holding the Godfrey Sullivan Chair, Baylor University

Key Areas:

The discussion will focus on several key areas:

1. Funding: How to manage the high cost of delivering medical education against the backdrop of reduced federal and state funding and federal efforts to limit student borrowing.
 - a. Sharing Resources: How can institutions share existing facilities and expertise to provide high-quality medical education at reduced costs?

- b. Collaborative Programs: Discuss potential models of collaboration that can expand educational opportunities and improve healthcare delivery.
2. Workforce Wellbeing and Shortages: Strategies to increase the number of healthcare workers, focusing on training, retention, and integrating new educational technologies. How can institutions partner to create career pathways for health professions from associate degrees to bachelor's to advanced degrees?
3. Community Impact: The broader implications of collaborative partnerships for local communities, particularly in enhancing access to healthcare services and improving health outcomes.

The panel will provide insights into how collaborative partnerships can generate a new generation of healthcare professionals equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving industry. Attendees will better understand the cooperative efforts needed to ensure sustainable healthcare education and delivery.

Institutions as the Needed Third Space: Addressing the Loneliness Pandemic through Faith and Research

Christopher Krall, Creighton University

Social isolation and loneliness have been identified as a national public health crisis with recognized negative impacts on the common good as manifest in declining individual and community health[1]. Chronic loneliness affects people physiologically, sociologically, psychologically, and spiritually and is prevalent especially in the current college-age population. Institutions—educational, ecclesial, and political—have an obligation and opportunity now to provide well-researched, safe, nurturing, and holy places for people to establish connection and communities to heal and to thrive. This paper will report on and analyze the findings of a grant-funded research project that I am directing that seeks to address the loneliness pandemic on a private Catholic university in the United States Midwest. The project will be guided by Tinto’s Student Integration theory, which posits that student integration at college is influenced by two systems – academic and social [2]. It can be measured by the quantity and quality of students’ interactions with peers, faculty, and staff [3]. Integration is a result of a student’s sense of belonging and self-worth or feeling supported, connected, respected, valued, and cared for [4]. The framework initially identifies a variety of attributes for the individual student (e.g. background, skills and abilities, prior education). It then outlines how students’ experiences at college—academic and social, formal and informal—can strengthen their goals and commitments over time. For example, informal social integration is measured by how much social contact a student has with others and their participation in activities [5]. Universities directly impact integration through the institutional experiences they provide, and faculty and staff play a significant role in the process.

Limitations to Tinto’s theory are acknowledged. Critics suggest that the theory associates social integration with the requirement that racial and ethnic minoritized students must leave behind their cultural identities to be successful at a predominantly white institution. However, there is recognition that considering the unique experiences of students from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds can help facilitate better integration and belonging.[6-8]

The central identity of this university is Christian, Catholic, which provides an integrative and incarnational vision of human persons in the world. This comprehensive vision takes social belonging as essential and regards isolation as a threat both to the promotion of justice and to one’s ability to contribute to the betterment of society. Extending the mission of the university to ecclesial and political institutions, a duty arises to help citizens strive for excellence while upholding the common good and a God-centered community that facilitates human flourishing. This paper reports the current prevalence of social isolation, loneliness, and related issues, offers a deeper understanding of what students are experiencing, and suggests institutional developments for enhancing belonging.

Teaching and Fostering Professional Identity in a Nation Undergoing an Identity Crisis: A Look at How Higher Education Can Help Students Face Current Challenges While Also Promoting Professional Growth

Kayla Landeros, Baylor Law School

Michael Smith, Baylor Law School

In a time of profound social, political, and economic upheaval, higher education institutions play a critical role in shaping the professional identities of students. This presentation will explore ways higher education can support students navigating current challenges while fostering professional growth. We will discuss the concept of professional identity, specific challenges faced by students today, and effective strategies that educators and administrators can employ to cultivate a strong professional identity in their students.

Specifically, the presentation will explore the following:

1. Understanding the national identity crisis: Provide context on the current identity crisis affecting the nation, specifically social, political, and economic factors that define this crisis, and its impact on higher education and students with a focus on students seeking advanced degrees.
2. Define professional identity: Clarify components of professional identity which can be broadly defined as the self-concept that individuals develop based on their professional roles, responsibility, and experiences, and explore significance of professional identity in personal and career development.
3. Identify student challenges: Highlight specific challenges students face in developing their professional identities amidst contemporary issues.
4. Explore higher education's role: Examine the role of higher education in fostering professional identity, supporting students' professional growth, and preparing students for life after graduation.
5. Present effective strategies: Offer practical strategies for educators and administrators to help students develop a strong professional identity with a focus on strategies used by or being considered by Baylor Law School.

Required Bible Curriculum Leading to Flourishing Stewardship for the Common Good

Earl Lavender, Lipscomb University

Lipscomb University currently requires all undergraduate students to successfully complete 18 credit hours in biblical studies. The curriculum has been carefully designed to lead every student through the biblical story (the Story of Israel, the Story of Jesus, and the Story of Church) as God's redemptive narrative in which they are invited to participate. The fourth course, Faith and Culture, works at considering how one lives out their vocational pursuits in culture from a Christian worldview. The course is designed to allow all students, regardless of their faith commitments, to consider their values and worldview – and reflect on whether that understanding of life satisfies their basic needs to be seen, soothed, safe, and secure (Dan Siegel, et al).

This paper will present the main teaching points of these present courses and also investigate a current project to create a specific capstone course to be offered by each of our colleges/disciplines of study that investigates in greater detail (specific to that discipline) how to lead a flourishing life for the common good - to the glory of God.

While some of our schools already have such a course, we are working to establish a common rubric/design for all colleges. We are constructing a module-based course that reviews/summarizes the required Bible curriculum, then allows for each of the disciplines to make appropriate application of the principles of a life based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, for the good of the world. While each school will have creative license, we are creating a rubric of required teaching points, competencies, and specific service components.

Our hope is this initiative will result in a special celebration at graduation of each student in their field of study. Each department or college will commission every student into the world for this purpose – living out their faith for the common good, bringing God's shalom wherever they go. Some of our schools are currently doing this well (pinning of our nursing students, for example), but our intent is for every student to be challenged to accept their calling to steward their gifts/talents/abilities for the common good – and this is what allows one to truly flourish in life.

Medical Humanities for Human Flourishing

Julianna Leachman, Houston Christian University

Christian liberal arts colleges should be leading the way in medical humanities studies. Because this field of studies offers countless opportunities for students and faculty to work collaboratively with private and public institutions for flourishing and the common good, medical humanities should be the poster child for both the value of studying the humanities and the value of extending that study beyond the classroom walls into the public sphere. Students who engage in the interdisciplinary work of medical humanities in a distinctively Christian context are well-positioned—perhaps best positioned—to creatively and proactively connect educational institutions, hospitals, healthcare facilities and clinics, churches, and governmental institutions to serve their communities.

Although nearly all professions can contribute to human flourishing in some way, medical professionals—doctors, nurses, physician’s assistants, lab techs, biomedical engineers, hospice workers, medical missionaries, etc.—are able to contribute in immediate, tangible, and meaningful ways that persons of any faith or no faith can recognize and appreciate. All clinical encounters are encounters with humans and are therefore opportunities to affirm human dignity and promote human flourishing. And because most clinical encounters take place in moments of heightened suffering and vulnerability, medical professionals, especially those who have been trained in the liberal arts in a Christian university, are well-positioned to offer humane, compassionate care that restores not only health but also flourishing for their patients.

In recent years, recognizing the tremendous value of integrating arts and humanities with medical studies, medical schools have begun offering their students opportunities to add medical humanities certificates or elective courses into their studies; some have even built these classes into their required curriculum for all students. McGovern Medical School in Houston, Texas, for example, guided by the belief that “medicine exists in the truest sense when science, technology, and the craftsmanship of the physician are applied with the deepest respect for the humanity of the patient,” offers its medical students the opportunity to add a Medical Humanities Scholarly Concentration to their medical studies.

But why shouldn’t students begin these studies earlier? Instead of focusing solely on completing their science requirements, students planning to go into medical professions could begin as undergraduates asking big questions about bioethics, death and dying, suffering and pain, vulnerable communities, religious liturgies and practices, and human interventions. These students could begin connecting their studies of literature, philosophy, history, theology, and the arts to their pre-med and pre-nursing classes, seeing that medicine promotes human flourishing in a myriad of ways—through biomedical or technical interventions, yes, but also through empathy, compassion, tolerance for ambiguity, concern for the marginalized, cultural sensitivity, and clear communication—the so-called “soft skills” that the study of humanities fosters. By supporting and promoting medical humanities degree programs, especially programs that offer students experiential internships in the medical field, Christian liberal arts colleges can nurture future medical professionals as they learn to integrate faith, science, and humanities for human flourishing and common good.

The Wisdom Path to Transformation

Gregory Leman, Baylor University

A Biblical 3rd way, when neither isolation from culture nor domination of culture through political means resonates with the Spirit of Christ within you. How you can be impactful without losing your faith or your values.

The Church as an institution is in turmoil over the politicization of its mission. Far-right voices claim that support for the Republican Party and Donald Trump be the criteria validating the authenticity of a believer. Other voices respond with equal conviction that it cannot be right to embrace personas antithetical to Christ in order to promote Christian causes. Believers and their institutional leaders can feel torn between two unacceptable choices: to use politics to try to prescribe culture at the expense of their standards for behavior or to cloister into Christian huddles and engage culture only from a distance. The “price of engagement” can seem to be the abandonment of values. A “third way” is needed.

This Biblical 3rd Way for highly impactful engagement of culture must amplify rather than diminish the need to carry the very aroma of Christ. I call this path The Way of Wisdom, a strategy for relevant, transformational partnering. It is built upon the entire historical arc of human-divine collaboration to advance the purposes of God in the earth. At its core, it is a re-embodiment of the role of Solomon as the successor of David to his throne, even as we, the Body of Christ and inheritors of His mission to advance His kingdom, are seated with Him upon His throne. Kings of the earth came to Solomon because of his heaven-imparted wisdom and visibly saw the presence of God’s Spirit across the temple courts because he had solutions they needed. We have the same opportunity for impact by carrying the wisdom we are collectively granted through access to the mind of Christ and will fulfill our calling to disciple the nations by following this path. This central declaration is a theological reframing of the mission of the Church in society, offering a transformative vision for the future.

As does The Malachi Moment, this presentation includes very practical means of coming together as a community of believers who are assigned to roles in Christian ministry, other institutions, and the full spectrum of marketplace settings. The path forward features both prophetic and practical impetus for an as-yet-unseen level of unity among the generations. It calls for a recognition of the “front lines” of the kingdom being within culture, and calls for a new expression of the 5-fold ministry roles in support of those called to serve outside the church walls.

Revelation 21 paints a picture of the end goal of discipling the nations – each having a fully expressed and unique glory to present to the King of kings. In light of how far the nations are from that readiness, we must reexamine and re-contextualize our mission in ways that are both challenging and compelling. This paper is meant to spur just that.

JESUS: A Deaf Mission Film: A Panel Discussion

Lewis Lummer, Baylor University

Dr. Meena Mann, New Mexico School for the Deaf

Robert Tawney, New York Independent Deaf Refugee Advocate

Jade Sims, Tennessee Independent Consultant Advocate

June 20th, 2024 marked a historical and controversial day for the release of the Deaf Missions' American Sign Language (ASL) movie, "JESUS: a Deaf Missions Film". The movie features Deaf native signing actors using American Sign Language and displays no voice over with open captions. The movie prevailed at 320 AMC, Cinemark, EVO, and other public theaters in America. Deaf Missions received a substantial discussion of favorable and unfavorable critiques through social media channels. Both nonbelievers and born-again believers use ASL or printed English, as well as people in the signed languages community, who praised the movie as the best-signed language movie in social media history and the most influential gospel tool ever.

A moderator, Baylor University faculty Dr. Lewis Lummer, will facilitate a panel discussion that consists of three Deaf Christian leaders: Dr. Meena Mann, New Mexico School for the Deaf Statewide Educational Consultant, Jade Sims, Tennessee Independent Consultant Advocate and Robert Tawney, New York Independent Deaf Refugee Advocate, and Rochester Deaf Rotary Club Past President. Dr. Lummer will discuss how JESUS: a Deaf Missions film has impacted the portrayal of the gospel and doctrine (bible-based) teaching in the signed language communities and the Hollywood/Bollywood industries.

During the panel discussion, Dr. Lummer will explore the panelists' experience regarding how this movie differs from Hollywood movies. They will be asked to identify movies that have made them contemplate their faith and whether this film has influenced their beliefs on the Christian faith. At the end, panelists will have an opportunity to discuss the film critics and then welcome questions from the audience.

The Quieter Virtues and the Common Good

Sarah Madsen, Baylor University

Perry Glanzer, Baylor University

Ted Cockle, Baylor University

Attention to the study and practice of virtue has re-ignited across higher education institutions, as campus leaders, faculty, and administrators jointly recognize the need to develop students not only intellectually but socially and morally as well, toward maturation as professionals, neighbors, and citizens in an ever-shifting society (Brant et al., 2022; Glanzer, 2022; Colby et al., 2003). Despite this renewed consideration of moral formation, few scholars have considered the enactments of generosity and gratitude among college students, even as these virtues are vital to the flourishing of individuals and institutions (Brant et al., 2022).

Our grounded theory analyses extend this burgeoning attentiveness, as we qualitatively explore how college students themselves narrate and engage in the virtues of generosity and gratitude. Rooted in positive and social psychology, our conceptualizations of these practices reflect foundational literature from the Science of Generosity Institute at the University of Notre Dame and the Manual of Character Strengths and Virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004): Generosity is giving good things to others freely and abundantly; generous behaviors are intended to enhance the well-being of others; however, the giver can benefit, which distinguishes generosity from “pure” altruism; and generosity can be actualized through various forms of giving. (Herzog & Price, 2016, p. 2). Further, gratitude refers to the “felt sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life. It can be expressed toward others, as well as toward impersonal (nature) or nonhuman sources (God, animals)” (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Scholars and theologians often refer to generosity and gratitude as “the quieter virtues,” given their countercultural and sometimes overlooked nature (see Spencer, 2010).

Drawing on qualitative data from 141 undergraduate students across 8 selective institutions, we uncover how students express gratefulness for the opportunities and resources of their schooling and familial environments, as well as their faith traditions, which they capitalize on through intentional campus engagement and relationship-building. Further, we detail how students’ generous behaviors – like volunteering – are comprised of a matrix of motivations, opportunity channels, and sites, wherein college-goers engage in the virtue of generosity in modes that match their interests and social networks. This scholarship therefore illuminates how college students are already engaged in these quieter virtues – actions that implicate not only the formational missions of higher education institutions but the wider societal fabric of the country (Putnam, 2000; Colby et al., 2003).

Even as students engage in expressions of gratitude and generosity, higher education institutions today still promote – implicitly and explicitly – practices that contradict these virtues, from shaping students to be mass consumers rather than generous givers to fostering individualism and competition that can constrain postures of gratefulness and contentment (Madsen, 2023). Thus, we hope session participants leave with a deeper understanding of the quieter virtues and their formative role in preparing students to promote the common good in college and beyond. Although such practices may run counter to the prevailing features of the

university, their habituation can ultimately support a revitalized vision for and enactment of shared life together.

Bridging Academia and Community: Addressing Food Insecurity through Engaged Learning

James Marcum, Baylor University

Stephanie Boddie, Baylor University

Julie King and Joshua King (latter as Moderator), Baylor University

In May 2024, 21 Baylor University faculty convened for the annual Academy of Teaching and Learning Summer Ethics Seminar, focusing on "Engaged Learning for Local Food and Environmental Justice." This seminar fostered an interdisciplinary dialogue, focusing on how we engage the ethical matters related to poverty and food insecurity through our teaching, particularly from a Christian perspective. The urgency of addressing food injustice and insecurity was a central theme. These issues are deeply entwined with prejudices based on gender, race, economics, and species, manifesting as racism, sexism, classism, capitalism, speciesism, and exceptionalism. Beyond mere acknowledgement, the seminar participants wrestled with how to help their students engage these complex matters while equipping them to make a meaningful difference in their local communities.

We propose a panel in which three faculty from this seminar will present on how they conceptualize their approach as Christians operating within a Christian university to reimagine their courses to better connect students with local organizations and community groups working to alleviate poverty and food insecurity. This reimagining aims to help students develop both personal and civic values, emphasizing the stewardship of creation and care for all beings.

Moderated by Dr. Nicholas R. Werse (Senior Director of Operations, School of Education Online Programs), the panel will consist of Dr. Stephanie Boddie (Associate Professor of Church and Community Ministries, Truett Theological Seminary and Diana R. Garland School of Social Work), Dr. James Marcum (Professor of Philosophy), and Dr. Julie King (Senior Lecturer in Environmental Law and Undergraduate Environmental Science Program Director). Each panelist will present for 20 minutes on the engaged learning activities they incorporated into their classes to connect students with local organizations addressing poverty and food insecurity, fostering a practical understanding of how their education can contribute to the common good. These presentations will lay a foundation for a moderated discussion with attendees for the remaining 30 minutes of the session.

This panel aims to provide insights into how they, as Baylor faculty, are actively reimagining their teaching to address pressing social issues. By fostering a deeper connection between students and community organizations, these initiatives exemplify how Christian higher education can contribute to the common good. We believe this discussion will offer valuable insights for other educators seeking to integrate ethical considerations into their curricula and support students in becoming active, informed stewards of justice and care within their communities. Through this panel, we hope to inspire a broader conversation on the role of education in addressing food injustice and insecurity, demonstrating that with thoughtful and engaged teaching, institutions can play a pivotal role in promoting societal well-being.

The Cybernetic Church: Rethinking Local Church Organization in Light of Cybernetic Theory

Nathaniel Metz, Baylor University

At the heart of the church's mission is the call to create disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The church, as a sacred communal institution, seeks to carry on the revelation of Christ, minister to its community, and foster spiritual growth in wisdom, holiness, and worship. However, with declining attendance, diverse congregational needs, staff shortages, financial constraints, and the necessity for effective community outreach and conflict resolution, ministers often struggle to maintain even the basic weekly services. This situation hampers additional discipleship activities such as Sunday school, Bible studies, community outreach, and social justice initiatives, leading to congregational stagnation and pastoral burnout. Furthermore, it opens the door for alternative forms of discipleship amongst the congregation through social media and cable news, which can divert the congregation's focus.

To address these challenges, this presentation explores improving church management by applying cybernetic organization principles and grassroots communication strategies. This approach, termed "the cybernetic church," employs Stafford Beer's Viable System Model, which consists of five interrelated systems: operations, coordination, control, intelligence, and policy. These systems communicate dynamically, fostering vertical and horizontal feedback loops that enhance organizational communication. In line with Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety, which states that a system must have a variety of responses to effectively handle the variety of challenges it faces, this model equips the church to be flexible and adaptive.

To prevent the cybernetic systems from devolving into poorly-imitated business structures, the paper integrates community organizing strategies, such as forming a foundational committee within the congregation. This group, composed of spiritually educated and committed individuals, who can be directly trained by the pastor, guides the congregation towards deeper faith understanding, fostering spiritual consciousness and community building.

To avoid elitism or the formation of cliques, the paper proposes, in conjunction with the foundational committee, an inclusive feedback mechanism, where church leaders engage with the congregation and community to understand their needs and concerns. This feedback is incorporated into the church's operations and strategic planning, creating a responsive and inclusive church environment.

By integrating cybernetic theory into church organization, the aim is to achieve collective leadership, continuous learning, and adaptive processes that encourage congregation self-organization and self-sufficiency.

The Pursuit of Vocations and Avocations for the Common Life

Anthony Minnema, Samford University

Bryan Gill, Samford University

The pursuit of a vocation has been a touchpoint for Christian scholars and students alike, but this concept has recently come under strain as both groups struggle to interpret their vocations in the face of hyper-individualization in all aspects of society. Christian universities often engage in a form of double-speak where they encourage students to develop both calling and career, but they often default to a kind of sanctified careerism. This ambiguity creates no small amount of tension in Christian circles, especially among our students who see the pursuit of a vocation in college as kind of Christian tax in education—a just one more thing they need to excel at.

This panel wants to shift the conversation back from the pursuit of the perfect, divinely-appointed job to a discussion that expands the concept of personhood beyond the 9-5 workweek. One way to reinvigorate the conversation around vocation is to encourage faculty and students to explore the concept of avocation—the pursuit of hobbies, side hustles, and passion projects. We offer avocation as a sort of release valve to the tension between calling and career, starting with the divine notion of sabbath as a call to find activities that give energy rather than take it away (Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:6-11). This panel will also explore how to translate the concept of avocation to students both inside and outside of the classroom. We specifically draw on our role as faculty advisors for the Samford Outdoor Adventure Club and Catholic Student Association and participants in the Christian Teacher Scholar Program.

These experiences not only alleviate some of the pressure placed on the concept of vocation, but they also point to a growing demand among faculty and students for conversations around the common life. We argue that this engagement in avocation provides a call for Christian institutions, particularly universities and colleges, to make good on their rhetoric to create and foster abundant life (John 10:10) in their congregations and student bodies. In short, Christians need to desacralize the emphasis on busyness that dominates our modern culture and to reimagine hobbies, pastimes, and side projects as integral to faith. The practice of avocations from cooking to camping, knitting to gardening helps faculty and students to bring their whole selves toward the pursuit of a common good and, in so doing, create organic communities around shared interests.

Thinking Institutionally: Recovering the Deep Roots of University Life

Michael Naughton, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Austin Litke, O.P, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

As important as institutions are, there is rarely an age when people are content with them, and ours is no different. Typically, the dissatisfaction is leveled at the leaders of institutions by those who are served by them. Hugh Heclo calls this discontent “performance-based distrust” of institutions. Heclo, however, sees an increasingly new kind of distrust, which he characterizes as distinctively modern and post-modern. He calls this form “culture-based distrust,” and reveals how we think about our institutions. Rather than see an institution as something larger than any individual within it, today we tend to thin out institutional life by holding up the autonomous individual as the main moral center. That is, the challenge today is not only that institutions fail us, but also that we are reconceiving our institutions in very dangerous ways.

To address this challenge of how we think about our institutions, we organize our paper around the concrete situation of the contemporary university, one of the institutions in our society that has increasingly suffered distrust and has undergone a deep recharacterization of its essence and purpose. We address the institutional situation of the university in three parts: crisis recognition, tradition recovery, and institutional innovation.

First, crisis recognition addresses Heclo’s insights of culture-based distrust, where we explore its anthropological and philosophical underpinnings, which has accelerated the increasing levels of distrust and lack of confidence in institutions, and has created the conditions for people, especially the young, to either opt out of institutional life, or to use institutions for their own private benefit. This institutional crisis is certainly one of trust, confidence, and participation, but most profoundly it is a “crisis of finality,” a disordering of the telos of institutions. Yuval Levin describes this as moving from an understanding of institutions as places that form and mold character to platforms for individual expression. We will address in this section the current crisis of universities in relation to an education and formation of mind and will that increasingly are seen as either platforms to launch careers and/or for political expression.

Second, because we are in great need of better thinking about institutions, we look to a tradition that has not only thought about educational institutions but has in fact given birth to the university namely, the Catholic Church. The Church has been creating and building schools for most of its history, with the university as one of its greatest accomplishments in the High Middle Ages. Important in the recovery of this tradition is the interplay of intellectual and moral formation and what bearing and presence they have on the contemporary university. We take Newman’s discussion of the University and College, and their various principles, as a useful lens through which to view the structuring of the university.

Third, institutions are living, breathing realities that are always in need of renewal. While their principles can be enduring, their forms need “innovation.” Newman puts it well when he writes, “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have change often.” We must change because our times are changing, not to become something else, but rather to be true to the

perennial principles we have been given. One place where this innovation has life in midsize to larger Catholic universities is within the humanities and Catholic Studies programs on various campuses (Villanova, Seton Hall, St. Louis University, DePaul University, University of St. Thomas (MN), and others). We argue that these programs serve as important vehicles of renewal for such universities, because of the integration of liberal and professional education, an emphasis on the collegiate life of the student, as well as an explicit and concrete role that the Church plays.

The Institution and the Individual in the Venerable Bede

Kaylie Page, Duke University

The eighth-century scholar monk the Venerable Bede spent much of his career reflecting on, from one side or another, the role of the Church as an institution, both in a global perspective and within the context of his own recently-pagan Britain. His practical work towards institutional reform has been a major topic of scholarship, but less discussed is the theology that undergirds his reform work. Bede has a rich sense of the interplay of unity and diversity that makes the Church a functioning institution. This paper examines the relationship in Bede's thought between the individual and the institution, chiefly displayed in his commentaries *On the Tabernacle* and *On the Temple*. Based on this examination, I argue that for Bede, the Church as an institution only succeeds when both individual responsibility and dependence on others are taken seriously. Primary responsibility for institutional health lies with the leaders, and the greatest danger to the Church is hypocritical leadership; but leaders have a correspondingly high call to personal humility and to recognizing the value of every member of the institution, even as they must be uncompromising when defending the truth. For the Church to thrive, Bede's theology and historical works demonstrate, there must be agreement across difference: agreement in essential practices and primary values, and difference among the individual churches and Christians scattered far and wide geographically. Every church must conform to the true Church, but every Christian within those churches exhibits unique virtues and unique conformity to Christ, Bede thinks. After laying out Bede's vision for the institutional Church in this life, I conclude this paper with his Christological and eschatological perspective on the institution, which is provisional in this life in order to become permanent in the next life for which it prepares us.

Christianity and the Bible in Anime/Manga

Moisés Park, Baylor University

Kaz Hayashi, Bethel Seminary/University

Thomas Middlebrook, Simpson University

The Bible and the Christian faith have had a wide-reaching influence that spans the globe. The Bible is often regarded as the most influential piece of literature in the world, and Christianity is the largest religion in the world, with believers which spans every continent in the world. While the Bible and the Christian faith are often regarded in high esteem and reverence by many, Scripture and its ecclesial institutions have also been the focal point of criticism. In this panel, we seek to explore how the Bible and the Christian faith are depicted in the Japanese popular medium of manga (Japanese comic books and graphic novels) and anime (Japanese television animation).

In recent years, the popularity of anime has grown exponentially in the U.S. and across the globe. Anime is available on almost every major streaming platform (i.e., Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, etc.), has become part of Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, several anime series have been adapted into English movies and TV shows (i.e., One Piece, Edge of Tomorrow, Alita), and the anime film *The Boy and the Heron* won the Oscars for the best-animated feature film in 2024. Correspondingly, in recent years, anime studies have burgeoned with numerous courses on anime offered at various universities, as evidenced by the establishment of peer-reviewed journals such as *The Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* and *Mechademia*. The field of anime studies understand how anime not only reflects Japanese customs and culture, but anime serves as a powerful medium to communicate and influence one's beliefs. Despite the prominence of anime and manga and the frequent appearance of biblical and Christian motifs in them, a critical analysis from a Christian perspective has seldom been done and is much needed.

The papers in this panel explore how anime and manga depict the Bible and Christianity. The papers critically assess how these popular mediums employ biblical and Christian motifs to reveal the positive and negative human condition. Moreover, the papers assess how knowing the Biblical, theological, and ecclesial dimensions in these works allows us to better know how to renew and reimagine the Church and to connect the Christian community to the world around us.

On Doing Without the State: Local Community and the Failure of the Modern Nation-State

Thomas Pearson, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The modern nation-state has been the dominant form of social and political organization, first in Europe and then spreading gradually throughout the globe, since the end of the Thirty Years' War in the mid-seventeenth century. It was intended in part to overcome the negative conditions engendered by the local, the insular and the parochial within the fractured and conflicted micro-territories of Europe and elsewhere. But by the third decade of the twenty-first century, as earlier political competition transitioned to economic competition and is now moving back to new forms of political competition, the modern nation-state has itself become an obstacle to human flourishing. Or so it is argued by observers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Taylor, who have each diagnosed the failures of the modern nation-state to articulate a coherent vision of the common good for the residents within its domain. This is so, they claim, because the modern nation-state is intrinsically incompetent to articulate such a vision: it is not a failure that can be overcome. MacIntyre and Taylor have each argued, from different philosophical points of departure, that human social flourishing can best and most effectively take place within local communities, where shared values, cooperative practices and interpersonal reciprocity among persons who routinely interact with one another can be sustained.

This paper will examine MacIntyre's essay, "Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good," and Taylor's "Community, Anarchy and Liberty" and "Rationality and the Ideology of Disconnection" to explore their positions for strengthening local communities and diminishing the influence of the modern nation-state in determining the contours of the common good for those communities. It will further address the related and vexed question, within Christian communities, of submission to established political authorities, like those raised in passages such as Romans chapter thirteen. Are Christians required by Saint Paul to obey all established political regimes as legitimate authorities? Or should a concern for instituting the conditions by which the identity of the common good for a social collective can be determined serve as normative for defining what counts as a legitimate political authority for Christians? Are Christians summoned to submit to the sovereignty of the modern nation-state, if the modern nation-state fails to nurture and empower the common good? These are questions for which MacIntyre and Taylor may offer provisional answers.

Enabling Congregations to be Public Theologians: The Characteristics and Practices of Congregational Public Theology

Patty Pell, Denver Seminary

As trust in societal institutions continues to decline and the complexity of social problems continues to increase, a renewed analysis of the mission of the church and its participation in the redemptive work of God in the world is required. Congregational Public Theology is a model that draws on the disciplines of both practical theology (Osmer, 2008, 2011; 2014; Miller-McLemore, 2014; Calahan, 2014) and public theology (Kim, 2017; Cartledge, 2016; de Gruchy, 2007; Storrar, 2007; Breitenberg, 2005; Benne, 1995) with the purpose of enabling congregations to be more effective in working for positive change in the community. The model weaves together vital characteristics and normative practices of public theology and principles of practical theology to build a framework that churches can employ in their public discourse and social action ministry. The definition of congregational public theology includes the praxes of public theology, the specific Christian vision of human flourishing, the necessity of a local context, reasoned and persuasive dialogue, and the strategy of incremental progress.

Crucial to the missional presence of churches engaging in congregational public theology are certain characteristics that foster solidarity with the community, increase trust in religious institutions, and encourage redemptive relationships between the local congregation and its neighborhood. Characteristics such as dialogue with the world, the ability to hold core beliefs and distinctly Christian symbols together with language that is accessible to all, internal and external critique, and a goal of societal change are necessary elements if congregations are to be equipped to engage the community in compassionate, credible, and compelling ways. In addition to these essential qualities, congregational public theology argues that good praxis for a congregation wanting to affect social change will include Collaborative Study, Interpretive Analysis, and Theological Reflection.

Collaborative Study involves a congregation engaging in conversation with relevant disciplines, organizations, and institutions in the local community and with those most affected by the social concern they seek to alleviate. Interpretive Analysis employs wisdom and discernment to the gathered data to interpret and analyze the causes of the social concern and the potential solutions. Theological Reflection distinguishes congregational public theology from a secular process of advocacy or community development. The congregation engages in deep theological reflection (de Gruchy, 2007) through routines of awareness, transcendence, and internal critique in response to the cognitive dissonance arising from the complexity of social action. Routines of awareness encourage congregations to acknowledge hypocrisy and listen to those most affected by the injustices and brokenness in the community. Routines of transcendence involve confession and repentance, while routines of internal critique invite adaptation of faith practices and theology in response to cognitive dissonance. The attributes and practices of congregational public theology can build and strengthen relationships of trust and collaboration between churches and their communities, serve the common good, and help equip congregations for redemptive and holistic mission in today's world.

Consistency, Authority, and Right Order

Gavriella Persing, Baylor University

In the modern world, with astounding technological advancements that make information regarding nearly every subject available upon demand, the immense volume of ideas being flung at the overwhelmed mind of the young person is unfathomable. Current college students are the first generation of “digital natives,” the term that has arisen to describe those who have grown up with digital technology and depend upon it in daily life to a much greater extent than previous generations. The resulting over-informed-ness of these individuals often leads to a distrust of organizations and a lack of confidence in their commitment to the wellbeing of society. The experience of authority has been fundamentally altered—anyone with a large enough platform and legitimate-seeming credentials is considered an expert on a given topic, creating an unprecedented number of “experts” influencing young people. Easily taken in by impassioned and convincing rhetoric, these digital natives become emotionally charged and highly opinionated with little foundation for correct discernment of the information being conveyed.

In light of false authorities, the obligation of institutions is to re-establish once-held authority even and especially against societal shifts. Instead of responding to accusations levied by vehement individuals with appeasement and submission, the institution must examine its foundations. By establishing and confirming its core principles, values, and morals, the institution will re-order itself accordingly, strengthening itself against criticisms and attacks. The consistency provided by the return to foundational values allows the institution to maintain authority even when the world around it changes. The tendency of the institution faced with accusations and criticisms is to fold, immediately making significant changes in a desperate attempt to appear more conformed to the surrounding culture. The issue with this decision is that the standards of the culture are constantly changing. A society ought to be defined by the work of its institutions, rather than the institution by fickle public opinion. Real authority is found in the transcendent and unchanging. This is particularly true for ecclesial institutions or those associated with religion. In such cases, the responsibility to an even higher authority creates greater consistency and adherence to principles. The traditions and fundamental truths which shape these institutions inspire the confidence of those within them. The combination of steadfastness in moral issues and the experience of the transcendent appeals poignantly to human nature, which has allowed such institutions to thrive in the past and will allow them to continue to enact good. Ultimately, the institution must thoroughly examine its roots and firmly commit itself to them. As a result, the institution will gain back the power to enact its values, to bring good to its dependents, and to give order back to a society characterized by chaos.

Institutional Engagement for the Common Good

Trisha Posey, John Brown University

John Brown University students will explore the question of how institutions can be transformed for the common good. Luke Dishman will examine the value of Arkansas Legal Aid for impoverished Arkansas Communities. Ian Contreras will consider how institutions addressing poverty can respond effectively in light of the differences between rural and urban poverty. Erick Moldonado will offer insight into best practices for empowering international students and promoting cross-cultural understanding on college campuses. Kourtney Highfill will explain how psychological research can strengthen the function of the church. Finally, Zipporah Jones will consider how Christian colleges and universities can build trust with members of Generation Z. Student projects are based on research carried out by students as part of their academic work at John Brown University.

Moving Toward Personal Virtue for Institutional Strength

Trisha Posey, John Brown University

If institutions are to fill their God-ordained role, the individuals within them must move toward virtuous engagement with themselves and others. John Brown University students will examine the realities of human free will, pride, and temptation through an exploration of scripture, literature, and philosophy in an effort to understand the challenges of living a virtuous life. Ainsley Lafferty will consider the temptation of Christ through a deep exploration into Luke 4, looking to Jesus as a model for his followers who face temptation. Ben Haak, inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, will explain how the pride of created beings can turn the beautiful and good into something destructive. Finally Reagan Cartmill will use the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard to ask the question of whether damnation is more a choice than punishment.

Religiosity: Shifting a Potential Barrier to Renewal and Restoration Through Religious Orientation

Carol Raymond, Baylor University

Dr. Todd Kettler, Baylor University

How do our values shape our actions? According to Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values, opposing dimensions can only be followed by acting differently, either in different settings or at different times (Schwartz et al., 2012). Therefore, if creativity is situated in openness to change and religiosity is steeped in tradition and conservation, are they inherently at odds?

We first tested these hypotheses at the individual level by exploring correlations between measures of religiosity (Huber & Huber, 2012) and creativity, as measured through creative self-concept (Karwowski, 2011), creative achievement (Carson et al., 2005), and openness to experience (DeYoung, 2015). The measure of openness to experience was included as it positively correlates with all domains of creativity and has been used as a proxy measure of creativity (Kaufman et al., 2010). Four hundred and ten participants (273 women, mean age = 30.23 years) were recruited via email and social media to complete an online survey. Preliminary results indicate a modest negative correlation between both religiosity and openness to experience ($r = -.124$, $p = .023$) as well as religiosity and creative achievement ($r = -.199$, $p < .001$). Creative self-concept had no significant correlations with the five-dimensional religiosity composite.

As creativity is a necessary precursor to innovation (Dino & Plucker, 2017), the negative correlations found between religiosity and measures of creativity suggest that religiosity may hinder the reimagination of institutions in society. Previous research has shown that religious fundamentalism is negatively correlated with creativity (El-Haq et al., 2016). So, perhaps, religiosity in itself does not impede innovation. Perhaps it is how an individual practices their religion, or the orientation they have toward their religion.

Allport and Ross (1967) suggested that individuals had two types of religious motivation - extrinsic or intrinsic. According to their theory, "the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion." Building upon this theory, Batson and Ventis (1982), suggested another orientation - the "quest" orientation. The quest religious orientation highlights an individual's willingness to face existential questions while accepting that they may never know the answers. They embrace uncertainty as part of their faith journey.

In our study, we also measured the correlation between an individual's religious orientation (Francis, 2007) and measures of creativity. A quest orientation had a significant positive correlation with creative achievement ($r = .135$, $p = .018$), openness to experience ($r = .316$, $p < .001$), and creative self-concept ($r = .196$, $p < .001$). An extrinsic orientation had a positive correlation with creative self-concept ($r = .139$, $p = .012$) and an intrinsic religious orientation showed a significant negative correlation with creative achievement ($r = -.230$, $p < .001$). All other relationships were nonsignificant.

The implications of these findings suggest that encouraging individuals to openly question matters of faith and embrace their religious experience as a existential journey will more likely result in creative thought and innovation. In order for our faith traditions to survive in modern society, we must be willing to innovate while staying true to our purpose. Adopting a quest religious orientation may be the answer to this dilemma.

Expanding Women's Leadership in Technological Innovation: Education as an Enabler

David Read, Skidmore College

Secondary and undergraduate educational institutions are well-positioned to address the ongoing marginalization of women in technology leadership roles. Addressing their absence goes far beyond workplace equity; it is necessary to overcome shortcomings in technology design that impact women's lives across society.

The rapid rate at which technological innovation is usurping human decision-making is a cause for concern. The buzzwords of our time, such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT), often overshadow the societal implications of our increasing reliance on computer-based technology, where computers pervade our interactions and decision-making. (Baecker, 2019; Dienlin & Johannes, 2020; Ghassemi, 2021; Joseph et al., 2023; Susskind & Susskind, 2022). The uncontrolled integration of technology into our lives drives a shift from humans controlling computers to computers directing humans.

Male-dominated technology organizations are at the center of this technological integration (Andrews, 2018; Klinger & Svensson, 2021; Kovaleva et al., 2023, 2023; Sugimoto & Larivière, 2023). The absence of women's viewpoints leads to systems that work better for men, such as in healthcare systems, where computer-based diagnostic and treatment systems recognize and manage conditions in men more effectively than in women (Cirillo et al., 2020; Fennelly, 2021; Wiens et al., 2020). Women's absence from CS roles across industries exacerbates this ongoing bias.

Introductory computer science (CS) education often focuses on algorithms, hardware, and programming, spending little time exploring how these concepts impact people's lives (Frieze et al., 2012; Verbick, 2002). The narrow scope reinforces CS-centric stereotypes of programming and isolation. Further, the programs novice students create are often limited and do not demonstrate the profound impact a computer application can have on how people comprehend the world.

The lack of exposure to CS roles across a broad suite of technologies leads some women to avoid the field, believing it does not offer an opportunity to do meaningful work (Bustamante et al., 2021; Craig et al., 2008; Schauer et al., 2023; Spieler et al., 2020). The result is a cycle of ever-expanding connections between computers and people, continually underserving women's needs and interests. CS education, focused on connecting the field to technology's impact on people, can forge a path to empowering women to participate fully in the design of society's technological future.

This paper discusses changes made in an introductory CS class at a liberal arts college and presents feedback from women in response to the updated content. The new material, designed to be inclusive, showing men and women working across different CS roles, was incorporated through three modes: a textbook chapter describing CS jobs in different industries, videos exploring CS' use in different fields, and class discussions to explore and debunk common CS stereotypes. Feedback came from informal class discussions and a survey provided

at the end of the semester. It showed that women found the new information broadened their view of the field, suggesting that curricular updates may help more women see the importance and value of participating in the integration of technology into society.

Revelation and Moral Learning: On the Necessity of the Institution

Elizabeth Regnerus Minyard, Baylor University

At the outset of his masterly work, the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas discusses the project of natural theology and the necessity of Revelation. The ability to know facts about the existence of God is certainly possible for human reason, but is likely to “only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors” (ST I Q1a1). Furthermore, although the natural law is written on the heart of each human person, it is easily confused or even blotted out by the influence of culture and epoch. So, while only the fool might say to himself that there is no God...the world can easily make us fools. Thus, the individual ought to take to heart what has been revealed by God, applying herself not just to proofs or deductions about God but also to what has been developed by centuries of Christian thought on these matters. The Church becomes an institution responsible for distilling the Truth, so that each person does not have to (and perhaps should not) spend their efforts starting over but can begin with a full framework of faithful teaching. In short, Revelation, stewarded by the Church, serves as a necessary institution to frame theological teaching and belief. With this structure in mind for theological thinking, I argue that this role of practical distillation must be extended to moral reasoning. In modernity, the role of moral authority has been greatly reduced, partially due to resistance to “indoctrination” by nation, family, and Church, which is arguably worth opposing in the case of some regimes or belief systems. Although the role of moral institutions can degrade and experience a reversal in mission, this itself suggests the positive role institutions play in moral development. Based on Alasdair MacIntyre’s theory of the development of practical reasoners in *Dependant Rational Animals*, I draw comparisons between Aquinas’ theoretical framework for theological revelation with practical revelation, suggesting that the Church serves a primary role in guiding practical deliberation, and the institutions of state, family, and school serve subsidiary roles in forming children to become agents who hearken to concerns about the noble. This is firstly because moral reasoning, like theological reasoning, is nearly impossible to come to of one’s own volition. Young practical reasoners are deeply intertwined with their community and are engaged in the process of transformation and separation from their animal desires, learning to stand back and evaluate their reasons for acting. Their caretakers (usually the institution of the family) provide the context for this process. Secondly, as is clear from history, moral reasoning amongst nations and cultures can be deeply distorted, leading to heinous actions such as genocide, mutilation, infanticide, racism, religious persecution, etc. Distinguishing theories of morality and identifying good and evil are hard problems. Subjecting each individual to these calculations is likely to result in only a few reaching a consciousness of the Good, after much deliberation, with some admixture of error. So, while we ought to academically discourse on these subjects, for most human persons, higher level moral reasoning should be institutionally guided.

The Family as an Institution: What's Still Working?

Emily Reynolds, Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University

When people start naming the institutions that hold our society together, the family may not always make the top of the list. We may more often think of schools, churches, higher education, institutions of government, and the civic organizations that are Burke's "little platoons." These all neatly fit the categories of ecclesial, educational or political.

On consideration, however, it becomes clear that the family actually fits not in just one of those categories, but in all three in various ways. And, let the record be clear, none of the institutions that come more readily to mind would even exist, much less thrive, if it weren't for families—and not just any families, but families of the sort that "form new members in particular practices" and habits, particular ways of being in relation. These practices and habits enable family members to, in Yuval Levin's words, "fill roles, . . . play parts defined by larger wholes, and . . . understand our obligations and responsibilities, our privileges and benefits, our purposes and connections." These practices and habits are the essentials of participation in all institutions and, ideally, they begin in the family.

The fact that the family isn't necessarily thought of as a core institution hasn't made it immune to the erosion of public trust which plagues other institutions. No-fault divorce, the birth dearth, the childfree life, the proliferation of alternate family forms, and the increasing incidence of co-habitation are all evidence that many people no longer trust the traditional family to perform the essential functions of a core institution.

As is often the case, however, there is something to be learned from those who have stayed the course. In the case of family, that means finding those who are still forming families of the sort described above. This presentation will offer some lessons from Phase One of the American Family and Fertility Project, a qualitative study of 55 well-educated women from 10 areas of the United States who are still committed to the institutional family, so committed that they have married, remained married, and born five or more children.

There is wisdom distilled from experience in interviews with women who have made childbearing and family life their priority in spite of the fertility down trend and the obstacles presented by a culture in which other institutions are struggling. These women provide clarity about what families are for, how families contribute to the common good, and what conditions and practices are necessary for that contribution to be sustained—and thus to help sustain the other essential institutions that make human flourishing possible.

The final section of the presentation will compare the conditions, practices, and habits that sustain the family to those that sustain institutions generally.

The Hidden Role of Religiosity in Contemporary Public Education in the United States of America

Marilyn Rhames, Baylor Center for School Leadership

The ‘separation of church and state’ is a fundamental precept of the United States, yet the phrase itself is not written in the Constitution, and even Supreme Court justices disagree on how it should be defined. The ambiguity surrounding religious liberty is perhaps most felt in K-12 public education, where the fear of inflicting faith formation on impressionable students has inspired the vision of a secular, God-neutral, government-run school system. As such, federal and state laws dictate that public school educators who coerce students by promoting or inhibiting religious devotion risk losing their jobs. Yet, the reality is that the fabric of a school is woven by the people who work, learn, and play in it—and oftentimes those people and their religious faith are indivisible. In this circumstance, the religious faith of individuals becomes a stealth moderator of school-based decision-making and outcomes, and as such, the ‘separation of church and state’ in public education becomes a misnomer. This three-papers-on-a-theme dissertation interrogates the under-studied topic of the role that religiosity plays in K-12 public education. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methodology, I utilize a nationally representative survey on public school perceptions, criminal and civil court records from Milwaukee, and Twitter discourse about the firing of a praying football coach to explicate this often-controversial topic. As a result, this dissertation provides evidence of the statistically significant predictive power of religious faith on students, parents, and teachers. At the same time, this dissertation reveals the complexity and apprehension that everyday Americans have about religion in K-12 public schooling.

Purpose-full Onboarding: Strategies for Institutional and Personal Flourishing through Vocation

Brent Roe-Hall, Lipscomb University

This proposal explores the critical connection between institutional purpose and employee engagement, highlighting an innovative onboarding process at Lipscomb University designed to align personal and institutional vocations. By clearly communicating the institution's mission and helping employees integrate their personal sense of purpose, Lipscomb aims to enhance engagement, well-being, and retention among faculty and staff.

Institutions thrive where joy and purpose converge, yet a clear and compelling connection between the "what" and the "why" of institutional activities is often missing. This disconnect creates a "purpose gap" for employees, leading to deficits in engagement, well-being, and retention. These challenges are exacerbated by resource scarcity and constraints, making it imperative to effectively communicate the institution's purpose to employees in a way that resonates with their personal goals.

At Lipscomb University, we are addressing this issue through an innovative approach incorporated into our onboarding process. This initiative, led by Lipscomb's Center for Vocational Discovery and the Office of the President, involves a dedicated session that introduces new employees to the university's mission—or "vocation"—invites them to reflect on their personal sense of vocation, and encourages them to consider how their roles contribute to the broader vocation of the institution: to promote flourishing.

During this session, new employees engage in activities designed to help them articulate their personal "why" and see its alignment with Lipscomb's mission. They brainstorm and share their thoughts with colleagues, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. Following the session, employees submit responses to prompts about their personal and professional aspirations, which are then printed and displayed in their workspaces. This serves both as an introduction to their work and a constant reminder of their purpose and contributions to the institution's mission.

This presentation will delve into both the philosophical and practical aspects of this onboarding process. Philosophically, it will examine the merits of cultivating a sense of purposeful work and living within an academic institution. Practically, it will outline the mechanics of the onboarding process, including specific exercises, sessions, and artifacts used to reinforce the connection between personal and institutional vocations.

Additionally, the presentation will create opportunities to discuss several pertinent issues:

- Employee retention challenges in higher education and strategies to address them.
- The ethical considerations in promoting "vocation," "mission," and "purpose" within institutional frameworks.
- The distinct experiences and needs of faculty versus staff.

- The consequences when employees lack a "purpose" imagination and fail to see the significance of their roles.

By examining these dynamics, this proposal aims to offer valuable insights and practical solutions for other institutions seeking to enhance employee engagement through purposeful alignment. The session's outcomes will be evaluated to measure improvements in employee satisfaction and retention, providing a model that can be adapted and implemented across various institutional contexts.

This presentation is intended to inspire dialogue and action among academic, ecclesial, and political institutions, highlighting the transformative potential of aligning personal and institutional purposes to foster a more engaged, committed, and flourishing workforce.

Redemptive Marketing: How Artificial Intelligence Can Become a Catalyst to Accelerate Kingdom-Expanding and Relational Marketing Practices

Michael Ross, Asbury University

This article seeks to explore how Artificial Intelligence (or AI) could become a redemptive element for the discipline of Marketing. A cursory review of the Marketing literature traces the evolution of Marketing from an engineering-inspired practice of managing the buying and selling of commodities and manufactured goods to a people-centric practice of satisfying human needs and wants as seen through the lens of a Christ-centered theological framework. From this unique perspective, Marketing may decidedly be viewed as a force for good in a God-centric economy where relational connectivity between suppliers and consumers is prioritized as the highest-form of Kingdom expansion. As such, artificial intelligence may ironically become a Kingdom-expanding catalyst when used by Christ-following marketers to enhance human connection and in turn create more Christ-followers.

Institutions as Organisms – Resourcing the Reformed Tradition for a Renewed Conception of Life in Institutions

Donald Roth, Dordt University

Early thought in organizational theory often characterized institutions as a sort of living thing. This feature also figured prominently in social thought deriving from the German Enlightenment. While this motif has faded almost entirely from contemporary social theory, vestiges remain in organizational theory. Whatever the reasons for its loss, when we think of institutions as a sort of living thing, we call to mind a range of intuitions about how to tend to their health that are often otherwise overlooked. Further, when we talk about Christian institutions, we often struggle to articulate what exactly a robust integration of faith and life looks like.

In this paper, I will draw upon thought from both organizational theory and a strand of Christian thought called neo-Calvinism to argue for a critical recovery of the idea that an institution is an organism. I will argue that the concept of organic interaction often describes the function of organizations in ways that are both accurate and intuitively helpful. Further, if an organism entails many differentiated parts working together to serve a unified purpose, the organic motif introduces a conception of form and purpose that can powerfully shape what we think it means to be a Christian institution. Ultimately, this line of inquiry directs us to think about how institutions can serve the purpose that all created things ultimately serve: the glory of God. After linking these concepts, I will conclude by arguing that clarifying the connection of institutions with their ultimate end will help us think more clearly about how to reinvigorate and restore institutions to the good of neighbor and creation as well.

The Role of Economics in Framing a Theological Understanding of Institutions' Roles in Promoting the Common Good

Shawn Sauve, Bethel University

Institutions have opportunities to influence how communities and social structures meet the needs of modern society by promoting social flourishing and the common good. This paper classifies institutional opportunities into two categories: (1) economic growth produced through free-market enterprise, and (2) programs. In this context, free-market enterprise is individuals and organizations pursuing profit through self-interested, mutually beneficial customer transactions. Programs are a broad term for group approaches focusing on resources, practices, systems, and structures. This paper argues that while society needs both free-market enterprise and programs, in a world of opportunity costs, free-market enterprise contributes to substantially elevated social flourishing in ways that programs do not.

One way of thinking about social flourishing and the common good is to address the negative side of the discussion: what do people identify as social challenges that individuals and institutions need to address? How people rank their relative social issue concerns shifts over time. Still, recent public polling suggests concerns over the prices of goods and services, public safety, immigration, hunger and homelessness, healthcare availability and affordability, the environment and climate change, racism and race relations, political polarization, quality of education, and access to employment. While programs have roles in addressing these social concerns, economic growth produced through free-market enterprise maximizes social flourishing and returns to the common good.

For those seeking to integrate biblical faith in discussions of social flourishing and the common good, the thesis of this paper presents challenges—the concept of a modern firm is largely foreign to the Bible. The Bible reflects the economics that dominated human living for millennia—primarily market economies with lower levels of specialization. The modern organization of an economy that reduces transaction costs by consolidating economic activity in firms—is an essentially new development over the past couple of hundred years. In this context, rather than viewing free-market enterprise and programs as adversaries, there are opportunities to embrace both as allies. Economic markets are not perfect, and programs can assist in addressing issues of externalities, market concentration, and unequal distribution of goods and services.

However, educational, ecclesial, and political institutions can promote greater social flourishing and improve the common good by acknowledging and promoting the order of magnitude positive impacts of free-market enterprise and economic growth in addressing social concerns. Rather than viewing free-market enterprise as an adversary uniquely needing renewal and restoration, economic growth fueled by free-market enterprise is the most effective means of promoting social flourishing. No institution is perfect—but maximizing the value of productive, thriving firms also maximizes social welfare.

The Educational Community Matters: Student Learning in Higher Education

Kate Scarborough, Samford University

Clara Gerhardt, Samford University

This session offers strategies to refocus practices to support the mission of the university and the overall purpose of higher education. Amidst the current narrative, institutions of higher education need to justify their purpose and illuminate their important role in society. As the unit struggles to adapt and provide for the evolving landscape, we risk losing our focus concerning the purpose of higher education. Arguably, higher education serves the development of students, yet at times it seems like learning takes a back seat. Institutions have mission statements created with input and deliberation from many. Frequently that mission statement is ignored while educating students and planning for student success. Drawing on the theoretical framework “How People Learn” (Donovon, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999), we reference the framework’s four lenses for learning. Faculty can reimagine their roles and instructional practices to support the mission of the university. While this task sounds momentous, the focus simply needs to shift to the students, our learners. As lectures are prepared by seasoned, well versed faculty, careful attention should be given to explicitly connecting the content to the context beyond the classroom. Taking for granted the novice understandings of our students leads to questions about the value of our courses. This session allows participants to analyze course content to determine how it fits into the mission of the university and the students’ future, personal or professional, lives. Further, we must reclaim the joy of imparting knowledge, by developing teaching/learning relationships with our students. Our reputation in higher education has frequently been described as elitest or perched in an ivory tower. Both visuals leave one seeing faculty as disconnected from their audience. This should change. The community in which learning takes place matters. Many mission statements include that students will contribute to society upon graduation. Our classrooms need to be communities of thoughtful discourse and respectful dialogue. Participants in this session can assess current classroom norms and refine practices to support community within respective fields. Finally, thorough audits of the assessments used are necessary. Ensuring that how we are testing our students aligns with what we want them to learn is imperative. When assessments do not align with the purpose of our course we marginalize the importance of our work. What we assess indicates what we value. If our course espouses critical thinking and depth of knowledge yet our assessments merely ask for recall of facts, it sends a message to the student concerning importance. Reflecting on current practices, participants can evaluate assessment methods to ensure they match the intended values. We in the field of higher education are at a crossroads. Now is the time to revisit and reimagine our practices to maintain our critical position in society.

Power and Authority in the Three Institutions that Matter Most

Read Schuchardt, Wheaton College

The Church, the State, and the Market are arguably the three most significant institutions that influence our everyday lives. In this historical and media ecological approach to the discussion, the author articulates the changing nature of these institutions through different media epochs, and how these media changes have themselves driven changes in the relationships and power dynamics between all three. Finally, in the theological realm, the author argues that the Church must "lose" the Power struggle, in order to restore the Authority of Truth, and thus institutional trust, once more to the public realm. A richly interdisciplinary talk illustrated with Powerpoint slide images, this talk looks at the big historical picture to show us where we are right now, which is not only back at the beginning of the Orality stage of cultural development, but one reason that the live, embodied conversation on these issues is so vital to our current choices and future outcomes.

Athens' Wisdom for Cities

Mike Sims, City of Terrell

This session is intended as an answer to the question of what “authentic mission” cities ought to adopt and utilize to revitalize their role in society in a culture adrift from foundational values. Sadly, this takes wisdom and wisdom is a word lacking in consensus of popular meaning. What can be a wise action for a city or a citizen in a city if we are without a foundation?

Athens stands out in history as a city grounded in the attempt to pursue wisdom. The pursuit of wisdom matters greatly because it implies there must be a true, a good and a beautiful defined by some objective standard. While the classical Greek method of assessing our world remains of great value, only when combined with a coherent Biblical worldview can it truly provide wise advice to our city leaders. I suggest we need both to understand why cities fail and how to revitalize cities.

This session will address the application of classical wisdom through a faith-based worldview to modern cities. Finding that authentic mission is now clouded by Federal and State mandates, spending and hubris. The mission is likewise confused by restyling cities as social service entities usurping roles formally led by churches, civic charities, and service clubs. While there are elements that ought to vary by the scale of the city, we greatly need a discussion of the core concept of city and how important city as an institution can be in human progress.

Since the city relies on the family as a functional institution just as much and often more than it relies on businesses, charities and higher levels of government, this session will also look at the key roles that mothers and fathers play in a healthy civic life. I will provide data from my own research on cities and families documenting this crucial connection as well as how families shape the mission of cities.

The session will use real world examples to explore ideas such as:

Can a city flourish if it is spiritually bankrupt or must it have a vision for the future that transcends the pragmatic needs of its current generation?

What practical actions should cities take related to the major challenges of our time: crime, homelessness, affordable housing, education, economic opportunity, aging infrastructure, the general purposelessness of the modern individual that leads to a lack of civic engagement?

What can we learn from a diverse range of cities applying these ideas or failing to apply these ideas?

How can churches, scholars, educators and citizens engage with their own city effectively: running for office, embarking on a career of public service, providing for the needy, operating a businesses, growing the spiritual faith of community, cultivating an upcoming generation that will seek to glorify God, and otherwise becoming part of a renewed and functional civic environment?

We will cover this all with specific place photos, research and some fun with Athens as the touchstone of our discussions.

The House I Did Not Build But Occupy: From Moral Injury to Virtuous Leadership

Jon Singletary, Baylor University

Recognizing racial injustice is an important first step that must be followed by a journey of antiracist commitments in our desire to renew and reimagine our predominantly white Christian institutions for the common good. This workshop title, from the theological writings of Dorothee Soelle, provides an invitation for honest self-reflection on the role of racialized experiences in our lives and the lives of the people we work with and serve. It is an invitation to listen to others' stories and realize what more we must do if we seek to shift the nature and narrative of our predominantly white institutions (W. J. Jennings). In our listening, we may hear and be forced to wrestle with the ways we perpetuate and benefit from our institutions as they are. This inner wrestling can awaken us to moral injury, the recognition that our actions and their impact do not align with our deepest values and beliefs (C. Walker Barnes). A virtue framework of humility, compassion, and responsibility, grounded in Micah 6:8, can provide a way forward for leaders who want to foster racial insight in new ways and engage the inner work of racial justice (R. Magee).

Bridging the Gap Between Healthcare and Faith Communities: Combating Isolation for Better Health Outcomes

Donna Stauber, Baylor Scott & White Health

Elysa Franklin, MPH, CHES, Baylor Scott & White Health

Loneliness has long been a social and health concern and programs that target isolated populations are increasingly vital. Through ten years of operation, Faith Community Health (FCH) at Baylor Scott & White Health (BSWH) has trained congregational members to become volunteers. These volunteers provide social support via weekly visits to healthcare referred lonely and isolated patients. Primarily done to offer a "ministry of presence", visits also target other areas of need identified within the BSWH Community Health Needs Assessment including social determinants of health.

The FCH program at BSWH seeks to share in the work of empowering local faith communities and healthcare to foster health and wellness for isolated and lonely patients. Our goal is to support people in reaching optimal health by integrating faith community volunteers with lonely and isolated patients, referred by healthcare staff, in order to provide more effective patient navigation, preventive education, and spiritual support in hopes of creating improved health outcomes. We are committed to serving people of all faiths and those of none.

FCH is a faith-based initiative that strives to improve the health of communities by combining the caring strengths embedded within faith communities and the clinical expertise of healthcare providers from Baylor Scott & White Health. Volunteers, from the faith community support community members throughout the healthcare experience by visiting them either virtually or in-person for one-hour per week after receiving a 2.5-hour training. Faith communities' potential for outreach and sustainability of health interventions are persuasive rationales to collaborate with religious organizations. Faith communities have the capability and capacity to offer health resources such as volunteers and social determinant of health location for community members.

The Faith Community Health Program extends assistance based on four principals:

- Right Door: educating people on correct avenues to seek health care.
- Right Time: educating and equipping individuals with prevention information to help them recognize and act on symptoms early in the process of a health issues.
- Ready to be Treated: helping people understand what they need and their medical options.
- Reassured: treating people with compassion and competent care that eases fear and helps them know they are not alone.

Yearly program data is collected by utilizing BSWH Electronic Health Record data. Patients are retrospectively followed for 12 months prior to receiving FCH intervention and for another 12 months since enrolling in the FCH program to analyze their emergency department (ED) and inpatient hospitalization (IP) data. The most recent data showed a 25.3% and 35.7% reduction in ED utilization and IP admissions, respectively. When compared to a control group,

FCH participants showed better health outcomes than those who did not receive the intervention.

As the only program of its kind to span 52 BSWH health facilities, the FCH model is intended to help those in need of additional support have better health outcomes and receive spiritual and social support.

A New Model for a Freshman Core English Class - Experiments, Anecdotes, and Takeaways

Emily Stelzer, Houston Christian University

What can professors and institutions do to meet incoming students where they are academically and spiritually, more intentionally align core curriculum with institutional mission, and promote student success and a sense of belonging? In this presentation Emily Stelzer shares her experience developing and piloting a new Reader for a core English class for freshman. She will discuss student responsiveness, how the course she piloted fits into larger institutional initiatives, the benefits of collaboration on curriculum renewal, ways the curriculum responds to the widespread availability of artificial intelligence tools, and transferable takeaways that could benefit a variety of institutions, especially Christian educational institutions and faculty seeking to introduce the liberal arts to the next generation of college students.

Connecting Margins of Society and Continents Through Sports Leadership

Bill Sterrett, Baylor University

Mar Magnusen, Baylor University

Charles Ramsey, Baylor University

Hina Abel, Baylor University

This session will share insights through a recent US State Department grant-funded effort bridging different institutions and different faiths through sports leadership. A team of Baylor graduate students, faculty, and staff collaborated with colleagues across various institutions in eastern Pakistan to foster the growth of women leadership through sports. Over a year, the team collaborated through virtual meetings, a week-long workshop held in Lahore, Pakistan, and through continual encouragement to share ideas, foster collaboration, and bring together those from the margins of society to promote flourishing and the common good. We shared ideas, sports equipment, and exercised creativity and humility in embracing each others' strengths and supporting each others' growth areas through having fun on the field together. We considered the importance of engaging different layers of leadership within institutions and among our communities.

This session will address the Symposium themes of institutions working together for the common good and supporting communities with resources and learning through rich narratives as well as discussing challenges and opportunities for institutions in the midst of technological shifts. We will share photos and video clips from the year-long effort that spanned different continents, religions, and sports. And we will explore together lessons learned from the margins that we each navigated in bringing together a rich collection of success stories from the field.

The Liberal Arts Are for Everyone: What If Our Universities Were, Too?

Elizabeth Stice, Palm Beach Atlantic University

“If I was in college now...” This is a phrase commonly heard by university faculty when they are interacting with people who are in the middle of their lives or later. People frequently express a bit of regret that some of what they ignored before, they now wish they knew or had studied. This suggests two things. First, that we are perhaps failing to convey the significance of certain subjects to the youthful population. Second, that we have an interested, older audience that we are ignoring and failing to serve. The liberal arts are for everyone, but often we fail to effectively offer them to everyone. In short, this paper looks at the untapped potential of Christian liberal arts universities to identify ways in which they can better engage and serve the community.

This paper presents different ways that universities can reimagine how they present their disciplines to the public, in order to engage a broader audience and to better serve the community. It considers new offerings and formats for presenting content and partnerships with other organizations. It also considers the possibilities of small presses. Some of this paper will draw on an essay I wrote for History News Network in 2023, “With Academic History in Crisis, can Departments Pivot to Reach Interested Audiences?”

[https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/with-academic-history-in-crisis-can-departments-pi?mibextid=Zxz2cZ](https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/with-academic-history-in-crisis-can-departments-pivot-to-reach-interested-audiences?mibextid=Zxz2cZ) That essay presented a variety of options for altering the ways in which history departments are utilized.

This paper also considers the ways in which we fail to market the liberal arts effectively. Current strategies are clearly not working well. How can we better communicate about these disciplines? Effective communication will not just help us reach new audiences. Rethinking our communication about the liberal arts can also help clarify the missions of some universities. For Christian universities, better marketing and broader service can also make clearer the value of good relationships between the Christian community and our colleges. Very often Christian colleges seem to be for the benefit of their students, but not necessarily the broader community. How can we change that while also better emphasizing to our students the ways in which they can and should use their gifts and education for the service of others?

Science, Humanities, and the End of the Liberal Arts

Mitch Stokes, New Saint Andrews College

Why are universities important? The word ‘university’ provides us with as good a clue as any—their goal is to unify the astonishingly diverse fields of human knowledge. Yet one of the most obvious features of universities today is the siloing of disciplines, especially between those of the sciences and humanities. This segregation became increasingly conspicuous in the decades after World War II. In 1959, the English scientist and novelist C. P. Snow—trained at Cambridge—had already warned us that “the intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups,” into “two cultures.” STEM and the humanities have become progressively isolated from one another, to the detriment of both.

One recent and representative example of this segregation—in this case, between physics and philosophy—comes from the iconic physicist Stephen Hawking. In his book *The Grand Design*, Hawking famously pronounces that “philosophy is dead,” telling us that scientists “have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.” Hawking then proceeds to do a good deal of philosophy without any hint of irony. (Also ignore that “philosophy is dead” is itself a philosophical claim.) Despite Hawking’s indisputable genius, his lack of philosophical self-awareness is alarming, especially given his cultural influence (e.g., the Academy Award nominated biopic *A Theory of Everything*). His philosophical clumsiness is ironic too: it is underwritten by an ignorance about the foundations of science, not just philosophy.

For one thing, Hawking’s dim view of philosophy goes directly against the great physicists of last century’s pre-war physics, visionaries such as Einstein, Niels Bohr, and Werner Heisenberg. These physicists were aware of the deep philosophical nature of their work. Each had what we would call a liberal arts education, and each consciously brought this education in the humanities to bear upon his physics. But more than just disagreeing with luminaries from the past, Hawking’s pronouncement that philosophy is dead is all the more surprising because it flatly belies what is occurring on the front lines of physics. Physicists are currently arguing over the scientific method itself, some worrying that the ongoing inability to arrive at a theory of everything stems from relying on non-empirical criteria such as beauty and elegance. But the question of whether mathematical beauty can be a reliable guide to truth is a philosophical one. In fact, Plato himself inaugurates the liberal arts tradition with the idea that the universe’s mathematical beauty is the key to becoming a philosopher king. In other words, the integration of science and the humanities is “baked into” the liberal arts. Or so I will argue. Integrating the two cultures is not a mere luxury for Christian institutions; nor must it be forced or ad hoc. Rather, it is necessary and natural. We need only to recapture and reimagine it for a new generation.

Millennial & Centurion Non-Profits and the Strategies that Make them Unique For Good

Hannah Stolze, Baylor University

Jesse Oxford, OX Creates

A recent study by McKinsey & Company found the average lifespan of companies listed in the Standard & Poor's 500 was 90 years in 1935 (Handscomb & Thaker, 2020). In 2010—only 75 years later—it was less than 14 years. The US has a short-termism crisis that has increasingly become a talking point of business thought leaders. Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock the world's largest investment firm, recently urged CEOs resist “the powerful forces of short-termism afflicting corporate behavior” (Turner, 2016). Few institutions remain with a history of more than 50 years. As of 2019, only 52 companies have remained on the Fortune500 list since 1955 (Perry, 2019). The vast majority of businesses will be gone in less than 20 years. Further, few institutions represent the impact a long-term orientation can have on the lifecycle of a business over time. One outlying organization in Europe, Admont Abby has maintained profitability for nearly 1,000 years. Admont Abby has become an important case study of the type of organization that can last for over a century as it approaches a millennium of continuous business (Guillaum & Despandes, 2017; Sternad, 2016).

Initially dubbed the Confucian dynamic, Hofstede's concept of long-term orientation emerged from Confucian values concerning time, tradition, perseverance, saving for the future, and allowing others to ‘save face.’ Long-term orientation was later defined as the “the cultural value of viewing time holistically, valuing both the past and the future rather than deeming actions important only for their effects in the here and now or the short term.” The concept of long-term orientation is widely recognized as the dichotomy between focusing on the “here and now” compared to a holistic view of the future and past. However, the work of Hofstede and later Nevins, Bearden, and Money (2006, 2007) focus on the individual level and not on long-term orientation as a firm level strategy, as called for by Larry Fink and necessitated by the McKinsey research.

Our project aims to (1) understand the drivers and common strategies of centurion and millennial non-profits, NGOs, and charity organizations and (2) identify the unique mission, brand, and partnership strategies that enables them to survive. By understanding the strategies that are unique to the long-term survival of non-profits, NGOs, and charity organizations, we expect to add to the research on long-term orientation at the organizational unit of analysis for non-profit institutions. The findings of this research will contribute to research and offer practical insights to non-profit, NGO, and charity organization leaders and employees with a goal to do good for good.

The 100-year brand is not a myth or a distant dream; it's a goal worth pursuing, and often things that are cheaper or easier in the short term are more costly in the long run. We hope to address the following questions for institutions with a vision for the common good:

Are the threats that keep you up at night ones that will even matter in 10 years?

Are the decisions you make simply for the next 3-5 years or are you building with a long-term vision? What would it take for your institution to endure?

Ripe for the Picking: Exploring Approaches for Developing and Sustaining Fruitful Professionalism

Marty Stuebs, Baylor University

James Marcum, Baylor University

This paper analyzes makarios, the blessed life, as an approach to restoring fruitful professionalism. Renewing and reimagining a fruitful society(1) with fruitful societal institutions necessitates fruitful professionalism because these societal institutions rely on fruitful professionals to operate them. The unsustainable societal damage and costs from crises of rampant unprofessionalism in healthcare (Westbrook et al. 2021), business, law, and education, for example, repeatedly herald the need to reimagine and renew fruitful professionalism as a cornerstone to restoring a fruitful society and fruitful societal institutions.

Given the importance of fruitful professionalism, this paper uses theoretical analysis to present makarios as a needed, complementary approach to fruitful professionalism. Traditional approaches to ethics and professionalism generally have focused on eudaimonia, the well-lived life, and the cardinal virtues(2). The focus in these approaches is on improving professionals' outer life—improving professionals' thinking (i.e., intellectual outputs) or actions (i.e., behavioral outputs) through either moral reasoning approaches or moral action approaches, respectively. Alternatively, makarios and the theological virtues(3) offer a unique, spiritual, and Christian approach to fruitful professionalism that first focuses professionals on their inner life—improving professionals' intentions (i.e., motivational inputs) through a moral motivation approach. Makarios and the theological virtues provide a needed motivational foundation to complement and transform the application of the cardinal virtues. While eudaimonia focuses on intellectual and behavioral outputs and professionals' outer-life fruit, makarios focuses on motivational inputs and professionals' foundational, spiritual inner-life root. Together, the result is a fruitful professionalism approach that brings together theological and cardinal virtues to connect a professional's inner and outer lives in an integrated, and fruitful whole.

Given the importance of makarios and a blessed life foundation to fruitful professionalism, we explore the contributions and implications of our work for ethics and professionalism research, education, and practice.

- (1) A fruitful society is one that effectively fosters the well-being, development, and prosperity of its members.
- (2) The cardinal virtues are justice, wisdom, courage and self-control.
- (3) The theological virtues are hope, faith, and love.

Examining Institutional Mission and Practices: A Qualitative Investigation of Course Learning Outcomes

Jill Swisher, Northwestern College

Lori Doyle, Concordia University Irvine

Because mission statements should drive institutional practice (Palmer, 2024), this paper examines higher education institutions' actions and outputs for conformity with institutional mission, specifically examining whether observable drivers in the mission statements are evident in course learning outcomes (CLOs) across the curriculum. Undergirded by a conceptual framework grounded in the literature regarding strategic planning and organizational change, the authors conducted a qualitative content analysis of learning outcomes found on recent archival syllabi collected from 15 institutions. Authors created and used an assessment rubric, which is undergoing additional reliability testing, to measure mission alignment as evidenced in CLOs. Results indicated public institutions averaged higher mission alignment scores than private Christian institutions. Implications for Christian institutions are discussed regarding the ways they can reexamine their mission and recontextualize their practices to stay faithful to their purpose.

Leadership Training and Character Development to Equip Graduates for Ethical Leadership and Service

Leah Teague, Baylor Law School

Kenneth Townsend, Wake Forest University

Tania Luma, Loyola University Chicago School of Law

Question to be discussed:

Are universities doing enough to prepare students to be positive influences and to serve ethically and effectively in this increasingly polarized, complex and continually changing world?

Objective:

Explore ideas for creating or enhancing programs that provide leadership and character development education and training to students.

Background and Description:

Institutions of higher education in the 21st century hold one of the most important roles in shaping the future of societies. Research indicates that a strong system of higher education is a significant contributor to the country's ability to compete in the global marketplace. The nation looks to its colleges and universities to provide an educated citizenry for our future. Shouldn't universities include education and training that encourages students to own their responsibilities to be honorable, productive citizens and leaders? The answer is a resounding yes!

Considering the polarization, dissension, and disruption in society, the need for thoughtful, courageous, and moral leadership has never been more important. Institutions of higher education have the opportunity to help their students develop the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to be positive influencers and leaders in their communities. Universities also have an obligation to play a role in character development and the teaching of values to future citizens. "For most of its recorded history, higher education made the study of moral values a central concern. Ethics was a major part of the curriculum of Greek academies and medieval universities." Early U.S. colleges and universities required the study of ethical theory and compulsory chapel to shape and mold their students' moral character. "During the nineteenth century, moral philosophy was often taught by college presidents as the capstone of the curriculum, as a framework for students' entire course of study and future life." The emphasis on preparing students with a values-based approach to problem solving, however, did not continue into the twentieth century.

Teaching values in higher education or law school in more modern times was considered unnecessary, too late, or not the job of a professor. Some who studied the teaching of ethics in the American undergraduate curriculum suggest the professors were generally uninterested or unwilling to teach, or impose, values. Accordingly, the "vision of a unified curriculum with a paramount moral mission gradually gave way to an emphasis on specialized training and ostensibly value-free inquiry." Concern about the commercialism and ethical relativism continues to the present.

Character and leadership development are particularly important in law schools given the critical role lawyers play in society. While lawyers comprise less than one-half of one percent of the population, their influence is significant and they impact decisions, both routine and life-altering ones. Today's lawyers not only represent and counsel individual clients, they also advocate for causes, counsel businesses, serve nonprofits, and lead in organizations throughout our communities. Efforts over the last decade have resulted in more law schools incorporating leadership and professional development into their programming.

Three law professors, from Baylor, Wake Forest and Loyola Chicago, will discuss leadership and character development efforts at their universities and more broadly within legal education, and engage in a discussion about how universities might incorporate character and leadership development into their programming and activities.

Beyond Deep Gladness: Institutional Commitment to the Common Good in Light of Vocations We Don't Choose

Deanna Thompson, St. Olaf College

One of the definitions of vocation that has become ubiquitous in university and religious settings comes from the writings of theologian, minister, and novelist Frederick Buechner. According to Buechner, the kind of work to which God calls us is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. Vocation, according to Buechner, is “the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.” Buechner’s definition has become synonymous with the word “vocation” in both higher education as well as in faith communities over the past several decades.

Scholars have applauded how Buechner’s definition of vocation is not just focused on the self. The concept of vocation, as it’s been understood inside and outside religious traditions, is never just about the individual. It’s always about who we are—and who we are becoming—in and through our relationships. But scholars have also pointed out that the focus on vocational gladness may sometimes be in tension with the vocational commitment to “serve the neighbor in love.” In other words, sometimes we’re called to vocations we’d rather not do. Sometimes being accountable to our families, friends, professors, colleagues and coworkers, does not result in gladness. Living out our vocations is not just about gladness but can and does involve challenge, deep sadness, and vocations we don’t choose.

But isn’t a focus on vocation and sadness kind of a downer for a conference focused on renewal? Here’s my response: if we don’t make space for the sadness that’s part of our lives and our vocations, it can be difficult if not impossible to get to gladness, to joy, to renewal, to a good that’s common to all. And even more, often it is in sharing one another’s sadness where gladness, joy, and flourishing begin to emerge.

This presentation will explore what it looks like for colleges and universities as well as faith communities to acknowledge and name deep sadness that stems from a variety of trauma and suffering, including those caused by the institutions themselves. It will offer resources from trauma literature to talk about the ways trauma makes itself known in the lives and bodies of those who’ve been traumatized, and describe how practices of lament can help those who live with suffering and trauma make more space to live alongside the sadness. In addition, the presentation will explore how lament enables many of us to bear witness to the suffering and trauma of others within our community, thereby increasing our empathic muscles to be with and for those experiencing deep sadness, opening new possibilities for supporting one another and working together toward the flourishing of all.

The AI Opportunity

Elizabeth Parker, Taylor University (Upland, IN)

The introduction of widely available generative AI tools like ChatGPT has resulted in hand-wringing among journalists, professors, and legions of Substack writers. Responses in popular online publications have tended to focus on concerns about student cheating, on the one hand, or suggestions for classroom use. Scholarly responses in the humanities have tended to focus on use. For example, the Conference on College Composition and Communication's 2024 Virtual Institute on "Machine Writing and the Work of Rhetoric and Composition" aims to explore "theory, pedagogy, assessment, and administration" and hopes to "activate further ideation." Composition and Communications are disciplines that have an enormous amount to lose in ceding skill-development and production to machines, yet underlying these aims is the unexamined assumption that generative AI will be used for and useful in writing.

In ceding ground too quickly to generative AI by creating pedagogical and administrative structures to guide its integration and use, liberal arts colleges and universities risk turning students into machine users rather than problem solvers and thinkers. In adopting rhetorical hand-wringing and iron-clad syllabus policies forbidding AI use, on the other hand, professors risk responding from a position of weakness and defensiveness. Rather, liberal arts institutions should see this period of technological change as an extraordinary opportunity to recommit to education as a good struggle that requires courage. For this to be more than rhetoric, however, this recommitment must be comprehensive -- incorporating each department, program, and individual -- and practical.

In this paper, I present a summary of my observations on the limits of generative AI as a technology, and I suggest three steps a liberal arts university can take to strengthen its mission and fortify its students: 1. connect academic departments, spiritual life (where applicable), residence life, and administrative departments around a common effort to discuss and develop the virtues of wisdom and courage – virtues necessary for the good struggle of learning. 2. slow down and deepen the teaching and learning process by replacing volume and efficiency with values such as understanding, immersion, and meaning. 3. reorient classroom practices around idea synthesis and creativity rather than (chiefly) content mastery. These principles emerge from deep reading with my students in Dante's **Divine Comedy** and Augustine's **Confessions**, as well as a semester spent researching and using AI. These experiences frame and inform my conclusion that liberal arts institutions must develop a business model in which learning is embraced as processional and worthy of struggle, rather than product-oriented or mechanical.

The Spiritual and Intellectual Lives of College Students -- Results of a New Survey

Jenna Van Sickle, Lilly Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities

The Lilly Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities together with Springtide Research Institute conducted a survey on the spiritual and intellectual lives of college students in 2023-2024. Over 10,000 students from 34 church-related colleges and universities across the United States responded to the survey in Fall 2023, and focus group interviews in Spring 2024 gave additional depth to the information gained about these students. The results of this survey give new insight into how students see their spiritual and intellectual lives, how their colleges and universities form and shape their spiritual and intellectual lives, and how they make choices about college and their futures with these and other factors in mind. These results have important implications for all church-related institutions and the faith traditions associated with them. Responding better to today's students and their spiritual needs will help our students and our institutions thrive. Understanding these results will help colleges and universities better understand the students they have, rather than the students they think they have.

A majority of institutions of church-related higher education are in peril at this time. Demographic changes have caused enrollments to plummet, and, despite severe budget cuts, these institutions are often struggling to survive. Many have closed, but the ones that remain open often do so at a cost to their mission. Because financial pressures have become so extreme in many cases, a commitment to mission takes a back burner when it comes to curricular decisions, staffing decisions, and many more.

These data represent an ecumenical group of students from colleges and universities that represent geographically diverse schools across the US, from very small colleges to large R1 universities. This diverse survey gives accurate and current information about students' spiritual lives and their desires to grow spiritually during the college years. These data also help us understand students' intellectual understandings and commitments. The survey is representative across first-year through senior level students, so we can see how these views change as students are formed through their higher education experience. With this valuable information in hand, colleges and universities can go forward being more fully informed about their students. Churches and other institutions that serve young adults can also learn valuable information from this research. This paper gives the most pertinent findings of this research for church-related colleges and universities and others who serve young adults.

Reflections on National Unity: Virtue, Values, and Vision in Song Texts

John Ware, Xavier University of Louisiana

Rather than academic scholarship, this presentation must be called performance scholarship. The ideas presented are derived from song texts and not purely academic research. These ideas must be considered to be art images. You will be encouraged to consider the concepts in this presentation, recognize any individual and personal resonance that they might have with you, reflect, and finally, you are asked to allow your reflection and imagination to envision national unity and other historically “American” Values. Heavily grounded in the disciplines of music, poetry, storytelling, fine art, and how we as Americans—we as human beings react to ideals of beauty and truth, this presentation is based on my book which uses song texts and other artistic media to recall, to reflect upon, and to rehearse American values.

This presentation is given expressly for Christian scholars in higher education. It gives a Christian perspective though some might call this perspective unorthodox and somewhat Universalist. Biblical and theological references are made but they are not intended to be preachy or ultra-denominational. Some might see this presentation as falling into the category of religion. However, any religious ideas presented herein are the products of a liberal arts education which includes Theology, along with History, English, Language, Art, Mathematics, and Philosophy.

“Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, a life to everything.” –Plato

Ancient Greek scholars believed that Music (especially music with words or texts) held the highest place among the liberal arts because it encompasses all the other disciplines. You will find that all liberal arts disciplines can be incorporated into these reflections on American nationalism. You will also see that the word nationalism and other word images must be reimagined in a more positive and productive context.

Freedom and democracy cannot be devolved from virtue, just as the word nationalism cannot be separated from America’s patriotic dialectic.

You are encouraged to think of the ideas presented to be ideas and not facts, theory and not theology. Although these ideas are sometimes political, social, and related to what we might call religion, they are given from the perspective of a musician/teacher who practices, and is practiced in helping others find meaning in texts. (Musical examples will be performed).

You will be challenged to reimagine your patriotism, your faith, your character, and those with whom you associate; to reevaluate who you are and how you think. You should decide if your individual brand of patriotic/nationalism realistically supports American values—if it serves the republic.

The meaning and impact of nationalistic American values enshrined in traditional patriotic song texts and in African American song texts is central to the framing of the narrative. I begin by attempting to reconcile from my African American perspective how our one country can have two national anthems: The Star-Spangled Banner—the American National Anthem and

Lift Every Voice and Sing—the Black National Anthem. Both national hymns are being regularly performed at NFL games.

Deconstructing and Reimagining Higher Education Student and Professional Development Using Spiritual Perspectives

Clay West, Sam Houston State University

Ricardo Montelongo, Ph.D., Sam Houston State University

Finding meaning and purpose in personal and professional development through religious and spiritual perspectives continues to grow (Benefiel & Lee, 2019; Briskin, 1996; Manning, 2018). Despite this growth, gaps are found in applying these perspectives in higher education settings. Spirituality and spiritual perspectives have been said to be “conspicuously absent” and “ignored” in college student development theories (Love & Talbot, 2009, p. 614). Spiritual perspectives in organizational theories are “complementary” and “modest” at best (Manning, 2018, p. 176). Gaps likely are a result of perceptions that spirituality and religion are connected; thus, an uncomfortable topic to discuss within secular organizations (Bolman & Deal, 1995). The proposed session disrupts these perceptions using the presenters’ positionalities centered on spirituality and religion. Modern institutions, they argue, benefit from acknowledging these approaches in college student and professional development to work towards the common good.

Higher education institutions play a role in educating and engaging students in pursuing the common life. Understanding a life of shared commitments exhibited through personal contexts and callings moves beyond a singular academic approach to holistic student development. Following a brief spike in interest in the role of spirituality in student development theory in the early 2000s, the academy has been largely silent. Only now are institutions beginning to question spirituality's role in student development. The college years are replete with opportunities for self-discovery and meaning-making with questions like, "What is my purpose in life? How can I contribute to making the world a better place?" Examining these in the context of the current generation is essential for private and public higher education. Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2012, identifies as spiritual rather than religious, seeking connection with others, nature, and the sacred. This generation requires a holistic approach to development that includes spirituality. Only then will they be able to understand and value the common life - a life of shared commitments and personal callings. Student development theory will be examined for gaps and necessary changes related to meeting the needs of Generation Z.

Interest in religion and spirituality is still novel in higher education administration. In developing meaning-making in professional work, service must be reimagined as critical towards commitment to program, department, college, and university values. Using Benedictine philosophy, early monasteries are seen as “workshops” where monks practice the “spiritual craft” of leading in community using the “tools of good works” (see *The Rule of Benedict*, Chapter 4). Early monastic communities serve as templates in modern organizational cultures in higher learning. Using the lens of a Benedictine Oblate, professional development is argued as effective “workshops” for honing the “tools of good works” for the common good. Viewing higher education leadership as a spiritual craft molded by hands, head, and heart reflects spiritual dimensions of organizational behavior. Faculty and staff professional development will be examined in how effective it uses these spiritual perspectives to enhance institutional mission statements and improve organizational culture and morale at public colleges and universities.

After Identifying Microaggressions

Jacob West, Hardin-Simmons University
A.J. Pardue, Hardin-Simmons University

Topic to Consider: “How can institutions better supply communities with resources, practices, spaces, connections, and narratives that contribute to human flourishing?”

In attempts to harmonize political, ecclesial, and educational environments, institutions have become keenly aware of microaggressions. As defined by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, microaggression is “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.” With good intention, institutions have implemented training to ensure microaggressions are avoided. However, this prescription is often incomplete. Instead of institutions only teaching what to avoid, can there be a way to prescribe what to do? Are there small, habitual acts of kindness that can be taught to cultivate a greater benefit for the common good? I propose there are.

The miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand in John 6 could serve as a biblical answer for this proposed question. Through the power of God, five loaves of barley and two fish fed well over five thousand people. Jesus took the small service of a boy and fed the equivalent of a modern small town. Moreover, Jesus in Luke 16:10 says, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” The Bible on countless occasions reveals the vitality of seemingly minute acts of kindness that lead to greater things. Over time, small habitual acts of kindness will inevitably cultivate holistic good for the common life.

Merely training individuals on what to avoid may lead to ceased interaction because there is an anxiety not to commit a microaggression. Therefore, it is worth attempting to try and develop ways for institutions to cultivate environments that are not only void of microaggressions but are equipped to counter them. Ignorance around combating microaggression is such an apparent problem there remains an inconclusive term on what to describe its opponent: microvalidation, microaffirmation, etc. Regardless of what the opposite of microaggression should be named, the problem of ignorance remains and thus reveals a need for a solution. This can be only achieved through research, counsel, and critical thinking.

For this symposium, this proposal remains valuable for furthering educational, ecclesial, and political institutions for the common good. Uncertainty about what to promote can lead to anxiety about what to avoid. Therefore, thoroughly understanding and implementing ways to habitually perform small acts of kindness is the aim of this proposal.

Can You Get “Clean” in Dirty Water?: Reexamining the Mission and Purposes of Corrections through a Qualitative Case Study Exploring the Prison Environment, Basic Needs, and the Impact on Substance Use Rehabilitation

Tyesia Williams, Baylor University/Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Leanne Howell, Baylor University

Rehabilitation is one of the four purposes of corrections. Although research shows that rehabilitation efforts have some impact on recidivism rates, one study showed that only 10% of the mission statements from 49 state prisons included in the study mentioned evidence-based treatment techniques (Graves, 2015). Moreover, 85% of offenders in the United States contend with substance use, but only 11.2% receive adequate substance abuse treatment (Bukten et al., 2020; NIDA, 2014). Offenders often have little motivation toward reaching personal and substance use rehabilitation goals during incarceration because their primary goals are focused on daily survival, even in prison settings (Liebling, 2011; Maslow, 1943; Mitchell, 2012). Imagine how much more productive life for offenders would be if their basic needs were met in prison so they could focus on substance abuse rehabilitation while incarcerated.

The purpose of this qualitative dissertation case study was to explore the influence of the prison environment on offenders' basic needs and discover barriers to their substance use treatment efforts. This dissertation study included four male offender participants who participated in a substance use treatment program in one Louisiana prison. Reexamining how the prison environment impacts the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process could be monumental in recontextualizing incarceration practices and reimagining correctional institutions for the common good.

The goals of this presentation include (1) revealing the missions/purposes of corrections, (2) shedding light on the prevalence of substance abuse in prison environments, (3) raising awareness of the realities of the prison environment, (4) proposing more realistic rehabilitation efforts that take place in prison environments that are more conducive for sobriety through focusing on offenders' basic needs, (5) proving implications for policymakers and the community, and 6) exploring how prison institutions can reexamine their missions/purposes of corrections to recontextualize practices for more sustainable rehabilitation purposes.

Attendees will be engaged through visual illustrations, anecdotes, and experiences from the research process. This is an interesting and eye-opening topic since the impact of prison life is rarely revealed and discussed openly unless one has personal or professional experiences with the prison population and the challenges that accompany it. Attendees who may not have considered the impacts of the prison environment will walk away from this presentation recognizing the potential influence that a prison institution has on meeting the rehabilitative missions/purposes of corrections through the provision of basic needs. This presentation will also provide recommendations to assist attendees in recontextualizing practices within the prison environment to help offenders have the best possible chance of getting their basic needs met in prison so they can focus on their substance abuse treatment to reimagine a better life for themselves, their families, and the communities where they will return.

The Narrative of Art, and the Art of Narrative: Revitalizing Pedagogy in the Classroom

Mariah Ziemer, The Thomas MacLaren School

As a young professional teaching studio art and art history courses at a liberal arts charter school, I have grown to love and respect an interdisciplinary approach to learning. My reasoning is twofold: 1) At its core, this approach fosters creative storytelling, a method which counteracts and redeems the ramifications of compartmentalized learning. Here, facts and commentary are blended together in a creative manner, where instructors "zoom in and out" of the content as they frame details within the larger scope of a narrative or theme. 2) In doing so, students are able to grow in both knowledge and wisdom as they build "ideological constellations" in and across disciplines. They soon become their own storytellers in the classroom and beyond as they enter into and engage society.

This presentation reflects on such questions and topics as they relate to middle and high school audiences in secondary education, but I hope the implications are applicable to a wider audience, including students of various ages and educational institutions or environments of various kinds. Ultimately, I want to uphold the dignity of teaching as a meaningful vocation, a craft that deserves earnest attention and thought in molding its pedagogical practices.