

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A Vision and Model for College Ministries | AT MESSIAH COLLEGE



COLLEGE MINISTRIES TEAM



ELDON FRY (D.Min.) is the college pastor to the Messiah College community and provides leadership for College Minis-

tries. He is privileged to work with a gifted team of pastors and staff. Eldon is an ordained pastor with a D. Min. in pastoral counseling and is trained in spiritual direction and formation and teaches as part of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

Eldon is deeply committed to the formational process on campus. He serves as advisor to the Spiritual Formation House and the Reconciliation House and manages the spiritual formation blog, <http://blogs.messiah.edu//spiritualformation>.



EVIE TELFER (M.Div.) is associate college pastor. She advises the student chaplain ministries including the Koinonia

small group ministry, Kairos Chapel and the prayer ministry. She also assists in the planning and programming of the chapel and preaches in common chapel each semester. Evie provides pastoral counseling through a partnership with the Engle Center. Her research interests focus on understanding the factors influencing spiritual development in young adults.

Evie provides leadership in efforts to highlight reconciliation and cross-cultural understanding and interaction. She actively mentors numerous students seeking the vocation of ministry.



DOUGLAS CURRY (M.A.) is minister of worship. He is primarily responsible for planning, leading, and giving shape to campus worship services. He provides guidance, support, and oversight to the Worship Community, a co-curricular group of students committed to the

development of skills, abilities, and the understanding of connecting the arts and theology in contexts of private and corporate worship. Students mentored under Doug's tutelage bring leadership to chapel and other worship events alongside College Ministries pastoral staff. Additionally, he serves as an adjunct instructor in the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies and in interdisciplinary studies.

Douglas is presently working on a D. Min. in campus ministry, and he serves as advisor to Powerhouse and other campus groups and College constituencies that include worship as a primary emphasis in their events. A professional vocalist and choral director, he also serves as a resource to music department ensembles for education and training in musical ministry skills, spiritual development, and the consideration of worship as an integral part of spiritual formation.



BRIAN SMITH (Ph.D.) is teaching pastor and senior lecturer in Bible. Brian's position brings the curricular and co-curricular sides of campus together; as a faculty member in the Department of Biblical

and Religious Studies, he teaches courses in Old Testament, Hebrew, and biblical interpretation. As teaching pastor, he preaches regularly in chapel, helps coordinate chapel programming, and provides resources for the Koinonia small group ministry.

Brian's research interests stretch from ancient Mesopotamia to faith development among 21st century college students. Watching students engage ancient Israel and the New Testament through the lens of their own developing faith motivates him to continually wonder at the roles of the Bible, tradition, and experience in present-day spirituality.



ARLENE BOSSERMAN is the administrative assistant to the College Pastor. She is clearly gifted as an administrator. Arlene is a long time

Messiah College employee who uses her knowledge of the campus to accomplish goals for College Ministries. Arlene's pastoral and administrative gifts are a blessing to staff and students alike.



DEBBIE McHUGH is the college ministries assistant in our office. Debbie maintains the college ministries web

presence and provides leadership in monitoring chapel attendance. Debbie is a welcoming person who displays her gifts of caring, compassion, and hospitality as she greets the many students and other visitors to our offices.

INTRODUCTION

The primary mission of College Ministries is **engaging the Messiah College community in the process of Christian spiritual formation**. This booklet introduces our mission, articulates an appropriate model of Christian spiritual formation for our community, and invites educators, administrators, and staff to join us in this process.

The holistic nature of a Messiah College education compels faculty, staff, and administrators alike to be committed to the spiritual formation of our students. College Ministries is a primary resource for this formation, supporting individuals and campus organizations as needed, and bringing together the various partnerships, conversations, and experiences around spiritual formation that happen here.

The spiritual formation model we use is three-fold: knowing, being, and doing. These foci provide a measure of flexibility while keeping our work centered in the values and the mission articulated by the College. While such a design is dynamic and diachronic, it also provides the necessary clarity to determine priorities for effective programming and assessment.

“You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, and with all our
soul, and with all your mind. You
shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

—*Matthew 22:37, 39 NRSV*

HOLISTIC

DEFINITION AND MODEL

Robert Mulholland defines spiritual formation as “**the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.**”¹ College Ministries uses this definition because it is clear, concise, and fits well with the College’s mission statement: “To educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.” Mulholland’s definition and the College’s mission dovetail nicely. The **process** of spiritual formation runs parallel to the College’s goal of **maturity**, and Mulholland’s purpose, “for the sake

of others,” becomes the motivation for our students’ “lives of service, leadership and reconciliation.” Spiritual formation is, therefore, a critical component of the mission of Messiah College.

Since Messiah College is primarily a residential college serving 18-22 year old students, we seek to integrate what is developmentally appropriate for that age group. At the same time we are also attentive to intentionally addressing the needs of staff and faculty and how we might appropriately serve our larger constituency. We affirm that while College Ministries is a part of the division of Student Affairs and staffed

with co-curricular educators, we need collaboration with the entire Community of Educators to integrate Christian spiritual formation into the life of the Messiah College community.

In our model, spiritual formation is expressed in three ways: maturity of **being**, characterized by a personal and communal relationship with God in Jesus Christ; maturity of **knowing**, characterized by intentional and transformational learning and reflection about God, self, and the world; and maturity of **doing**, characterized by intentional actions compelled by what we believe and who we are in Christ.

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

—Romans 12:1–2

¹M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993).



BEING

BEING

Being is the most foundational element of spiritual formation. Each person is made in the image of God and is thus created for relationship with God and others. This relationship with God involves personal faith in Jesus Christ, expressed in the College's use of the Apostles' Creed. Belief in the image of God and faith in the life and work of Jesus allows us to accept our brokenness and celebrate redemption as God's greatest gift of love. A maturing Christian faith finds its identity in Jesus Christ and evidences the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Being a Christian is not solely an individual pursuit. A communal faith in Jesus Christ finds expression in corporate worship and believes the church to be the body of Christ, locally and universally. A communal faith resists separation and prejudice, and celebrates diversity and reconciliation as characteristics of the kingdom of God.

Therefore, we believe that we should engage in developing Christ followers who have a personal and communal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

We believe in vital and diverse expressions of worship, proper understanding of the brokenness in our lives, awareness of sin and its results personally and in our worldwide community. We believe that awareness, experience, and appropriation of God's love, grace, empowerment, and ministry of reconciliation are essential for the faith journey. Space for reflection, solitude, prayer, developing the fruit of the Spirit, and developing life disciplines is at the heart of spiritual formation.

“He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasures of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

— Ephesians 1:5–6



KNOWING

KNOWING

Knowing who we are in Jesus Christ leads us to engage our minds in learning. A maturing faith pursues an ever-deepening understanding of God through purposeful study of the Bible and reflection on its revelation of God in the person and work of Jesus. Such study will transform the Christian's life through effective application of the truth of the Gospel. A holistic pursuit of knowing will be characterized by relational, experiential, emotional,

and social learning in addition to sustained critical reflection on the intersection of faith with all academic disciplines. Knowing is thus an exploration which fully engages the mind, heart, and body in the process of faith development.

Therefore, we believe that we should engage in developing Christ followers who have a basic, thoughtful understanding of their beliefs and lifestyle choices. It is

important that they understand how God is revealed through scripture, tradition, and faith communities. Formation should include efforts to connect vocation and academic disciplines with faith. Those involved in formation need to understand and appreciate the world-wide body of Christ and our inter-connectedness to it. We should also strive to understand the context and implications of our own faith journey and faith community.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

— 2 Peter 3:18



DOING

DOING

Doing — the activity of a maturing Christian — is grounded in being and knowing. Genuine knowledge and belief will be manifest in the lifestyle and purposeful actions of a Christian. The vocation of a maturing Christian is rooted in an awareness of self and the needs of the world. By obeying God and engaging society, the Christian seeks to be an agent of transformation in the world. Commitment to the church, exercising spiritual gifts,

and serving the local community will characterize the efforts of a maturing Christian. These efforts are motivated by a desire to share the redemptive life and work of Jesus and God's desire for reconciliation with and throughout the world.

Therefore, we believe that we should engage in developing servant leaders who will passionately demonstrate purposeful mission and meaningful proclamation.

It is very important to engage the process of vocation and to grow in understanding of how we can be transformative followers of Christ who appropriately and skillfully utilize our spiritual giftedness, leadership skills, personal talents, and experiences to minister in the world and to disciple others in the Christian community. We need to learn how to contextualize the Gospel and to develop Christian community.

“Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”

—James 1:22

THE HERITAGE OF MESSIAH COLLEGE AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Three theological strains form the spiritual heritage of Messiah College. The Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions continue to inform and influence our identity, curricula, and campus culture. While spiritual formation is a relatively new term for our campus, it is deeply rooted within the traditions that have shaped Messiah College.

Anabaptism has been characterized by qualities such as intentional close community, simplicity of lifestyle, uncompromising morality, separation from worldly culture, pacifism, valuing scripture as a guide for life, and a dependency on the Holy Spirit in worship. The phrase “radical discipleship” is often used to identify this tradition.

In our Pietist roots we find lay activism, Bible study, and preaching that all focus on practical life actions, pastoral care, and an inward conversion. These ele-

ments of pietistic spirituality motivate practical acts of renewal that reveal an immanent God who transcends self.

Wesleyan influences resonate with these earlier traditions but have led to a methodical discipleship pattern that calls us to a holy life. This life is marked by a caring compassion and a desire to be set apart for God’s purposes.

These three traditions form the fabric of our campus culture and community. But as a hospitable, inclusive community, we are continually affected by other influences as well. We identify the Apostles’ Creed and an institutional statement of faith that summarize our common bonds while acknowledging and leaving room for our differences.

At the heart of the Messiah College heritage and hope is the so-called “Jesus Creed,” the dual commandments

found in Mark 12:30–31: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Loving God and loving neighbor thus epitomize our common goal as a community. Scot McKnight finds in these words “the foundation of everything Jesus teaches about spiritual formation.”²

Spiritual formation is deeply rooted in the traditions that have shaped our community and identifies outcomes consistent with our heritage and foundational documents as a Christian educational institution. We believe that spiritual formation is not a checklist of spirituality but rather a process that is consistent with the purpose of Messiah College.

²Scot McKnight, *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete, 2004), 11. See also Douglas Jacobsen and Rodney Sawatsky, *Gracious Christianity: Living the Love We Profess* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 22–23, 43–46.

PROCESS

Christian spiritual formation is a process of gradual growth and formation and may be punctuated by occasional “crisis” moments of heightened awareness, personal struggle, or intense experience of progress. These “crisis” moments may also take the form of intense questioning, disillusionment, and doubt, and may be experienced in any of the areas of our lives—in who we believe we are, in what we know and/or learn, and in what we do.

Therefore, we believe that Christian spiritual formation is indeed a work that God does in us. In the context of a Christian undergraduate college, the community can play a critical role in this process. Graciousness, patience, honesty, encouragement, and prayer will support the spiritual formation of our students. These qualities will develop the

kind of community that deepens the maturity of its individuals. By allowing God to move freely within and among its members, Messiah College will embody Christ.

So spiritual formation can occur throughout the college — in residence halls, athletic fields, student organizations, and classrooms alike. The mission of maturing our students covers all educational arenas. And each of these various arenas is potentially formational. According to S. Steve Kang, “In a learning community, we come to know ourselves as we are known by God. True learning is a holistic process of formation and transformation.” We believe that the Messiah College community is an intentionally sacred space in which we engage the formational process that results in the transformation of our lives.

²Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 166.

“I am confident of this: that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

— *Philippians 1:6*

WORK

SPIRITUALITY TYPES

Educating women and men toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith requires training our students to think critically about a variety of subjects. Their own faith is no exception; indeed, the being and knowing elements of spiritual formation each involve careful thinking and meditation. Therefore, we can help our students greatly by giving them the vocabulary and opportunity to reflect intentionally and deeply about spirituality.

At the risk of labeling something so mysterious as the spirit, we use the following scheme to assist students in identifying their own spiritual type. It

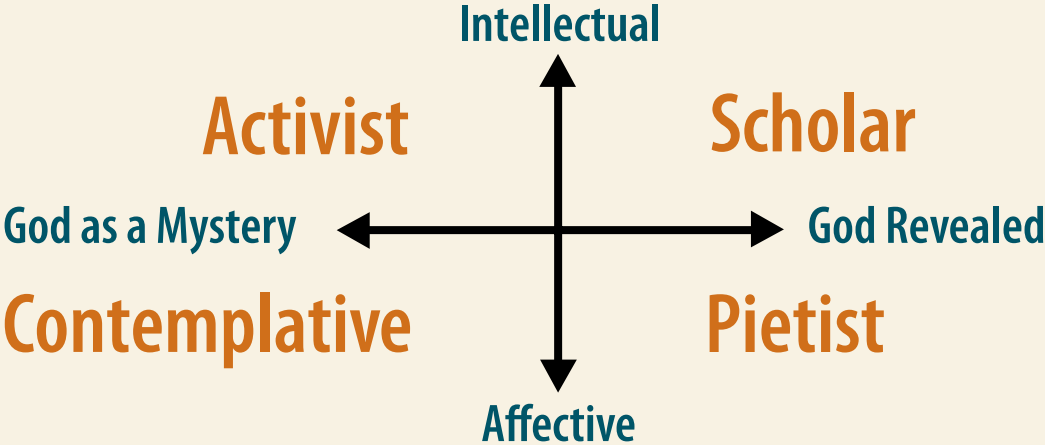
is best to view this scheme not as an inflexible tool that categorizes people into specific stereotypes, but as a means for starting conversation and reflection about the ways in which spirituality is manifest within our community. This can be a helpful device for those who have never considered their spiritual leanings, as well as for those who find themselves somewhat mystified by differing forms of spirituality within the same faith community.

The two axes in the diagram help us understand the ways we approach God and the ways we live our faith. The vertical line addresses how we perceive

and experience God. Those who seek a more intellectual knowledge of God will tend toward the “intellectual” end, while those who desire an affective relationship will locate themselves at the “affective” end.

The horizontal line indicates the ways we conduct our spiritual lives. Those who emphasize the revealed God will make use of images, concepts, and symbols in relating to a knowable God. Christians who view God as an ultimately unknowable mystery seek to comprehend the divine through quiet contemplation.

FOUR SPIRITUALITY TYPES



*These four spiritual types are drawn from the work of Allan H. Sager in Gospel-Centered Spirituality: An Introduction to Our Spiritual Journey (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 30-56.

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

—*Philippians 4:8*

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.”

—*2 Timothy 2:15*

The four spirituality types are the combinations of the ends of each of these two scales. At the ends of the scales, as demonstrated in the diagram, we find the activist, the scholar, the pietist, and the contemplative. These four terms help identify the various manifestations of spirituality among Christians. Very briefly, we may describe them as follows:

The contemplative is marked by an inward spirituality and a desire to live a contemplative life. The monastic and ascetic movements provide examples of this tendency, but contemplatives are found in all walks of life. Quiet, prayerful worship leading to a mystical union with God is the goal of the contemplative.

“Be still, and know that I am God”

—*Psalms 46:10*

In the scholar, the intellect is dominant. The Bible and the manifestation of God in Jesus is the focus, with less attention to personal piety and inner reflection. Spiritual transformation is accomplished through the renewing work of God, and the only necessary spiritual direction comes from the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

Pietists will focus on their walk with God and search for an experiential identity made manifest in a Christian lifestyle. This tendency holds conversion and repentance to be essential, and is motivated to transform individuals and society through evangelism. Salvation is celebrated in affective worship rather than in theological and doctrinal correctness.

“Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.”

—*Psalms 86:11*

Activist spirituality is motivated by prophetic cries against societal injustice. Theological distinctives are not emphasized; activists are found in many denominational traditions. Societal regeneration is the focus, and God and other activists provide the sustaining resources for confronting the powers of the world.

Again, these tendencies are only starting points for conversation and reflection, and many people will identify with more than one of the above categories. The four spiritual types thus serve as touchpoints for conversation and reflection. Their purpose is to help us better understand ourselves and others as we engage together the process of spiritual formation.

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

—*Deuteronomy 6:5*

“When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous.”

—*Proverbs 21:15*

“For I the LORD love justice.”

—*Isaiah 61:8*



APPLICATIONS

Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs has developed a holistic model for student formation that leads to a synthesis of our students' diverse experiences. This model encompasses four broad areas of cultivation: spiritual, leadership, personal identity, and cultural development. The formational goal of student affairs is rooted in the College's mission of educating men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith. The model has adopted the metaphor of a river and is fully described in "The River: A Student Formation Model." The Student Affairs' model supports the spiritual formation work of College Ministries and provides a key component of the environment in which spiritual formation can take place on campus.

Biblical and Religious Studies

The goal of the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies (BRS) is to model and encourage informed thinking about Christian faith and practice and the role of religion in the world. This work is governed by an educational philosophy that guides the department's approach to biblical studies, theological reflection, and ministerial preparation. This philosophy coincides with the spiritual formation model of College Ministries and provides a curricular connection to this work. Please see the full BRS philosophy statement here: www.messiah.edu/departments/brs/Philosophy.html.



Chapel

Chapel at Messiah College is a central expression of our identity as a community of Christians with a deep commitment to spiritual growth and academic excellence. In chapel we seek to nurture holistic Christian faith through 1) worship that expresses our faith with a full range of contemporary and traditional forms, 2) teaching that connects God's Word and our world, and 3) community building that affirms our common identity in Christ and celebrates our diversity.

The chapel program is designed to give students a grasp of the value and relevance of corporate worship and the Bible, the complexities of the church, worship as a holistic practice, creedal belief statements, and College values.

Across Campus

A wide range of curricular and cocurricular programming also supports our work of spiritual formation. Much of this programming is optional and provides students and educators with opportunities to engage spiritual formation in tangible ways. Koinonia groups, The Agapé Center, Issachar's Loft, and The Collaboratory are just a few examples of people working at, encouraging, and celebrating the spiritual formation of our community.



ENGAGE



SPIRITUAL FORMATION OUTCOMES

To assist in assessment and programming, we have identified six outcomes of spiritual formation. These particular outcomes are based in outcomes for the Division of Student Affairs.

1. Spiritual Identity: a maturing sense of self in relationship to God

Dimensions of this outcome include intentional growth in character, integrity and ethics, a healthy concept of God and self, and intentional engagement in spiritual practices. (SA outcome 2)

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14).

"I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

2. Understand Beliefs: a maturing understanding of biblical belief and theological application

Students will own their Christian beliefs, be able to integrate Christian thought into various aspects of life,

have a respect and understanding of other theological perspectives, intellectually engage the Bible, and appropriately apply the Bible to daily life. (SA outcome 1)

"I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him" (2 Timothy 1:12).

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31–32).

3. Reconciliation: a maturing appreciation and understanding of the diversity of God's Kingdom

Students will understand and pursue reconciliation, begin to demonstrate cultural and theological competency, experience positive interactions across differences, and value other persons. (SA outcome 3)

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

4. Community of Faith: a maturing understanding and commitment to a community of faith

Students will engage meaningful relationships, be committed to the good of others, have a realistic understanding of self and how that relates to others, and begin to use appropriate life skills for living in community. (SA outcome 5)

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35).

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; everyone who love is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7–8).

5. Servant Leadership: a maturing commitment to servant leadership

Dimensions of this outcome include developing a sense of service and justice, leadership skills, an understanding of vocation, and the importance of setting goals and working to achieve them. (SA outcomes 4 and 5)

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

6. Life of Worship: a maturing understanding of worship through all aspects of life

Students will develop a healthy concept of God and self, participate in corporate and personal worship practices, live

purposefully with a sense of calling, and be stewards of a holistic, balanced life. (SA outcome 6)

“Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

These six outcomes may be approached through particular goals, which demonstrate the breadth of our spiritual formation work. We hope Messiah College graduates will have a basic understanding of spiritual formation, including a definition and practices. Practically, we hope they experience a variety of intentional spiritual formation events. In addition to one-time events and experiences, we hope our students will take part in long-term mentor/mentee relationships with educators and staff, and also develop spiritual partnerships with one another. These events and relationships will also provide opportunities for our students to reflect on their lives through the lens of spiritual formation, developing habits of practice, exploration, and formation that will continue long beyond their time at Messiah College.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

—Colossians 3:16, 17 NRSV

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

There is perhaps no greater challenge or joy than following Jesus. Being conformed to the image of Christ is a high calling indeed, a calling for a lifetime, no matter when the call is first answered. Some of our students have been answering that call since they were children; others have yet to hear it. Perhaps the greatest challenge of College Ministries is finding ways and creating opportunities for spiritual formation that will entice and encourage both the seasoned traveler and the one who has yet to take her first step.

But it is a task we embrace with prayer and hope, for we believe the miracle of the incarnation happens daily, within and among those who want to follow Jesus into his likeness. And it is a task we celebrate together, for we believe that God has called a people to be the body of Christ—the divine presence—while we await Jesus' return. And our communal formation into the image of Christ is and will be infinitely fuller and richer and deeper because of what is happening among us all as well as within each individual. This is formation

for the sake of others, and not merely for ourselves.

May God's hope for oneness with us be added to our hope for a spiritual formation of self, knowledge and deed. And may the diverse spiritualities among us each reflect the mysterious and intimate God we find in the person of Jesus Christ.

“I . . . beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

— *Ephesians 4:1–3 NRSV*

ONENESS



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Cover photo by Erica
Lepley '09, taken while
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